



## The Role and Implementation of Teachers' Professional Competence in Improving Fourth-Grade Students' Learning Outcomes in Christian Religious Education: A Study at SDN Penda Pilang

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in improving fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. Teacher professional competence is a crucial factor in ensuring effective learning because it involves mastery of subject matter, the ability to organize learning activities, the application of appropriate teaching strategies, and the use of evaluation methods that support student achievement. In the context of Christian Religious Education, professional competence also contributes to the effective communication of biblical values and spiritual understanding that shape students' moral development. The research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlational design. The participants of the study consisted of all fourth-grade students who participated in Christian Religious Education learning at SDN Penda Pilang. Data were collected through structured questionnaires that measured students' perceptions of the teacher's professional competence and through documentation of students' academic scores to assess their learning outcomes. The findings indicate that the Christian Religious Education teacher demonstrates a good level of professional competence, particularly in mastering teaching materials, explaining biblical concepts clearly, and implementing effective instructional strategies. Statistical analysis revealed that teachers' professional competence has a positive contribution to improving students' learning achievement in Christian Religious Education. In conclusion, the implementation of teachers' professional competence plays an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of the learning process and improving students' academic achievement. Strengthening professional competence through continuous professional development, reflective teaching practices, and institutional support is essential for improving the quality of Christian Religious Education and fostering both intellectual and spiritual growth among students.*

**Keywords:** Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Fourth-Grade

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping human character, intellectual capacity, and moral responsibility within society. In the context of formal schooling, teachers function as the primary agents who translate educational goals into concrete learning experiences for students. The quality of learning outcomes achieved by students is strongly influenced by the competence possessed by teachers, particularly professional competence, which refers to the ability of educators to master subject matter, design effective learning strategies, and implement meaningful teaching practices in the classroom. Professional competence is therefore considered one of the essential pillars in determining the effectiveness of educational processes in schools. Teacher competence is formally regulated through national educational policies. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that teachers are required to possess four core competencies: pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence, and personal competence. Among these competencies, professional competence is closely related to teachers' mastery of learning materials, their ability to develop subject content in a structured way, and their capacity to present knowledge in ways that are understandable and relevant for students. Teachers who demonstrate strong professional competence are more capable of organizing meaningful learning experiences that lead to improved academic achievement and deeper conceptual understanding. Professional competence becomes even more significant because the subject is not limited to cognitive knowledge but also involves the formation of students' spiritual values, moral character, and faith-based attitudes. CRE aims to guide students in understanding biblical teachings and applying Christian values in their daily lives. Therefore, teachers of Christian Religious Education must possess not only theological understanding but also pedagogical skills that allow them to communicate biblical principles effectively to young learners. Effective CRE instruction requires teachers to contextualize biblical teachings in ways that are relevant to students' experiences, thus enabling students to internalize spiritual values while also achieving academic success.

Professional competence also influences how teachers select and apply instructional methods during classroom learning. According to educational theory, effective teaching requires the integration of various learning strategies, including discussion, questioning techniques, storytelling, and the use of visual or contextual learning media. When teachers demonstrate creativity in instructional practices, students tend to become more engaged in the learning process, which subsequently contributes to improved learning outcomes. Conversely, when teaching methods are monotonous or poorly structured, students may lose interest, resulting in limited comprehension and lower academic performance. Learning outcomes themselves represent measurable indicators of students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral development after participating in educational activities. In elementary education, particularly in the fourth grade, students are in a crucial developmental stage where conceptual understanding and moral reasoning begin to develop more systematically. At this level, the role of teachers becomes increasingly important in guiding students to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life experiences. Effective teaching practices not only enhance students' academic performance but also encourage them to develop positive attitudes toward

learning. Initial observations at SDN Penda Pilang indicate that variations exist in the learning outcomes of fourth-grade students in Christian Religious Education. Some students demonstrate strong comprehension of biblical teachings and actively participate in classroom discussions, while others experience difficulties in understanding the material presented during lessons. These differences raise important questions regarding the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in facilitating effective learning within the classroom context.

Previous studies in educational research emphasize that teachers who possess strong professional competence are better equipped to design structured learning activities, utilize appropriate instructional media, and manage classroom environments effectively. Such competencies contribute significantly to students' motivation and participation during the learning process. As a result, students tend to develop deeper understanding and achieve higher academic performance. Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in improving the learning outcomes of fourth-grade students in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. By exploring how teachers apply professional competence in classroom practices, this research aims to provide insights into the relationship between teacher professionalism and student learning achievement. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective instructional practices in Christian Religious Education, particularly at the elementary school level.

## **METHODS**

A quantitative research approach with a descriptive and correlational design was implemented to examine the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in improving fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. Quantitative methods were chosen because they enable researchers to measure variables objectively and analyze the relationship between teacher competence and student academic achievement using statistical procedures. According to educational research methodology, quantitative designs are effective for identifying patterns, testing relationships between variables, and producing empirical findings that can be generalized within a specific educational context. The population of this study consisted of all fourth-grade students who participate in Christian Religious Education learning at SDN Penda Pilang. Because the number of students is relatively manageable, the study used a total sampling technique, in which all available students in the class were involved as research respondents. This approach allows the researcher to obtain comprehensive data regarding the learning outcomes of students and their perceptions of the teaching practices implemented by the teacher. In addition to student respondents, the Christian Religious Education teacher responsible for teaching the subject also served as a key source of contextual information regarding instructional practices and the implementation of professional competence during classroom learning. Data collection in this study was conducted through several research instruments. A structured questionnaire was distributed to students to measure their perceptions of the teacher's professional competence, particularly in terms of mastery of subject matter, clarity of explanation, instructional strategies, and the use of learning media during

Christian Religious Education lessons. The questionnaire items were developed using a Likert scale format to ensure that students could express varying levels of agreement regarding the effectiveness of the teacher's instructional practices. Documentation techniques were used to collect data on students' learning outcomes, particularly their academic scores in Christian Religious Education subjects. These scores served as quantitative indicators for evaluating the level of students' learning achievement. Limited classroom observations were conducted to support the interpretation of quantitative findings and to understand how professional competence was practically implemented during the teaching and learning process. The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data obtained. Validity testing was conducted using correlation analysis between questionnaire items and the overall score, while reliability testing employed the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Only items that met the validity and reliability criteria were used in the final data collection process. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to present the distribution of students' responses and the general level of teacher professional competence as perceived by students. Meanwhile, inferential statistical analysis, particularly correlation analysis, was employed to examine the relationship between the implementation of teachers' professional competence and the learning outcomes of fourth-grade students. Through these analytical procedures, the study aimed to identify whether professional competence plays a significant role in improving students' academic achievement in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal important findings regarding the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in improving fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. The data collected through questionnaires, documentation of students' academic scores, and classroom observations demonstrate that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher plays a significant role in shaping both the learning process and the academic achievement of students. Professional competence in teaching is generally defined as the teacher's mastery of subject matter, the ability to design and implement effective instructional strategies, and the capacity to evaluate and improve the learning process systematically. In the context of Christian Religious Education, professional competence also includes the ability to communicate biblical values clearly and meaningfully to students so that learning becomes not only cognitive but also formative in terms of character development. Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses, the majority of students perceived that the Christian Religious Education teacher at SDN Penda Pilang demonstrated a high level of professional competence. Most respondents agreed that the teacher showed strong mastery of biblical content, was able to explain lessons clearly, and used teaching methods that helped them understand the subject matter. The average score obtained from the questionnaire responses indicated that students rated the teacher's professional competence in the "good" category. This suggests that the teacher is capable of

translating theological and biblical concepts into explanations that are accessible to elementary-level learners. Such competence is essential because Christian Religious Education requires teachers not only to understand biblical theology but also to communicate it effectively to students with different levels of cognitive development.

The documentation data concerning students' academic performance in Christian Religious Education further supports this perception. The analysis of fourth-grade students' scores shows that the majority of students achieved learning outcomes above the minimum competency standard established by the school. Only a small number of students scored slightly below the expected threshold, while most students demonstrated satisfactory or even excellent academic performance. These findings suggest that the teacher's professional competence contributes positively to the learning achievements of students. Effective mastery of the subject matter allows teachers to provide accurate explanations and clarify difficult concepts, which in turn enhances students' comprehension of the material being taught. The relationship between teacher professional competence and student learning outcomes was further examined through correlational analysis. The statistical results indicate a positive relationship between the level of professional competence demonstrated by the teacher and the academic performance of the students. This finding aligns with educational research that emphasizes the central role of teacher competence in determining the effectiveness of classroom instruction. When teachers possess strong professional competence, they are more capable of organizing learning activities, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, and responding to students' learning needs. Consequently, students are more likely to engage actively in the learning process and achieve better academic results.

Classroom observations provide deeper insight into how professional competence is implemented during the teaching and learning process. The observations revealed that the Christian Religious Education teacher at SDN Penda Pilang consistently prepared lesson plans that aligned with the curriculum and learning objectives. The teacher demonstrated careful preparation before each lesson, including the selection of biblical passages, supporting learning materials, and instructional activities designed to facilitate student understanding. Such preparation reflects a key dimension of professional competence, namely the ability to design structured and purposeful learning experiences. During classroom instruction, the teacher also employed various teaching strategies to maintain students' engagement. For example, storytelling techniques were frequently used to present biblical narratives in a way that was meaningful and relatable for students. Storytelling is particularly effective in Christian Religious Education because many biblical teachings are conveyed through narratives. By presenting these narratives with clarity and enthusiasm, the teacher was able to capture students' attention and encourage them to reflect on the moral and spiritual lessons embedded in the stories. This approach helped students connect biblical teachings with their everyday experiences, thereby strengthening both comprehension and retention of the material.

Another aspect of professional competence observed in this study was the teacher's ability to encourage active participation among students. Rather than relying solely on lecture-based instruction, the teacher frequently invited students to ask questions, share

their thoughts, and participate in discussions about the biblical lessons being studied. Such interaction fosters a student-centered learning environment in which learners are encouraged to express their understanding and engage critically with the material. This participatory approach not only improves students' comprehension but also promotes confidence and communication skills. The integration of learning media also played a role in supporting effective instruction. Although the available resources at SDN Penda Pilang are relatively limited, the teacher demonstrated creativity in utilizing simple teaching aids such as pictures, printed materials, and visual illustrations related to biblical stories. These media helped students visualize the contexts of biblical events and better understand the narrative content of the lessons. The use of visual aids is particularly beneficial for elementary school students, whose cognitive development often relies on concrete representations to grasp abstract concepts. Another significant finding of this study concerns the teacher's ability to conduct continuous assessment and provide feedback to students. Assessment is an integral component of professional competence because it allows teachers to evaluate whether learning objectives have been achieved. The Christian Religious Education teacher at SDN Penda Pilang regularly conducted both formative and summative assessments, including quizzes, assignments, and class discussions. Through these assessments, the teacher was able to identify students who required additional support and provide appropriate guidance to improve their understanding of the subject matter. The feedback provided by the teacher also played an important role in motivating students to improve their academic performance. Students reported that the teacher often offered constructive comments on their assignments and encouraged them to reflect on their learning progress. Positive reinforcement, such as praise for good performance and encouragement for improvement, contributed to creating a supportive learning environment. When students feel appreciated and supported by their teacher, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation to learn.

The findings of this study are consistent with theoretical perspectives in educational research that highlight the importance of teacher competence in shaping student learning outcomes. Professional competence enables teachers to deliver instruction that is not only informative but also engaging and meaningful. In the context of Christian Religious Education, this competence is particularly important because the subject aims to nurture both intellectual understanding and spiritual formation. Teachers must therefore possess the ability to integrate theological knowledge with pedagogical skills in order to facilitate holistic learning experiences for students. The study demonstrates that professional competence is not limited to subject mastery but also includes the teacher's commitment to continuous improvement. The teacher at SDN Penda Pilang showed a willingness to adapt teaching strategies based on students' learning needs and classroom dynamics. Such adaptability reflects a reflective approach to teaching, in which educators continually evaluate their instructional practices and seek ways to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching. Reflective practice is widely recognized as a key characteristic of professional educators, as it enables them to respond to challenges and improve the quality of education they provide. Another dimension of professional competence observed in this study is the teacher's ability to connect biblical teachings with students' daily lives. Christian Religious Education is most effective when students

can see the relevance of biblical values in their own experiences. The teacher often encouraged students to reflect on how the lessons learned from biblical stories could guide their behavior, relationships, and moral decisions. By making these connections explicit, the teacher helped students understand that Christian teachings are not merely theoretical concepts but practical principles that can shape their character and actions.

The positive learning outcomes observed among fourth-grade students at SDN Penda Pilang also reflect the broader impact of a supportive learning environment. The teacher's professional competence contributed to creating a classroom atmosphere characterized by respect, openness, and encouragement. In such an environment, students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and asking questions without fear of criticism. This sense of psychological safety enhances the learning process because students are more willing to engage actively with the material being studied. The study also identified several challenges that may affect the implementation of professional competence in Christian Religious Education. One of the main challenges is the limited availability of instructional resources and learning media. Although the teacher demonstrated creativity in utilizing available materials, the lack of technological resources may limit the variety of instructional strategies that can be employed. Access to digital learning tools, multimedia resources, and updated teaching materials could further enhance the quality of instruction and provide students with richer learning experiences. Elementary school students often display varying levels of cognitive development and learning styles, which require teachers to adapt their instructional approaches accordingly. While the teacher in this study made efforts to accommodate these differences, additional professional development opportunities could further strengthen the teacher's ability to implement differentiated instruction. Training in innovative teaching strategies and the use of educational technology could help teachers address the diverse needs of students more effectively. The overall findings of this study indicate that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SDN Penda Pilang has a positive and meaningful impact on students' learning outcomes. The teacher's mastery of subject matter, effective instructional strategies, and commitment to student development contribute significantly to the success of the learning process. These findings highlight the importance of investing in teacher professional development as a means of improving educational quality. The results of this study underscore the crucial role of teachers as key agents of educational transformation. In many educational contexts, particularly in rural or resource-limited schools, teachers' professional competence becomes one of the most decisive factors influencing student achievement. When teachers possess strong professional competence, they can overcome various structural limitations and create meaningful learning opportunities for their students.

The study also emphasizes that Christian Religious Education has the potential to contribute not only to academic achievement but also to the holistic development of students. Through effective teaching, biblical lessons can inspire students to cultivate values such as faith, honesty, responsibility, and compassion. These values are essential for shaping the moral character of students and preparing them to become responsible members of society. The findings of this research demonstrate that the implementation of teachers' professional competence plays a vital role in improving fourth-grade

students' learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. The teacher's ability to master the subject matter, design effective instructional strategies, engage students in active learning, and provide constructive feedback contributes significantly to the success of the learning process. Although certain challenges remain, the overall results indicate that strong professional competence can enhance both the quality of instruction and the academic performance of students. These findings reinforce the importance of continuous professional development for teachers and highlight the need for educational institutions to support teachers in their efforts to provide high-quality education.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the role and implementation of teachers' professional competence in improving fourth-grade students' learning outcomes in Christian Religious Education at SDN Penda Pilang. Based on the results of the quantitative analysis and classroom observations, it can be concluded that teachers' professional competence plays a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of the learning process and the academic achievement of students. Professional competence, which includes mastery of subject matter, the ability to design and implement appropriate teaching strategies, the use of instructional media, and the implementation of effective assessment practices, contributes directly to students' understanding of Christian Religious Education material and their overall learning outcomes. The findings indicate that the Christian Religious Education teacher at SDN Penda Pilang demonstrates a strong level of professional competence. This is reflected in the teacher's ability to present biblical teachings clearly, organize learning activities systematically, and engage students actively in the classroom. Students' positive perceptions of the teacher's instructional practices, combined with their relatively high academic achievement, suggest that effective professional competence has a measurable impact on learning success. The teacher's mastery of content enables accurate and meaningful explanations of biblical concepts, while the use of interactive teaching methods encourages student participation and strengthens comprehension. The implementation of professional competence contributes to the creation of a supportive and conducive learning environment. Through constructive feedback, continuous assessment, and encouragement, the teacher helps students develop confidence and motivation in learning Christian Religious Education. This supportive environment allows students not only to improve their academic performance but also to internalize moral and spiritual values conveyed through the lessons. In this way, the teacher's professional competence functions not only as an instructional asset but also as a formative influence in the development of students' character. The study also acknowledges certain limitations, such as the availability of limited learning resources and the diverse learning abilities among students. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and institutional support in providing adequate teaching materials and learning facilities. Strengthening teachers' professional competence through training, collaboration, and reflective practice will further enhance the quality of Christian Religious Education instruction. This study confirms that teachers' professional competence is a crucial factor in improving students'

learning outcomes. At SDN Penda Pilang, the effective implementation of professional competence by the Christian Religious Education teacher has contributed positively to students' academic success and spiritual formation. Therefore, efforts to strengthen teacher professionalism should remain a priority in educational development, particularly in subjects such as Christian Religious Education that aim to integrate intellectual learning with moral and spiritual growth.

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