



## Biblical-Based Pedagogical Competence in Christian Religious Education: A Study at SMP Negeri 3 Toma

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### ABSTRACT

*Education plays a crucial role in shaping the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of students, preparing them to navigate modern challenges with integrity and wisdom. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), teaching is not limited to the transfer of knowledge but extends to the formation of faith, character, and spiritual maturity rooted in biblical truth. Consequently, teachers of CRE are called to embody pedagogical competence that integrates professional expertise with scriptural principles. This responsibility becomes particularly significant in regions such as Toma, a subdistrict in South Nias, North Sumatra, where Christianity constitutes both a religious identity and a cultural foundation. Toma is distinguished by strong communal ties and a predominantly Christian population. Families, schools, and churches often collaborate to preserve moral and spiritual values, yet the community faces educational challenges, including limited resources and external secular influences. In this context, SMP Negeri 3 Toma represents a vital setting where biblical principles intersect with national curriculum requirements. Teachers in this school are expected to not only manage instruction effectively but also serve as spiritual mentors, modeling Christ-centered values through their pedagogical practices. Biblical-based pedagogical competence involves more than technical proficiency; it emphasizes teaching as a transformative act grounded in Scripture. By incorporating prayer, reflection, biblical narratives, and Christian ethics into instruction, teachers cultivate both academic learning and spiritual resilience. This dual focus equips students to confront secular ideologies while nurturing critical thinking, moral responsibility, and a Christ-centered worldview. This study investigates how CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Toma embody such competence, exploring their strategies, challenges, and contributions to students' holistic formation. Ultimately, it underscores that biblical-based pedagogy is not merely an educational strategy but a theological imperative essential for preparing students to live faithfully in a complex world.*

**Keywords:** *Biblical, Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education*

## INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental medium through which values, knowledge, and skills are transmitted from one generation to another. In the context of Christian education, teaching extends beyond intellectual development to the holistic formation of students' faith, character, and spirituality. Teachers, therefore, are not only transmitters of information but also role models whose competence reflects both professional skills and a deep-rooted commitment to biblical principles. Pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) must be anchored in biblical truth so that the learning process does not merely shape cognitive understanding but also cultivates moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and transformative life practices (Brummelen, 2015). This study seeks to explore the dynamics of biblical-based pedagogical competence among teachers of Christian Religious Education, with a particular focus on the context of SMP Negeri 3 Toma, located in Nias Selatan, Indonesia. The discourse surrounding teacher competence has long been a central concern in educational research. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education, teacher competence encompasses pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions. Among these, pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning in ways that meet students' developmental needs and foster effective engagement. However, when this competence is placed within the framework of Christian Religious Education, it acquires a distinctive dimension: the integration of biblical foundations. Teachers are expected not only to master instructional strategies but also to align their pedagogical practices with scriptural truth, modeling Christ-centered values in every aspect of teaching and learning. Biblical-based pedagogy emphasizes the inseparability of teaching from the teacher's faith and spiritual maturity. The apostle Paul reminds in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” This passage highlights that Scripture is not merely supplementary but foundational in guiding the educational process. A Christian teacher, therefore, is called to design learning activities that reflect biblical wisdom, nurture students' personal relationship with God, and shape their ethical decision-making in everyday life (Sibarani, 2025). Such an approach differentiates Christian pedagogy from secular educational practices, as it aims at holistic transformation grounded in the Word of God.

SMP Negeri 3 Toma, as the locus of this study, offers a unique cultural and educational setting. Toma is a sub-district within South Nias Regency (Kabupaten Nias Selatan), an island region in North Sumatra known for its rich cultural traditions, communal values, and predominantly Christian population. The local community in Toma places strong emphasis on kinship, respect for elders, and collective responsibility—values that resonate with biblical teachings on love, service, and fellowship. Despite geographical challenges as a relatively remote area, Toma has demonstrated resilience in prioritizing education as a means of empowering the younger generation. Within this environment, Christian Religious Education functions not only as an academic subject but also as a vital instrument in preserving faith identity, reinforcing moral values, and equipping students to live out their faith in both local and global contexts.

The integration of biblical-based pedagogical competence in such a context is essential. Teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Toma are faced with the dual responsibility of addressing

contemporary educational demands while remaining faithful to their spiritual mission. On the one hand, they must adhere to national standards of curriculum design and assessment; on the other, they are entrusted with the calling to teach as servants of Christ, embodying patience, humility, and love in their professional practice. This dual responsibility often presents challenges, especially when educational modernization requires adaptation to new technologies and pedagogical innovations that may not always align with biblical worldviews (Foster, 2010). Nevertheless, it also provides opportunities for teachers to contextualize their teaching, ensuring that students are equipped academically while remaining grounded in Christian faith and practice. The specific context of South Nias highlights the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in Christian education (Murti, 2023). Students in Toma are shaped not only by classroom instruction but also by their cultural heritage and local community practices. A biblical-based pedagogical approach enables teachers to affirm local values—such as respect, mutual care, and perseverance—while integrating them with Christian virtues. In doing so, education becomes both contextually relevant and theologically rooted, fostering a learning environment where students can thrive intellectually, spiritually, and socially. In recent years, scholarly attention has increasingly turned to the role of teachers' spiritual competence in enhancing student outcomes. Research suggests that when teachers embody biblical values in their pedagogy, students experience not only improved academic achievement but also deeper spiritual growth and stronger moral character. This is particularly significant in regions such as South Nias, where students are preparing to face both local realities and global challenges. By cultivating biblical-based pedagogical competence, teachers empower students to navigate these challenges with discernment, integrity, and a Christ-centered worldview. Therefore, this study is timely and necessary. It examines how Christian Religious Education teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Toma implement biblical-based pedagogical competence in their practice. It seeks to uncover the strategies they employ, the challenges they encounter, and the extent to which their pedagogy contributes to the spiritual formation of their students. Through this exploration, the study not only contributes to the broader discourse on Christian pedagogy but also provides practical insights for teachers, policymakers, and church communities who share the mission of nurturing the next generation in faith and learning. Biblical-based pedagogical competence stands at the heart of Christian Religious Education, is the bridge that connects professional skill with spiritual mission, ensuring that teaching is not reduced to technical instruction but becomes a transformative act of discipleship. In the cultural and educational landscape of Toma, South Nias, such competence is not merely an academic ideal but a lived necessity—one that sustains both the faith identity of students and the integrity of Christian education in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative case study design, as it sought to gain an in-depth understanding of how biblical-based pedagogical competence is implemented by Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers within the specific context of SMP Negeri 3 Toma, South Nias. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the research questions centered on exploring teachers' practices, lived experiences, and the meanings

they attach to their pedagogical roles. The case study method further allowed for a holistic examination of the interplay between cultural context, educational policy, and biblical foundations in shaping teaching strategies. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Toma, a junior high school located in South Nias Regency, North Sumatra. This school was selected because of its distinctive cultural and religious environment, where Christian values strongly influence educational practice. The participants consisted of three CRE teachers who were directly responsible for delivering Christian Religious Education. In addition, to provide triangulation and broaden the perspective, school administrators (the principal and one vice-principal) and a small group of parents were also interviewed. Student perspectives were included through focus group discussions involving two groups of students from different grade levels. This multi-stakeholder approach was employed to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore teachers' pedagogical strategies, the biblical principles guiding their instruction, and the challenges they encountered. Classroom observations focused on how biblical values were integrated into teaching practices, including lesson delivery, interaction patterns, and assessment methods. Document analysis included curriculum plans, lesson plans, and school policies to examine the institutional framework supporting CRE instruction. Collecting data from multiple sources helped ensure data triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded inductively to identify recurring themes related to biblical-based pedagogy. Codes were then grouped into broader categories such as "integration of Scripture in pedagogy," "cultural contextualization," and "challenges in implementation." Through constant comparison, patterns were refined and linked to the conceptual framework of pedagogical competence and biblical integration. To enhance validity, findings were cross-checked with participants through member checking, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives. This methodological design enabled a nuanced exploration of biblical-based pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 3 Toma, capturing both the strengths and challenges of its implementation within a distinctive cultural and religious context.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of biblical-based pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SMP Negeri 3 Toma is both deeply rooted in scriptural values and shaped by the socio-cultural realities of South Nias. The teachers in this study demonstrated a strong commitment to aligning their instructional practices with biblical principles, although the extent and manner of integration varied depending on individual teaching styles, levels of theological understanding, and the challenges of contextual realities. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, three dominant themes emerged: the integration of Scripture in pedagogy, the contextualization of teaching within Niasan culture, and the challenges faced by teachers in balancing educational demands with their spiritual mission. One of the most prominent findings concerns the integration of Scripture as the foundation of

pedagogy (Gaghunting, 2022). Teachers consistently emphasized that the Bible is not treated as supplementary material but as the central guide in planning lessons, delivering content, and evaluating student outcomes. In classroom observations, teachers frequently began lessons with the reading of Scripture and prayer, setting a tone that positioned biblical truth as the starting point of learning. Lesson plans reviewed also reflected a deliberate effort to incorporate biblical passages that corresponded with the theme being taught. For example, in a lesson on honesty and integrity, teachers referred to Proverbs 12:22, linking the biblical mandate for truthfulness with practical applications in students' daily lives. This integration demonstrates that pedagogical competence in CRE is not simply about effective delivery but about ensuring that every instructional moment becomes an avenue for moral and spiritual formation. Such an approach echoes the Pauline exhortation in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, where Scripture is seen as essential for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness. The teachers' practices confirm that their pedagogy is intentionally Christ-centered and grounded in the Word of God, thereby differentiating it from secular educational models that focus exclusively on cognitive development.

A second theme that emerged is the cultural contextualization of biblical pedagogy. Given the unique socio-cultural landscape of South Nias, the teachers in Toma consistently drew upon local traditions and values to reinforce biblical teachings. South Nias is known for its communal way of life, respect for elders, and kinship systems that prioritize collective responsibility. These values, while cultural, resonate strongly with Christian virtues of love, respect, and service. Teachers often contextualized biblical lessons by referencing cultural practices familiar to students. For instance, in teaching about mutual care and sacrifice, teachers drew parallels with local customs of *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) that are practiced in the community. Students were encouraged to see these practices not only as cultural heritage but also as reflections of biblical principles of fellowship and stewardship. This approach ensured that biblical-based pedagogy was not abstract but relevant and relatable to students' lived realities. It also affirms the argument of scholars who emphasize the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in Christian education, where the integration of faith and culture enhances the holistic development of learners (Palmer, 2007). The data also show that teachers' pedagogical practices extended beyond cognitive instruction to character and spiritual formation. Teachers perceived their role not only as educators but also as spiritual mentors and role models. This dual role was visible in how they related to students inside and outside the classroom. Observations revealed that teachers modeled Christ-centered values such as patience, humility, and forgiveness in their interactions with students. For example, during one classroom session, when a student struggled with participation, the teacher responded with encouragement rather than reprimand, framing the moment as an opportunity to teach about God's grace. Such lived modeling reflects the holistic understanding of pedagogy that this study underscores: that teaching is not merely the transmission of knowledge but also the embodiment of values that students can emulate. Students interviewed in focus groups highlighted that they saw their CRE teachers as role models who guided them not only academically but also spiritually, shaping their attitudes toward prayer, honesty, and service to others. At the same time, the findings indicate that teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Toma face significant challenges in implementing biblical-based pedagogy.

One of the main challenges identified was the pressure to balance national curriculum requirements with the spiritual mission of Christian education (Knight, 2008). Teachers acknowledged that the government-mandated curriculum for CRE provides a framework that they must follow, yet they often felt that certain aspects of the curriculum were limited in addressing deeper spiritual needs. As a result, teachers frequently adapted the content by supplementing it with additional biblical resources and contextual discussions. This adaptation, while beneficial for spiritual formation, sometimes created tension in meeting standardized assessment requirements (Smith, 2018).

Another challenge lies in the limited access to educational resources and technology. Given the relatively remote location of South Nias, teachers reported difficulties in accessing updated teaching materials, digital tools, and training opportunities (Siahaan, 2020). This constraint affected their ability to innovate pedagogically, especially in an era where technology-enhanced learning is increasingly emphasized at the national level. Despite these limitations, teachers showed resilience by relying on locally available resources, community support, and their own creativity. For example, rather than using digital media, teachers often employed storytelling, role-play, and group discussions as pedagogical tools to make lessons engaging and participatory. While these methods align well with biblical-based pedagogy, they also highlight the need for greater institutional support to enable teachers to integrate modern educational innovations without compromising their biblical framework (Tillich, 2011). In discussing the findings, it becomes evident that the implementation of biblical-based pedagogical competence in SMP Negeri 3 Toma reflects both universal principles of Christian pedagogy and the particularities of the local context. The emphasis on Scripture as foundational pedagogy aligns with theological perspectives that view education as an extension of discipleship. The practice of integrating cultural values into biblical teaching resonates with broader discourses on contextual theology, which argue that faith must be expressed in ways that are culturally intelligible and transformative. Moreover, the teachers' commitment to holistic formation reflects the broader Christian educational ideal that seeks to nurture not only the mind but also the heart and spirit of learners. These findings also contribute to the broader discourse on teacher competence as defined by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. While pedagogical competence is generally understood as the ability to design and deliver effective instruction, the case of SMP Negeri 3 Toma demonstrates that in the context of Christian education, pedagogical competence cannot be separated from spiritual maturity and biblical integration. This reinforces the idea that competence in CRE teaching must encompass not only technical skills but also faith-driven intentionality. It suggests that educational policy, when applied in faith-based contexts, must allow for flexibility and contextualization to enable teachers to fulfill their dual responsibility as educators and spiritual mentors.

In terms of student outcomes, the data indicate that biblical-based pedagogy positively influences students' spiritual formation and moral character (Lickona, 2004). Students reported that CRE lessons helped them grow in their personal relationship with God, improved their understanding of Christian values, and guided their ethical decision-making. These outcomes align with existing research that shows the positive correlation between teachers' spiritual competence and students' holistic development. In the specific context of Toma, this impact is particularly significant because education is not

only an academic pursuit but also a means of sustaining the community's Christian identity and resilience in the face of modern challenges. The challenges identified in this study highlight the need for ongoing support and development for CRE teachers. Professional development programs that integrate pedagogical innovation with biblical foundations could help teachers navigate the demands of modern education without compromising their spiritual mission. Similarly, greater institutional investment in resources and infrastructure would enable teachers in remote areas like Toma to access tools that enhance their teaching while maintaining biblical integration. Importantly, collaboration between schools, churches, and local communities is essential to sustain the mission of biblical-based pedagogy (Woodard, 2023). By working together, these stakeholders can ensure that Christian education remains both academically credible and spiritually transformative. They affirm that biblical-based pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 3 Toma is not an abstract ideal but a lived reality shaped by Scripture, cultural context, and the resilience of teachers committed to their calling. The integration of biblical truth in pedagogy, the contextualization of teaching within Niasan culture, and the emphasis on holistic formation reflect the depth and distinctiveness of Christian education in this setting (Runtukahu, 2022). At the same time, the challenges of curriculum demands, limited resources, and technological constraints underscore the need for systemic support to sustain and enhance this pedagogical practice. The findings suggest that biblical-based pedagogy is vital not only for academic success but also for nurturing a generation of students who are spiritually mature, morally grounded, and equipped to face the complexities of contemporary life with a Christ-centered worldview. In this way, the study contributes to the broader discourse on Christian pedagogy and underscores the importance of empowering teachers as both professionals and spiritual mentors in the transformative work of education.

## Conclusion

This study has underscored the significance of biblical-based pedagogical competence in the teaching of Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SMP Negeri 3 Toma, South Nias. The findings demonstrate that such competence is not only essential for effective knowledge transmission but also crucial for fostering holistic student formation—encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. By grounding their teaching in Scripture, teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Toma embody the conviction that education is a sacred responsibility, one that extends beyond technical instruction to the transformative work of discipleship. This approach affirms the biblical principle articulated in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, wherein Scripture is presented as the foundation for teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness. A central conclusion of this research is that the integration of Scripture into pedagogy is more than a methodological choice; it is the defining characteristic of Christian education. Teachers' deliberate use of biblical passages in lesson planning, classroom discussions, and moral exhortation illustrates how faith and pedagogy are inseparable. Through this integration, CRE instruction transcends the boundaries of academic content, enabling students to internalize biblical values that inform their

decision-making and life practices. In this respect, pedagogical competence cannot be reduced to technical expertise but must be understood as deeply intertwined with the teacher's spiritual maturity and faith-driven intentionality. The study further highlights the importance of contextualizing pedagogy within the cultural realities of South Nias. By drawing on communal traditions such as kinship, mutual care, and respect for elders, teachers make biblical teachings both relevant and relatable. This contextualization not only affirms local cultural identity but also demonstrates the compatibility of biblical principles with indigenous values, thereby creating a culturally responsive Christian pedagogy. Such integration reflects the broader theological conviction that faith must be expressed in forms that are intelligible and transformative within particular cultural contexts. The research has also illuminated several challenges that impede the full realization of biblical-based pedagogy. Teachers face the tension of balancing national curriculum requirements with the spiritual mission of CRE, often necessitating adaptation of standardized materials to meet students' spiritual needs. Resource limitations, including restricted access to updated teaching materials and technology, further constrain pedagogical innovation. Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrate resilience and creativity by utilizing locally available resources and community-based practices to enrich learning. These findings point to the need for systemic support through professional development programs, institutional investment, and stronger collaboration between schools, churches, and communities. The implications of this study extend beyond the local setting of Toma. They suggest that biblical-based pedagogical competence is indispensable for Christian education more broadly, as it ensures that teaching remains both academically credible and spiritually transformative. The experiences of CRE teachers in South Nias exemplify how biblical pedagogy equips students not only to excel academically but also to grow in faith, moral character, and resilience in navigating the challenges of contemporary life. It affirms that biblical-based pedagogical competence is at the heart of Christian education, serving as the bridge between professional skill and spiritual mission. At SMP Negeri 3 Toma, this competence is lived out through the integration of Scripture, the contextualization of teaching, and the holistic mentoring of students. While challenges persist, the commitment of teachers to embody Christ-centered values in their pedagogy ensures that education remains a transformative act of discipleship. Such an approach is vital for nurturing a generation of students who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually mature and morally grounded, able to face the complexities of the modern world with a Christ-centered worldview.

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