



Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Glory of God: A Reflection on Exodus 33:18 at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching the glory of God as depicted in Exodus 33:18, with a specific focus on instructional practices at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu. The research is grounded in the conviction that teaching about the kabod (glory) of God requires not only content mastery but also the integration of spiritual sensitivity, pedagogical clarity, and contextual relevance. Moses' request, "Show me Your glory," serves as the theological anchor from which this study frames the CRE teacher's task as one of guiding students toward experiencing and understanding God's presence, character, and transformative power. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with CRE teachers, and document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials. The analysis reveals that teachers demonstrate strong theological commitment and sincere spiritual motivation, yet pedagogical execution remains uneven. While some teachers successfully translate the theological depth of Exodus 33:18 into age-appropriate learning experiences-such as narrative-based storytelling, reflective prayer, and character-oriented discussions-others struggle to connect abstract theological ideas with students' cognitive levels and daily realities. The findings highlight gaps in instructional strategies, assessment literacy, and contextualized pedagogy, particularly in adapting the theme of divine glory to the socio-cultural realities of Nias children. The study concludes that strengthened pedagogical training, enhanced exegesis-based lesson design, and integrative spiritual formation programs are essential for improving CRE teaching effectiveness. Ultimately, the article argues that competent pedagogy rooted in biblical revelation can empower teachers to help students meaningfully encounter and reflect God's glory in their personal and communal lives.

Keywords: Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Glory of God

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Christian Religious Education in public primary schools demands a unique integration of pedagogical competence and theological clarity. Teachers must ensure that biblical truths—often abstract and profound—are communicated in ways that are developmentally appropriate, contextually meaningful, and spiritually formative for young learners. In SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu, located in West Nias, North Sumatra, this responsibility becomes even more significant as CRE teachers work within a cultural environment where Christian faith and local traditions intersect. One of the central theological themes that requires careful pedagogical handling is the concept of the glory of God, rooted deeply in biblical revelation. A pivotal text that illuminates this theme is Exodus 33:18, where Moses petitions, *“Please show me Your glory.”* This request reveals both a human longing for divine presence and the nature of God’s self-disclosure. Moses’ appeal in Exodus 33:18 occurs within the narrative of Israel’s spiritual crisis following the sin of the golden calf. As Fretheim (1991) explains, Moses stands as an intercessor who seeks reassurance of God’s continued presence with His people despite their rebellion. God’s response—manifesting His goodness, mercy, and steadfast love—indicates that divine glory is not primarily a visual spectacle but a revelation of God’s character. Thus, the glory of God must be understood as relational and ethical, grounded in God’s attributes rather than merely His power. This theological insight is essential for CRE teachers, who must reinterpret such profound concepts for primary school students in ways that highlight God’s goodness and faithfulness rather than abstract metaphysics. Within contemporary educational theory, pedagogical competence is recognized as a core determinant of instructional effectiveness. Mulyasa (2013) emphasizes that pedagogical competence includes understanding learners’ characteristics, designing meaningful learning experiences, managing classrooms effectively, employing relevant media, and conducting fair and holistic assessments. When teaching theological themes such as divine glory, these competencies become even more critical. CRE teachers must not merely deliver information but also translate theological truths into vivid, concrete, and experiential forms of learning appropriate for children. Approaches that incorporate storytelling, visual symbols, reflective dialogue, and connections to students’ daily experiences can help make theological content accessible and transformative (Groome, 2010). The cultural context of Onolimbu also shapes how pedagogical competence is enacted. Nias is rich with indigenous values, communal relationships, and spiritual sensitivity, which can be harmonized with biblical teaching. CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu, therefore, face the dual task of honoring local wisdom while ensuring that students encounter a biblically grounded understanding of God’s glory. This necessitates a pedagogical approach that is both contextual and formational, cultivating not only intellectual understanding but also character development. Palmer (2007) argues that Christian education is not merely about transmitting knowledge but fostering transformation—a view highly relevant for teaching divine glory to children.

A theological reflection on Exodus 33:18 provides pedagogical inspiration: Moses’ desire to see God’s glory models a posture of yearning, humility, and relational trust. CRE teachers can draw from this text to help students recognize God’s goodness in everyday life—through experiences of kindness, community, gratitude, and personal reflection.

Teaching about God's glory, therefore, becomes an invitation for students to encounter God personally rather than an exercise in doctrinal memorization. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu in teaching the concept of the glory of God, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Exodus 33:18. The research explores the teachers' understanding of the text, the instructional strategies they employ, the challenges they face, and the observable outcomes in students' spiritual comprehension. This study contributes both theoretically-to the discourse on Christian pedagogy in plural educational environments-and practically, by offering insights for CRE teachers seeking to design more effective, contextual, and theologically rich learning experiences.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the concept of the glory of God, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Exodus 33:18 at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a rich, contextualized understanding of teachers' instructional practices, theological interpretations, and classroom dynamics as they naturally occur (Creswell, 2014). The study population consisted of all CRE teachers at the school, and participants were selected using purposive sampling. This strategy ensured that data were obtained from individuals who possess the knowledge, experience, and direct involvement required to address the objectives of the study. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The semi-structured interviews, conducted individually with each CRE teacher, allowed the researcher to explore teachers' understanding of Exodus 33:18, their pedagogical strategies for teaching divine glory, and perceived challenges in translating abstract theological concepts into child-friendly learning experiences. Classroom observations were carried out over multiple teaching sessions to examine how teachers applied pedagogical competence in real time, including their use of learning media, student engagement techniques, classroom management skills, and integration of biblical reflection into instructional activities. Observations were guided by a structured observation sheet to ensure consistency while still providing room for naturalistic description. To complement these data, teaching materials such as lesson plans, worksheets, assessment tools, and biblical reflection exercises were analyzed to evaluate how theological content was structured pedagogically, especially regarding clarity, relevance, contextualization, and alignment with students' developmental stages. Data from all sources were transcribed, categorized, and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, which includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This method allowed for the identification of recurring patterns related to teachers' pedagogical competence, theological depth, and classroom implementation. Trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through triangulation of data sources, member checking, and maintaining a detailed audit trail throughout the analysis process. Triangulation provided cross-verification between interview responses, observational data, and documents; member checking allowed participants to review and confirm the interpretations of their statements, enhancing credibility; and the audit trail ensured

transparency in the research process. Ethical considerations were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent from participants, safeguarding confidentiality, and ensuring that participation did not interfere with school routines or teacher responsibilities. The methodological design thus provided a comprehensive, systematically grounded understanding of how CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu employ their pedagogical competence to teach the theological theme of God's glory, enabling the study to connect exegetical insights from Exodus 33:18 with practical pedagogical realities in the primary school classroom.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the theological concept of the glory of God at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Exodus 33:18. The findings emerged from interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of pedagogical documents. The results are presented thematically and intertwined with discussion engaging relevant theories of pedagogy, theology, and Christian education. One of the central findings of this study concerns the teachers' theological comprehension of Exodus 33:18. Interviews revealed that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu generally interpret Moses' request—"Please show me Your glory"—as an expression of humanity's longing for God's presence, goodness, and intimate relationship. Teachers articulated that glory (*kabod*) is not merely a visual or supernatural phenomenon but a revelation of God's attributes: His goodness, mercy, and covenant love. This aligns with Fretheim's (1991) exegetical analysis, which emphasizes that God's response to Moses is fundamentally ethical rather than purely metaphysical. Teachers consistently expressed that the episode teaches the centrality of divine character, not spectacle. They emphasized that God reveals who He is by demonstrating His goodness and compassion. One teacher explained, "God did not give Moses a dramatic show; He revealed His heart." Such insights reflect a healthy theological orientation that can serve as a foundation for meaningful pedagogy. The study also found variation in theological depth. While some teachers offered nuanced explanations connecting the text with Israel's covenant crisis in Exodus 32-34, others interpreted glory in simpler terms such as "God's greatness" or "God's power." Although not incorrect, these definitions risk making the concept abstract and distant for primary school students. The diversity of theological understanding has implications for teaching. Teachers with deeper exegetical insight were more capable of making the concept relatable to children, linking God's glory to everyday experiences of kindness, forgiveness, and protection. Those with minimal theological training tended to rely on storytelling alone, without connecting the narrative to broader theological themes. This reinforces Palmer's (2007) argument that teachers teach from who they are; their inner theological formation influences their pedagogical choices.

Pedagogical Competence in Designing Learning Experiences

Another major finding concerns teachers' capacity to design learning experiences that communicate abstract theological concepts in accessible ways. The analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials revealed both strengths and weaknesses. Many lesson

plans demonstrated thoughtful structuring, including clear learning objectives, relevant biblical illustrations, age-appropriate activities, and contextual connections. Teachers frequently used storytelling, drawing, songs, and group discussions to help students grasp the meaning of God's glory. For example, one teacher designed a lesson where students identified acts of kindness in their families and linked them to the idea of "experiencing God's goodness," drawing a line between the text and lived experience. This aligns with Groome's (2010) shared Christian praxis, which emphasizes connecting life, faith, and reflection. The use of creative strategies also resonates with Mulyasa's (2013) framework of pedagogical competence-specifically, selecting appropriate media and designing meaningful interactions. The study also found that some lesson plans lacked depth in explicating the theological core of the passage. In several cases, learning objectives were too general-such as "students understand the meaning of God's glory"-without specifying measurable indicators or cognitive processes expected from students. This could hinder effective assessment and leave students with vague understanding. Some teachers relied heavily on traditional methods such as lecturing or reading biblical passages aloud. While such approaches have value, over-reliance on them limits opportunities for active and experiential learning, essential for younger learners. Observation confirmed that in some classrooms, students appeared passive because the instructional format required little participation. Thus, while teachers showed adequate understanding of lesson design, the study highlights the need for more training in formulating concrete learning outcomes and incorporating more diversified pedagogical models.

Pedagogical Competence in Classroom Implementation

Classroom observations provided a rich picture of how teachers enact pedagogical competence during instruction. Several themes emerged. Storytelling was consistently effective. Teachers narrated the story of Moses with expressive tone, gestures, and emotional cues. Students were attentive and engaged, often asking questions or reacting emotionally during the story. Narrative learning is particularly potent for theological teaching, allowing children to enter the biblical world imaginatively. Teachers who integrated dramatic elements-such as role play or voice modulation-were especially successful in stimulating students' interest. Some teachers facilitated reflection by asking students how they had experienced God's goodness in everyday life. This approach resonates strongly with constructivist learning theory and with devotional pedagogy, where personal meaning-making is central. Students responded by sharing stories of parental love, being helped by friends, or recovering from illness. Teachers then connected these experiences to the idea of God revealing His glory through goodness. This pedagogical move effectively grounded theology in daily life. Observation showed that teachers demonstrated competent classroom management. They maintained order through clear routines, consistent expectations, and calm authority. Such stability allowed students to focus and participate actively. Teachers often divided students into small groups for discussion or collaborative tasks, fostering peer interaction and minimizing behavioral problems. Some teachers used visual aids such as illustrated biblical scenes, flashcards, or simple posters summarizing God's attributes. These visuals helped students remember key concepts. However, technology-based media were rarely used. This limitation resulted from inadequate resources rather than lack of willingness from teachers. The absence of digital tools, while not fatal, does restrict opportunities for

multisensory learning experiences. Teachers struggled with explaining abstract theological ideas in concrete ways. For example, when defining “glory,” some relied on words like “holiness” or “majesty,” which remain abstract for young learners. Without analogies or tangible examples, some students continued to perceive God’s glory as a distant or unreachable concept. This confirms the need for richer pedagogical scaffolding, consistent with Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, where teachers must bridge gaps between unfamiliar concepts and children’s prior knowledge. Contextualization emerged as both a strength and an area for growth among teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu. Teachers often used examples from Nias culture—such as communal cooperation, respect for elders, and mutual aid—as illustrations of God’s goodness. This strategy helped localize the biblical message and make it relatable. In particular, teachers used cultural stories that highlight virtues such as courage, generosity, and loyalty, drawing parallels with divine attributes revealed in Exodus 33:18. This demonstrates what Bevans (2002) describes as a synthetic model of contextual theology, where local cultural values harmonize with biblical truths without compromising doctrinal integrity. The study found that cultural illustrations were not always tied explicitly to the text’s theological meaning. Sometimes cultural examples overshadowed the biblical narrative, leading students to remember the cultural story more vividly than the connection to God’s glory. Teachers need to strengthen the link between cultural narratives and biblical theology to maintain biblical centrality. Some teachers conducted formative assessments through questioning, group presentations, and reflective exercises. For example, students were asked to draw pictures representing moments when they felt God’s goodness. This allowed teachers to evaluate comprehension beyond verbal responses, tapping into children’s creative expression. A few teachers used short quizzes or matching exercises to reinforce key points, showing awareness of cognitive assessment methods. Summative assessment tools were inconsistent. Many teachers relied solely on verbal questioning, which may not adequately measure deeper understanding. Furthermore, the assessment criteria were not always aligned with the learning objectives in lesson plans, limiting their effectiveness. This reflects the need for enhanced training, particularly in designing assessments that evaluate cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions holistically, consistent with Bloom’s taxonomy and Christian education standards. Teachers identified several challenges in teaching the concept of God’s glory. Teachers acknowledged that glory is difficult for children to understand. Without tangible illustrations, explaining God’s character attributes requires high pedagogical creativity. Some teachers lacked access to illustrated Bibles, multimedia tools, and contextualized teaching aids. This restricts their ability to diversify teaching strategies. While teachers were spiritually committed, several expressed the need for deeper theological training to explain complex biblical texts more effectively. This supports Palmer’s (2007) assertion that teachers’ inner formation shapes their pedagogical competence. The findings reveal that pedagogical competence is deeply interconnected with theological understanding. Teachers with richer theological insight were more effective in explaining God’s glory in relatable ways, designing engaging lessons, and fostering reflective learning environments. The study reinforces the validity of Groome’s (2010) model of Christian pedagogy, which integrates life, faith, action, and reflection. Teachers who used dialogical and experiential methods most effectively embodied this model. The study demonstrates the importance of contextual theology in education. When biblical truths were linked to local Nias cultural

values, students grasped concepts more fully. This illustrates Bevans' argument that contextualization enriches rather than dilutes Christian education when done intentionally. Ongoing theological training is essential for CRE teachers to maintain depth and accuracy in teaching abstract concepts. Professional development in pedagogical design is necessary for improving learning outcomes and assessment practices. Investment in teaching resources can significantly enhance classroom engagement and conceptual clarity. Contextual integration must be strengthened to ensure cultural stories serve as bridges, not replacements, for biblical truth. The study found that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu exhibit a commendable level of pedagogical competence in teaching the glory of God, particularly in storytelling, reflection facilitation, classroom management, and cultural contextualization. However, there remains substantial room for growth in theological depth, assessment literacy, instructional diversity, and resource utilization. The results underscore that effective Christian pedagogy requires both theological rootedness and methodological creativity, especially when teaching profound concepts such as the glory of God to young learners.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the theological concept of the glory of God, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Exodus 33:18, at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu. The findings reveal that effective teaching of abstract biblical themes such as divine glory requires an interplay of sound theological understanding, creative pedagogical strategies, and contextual sensitivity. Teachers demonstrated a sincere commitment to helping students grasp the meaning of God's glory as revealed to Moses-emphasizing God's goodness, mercy, and relational presence. When theological insight was strong, teachers were able to translate these divine attributes into concrete, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. However, where theological depth was limited, explanations tended to remain abstract, highlighting the essential need for ongoing biblical and theological formation among CRE educators. The study also showed that pedagogical competence was evident in several areas, particularly in storytelling, reflective dialogue, classroom management, and cultural integration. Teachers skillfully used narrative methods to engage students and foster understanding. Reflective discussions enabled students to connect biblical truths with their own lived experiences, making theology personally meaningful. Classroom management practices created environments conducive to active learning. The integration of local Nias cultural values-such as community cooperation, respect, and mutual care-demonstrated the teachers' capacity to contextualize biblical teachings. Cultural examples were not always linked explicitly to theological messages, indicating the need for stronger intentionality in maintaining biblical centrality while using cultural analogies. At the same time, the findings highlight several pedagogical challenges. Assessment practices were inconsistent, with limited use of measurable indicators and varied alignment between learning objectives and evaluation tools. Instructional strategies were sometimes overly traditional, relying mainly on lecturing or basic verbal explanation, which limited opportunities for experiential or multisensory learning. The scarcity of teaching resources hindered the use of visual or digital media, which could help make abstract theological concepts more accessible to young learners. Teachers recognized these limitations and expressed the

need for professional development in both theology and pedagogy. The study concludes that CRE teachers at SD Negeri 071177 Onolimbu possess foundational strengths that contribute positively to Christian education-spiritual commitment, relational warmth, contextual sensitivity, and skillful storytelling. Yet, to fully realize the potential of their pedagogical vocation, especially when teaching profound theological themes like the glory of God, these strengths must be supported by ongoing training, improved assessment literacy, deeper theological engagement, and increased access to teaching resources. By strengthening these areas, teachers will be better equipped to help students encounter the glory of God not merely as an abstract idea but as a lived experience of His goodness, love, and presence. This research underscores the broader implication that Christian pedagogy flourishes when theological clarity and pedagogical competence work in dynamic harmony. Teaching the glory of God requires more than doctrinal accuracy-it demands imaginative, reflective, and contextually aware instruction rooted in the biblical narrative. As CRE teachers grow in these dimensions, they contribute not only to students' cognitive understanding but also to their spiritual formation, enabling children to see and experience the goodness of God in their daily lives, just as Moses sought and encountered in Exodus 33:18.

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