

Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in the Light of Philippians 1:9-11: A Case Study at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the pedagogical competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher through a biblical-theological lens based on Philippians 1:9-11, which emphasizes love, knowledge, discernment, and righteous living. The research was conducted as a qualitative case study at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih, a public junior high school where 26 Christian students are served by a single CRE teacher. This unique minority context presents distinctive pedagogical and spiritual challenges that require a high level of professional and theological competence. Data were collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews with the CRE teacher and selected students. The data were analyzed thematically using an interactive qualitative analysis model and interpreted through the exegetical values of Philippians 1:9-11. The findings reveal that the teacher's pedagogical competence is reflected in intentional lesson planning that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual learning outcomes; relational and contextual instructional practices grounded in love and empathy; and holistic assessment strategies that evaluate both academic mastery and spiritual formation. The teacher demonstrates strong pedagogical discernment in selecting teaching methods and addressing students' ethical and emotional needs within a pluralistic educational environment. This study concludes that pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education is best understood as an integrated vocation that unites professional skill, moral discernment, and spiritual depth. The results contribute to the development of a biblically grounded framework for evaluating pedagogical competence in Christian education and offer practical implications for teacher development in public school contexts.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Philippians 1:9-11*

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical competence is a fundamental dimension of teacher professionalism that directly influences the quality of learning processes and student outcomes. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence does not merely involve mastery of teaching strategies, classroom management, and curriculum implementation, but also the integration of biblical values that shape students' faith, character, and moral

discernment. Unlike other subjects, CRE carries a dual mission: academic instruction and spiritual formation. Therefore, the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers must be understood not only from an educational framework but also from a theological perspective that is rooted in Scripture. One of the biblical texts that provides a strong theological foundation for pedagogical competence is Philippians 1:9-11. This passage expresses the apostle Paul's prayer that love may abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment so that believers may discern what is best and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. The emphasis on love, knowledge, discernment, and moral integrity closely parallels the core elements of pedagogical competence, particularly in Christian education. Pedagogy that is grounded in love fosters meaningful relationships between teachers and students; knowledge ensures intellectual depth; discernment guides wise instructional decisions; and moral integrity shapes character formation. Thus, Philippians 1:9-11 offers a rich biblical lens for understanding how pedagogical competence should be practiced by CRE teachers. In the Indonesian educational system, teacher competence is institutionally framed through four major domains: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence. However, for CRE teachers, these competencies are inseparable from spiritual responsibility. Pedagogical competence in CRE entails the ability to design faith-based learning, contextualize biblical messages for students' real-life situations, apply appropriate teaching methods, and evaluate learning in ways that nurture both cognitive understanding and spiritual growth. This becomes particularly challenging in public schools where Christian students often form a minority and where religious instruction must navigate pluralistic and multicultural environments.

This study is situated at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih, a public junior high school where Christian students represent a small segment of the school population. At this school, there are 26 Christian students served by only one CRE teacher. This context presents a unique pedagogical situation in which the teacher simultaneously carries the roles of educator, spiritual mentor, curriculum developer, and faith role model. The limited number of Christian students can easily lead to marginalization of religious instruction, while the lack of multiple CRE teachers increases the pedagogical and pastoral burden on a single educator. These realities demand a high level of pedagogical competence that is both professionally sound and spiritually grounded. Previous studies on CRE teacher competence have generally focused on curriculum implementation, teaching methods, or the correlation between teacher competence and student learning outcomes. However, few studies have explicitly examined pedagogical competence from a biblical-exegetical perspective, particularly grounded in a specific New Testament text. Moreover, research that explores pedagogical competence within the concrete context of minority Christian students in public schools remains limited. This gap highlights the need for a study that integrates educational theory, biblical exegesis, and real classroom practice.

Philippians 1:9–11 is highly relevant to this context because it connects cognitive growth ("*knowledge*"), ethical discernment ("*discernment*"), relational depth ("*love*"), and moral maturity ("*pure and blameless*"). These dimensions reflect the core objectives of pedagogical competence in CRE. A teacher who teaches with love nurtures a safe and supportive learning environment; a teacher who teaches with knowledge ensures doctrinal and academic accuracy; a teacher who teaches with discernment adapts instruction wisely to students' developmental and contextual needs; and a teacher who

teaches with moral integrity becomes a living example of Christian character. This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih through the theological lens of Philippians 1:9-11. By employing a case study approach, this research seeks to describe how the values of love, knowledge, and discernment are embodied in classroom practices, instructional strategies, and teacher-student interactions. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically: theoretically by enriching the discourse on biblically grounded pedagogical competence, and practically by providing insights for CRE teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in strengthening Christian education in public school settings where faith education faces structural and contextual challenges.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore in depth the pedagogical competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as reflected through the theological lens of Philippians 1:9-11. A case study approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of a bounded educational phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih, a public junior high school in which Christian students constitute a minority group. At the time of the study, the school had 26 Christian students served by a single CRE teacher, making this context particularly suitable for examining the dynamics of pedagogical competence under conditions of limited human resources and minority religious status. The focus of the study was the lived pedagogical practice of the teacher in planning, implementing, and evaluating CRE instruction that integrates cognitive learning and spiritual formation. Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted over multiple teaching sessions to capture authentic instructional practices, classroom interactions, teaching strategies, and the teacher's ability to facilitate learning in line with the values of love, knowledge, and discernment derived from Philippians 1:9-11. Field notes were systematically recorded to document teaching methods, student engagement, classroom atmosphere, and pedagogical decision-making processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher as the main informant to explore personal experiences, pedagogical reflections, perceived challenges, and strategies used in teaching Christian students in a public school environment. To strengthen data credibility, several students were also interviewed to gain their perspectives on the teacher's pedagogical approach and its impact on their learning and spiritual growth. Document analysis included the reflective teaching journals to examine the alignment between instructional planning and classroom implementation (Bowen, 2009). The analytical framework of the study integrated pedagogical competence indicators based on contemporary teacher competence theory and theological values derived from an exegetical interpretation of Philippians 1:9-11. Data analysis followed the interactive model which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. All observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents were coded thematically using open coding. Then codes were categorized into broader themes related to instructional planning, learning implementation, classroom interaction, assessment strategies, and spiritual formation.

These pedagogical themes were interpreted through the biblical constructs of love (*agapē*), knowledge (*epignōsis*), and discernment (*aisthēsis*), as articulated in Philippians 1:9–11, to reveal how theological values were embodied in pedagogical practice. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and methods, as well as member checking with the main informant. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail of the research process, while confirmability was maintained by minimizing researcher bias through reflexive journaling. All data were used solely for academic purposes in accordance with ethical standards for educational research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study on the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih, interpreted through the theological lens of Philippians 1:9-11. The findings are organized into four major themes: pedagogical planning grounded in love and discernment, instructional implementation characterized by relational and contextual teaching, assessment practices as a means of spiritual and academic formation, and pedagogical challenges and theological resilience in a minority context. These themes are subsequently discussed in relation to contemporary pedagogical competence theory and the exegetical insights of Philippians 1:9-11. The results reveal that pedagogical planning by the CRE teacher is strongly shaped by an awareness of the students' minority status and spiritual vulnerability. With only 26 Christian students across several grade levels and a single CRE teacher responsible for their instruction, lesson planning is not merely an administrative requirement but a strategic and pastoral task. The teacher consistently prepares lesson plans that integrate the national curriculum with biblical values, ensuring that learning objectives encompass cognitive understanding, affective engagement, and behavioral transformation. This integration reflects the theological principle expressed in Philippians 1:9, where love is expected to "abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment." In pedagogical terms, this means that the teacher does not separate emotional care, intellectual mastery, and moral clarity in instructional design. Instead, these dimensions are interwoven within every lesson plan. From the observation data, it was evident that learning objectives were formulated not only in terms of knowledge acquisition but also in relation to character formation and spiritual sensitivity. For example, when teaching about Christian forgiveness, the teacher explicitly connected doctrinal understanding with students' daily interpersonal conflicts at school. This alignment between curriculum content and students' lived realities demonstrates a high level of pedagogical content knowledge, as the teacher translates theological concepts into developmentally appropriate and contextually relevant learning experiences. This finding supports the view that pedagogical competence in CRE transcends technical mastery and requires theological sensitivity and contextual awareness.

The planning process also shows discernment in the selection of learning methods. The teacher intentionally avoids purely lecture-based instruction and instead employs interactive strategies such as guided discussion, storytelling, role-playing, and reflective journaling. These methods are chosen to cultivate both understanding and affective engagement. This pedagogical discretion mirrors the concept of "discernment" in

Philippians 1:10, which emphasizes the ability to distinguish what is best. In educational practice, discernment manifests as the capacity to choose instructional strategies that are most appropriate for students' needs, emotional conditions, and spiritual maturity. The study thus confirms that the teacher's pedagogical competence is not merely procedural but deeply reflective and purpose-driven. In terms of instructional implementation, classroom observations indicate that the CRE teacher consistently creates a learning atmosphere characterized by warmth, mutual respect, and emotional safety. This relational climate reflects the centrality of love (*agapē*) as emphasized in Philippians 1:9. The teacher's interpersonal approach is marked by patience, empathetic listening, and a non-judgmental attitude toward students' struggles. Students reported that they felt safe sharing personal concerns during CRE lessons, even when these concerns involved moral failure or family problems. This relational openness enhances student engagement and learning motivation, which are key indicators of effective pedagogical competence. Instructional delivery is also marked by clarity, coherence, and contextualization. Biblical texts are explained not only from a historical-theological perspective but also through practical illustrations relevant to adolescents' daily lives, such as peer pressure, social media influence, and family relationships. This contextualization indicates strong pedagogical skills in translating abstract theological principles into concrete ethical guidance. The teacher frequently uses probing questions to stimulate critical thinking and moral reflection, rather than simply transmitting doctrinal information. Such dialogical teaching aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active student participation in meaning-making processes. The findings show that the teacher integrates moral discernment into classroom discussions in a way that aligns with Philippians 1:10-11, which speaks of approving what is excellent and being filled with the fruit of righteousness. Students are encouraged to evaluate ethical dilemmas using biblical principles and to reflect on the consequences of their decisions. For instance, during a lesson on honesty, students were invited to analyze real-life scenarios involving cheating, gossip, and social conformity. They were guided to assess these situations using Christian moral reasoning rather than merely memorizing moral rules. This approach demonstrates that pedagogical competence in CRE includes the facilitation of moral discernment as a cognitive and spiritual skill.

Assessment practices in this study also reflect an integration of pedagogical and theological dimensions. The teacher employs a combination of formative and summative assessment methods, including written tests, reflective essays, group projects, and oral presentations. However, assessment is not limited to measuring cognitive achievement. Reflective journals are used to assess students' spiritual understanding, personal application of biblical teachings, and ethical growth. This holistic approach to assessment corresponds with the holistic vision of education implied in Philippians 1:9-11, where knowledge, love, discernment, and righteousness are inseparable. Students' reflective writings reveal that many of them experienced personal transformation through CRE learning. Several students expressed increased awareness of their responsibility as Christian minorities to live out their faith with integrity and humility. This indicates that pedagogical competence in CRE, when grounded in theological values, can foster not only academic understanding but also spiritual maturity and moral responsibility. Such findings resonate with educational theories that emphasize formative assessment as a tool for

guiding learning and character growth rather than merely for grading. The study also identifies significant pedagogical challenges faced by the CRE teacher. One of the most prominent challenges is the limited instructional time allocated for CRE in a public school setting, especially where Christian students form a minority. The teacher reported difficulties in achieving both cognitive and spiritual learning objectives within restricted time frames. This limitation demands a high level of pedagogical efficiency and prioritization. In response, the teacher exercises pedagogical discernment by focusing on essential biblical themes and moral values that have the greatest transformative potential for students' lives. Some students reported experiencing subtle forms of marginalization or misunderstanding from peers of other religious backgrounds. In such circumstances, the pedagogical role of the CRE teacher extends beyond academic instruction to include pastoral care and emotional support. The teacher actively addresses issues of identity, self-worth, and resilience in class discussions, emphasizing the biblical principle that faithfulness to Christ does not depend on majority status but on personal conviction and integrity. This approach reflects the theological message of Philippians, which was written in a context of struggle and minority status, yet emphasizes joy, perseverance, and faithfulness. The teacher's ability to navigate these challenges reflects a high level of pedagogical and spiritual resilience. Rather than interpreting these limitations as obstacles, the teacher reframes them as opportunities for deeper spiritual formation. This theological resilience aligns with Philippians 1:29, which speaks of the privilege of suffering for Christ. Although this verse was not the primary exegetical focus of the study, its thematic resonance is evident in the teacher's perspective and practice. The teacher models a theology of perseverance that shapes not only personal faith but also pedagogical commitment. The findings confirm that pedagogical competence in Christian education cannot be understood solely within the framework of technical teaching skills. Instead, it must be interpreted as an integrated competence that encompasses instructional design, relational engagement, moral discernment, and spiritual formation. The exegetical framework of Philippians 1:9-11 provides a robust theological foundation for this integrated understanding. Love corresponds to the relational dimension of pedagogy; knowledge corresponds to content mastery and instructional clarity; discernment corresponds to pedagogical decision-making and moral guidance; and righteousness corresponds to the desired outcome of character formation.

The discussion further indicates that pedagogical competence in CRE is deeply contextual. The teacher's strategies, challenges, and successes are shaped by the specific realities of teaching in a minority context within a public school. This context demands a pedagogy that is simultaneously faithful to Christian doctrine and sensitive to pluralistic surroundings. The teacher's ability to balance confessional fidelity with respectful engagement toward students of different religious backgrounds demonstrates a nuanced form of pedagogical competence that is highly relevant to multicultural educational settings. In relation to previous research, the findings of this study extend existing discussions on teacher competence by incorporating a biblical-exegetical framework into pedagogical analysis. While many studies emphasize the correlation between pedagogical competence and student achievement, this study highlights the theological depth that undergirds effective CRE pedagogy. It demonstrates that biblical values are not merely ornamental additions to pedagogical practice but constitute its foundational orientation.

The integration of Scripture into pedagogical reflection enriches both educational theory and classroom practice. The results contribute to the discourse on minority education by showing how pedagogical competence can function as a form of educational advocacy and spiritual empowerment. The CRE teacher's pedagogical approach enables students to internalize their Christian identity with confidence and ethical responsibility, even within a context where they are numerically and socially marginalized. This confirms that pedagogical competence in religious education has significant implications not only for individual learning outcomes but also for students' social resilience and moral agency.

The findings also reveal that the teacher's personal spirituality significantly influences pedagogical effectiveness. The teacher's consistent practice of prayer, biblical reflection, and personal devotion shapes the way instruction is delivered and how students are treated. This personal spirituality becomes a hidden yet powerful source of pedagogical energy and moral authority. Students perceive their teacher not merely as an instructor but as a spiritual role model whose life exemplifies the values taught in class. This reinforces the theological principle in Philippians 1:11 that righteous living is ultimately oriented toward the glory and praise of God. From other perspective, these findings underscore the need for institutional support for CRE teachers in public schools, especially those who serve small minority student populations. The heavy pedagogical and pastoral workload borne by a single teacher highlights the risk of burnout and the importance of professional development opportunities that integrate pedagogical training and spiritual formation. Educational authorities should recognize that pedagogical competence in CRE involves unique challenges that differ from those of other subjects, particularly in pluralistic contexts. The integration of exegetical insights into pedagogical analysis also raises important methodological implications. This study demonstrates that biblical exegesis can serve not only as a theological exercise but also as an analytical lens for evaluating educational practice. By interpreting pedagogical actions through the values articulated in Philippians 1:9-11, this research offers a model for future studies that seek to bridge theology and education in a methodologically rigorous manner. The results of this study show that the pedagogical competence of the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih is characterized by intentional planning grounded in love and discernment, relational and contextual instructional implementation, holistic assessment practices, and resilient responses to pedagogical challenges in a minority context. These practices are deeply aligned with the theological values of Philippians 1:9-11, which emphasize love, knowledge, moral discernment, and righteous living. The discussion confirms that pedagogical competence in Christian education is not merely a technical capacity but a spiritually informed vocation that integrates professional skill, theological reflection, and pastoral sensitivity. This integrated competence enables the teacher to nurture not only students' cognitive understanding of Christian doctrine but also their spiritual maturity, moral responsibility, and resilience as Christian learners in a pluralistic educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih through the theological lens of Philippians 1:9-11.

The findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence in this context is not merely a technical or procedural capacity, but an integrated vocation that unites instructional skill, moral discernment, and spiritual depth. The teacher's pedagogical practice reflects the core values articulated in Philippians 1:9-11, namely love that abounds in knowledge, wise discernment in decision-making, and the pursuit of righteous character formation, all of which are embodied in daily classroom activities. The results reveal that pedagogical planning is intentionally designed to integrate cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of learning. Lesson objectives are not limited to academic achievement but are extended to include students' moral growth and spiritual sensitivity. This holistic orientation confirms that effective CRE pedagogy must be rooted in both sound educational theory and deep theological conviction. The teacher's capacity to contextualize biblical teachings for adolescent learners further demonstrates strong pedagogical content knowledge and sensitivity to students' lived experiences. In instructional implementation, the study shows that a learning climate grounded in relational warmth, empathy, and mutual respect significantly enhances student engagement and motivation. The teacher's practice of dialogical and contextual teaching enables students to actively construct meaning from Scripture while developing moral reasoning and critical reflection. This confirms that pedagogical competence in CRE is inseparable from relational competence, as love becomes the foundation for meaningful teaching and learning processes. The emphasis on discernment also equips students with the ability to evaluate ethical issues in light of Christian values, rather than merely memorizing doctrinal concepts. Assessment practices in this study further highlight the holistic nature of pedagogical competence. The integration of formative and reflective assessment allows the teacher to evaluate not only cognitive mastery but also spiritual understanding and character development. This approach aligns with the theological vision of Philippians 1:11, which emphasizes the "fruit of righteousness" as the ultimate outcome of Christian formation. Students' reflective responses indicate that CRE learning has contributed to their growing awareness of responsibility, integrity, and identity as Christian students in a pluralistic environment. At the same time, this study underscores the significant pedagogical challenges faced by CRE teachers in public schools, particularly in minority contexts. Limited instructional time, the psychological pressures experienced by minority students, and the heavy burden borne by a single teacher serving multiple classes require not only professional competence but also strong spiritual resilience. Despite these constraints, the teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih demonstrates a form of pedagogical perseverance that is deeply shaped by faith, reflecting the broader theological spirit of the Epistle to the Philippians.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. It contributes to the discourse on teacher competence by offering a biblically grounded framework for understanding pedagogical competence in Christian education. It affirms that Scripture can function as a meaningful analytical lens for evaluating educational practice. Practically, this study provides insights for CRE teachers, school leaders, and policymakers regarding the importance of supporting pedagogical and spiritual development, especially for teachers serving in minority and resource-limited contexts. In conclusion, the pedagogical competence of the CRE teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Adiluwih is best understood as an integrated expression of professional skill and spiritual vocation. Guided by the

values of love, knowledge, and discernment in Philippians 1:9-11, the teacher not only facilitates effective learning but also nurtures students' moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and resilience. Future research is encouraged to expand this biblical-pedagogical framework across diverse educational settings and to explore its implications for teacher education and professional development in Christian Religious Education.

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