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Faith Learning Integration as the Soul of Teacher Education: Nurturing Self-Esteem and Self-Leadership among Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Christian universities often claim to integrate faith and learning, but few studies test that claim from the side of the students being formed. This study examines how Faith Learning Integration (FLI) shapes the self-esteem and self-leadership of pre-service teachers at a Protestant Christian teacher education faculty in Indonesia. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, it measured self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning among 26 final-year Early Childhood and Elementary Education students at program entry (2022) and at graduation (May 2026), then used structured written interviews to confirm and explain the change. Handwritten gratitude cards to lecturers served as supplementary documents. Mean self-efficacy rose from 21.48 to 31.20 and mean self-esteem from 24.81 to 28.38, while self-regulated learning fell from 98.58 to 73.38. The interviews explained the gains through five themes: worth relocated from performance to identity in Christ, relational safety as the condition for risk-taking, mastery through field practice and responsibility, self-leadership as reframing and disciplined dependence on God, and the lecturer's life as the integrating medium. The findings suggest that FLI reaches students mainly through modeling, relationship and structured responsibility rather than content alone, but that relational support does not by itself transfer academic self-regulation. Christian teacher education should therefore invest in lecturer formation and mentoring while teaching self-regulation explicitly.

INTRODUCTION

Christian universities routinely claim to integrate faith and learning. Yet the claim is easier to state than to demonstrate. A mission statement, a theology course, prayer before class or a Bible verse in a lecture may express Christian intention without showing that faith has actually shaped how knowledge is understood, taught and lived. Handoko (2024) identifies our common failures even where the intention is sincere: superficial addition, where religious activity is appended to an otherwise unchanged pedagogy; superficial transposition, where church practices are simply transferred into another setting; overcritical examination, where faith or scholarship is endlessly questioned without a constructive account of either; and atomistic theological commitment, where a particular interpretive position is mistaken for a comprehensive Christian worldview.

If these failure modes are real, an institution cannot establish that it integrates faith and learning merely by describing its program. The question must also be put to the people it claims to have formed. This study therefore asks 26 pre-service teachers, at the end of four years of preparation, what changed in them and how.

We focus on two outcomes, self-esteem and self-leadership, because they are where integration either reaches the person or fails to. Each of Handoko's failure modes leaves a recognizable mark on them. Superficial addition leaves a student's worth tied to grades, because the religious material never touches how feedback and assessment communicate value. Superficial transposition produces compliance with external rules rather than internalized self-leadership. Overcritical examination unsettles identity without offering a ground for it. Atomistic commitment yields an identity too narrow to survive unfamiliar challenges. Genuine integration should do the opposite: ground worth in something more stable than performance and form a self that governs itself before God. Students' self-esteem and self-leadership are

therefore a sensitive test of whether FLI is substantive.

The question also matters theologically. Human dignity is not conferred by academic success but received by creatures made in the image of God. Vocation is not simply self-invention but a faithful response to God's calling. Self-leadership is not autonomous self-mastery but responsible stewardship under the lordship of Christ.

The study asks three questions:

- **RQ1.** How did pre-service teachers' self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning change between program entry (2022) and graduation (2026)?
- **RQ2.** Through what processes do pre-service teachers describe FLI, as enacted in course content, lecturer conduct and program structures, shaping their self-esteem?
- **RQ3.** Through what processes do they describe FLI shaping their self-leadership?

Faith Learning Integration: Concept, Conceptions and Failure Modes

Badley's (1994, 2009) distinction between a concept and its conceptions remains a useful entry point. The concept of faith learning integration is broadly shared, while the ways institutions understand and enact it differ substantially. Badley identifies faith *above* learning, where theology adjudicates from a superior position; faith *alongside* learning, where the two proceed in parallel without meaningful encounter; faith *for* learning, where faith supplies motivation for scholarship; and faith *in* learning, where theological commitments operate within the discipline's own reasoning. Only the last represents integration in the fullest sense. Kaak (2016) and Langer (2012) likewise show that Christian educators may affirm integration while still lacking a shared account of how faith should shape disciplinary thought and academic practice.

Handoko's (2024) four flawed models function in this study as a negative diagnostic. As argued in the introduction, each predicts a characteristic weakness in students' self-esteem and self-leadership. If students locate their worth only in grades, or describe their self-discipline only as obedience to external rules, integration has not reached them, whatever the handbook says. The analysis therefore attended to whether students described faith operating inside how they evaluate themselves and govern their own action.

Theological Foundations: A Reformed Lens

This study reads integration through a Reformed theological lens, in which integration follows from a biblical account of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Creation affirms that the world belongs to God and that human persons bear His image, so knowledge and human dignity cannot finally be detached from their Creator (Plantinga, 2002). The fall reminds Christian educators that no human reasoning is morally or spiritually neutral. Redemption in Christ refuses the division of life into sacred and secular compartments, because Christ claims the whole person and the whole of creation. Consummation directs education toward hope, since Christian formation anticipates God's restoration rather than treating the present world as disposable (Alcorn, 2004; Wolterstorff, 2004).

Two implications follow. First, all truth is God's truth, a conviction developed in evangelical Christian educational thought by Gaebelein (1968) and Holmes (1987) and shared by Reformed writers such as Plantinga (2002). The disciplines deserve serious study precisely because they belong under the lordship of Christ. Christian education does not make a subject Christian by attaching religious language to unchanged content. It asks how the assumptions, purposes, methods and practices of a discipline can be understood faithfully before God (D. I. Smith, 2018). Second, vocation is stewardship. Teachers do not own their gifts, knowledge, influence or students. They receive these as trusts to be exercised for God's glory and the good of their neighbor (Van Brummelen, 2009).

This places the teacher's own spiritual formation at the center of teacher education, not only the teacher's competence. Palmer (1998) puts the point simply: "we teach who we are." Students read the educator's life alongside the educator's content. J. K. A. Smith (2009) adds that people are formed less by ideas alone than by practices and relationships that shape what they love. In a higher education setting, this means the lecturer's life becomes part of the curriculum that forms pre-service teachers.

Wolterstorff (2004) supplies the purpose through education for shalom. Education is directed not merely toward competence, nor toward private piety, but toward human flourishing in right relationship with God, neighbor and creation. A Christian teacher is therefore not merely a deliverer of curriculum but a servant called to participate in God's work in a particular classroom.

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Indonesian Christian Educational Thought

Two Indonesian voices ground this framework locally. Kho (2014, 2016) argues that Christian education in Indonesia is weakened when religious content is added to an otherwise unchanged pedagogy. He insists that Christian philosophy must first shape the teacher's worldview and professional life before it can meaningfully shape a syllabus. Lo (2020), in an empirical study of Christian faculty in Indonesia, develops a similarly holistic account through being, knowing and doing. Together these perspectives support the claim tested in this study: the decisive site of FLI is not only what the lecturer explains, but who the lecturer is and how that lecturer lives before students.

Self-Esteem and Self-Leadership

Self-esteem is the global evaluation of one's worth (Rosenberg, 1965) and is distinguishable from self-efficacy, the domain-specific belief that one can carry out a task (Bandura, 1997). Crocker and Wolfe (2001) show that people differ in the domains on which their worth is contingent, such as academic success, others' approval or appearance. They argue that worth staked on such external domains rises and falls with daily success and failure. Notably, their measure includes "God's love" as a distinct contingency of self-worth (Crocker et al., 2003).

Christian anthropology offers a parallel account. Calvin (1559/1960, I.1.1) opens the *Institutes* by arguing that true knowledge of ourselves cannot be separated from knowledge of God. Hoekema (1986) grounds human dignity in creation in God's image, while also recognizing that this image is distorted by sin and renewed in Christ. Christian formation is therefore not an exercise in unqualified positive self-regard. Keller (2012) describes the alternative as a worth that is received rather than achieved, which frees a person from constant self-evaluation. Such worth is less vulnerable to academic or professional failure because the self is not its final source.

Self-leadership, as developed by Manz (1986) and elaborated by Neck and Houghton (2006) and Stewart et al. (2019), describes how people influence themselves toward the direction and motivation needed to act. Its strategy clusters include behavior-focused strategies such as self-observation and goal setting, natural reward strategies that strengthen intrinsic motivation, and constructive thought pattern strategies that reshape dysfunctional beliefs and self-talk. Within the Christian framework above, self-leadership is not sovereignty of the self. It is disciplined stewardship of thought, action, habit and vocation before God (Van Brummelen, 2009; D. I. Smith, 2018).

How Self-Esteem and Self-Leadership Develop

The constructs above describe states. This study is concerned with how they grow, so the framework also needs an account of development.

Self-esteem. Harter (2012) argues that self-esteem develops through two main routes: perceived competence in domains a person values, and the regard communicated by significant others. Orth and Robins (2014) show that self-esteem, while relatively stable, continues to respond to relationships and life transitions during emerging adulthood, the life stage of university students. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) suggest a third route: change in *what* worth depends on. A student who moves the basis of worth from grades to God's love may report steadier self-esteem even when performance fluctuates. Neff (2003) adds self-compassion, the capacity to treat one's own failures with kindness, as a related but distinct resource.

Self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) identifies four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences of watching similar others succeed, verbal persuasion, and the interpretation of physiological and emotional states. In teacher education, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) show that teaching efficacy is shaped most strongly by mastery experiences in real classrooms. Woolfolk Hoy and Spero (2005) found that efficacy rises during preparation and can fall in the first year of teaching.

Self-regulation and self-leadership. Manz (1986) built self-leadership on earlier self-regulation and self-control theory, extending it to include intrinsic motivation and thought patterns. Zimmerman (2002) describes self-regulated learning as a cycle of forethought, performance and self-reflection, which develops through modeling, guided practice and gradually withdrawn support. Prussia et al. (1998) found that self-leadership strategies improve performance largely by raising self-efficacy. Self-efficacy and self-regulation are therefore treated in this study as closely linked indicators of self-leadership: self-regulation as its foundation and self-efficacy as its proximal outcome. Self-leadership itself was not measured directly, and this is acknowledged as a limitation.

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Spiritual formation. J. K. A. Smith (2009) argues that formation happens through repeated practices and relationships rather than information alone. This suggests that small growth groups, mentoring and communal life may form self-understanding more than lectures do.

Prior Empirical Research on FLI and Student Formation

Most research on FLI has studied faculty and institutions. Studies that ask students are fewer. Hall et al. (2009) and Sites et al. (2009) report that students at Christian universities locate integration substantially in faculty example and relationship, alongside course content. In teacher education, Burton and Nwosu (2003) examined student perceptions of faith, learning and practice integration in an education methods course. Lawrence et al. (2005) argued that integration should be judged by what students learn, not only by what faculty intend. In Indonesia, Lo (2020) studied how Christian faculty integrate faith through being, knowing and doing.

We located few studies that connect FLI directly to students' self-esteem or self-leadership, and fewer still that combine pre- and post-program measures with students' own accounts. This study addresses that gap.

Whole Person Education and Whole Person Educational Leadership

The framework also resonates with two Asian traditions of holistic education. The United Board's whole person education, which serves Christian institutions across denominations in Asia, holds that intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and ethical dimensions develop interdependently (United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 2019). The Ateneo Lily Academy's account of whole person educational leadership, from the Catholic and Ignatian tradition, emphasizes reflective, listening, discerning and missioning leadership (Ateneo Lily Academy for Whole Person Educational Leadership, 2024). The confessional starting points differ, but both traditions insist that education reaches the whole person and that the educator's own life matters. FLI can be read as the theological and epistemological reason a Christian institution refuses to partition either the person or knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Participants

The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design with quantitative priority (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A pre–post survey measured change across four years and is the primary data. Structured written interviews followed, to confirm whether students recognized that change in themselves and to explain how it came about. The interviews were analyzed as qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000), staying close to students' own accounts.

Participants were 26 final-year pre-service teachers in the Early Childhood (PG-PAUD) and Elementary Education (PGSD) programs of the Faculty of Teacher Education at Petra Christian University, Surabaya, a Protestant Christian university. The cohort entered in 2022, when the faculty began its holistic education program.

All participants completed coursework, reflective assignments, teaching practice and the undergraduate thesis (*skripsi*). The program also included several formative structures that appear in the findings: an assigned guardian lecturer (*dosen wali*); small growth groups led by faculty (*KTB, Kelompok Tumbuh Bersama*); campus residence (*asrama*) with student dormitory assistants (*Astor*); field teaching experience (*PGM*), including placements in kindergarten (*TK*) and special education (*PLB*); the student association (*Himagudatra*); counseling; and a Healing Ministry program.

Data Sources and Collection Sequence

Three data sources were used, each with a distinct role. The surveys are the primary data. The interviews confirm and explain the survey results. The cards are supplementary and were used only to corroborate. The cards were written before the interviews were designed.

Surveys. Self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning were each measured with a self-report questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The same questionnaires were used at pre-test and post-test. Internal consistency reached Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.60$, the minimum often accepted in exploratory research.

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Table 1. Data Sources, Timing and Role

Source	When	How	Role
Pre-test survey	2022, at entry, before the holistic program began	Self-report questionnaire	Primary: baseline
Post-test survey	End of May 2026	Same instruments as the pre-test	Primary: outcome
Structured written interview	2026, after the post-test	Open written responses in Bahasa Indonesia	Confirmatory and explanatory
Source	When	How	Role
"I am blessed by you" cards	2026, at the close of study	Handwritten by students to lecturers of their choice	Supplementary corroboration

Confirmatory written interview. After the post-test, students answered open questions in writing. Its three prompts asked how the integration of faith and knowledge, lecturers' conduct outside class, and students' own readiness to integrate faith and learning had shaped them. Their answers were then read against the survey results to confirm and explain the measured change. Each prompt asked for a specific incident rather than a general impression. The full protocol is given in Appendix A so that readers can evaluate it and later researchers can build on it.

Cards. At the close of study, students wrote handwritten *"I am blessed by you"* cards to lecturers of their choice. These cards were written for a named reader and for a purpose other than research, before the interview study was designed. With consent, they were later released for research. Because they are gratitude documents addressed to individuals, they naturally name lecturers and speak warmly. They were therefore used only to corroborate themes already present in the interview data and to search for disconfirming cases, not to establish themes.

Analysis

Quantitative. Change was analyzed descriptively. For each scale, pre-test and post-test means were compared, and each student was classified as having improved, remained stable or declined between the two measurements. Inferential tests are not reported, so the quantitative results describe the direction and size of change in this cohort rather than its statistical significance.

Qualitative. Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), in which data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification proceed concurrently. First-cycle coding combined In Vivo coding and Descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2021). In Vivo coding is a manual method that keeps participants' own words as code labels; it is distinct from the NVivo software. It preserved phrases such as *ruang aman untuk bertumbuh dan bersuara* ("a safe space to grow and to have a voice") and *membekali hati* ("equipping the heart"). Translation into English followed coding rather than preceding it.

Codes were sorted into conceptual bins (Miles et al., 2014): relational, theological, process and program bins. Causal network displays were then built separately for self-esteem and self-efficacy, tracing students' accounts from an initial state, through formative experiences, to an outcome. Second-cycle Pattern coding produced the five themes reported below.

Integration. A joint display set the interview themes beside the direction of change on each scale, to check whether students' accounts confirmed, explained or contradicted the measured change. Card extracts were then compared with each theme. Conclusions were verified by checking representativeness, weighting evidence by source type, and searching for negative cases.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Credibility rests on combining three sources: measured change, students' written explanations, and documents written before the interview study existed. The cards were written as students were about to graduate, after their grades were final, so students had no academic incentive to flatter their lecturers. Two features still required care: a member of the research team is among the lecturers to whom cards were addressed, and gratitude writing is positive by genre. Three safeguards were therefore applied. First, themes were established from interview data, and cards were used only to corroborate. Second, analysis privileged specific reported actions and reasoning over evaluative adjectives. Third, no author coded material addressed to herself.

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Participants gave informed consent for the surveys, interviews and use of the cards, and could withdraw without academic consequence. All student names were removed. Quotations use first-person pronouns where participants originally referred to themselves by name, and sources are reported as Participant 1, Participant 2 and so forth. Lecturer names were also removed from all quotations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Self-efficacy and self-esteem rose across the four years, while self-regulated learning fell. The measured change is reported first, followed by five themes from the confirmatory interviews that explain the measured change, with card extracts as corroboration. Evidence that does not fit is then reported, and all results are discussed against prior research.

Measured Change (RQ1)

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Test Means and Direction of Individual Change

Scale	Pre-test mean (2022)	Post-test mean (2026)	Change	Improved	Stable	Declined
Self-efficacy	21.48	31.20	+9.72 (+45%)	19	4	2
Self-esteem	24.81	28.38	+3.57 (+14%)	16	3	7
Self-regulated learning	98.58	73.38	−25.20 (−26%)	7	0	19

Note. n = 26; self-efficacy n = 25.

Self-efficacy showed the clearest gain, with 19 students improving. Self-esteem rose more modestly, and 7 students declined. Self-regulated learning moved in the opposite direction, with 19 students declining. The themes below explain the first two results; the third is addressed under Divergent Evidence and in the discussion that follows.

Theme 1: From Performance-Based to Received Worth (RQ2)

The clearest self-esteem pattern was a change in what worth depended on. Several students described entering the program with worth tied to grades and achievement:

"I used to measure my self-worth by grades… if I made a mistake, I felt like I wasn't smart enough and don't deserve to be in the study program." (Interview)

By graduation, the same kind of student described worth as received from God rather than earned:

"I am no longer someone who must achieve everything… [I am] a child of God." (Interview)

"My self-worth is certain in God and does not change because of criticism." (Interview)

This is the shift Crocker and Wolfe (2001) describe: from a contingency that rises and falls with performance to one that does not. It is also the theological account of self-esteem given earlier, lived out. Worth is received as a creature made in God's image and redeemed in Christ (Hoekema, 1986), so criticism can expose weakness without erasing dignity. Here the theology is not an addition to students' lives; it operates inside how they evaluate themselves, which is what genuine integration predicts and superficial addition does not.

For some students, the change also reached past wounds. One described the Healing Ministry program as helping them "see that every event has a red thread showing God's intervention," which turned shame into a sense of purpose (Interview).

The cards corroborate the theme. One student thanked a lecturer whose guidance "helped me see my identity in Christ more clearly" (Participant 9, card). Another learned "to be thankful for the talents I received, even though sometimes I feel different" (Participant 10, card). In the second case, the feeling of difference did not disappear but was reinterpreted as a gift rather than a deficit.

Theme 2: Relational Safety as the Condition for Risk (RQ2)

Students explained growth in self-esteem through relationships in which failure did not mean rejection. Several had entered feeling inferior (*minder*), for example because of a vocational rather than academic secondary school background (*SMK* rather than *SMA*), or compared with more privileged peers. Lecturers' personal reassurance changed what speaking up cost them:

"The lecturer gave me a guarantee that nothing bad would happen if I answered incorrectly… I felt loved and understood." (Interview)

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Peers and small groups extended this safety:
"The togetherness and sense of family with friends made me realize I wasn't walking alone in this process." (Interview)
"Through KTB with the advisor, I grew in spirituality… and openness toward the struggles I faced." (Interview)

This matches Harter's (2012) second route to self-esteem, the regard of significant others, and Orth and Robins's (2014) finding that self-esteem in emerging adulthood remains responsive to relationships. Theologically, to receive a student as a bearer of God's image is to take that person seriously before achievement, while still calling them toward growth.

The cards echo the same mechanism. One student thanked a lecturer "for being a safe space for me to grow and to have a voice" (*ruang aman untuk bertumbuh dan bersuara*; Participant 6, card). Others wrote of a lecturer "always being there when I was facing my struggles" (Participant 7, card) and of "every act of care that made students feel noticed and supported" (Participant 8, card).

Theme 3: Mastery Through Field Practice and Responsibility (RQ2, RQ3)

Relational safety mattered because it let students take on real challenges. Students named direct teaching as the strongest single source of confidence:
"During PGM I felt capable… through direct experience with children… I realized I could do it too." (Interview)
"Experience teaching in various schools increased my communication and relationship skills." (Interview)

One student who had disliked special education (*PLB*) said that actual practice helped them "enjoy the process" and recognize their own potential (Interview). This is Bandura's (1997) mastery experience, which Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) identify as the strongest source of teaching efficacy, and it fits the large self-efficacy gain in Table 2.

Leadership roles outside class did similar work, and here self-efficacy shades into self-leadership:
"Experience as chair of Himagudatra formed my perspective on how to serve others and resilience in facing challenges." (Interview)
"Being an Astor helped me learn to share life and mentor new students, which requires good emotional management." (Interview)
"I was an introvert and afraid to lead, but being a coordinator taught me that I am valuable because I am reliable, not because I am perfect." (Interview)

The last extract links this theme to Theme 1. Worth is still connected to function, but no longer to perfection. Responsibility given within a supportive community appears to have been the setting in which students tested and confirmed a less fragile self-understanding. One student summarized the arc: "I used to be closed off and inferior, now I am more confident… now I want to try if I am trusted with something" (Interview).

Theme 4: Self-Leadership as Reframing, Self-Examination and Disciplined Dependence (RQ3)

Students described ways of leading themselves that now operate without a lecturer present. The most frequent was constructive reframing of failure:
"Now when I fail, I don't lose sleep. I take time to cry if I need to, then I evaluate and try again." (Interview)
"I stopped comparing myself to others… I am more daring to say it's okay to be tired and okay to not be able to do it yet." (Interview)

The first extract contains a full self-leadership sequence in Neck and Houghton's (2006) terms: an emotional response is acknowledged, then self-observation and evaluation follow, then renewed action. Both extracts also show self-compassion (Neff, 2003), treating oneself as a friend rather than a judge. Students linked this capacity to counseling and residential life (*asrama*), which helped them manage anxiety during the thesis.

The cards corroborate and extend the theme in two ways. First, an evaluative standard passed from lecturer to student:
"Thank you for teaching me to always examine myself and ask, 'Am I becoming a Christlike teacher?'" (Participant 11, card)

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This is behavior-focused self-observation in a precise sense. In Reformed vocabulary it also resembles life lived *coram Deo*, before the face of God: self-examination against a standard received from beyond the self.

Second, diligence joined with dependence. One student learned during thesis supervision "to be meticulous and to keep relying on God" (*teliti dan terus mengandalkan Tuhan*; Participant 2, card). Another learned "that faith and logic must run together, while there is still a time when we must sit down and surrender" (Participant 1, card). Neither student presents effort and trust as alternatives. Christian self-leadership appears here not as self-sufficiency but as disciplined action undertaken in dependence on God.

Theme 5: The Lecturer's Life as the Integrating Medium (RQ2, RQ3)

Across Themes 1 to 4, lecturers appear in the interviews less as transmitters of content than as models and mentors. Students described lecturers who were open to questions and who gave real examples of perseverance, which helped them move from fear of mistakes to willingness to try. One explained:
"Lecturers provide a real example of how confidence is balanced with the desire to continuously develop… I felt guided to fix my mistakes." (Interview)

The analysis coded this pattern as *intentional caring* and *lecturers' sacrifice*: time given outside class, through KTB, guardianship and supervision. This is Bandura's (1997) vicarious learning, but also Palmer's (1998) point that teachers teach who they are.

The cards, read with the caution their genre requires, point the same way. Because the cards were written to thank named lecturers, they naturally name persons; they cannot by themselves show that persons mattered more than courses. What they add is the content of what students valued:
"You have shown us that being an educator is not only about what we teach in class, but how we share our life with others, especially our students." (Participant 3, card)
"Thank you for becoming a parent, a role model, and a friend who helped me come to know the Lord Jesus and become a more professional person." (Participant 5, card)

In the second extract, coming to know Christ and becoming more professional appear in a single clause, attributed to a single relationship, with no sense of tension. Another student wrote that a lecturer's classes equipped not only skills but "my heart" (*membekali hati*) to serve children (Participant 2, card). This is the rejection of a sacred–secular divide expressed in experience rather than doctrine, consistent with Kho's (2016) and Lo's (2020) emphasis on the educator's being.

Divergent Evidence

Three results do not fit the themes above and are reported as negative cases.

First, self-regulated learning fell for 19 of 26 students. The interviews contain no account that directly explains this, so any explanation is provisional (see the discussion below). Second, 7 students' self-esteem and 2 students' self-efficacy declined. Their interviews were not analyzed separately, so the study cannot show whether their accounts differed from the themes. Third, the cards cannot supply negative cases, since gratitude writing does not record what failed.

The qualitative evidence for self-leadership is therefore strongest for emotional and relational self-leadership: reframing failure, self-examination and perseverance under responsibility. It is weakest for the academic self-regulation that the survey measured.

Integration Seen Through Self-Esteem and Self-Leadership

The introduction argued that each of Handoko's (2024) failure modes would leave a mark on students' self-esteem and self-leadership. The data mostly do not show those marks. Students did not describe worth that remained tied to grades, which superficial addition would predict; they described worth relocated to identity in Christ (Theme 1). They did not describe self-discipline as compliance with church-like rules, which superficial transposition would predict; they described internalized questions and reframing (Theme 4). In Badley's (1994, 2009) terms, faith operated *in* their self-understanding rather than *alongside* it.

The survey adds a caution. Self-regulated learning declined, so integration reached students' sense of worth and their emotional self-leadership more clearly than their academic self-regulation. The integration was real, but uneven.

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Self-Esteem: Changing the Ground, Not Only the Level

The mean self-esteem gain was modest, and 7 students declined. The qualitative evidence suggests that the more important change may be in what self-esteem rests on rather than in its level. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) argue that worth contingent on performance is unstable, and students' accounts describe exactly that move away from grades. A scale that measures the level of self-esteem cannot capture this shift. Future studies could add a measure of contingencies of self-worth (Crocker et al., 2003).

Attribution also needs care. Orth and Robins (2014) show that self-esteem tends to rise from adolescence into adulthood, so some gain would be expected without any program. The study has no comparison group. What the qualitative data add is students' own account of the mechanism: relational safety, theological reframing and the Healing Ministry.

Self-Efficacy: Consistent with Teacher Education Research

The large self-efficacy gain is consistent with research showing that teaching efficacy rises during preparation, driven mainly by mastery experience in real classrooms (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005). Students' accounts map closely onto Bandura's (1997) four sources: field practice as mastery, lecturers as models, validation as persuasion, and counseling and *asrama* life as emotional management. Woolfolk Hoy and Spero (2005) also found that efficacy can fall in the first year of teaching. These graduates' efficacy has not yet met full professional responsibility, which makes support during induction important.

The Decline in Self-Regulated Learning

The fall in self-regulated learning is the study's most important negative case, and the data do not settle its cause. Three explanations are plausible and should be tested.

First, response-shift bias (Howard, 1980). Entering students may rate their study habits against a naive standard. After four years they know what good self-regulation requires and rate themselves more strictly. Their scores fall even if their behavior does not. This fits the growth in honest self-examination in Theme 4.

Second, timing. The post-test took place at the end of May 2026, near the end of thesis work and the final semester, when students' study routines are under the greatest strain.

Third, a genuine gap. Zimmerman (2002) argues that self-regulation develops when modeling and guided practice are followed by gradually withdrawn support. A program rich in relational support may have helped students cope through co-regulation, with lecturers and peers carrying part of the load, without fully transferring academic self-regulation to them. If so, the relational strength described in Themes 2 and 5 also has a cost. A study of teachers in a Christian senior high school points the same way: servant leadership raised teacher competence, and structured coaching strengthened that effect, which the authors read as showing that care without structure may remain only emotional support (Yulianto et al., 2026).

Whatever the cause, the finding limits what can be claimed for self-leadership. Prussia et al. (1998) treat self-efficacy as the route through which self-leadership improves performance, and that route is strong here. Self-regulation, which Manz (1986) placed at self-leadership's foundation, is not.

Content or Pedagogy?

The data suggest that FLI reached students mainly through pedagogy, relationship and program structure rather than course content. Students rarely cited lectures. They cited a lecturer's reassurance, a KTB group, a teaching placement, a leadership role, a counseling conversation. This agrees with student-perspective studies in other Christian universities, which locate integration substantially in faculty example and relationship (Hall et al., 2009; Sites et al., 2009). It also supports Kho's (2016) claim that Christian philosophy must shape the teacher before it can shape the syllabus, and Palmer's (1998) claim that teachers teach who they are. Students were reading lecturers' lives, not only their material.

This does not make content unimportant. One student could state a general principle about faith and logic (Participant 1, card). Most students, however, described integration as something they received rather than a method they could apply to a new subject. Formation appears to have transmitted a disposition more reliably than a method.

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Shalom and Whole Person Education

Wolterstorff's (2004) education for shalom helps explain what the psychological measures leave over. Students did not report only increased confidence. They reported a changed understanding of what their work is for: early childhood and elementary teaching as places of vocation before God, not lesser forms of work measured by social prestige.

The findings also sit alongside the two whole person traditions introduced earlier. The United Board's (2019) claim that developmental dimensions are interdependent appears in data where a single relationship carried supervision, professional formation, spiritual counsel and emotional support. The Ateneo Lily Academy's (2024) listening, discerning, reflective and missioning leadership are recognizable in the safe space to speak, the counsel about faith and logic, the standard passed on as a question, and graduates who describe themselves as sent. The confessional grammar differs; the structural commitment, that leadership forms whole persons through the leader's own formed life, is shared.

CONCLUSION

This study asked how Faith Learning Integration shapes the self-esteem and self-leadership of pre-service teachers. Across four years, the 26 participants grew markedly in self-efficacy and more modestly in self-esteem, while their self-rated academic self-regulation fell. Asked how they changed, they did not name a course. They described worth that no longer depended on grades, lecturers who made failure safe, responsibilities that proved what they could do, and a question they had learned to ask themselves before God.

The study makes three contributions. It evaluates FLI from the side of those being formed and ties it to two outcomes through which integration either reaches the person or does not. It specifies the mechanisms: relational safety, modeling, structured responsibility, field practice and theological reframing mattered more than content alone. It also combines measured change with students' own explanations and reports where the two diverge.

Practically, Christian teacher education institutions should treat lecturer formation as the primary integration intervention, because students read the lecturer's life alongside the syllabus. They should protect relational structures such as guardian lecturers, small growth groups and residential life, which depend on continuity, unhurried time and small caseloads. Responsibility should be paired with support, since self-efficacy grew most where students carried real responsibility knowing that failure would not mean rejection; this agrees with work showing that servant leadership and coaching work best together in Christian schools (Ricky, 2025; Yulianto et al., 2026). Because relational support did not by itself transfer academic self-regulation, planning, monitoring and self-evaluation of study should be modeled, practiced and then handed over. Finally, institutions should make the theological grounds of integration explicit, use Handoko's four flawed models as a review instrument, and hand students an internalized standard rather than merely a rule, such as the question one student now asks without a lecturer present: "Am I becoming a Christlike teacher?"

The study has several limitations. It was conducted in one Christian institution in Indonesia with a distinctive guardian lecturer structure, so the findings are transferable to comparable settings rather than generalizable. There was no comparison group, so normal maturation cannot be separated from program effects. Self-leadership was not measured directly; self-efficacy and self-regulated learning served as related indicators, and scale reliability was modest (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.60$). The quantitative change is reported descriptively, without significance testing. The interviews were confirmatory, retrospective and self-reported, and the card corpus is appreciative by genre. A member of the research team is among the lecturers to whom cards were addressed; the safeguards described in the methodology reduce this threat.

Future studies should measure self-leadership directly, for example with the Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (Houghton & Neck, 2002), and add a measure of contingencies of self-worth. They should test pre–post change inferentially, test the explanations for the decline in self-regulated learning, include a comparison cohort, follow graduates into their first year of teaching, and examine whether graduates can apply FLI in schools that do not share the same Christian culture.

Faith Learning Integration is the soul of Christian teacher education because the lordship of Christ refuses the division between what a teacher knows, who a teacher is and how a teacher lives. Its purpose is not merely to produce confident graduates. It is to form teachers who know that their dignity is received, their gifts are entrusted, their calling is given, and their work is done before God and for their neighbor.

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The lecturer is not the source of transformation but a steward through whom God may work.

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APPENDIX

Structured Written Interview Protocol

Students answered in Bahasa Indonesia, in writing. Each prompt asked for a specific incident rather than a general impression.

1. How far did the integration of faith and knowledge influence your four-year journey toward becoming an early childhood or elementary teacher? Describe a specific incident.
2. How did the conduct of lecturers outside the classroom affect you as a person with worth and dignity? Describe a specific incident.
3. How far do you feel able to integrate faith and knowledge faithfully in your future teaching? Give an example.