

Community Service Program: Socialization And Training For Sunday School Teachers In Developing Children's Character at GBI Avia Cemara Church, Medan

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ABSTRACT

Sunday School teachers play a central role in shaping children's character, particularly through Christian religious education that addresses both moral and spiritual aspects. Based on research conducted at Bethel Indonesia Church (GBI) AVIA CEMARA in Medan, it was found that although the teachers are enthusiastic in their ministry, they have not yet received specific training in character education for children. This Community Service Program (CSP) aims to strengthen the competencies of Sunday School teachers in applying character-based learning methods rooted in Christian values. The program integrates educational approaches such as Bible study, reflective discussions, teaching simulations, and the development of character-based teaching media. The results show a significant improvement in the teachers' understanding and teaching skills, along with a more reflective and contextual spirit in their ministry. This program is expected to make a meaningful contribution in supporting the church to nurture Christian character from an early age.

Keywords: Training, Sunday School Teachers, Children's Character, Christian Religious Education, Church.

A. INTRODUCTION

Building a child's character is an essential part of the faith-based educational mandate, as emphasized in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." The church, as a place of spiritual growth, is not only responsible for teaching doctrine but also for shaping character through example and value-based education. In this context, Sunday School teachers play a central and foundational role.

Therefore, a structured training framework rooted in Scripture and supported by current character education theories is crucial. Berkowitz (2012) argues that character education must be both intentional and integrated, bridging moral theory with day-to-day practice. Responding to this need, this Community Service Program (CSP) aims to provide holistic training grounded in theology, pedagogy, and creativity to equip teachers at GBI AVIA CEMARA Church in Medan.

In the context of Christian education, the role of Sunday School teachers becomes foundational in laying early moral and spiritual principles (Albrecht, 1995). However, field observations and

supporting studies (Saragih et al., 2024) indicate that many Sunday School teachers lack sufficient pedagogical and theological preparation. Inadequate training can lead to ineffective delivery of character values, particularly in facing contemporary societal challenges and digital distractions (Bandura, 1977; Damon, 2008).

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However, field observations indicate that many Sunday School teachers still lack adequate pedagogical and theological preparation. There is a clear and pressing need for systematic and practical training, especially in teaching methods that are relevant to the world of children and grounded in Christian values.

This Community Service Program (CSP) was conducted as an academic response to this need. It applies an educational and participatory approach aimed at nurturing Christ-like character in children through well-trained and compassionate Sunday School teachers at GBI AVIA CEMARA Church, Medan.

B. OBJECTIVE

This community service initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of Sunday School teachers in shaping children's character through Christian education. The program seeks to instill a solid theological understanding of character education from a Christian perspective, equip teachers with effective character-based teaching methods rooted in Biblical values, and provide creative training in the development of relevant instructional media and materials. In addition, it aspires to foster a reflective and contextually aware spirit of ministry among the participants, ensuring that their teaching is not only informative but also transformative in nurturing Christ-like character in children.

C. METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

This Community Service (CSP) activity was carried out through an integrated approach combining theological, reflective, practical, and creative dimensions. The program was

implemented intensively in a one-day session on **April 20, 2025**, at **Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) AVIA CEMARA**, Medan. The training was designed as a participatory and systematic learning experience involving Sunday School teachers from diverse age groups and ministry backgrounds.

The activity was facilitated by four lecturers from various academic and ministry disciplines:

1. Dr. (Cand) Novita Romauli, SH., S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd. – presented the topic on *Biblical Education*;
2. Dr. Selamat Karo-Karo, S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd. – led the session on *Reflective Discussion*;
3. Dr. Padriadi Wiharjokusumo, SS., SH., MH. – conducted the session on *Interactive Teaching Simulation*;
4. Dr. Dameria Girsang, S.Sos., MM., M.Si. – delivered the *Creative Media Development* workshop.

Training Session Overview

The training was structured into four main sessions designed to integrate foundational theology and practical skills in character education:

1. Biblical Foundation of Character

Participants explored the development of children's character based on the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and Jesus' example of loving children (Mark 10:14). This was followed by narrative readings and discussions on biblical role models such as David, Joseph, and Timothy, who exemplify godly character.

2. Reflective Dialogue on Ministry Challenges

A facilitated discussion allowed participants to reflect on real challenges faced by Sunday School teachers in shaping children's character amidst rapid societal change. This session encouraged a deeper awareness and sense of calling in their ministry.

3. Interactive Teaching Simulation

Participants practiced delivering Sunday School lessons using engaging, value-based, and child-friendly methods such as storytelling, value games, and group dynamics. The aim was to equip teachers to communicate character values effectively within children's contexts.

4. Creative Media Development and Ministry Commitment

A workshop session focused on developing teaching aids for character education, including value cards, illustrated stories, and visual tools. The session concluded with group presentations, personal reflection, and the signing of a commitment to character-building ministry.

Evaluation of Activities

The effectiveness of the program was evaluated using three main instruments:

- **Pre-test and post-test**, to measure participants' understanding of character values before and after the training.
- **Observation**, conducted during group discussions and simulations, to assess participation and engagement.
- **Written interviews**, aimed at capturing participants' spiritual insights and motivational impact after the training.

This implementation method was designed not only to deliver knowledge and practical skills but also to provide a transformative experience that strengthens the role of Sunday School teachers as Christian character-builders.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, this Community Service Program (CSP) demonstrates that character education in Sunday Schools can be both theologically grounded and practically rich when educators are given the tools, space, and community to grow.

Quantitative data showed knowledge growth of 30–40%, and qualitative reflections indicated enhanced vocational passion and spiritual insight. These outcomes reflect the core principles of effective character education: intentionality, consistency, community, and spiritual grounding (Damon, 2008; Groome, 1998).

Participants created teaching aids that incorporated visual learning strategies. The development of tools like value cards and illustrated stories supports the multi-modal learning theory (Padriadi et al., 2022). Group collaboration fostered ownership, and commitment-signing gave a symbolic conclusion to reinforce accountability.

The following sessions exemplify how various educational strategies were employed to support this transformation:

1. Biblical Education Session – Dr. (Cand) Novita Romauli, SH., S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd.

The Biblical Education session facilitated by Dr. (Cand) Novita Romauli, SH., S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd., significantly enriched participants' theological understanding of character formation grounded in biblical principles. Through an exploration of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and narratives of biblical figures, Sunday School teachers were guided to see how Scripture offers concrete models for Christ-centered moral education.



Figure 1: Dr. (Cand) Novita Romauli, SH., S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd. shares material on biblical foundations for children's character development, inspiring Sunday School teachers with practical and relevant Christ-centered values.

This Community Service Program yielded encouraging outcomes, as evidenced by marked improvements in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and pedagogical skills. Each session integrated theological, reflective, and practical approaches in a balanced manner, aligning with research which asserts that effective moral education requires both content mastery and reflective engagement (Berkowitz, 2012; Homrighausen & Enklaar, 2004).

Participant reflections and post-test results revealed a clear shift in how they perceive their ministry. Many expressed a renewed commitment, recognizing teaching not merely as a routine task but as a profound spiritual calling to guide children's character growth based on God's Word. This renewed sense of mission stands as a key indicator of the holistic success of the session.

Building upon the theological foundation laid in the Biblical Education session, the next phase of the program focused on encouraging self-awareness and contextual reflection. This

was achieved through a Reflective Discussion Session led by Dr. Selamat Karo-Karo, S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd.

2. Reflective Discussion Session – Dr. Selamat Karo-Karo, S.Th., M.Th., M.Pd.

The reflective discussion session led by Dr. Selamat Karo-Karo provided a meaningful space for teachers to share personal experiences and challenges in their ministry. Through guided questions and structured dialogue, participants were encouraged to critically assess their teaching approaches, cultural influences, and the spiritual needs of children. The session not only reinforced the theological foundation of character education by highlighting biblical figures such as Joseph and Timothy but also aligned with Groome's (1998) narrative method and Damon's (2008) emphasis on fostering an internal moral compass. Observation notes recorded high levels of engagement, empathy, and openness, resulting in a renewed awareness of their spiritual calling as educators.

To further reinforce practical application of character education, the program proceeded with an Interactive Teaching Simulation session. Facilitated by Dr. Padriadi Wiharjokusumo, SS., SH., MH., this session provided participants with a dynamic opportunity to embody and express moral values in child-friendly teaching formats.

3. Interactive Teaching Simulation – Dr. Padriadi Wiharjokusumo, SS., SH., MH.

The interactive teaching simulation session led by Dr. Padriadi Wiharjokusumo enabled participants to apply value-based teaching methods in a supportive environment. Activities such as storytelling, role-playing, and value games proved effective in helping teachers translate abstract character values into engaging, child-appropriate lessons. Observers noted increased enthusiasm, creativity, confidence, and improved communication skills. The session also reflected Groome's (1998) practice-oriented reflection model and reinforced Bandura's (1977) theory that modeling and shared narratives influence belief systems. Many participants shared that they now feel more equipped to deliver lessons that are not only doctrinal but also morally meaningful and practically applicable.

Another pivotal session was the Creative Media Development workshop, designed to integrate visual literacy and collaborative creativity into Sunday School pedagogy. Led by Dr. Dameria Girsang, S.Sos., MM., M.Si., this session invited participants to transform values into tangible teaching tools.



Figure 2 : Dr. Padriadi Wiharjokusumo, SS., SH., MH. facilitates an interactive teaching simulation, demonstrating engaging methods to instill moral values in Sunday School students.

4. Creative Media Development – Dr. Dameria Girsang, S.Sos., MM., M.Si.

The creative media development session, facilitated by Dr. Dameria Girsang, highlighted the importance of visual and interactive tools in character education. Participants worked collaboratively to produce innovative teaching aids such as illustrated value cards, moral storyboards, and educational posters. Group presentations demonstrated strong ownership and creativity among teachers, aligning with constructivist pedagogical approaches (Wiharjokusumo, 2021) and Berkowitz’s (2012) assertion that active engagement and agency are vital for character formation. The signing of a ministry commitment at the end of the session added a powerful symbolic element, reinforcing personal accountability and long-term dedication to character-building in the classroom.

Integrated Impact and Evaluation Findings

Quantitative data from pre-tests and post-tests revealed a marked increase in understanding of biblical character values, with average scores rising by 30–40% across participants. Qualitative data from written interviews showed that the training instilled not only new knowledge and teaching techniques, but also spiritual motivation and a renewed sense of purpose. Observational data supported these findings, highlighting active participation, peer encouragement, and positive group dynamics throughout the sessions.

In summary, the collaborative and multi-faceted method of implementation allowed the Community Service Program to meet its objectives effectively. The lecturers' combined expertise and the participatory training model succeeded in enhancing both the competency and

commitment of Sunday School teachers. This initiative serves as a replicable model for other faith-based educational programs aiming to nurture character in children through spiritually and pedagogically equipped educators.



Figure 3 : Sunday School teachers and participants engage in collaborative learning during the character development training at GBI AVIA CEMARA Church, Medan.

E. CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program conducted at GBI AVIA CEMARA Church, Medan, has proven to be both impactful and transformative in enhancing the role of Sunday School teachers as character educators. Through an integrated approach combining biblical instruction, reflective discussion, interactive simulation, and creative media development, the program effectively strengthened the teachers' theological foundation, pedagogical skills, and spiritual motivation.

The training sessions facilitated by the four lecturers provided a comprehensive and participatory learning experience that addressed the real needs of the participants. Teachers not only gained deeper insight into the biblical basis of character education but also acquired practical strategies to engage children in meaningful and value-based learning. The use of simulations and teaching aids helped bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering creativity, confidence, and clarity in teaching.

Evaluation results—including improved post-test scores, active participation, and positive reflective feedback—affirm the success of the program in fostering a renewed sense of calling and commitment among Sunday School teachers. This initiative underscores the critical importance of equipping faith-based educators with both spiritual insight and educational competence in shaping the next generation’s character.



Figure 4 : Sunday School children at GBI AVIA CEMARA engage in interactive character-building activities, learning Christian values through joyful and meaningful experiences.

Moving forward, it is recommended that similar training programs be sustained and expanded to other local churches, ensuring that character education remains a vital part of Christian ministry. By investing in the capacity-building of Sunday School teachers, the church continues its mission of nurturing Christ-like values in children—laying a strong foundation for their spiritual and moral growth.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes and reflections from this Community Service Program, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Sustainability of Training Programs

The church leadership is encouraged to organize regular follow-up training and mentoring sessions to ensure continuous development of Sunday School teachers. This can include refresher courses, peer-sharing groups, and leadership development modules.

2. Curriculum Integration

The character education framework introduced during the training should be integrated into the Sunday School curriculum. This includes aligning lesson plans, teaching materials, and evaluation strategies with biblical values and child-friendly methodologies.

3. Broader Participation

Future programs should expand their reach to include Sunday School teachers from other congregations and denominations. Inter-church collaboration would enrich the learning experience and foster unity in the broader Christian education community.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation System

A simple monitoring tool should be developed to assess the implementation of character-based teaching methods in the classroom. This would help track progress, address challenges, and highlight success stories to inspire other teachers.

5. Support from the Congregation

The church community should be encouraged to support Sunday School ministries, not only through prayer but also by providing resources, recognition, and platforms for teachers to share testimonies and best practices.

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May this program bear lasting fruit in the lives of the children and the educators who serve them, and may it inspire further collaboration between the church and academic institutions in strengthening Christian character education.

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