



Developing Active Faith in Christian Education: The Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers Based on Philippians 2:12-13 at SD Negeri Pulo Latong

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ABSTRACT

The development of active faith is a central goal of Christian Religious Education, particularly in contexts where students require guidance to connect biblical teachings with daily life. In this process, the spiritual competence of teachers plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and practice of faith. This study examines the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering active faith among students based on the theological perspective of Philippians 2:12-13 at SD Negeri Pulo Latong, Southeast Aceh. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving one CRE teacher and ten Christian students who participate in Christian Religious Education classes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis to explore how the teacher's spiritual competence influences the development of students' faith. The findings reveal that the teacher's spiritual competence is expressed through personal spiritual discipline, contextual biblical teaching, relational mentoring, and the modeling of Christian values in daily interactions. The study concludes that spiritually competent teachers play a vital role in cultivating active faith among students, even within minority and resource-limited educational contexts, by integrating biblical values with meaningful educational practices that support holistic spiritual development.

Keywords: Active Faith, Christian Religious Education, Spiritual Competence

INTRODUCTION

Christian education is fundamentally concerned with the formation of faith that is both personal and active in everyday life. Unlike purely academic disciplines, Christian Religious Education (CRE) seeks to integrate knowledge, belief, and practice so that students develop a living relationship with God while also embodying Christian values in their daily behavior. In this process, teachers hold a crucial role not only as transmitters of biblical

knowledge but also as spiritual mentors who guide students toward a deeper understanding of faith. The effectiveness of Christian education therefore depends significantly on the spiritual competence of teachers who are able to connect biblical teachings with the real-life experiences of students. One biblical passage that provides an important theological foundation for such spiritual formation is Philippians 2:12-13, which encourages believers to “work out” their salvation while recognizing that God works within them to will and act according to His good purpose. The epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul the Apostle to encourage the Christian community in Philippi to live faithfully in the midst of social and spiritual challenges. In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul emphasizes the dynamic relationship between human responsibility and divine grace. Believers are called to actively live out their faith, yet this process is empowered by God’s work within them. In the context of Christian education, this theological principle suggests that faith development requires intentional guidance, practice, and reflection. Teachers who possess strong spiritual competence can help students understand that faith is not merely a set of beliefs but a way of life that influences attitudes, relationships, and decisions. According to Pazmiño (2008), Christian education aims to nurture discipleship by integrating biblical teaching with life experience so that learners grow spiritually, morally, and intellectually. Spiritual competence among CRE teachers includes several interrelated dimensions, such as personal faith maturity, biblical understanding, spiritual leadership, and the ability to guide students toward meaningful faith practices. These competencies enable teachers to serve as authentic role models whose lives reflect the values they teach. When students observe consistency between a teacher’s instruction and personal conduct, the message of Christian faith becomes more credible and impactful. Groome (2011) argues that Christian educators must embody the faith they teach, because authentic witness is a central element of effective faith formation. In this sense, spiritual competence involves both internal spiritual discipline and external educational practice.

The importance of spiritual competence becomes even more significant in educational contexts where the Christian student population is small and resources for religious education may be limited. Schools located in regions where Christians form a minority often face unique challenges in maintaining consistent faith formation for students. In such environments, the presence of a dedicated and spiritually mature teacher becomes an essential factor in sustaining the spiritual growth of students. SD Negeri Pulo Latong, located in Southeast Aceh, represents one such context. Within this school community, there are ten Christian students and one Christian Religious Education teacher responsible for guiding their spiritual learning. The limited number of students and teachers creates both challenges and opportunities for Christian education. On one hand, resources and institutional support may be limited; on the other hand, the small learning environment allows for more personal interaction and mentoring relationships between teacher and students. While pedagogical competence remains important, the spiritual dimension of teaching plays an equally critical role in shaping students’ faith experiences. The integration of biblical teachings with professional teaching practice requires educators who are spiritually grounded and capable of guiding students toward active faith. Philippians 2:12-13 provides a meaningful framework for understanding this process because it highlights the cooperative relationship between human effort and

divine empowerment in spiritual growth. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the development of active faith among students at SD Negeri Pulo Latong, Southeast Aceh. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of both the teacher and the students, the research aims to understand how biblical values are implemented within the classroom and how they influence students' faith development. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on Christian education by highlighting the importance of teacher spirituality as a foundational element in cultivating active and meaningful faith among students, particularly within small and minority Christian educational contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering active faith among students based on the theological perspective of Philippians 2:12-13. A qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of the research was to understand deeply the experiences, perceptions, and spiritual practices of teachers and students within their natural educational context. Qualitative descriptive research enables the researcher to examine educational and social phenomena through detailed descriptions and interpretations of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014). In the context of this study, the approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of how spiritual competence is expressed in the daily practices of Christian Religious Education. The research was conducted at SD Negeri Pulo Latong in Southeast Aceh, an elementary school where Christian students form a small minority within the broader school community. The participants consisted of one Christian Religious Education teacher and ten Christian students who regularly attend CRE classes. Because the population of Christian students in the school is limited, the study used a total sampling approach in which all available participants were involved in the research process. This approach ensures that the perspectives of all Christian students receiving religious instruction are represented in the findings. The CRE teacher served as the primary key informant, providing insights into teaching strategies, spiritual practices, and the challenges of nurturing active faith within a small educational setting. Data were collected using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher to explore his understanding of spiritual competence, his interpretation of the biblical message of Paul the Apostle in Philippians 2:12-13, and the ways in which this teaching is applied in classroom practice. Interviews with students were also conducted to capture their experiences of Christian Religious Education, their perceptions of the teacher's spiritual guidance, and their understanding of how faith can be practiced in daily life. These interviews allowed participants to share their perspectives openly while enabling the researcher to probe deeper into relevant themes. Classroom observations were carried out during Christian Religious Education lessons to examine how the teacher integrates biblical teachings into the learning process and how students respond to those teachings. The observations focused on several aspects, including teaching methods, student participation, teacher-student interaction, and the incorporation of spiritual practices such as prayer, reflection, and discussion of biblical values. In addition, documentation analysis was conducted by reviewing relevant

materials such as lesson plans, teaching notes, and school records related to Christian Religious Education activities. These documents provided supporting evidence regarding the teacher's preparation and the structure of the learning process. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with the process of familiarization, in which the researcher carefully read interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This was followed by coding, where significant statements and meaningful patterns related to spiritual competence and faith development were identified. The codes were then organized into broader themes that represent key aspects of the teacher's spiritual competence and its influence on students' active faith. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives and the theological framework derived from Philippians 2:12-13. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were applied. Data triangulation was used by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted by confirming key interpretations with the teacher to ensure that the researcher's understanding accurately reflected the participants' experiences. Additionally, detailed descriptions of the research context and procedures were provided to enhance transparency and reliability. Through these methodological steps, the study seeks to present a trustworthy and meaningful account of how the spiritual competence of a Christian Religious Education teacher contributes to the development of active faith among students at SD Negeri Pulo Latong, Southeast Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Negeri Pulo Latong, Southeast Aceh, plays a significant role in cultivating active faith among students. Although the number of Christian students in the school is relatively small, only ten students guided by a single CRE teacher, the educational process reveals meaningful patterns of faith development that are closely connected to the teacher's spiritual leadership, personal example, and pedagogical approach. The spiritual competence of the teacher is reflected in several interrelated dimensions, including personal spiritual maturity, the integration of biblical teaching into classroom practice, relational mentoring with students, and the encouragement of practical expressions of faith in everyday life. These dimensions resonate strongly with the theological message of Philippians 2:12-13, which emphasizes the dynamic relationship between human responsibility and divine empowerment in the process of spiritual growth. One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data is the teacher's strong commitment to personal spiritual discipline as the foundation of professional ministry. During interviews, the teacher explained that spiritual competence begins with a consistent relationship with God through prayer, Bible study, and personal reflection. These spiritual practices are seen as essential for maintaining wisdom, patience, and spiritual sensitivity in guiding students. The teacher emphasized that teaching Christian Religious Education requires more than academic preparation; it demands a life that is spiritually aligned with the message being taught. This perspective reflects the teaching of Paul the Apostle in his letter to the Philippians, where believers

are encouraged to actively live out their salvation while recognizing that God works within them to accomplish His purposes. By cultivating personal spiritual discipline, the teacher seeks to remain attentive to God's guidance in the educational process. Classroom observations further reveal how this personal spirituality translates into practical teaching methods that encourage students to develop active faith. Lessons are not limited to explaining biblical passages but also involve discussions, reflections, and practical applications that help students understand how faith influences daily decisions and relationships. For example, when discussing Philippians 2:12-13, the teacher encouraged students to reflect on the meaning of "working out salvation" in their own lives. Students were invited to share experiences of practicing honesty, helping others, or resolving conflicts with friends. Through such activities, biblical teachings become relevant to the students' personal experiences rather than remaining abstract theological concepts. This approach aligns with the principles of Christian educational theory, which emphasize experiential learning and the integration of faith with everyday life.

Another significant finding is the importance of relational closeness between the teacher and students in supporting faith development. Because the number of Christian students is small, the classroom environment resembles a close-knit learning community where personal interaction is frequent and meaningful. Students described the teacher as approachable, patient, and attentive to their individual needs. This relational dynamic allows the teacher to provide not only academic instruction but also pastoral guidance. Students often seek advice regarding personal challenges, friendships, and moral dilemmas, and the teacher responds by connecting these situations with biblical values. In this sense, the teacher functions as both educator and spiritual mentor. The small class size creates opportunities for individualized guidance that may be difficult to achieve in larger educational settings. The role of modeling also emerges as a critical element of spiritual competence. Students consistently reported that the teacher's personal example greatly influences their understanding of Christian faith. When students observe the teacher demonstrating kindness, fairness, humility, and responsibility, they perceive these qualities as authentic expressions of Christian teaching. This observation supports the broader principle that character formation in Christian education occurs not only through verbal instruction but also through the lived example of educators. The teacher's consistent behavior reinforces the message that faith involves concrete actions and attitudes that shape everyday life. Such consistency between teaching and personal conduct strengthens the credibility of the educational message and encourages students to imitate similar values in their own lives. The findings also highlight the creative strategies used by the teacher to overcome limitations in educational resources. As a school located in a rural area with limited facilities, SD Negeri Pulo Latong does not always have access to multimedia tools or specialized teaching materials for Christian Religious Education. Nevertheless, the teacher employs various interactive methods such as storytelling, group discussions, role-playing, and contextual examples drawn from students' daily experiences. These strategies enable students to engage actively with biblical teachings even without advanced technological resources. The emphasis on dialogue and reflection encourages students to think critically about the meaning of faith and its relevance to their personal lives. This adaptability demonstrates that spiritual competence includes the ability to contextualize biblical teaching within the realities of the local educational environment.

Another aspect revealed in the findings is the teacher's role in encouraging communal expressions of faith among students. Although the Christian student population in the school is small, the teacher organizes regular activities such as group prayer, Bible reading sessions, and discussions about moral values. These activities create a sense of spiritual community among students who might otherwise feel isolated as a minority within the broader school context. Through these communal practices, students learn that faith is not merely an individual belief but also a shared commitment that strengthens relationships within the Christian community. The teacher's effort to cultivate this sense of fellowship reflects the biblical principle that spiritual growth occurs within a supportive community of believers. The students' responses during interviews reveal that these educational practices have a tangible impact on their attitudes toward faith. Many students expressed that they now understand faith as something that must be practiced through actions such as helping friends, respecting parents and teachers, and demonstrating honesty in schoolwork. Some students also described how they have become more confident in expressing their Christian identity within the school environment. These testimonies indicate that the teacher's spiritual competence has contributed to the development of active faith, consistent with the message of Philippians 2:12–13. Students begin to recognize that faith involves both personal commitment and reliance on God's guidance. The study also identifies several challenges associated with nurturing active faith in a minority context. One challenge relates to the limited opportunities for students to interact with larger Christian communities within the school environment. Because the number of Christian students is small, opportunities for group worship or larger fellowship activities are relatively limited compared with schools where Christians form the majority. The teacher addresses this challenge by encouraging students to participate in church activities outside the school and by maintaining communication with local church leaders when possible. This collaboration helps ensure that students receive consistent spiritual support beyond the classroom. Another challenge involves balancing academic curriculum requirements with the broader goals of spiritual formation. As a teacher in a public school, the CRE educator must follow national curriculum guidelines while also seeking to nurture students' faith development. Achieving this balance requires careful lesson planning and thoughtful integration of biblical principles within academic objectives. The findings indicate that the teacher manages this challenge by framing lessons around themes such as responsibility, perseverance, humility, and cooperation—values that are both educationally relevant and consistent with Christian teaching. The results of this study contribute to the understanding of spiritual competence as an essential component of teacher professionalism in Christian education. While educational discourse often emphasizes pedagogical techniques and academic outcomes, this research highlights the importance of spiritual leadership and personal integrity in shaping meaningful learning experiences. The teacher's ability to connect biblical teaching with real-life situations enables students to perceive faith as a practical and transformative force rather than a purely theoretical concept. The findings underscore the importance of contextual sensitivity in Christian education. The strategies employed by the teacher are shaped by the unique circumstances of the school environment, including its small Christian population and limited resources. Instead of viewing these conditions as obstacles, the teacher transforms them into opportunities for deeper personal interaction and mentorship. This

adaptability illustrates how spiritual competence involves not only theological knowledge but also the capacity to respond creatively to local educational realities. The results and discussion of this study reveal that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher at SD Negeri Pulo Latong plays a crucial role in fostering active faith among students. Through personal spiritual discipline, relational mentoring, contextual teaching methods, and communal faith practices, the teacher creates an educational environment where students can experience the practical implications of Christian belief. The theological message of Philippians 2:12-13 serves as a guiding framework that emphasizes both human participation and divine empowerment in the process of spiritual growth. Within this framework, the teacher acts as a facilitator who guides students to live out their faith in concrete and meaningful ways. The findings suggest that the development of active faith in Christian education depends significantly on the spiritual competence and dedication of teachers. When educators embody the values they teach and intentionally integrate biblical principles into the learning process, students are more likely to develop a vibrant and authentic faith that influences their character, relationships, and daily decisions. Even within small and resource-limited educational contexts, spiritually competent teachers can create powerful opportunities for faith formation that leave a lasting impact on the lives of their students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how the spiritual competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher contributes to the development of active faith among students at SD Negeri Pulo Latong, Southeast Aceh. Grounded in the theological perspective of Philippians 2:12-13, the research highlights that spiritual competence is a foundational element in the practice of Christian education. The findings reveal that the teacher's spiritual maturity, commitment to personal faith practices, and ability to integrate biblical teachings into classroom learning play a central role in nurturing students' faith development. Through consistent prayer, Bible study, and reflection, the teacher maintains a strong spiritual foundation that supports effective guidance for students in their faith journey. The results also show that the teacher's spiritual competence is expressed through relational mentoring, contextual teaching strategies, and the modeling of Christian values in everyday interactions. Because the number of Christian students in the school is relatively small, the educational environment allows for close relationships between the teacher and students. This closeness enables the teacher to provide individualized spiritual guidance and to connect biblical teachings with the real-life experiences of students. As a result, students are encouraged to understand faith not merely as a belief system but as a practical commitment that influences their attitudes, relationships, and actions. The study demonstrates that active faith can be cultivated even within minority and resource-limited contexts when teachers demonstrate dedication, creativity, and spiritual leadership. By fostering classroom discussions, encouraging communal prayer, and providing moral guidance, the teacher creates opportunities for students to experience the transformative power of Christian faith in their daily lives. The message of Paul the Apostle in Philippians underscores that spiritual growth involves both human effort and God's work within believers, a principle that is reflected in the teacher's approach to guiding students toward responsible and active expressions of faith. The spiritual competence of CRE teachers is essential for the holistic development of students in

Christian education. Teachers who embody the values of the gospel and intentionally integrate biblical teachings into their professional practice can effectively nurture active faith among students. Even in small educational communities such as SD Negeri Pulo Latong, the presence of spiritually committed educators can have a profound impact on students' spiritual formation and character development. Future research may further explore similar educational contexts to deepen understanding of how teacher spirituality contributes to faith formation in diverse school environments.

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