



## Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in the Perspective of Life Transformation: A Study of Philippians 3:20 at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang

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### ABSTRACT

*Pedagogical competence is a key determinant in the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly when education is oriented toward life transformation rather than mere cognitive understanding. This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers from the perspective of life transformation based on Philippians 3:20, conducted at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang, a public elementary school in Indonesia. The research context involves 291 Christian students taught by only two CRE teachers, highlighting the importance of effective pedagogy within a setting characterized by limited human resources and a pluralistic educational environment. This study employed a qualitative research design by integrating a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with simple semi-structured interviews. The SLR examined scholarly literature on pedagogical competence, Christian education, life transformation, and biblical identity, while interviews explored teachers' pedagogical practices, theological understanding, and instructional strategies in CRE classrooms. Data were analyzed thematically and synthesized to ensure coherence between theoretical perspectives and empirical findings. The results indicate that CRE teachers understand life transformation as a gradual process of character and identity formation reflected in students' daily behavior, attitudes, and moral awareness. The concept of heavenly citizenship in Philippians 3:20 is pedagogically translated into practical values such as responsibility, integrity, discipline, respect, and service. Although the integration of biblical texts tends to be implicit and assessment of transformation relies largely on observation, the findings confirm that competent pedagogy significantly supports students' life transformation. This study concludes that pedagogical competence grounded in biblical theology and learner-centered practices plays a vital role in fostering transformative Christian education within public school contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Life Transformation*

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, pedagogical competence is increasingly recognized as a foundational element in shaping not only students' academic achievement but also their character, identity, and orientation toward life. Teachers are no longer perceived merely as transmitters of knowledge; they are educators who guide learners toward holistic transformation that integrates cognitive, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. Within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence holds particular significance because teaching is inseparable from value formation and spiritual development. CRE teachers are therefore expected to design learning experiences that foster life transformation grounded in Christian faith, rather than limiting instruction to doctrinal understanding alone. Pedagogical competence generally encompasses teachers' ability to understand students' characteristics, design meaningful learning processes, implement appropriate teaching strategies, and conduct reflective assessment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In Christian education, this competence is expanded by a theological dimension that emphasizes transformation of life as the ultimate goal of education (Knight, 2016). Life transformation in this sense refers to the renewal of attitudes, values, and identity that shapes how students perceive themselves, others, and their responsibilities in society. Consequently, CRE pedagogy must intentionally integrate biblical perspectives with educational practices that are responsive to students' developmental stages and contextual realities. One of the biblical texts that provides a strong theological foundation for life transformation is Philippians 3:20, which declares that "our citizenship is in heaven." This passage highlights a transformative understanding of identity, where believers are called to live in the world while being oriented toward heavenly values. From an educational perspective, this concept of citizenship implies ethical responsibility, self-discipline, and moral integrity in daily life. For Christian Religious Education, Philippians 3:20 offers a framework for shaping students' character and worldview, encouraging them to embody values that reflect their spiritual identity in practical and socially responsible ways. In the Indonesian public-school context, Christian Religious Education plays a strategic role in nurturing students' spiritual identity within a pluralistic environment. At SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang, where 291 Christian students are guided by only two CRE teachers, pedagogical competence becomes a crucial factor in ensuring effective and meaningful learning. The large number of students relative to the limited number of teachers presents challenges related to classroom management, individualized attention, and sustained character formation. These conditions demand pedagogical strategies that are not only efficient but also transformative, enabling students to internalize Christian values amid diverse social influences. Previous studies on Christian Religious Education have emphasized the importance of teacher competence in character formation, moral education, and faith development (Van Brummelen, 2012; Lickona, 2013). However, many of these studies focus on general moral outcomes without explicitly examining how pedagogical competence contributes to life transformation rooted in specific biblical texts. Research that integrates pedagogical analysis with theological reflection remains limited, particularly in the context of public elementary schools. This gap indicates the need for studies that explore how CRE teachers translate biblical concepts of identity and transformation into concrete pedagogical practices. Leadership and citizenship education

have become central themes in contemporary educational policy and practice. From a Christian perspective, these themes are inseparable from spiritual identity and moral responsibility. Philippians 3:20 provides a theological lens through which students can be guided to understand citizenship not merely as legal or national belonging, but as a way of life shaped by transcendent values. CRE teachers, through their pedagogical competence, play a decisive role in helping students bridge this theological understanding with everyday behavior in school and community life. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in the perspective of life transformation based on Philippians 3:20 at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang. By examining how CRE teachers design, implement, and reflect upon their teaching practices, this research seeks to contribute to the discourse on Christian pedagogy, life transformation, and faith-based education in public schools. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical insights and practical implications for strengthening pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education, particularly in contexts characterized by limited teaching resources and diverse student populations.

## **METHODS**

The qualitative approach was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration of pedagogical practices, theological interpretation, and contextual realities within a public elementary school setting. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang, which serves 291 Christian students guided by two CRE teachers. This context provides a meaningful setting to analyze pedagogical competence amid a high student-teacher ratio and a pluralistic educational environment. The first phase of the research consisted of a Systematic Literature Review. The SLR was conducted using a structured and transparent procedure to identify, select, and analyze scholarly sources relevant to pedagogical competence, Christian Religious Education, life transformation, and biblical perspectives on identity and citizenship. Academic databases such as Scopus-indexed journals, Google Scholar, and reputable theological and educational publishers were consulted. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published primarily within the last ten years, while allowing seminal theological works where necessary to support biblical interpretation. The selected literature was analyzed thematically to identify key concepts, pedagogical frameworks, and theological insights related to transformative education. The results of the SLR served as the theoretical foundation for interpreting empirical findings from the field. The next phase involved simple semi-structured interviews aimed at capturing contextual and experiential data from CRE teachers. The interview participants consisted of the two CRE teachers who were directly responsible for teaching Christian Religious Education at the research site. A simple interview format was intentionally employed to ensure clarity, ethical sensitivity, and practicality within the school context. Open-ended questions were designed to explore teachers' understanding of pedagogical competence, their interpretation of life transformation in relation to Philippians 3:20, and their strategies for integrating biblical values into classroom instruction. Additional questions addressed challenges faced in teaching large groups of students and approaches used to foster students' spiritual identity and daily conduct. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a natural school setting and lasted approximately 40-60 minutes per participant. With informed consent, responses were recorded through detailed written notes to maintain confidentiality and

minimize disruption to teaching activities. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Interview notes were coded inductively to identify recurring themes related to pedagogical planning, instructional strategies, biblical integration, and perceived indicators of student life transformation. These themes were then compared and synthesized with findings from the SLR to achieve analytical triangulation. Through this integrated methodological approach, the study provides a robust and context-sensitive analysis of how pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education contributes to students' life transformation in light of Philippians 3:20.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang plays a significant role in fostering students' life transformation, particularly when viewed through the theological perspective of Philippians 3:20. By synthesizing insights from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and empirical data gathered through simple semi-structured interviews with the two CRE teachers, this discussion provides a comprehensive analysis of how pedagogical competence operates in practice, how biblical concepts of transformed identity are communicated to students, and how contextual realities shape educational outcomes in a public elementary school setting. The results indicate that CRE teachers conceptualize life transformation primarily as a gradual process of internal change that affects students' attitudes, behaviors, and self-understanding rather than as an instantaneous spiritual experience. Teachers consistently described transformation as visible in students' daily conduct, such as increased discipline, respect toward teachers and peers, honesty, and a growing sense of responsibility. This understanding aligns with the literature identified in the SLR, which emphasizes that transformation in Christian education is best understood as a continuous formation of character and identity rather than mere cognitive acquisition of religious knowledge. From a pedagogical standpoint, this perspective demonstrates teachers' competence in aligning theological goals with realistic developmental expectations of elementary school students.

Pedagogical competence was strongly reflected in teachers' awareness of students' characteristics and learning needs. Given the large number of Christian students, 291 learners taught by only two CRE teachers, classroom management and instructional efficiency emerged as central pedagogical concerns. Teachers reported that they intentionally employ structured routines, clear instructions, and repetitive reinforcement of key values to ensure learning continuity. This approach reflects pedagogical competence in managing learning environments effectively, a skill emphasized in educational theory as essential for maintaining engagement and fostering meaningful learning outcomes in large classrooms. The SLR supports this finding by highlighting that pedagogical competence in contexts of limited resources requires strategic planning and adaptive teaching methods. In terms of instructional strategies, the results show that narrative-based learning, contextual explanation, and teacher modeling are the primary methods used to communicate transformative Christian values. Teachers frequently rely on biblical stories and everyday examples to help students understand abstract concepts such as heavenly citizenship, moral responsibility, and ethical living. Rather than engaging

in complex theological exposition, teachers translate the message of Philippians 3:20 into simple and relatable language, emphasizing that being a “citizen of heaven” means behaving differently in daily life, showing kindness, obedience, and integrity. This pedagogical approach demonstrates competence in selecting teaching strategies that are developmentally appropriate and contextually relevant. The emphasis on modeling deserves particular attention. Teachers acknowledged that students often learn more from what teachers do than from what they say. As a result, they consciously seek to embody the values they teach, such as patience, fairness, and humility. This finding resonates strongly with the literature on Christian pedagogy, which underscores the role of teachers as moral and spiritual exemplars. From the perspective of life transformation, teacher modeling serves as a living curriculum through which students observe and imitate transformed behavior. The alignment between teachers’ self-awareness and pedagogical practice indicates a mature understanding of pedagogical competence that integrates professional skill with personal integrity.

The integration of Philippians 3:20 into pedagogical practice was found to be mostly implicit rather than explicit. Teachers rarely engage students in direct textual analysis of the verse; instead, they extract and apply its core message, identity rooted in heavenly citizenship, within broader discussions about behavior and character. This approach reflects both pedagogical sensitivity and theological simplification. On the one hand, it allows students to grasp the practical implications of the text without being overwhelmed by abstract theological language. On the other hand, it may limit students’ awareness of the biblical foundation underlying these values. The SLR suggests that such implicit integration is common in elementary Christian education, where application is prioritized over textual exegesis. The teachers’ pedagogical competence is evident in their ability to contextualize biblical identity within a pluralistic school environment. As a public school, SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang requires CRE teachers to ensure that Christian instruction promotes values compatible with national educational goals, such as social harmony, respect for diversity, and civic responsibility. Teachers reported that they consciously frame life transformation not as separation from others, but as ethical engagement with peers from different religious backgrounds. This interpretation of heavenly citizenship as a moral orientation rather than social exclusivity reflects both theological insight and pedagogical wisdom. The literature supports this approach, emphasizing that Christian education in pluralistic contexts must cultivate inclusive virtues while maintaining faith-based identity. Another significant finding relates to the perceived outcomes of pedagogical competence on students’ lives. Teachers observed that students who consistently participate in CRE lessons tend to show greater emotional regulation, willingness to help others, and sensitivity to moral issues. While these observations are informal and not measured through standardized instruments, they provide qualitative evidence of life transformation at the behavioral level. The SLR indicates that such behavioral indicators are commonly used in qualitative studies of character and spiritual formation, particularly in contexts where formal assessment tools are limited or impractical. The study also reveals important challenges that affect the depth and sustainability of life transformation. One major challenge is the limited instructional time allocated to Christian Religious Education within the national curriculum. Teachers expressed concern that transformation-oriented learning requires continuity and

reinforcement, which are difficult to achieve with restricted contact hours. This challenge underscores the importance of pedagogical competence in maximizing limited time through focused objectives and integrated learning experiences. The literature emphasizes that in such contexts, pedagogical clarity and intentionality become critical for achieving transformative outcomes.

Another challenge identified is the absence of structured assessment mechanisms for evaluating life transformation. Teachers primarily rely on observation and intuition to gauge changes in students' attitudes and behavior. While this approach aligns with the qualitative nature of spiritual formation, it may limit opportunities for systematic reflection and improvement. The SLR highlights that formative assessment tools, such as reflective journals or guided self-evaluation, can enhance students' awareness of their own growth and support teachers' pedagogical decision-making. The lack of such tools in the current context suggests an area for further pedagogical development. The synthesis of findings demonstrates that pedagogical competence remains a decisive factor in enabling life transformation through Christian Religious Education. Teachers' ability to translate theological concepts into practical values, manage large classes effectively, and model transformed living reflects a holistic understanding of pedagogy that integrates knowledge, skill, and character. This finding aligns with contemporary theories of transformative education, which emphasize that meaningful learning occurs when cognitive understanding is accompanied by affective engagement and behavioral change. Philippians 3:20 provides a compelling framework for understanding life transformation as identity formation. The concept of heavenly citizenship offers students a lens through which to interpret their daily experiences, encouraging them to live responsibly and ethically in the present world. The teachers' pedagogical competence is evident in their ability to bridge this theological vision with students' lived realities, making abstract doctrine accessible and actionable. The literature affirms that such integration of theology and pedagogy is essential for Christian education that seeks not merely to inform, but to transform. The discussion also highlights the contextual significance of this study. With only two CRE teachers serving a large population of Christian students, the effectiveness of pedagogical competence becomes even more pronounced. The findings suggest that even in resource-constrained settings, competent pedagogy can foster meaningful life transformation when teachers are intentional, reflective, and committed to their vocation. This insight contributes to the broader discourse on teacher competence in developing countries, where educational challenges often demand creative and adaptive pedagogical responses. In synthesizing the results, it becomes clear that life transformation in Christian Religious Education is not the result of isolated instructional techniques, but of a coherent pedagogical orientation grounded in theological conviction and contextual awareness. The teachers at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang demonstrate that pedagogical competence involves continuous reflection on the purpose of education, the needs of learners, and the transformative power of biblical values. While improvements are needed in systematic planning and assessment, the overall findings affirm the central role of pedagogical competence in shaping students' transformed lives.

The results and discussion confirm that pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers significantly contributes to students' life transformation when

interpreted through the lens of Philippians 3:20. Transformation is manifested not primarily in doctrinal mastery, but in the gradual shaping of identity, behavior, and moral orientation. Through narrative-based instruction, contextual application, and personal modeling, CRE teachers help students internalize the meaning of heavenly citizenship in their daily lives. This study thus reinforces the importance of strengthening pedagogical competence as a strategic priority for Christian education, particularly within public school contexts characterized by diversity and limited resources.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering students' life transformation through the theological perspective of Philippians 3:20 at SD Negeri 1 Tamiang Layang. By integrating findings from a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and simple semi-structured interviews with the two CRE teachers, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical competence functions as a transformative force within a public elementary school context characterized by a large Christian student population and limited teaching resources. The findings indicate that CRE teachers understand life transformation as a continuous process of character and identity formation rather than a momentary spiritual change. This perspective is pedagogically appropriate for elementary school students, whose moral and spiritual development is gradual and strongly influenced by daily experiences. Teachers' pedagogical competence is reflected in their ability to translate theological concepts, particularly the notion of heavenly citizenship in Philippians 3:20, into practical values such as responsibility, integrity, discipline, respect, and service. Through narrative-based instruction, contextual explanation, and consistent teacher modeling, these values are internalized by students and expressed in everyday behavior. The study further demonstrates that pedagogical competence is especially critical in contexts of structural limitation. With only two CRE teachers responsible for 291 Christian students, effective classroom management, strategic planning, and value-focused instruction become essential. The teachers' ability to maintain learning continuity, foster engagement, and model transformed living highlights the importance of pedagogical adaptability and professional commitment. These findings affirm that meaningful life transformation can occur even in resource-constrained settings when pedagogical competence is exercised holistically. The study also identifies areas requiring further development. The integration of biblical texts into pedagogical planning tends to be implicit rather than explicit, which may limit students' awareness of the scriptural foundations of their values. Additionally, assessment of life transformation relies largely on informal observation, indicating the need for simple yet structured formative assessment tools that support reflective learning and pedagogical evaluation. Addressing these areas could enhance the intentionality and sustainability of transformative Christian education. This research confirms that pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education plays a decisive role in shaping students' transformed lives. When grounded in biblical theology and implemented through learner-centered, reflective pedagogy, CRE instruction becomes a powerful medium for identity formation and moral development. The perspective of Philippians 3:20 provides a meaningful theological framework for guiding students to live as responsible and ethical citizens while remaining rooted in their Christian identity. Future research is recommended to explore the development of

structured pedagogical models and assessment frameworks for life transformation across diverse educational contexts, thereby strengthening the contribution of Christian Religious Education to holistic student development.

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