



## **Implementation of Teacher Competence through Social Inquiry-Based Christian Religious Education Learning at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the implementation of teacher competencies in Christian Religious Education (PAK) through social inquiry-based learning at SD Negeri 066653 Medan Helvetia. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The research subjects consisted of PAK teachers and fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 066653 Medan Helvetia. The findings reveal that the implementation of pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies by PAK teachers through social inquiry-based learning effectively enhanced students' understanding of religious concepts, social skills, and critical thinking. Furthermore, this learning approach encouraged students to relate Christian values to contemporary social issues in their daily lives. The study recommends further development of the social inquiry learning model within the context of religious education at the elementary school level.*

**Keywords:** *teacher competence, Christian education, social inquiry, elementary school*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Christian Religious Education (CRE) at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and instilling moral values. As one of the compulsory subjects in the national curriculum, CRE is not merely intended to transfer religious knowledge but also has a broader purpose: to develop students' ability to apply Christian values in their daily lives. In this regard, teacher competence plays a decisive role in the success of the CRE learning process at the elementary level. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers clearly stipulates that every professional teacher must possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence. These four competencies are integrated and must be demonstrated in teachers' performance across all subjects, including Christian Religious Education. Pedagogical competence refers to teachers' ability to design and implement effective

learning processes, while personal competence relates to teachers' attitudes and behaviors that reflect strong moral and ethical values. Social competence involves teachers' ability to interact with students and the broader social environment, and professional competence refers to mastery of the subject matter being taught. In practice, however, CRE learning at the elementary level is often still dominated by conventional, doctrinal approaches. These approaches tend to focus on one-way delivery of religious content, providing little room for students to think critically and develop their own understanding. Such methods frequently neglect students' life contexts and offer limited opportunities for them to analyze and respond to social issues relevant to their everyday experiences. This situation poses a significant challenge for CRE teachers in optimally implementing their competencies, particularly in encouraging students to understand religious teachings in a deeper and more applicable manner.

One approach that can address these issues is social inquiry-based learning. This approach, developed from the inquiry learning model, emphasizes investigation into issues relevant to students' lives, whether social, moral, or religious. Social inquiry-based learning encourages students not only to understand religious concepts theoretically but also to analyze and respond to social problems from a Christian faith perspective. Within this framework, students are actively engaged in the learning process, where they are given opportunities to ask questions, seek information, and construct their own understanding of Christian values applied in social life. Joyce and Weil (2015) explain that the social inquiry approach provides opportunities for students to think critically and creatively, as well as to develop their problem-solving skills. Through this approach, CRE learning is no longer limited to doctrinal information delivery but also aims at shaping attitudes and behaviors aligned with Christian teachings in addressing everyday challenges. This is consistent with the broader goals of education, namely to form individuals who not only possess sound religious knowledge but are also capable of applying these values in concrete actions. For instance, at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia, a state elementary school in Medan, CRE teachers have made efforts to implement social inquiry-based learning. Initial observations revealed that CRE teachers at this school have attempted to integrate the social inquiry approach into Christian Religious Education. Several challenges remain in its implementation, including limited time to conduct inquiry-based lessons, insufficient teacher understanding and skills in managing inquiry-based learning, and difficulties in motivating students to actively engage in the learning process. This study is of particular importance as it seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of how CRE teacher competencies are implemented through social inquiry-based learning at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia. The research aims to explore various factors that influence both the success and the challenges of applying pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies in the context of social inquiry-based CRE learning. In addition, this study is expected to provide a clearer picture of how the social inquiry approach can enhance the quality of CRE learning and contribute to the development of Christian Religious Education at the elementary level. Several previous studies have examined aspects related to the implementation of teacher competencies in religious education. For example, Hutapea (2020) investigated CRE teacher competence in online learning, while Simbolon (2018) developed a contextual approach-based CRE learning model. However, studies specifically focusing on the implementation of CRE teacher competence through social inquiry-based learning at the

elementary school level remain limited. Thus, this study is expected to fill this gap and provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of CRE learning in elementary schools.

Based on this background, the primary objective of this research is to analyze the implementation of CRE teacher competencies within the context of social inquiry-based learning. More specifically, the study aims to: (1) analyze the implementation of pedagogical competence of CRE teachers through social inquiry-based learning, (2) analyze the implementation of personal competence of CRE teachers through social inquiry-based learning, (3) analyze the implementation of social competence of CRE teachers through social inquiry-based learning, and (4) analyze the implementation of professional competence of CRE teachers through social inquiry-based learning at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia. It is expected to provide deeper insights into the role of teacher competence in CRE learning and the importance of the social inquiry approach in developing students' critical thinking skills and the application of Christian values. The findings are anticipated to serve as a reference for developing more innovative and effective CRE learning strategies, as well as to offer input for enhancing the competencies of CRE teachers in elementary schools. Ultimately, Christian Religious Education at the elementary level can become more effective in shaping students' character and moral values while preparing them to face life's challenges with a strong understanding of Christian principles.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth account of the implementation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher competencies through social inquiry-based learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study in its natural context, as explained by Creswell and Poth (2018). The descriptive method was used to describe, analyze, and interpret conditions related to the implementation of CRE teacher competencies at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia, with the aim of providing a clear and comprehensive picture of the practice of social inquiry-based learning. It was conducted at Public Elementary School 066653, located in Medan Helvetia Sub-district, Medan City, North Sumatra Province. Data collection was carried out over a period of three months, from January to March 2025. This extended period was chosen to ensure that the researcher could collect representative and sufficient data, as well as to enable an in-depth analysis of the implementation of teacher competencies in the learning process. The research subjects consisted of CRE teachers and fifth-grade students at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia. Two CRE teachers participated as subjects, along with 30 fifth-grade students. Fifth grade was selected as the focus of the study because students at this level generally possess sufficiently complex cognitive abilities to engage in social inquiry processes, which require skills in analyzing and discussing social issues relevant to their lives. To collect data, three primary techniques were employed: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document study. Participatory observation was conducted through direct observation of social inquiry-based CRE lessons delivered by the teachers. The researcher observed eight class sessions using an observation guide that had been validated by experts. In-depth interviews were

conducted with CRE teachers to obtain deeper insights into the implementation of teacher competencies through social inquiry-based learning. Additional interviews were also held with the school principal and several students to gather supplementary information relevant to the focus of the study. Finally, document study was used to collect materials related to the implementation of CRE teacher competencies, such as lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, teaching materials, learning journals, and student portfolios.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, functioning as a human instrument, relying on the researcher's ability to collect and analyze data objectively. In addition, supporting instruments were used, including an observation guide covering aspects of teacher competence and indicators of social inquiry-based learning. An interview guide was utilized to structure questions related to the implementation of CRE teacher competencies, while documentation sheets were employed to analyze relevant documents. Data collected through observation, interviews, and document study were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The data analysis process consisted of three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and transformed raw data into more structured and comprehensible information. The condensed data were then presented in the form of narrative texts, tables, and diagrams to facilitate the conclusion-drawing process. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the analyzed data, followed by verification to ensure data validity through source and technique triangulation. To ensure data credibility, the researcher employed triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from different sources, such as CRE teachers, the school principal, and students. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing data gathered through observation, interviews, and document study. Additionally, member checking was carried out by confirming data and interpretations with the research subjects to ensure accuracy. Peer debriefing was also performed by discussing research findings with colleagues in order to obtain feedback and alternative perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity of the study's findings. It is expected to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the implementation of CRE teacher competencies through social inquiry-based learning at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia. Furthermore, the findings are anticipated to contribute to the development of more effective and relevant CRE learning that aligns with students' needs in an increasingly complex era.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### ***Understanding Students' Characteristics***

CRE teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of students' characteristics in social inquiry-based learning. Based on classroom observations, teachers were able to identify students' potential, levels of comprehension, and diverse learning styles. In interviews, Teacher A stated:

*"Before implementing social inquiry-based learning, I conduct an initial assessment to understand students' characteristics, whether cognitive, affective, or psychomotor. This is important because each student has a different background and ability in responding to social issues from a religious perspective."*

Such understanding of students' characteristics served as a foundation for teachers in designing social inquiry-based learning tailored to students' needs and abilities. For instance, for students who tended to be passive, teachers provided more intensive scaffolding during the inquiry process.

### **Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning**

CRE teachers demonstrated competence in developing curricula and designing social inquiry-based learning. Based on the analysis of lesson plans (RPP), teachers had integrated the social inquiry approach into CRE by formulating learning indicators that directed students toward the ability to analyze and respond to social issues from a Christian values perspective. One example of curriculum development was found in the topic *"Living Together in Diversity"* for fifth grade. Teachers designed lessons that enabled students to investigate cases of intolerance in society and analyze them from a Christian faith perspective. The lesson plan included stages that reflected the inquiry process: problem orientation, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion drawing. In implementing social inquiry-based CRE, teachers demonstrated the ability to create an educational and dialogical learning atmosphere. Observations showed that teachers did not act as the sole source of knowledge but rather as facilitators who encouraged students to be active in investigation and discussion.

Teacher B explained in an interview:

*"In social inquiry-based CRE, I try to create a safe and comfortable classroom environment where students feel free to express opinions and ask critical questions. I encourage them to discuss social issues from various perspectives and relate them to Christian values."*

Classroom observations revealed that teachers used various interactive learning methods, such as group discussions, role-playing, and investigative projects. For example, during a discussion on *"Social Justice"*, the teacher posed stimulating questions that prompted students to think critically about injustices in society and how Christians should respond to them.

### **Utilization of Information and Communication Technology**

CRE teachers utilized information and communication technology in social inquiry-based learning. Observations indicated the use of various digital media, such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, and online learning platforms to support students' investigations. One example was during an inquiry on *"The Role of the Church in Environmental Issues."* Teachers facilitated students' access to information from multiple digital sources and guided them in evaluating the credibility of those sources. Students were also encouraged to present their findings using digital presentation tools. CRE teachers further demonstrated competence in evaluating both the process and outcomes of social inquiry-based learning. Document analysis showed the use of multiple assessment instruments covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Cognitive assessment not only measured students' understanding of religious concepts but also their ability to analyze social issues from a Christian faith perspective. Affective assessment was conducted through observation of attitudes and student reflection journals, while psychomotor assessment involved projects and performance tasks.

Teacher A explained in an interview:

*“In social inquiry-based learning, the process of students’ investigations is just as important as the final outcomes. Therefore, I use authentic assessment that includes both process and product evaluation. For example, I assess how students formulate questions, collect data, analyze information, and draw conclusions.”*

### **Implementation of Personal Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning**

CRE teachers exhibited steady and mature personalities in social inquiry-based learning. Observations showed that they were able to manage emotions effectively when faced with critical questions from students or differing opinions in classroom discussions.

The school principal noted in an interview:

*“Our CRE teachers possess stable and strong personalities. They serve as role models for students in demonstrating maturity and wisdom, especially when addressing sensitive social issues in inquiry-based learning.”*

CRE teachers demonstrated maturity and wisdom in guiding students through social inquiry. Observations revealed that they did not impose personal perspectives on students but rather encouraged them to develop their own understanding based on Christian values. For example, in a lesson on *“Respecting Diversity”*, teachers did not provide direct answers about how Christians should treat people of other faiths. Instead, they guided students to explore various biblical perspectives and apply them in the context of a pluralistic society. Teachers’ authority was evident in their ability to create a conducive learning environment for social inquiry. Observations showed that students respected their teachers and followed their guidance during the inquiry process.

One student stated in an interview:

*“I enjoy learning CRE with my teacher because she not only explains well but also listens to our opinions. She can be firm without being harsh, which makes us feel comfortable to ask questions and engage in discussions.”*

CRE teachers acted as role models in applying Christian values in daily life. Student interviews indicated that teachers did not merely teach religious values theoretically but also demonstrated how those values are practiced in responding to social issues.

Teacher B explained:

*“As a CRE teacher, I strive to be a role model for students in integrating faith with social action. For example, when discussing environmental care, I not only encourage students to investigate but also join them in concrete actions, such as school greening activities.”*

### **Implementation of Social Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning**

CRE teachers demonstrated effective communication skills with students in social inquiry-based learning. Observations indicated the use of clear and accessible language as well as active listening to students’ opinions and questions. In a discussion on *“Poverty and Social Responsibility”*, teachers employed effective questioning techniques to encourage students to explore various dimensions of poverty and relate them to Christian teachings on love and justice. CRE teachers also involved parents and the community in social inquiry-based learning. Document analysis showed that they designed inquiry tasks that allowed students to involve parents and community members as information sources or partners in social projects.

One example was the project *“Community Service through Love”*, where students conducted surveys on community needs and planned practical actions to help meet those needs. Parents and community leaders were engaged as resource persons and mentors for students.

Teacher A explained in an interview:

*“Social inquiry-based learning becomes more meaningful when parents and the community are involved. This collaboration not only enriches the learning process but also strengthens the relationship between school, family, and community in educating children.”*

CRE teachers further demonstrated adaptability in diverse educational environments. According to interviews with the school principal, CRE teachers were able to collaborate with teachers of other subjects in developing integrated learning that included social inquiry. One example was a collaboration with social studies teachers in a project entitled *“Preserving Local Culture with Christian Values”*. In this project, students investigated the local wisdom of North Sumatran communities and analyzed its relevance to Christian values. Implementation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) Teachers’ Competence through Social Inquiry-Based Learning Implementation of Professional Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning CRE teachers demonstrate strong mastery of subject matter and concepts delivered through the social inquiry approach. Based on classroom observations, teachers were able to explain theological concepts clearly and connect them to social issues relevant to students’ daily lives. For example, in a lesson on *“Justice and Peace”*, the teacher not only discussed these concepts from a biblical perspective but also related them to contemporary social contexts, such as social conflicts and economic inequality in society.

CRE teachers also show commitment to continuous professional development in implementing social inquiry-based learning. Documentation studies revealed that teachers actively participated in professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, and Teacher Working Groups (KKG) in Christian Religious Education. In an interview, Teacher B stated:

*“To implement social inquiry-based CRE learning effectively, I need to continuously learn and develop myself. I actively attend training on inquiry-based pedagogy and strive to integrate it into CRE teaching.”*

Teachers also utilize research findings to improve the quality of social inquiry-based CRE learning. Documentation shows that teachers conduct classroom action research to identify problems in CRE instruction and to develop innovative solutions. One such example is Teacher A’s classroom action research on *“Developing Authentic Assessment Instruments in Social Inquiry-Based CRE Learning.”* The results were subsequently applied to improve the assessment system in CRE teaching.

Implementation of Pedagogical Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning Research findings indicate that CRE teachers at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia have successfully implemented pedagogical competence through social inquiry-based learning. This is evident in their ability to understand students’ characteristics, develop curriculum, deliver educative instruction, integrate technology, and conduct learning assessments.

Understanding students' characteristics is a crucial aspect of social inquiry-based learning, since each student possesses unique backgrounds, experiences, and capacities in responding to social issues. This aligns with Dewey's (1916) assertion that effective learning should begin with students' experiences and interests. In the context of CRE, such understanding allows teachers to connect theological concepts with students' concrete social experiences. The development of a social inquiry-based CRE curriculum reflects efforts to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of religious learning. As Bloom (1956) notes, comprehensive learning must encompass all three domains. In this context, students not only acquire religious knowledge (cognitive), but also develop attitudes and values (affective), as well as skills to respond to social issues (psychomotor).

The implementation of dialogical and educative instruction in social inquiry-based CRE reflects the social constructivist paradigm introduced by Vygotsky (1978), which posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through social interaction, rather than transmitted passively from teacher to student. Here, the teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging students to actively construct understanding of Christian values and their application in social contexts. Teachers' use of information and communication technology in social inquiry-based CRE demonstrates adaptation to the digital era. According to Mishra & Koehler (2006), effective technology integration requires *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge* (TPACK)—knowledge of how to use technology to teach specific content through appropriate pedagogy. In this context, teachers demonstrated TPACK by utilizing digital media to support students' inquiry into social issues from a Christian faith perspective.

Evaluation of learning processes and outcomes reflects the use of authentic assessment aligned with the characteristics of social inquiry-based instruction. As Wiggins (1990) suggests, authentic assessment measures not only students' knowledge but also their ability to apply knowledge in real-life contexts. In CRE inquiry-based learning, teachers implemented authentic assessments that evaluate both the inquiry process and the final products generated by students.

### ***Implementation of Personal Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning***

Research shows that CRE teachers at Public Elementary School 066653 Medan Helvetia have demonstrated strong personal competence in social inquiry-based learning. This is reflected in their stable and mature personality, wisdom, integrity, and ability to serve as role models for students. A stable and consistent personality plays a vital role in social inquiry-based learning, which often involves complex and sensitive social issues. Palmer (2007) argues that teaching quality is determined not merely by technique but also by the integrity and identity of the teacher. In this context, teachers' stable character creates a safe psychological environment for students to explore diverse perspectives on social issues.

Teachers' maturity and wisdom are evident in their ability to respect diverse student opinions during inquiry. Freire (1970) emphasizes that liberating education is not indoctrinative but dialogical. In this approach, teachers do not position themselves as absolute holders of truth but as facilitators who encourage critical and reflective thinking.

Teacher authority in CRE inquiry-based learning is not built on authoritarianism but on trust and mutual respect derived from authentic teacher–student interactions. As Buber (1958) explains, meaningful education occurs in *I–Thou* dialogical relationships rather than *I–It* objectified relations. Teachers establish authority through genuine engagement in dialogue with students about social issues and their implications for faith and life.

Teachers' role as exemplars also aligns with Jackson's (1968) concept of the *hidden curriculum*, which emphasizes that students learn not only from formal curriculum but also from teachers' values, attitudes, and behaviors. In this context, teachers do not merely teach Christian values verbally but also model them through their interactions with students and their responses to social issues.

### ***Implementation of Social Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning***

Findings indicate that CRE teachers have successfully implemented social competence in social inquiry-based learning, as reflected in their ability to communicate effectively with students, collaborate with parents and communities, and adapt to their professional environment.

Effective teacher–student communication reflects van Manen's (1991) concept of *pedagogical tact*, whereby pedagogically sensitive teachers respond appropriately to students' needs in concrete learning situations. In this case, teachers demonstrated pedagogical sensitivity by listening to students' opinions and asking questions that stimulated critical thinking.

Collaboration between teachers, parents, and communities aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *ecological systems theory*, which emphasizes that children's development is shaped by interactions among multiple systems such as family, school, and society. Teachers facilitated such collaboration to create holistic and authentic learning environments.

Teachers' adaptability reflects the concept of *professional learning communities* (DuFour, 2004), where professional growth occurs through collaboration with fellow educators focused on improving student learning outcomes. In this context, CRE teachers worked collaboratively to develop integrated learning approaches that engage students in investigating social issues from interdisciplinary perspectives.

### ***Implementation of Professional Competence of CRE Teachers through Social Inquiry-Based Learning***

Findings reveal that CRE teachers effectively implemented professional competence in social inquiry-based learning, as reflected in their mastery of CRE content and concepts, continuous professional development, and use of research to improve instructional quality.

Teachers' mastery of CRE content and concepts illustrates Shulman's (1986) concept of *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK), where effective teaching requires not only subject matter knowledge but also the ability to deliver it meaningfully. In social inquiry-based CRE, teachers exhibited PCK by linking theological concepts with students' real-life social issues.

Continuous professional development reflects Schön's (1983) concept of the *reflective practitioner*, where professional growth occurs through critical reflection on practice.

Teachers reflected on the effectiveness of the social inquiry approach in fostering students' understanding of Christian values and their application in social contexts.

The use of research-based evidence illustrates *evidence-based practice* (Hargreaves, 2007), where pedagogical decisions are informed by research findings. Teachers used both published research and their own classroom action research to enhance instructional quality.

### ***Theoretical and Practical Implications***

This study provides both theoretical and practical implications for the development of CRE in elementary schools. Theoretically, it contributes a conceptual model of how the four teacher competencies (pedagogical, personal, social, and professional) are integrated into social inquiry-based CRE learning.

Practically, the findings suggest several implications:

1. Curriculum Development: CRE curriculum should not only emphasize doctrinal knowledge but also the application of Christian values in social contexts. Curriculum design should facilitate inquiry-based learning that encourages students to analyze social issues from a Christian faith perspective.
2. Teacher Professional Development: CRE teachers need professional development programs focused on inquiry-based pedagogy, equipping them with knowledge and skills to effectively implement this approach.
3. School–Family–Community Collaboration: Stronger collaboration among schools, parents, and communities is necessary to support holistic CRE learning.
4. Authentic Assessment: CRE assessment systems should adopt authentic approaches that evaluate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, as well as the inquiry process and student outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of pedagogical competence is reflected in teachers' ability to understand student characteristics, design curriculum, deliver dialogical instruction, integrate technology, and conduct meaningful evaluation. Personal competence is demonstrated through teachers' stability, maturity, integrity, and role-modeling of Christian faith in social life. Social competence is reflected in effective communication, collaboration with parents and communities, and adaptability within diverse professional contexts. Professional competence is demonstrated in subject mastery, continuous professional development, and evidence-based instructional improvement.

Social inquiry-based CRE learning has proven effective in fostering students' ability to analyze social issues from a Christian perspective and to apply Christian values in social life. This approach also enhances students' critical thinking, empathy, and social skills necessary for life in a pluralistic society.

It is recommended that CRE teachers continue to develop their competencies in implementing social inquiry-based learning through reflective practice and innovative strategies. Future research is encouraged to further examine the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing students' academic outcomes, moral development, and social skills.

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