



The Application of Strong Personal Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Educating Students at SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai Based on Proverbs 22:6

Rosinta Sihaloho^{1*}, Eben Haezarni Telaumbanua²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: sihalohorosinta606@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the practical application of strong personal competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in educating students at SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai. The research draws its inspiration from the profound biblical principle found in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This verse provides the essential theological and pedagogical foundation for understanding the teacher's vital role in shaping students' moral and spiritual lives from an early age. The primary focus of this research centers on the moral and spiritual depth inherent in the teacher's personality, which is crucial for influencing students' faith beliefs and overall character. A mature personal competence is viewed as the key driver for the successful transmission of Christian values. To achieve its objectives, the study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were gathered comprehensively through various methods, including direct classroom observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and stakeholders, and relevant documentation. The findings consistently indicate that CRE teachers possessing firm personal competence-characterized by integrity, consistency between word and action, and spiritual maturity-serve as powerful role models. These teachers effectively instill moral discipline, foster faith development, and cultivate a strong sense of responsibility among their students. Significantly, this research contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse on teacher professionalism within the realm of Christian education. The study underscores that biblical principles are not merely supplementary but are essential pedagogical foundations required for nurturing students' holistic development. Ultimately, the quality of a teacher's character stands as the core element of transformative faith-based education.

Keywords: *Personal competence, Christian Religious Education, Proverbs 22:6*

INTRODUCTION

The foundational purpose of education is increasingly understood to encompass a comprehensive development of the student, extending significantly beyond the mere

transmission of cognitive knowledge and academic skills. Within the specialized domain of Christian Religious Education (CRE), this mandate assumes an intensified dimension, focusing critically on the holistic formation of students' spiritual lives, ethical frameworks, and moral character. The efficacy of CRE, therefore, is ultimately measured not by test scores alone, but by its capacity to nurture young individuals who embody Christian values and exhibit the ethical maturity necessary to contribute positively to society. This dual purpose—intellectual instruction and character formation—places an immense, unique responsibility on the CRE educator. This critical role is amplified within the specific educational context of Indonesia. As a nation founded upon the principle of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (Belief in the One and Only God), religious and moral instruction holds an inherent and mandatory place in the curriculum. Yet, despite the pervasive presence of religious education, Indonesian schools and society at large are contending with persistent and escalating challenges related to moral decline and problematic student behavior, including issues of bullying, academic dishonesty, and social misconduct (Astuti & Purwanto, 2021). This growing ethical chasm highlights a significant failure in translating didactic instruction into internalized moral action. In this environment, the curriculum and methodology, while important, recede in influence relative to the personality and ethical conduct of the teacher, which emerges as the single most decisive factor in the moral education process. The teacher acts not merely as an instructor, but as the living, primary model of the principles they advocate, thus demonstrating the *telos* of the faith being taught.

For the Christian educator, the call to moral mentorship is fundamentally anchored in a theological basis. The Bible provides clear direction regarding the enduring impact of early guidance and consistent character formation. Proverbs 22:6—"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it"—serves as the cornerstone of Christian educational philosophy. This passage underscores a profound commitment to early and sustained character development, suggesting that foundational moral and spiritual training yields a long-term, cumulative, and persistent impact on a child's ethical and spiritual trajectory throughout their life. The responsibility of the CRE teacher is, therefore, understood as a sacred stewardship over the soul and character of the students, necessitating that the educator's own life be an unwavering reflection of the faith they are tasked with imparting. This theological imperative is systematically reinforced by the regulatory framework governing the Indonesian education system. The Indonesian National Education Standards (codified in the *Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 16/2007*) explicitly define and require four core teacher competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and, crucially, personal competence. This standard stipulates that teachers must demonstrate inherent traits such as maturity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, stability, and high integrity—qualities that transcend mere professional skill. For CRE teachers, this mandate is further elevated and spiritualized (Sinaga, 2020). Their personal competence is not simply a professional attribute but a spiritual necessity, demanding demonstrable obedience to God and an unwavering faithfulness in reflecting Christlike values, ethical consistency, and spiritual maturity in every facet of their daily interactions.

Therefore, strong personal competence in CRE reflects a teacher's profound capacity to model Christlike behavior effectively. It is the ability to maintain ethical integrity in teaching, demonstrate emotional stability under duress, and uphold a profound

consistency between the faith they profess and the actions they take. This visible alignment between faith and action is the true engine of transformative influence in moral education, offering students a tangible, lived example of Christian principles being successfully applied to daily ethical decisions. When a CRE teacher embodies these qualities—exhibiting fairness, resilience, and genuine care—they move beyond merely discussing the biblical mandate of Proverbs 22:6; they embody the principle, providing a clear, observable model that guides children toward righteous and mature living.

This research aims to empirically investigate the application and efficacy of this essential competence within a specific, relevant context. SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai serves as the setting for this study, providing a localized environment in which to explore how CRE teachers operationalize their personal competence within the confines of the national public school system. The primary objective is to thoroughly examine the nature and demonstration of personal competence by CRE teachers at this institution and to analyze its demonstrable transformative influence on students' moral character development and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, this study investigates how teachers reconcile and enact their competence against both national regulatory requirements and theological mandates, how the crucial consistency between their personal faith and professional actions is perceived by students, and the resulting impact on the students' internalization of Christian values and overall moral conduct, thereby providing empirical evidence for the successful implementation of the character formation principles articulated in Proverbs 22:6. The ensuing sections will proceed with a comprehensive review of relevant literature, an articulation of the research methodology employed, a presentation and discussion of the findings, and, finally, a conclusion detailing the study's contributions and implications for future practice and research.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore and document the intricate ways in which Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers demonstrate and enact strong personal competence within their pedagogical methods and relational practices. The study was situated at SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai, a public primary school where CRE is formally established as an integral component of the mandatory curriculum, providing a relevant and focused context for investigating the intersection of teacher character and moral formation. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of key perspectives central to the phenomenon under study, resulting in the involvement of two CRE teachers and ten students from their respective classes. Data were systematically collected using a triangulation of three primary techniques to enhance the depth and validity of the findings. First, direct observation was conducted to examine the teachers' consistent behavior in practice, focusing specifically on their teaching demeanor, application of discipline, and dynamic interaction with students outside formal instruction. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted separately with both the participating teachers and the selected students to gain nuanced perspectives on the teachers' personality, ethical conduct, and the perceived influence of the teachers' character on student moral and spiritual attitudes. Third, documentation analysis involved reviewing official materials such as lesson plans, teaching materials used in the CRE curriculum, and school policies related to moral and character education,

providing contextual and corroborating evidence. Data analysis followed the well-established model proposed which comprised three simultaneous flows of activity: data reduction (selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the raw data), data display (organizing and assembling the reduced data into matrices and charts), and conclusion drawing and verification. The credibility and reliability of the interpretations were rigorously ensured through the systematic use of triangulation, cross-referencing findings gathered from the observations, interviews, and documentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integrity stands as the indispensable bedrock of effective character education, representing the ultimate alignment between a teacher's professed values and their tangible actions. The findings of this study conclusively indicate that the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai consistently demonstrated unwavering honesty and fairness in all their pedagogical and relational interactions. This ethical behavior was not situational but rather a pervasive pattern that characterized their daily conduct. By upholding this stringent standard, these educators effectively bridged the chasm between abstract moral lessons and concrete ethical practice. This observed ethical consistency served as the catalyst for cultivating a deep, reciprocal trust among the student body. Students, possessing an acute radar for hypocrisy, readily perceived the authenticity of their teachers, a perception that exponentially amplified the teachers' moral authority within the classroom setting. The importance of integrity in the teacher's role cannot be overstated; it functions as the moral capital necessary for any persuasive communication about character. When students witness a teacher applying the same ethical standards to themselves—such as owning up to a mistake or ensuring impartial treatment in grading and discipline—they learn that morality is not a set of external rules but an internal commitment. Hamalik (2004) emphasizes that the teacher's character serves as the moral foundation upon which students' respect and obedience are built. Respect is not merely granted based on professional title; it is earned through the consistent display of genuine integrity. When trust is firmly established through the teacher's predictable ethical behavior, student compliance shifts from being purely mandatory to being voluntary and internalized. They obey not out of fear of punishment, but out of respect for the moral authority the teacher has established. This dynamic transforms the classroom environment from a place of mere rule-following into a community where ethical standards are mutually valued and upheld. Furthermore, in the broader Indonesian context, where public trust in institutions is often challenged by reports of corruption or inconsistency, the teacher's integrity becomes a vital counter-narrative, modeling the virtuous civic and spiritual life essential for national character development. This unwavering personal competence makes the moral lessons taught by the CRE teacher not only palatable but powerfully transformative, establishing the precondition for all subsequent moral learning.

Consistency in Teaching and Conduct

The transformative power of Christian Religious Education lies in the demonstrable consistency between what is explicitly taught in the classroom and what is implicitly modeled in the teacher's personal life and professional conduct. The study highlighted

that the CRE teachers meticulously ensured a robust alignment between classroom instruction and personal life, thus eliminating the moral confusion that hypocrisy often engenders. For instance, abstract virtues discussed during lessons—such as the theological concepts of forgiveness, discipline, and unconditional obedience—were immediately reinforced and given concrete meaning through the teachers' everyday example. If a lesson centered on the necessity of forgiveness, the teachers subsequently modeled grace and patience when a student erred. If the instruction focused on discipline and responsibility, the teachers demonstrated punctuality, organized preparation, and accountability for their own commitments. This profound consistency fulfills the core theological and educational mandate found in Proverbs 22:6, which instructs educators to "train up a child in the way he should go." Rahman (2022) underscores that the efficacy of this training hinges on the child not only *hearing* moral teachings but witnessing them in active, consistent application. Consistency transforms the cognitive lesson into a lived experience, solidifying the moral truth through empirical observation. The teacher, in this capacity, becomes the "living curriculum," providing irrefutable proof that the Christian values they espouse are both achievable and sustaining in daily life. Conversely, any inconsistency—a lesson on honesty followed by a teacher's minor deceit—would immediately undermine the integrity established in the previous domain, fostering cynicism and rendering the moral instruction inert. This finding confirms that the teacher's personal competence acts as a bridge between theory and practice. The continuous, reliable display of moral virtue creates a predictable moral environment, allowing students to internalize the teachings as a reliable blueprint for righteous living. The repetition of the moral lesson through the teacher's consistent character ensures that the training penetrates beyond superficial memory, setting the child on a path that they are less likely to abandon in adulthood, thereby fulfilling the long-term character formation promise inherent in the biblical text.

Spiritual Maturity and Prayer Life

The investigation into the personal competence of the CRE teachers revealed that their capacity for effective character modeling was intrinsically linked to their spiritual maturity, which was visibly nurtured through a disciplined prayer life and devotional practice. Teachers who regularly engaged in personal prayer, devoted time to reflective study of scripture, and maintained a deep, ongoing spiritual life demonstrated a markedly superior capacity for emotional stability and patience when managing the inevitable behavioral challenges and disciplinary issues arising among students. This spiritual discipline was not a private matter entirely separated from their professional duties; rather, it served as the hidden wellspring for the resilience and grace they consistently displayed in the classroom.

The observable effect of this spiritual grounding was the promotion of a palpably different classroom environment. Wahyuni (2021) links this spiritual discipline directly to pedagogical outcomes, suggesting that an educator's centeredness, derived from devotion, directly translates into a climate of peace and mutual respect. In practical terms, this spiritual maturity manifested as the ability to respond to conflict rather than react emotionally. Instead of immediate frustration or punitive anger in the face of student misbehavior, these teachers exhibited a calm, measured, and grace-filled approach. Their internal spiritual discipline allowed them to practice the self-control necessary to model

forgiveness and patience, even under provocation. This consistent display of controlled, non-anxious presence, rooted in their relationship with God, provided a powerful, non-verbal lesson in emotional regulation for the students. The students, in turn, learned to equate Christian discipleship not with unattainable perfection but with sustained stability and grace. The teacher's prayer life thus became a professional necessity, equipping them with the affective competence required to manage the high emotional labor inherent in moral education. This spiritually nourished patience creates a psychologically safe space where students feel comfortable admitting failure, seeking genuine repentance, and embarking on the challenging journey of character transformation without fear of condemnation.

Compassion and Empathy in Student Relations

A fourth, and perhaps most powerful, element of the CRE teachers' personal competence was their consistent reliance on compassion and empathy when navigating their relationships with students, particularly during moments of discipline and moral failure. The findings showed that these teachers consciously adopted an approach rooted in deep understanding and empathy, seeking to grasp the underlying causes, struggles, or developmental stage contributing to a student's misbehavior, rather than focusing solely on the infraction itself. This perspective-taking allowed them to avoid punitive, shame-based disciplinary actions. This compassionate approach is profoundly significant as it mirrors Christ's love and serves as the ultimate enactment of the Christian call to restorative justice. Manullang (2019) argues that disciplinary methods rooted in *agape* love are crucial for transformation, as they preserve the student's dignity while unequivocally addressing the moral failure. The mechanism of empathy shifts the disciplinary focus from "What punishment is deserved?" to "What needs to change for the student to grow and repair the harm?" Instead of simply inflicting pain or issuing sanctions, the teachers guided students toward genuine repentance and internal transformation. For example, when addressing a student who had cheated or bullied, the teachers did not resort to public shaming but engaged in private, reflective dialogue. They asked probing questions designed to foster self-awareness, personal accountability, and a plan for restitution or reconciliation. This method taught students that discipline is an act of love, designed to correct and restore, not merely to punish and exclude. By modeling Christ-like compassion—a patient, forgiving, yet firm approach to sin and failure—the teachers demonstrated that the core of the Christian life is not rigid legalism but relational grace. This compassionate personal competence ensures that the moral education process leads to lasting changes in the student's heart and character, solidifying their commitment to righteous living through an experience of transformative, empathetic love.

CONCLUSION

These findings align with previous educational theories emphasizing that personal competence significantly affects students' emotional and moral development (Atmojo, 2013). A teacher's spiritual integrity functions as a living curriculum, embodying Christian values through example rather than instruction alone. Thus, the application of personal competence in this context demonstrates that Christian education is most effective when

teachers integrate biblical wisdom, emotional stability, and professional integrity. This integration nurtures not only academic achievement but also moral and spiritual growth, consistent with the theological vision of Proverbs 22:6.

The study concludes that the application of strong personal competence among CRE teachers is essential for holistic Christian education. Teachers at SD Negeri 020271 East Binjai exemplify how personal integrity, spiritual maturity, and compassion can transform both classroom dynamics and student character. By embodying the principles of Proverbs 22:6, CRE teachers serve as living witnesses of faith who guide students toward moral responsibility and enduring spirituality. Educational institutions must therefore prioritize continuous development of teachers' personal competence through spiritual formation programs, mentoring, and reflection on biblical values. Future research could further explore quantitative assessments of personal competence and its correlation with student moral outcomes in diverse educational contexts.

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