

Rehumanizing Christian Religious Education amid a Crisis of Human Values in Indonesia

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Abstract: This article examines the urgent need for rehumanization within Indonesia's educational landscape, particularly through the lens of Christian Religious Education (CRE). Rehumanization, in this context, refers to the intentional effort to restore and uphold human dignity, moral agency, and relational integrity within educational practice—dimensions often marginalized by technocratic, utilitarian, and depersonalized pedagogical paradigms. Despite being widely recognized as a fundamental right and public good, education in Indonesia frequently reflects systemic tendencies that prioritize cognitive and instrumental outcomes while neglecting the holistic development of learners. Within such a context, the role of CRE teachers becomes increasingly significant, as they are uniquely positioned to integrate theological, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions in the formation of learners. Drawing on conceptual frameworks and contemporary literature, this study emphasizes the need to reposition CRE teachers as transformative agents who foster dialogical learning, nurture students' spiritual and moral consciousness, and cultivate a classroom environment grounded in compassion, justice, and mutual respect. Rather than functioning merely as knowledge transmitters, teachers are called to embody the values they teach, becoming living witnesses of faith, hope, and love within the educational community. Rehumanizing Christian Religious Education, therefore, demands a paradigm shift—one that reorients curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher formation toward the affirmation of each learner's full humanity to God, others, and the created world. By centering educational practice on relationality, embodiment, and the sacredness of the human person, rehumanization contributes to the renewal of education as a moral and spiritual enterprise.

Keywords: rehumanization, Christian Religious Education, moral formation, teacher agency, spiritual pedagogy, human dignity

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PENDAHULUAN

Christian Religious Education is a process through which the Church seeks to equip individuals (the faithful) to understand, embrace, and exemplify the Christian faith and way of life. It constitutes a deliberate effort to enable individuals to grasp the full meaning and latent possibilities of human nature as revealed in Jesus Christ and illuminated through the lens of contemporary knowledge. Moreover, it aims to assist individuals in establishing and sustaining a relationship with God and with others—relationships that guide them toward the actualization of their highest potential, and invite them to participate in the unfolding of God's will and purpose for themselves and for humanity at large, namely, to grow toward the maturity of Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Christian Religious Education is grounded in the theological conviction of Jesus Christ as Lord and in the understanding of His relational engagement with humanity. It is, in essence, a continuation of His teaching ministry, now carried out by those who have chosen to follow Him and to participate in the proclamation of God's redemptive love. This love is not merely abstract but is to be embodied and manifested through human behavior and communal life. Therefore, Christian Religious Education places a central emphasis on the personhood, life, and teachings of Jesus Christ. These are regarded as the foundation of human dignity, moral values, and normative patterns of life that guide individuals in both personal and communal existence.

Christian Religious Education (CRE) is not merely an institutional endeavor but a theological and pedagogical commitment to forming individuals in the way of Christ. At its core, CRE seeks to enable believers to understand, internalize, and embody the Christian faith as revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It involves a holistic process that nurtures both the cognitive and spiritual dimensions of the human person, guiding them toward the full realization of their vocation as children of God. This pedagogical effort affirms that the human being is not only a rational creature but also a moral and relational subject, called to live in communion with God and others (Boiliu, 2013).

Unlike secular models of education that often prioritize cognitive achievement and utilitarian outcomes, Christian Religious Education places Christ at the center. It interprets the human person through the lens of divine love: as inherently valuable, unconditionally loved, and infinitely worthy. From Christ's perspective, every person is to be nurtured in a way that leads to the actualization of their God-given potential. As such, all educational relationships—particularly between teacher and student—ought to be evaluated based on their contribution to this transformative goal (Groome, 2011).

This article argues that **rehumanization** must be reclaimed as a central task of Christian Religious Education, especially in contexts marked by moral fragmentation and instrumentalized education. The term *rehumanization* denotes a restorative orientation that reasserts the intrinsic worth of the human person within educational structures that often reduce learners to passive recipients or data points (Veugelers, 2011; Boiliu et al., 2020). Philosophically speaking, the human being exists not in isolation but in relational interdependence—with fellow humans, with the world, and ultimately with God. Following Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*—the human as a “being-in-the-world”—

education must be understood as an existential process wherein meaning is constructed in time and relationship (Snijders, 2014).

Thus, CRE is not merely concerned with doctrinal transmission but with fostering a deeper awareness of human identity in the light of divine grace. It invites both educators and learners to participate in a dynamic process of becoming—rooted in love, guided by truth, and oriented toward the fullness of life in Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:15). In such a vision, the classroom becomes a sacred space where human dignity is affirmed, transformation is possible, and the presence of God is encountered through intentional, reflective, and compassionate pedagogy (Bakker, 2007).

The act of self-development is rooted in human consciousness, particularly in one's awareness of existence as a thinking and relational being (Snijders, 2014). From this awareness arises a distinctly human impulse to understand the world and shape one's place within it. Education, therefore, is not a neutral or accidental activity, but a product of existential reflection on lived experience. As Groome (2011) notes, "education is as old as human consciousness," grounded in the human subject's engagement with others and the surrounding world. Such awareness is not limited to passive perception but extends to a reflective capacity that enables meaning-making, transformation, and growth.

This understanding situates education as a dynamic and ongoing process that reflects the uniqueness and dignity of the human person. It also underscores that human existence is not isolated (*an sich*), but embedded in relationships, in which learning becomes a way of constructing both the self and society. Philosophers throughout history—from Plato and Augustine to Dewey—have explored this formative dimension of education, yet, as Groome (2011) observes, a universally accepted definition of education remains elusive. What is clear, however, is that true education must address the whole person and cultivate a vision of human flourishing grounded in freedom, responsibility, and relational meaning.

Christian Religious Education (CRE) serves as a medium for the formation of faith and character, rooted in the theological affirmation that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (*Imago Dei*). As an integral component of the broader educational process, CRE must not be detached from the holistic dimensions of humanity—intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social. In the context of Indonesian society, which is both pluralistic and currently facing a crisis of human values—including intolerance, symbolic violence, and dehumanizing tendencies within the educational system—CRE bears the critical responsibility of becoming a space for the rehumanization of faith. It must educate learners as whole persons who uphold the dignity of others and value diversity.

Over the past decade, an increasing number of scholarly works have emphasized the necessity of adopting humanistic approaches to education. CRE, in this regard, is called to shift from doctrinal teaching models toward liberating pedagogies that cultivate ethical awareness among learners (Sagala, 2017). A transformative pedagogy in CRE has been shown to enhance students' active engagement and develop their social sensitivity (Katili et al., 2023). The restoration of relationships between the human person, others,

and the environment is likewise central to a humanistic and ecological Christian education, and represents a vital dimension of the broader rehumanization effort (Amirudin, 2025). Beyond the Indonesian context, Boiliu and Kia (2025) argue that authentic Christian education must be capable of integrating values of humanization, spirituality, and social justice within its pedagogical framework.

Educational practices in Indonesia remain largely focused on cognitive achievement and curriculum mastery, often at the expense of students' affective and moral development (Sabaruddin, 2020; N. I. Boiliu & Samosir, 2023). This has resulted in predominantly transactional learning approaches that lack the participatory, empathetic, and contextual pedagogy needed in religious education (Nadeak, 2014). In response to this challenge, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers are called to cultivate more reflective and dialogical learning paradigms capable of addressing students' spiritual and human needs in the midst of social disruption and educational standardization.

While recent scholarship has contributed meaningfully to the discourse on humanistic values and transformative pedagogies in education, much of the existing literature remains normative and conceptual. Few studies have explored the pedagogical praxis of CRE teachers in the specific cultural and social contexts of Indonesia. There is a notable lack of empirical data on how rehumanization is being implemented in actual classrooms, particularly in pluralistic environments marked by cultural and religious diversity.

Furthermore, limited research has examined the explicit relationship between the theology of the *Imago Dei* and the pedagogical strategies employed by CRE teachers to rehumanize learners, especially within increasingly technocratic and standardized educational settings. This gap calls for further investigation to ensure that CRE does not function merely as a vehicle for doctrinal transmission but as a transformative space for forming whole persons who are free, responsible, and rooted in their God-given dignity.

METODE

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using conceptual analysis and literature review as its primary methodology. The research is grounded in a theological-educational framework that seeks to explore the concept of *rehumanization* within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Indonesia. The central focus is to examine how rehumanizing practices can be articulated and embodied in the pedagogical roles of CRE teachers, particularly in response to the ongoing crisis of human values in contemporary educational settings.

The data used in this study consists of secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theological writings, and government educational policies published within the last ten years (2015–2025). Particular attention was given to interdisciplinary sources that integrate perspectives from theology, educational philosophy, humanistic pedagogy, and contextual Indonesian education. Sources were selected through keyword searches such as “rehumanization of education,” “Christian pedagogy,” “Imago Dei,” “human dignity in education,” and “transformative teaching” across platforms like Google Scholar, DOAJ, and major theological databases.

The method of analysis employed is hermeneutic-reflective, allowing for a dialogical engagement between theological concepts (e.g., *Imago Dei*, relational anthropology, Christocentric pedagogy) and the empirical realities of educational practice. Texts were analyzed thematically to identify core principles and gaps related to rehumanization, and to propose a practical pedagogical framework for CRE grounded in a humanistic and theological vision of education.

This methodological approach enables the study to not only construct a theoretical basis for rehumanization in CRE but also to highlight pedagogical implications that are contextually relevant for Christian educators in Indonesia today.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Education does not emerge abruptly or fall from the sky; rather, it is the result of human existential dynamics shaped by one's awareness of self and surrounding realities. It is born out of human interaction within a web of relationality, reflecting the social nature of human beings.

Etymologically, the Latin terms *educare* or *educere* mean "to lead, to guide, or to draw out," with the prefix *e-* signifying "out." In this sense, education is understood as a process of "drawing out" (Groome, 2011). However, this definition prompts a critical inquiry: Does education genuinely serve as a guiding force? Who first discovered or became aware of education as a concept?

Education is deeply rooted in the consciousness of human beings as thinking subjects. Yet this view can be broadened to affirm that education is not merely a means of extracting individuals from a state of ignorance, but rather a temporal and existential process by which human beings are awakened to their existence. In this journey, individuals are confronted with the reality of their being and the world around them, and are invited to reflect openly on their human nature and purpose.

As Boehlke (1997) suggests, the educational journey is not always pleasant—indeed, it is often marked by struggle and discomfort—through which one gradually comes to recognize that the perceived reality may merely be shadows of a deeper truth. Thus, education is a historical process through which human beings undergo existential transformation over time.

Groome (2011, p. 6) conceptualizes education as a process that involves three temporal dimensions: (1) the point of departure, (2) the present unfolding, and (3) the future orientation of the journey. In this sense, education encompasses the dimensions of "already," "in the process," and "not yet completed." Questions such as "from where," "in what process," and "toward what end" reflect the historical and temporal nature of human existence (Bakker, 2007, p. 53), and, importantly, the consciousness of the self in time.

In this process, the learner enters the educational horizon from a position of unknowing, moving into formation and gradually emerging as a transformed person. It resembles a block of marble in the hands of a sculptor: there is a moment in time when the marble is formless, then a process of shaping and chiseling unfolds (the educational

horizon), and eventually, at the right time, the indistinct stone gives way to a visible, intentional form, emerging into being.

The dimension of the “Already” (Point of Departure) refers to what learners already know and the internal capacities they possess. Groome (2011) likens this to a sculptor who envisions the potential form within a block of marble. The sculptor (educator) recognizes the inherent potential within the marble (student) and works to reveal it. Learners are not passive or empty vessels; they bring with them foundational knowledge and competencies that await conscious actualization through education.

The “In Process” (Present Realization) dimension emphasizes the active discovery that unfolds in the present moment, rather than merely reinforcing what is already known. In this phase, learners encounter new knowledge through experience and guided inquiry, expanding beyond the limits of their current understanding. In this perspective, learning is not primarily about the transmission of content but about a journey of encounter, construction, and transformation.

The “Not Yet Fully Realized” (Future-Oriented) dimension signifies the telos or ultimate goal of education—the direction toward which teaching and learning are oriented. The act of “drawing out” is essentially future-facing, envisioning possibilities not yet manifested. Groome (2011) describes this as the transcendent aspect of education, enabling individuals to reach toward unrealized potentialities that carry the promise of fulfillment and flourishing.

These three dimensions—“already,” “in process,” and “not yet”—are deeply interconnected and converge in the present moment. The past and the future interpenetrate within the now, continuously shaping and reshaping one another. As Bakker (2007) argues, the past provides orientation and foundation, while the future functions as a horizon of meaning that challenges, critiques, and revitalizes the past through the lens of present consciousness.

In practical terms, this tripartite temporal framework requires educators to critically identify (1) the learner’s starting point (*from where*), (2) the dynamics of the current educational process (*how*), and (3) the envisioned outcome of the learning journey (*toward what*). This requires careful pedagogical planning based on an assessment of students’ prior knowledge and readiness. By understanding learners’ initial developmental levels, educators can accompany them more effectively toward the realization of educational goals in a process that is humane, responsive, and transformative.

Framed within the discourse of rehumanization, education is not merely understood as a process of “drawing out” from ignorance, but rather as an existential journey that calls human beings to become aware of and actualize their full humanity across all temporal dimensions—the “already,” the “in-process,” and the “not-yet.” Education functions not only as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge but more profoundly as a medium for awakening self-awareness, uncovering meaning through lived experiences, and guiding individuals toward existential potential that is not yet fully realized.

As Palmer (2007) eloquently states, “Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” In this regard,

education inherently engages the deepest dimensions of human existence, particularly one's wholeness of identity and relational awareness. Education becomes a transformational process, allowing each individual to actively shape themselves into a dignified, conscious, and socially relevant person within a dynamic network of relationships (Abbott & Badley, 2019; Biesta, 2015).

Consequently, education must be seen not merely as a classical or institutional space, but as a lifeworld arena that invites each human being to be fully present—to experience, to reflect, and to grow into an authentic self.

KESIMPULAN

Rehumanizing education is a necessary response to the growing dehumanization within educational systems shaped by technocratic and utilitarian paradigms. Christian Religious Education (CRE), as an integral part of educational praxis, bears a theological and pedagogical responsibility to restore the dignity of learners by grounding the learning process in the values of the Gospel and the image of God (*Imago Dei*). This vision affirms that education must not only engage the intellect but must also nurture the spiritual, emotional, and moral dimensions of the human person.

In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and often fragmented society, the rehumanization of CRE demands a radical reorientation—from authoritarian, content-centered approaches to dialogical, learner-centered practices. Teachers of CRE are called not merely to transmit doctrines but to embody and facilitate a transformative encounter with truth, self, others, and God. Such an approach empowers both educators and learners to journey together toward maturity in Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:15), while building inclusive and compassionate learning communities that affirm human worth and relational integrity.

Ultimately, rehumanization is not a peripheral concern but a foundational imperative for Christian education. It requires systemic and cultural shifts in how we understand teaching, learning, and formation. When CRE faithfully engages this calling, it becomes not only a space for theological instruction but a living testimony of the Kingdom of God—a space where every learner is seen, known, and loved as fully human and fully capable of becoming who God intends them to be.

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