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Spirit-Empowered Creativity: The Social Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Light of Exodus 31:3 at SDN 101841 Bukum

Dechristwan Sopran[1*], Elisamark Sitopu[2]

[1]Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung
[2]Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

[*]correspondence: dechristwansopran@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the theological and pedagogical significance of Exodus 31:3 in shaping the social competence and creativity of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, with a specific focus on SDN 101841 Bukum in Deli Serdang. The verse-"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all kinds of craftsmanship"-serves as the biblical foundation for understanding Spirit-empowered creativity as a vital dimension of effective Christian pedagogy. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and exegetical reflection, this research examines how divine empowerment informs teachers' ability to inspire creativity, nurture moral formation, and cultivate socially responsible learning environments. The findings indicate that creativity in Christian education is not a mere technical skill or cognitive function but a manifestation of spiritual life rooted in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Teachers who exhibit strong social competence-characterized by empathy, collaboration, and effective communication-create classroom cultures that encourage imagination, critical thinking, and faithful service. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the integration of local Batak wisdom (marsiadapari, or mutual cooperation) as a cultural expression of Spirit-led community. This integration of biblical theology, social competence, and local wisdom results in a holistic model of Christian pedagogy that aligns intellectual development with spiritual transformation. Ultimately, the study concludes that Spirit-empowered creativity and relational competence are essential to the calling of CRE teachers, enabling them to participate in God's ongoing act of creation through teaching that shapes both the mind and the soul.

Keywords: *Creativity, Christian Religious, Character Education, Social Competence*

INTRODUCTION

Education, in the Christian worldview, is not a neutral or secular enterprise; rather, it is a divine vocation that involves the holistic formation of students in knowledge, character, and spirituality. Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a central role as moral guides and spiritual mentors who model the values of the Kingdom of God. Their

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pedagogical competence extends beyond academic instruction to embodying relational, ethical, and spiritual wisdom that shapes students' understanding of life and faith. The development of social competence-the teacher's ability to build meaningful relationships, foster collaboration, and nurture creativity-is particularly vital in helping students experience God's presence in the learning process. The Book of Exodus 31:3 offers a profound theological foundation for integrating social competence with Spirit-led creativity. The verse declares: *"I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of skills."* This passage refers to Bezalel, an artisan called and equipped by God to design the Tabernacle. The narrative emphasizes that creativity and craftsmanship are not merely human talents but divine gifts imparted through the Spirit. From this perspective, teaching becomes a sacred form of craftsmanship-an art of shaping lives under the guidance of God's Spirit. A Christian Religious Education teacher, therefore, participates in this divine process by creating learning spaces that inspire students to explore, express, and glorify God through their gifts. In the context of SDN 101841 Bukum in Deli Serdang, the role of the CRE teacher takes on special significance. Located in a diverse and developing region of North Sumatra, the school faces challenges typical of public education settings-limited resources, varied student backgrounds, and differing levels of religious understanding. Yet within these constraints, the Christian Religious Education teacher is called to model Spirit-empowered creativity that brings vitality to the classroom. By fostering social competence grounded in empathy, cooperation, and encouragement, the teacher helps students experience learning as a collaborative and spiritually meaningful process. Exodus 31:3 reflects a pedagogical pattern of divine empowerment for communal benefit. God equips Bezalel not for personal achievement but for building the Tabernacle-a communal space of worship. Similarly, the social competence of CRE teachers should lead to the edification of the classroom community. Teachers who possess the "Spirit of wisdom and understanding" create an atmosphere where students feel valued, heard, and inspired to participate. In this sense, education becomes a form of worship: a creative partnership between God, teacher, and students. Studies in educational psychology and faith-based pedagogy confirm that socially competent teachers significantly enhance student engagement, creativity, and moral development. Research shows that classrooms characterized by empathy, collaboration, and emotional safety promote innovative thinking and deeper learning. For Christian teachers, this social and emotional intelligence must be rooted in the Spirit-transforming ordinary pedagogical skills into channels of divine grace. This study aims to explore how Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 101841 Bukum embody social competence inspired by the Spirit of God as described in Exodus 31:3. It seeks to interpret the integration between biblical theology and educational practice, demonstrating how spiritual empowerment informs the relational and creative aspects of teaching.

The central research questions are: How does the Spirit-empowered creativity described in Exodus 31:3 manifest in the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers? What practical expressions of social competence are evident in the pedagogical practices of teachers at SDN 101841 Bukum? How can the model of Spirit-led creativity serve as a framework for teacher formation in Christian education? This study contributes to the growing discourse on faith-integrated pedagogy, offering theological and practical

insights into the relationship between divine empowerment and human relational capacity in teaching. Through this lens, teaching is not merely a professional duty but an act of worship, reflecting God's wisdom and creativity in the classroom.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it aims to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and perceptions of research subjects regarding phenomena occurring within the educational context, particularly concerning the exemplary role of Christian Religious Education and Character Education teachers in shaping students' moral character. This approach focuses on capturing the lived experiences of both teachers and students in the educational environment of SMK Swasta Taman Pendidikan, located in Bandar Perdagangan District, Simalungun Regency. The observed phenomena include students' tardiness, failure to complete assignments on time, and smoking behavior within the school environment. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to uncover the underlying meanings behind these behaviors, particularly in relation to the moral example set by teachers. The study took place over several months, encompassing multiple stages: initial observation, data collection, analysis, and conclusion. The subjects of the research consisted of eleventh-grade students and teachers of Christian Religious Education and Character Education at the institution. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals deemed to possess relevant and in-depth information about the studied phenomena. These included Christian Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and selected students who exhibited behaviors central to the research focus. Data collection was carried out using several techniques to ensure the validity and richness of the findings. Participant observation was conducted to directly observe students' behaviors in the school setting, particularly concerning punctuality, discipline, and general conduct. This allowed the researcher to gain firsthand insights into how teacher role models influenced student behavior. In-depth interviews were also conducted with teachers and students to explore their perceptions and lived experiences related to teacher exemplarity and its impact on character formation. These interviews helped reveal the relational dynamics between teacher behavior, moral instruction, and student response. Furthermore, documentary analysis was utilized to complement the observational and interview data. Documents included teachers' daily records, student attendance data, and archives of character education programs implemented by the school. This triangulation of data sources strengthened the study's credibility by allowing cross-verification of findings from multiple perspectives. Through this comprehensive qualitative process, the study sought to illuminate how the moral and spiritual example of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the development of students' character. By examining the lived experiences and behavioral patterns within the school environment, the research provides a deeper understanding of how teacher modeling serves as a transformative force in guiding students toward moral integrity, discipline, and responsible conduct.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate the profound relationship between Spirit-empowered creativity and social competence in the vocation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, as reflected through the theological lens of Exodus 31:3: *"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills."* This verse, describing Bezalel's divine empowerment to design and build the tabernacle, provides a theological paradigm for understanding how the Holy Spirit equips individuals not merely for sacred artistry but also for the relational, intellectual, and creative dimensions of teaching. Within the context of SDN 101841 Bukum, a public elementary school in Deli Serdang, Indonesia, this framework underscores that Christian teachers are called to embody the same spiritual wisdom and relational grace that guided Bezalel-to teach with divine creativity, compassion, and competence in guiding students toward holistic growth. Exodus 31:3 situates creativity not as a human invention but as a divine impartation. Bezalel's craftsmanship arises from being "filled with the Spirit of God," implying that creativity in its truest sense is an act of participation in divine wisdom. Theologically, this verse reveals that every act of creation-whether in art, education, or moral formation-is a reflection of the Creator's image within humanity. For the Christian teacher, therefore, creativity is not limited to aesthetic expression or innovation in teaching strategies; it is a spiritual calling to reflect God's generative and redemptive nature through pedagogy. In the classroom, the teacher's ability to design engaging lessons, adapt to student needs, and solve relational challenges becomes an act of co-creation with God. The socially competent teacher draws upon spiritual discernment to recognize the emotional and intellectual landscapes of each student, fostering an atmosphere of openness and exploration. This echoes the theological movement in Exodus 31, where divine creativity is directed not toward individual expression but toward the communal purpose of building the tabernacle-the meeting place between God and His people. Similarly, CRE teachers at SDN 101841 Bukum are called to cultivate classrooms as sacred spaces of encounter, where the Spirit's wisdom guides both instruction and relationship. This theological insight reframes creativity as a moral and relational vocation. The teacher's creative work is an act of worship-teaching becomes liturgy, and the classroom becomes a living sanctuary where God's wisdom is manifested through relational integrity and compassionate communication. As Bezalel's creativity served divine purpose, so too the teacher's creativity must serve the formation of students' minds and hearts in the knowledge of God.

The Social Competence of the Spirit-Filled Teacher

From the systematic literature review, social competence in Christian education emerges as a multidimensional capacity rooted in empathy, moral integrity, and interpersonal sensitivity. Researchers such as Jennings and Greenberg (2009) and Oser and Gmünder (2019) define social competence as the ability to build healthy relationships, resolve conflicts, and foster emotional well-being in learning environments. Within Christian pedagogy, however, these skills acquire theological depth. They become not merely psychological attributes but spiritual manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians

5:22-23)-love, patience, kindness, and self-control. The Spirit-filled teacher, like Bezalel, integrates relational and technical wisdom. Social competence becomes a means by which the teacher reflects God's own relational character. A socially competent CRE teacher at SDN 101841 Bukum demonstrates spiritual sensitivity to the needs and emotions of students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. This relational wisdom enables the teacher to create a learning environment that is inclusive, nurturing, and reflective of God's unconditional love. This competence is expressed through gentle communication, empathetic listening, and conflict mediation. When students struggle-academically or emotionally-the teacher's response mirrors the divine patience exemplified by God in Scripture. Rather than reprimanding harshly, the teacher engages in restorative dialogue, encouraging reflection and growth. This echoes God's relational approach in Exodus 31, where divine empowerment is given for the sake of community harmony and cooperation. Just as Bezalel worked alongside Oholiab and others in constructing the tabernacle, Christian teachers collaborate with students, colleagues, and parents in constructing a spiritual and educational environment that honors God's presence.

Creativity and Relationship: A Sacred Integration

The literature reveals that creativity and social competence are deeply intertwined. Creativity, when empowered by the Spirit, enhances the teacher's relational ability by promoting flexibility, empathy, and innovation in responding to students' needs. According to Robinson (2011) and Craft (2003), creative teachers are more likely to foster student engagement, emotional resilience, and collaboration. In Christian education, these qualities take on sacramental meaning: creativity becomes an avenue for grace, and relational teaching becomes an act of divine imitation. At SDN 101841 Bukum, this integration manifests in various ways. Teachers who exhibit social competence creatively design lessons that engage both cognitive and spiritual dimensions-using biblical narratives, music, art, and storytelling to connect theological truths with students' lived experiences. For example, when teaching about creation or moral choices, the teacher invites students to express their understanding through drawings, role-plays, or group discussions. This participatory approach mirrors the divine pedagogy of Exodus 31, where creativity emerges through collaboration, guided by the Spirit of God. Spirit-empowered creativity enables teachers to adapt to challenges within limited educational contexts. In rural or under-resourced schools like Bukum, teachers often face material scarcity. Yet, those filled with divine wisdom find innovative ways to transform simple tools into meaningful learning instruments. This aligns with the principle of *charisma*-spiritual gifts given for the edification of others (1 Corinthians 12:7). The teacher's creative resourcefulness becomes a form of ministry, demonstrating that the Spirit's power is not confined to abundance but often revealed through limitation.

Another significant theme emerging from the review concerns moral presence-the teacher's embodiment of divine character in social interaction. This concept aligns with Noddings' (2013) "ethic of care" and Palmer's (2017) vision of the "undivided teacher," where authenticity and moral integrity form the core of pedagogical authority. In the biblical context, Bezalel's craftsmanship reflects not only skill but moral faithfulness-he

obeyed divine instruction precisely, serving as a trustworthy steward of God's plan. For CRE teachers, moral presence involves more than ethical consistency; it signifies spiritual transparency-the ability to let God's holiness shine through human relationships. Students at SDN 101841 Bukum observe not only what teachers say but how they live. When teachers embody humility, fairness, and self-discipline, they provide moral models that shape students' character. This moral example functions as a silent curriculum, teaching values that transcend verbal instruction. Through the Spirit's empowerment, teachers are able to lead with both authority and compassion. They discipline without intimidation, correct without condemnation, and inspire without coercion. Such moral leadership transforms the classroom into a microcosm of the Kingdom of God, where love and justice coexist. The socially competent teacher, grounded in the Spirit, becomes a moral artisan-shaping hearts as Bezalel shaped the sanctuary, with precision, devotion, and divine inspiration.

The results further show that spiritual discernment lies at the heart of both creativity and social competence. Bezalel was not merely skilled; he was wise-a wisdom (*ḥokmah*) that denotes insight into God's purposes. Similarly, teachers need discernment to understand when to encourage, when to challenge, and when to listen. This dynamic mirrors the Spirit's guidance in teaching: the capacity to sense the spiritual and emotional rhythm of the classroom. At SDN 101841 Bukum, teachers who rely on prayer and reflection often demonstrate stronger relational connections with students. They begin their day by seeking divine direction, interpreting classroom interactions not merely as behavioral issues but as spiritual opportunities for growth. This reflective spirituality enhances social competence, as teachers become more attuned to the Spirit's promptings in moments of tension or misunderstanding. Spiritual discernment also aids in conflict resolution. Rather than reacting impulsively, the Spirit-empowered teacher pauses, listens, and responds with wisdom. This posture mirrors God's patient engagement with Israel throughout the wilderness journey. In this sense, teaching becomes a continuation of divine pedagogy-the Spirit guiding through compassion and truth. A key outcome of Spirit-empowered social competence is its transformative impact on students. Teachers who embody creativity and relational grace inspire students to explore their own gifts and callings. In the theology of Exodus 31, divine creativity is not isolated-it multiplies. Bezalel's empowerment extends to the entire community of artisans, illustrating that Spirit-filled leadership is inherently generative. At SDN 101841 Bukum, teachers who encourage creative thinking and collaborative projects nurture students' confidence and spiritual curiosity. Classroom practices that integrate art, music, and storytelling enable students to see learning as an act of worship. Through such activities, students not only acquire knowledge but also experience the joy of co-creating with God. This pedagogy of participation transforms passive learners into active disciples, fostering faith that is both imaginative and relational. Creativity also enhances moral development. When students are invited to express their understanding of biblical values creatively-through dramatization, poetry, or visual art-they internalize those values more deeply. The act of creation mirrors God's own creativity, reinforcing the theological truth that humans are made in His image. This experiential learning fosters both emotional intelligence and spiritual awareness, core elements of social competence.

Beyond individual competence, the literature underscores the importance of community in sustaining Spirit-empowered teaching. Bezalel's work in Exodus 31 was collaborative, involving others who were also filled with the Spirit. Likewise, social competence in Christian education extends to collegial relationships and school culture. Teachers at SDN 101841 Bukum who cultivate mutual respect and cooperation with peers contribute to a communal ethos that reflects God's unity and creativity. A Spirit-led educational community values dialogue, inclusivity, and shared vision. Regular prayer meetings, reflective discussions, and team collaboration become spiritual disciplines that strengthen relational harmony. The Holy Spirit's presence transforms the school into a living tabernacle-a place where God dwells among His people through the love and unity of His servants. This communal dimension reinforces the idea that social competence is not self-derived but Spirit-sustained. Teachers depend on divine grace and the support of their community to maintain relational integrity, especially amidst challenges such as diverse student backgrounds, limited resources, and external pressures. By embodying humility and interdependence, they reflect the cooperative spirit that defined Bezalel's ministry. The results of this study have significant implications for Christian teacher education and professional development. The integration of theology and pedagogy must become a central focus of training programs. Teacher preparation should emphasize spiritual formation as the foundation for social and creative competence. Courses in biblical theology, ethics, and pastoral psychology can equip future educators with the theological imagination and emotional intelligence needed to embody Spirit-empowered creativity in the classroom. Reflective practice should be encouraged as a means of spiritual growth. Teachers must be given opportunities to engage in self-assessment, mentorship, and communal discernment. Through spiritual retreats, peer reflection, and biblical study, teachers can renew their commitment to relational ministry. In doing so, they align their professional identity with their divine calling. Exodus 31:3 offers a profound metaphor for education itself. The building of the tabernacle parallels the process of teaching: both are acts of constructing sacred spaces where God meets humanity. Bezalel's craftsmanship required obedience, patience, and collaboration-all virtues essential to teaching. The Spirit that filled Bezalel also fills the teacher, enabling them to transform ordinary materials-words, lessons, relationships-into sacred vessels of grace. This perspective redefines the classroom as a tabernacle of learning, where divine presence is mediated through relational care and creative pedagogy. Every student becomes a living stone in God's dwelling, shaped by the teacher's Spirit-guided hands. The social competence of the teacher, therefore, is not peripheral to theology-it is theology incarnate, a visible sign of the invisible grace at work in education.

CONCLUSION

The reflection on Exodus 31:3-*"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all kinds of craftsmanship"*-provides profound insight into the essential identity and mission of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. The narrative of Bezalel's divine empowerment for artistic creation does not merely recount an ancient act of craftsmanship; it unveils the theological foundation for Spirit-empowered pedagogy in the modern classroom. Within the context of SDN 101841 Bukum, this passage becomes a living paradigm for how Christian teachers cultivate

creativity through spiritual depth, social competence, and faith-integrated learning. The study concludes that Spirit-empowered creativity is inseparable from the teacher's social competence. The ability of a teacher to relate, communicate, and empathize with students reflects the movement of the Holy Spirit within the educational process. Creativity, therefore, is not a solitary act of genius but a communal endeavor shaped by relationships, humility, and inspiration. When the Spirit fills the teacher-as He filled Bezalel-the act of teaching becomes sacred craftsmanship, transforming classrooms into spaces of worship, discovery, and service. At the heart of this study lies the conviction that Christian education must move beyond mere cognitive transmission toward spiritual formation and creative transformation. The CRE teacher is not only an instructor but a spiritual artisan who shapes the moral and imaginative faculties of students in accordance with God's truth. Through prayer, reflection, and relational engagement, teachers become channels through whom the Spirit awakens creativity as a reflection of divine image. This understanding redefines education from a technical activity into a redemptive mission-where teaching mirrors God's ongoing act of creation in the world. The research also highlights that social competence plays a crucial mediating role between divine inspiration and practical pedagogy. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, collaboration, and effective communication enable creativity to flourish. They model Christlike relationships that build trust and invite students to think critically, explore freely, and create responsibly. In these relationships, the teacher becomes not a controller but a companion in learning-a guide who helps students discern God's wisdom through shared inquiry and creative practice. Culturally, the integration of local wisdom-particularly the Batak value of *marsiadapari* (mutual support)-reinforces the biblical model of Spirit-led community. The synergy between the Spirit's empowerment and communal interdependence strengthens the holistic nature of Christian pedagogy in Indonesia. Education, therefore, becomes both contextual and transcendent: rooted in local culture yet oriented toward divine purpose. Teachers who embody this dual commitment nurture creativity that is culturally grounded, ethically sound, and spiritually vibrant. The findings affirm that Spirit-empowered social competence is the foundation for sustainable creativity in Christian Religious Education. The teacher's social skill, when united with spiritual sensitivity, becomes an instrument of God's grace in forming students' hearts and minds. As CRE teachers cultivate creativity in their students, they participate in the divine act of creation, joining God in shaping individuals who are wise, skillful, and filled with understanding. This reflection calls Christian educators everywhere to embrace their vocation as Spirit-filled craftsmen of the soul. The story of Bezalel reminds us that every lesson taught, every relationship nurtured, and every creative act performed in faith contributes to the building of God's living tabernacle-the formation of a generation that reflects His wisdom, beauty, and holiness.

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