



Reflecting God's Glory in the Classroom: Personal Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers Inspired by Exodus 40:9 at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe

Erwin Marihot Sinaga

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

* correspondence: erwinmarihotsinaga@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The personal competence of teachers plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education, particularly in shaping students' spiritual understanding and character formation. Teachers are not only responsible for conveying biblical knowledge but also for reflecting Christian values through their attitudes, behavior, and personal integrity. This study aims to examine how the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers reflects the glory of God in the classroom, inspired by the theological reflection of Exodus 40:9. The research was conducted at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe, a Christian-based junior high school with 121 Christian students and 22 Christian teachers, including teachers responsible for Christian Religious Education. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of teachers and students within the learning environment. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to the manifestation of teachers' personal competence in teaching practice. The findings indicate that the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is expressed through several key dimensions, including spiritual integrity, moral consistency, relational sensitivity, pedagogical responsibility, and exemplary character. The study also highlights that when teachers embody biblical principles in their daily interactions with students, the classroom becomes a space where spiritual formation and character development can occur simultaneously. Ultimately, the study concludes that strengthening the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of Christian education and fostering students who are spiritually mature and ethically responsible.

Keywords: Personal Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Glory

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays an essential role in shaping students' spiritual awareness, moral character, and faith commitment within the context of formal education. In Christian educational institutions, teachers are not only responsible for transmitting knowledge but also for modeling Christian values through their personal lives. Among the various competencies expected of teachers, personal competence occupies a central place because it reflects the integrity, maturity, and spiritual authenticity of the educator. In the context of Christian Religious Education, personal competence becomes even more significant since the credibility of biblical teaching is often measured by the consistency between what teachers teach and how they live. Therefore, the personal competence of CRE teachers functions as a visible expression of Christian faith that can influence students' understanding of God and their spiritual formation (Pazmiño, 2008). The concept of personal competence in education generally refers to the teacher's ability to demonstrate integrity, self-discipline, responsibility, and ethical behavior in professional practice. Educational scholars emphasize that teachers who possess strong personal competence can create a learning environment characterized by trust, respect, and moral clarity. According to James R. Estep, Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg Allison, Christian educators are called not only to teach biblical knowledge but also to embody the gospel message in their attitudes and behaviors so that students can see the integration of faith and life in real terms (Estep et al., 2008). This perspective highlights that teaching in Christian education involves a spiritual dimension where personal character becomes a crucial pedagogical tool.

Biblical theology also emphasizes the importance of personal holiness and consecration in serving God. One relevant passage is Exodus 40:9, which describes the anointing of the tabernacle and its furnishings as a sign of dedication to God's glory. In this text, the act of anointing symbolizes sanctification and the recognition that everything used for God's service must reflect His holiness and glory. Scholars note that the consecration of the tabernacle in Exodus represents the establishment of a sacred space where God's presence dwells among His people (Wright, 2006). When applied to Christian education, this concept suggests that teachers, as servants of God in the classroom, are called to reflect God's glory through their character, attitudes, and teaching practices. The classroom, therefore, can be understood as a space where God's glory is reflected through the interaction between teachers and students. Christian educators who demonstrate humility, responsibility, compassion, and integrity provide students with a living example of Christian values. Thomas H. Groome argues that effective Christian education integrates biblical reflection with lived experience, allowing students to encounter faith not merely as doctrine but as a transformative way of life (Groome, 2011). In this sense, the personal competence of CRE teachers becomes an important factor in ensuring that the message of Scripture is communicated authentically and meaningfully. The role of Christian Religious Education teachers is also closely connected to national educational goals that emphasize character formation. Teachers are expected to nurture students' spiritual and moral development while maintaining professional standards of teaching. However, the effectiveness of this mission often depends on the personal qualities of the teacher, including spiritual maturity, emotional stability, and ethical consistency. Christian

educators who exhibit strong personal competence can guide students to appreciate the glory of God not only through biblical texts but also through the example of a life devoted to God's service.

This study was conducted at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe, a Christian-based educational institution where there are 121 Christian students and 22 Christian teachers, including teachers of Christian Religious Education. In this environment, the teaching of Christian faith is expected to contribute significantly to the spiritual growth of students. However, understanding how teachers' personal competence reflects the glory of God in the classroom remains an important area of inquiry. Investigating this issue can provide valuable insights into the relationship between teacher character, biblical teaching, and students' faith development. Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the role of personal competence among Christian Religious Education teachers in reflecting God's glory through teaching practices inspired by Exodus 40:9. By exploring how teachers embody spiritual values in their daily interactions with students, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discussion on the integration of biblical theology, teacher competence, and character-based education within Christian schools. Ultimately, the study highlights that the credibility of Christian teaching in the classroom is closely connected to the authenticity of the teacher's personal life, which serves as a living testimony of God's glory.

METHODS

Qualitative research was considered appropriate for this study because it allows researchers to understand educational phenomena in depth, particularly those related to attitudes, character, spirituality, and interpersonal interactions within the learning environment. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, enabling the researcher to capture complex experiences and contextual realities within educational settings (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the research aimed to examine how the personal competence of CRE teachers is expressed through their behavior, teaching practices, and interactions with students in the classroom. The research was conducted at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe, a Christian-based junior high school in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This school was selected as the research site because it integrates Christian values within its educational environment and provides a suitable context for examining the relationship between teacher character and Christian Religious Education. At the time of the study, the school had 121 Christian students and 22 Christian teachers, including teachers responsible for Christian Religious Education. The presence of a predominantly Christian school community created an environment where biblical teaching and character formation are expected to be central components of the educational process. The participants in this study consisted primarily of Christian Religious Education teachers, along with several students who were involved in the learning process. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the phenomenon being studied. As explained by Michael Quinn Patton, purposive sampling allows researchers to select information-rich cases that can provide detailed insights into the issue being investigated (Patton, 2015). In this research, CRE teachers were chosen because they directly engage in teaching

biblical material and play a significant role in shaping students' understanding of Christian values. Data were collected through several techniques, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how teachers demonstrate personal competence in real teaching situations, such as through attitudes of discipline, humility, responsibility, and integrity when delivering lessons related to Christian faith. Observations also focused on how teachers communicate biblical messages and how students respond to these teaching practices. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with CRE teachers to explore their perspectives on the meaning of personal competence, their understanding of the theological message of Exodus 40:9, and how they integrate these values into their teaching activities. Interviews provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and reflections in greater depth. In addition, documentation such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and school policy documents related to Christian education were analyzed to understand how the teaching of God's glory and spiritual character formation is structured within the institutional framework. In this study, data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were compared to identify consistent patterns related to the manifestation of teachers' personal competence in the classroom. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved several stages, including data organization, coding, categorization, and interpretation. All interview transcripts and observation notes were carefully reviewed to identify meaningful statements related to teacher character, spiritual attitudes, and teaching practices. These statements were then grouped into thematic categories reflecting different aspects of personal competence, such as integrity, spiritual maturity, responsibility, and the ability to reflect God's glory through teaching. Finally, the themes were interpreted in light of the theological message of Exodus 40:9, which emphasizes consecration and dedication to God's glory. Through this methodological approach, the research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the reflection of God's glory within the classroom environment at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the personal competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a crucial role in reflecting the glory of God in the classroom at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe. The results are derived from classroom observations, interviews with Christian Religious Education teachers, and analysis of relevant school documents. These findings indicate that the personal competence of teachers is expressed through several interconnected dimensions, including spiritual integrity, moral consistency, relational sensitivity, pedagogical responsibility, and the ability to embody biblical values in daily educational practice. These dimensions collectively shape the learning environment and significantly influence students' spiritual and moral development. When examined in light of the theological reflection of Exodus 40:9, which describes the consecration of the tabernacle as a symbol of dedication to God's glory, the role of the teacher becomes analogous to that of a servant entrusted with maintaining a

sacred space where God's presence is honored and manifested through faithful service. One of the most significant findings of this study is the central role of spiritual integrity in the personal competence of CRE teachers. Spiritual integrity refers to the alignment between a teacher's faith, personal life, and professional responsibilities. Observations in several Christian Religious Education classes revealed that teachers who consistently demonstrate sincerity, humility, and devotion create a learning atmosphere that encourages students to engage more deeply with biblical teachings. In interviews, teachers explained that teaching Christian Religious Education is not merely a professional duty but a spiritual calling that requires personal commitment to living according to Christian values. This perspective aligns with the broader understanding of Christian education as a vocation that integrates faith and pedagogy. Scholars such as Robert W. Pazmiño emphasize that Christian educators must embody the message they teach because the credibility of Christian instruction depends on the authenticity of the teacher's life (Pazmiño, 2008). The findings of this study support this view, showing that students respond more positively to teachers whose character reflects the spiritual principles taught in the classroom. Another important dimension of personal competence identified in this research is moral consistency. Moral consistency refers to the teacher's ability to maintain ethical behavior and discipline in both teaching and interpersonal interactions. During classroom observations, CRE teachers at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe demonstrated strong commitment to fairness, honesty, and responsibility in guiding students. For example, teachers consistently applied classroom rules with patience and respect, emphasizing that discipline should reflect Christian values rather than authoritarian control. Students interviewed during the study expressed that they respected teachers who demonstrated fairness and kindness because such attitudes helped them understand the practical meaning of Christian teachings. This finding is consistent with the argument of James R. Estep and colleagues that Christian educators serve as moral exemplars whose behavior shapes the ethical perceptions of their students (Estep et al., 2008). In the context of Exodus 40:9, the concept of consecration suggests that individuals dedicated to God's service must reflect His holiness through ethical conduct. When teachers demonstrate moral consistency, they effectively embody this biblical principle within the educational setting.

Relational sensitivity also emerged as a key component of teachers' personal competence. Relational sensitivity refers to the ability of teachers to build caring, respectful, and supportive relationships with students. Observations revealed that CRE teachers often created opportunities for open dialogue, encouraging students to express their thoughts and experiences related to faith and daily life. Teachers frequently integrated personal reflection into lessons, asking students to consider how biblical teachings apply to their own circumstances. This relational approach helps students perceive Christian education as relevant and meaningful rather than abstract or purely doctrinal. The ability to establish supportive relationships reflects the pastoral dimension of Christian teaching, where educators act not only as instructors but also as mentors guiding students toward spiritual maturity. Thomas H. Groome highlights that authentic Christian education involves shared reflection between teacher and student, where faith is explored within the context of lived experience (Groome, 2011). The findings of this research confirm that relational sensitivity enhances the effectiveness of CRE teaching by

fostering an environment of trust and openness. Pedagogical responsibility was identified as another significant aspect of teachers' personal competence. Pedagogical responsibility refers to the commitment of teachers to prepare lessons carefully, present biblical material clearly, and ensure that students understand the spiritual significance of the topics discussed. Teachers at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe demonstrated strong dedication to preparing lesson plans that integrate biblical texts with practical applications relevant to students' lives. For instance, lessons based on biblical narratives often included discussions about ethical decision-making, respect for others, and the importance of faith in overcoming challenges. Teachers also used storytelling and reflective questioning to help students connect biblical teachings with their personal experiences. This approach reflects the educational philosophy that Christian learning should involve both cognitive understanding and spiritual formation. According to George R. Knight, Christian education aims to guide learners toward a holistic understanding of truth that integrates knowledge, character, and faith (Knight, 2006). The pedagogical practices observed in this study illustrate how teachers' personal commitment to their vocation can enhance the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education.

Another important finding concerns the symbolic significance of the classroom as a space where God's glory can be reflected. The theological message of Exodus 40:9 emphasizes the consecration of the tabernacle as a place where God's presence dwells among His people. In a similar sense, the classroom in a Christian educational setting can be understood as a space where spiritual values are cultivated and where the presence of God is acknowledged through teaching and learning activities. Teachers who demonstrate personal competence contribute to the creation of such an environment by maintaining attitudes of reverence, respect, and dedication in their interactions with students. Observations in the classroom showed that teachers often began lessons with prayer and short reflections on biblical passages, emphasizing the importance of inviting God's guidance in the learning process. These practices help students understand that education is not merely an intellectual pursuit but also a spiritual journey that involves recognizing God's role in human life. The role of teacher example also emerged as a powerful influence on students' attitudes toward Christian values. Students repeatedly mentioned that they were inspired by teachers who demonstrated patience, kindness, and sincerity in their daily interactions. These personal qualities served as practical demonstrations of the Christian principles discussed in the classroom. Educational theorists often emphasize that students learn not only through formal instruction but also through observation of role models. In Christian education, the teacher's life itself becomes a form of testimony that reinforces the credibility of biblical teachings. This idea corresponds with the biblical concept of discipleship, where spiritual formation occurs through relationships and example rather than through instruction alone. By embodying the values of humility, integrity, and compassion, CRE teachers effectively communicate the message that God's glory is revealed through faithful living. The research findings suggest that personal competence contributes to students' spiritual awareness and motivation to learn. Students reported that they felt encouraged to engage more actively in Christian Religious Education classes when teachers demonstrated genuine care and enthusiasm for the subject. The authenticity of the teacher's character helped students perceive biblical teachings as relevant and applicable to their lives. This observation aligns

with the educational principle that meaningful learning occurs when students feel emotionally and spiritually connected to the learning process. When teachers demonstrate commitment to their faith and vocation, they inspire students to approach religious education with greater seriousness and curiosity. The presence of a supportive school community also plays an important role in strengthening the personal competence of CRE teachers. At SMP Methodist Kabanjahe, the fact that there are 22 Christian teachers creates an environment where Christian values are reinforced across different aspects of school life. Teachers collaborate in organizing spiritual activities such as prayer meetings, devotional sessions, and character-building programs. These activities provide opportunities for both teachers and students to deepen their faith and strengthen their sense of community. Such collaboration reflects the communal dimension of Christian education, where the responsibility for spiritual formation is shared among educators rather than limited to a single subject teacher. Teachers occasionally face difficulties balancing administrative responsibilities with the time required for spiritual preparation and reflection. Students come from diverse family backgrounds with varying levels of spiritual support, which can influence their engagement with Christian teachings. These challenges highlight the importance of ongoing professional and spiritual development for Christian educators. Continuous reflection, prayer, and theological learning are necessary to sustain the spiritual vitality required for effective teaching. The findings of this study demonstrate that the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers remains a decisive factor in reflecting God's glory within the classroom. When teachers approach their vocation with sincerity, humility, and dedication, they transform the educational environment into a place where faith and learning are integrated meaningfully. The message of Exodus 40:9 reminds believers that everything dedicated to God must reflect His holiness and glory. In the context of Christian education, this principle encourages teachers to consecrate their talents, character, and professional responsibilities to God's service. The results of this study highlight that the personal competence of CRE teachers at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe is expressed through spiritual integrity, moral consistency, relational sensitivity, pedagogical responsibility, and exemplary character. These qualities collectively contribute to a learning environment where students can experience Christian values in both teaching and practice. By embodying the principles reflected in Exodus 40:9, teachers demonstrate that education can become a form of ministry that reveals God's glory in everyday interactions. Such findings reinforce the importance of nurturing both the professional skills and the spiritual formation of Christian educators so that they may continue to guide students toward faith, character, and a deeper understanding of God's presence in their lives.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the personal competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a vital role in reflecting the glory of God within the classroom environment at SMP Methodist Kabanjahe. Through qualitative analysis involving classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, the research found that the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education is closely related to the character, integrity, and spiritual maturity of the teacher. Teachers who possess strong personal competence are able to integrate biblical teachings with authentic personal example, thereby creating

a learning environment where faith is not only taught conceptually but also experienced through daily interactions. The findings reveal that several key dimensions of personal competence contribute significantly to the process of reflecting God's glory in Christian Religious Education. These dimensions include spiritual integrity, moral consistency, relational sensitivity, pedagogical responsibility, and exemplary character. Teachers who demonstrate these qualities are able to foster a classroom atmosphere characterized by respect, trust, and spiritual reflection. In such an environment, students are encouraged to understand biblical teachings not merely as theoretical knowledge but as guiding principles for their lives. The alignment between teachers' personal character and the values they teach strengthens the credibility of Christian instruction and enhances students' engagement with the learning process. The theological reflection on Exodus 40:9 provides an important framework for understanding the significance of personal competence in Christian education. In the biblical narrative, the anointing of the tabernacle symbolizes dedication and consecration to God's glory. When applied to the context of education, this concept suggests that teachers who serve in Christian educational institutions are called to dedicate their lives, talents, and professional responsibilities to God's service. The classroom thus becomes a space where spiritual formation takes place and where God's glory can be reflected through faithful teaching and exemplary conduct. The study highlights that the presence of a supportive Christian school community contributes to the development of teachers' personal competence. Collaboration among teachers, participation in spiritual activities, and the integration of Christian values across the school environment help reinforce the spiritual mission of education. Such a community encourages educators to maintain their commitment to personal growth, both professionally and spiritually, so that they can effectively guide students toward a deeper understanding of faith.

The findings confirm that teachers' personal competence remains a decisive factor in shaping the spiritual and moral development of students. When Christian Religious Education teachers consistently demonstrate humility, integrity, compassion, and dedication, they become living testimonies of the biblical message they proclaim. In this way, their presence in the classroom serves as a reflection of God's glory and an inspiration for students to pursue a life grounded in faith and moral responsibility. Strengthening the personal competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of Christian education. Educational institutions should therefore support teachers through continuous spiritual formation, professional development, and collaborative learning opportunities. By nurturing teachers who embody Christian values in both character and practice, Christian schools can ensure that the process of education not only develops academic knowledge but also forms students who are spiritually mature, ethically responsible, and committed to living in accordance with God's will.

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