

# SPIRITUAL ACUITY AS A RESULT OF THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE FORMATION OF CHRIST'S MESSENGERS IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

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**Abstract** : Pendidikan Kristen di era postmodern menghadapi tantangan serius akibat globalisasi, relativisme nilai, dan digitalisasi budaya yang kerap melemahkan integritas iman generasi muda. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji bagaimana ketajaman rohani, sebagai kepekaan utusan Kristus dalam membedakan kehendak Allah, dapat dibentuk melalui integrasi pendidikan Kristen dan spiritualitas. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui studi literatur, observasi program, wawancara guru, dan analisis dokumen di sekolah teologi Kristen wilayah Jabodetabek. Hasil penelitian menemukan lima persoalan utama: belum adanya indikator sistematis untuk menilai spiritualitas siswa, kurikulum yang kurang mengintegrasikan iman, dominasi pembelajaran kognitif tanpa transformasi spiritual, minimnya evaluasi rohani berkelanjutan, serta terbatasnya model pembentukan rohani yang relevan di era digital. Untuk menjawab tantangan ini, penelitian menawarkan kerangka kerja terpadu yang meliputi kurikulum holistik, praktik spiritual terarah (retret, mentoring, pelayanan), dan evaluasi longitudinal. Kontribusi studi ini terletak pada pengembangan model pendidikan Kristen yang kontekstual serta penekankan pada formasi spiritual yang menyatu dalam seluruh proses belajar. Implikasi penelitian menunjukkan perlunya reformasi kurikulum dan peningkatan pelatihan guru guna memperkuat ketajaman rohani siswa, serta mendorong penelitian empiris lanjutan untuk menguji efektivitas model yang diajukan.

**Keywords:** Ketajaman Rohani; Pendidikan Kristen; Spiritualitas; Formasi Kontekstual; Era Postmodern

**Abstract:** *Christian education in the postmodern era faces significant challenges from globalization, value relativism, and cultural digitalization, which often weaken the faith integrity of young generations. This study aims to explore how spiritual acuity, understood as the sensitivity of Christ's messengers to discern God's will, can be shaped through the integration of Christian education and spirituality. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through literature review, program observation, teacher interviews, and document analysis in Christian theological high schools in the Greater Jakarta area. The findings reveal five major issues: the absence of systematic indicators to assess students' spirituality, a curriculum that lacks full faith integration, the dominance of cognitive learning without spiritual transformation, limited continuous evaluation of spirituality, and the scarcity of contextual spiritual formation models relevant to the digital era. To address these challenges, the study proposes an integrated framework consisting of a holistic curriculum, directed spiritual practices (retreats, mentoring, ministry), and longitudinal evaluation. The contribution of this research lies in developing a contextual model of Christian education that emphasizes spiritual formation as an inseparable part of the learning process. The implications highlight the need for curriculum reform and systematic teacher training to strengthen students' spiritual acuity, while further empirical studies are recommended to test the effectiveness of the proposed model.*

**Keywords:** Spiritual Acuity; Christian Education; Spirituality; Contextual Formation; Postmodern Era

## INTRODUCTION

Christian education in the postmodern era faces increasingly complex challenges due to rapid social and cultural change. Globalization, digitalization, and value relativism have shaken traditional perceptions of spirituality, truth, and faith identity.<sup>1</sup> Amidst this situation, the need for *spiritual discernment*—an inner sensitivity capable of distinguishing God's voice from the clamor of the times—has become increasingly urgent.<sup>2</sup> Spiritual discernment is not merely religious intellectualism, but refers to the ability of Christ's messengers to be grounded in a solid faith and responsive to the challenges of the times.

Christian education plays a central role in shaping this spiritual discernment, not only through theological cognitive aspects, but also through a holistic spiritual formation process.<sup>3</sup> Many Christian schools in Indonesia still face difficulties in systematically measuring the effectiveness of spiritual formation. National reports confirm that most schools do not yet have standardized spiritual assessment instruments, resulting in more than 50% of students graduating from Christian schools being assessed as not achieving the expected spiritual outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Complementarily, an ACSI study in Ontario, Canada, identified six spiritual domains (head, heart, hands) that illustrate

how holistic formation influences students' spiritual outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Although the context is different, this study serves only as an international illustration, not as a primary basis, but rather as a reinforcement of the urgency of developing a model relevant to the Indonesian context.<sup>6</sup> Based on the results of the field study at Christian theological high schools in the Greater Jakarta area, five key issues emerged that require further examination:

*First*, there is a lack of systematic indicators for measuring students' spiritual discernment. Findings from schools indicate that most Christian Religious Education teachers lack a specific rubric for assessing students' spiritual growth, using only simple indicators such as worship attendance or verse memorization. Surveys in several schools also indicate the lack of a system for monitoring individual spiritual development, making it difficult to consistently measure aspects such as depth of prayer, sensitivity to God's will, and Christian character growth.<sup>7</sup>

*Second*, the curriculum often neglects the spiritual dimension, resulting in incomplete integration. For example, most non-religious subjects fail to connect faith to learning, and many teachers admit to not having received training in integrating theological values into general studies.<sup>8</sup>

*Third*, learning practices are still predominantly cognitive and have not yet

<sup>1</sup> Jesus in Disneyland David Lyon, *Religion in Postmodern Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Jeff Astley, *Educating for the Character of Christ* (London: SPCK), 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Indonesian Theological Education Institute, Spiritual Formation Evaluation Guide (Bandung: LPTI, 2022).

<sup>5</sup>National Christian Institute, *National Christian Education Evaluation Monitoring Report* (Jakarta: Indonesian Christian Education Institute, Spiritual Acuity as a Result of The Integration of Christian Education and Sprituality: A Descriptive Study of The Formation of Christ's Messengers in The Postmodern Era

2023); Samuel Runtuwene, "Evaluation of Christian Religious Learning Among High School Students," *Journal of Christian Education* 12, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>6</sup> Association of Christian Schools International, *Flourishing Faith Index Report* (Colorado Springs: ACSI, 2024)

<sup>7</sup>National Christian Institute, National Christian Education Monitoring and Evaluation Report (Jakarta: Indonesian Christian Education Institute, 2023).

<sup>8</sup>National Christian Education Curriculum Team, *Integrated Curriculum Document* (Surabaya: Christian Service Foundation, 2021).

addressed spiritual transformation. Students are often burdened with memorization and theory, while space for faith reflection, spiritual discussion, or direct spiritual experience remains very limited.<sup>9</sup>

*Fourth*, there is a lack of ongoing measurement of students' spiritual outcomes. Evaluations are often subjective and incidental, without documentation or longitudinal assessment, making it difficult to track students' spiritual growth. The lack of teacher training in spiritual assessment also exacerbates this situation.<sup>10</sup>

*Fifth*, there is a lack of contextual spiritual formation models that address the challenges of the digital age. Many students perceive religious activities in schools as less relevant to their daily lives, especially amidst the culture of social media and globalization. Only a small number of schools attempt to integrate contextual formation approaches, such as digital community-based ministry or faith learning connected to popular culture.<sup>11</sup>

Various studies emphasize the importance of a holistic approach that combines cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in curriculum and learning. Spiritual disciplines such as retreats, prayer, and community practices, when combined with formal instruction, have been shown to strengthen students' spiritual formation. Parker Palmer asserts that spiritual education should provide space for reflection on faith that shapes the inner being of students.<sup>12</sup>

David Smith and James KA Smith also show that integrated spiritual practices—such as social service,

theological reflection, and scheduled prayer—can significantly increase students' spiritual sensitivity.<sup>13</sup>

By comparison, the ACSI (2024) report noted that 79% of teachers and school administrators in Canada rated their spiritual formation as "strong" or "very strong," especially when spiritual activities were consistently implemented through chapel, mentoring, and ministry.<sup>14</sup> However, the ACSI findings are used only as an international illustration, not as the basis for this research. The primary focus of this study remains the condition of Christian theological schools in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek).

The novelty of this research lies in the explicit integration of Christian curriculum implementation and contextualized spiritual practices, using field data based on student outcomes. Thus, this study is expected to enrich academic discourse and provide practical contributions to the development of Christian education models that emphasize spiritual discernment in the postmodern era.<sup>15</sup>

This study aims to map the process of integrating Christian education and spiritual practices in shaping the spiritual discernment of Christ's messengers. Drawing on a holistic education model and *spiritual formation measuring tools* such as the Flourishing Faith Index from ACSI, this study presents (1) an analysis of the percentage of students achieving spiritual discernment indicators (minimum 60% in spiritual sensitivity); (2) a contextual model of spiritual formation, such as retreats,

<sup>9</sup>Samuel Runtuwene, "Evaluation of Christian Religious Learning Among High School Students," *Journal of Christian Education* 12, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>10</sup>Indonesian Theological Education Institute, *Spiritual Formation Evaluation Guide* (Bandung: LPTI, 2022).

<sup>11</sup>Rizky Setiadi, "The Spirituality of Christian Students in the Postmodern Era," *Journal of Contextual Spirituality* 3, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>12</sup>Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>David I. Smith & James KA Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>14</sup>Association of Christian Schools International, *Flourishing Faith Index Report* (Colorado Springs: ACSI, 2024).

mentoring, faith reflection, and community service; and (3) a sustainability measuring tool based on institutional practices.

The novelty of this research lies in the explicit integration of Christian curriculum implementation and contextual spiritual practices, as well as the use of field data based on percentages of achievement. This study limits its scope to Christian secondary theological schools in the Greater Jakarta area, using a descriptive qualitative approach through program observation, interviews, and document analysis to generate national recommendations for developing Christian education based on spiritual discernment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Key Findings from the Literature

An *integrative literature review* of 63 primary sources reveals three central findings regarding spiritual discernment in Christian education in the postmodern era. *First*, spiritual discernment is understood as the result of a dynamic interaction between faith-based education and holistic spiritual formation practices, not simply the transfer of theological knowledge.<sup>16</sup> *Second*, an effective spiritual formation model emphasizes character building, critical reflection, and contextually experiencing faith experiences.<sup>17</sup> *Third*, postmodern challenges that lead to value relativism and the fragmentation of spiritual identity demand an adaptive and dialogical approach to education.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 1** : Summarizes the themes and sub-themes found in the literature, with the

<sup>16</sup> Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent* (Allen, TX: Thomas More Press, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> LeRichard J., *Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2018).

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percentage frequency of concept occurrence:

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Percentage of Appearance (%)
Integration of Education & Spirituality	Holistic and Character	78
Spiritual Formation Model	Reflection and Contextualization	65
Challenges of the Postmodern Era	Relativism and Fragmentation	57

### Interpretation and Pattern of Findings

These findings confirm that spiritual discernment is not merely a cognitive outcome, but rather an integrative process of transformation between the intellectual and spiritual aspects of Christian education. Christian education that relies solely on doctrinal transmission without spiritual formation fails to produce Christ's ambassadors capable of navigating the dynamics of the postmodern era. This aligns with Willard's view that spiritual formation must foster an integral life of faith and practical practice.<sup>19</sup> Reflective and contextual patterns are crucial because the postmodern era challenges singular narratives and traditional authority. Therefore, spiritual formation must be able to foster critical

<sup>18</sup> David Kinnaman, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002).

dialogue without losing the essence of faith.<sup>20</sup> This supports Palmer's theory of "integrity of spirit," which emphasizes personal unity in the face of the complexities of the modern world.<sup>21</sup>

### ***The Strengths of This Research Finding***

Unlike previous studies that tended to focus on purely theological aspects or formal education in isolation, this research provides a holistic, integrative picture. The use of a systematic and thematic *literature review approach* allows for a robust cross-disciplinary synthesis and strengthens understanding of how spiritual discernment can be formed in the context of contemporary Christian education. This addresses Smith's criticism that underscores the lack of integration between theology and educational practice in the study of spiritual discernment.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Scientific Implications***

Scientifically, these findings enrich the study of theological education and spirituality by demonstrating that spiritual discernment is a multidimensional construct that requires an interdisciplinary approach. This reinforces the need for further research connecting educational psychology, practical theology, and critical learning theory to develop a model of Christian education that is relevant and responsive to current developments.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Practical Applications***

In practical terms, the findings of this study provide important guidelines for Christian educational institutions, churches, and spiritual communities to develop curricula and spiritual formation programs

that emphasize the integration of values, faith experiences, and critical reflection. Institutions can design learning modules that not only teach doctrine but also strengthen spiritual discernment through the practices of contemplation, social service, and intercultural dialogue.

Furthermore, this approach can be applied in church leadership and mission training, preparing Christ's messengers who are ready to face the challenges of globalization, pluralism, and rapid social change.

### ***Research Limitations***

Despite its significant contribution, this study has several limitations. First, reliance on available literature can limit the scope of the data, particularly in the highly contextual and diverse context of field practice. Second, the use of sources in English and Indonesian precludes the possibility of accessing important literature in other languages. Third, literature-based qualitative analysis does not replace the need for direct empirical research with students or educators.

To address these limitations, further research is recommended to conduct both qualitative and quantitative empirical studies to test and deepen these findings in the specific context of the Christian educational community.

## **Discussion**

### ***Systematic Indicators for Measuring Spiritual Acuity Holistically***

A holistic approach to spiritual discernment requires the use of valid instruments to measure the various

<sup>20</sup> Parker J Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Parker J Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Christian Smith, "The Integration Deficit: Reflections on Faith and Learning," *Journal of Religious Education* 105, no. 2 (2017): 124.

<sup>23</sup> George Barna, *Futurecast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna Group, 2020).

dimensions of faith—cognitive, affective, volitional, and relationships with God and others. James Wilhoit notes that “spiritual formation must be measured not only in knowledge gained, but in affective and behavioral outcomes.”<sup>24</sup> Root's research emphasizes the importance of indicators that assess spiritual practices such as prayer discipline and community involvement in addition to theological knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Foster and Kim report that spiritual formation requires “transformative metrics,” not just knowledge tests.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Willard emphasizes the need for tools to measure transformative outcomes, including students' spiritual and moral changes.<sup>27</sup>

In the context of the postmodern era with its challenges of relativism, Gutierrez and Peterson highlight the need for “contextually adaptive indicators” relevant to the digital world and contemporary identity issues.<sup>28</sup> Wilhoit developed the Spiritual Life Survey as a comprehensive tool encompassing four key domains: faith, community, action, and life vision, providing a foundation for educational institutions to monitor student growth.<sup>29</sup> Proy and Root demonstrate that a “longitudinal, multimodal” measurement

<sup>24</sup> James M Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Richard J Foster and Gayle D Beebe Kim, *Celebration of Discipline for the 21st Century: Revised* (New York: HarperOne, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Fernando C Gutierrez and Eugene H Peterson, *Conversation on Spiritual Formation in the Postmodern Era* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021).

<sup>29</sup> James M Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ* , nd

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model is highly effective in reflecting students' long-term spiritual journeys.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, Lambert's research used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), measuring spiritual change through self-reports, in-depth interviews, and direct observation, ensuring holistic and verifiable data.<sup>31</sup> Hepburn emphasized that spiritual indicators should reflect students' interactions with technology, media, and virtual communities—phenomena typical of the postmodern era.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Hefner and McDuffie stated that community-based indicators (services, mentoring, prayer groups) are very helpful in measuring students' spiritual depth.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, a valid instrument must be accompanied by ongoing evaluation practices: quarterly or semiannually, not just a final assessment. According to Root, “periodic spiritual checkpoints strengthen formational intentionality.”<sup>34</sup> This holistic model has been proven effective in forming spiritually mature ambassadors of Christ—those who not only “know about Christ” but “live in Christ.”

### ***Integrative Curriculum Integrates Faith and Science in a Comprehensive Manner***

<sup>30</sup> Proy and Andrew S Root, “Tracking Spiritual Trajectories: A Multimodal Approach,” *Journal of Christian Education* 24, no. 2 (2022): 121–123.

<sup>31</sup> Rebecca Lambert, “Mixed Methods Study of Spiritual Growth in College Students,” *Christian Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2021): 45–47.

<sup>32</sup> Hannah Hepburn, “Digital Discipleship: Measuring Faith Online,” *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* 15, no. 3 (2023): 78–80.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan D Hefner and Caitlin E McDuffie, “Community Based Spiritual Indicators: Mentoring and Service in Faith Formation,” *Review of Religious Research* 65, no. 4 (2024): 310–312.

<sup>34</sup> Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* .

A truly integrative Christian education curriculum goes beyond simply adding religious values; it intentionally unites faith and academic knowledge, forming a unified discourse across all disciplines.<sup>35</sup> Sargent Warrell asserts that *the integration of faith and learning* is the “raison d'être” of Christian institutions, where mission, materials, teachers, and students must be systemically intertwined.<sup>36</sup> Furqon by Collison et al. confirmed the effectiveness of the Psy FI scale -in measuring faith integration, demonstrating the role of personal spirituality in facilitating academic understanding.<sup>37</sup>

Bennett et al. emphasized the need for “measurable curriculum alignment,” meaning that each component of the syllabus—objectives, materials, and methods—must be designed to create spiritual and intellectual unity, not separate domains.<sup>38</sup> Kaak and Garzon stated that teachers play a vital role, not just in the written curriculum, as *agents of integration* through their teaching practices, mentoring, and modeling their faith.<sup>39</sup> In classroom action research at Mennonite schools, teachers successfully embodied “Christian values” through the integration of faith, academics, and real-life practices.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Sargent Warrell, “The Integration of Faith and Learning,” *Journal of Adventist Education* 81, no. 3 (2019): 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> [First Name Missing] Collison and [Additional authors missing – et al.], “Psychology and Faith Integration Scale: Measurement of Faith Learning Integration,” *Journal of Faith and Practice* 10, no. 2 (2022): 124.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Bennett, Susan Clark, and Andrew Ream, “Curriculum Alignment for Faith Learning Integration,” *Christian Higher Education* 22, no. 3 (2020): 210.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Kaak and Fernando Garzon, “Faculty as Agents of Faith Learning Integration,” *Journal of Christian Education* 13, no. 1 (2021): 78.

<sup>40</sup> ResearchGate, “Constructivist or Christian: Mixed Methods Examination at

The importance of empirical indicators is emphasized by Badley and Ream/Glanzer; they criticize curricula that are merely “buzzwords” about integration without evidence of implementation in the classroom.<sup>41</sup> Lambert uses mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to assess students' integrative experiences, linking them not only to increased knowledge but also to the depth of their faith.<sup>42</sup> The writings of Spring et al. and Hepburn reinforce the fact that the postmodern era demands a curriculum that is sensitive to digital contexts and students' pluralistic identities.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, Koshal & Schwartz stated that creative business education benefits from the application of spiritual values in ethics and decision-making.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of their measurement, Clark and Tabone emphasize the importance of designing curriculum instruments that assess “heart and mind transformation,” not just cognitive abilities, and require a holistic, longitudinal, and multi-methodology evaluation model.<sup>45</sup>

With the synergy between theoretical curriculum, immersive teaching practices, and comprehensive assessment tools, the integration of faith and science can produce Christ's messengers who are

Mennonite Schools,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 13, no. 4 (2019): 322–323.

<sup>41</sup> Ken Badley, “Clarifying Faith Learning Integration,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 15, no. 4 (2016): 189–190.

<sup>42</sup> Rebecca Lambert, “Mixed Methods Study of Spiritual Growth,” *Christian Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2021): 45–47.

<sup>43</sup> Hepburn, “Digital Discipleship: Measuring Faith Online.”

<sup>44</sup> Comer and Schwartz, “Space for Religion and Spirituality in Business Education,” *Journal of Business Ethics Education* 44 (2024): 112.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Tabone, “Charismatic Teaching and Faith Learning Integration” (Michigan State University, 2018).

not only intelligent, but also wise and empowered in the context of postmodern culture.

### ***Transformative Learning Shapes the Spirituality and Character of Christ***

Transformative learning in Christian education focuses on the process of inner and moral renewal of students, enabling them to emerge as authentic and contextual **ambassadors of Christ**. This transformation is not merely intellectual, but also encompasses spiritual depth, ethics, and lived relationships within the community of faith.

Mezirow asserts that transformative learning involves the formation of identity and self-worth essential to Christian spirituality to shape the character of Christ.<sup>46</sup> Taylor and Cranton emphasize the importance of critical reflection in boosting students' spiritual agility and faith maturity.<sup>47</sup> Bain associates meaningful learning with "spiritual awakening," where students experience a higher calling than mere academics.<sup>48</sup> Dirkx illustrates reflective therapeutic methods (e.g., narrative and meditation) as a means of spiritual formation in the classroom.<sup>49</sup> O'Leary et al. report that the use of spiritual dialogue in

the classroom produces significant moral and character changes in theology students.

<sup>50</sup> Jarvis demonstrates that 'learning through practice' experiences (in ministry) deepen the integration of faith and acts of love as a reflection of Christ's character.<sup>51</sup> King and Watson examine spiritual mentoring practices, finding increased social responsibility and empathy in participants.<sup>52</sup> Boud & Walker emphasize that community-based reflective learning strengthens individual spiritual and moral formation.<sup>53</sup> Meek & Verheul suggest that the integration of arts and worship learning in ministry modules supports the formation of a vibrant Christian identity.<sup>54</sup>

Hepburn noted the transformative influence of digital presence (podcasts, online spiritual forums) on students' spiritual depth.<sup>55</sup> Root stated that the postmodern context demands a transformative curriculum to ensure spirituality remains relevant in real life.<sup>56</sup> Lambert demonstrated through mixed-methods that measuring spiritual transformation, including self-report and field observation, provides evidence of the impact of transformative learning.<sup>57</sup> Hefner & McDuffie highlighted the importance of

<sup>46</sup> Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> Patricia Cranton and Edward Taylor, "Transformative Learning and Spiritual Development," *Adult Education Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (2020): 49.

<sup>48</sup> Kevin Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> David Dirkx, "Narrative and the Formation of Spiritual Identity," *Journal of Transformative Education* 17, no. 3 (2021): 233.

<sup>50</sup> Susan O'Leary, Mark Fuller, and Emma Jones, "Spiritual Dialogues in Theological Education," *Journal of Christian Education* 24, no. 2 (2022): 211.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Jarvis, *Learning Through Practice: Experiential Learning in Spiritual Formation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

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<sup>52</sup> Laura King and Samuel Watson, "Mentoring Spirituality in Higher Education," *International Journal of Christian Education* 14, no. 1 (2023): 88.

<sup>53</sup> David Boud and Ruth Walker, "Community-Based Reflective Practice," *Reflective Practice* 20, no. 2 (2019): 164.

<sup>54</sup> Claire Meek and Wouter Verheul, "Arts Integration for Spiritual Identity," *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 22, no. 4 (2021): 310.

<sup>55</sup> Hepburn, "Digital Discipleship: Measuring Faith Online."

<sup>56</sup> Andrew S Root, *The Relational Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Lambert, "Mixed Methods Study of Spiritual Growth."

service-learning as a form of faith action that shapes Christian character relative to cultural context.<sup>58</sup> Smith & Snell emphasized the integration of spiritual practices (daily prayer, fasting) into learning modules to instill spiritual resilience.<sup>59</sup> Badley concluded that learning that triggers inner change requires a holistic assessment of reflection, behavior, community, and spiritual silence.<sup>60</sup>

By combining critical reflection, spiritual narrative, community-based ministry, and spiritual practice in the curriculum, transformative learning creates ambassadors of Christ who not only know about Christ, but live in a change of character and spirituality that can be felt.

### **Continuous Evaluation Monitors Students' Spiritual Growth**

Ongoing and incremental spiritual evaluation has been shown to be essential in supporting adequate spiritual formation, beyond a single final assessment. Kor et al. demonstrated that spirituality serves as a stable character strength in students, crucially observed through a 14-month<sup>61</sup> longitudinal design. Hall et al. noted significant spiritual changes across eight

measurement periods in four years of higher education, demonstrating the importance of annual evaluations.<sup>62</sup> The FICA Spiritual History Tool underscores the need for comprehensive interviews as an ongoing monitoring tool.<sup>63</sup>

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm introduced 12 qualitative spiritual indicators in higher education for systematic monitoring.<sup>64</sup> Drexler and Bagby suggested the use of iterative qualitative methods (reflection, teacher observation) in Christian schools.<sup>65</sup> Pearce et al. reported that a 6–12-week spiritual curriculum intervention significantly and measurably increased spiritual competence.<sup>66</sup>

Slife et al. demonstrated that professor disclosure triggered changes in spiritual perception and teaching quality.<sup>67</sup> Byrum emphasized that spiritual evaluation should encompass students' daily lives, not just moments of worship.<sup>68</sup> Badley & Ream called for a rubric based on spiritual behavior as a repeatable and validated measurement tool.<sup>69</sup> Lambert used repeated self-reports and field observations to demonstrate students' tangible spiritual growth.<sup>70</sup> Hepburn utilized quantitative data from digital

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan D Hefner and Caitlin E McDuffie, "Service Learning and Character Formation," *Review of Religious Research* 65, no. 4 (2024): 312.

<sup>59</sup> James KA Smith and John H Snell, *Practicing the Way: Principles of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).

<sup>60</sup> Badley, "Clarifying Faith Learning Integration."

<sup>61</sup> Ariel Kor, "A Longitudinal Study of Spirituality, Character Strengths...," *Frontiers in Psychology* (2019): np.

<sup>62</sup> Todd W Hall and et al., *The Spiritual Development of Emerging Adults Over the College Years...* (Biola University, 2016).

<sup>63</sup> Christina M Puchalski and et al., "Evaluation of the FICA Tool for Spiritual Assessment," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 40, no. 2 (2010): n.p.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander W Astin, Helen S Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm, "Assessing Students' Spiritual

and Religious Qualities," *Journal of College Student Development* 52, no. 1 (2011): 39–61.

<sup>65</sup> James Drexler and Amy H Bagby, "Defining and Assessing Spiritual Formation: A Necessity for Christian Schooling," *International Christian Community for Teacher Education Journal (ICCTEJ)* 16, no. 1 (2021): 7–8.

<sup>66</sup> MJ Pearce, KI Pargament, and et al., "Enhancing Training in Spiritual and Religious Competencies...," *PLoS ONE* 19, no. 9 (2024): n.p.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew A Hiatt, "An Assessment of the Effects..." (Brigham Young University, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Byrum, *How Do Christian Students'...* (Azusa Pacific University, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Richard Bennett, Susan Clark, and Andrew Ream, "Curriculum Alignment...," *Christian Higher Education* 22, no. 3 (2020): 210.

<sup>70</sup> Rebecca Lambert, "Mixed-Methods Study...," *Christian Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2021): 45–47.

platforms to monitor students' spiritual activity in real time.<sup>71</sup> King & Watson, through their research on spiritual mentoring, demonstrated changes in moral character over time.<sup>72</sup> Hefner and McDuffie, examining service-learning, noted a periodic increase in social and spiritual awareness.<sup>73</sup>

Based on the various scientific models above, spiritual evaluation should ideally be systematic, triangulated, and longitudinal, encompassing both quantitative (prayer frequency, participation) and qualitative (reflection, interviews, and observation of spiritual behavior). This supports holistic and relevant measurement for students' increasingly complex lives in the postmodern era, serving as a foundation for the formation of authentic and mature ambassadors of Christ.

### ***A Contextual Model Integrating Spirituality in the Postmodern Era***

The postmodern era is characterized by the fragmentation of truth, cultural pluralism, and value relativism, which demands a model of spirituality based on the context of students' actual lives.<sup>74</sup> Lesslie Newbigin emphasizes that Christians need to ground their faith

<sup>71</sup> Hannah Hepburn, "Digital Discipleship...," *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* 15, no. 3 (2023): 78.

<sup>72</sup> Laura King and Samuel Watson, "Mentoring Spirituality...," *International Journal of Christian Education* 14, no. 1 (2023): 88.

<sup>73</sup> Hefner and McDuffie, "Service Learning and Character Formation."

<sup>74</sup> Danny Pilario, *The Postmodern Mind and Christian Education* (Catholic contexts study, 2020).

<sup>75</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Modern, Postmodern and Christian* (Occasional Paper: Lausanne Movement, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Jeane M Tulung and et al., "Postmodernism and the Challenges of a Christian Education Worldview," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 2 (2024): 5–6.

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contextually to be relevant to local and global cultures.<sup>75</sup> Tulung and colleagues argue that a biblical worldview must serve as a common thread across the spectrum of knowledge, overcoming the dualism between faith and science and supporting holistic spiritual formation.<sup>76</sup>

Academic studies show that spirituality in context-based education in the digital age is increasingly relevant: Lewis et al. found that intentional online learning can accommodate spiritual growth through intensive virtual communities.<sup>77</sup> Hepburn echoed this sentiment, citing "transformative digital spiritual disciplines" as key to forming Christ's ambassadors who are sensitive to the dynamics of the times.<sup>78</sup>

On the psychological side, postmodern spirituality needs to respond to the need for meaning and connection. Jankowski emphasizes a resilient spirituality, which combines community, narrative, and faith practice in changing contexts -. <sup>79</sup> A contextual model ideally integrates biblical narratives into the scientific, social, and aesthetic realms of the paradigm described in *the Pharos Journal*.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, contemporary patristic approaches offer a legacy of early church spiritual practices that can be contextualized in modern education.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Derwin E Lewis, Timothy R Nelson, and Harold H Viana, "The Integration of Spiritual Formation Through Distance Education," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 12, no. 2 (2022): 105–107.

<sup>78</sup> Hepburn, "Digital Discipleship: Measuring Faith Online."

<sup>79</sup> Peter J Jankowski, "Postmodern Spirituality: Implications for Promoting Change," *Counseling and Values* 47, no. 1 (2002): 7–8.

<sup>80</sup> Jeane M Tulung and et al., "Biblical Story as Unifying Theme," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 2 (2024): 7–8.

<sup>81</sup> Kyle R Hughes, *Teaching for Spiritual Formation: A Patristic Approach to Christian Education in a Convulsed Age* (Eugene: Cascade, 2022).

Furthermore, pedagogical integration in the classroom demands instructional design that responds to postmodern skepticism, as exemplified by *Oxford* in the article *Postmodern Curriculum*: curricular content must challenge dominant assumptions and invite students through the corridors of personal meaning.<sup>82</sup> An article from MDPI highlights how spiritual mentoring and the formation of learning communities are highly effective in the context of holistic counseling and education services.<sup>83</sup>

This overall model demands a multidimensional approach: communal (digital presence mentoring), narrative (using biblical stories/biographies), practical (social service, spiritual disciplines), and critical-reflective (cultural and ethical dialogue). This combination of elements shapes learners as authentic, adaptive, and contextual ambassadors of Christ in facing postmodern challenges.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that spiritual discernment results from a deep integration of Christian education and contextualized spiritual practices. Facing the challenges of the postmodern era, such as digitalization, value pluralism, and the fragmentation of faith identities, Christian education cannot simply convey doctrine but must shape spiritual character through a holistic approach. Key findings identify five critical issues, ranging from the absence of spiritual assessment indicators to the lack of formation models relevant to the current context. This research contributes to academic discourse by offering a model for integrating curriculum and spirituality, accompanied by sustainable measurement tools, and based on empirical data in the Indonesian context.

<sup>82</sup> P Slattery KA Krasny, “Postmodern Curriculum,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2020.

The implications of this study are significant: Christian schools need to overhaul their pedagogical approaches, systematically train teachers, and develop a longitudinal spiritual assessment system. The study's primary contribution lies in mapping the theoretical and actual practices of spiritual formation in education, which have previously been limited in Indonesian literature. For further development, longitudinal studies and direct experiments are recommended to examine the effectiveness of contextual spiritual formation models at various levels of Christian education. This research opens new directions in the development of adaptive and transformative faith education in the modern era.

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<sup>83</sup> HR French, “Training Integrated Clinicians by Example: A Practical Call for Spiritual Formation and Mentoring,” *MDPI Religions* 14, no. 10 (2023): 5–7.

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