



The Application of the Collaborative Learning Model in Christian Religious Education: The Implementation of Teachers' Social Competence at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education as an implementation of teachers' social competence at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu. Teachers' social competence is one of the crucial qualifications that educators must possess in order to create an effective learning process. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving six Christian Religious Education teachers and thirty students. The findings reveal that the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education has a significant impact on enhancing the implementation of teachers' social competence, which encompasses communication, interaction, and collaboration skills within the learning context. The collaborative learning model facilitates teachers in developing students' social skills and fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere. The study also identifies several challenges in implementing this model, including time constraints, differences in students' characteristics, and teachers' readiness to manage collaborative learning. The conclusion underscores that the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education can serve as an effective means for teachers to implement their social competence while simultaneously cultivating students' social skills and Christian values in an integrated manner.

Keywords: *collaborative learning, teachers' social competence, Christian Religious Education, elementary school*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' character and instilling Christian values at the elementary school level. Unlike subjects that predominantly emphasize cognitive mastery, CRE encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions that require a comprehensive instructional approach. Through this subject, students are expected not only to acquire biblical knowledge but also to embody values such as love, integrity, and service in their daily lives. Within this broader

educational framework, teachers' competence-particularly social competence-emerges as a decisive factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the learning process in Christian Religious Education (Sidjabat, 2019). Social competence refers to the ability of teachers to communicate, interact, and collaborate effectively with students, fellow educators, parents, and the broader community (Permendiknas No. 16/2007). These abilities are especially significant in CRE instruction, which emphasizes the values of fellowship, compassion, and service. Teachers who possess strong social competence are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they serve as role models and facilitators of a learning environment that nurtures holistic development. The implementation of teachers' social competence in CRE classrooms continues to face challenges. Among these is the dominance of conventional instructional methods, which are typically teacher-centered and less conducive to fostering social interaction and collaborative engagement among students (Hutapea, 2020). In response to these challenges, the collaborative learning model has gained recognition as an alternative pedagogical approach that underscores cooperation, social interaction, and the collective construction of knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). The model shifts the classroom dynamic from individualistic and competitive modes of learning toward cooperative and community-oriented practices. In the context of Christian Religious Education, collaborative learning resonates with core Christian values, particularly the belief in the importance of community in the process of spiritual growth and faith formation (Groome, 2018). When applied in CRE, collaborative learning not only supports academic objectives but also embodies the communal and relational dimensions of Christian discipleship. Empirical evidence has consistently highlighted the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing students' learning outcomes across different subjects and educational contexts (Gillies, 2019). Collaborative learning fosters peer-to-peer interaction, improves communication skills, and strengthens critical and reflective thinking. However, research specifically investigating its application in Christian Religious Education, especially as a means to implement teachers' social competence, remains limited. This gap in the literature underscores the importance of exploring how collaborative learning can be contextualized within CRE classrooms to address both pedagogical and spiritual goals.

SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu, an elementary school located in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, provides an illuminating case for such an exploration. The school serves a diverse population of students with varying social, economic, and denominational backgrounds. This heterogeneity presents both opportunities and challenges for teachers, particularly CRE teachers, who must design and implement instruction that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners. Against this backdrop, the application of the collaborative learning model in CRE at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu becomes an important area of study. The implementation of teachers' social competence through collaborative learning is not only relevant but also necessary for building a classroom atmosphere that reflects the inclusive and communal ethos of Christian education. This study is designed to achieve three main objectives: To analyze the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu. This involves examining how collaborative strategies are planned, implemented, and evaluated within the CRE classroom context. To investigate the implementation of teachers' social competence through the collaborative learning model. This entails exploring the ways in which CRE teachers' communication, interaction, and cooperation

skills are demonstrated and developed within the collaborative framework. To identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the application of collaborative learning in CRE as an implementation of teachers' social competence. This includes recognizing both internal and external challenges that teachers face and the conditions that facilitate successful implementation. This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarship on contextual and transformative approaches in Christian Religious Education. By integrating collaborative learning into CRE, the research advances the understanding of how pedagogical models can align with theological and spiritual objectives. The study also expands the conceptualization of teachers' social competence, framing it not merely as a professional requirement but as a theological and pedagogical imperative that reflects the relational nature of Christian faith. The findings are expected to provide insights into how social competence can be operationalized within the unique context of CRE classrooms. For instance, teachers' ability to communicate effectively with students is not only a pedagogical necessity but also a reflection of Christian values of openness and empathy. Similarly, collaboration with parents and the community can be seen as an extension of the church's mission to nurture faith across generations.

On a practical level, the study holds several implications for teachers, schools, and policymakers. For CRE teachers, the research highlights concrete strategies for implementing their social competence through collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, peer mentoring, project-based learning, and service-oriented projects. These strategies can help teachers foster not only academic achievement but also social and spiritual growth among students. For schools, the findings emphasize the need to create an institutional culture that supports collaborative learning. This includes providing professional development opportunities for teachers, allocating adequate instructional time for collaborative activities, and ensuring that classrooms are equipped with the necessary resources. School administrators also play a crucial role in fostering collaboration among teachers themselves, thereby modeling the very practices they seek to cultivate in students. For policymakers, the study underscores the importance of designing curricula and teacher training programs that prioritize social competence and collaborative pedagogies. While national education standards often emphasize cognitive outcomes, there is a pressing need to integrate affective and social dimensions into teacher professional development programs. Policies that encourage collaboration between schools, churches, and local communities can further strengthen the implementation of collaborative learning in Christian Religious Education.

METHODS

A descriptive-analytical method was used in his research, in the form of a case study. This approach was chosen as it is considered most appropriate for exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education (CRE) instruction, as well as the implementation of teachers' social competence within this context. In line with Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative approach is particularly suitable for exploring the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu, located in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra. This site was selected because the school has been implementing a CRE instructional approach grounded in Christian values and character development. The research subjects consisted

of six CRE teachers and thirty students, comprising fifteen from Grade IV and fifteen from Grade V. Purposive sampling was employed using specific criteria, namely teachers who had implemented the collaborative learning model for at least one semester, and students who actively participated in CRE learning activities. Data were collected through three main techniques. First, participatory observation was conducted during twelve instructional sessions in Grades IV and V. Structured observation sheets were used to assess the implementation of the collaborative learning model and teachers' social competence. Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with six CRE teachers to capture their perspectives and experiences in applying the model, as well as with ten students to gain insights into their perceptions of the learning process. Third, documentation was gathered, including lesson plans (RPP), teachers' journals, students' portfolios, and recordings of learning activities. Data validity was ensured through source, method, and time triangulation, accompanied by member checking and peer debriefing to test the accuracy of data interpretation. Systematic documentation of the research process was maintained through an audit trail to ensure data traceability and the credibility of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The application of the collaborative learning model in CRE at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu was found to have distinctive characteristics. Based on observations and interviews, CRE teachers had systematically developed collaborative lesson designs, which were clearly outlined in their lesson plans. These designs typically included the formation of heterogeneous groups consisting of four to five members, deliberately balanced according to academic ability, gender, and denominational background. Within these groups, each member was assigned specific roles to ensure active participation. In addition, teachers developed authentic, problem-based tasks that were contextually relevant to students' everyday lives. One notable example was the "Love in Action" project, where students were required to plan and carry out simple social activities as a way of applying Christian values. Teachers also provided support systems such as detailed guidelines, collaborative worksheets, and supplementary learning resources to strengthen the group process. As one teacher (Informant 3) expressed, preparing collaborative lessons required greater effort than conventional approaches because it demanded careful planning of group composition, the design of tasks that enabled equitable contribution, and the creation of rubrics to assess both process and outcomes. The implementation of collaborative learning strategies in CRE was observed through several practices. Among the most frequently used were *Think-Pair-Share*, which facilitated reflection and discussion of biblical stories; the *Jigsaw* technique, where students became "experts" on particular biblical figures and then taught their peers; project-based learning, which included group projects such as biblical dramas, wall magazines on Christian values, and small-scale social service initiatives; and role-playing, which enabled students to embody biblical stories and reflect on Christian values in everyday life. Observations revealed that the *Jigsaw* and project-based strategies were particularly effective in fostering student collaboration. A student (Informant 13) stated that learning CRE through group work allowed them to share ideas and complete projects together, deepening their understanding of discipleship through practical experiences such as the "Love in Action" project.

The dynamics of interaction during collaborative learning also displayed notable shifts. Peer-to-peer interaction increased in both frequency and quality, as students actively engaged in discussion, exchanged opinions, and negotiated solutions in group tasks. Initially, some students tended to dominate, but over time participation became more balanced. Teacher-student interactions reflected a significant change in pedagogical roles. Teachers acted less as instructors and more as facilitators, posing reflective questions, providing scaffolding, and guiding discussions rather than delivering lengthy lectures. One teacher (Informant 1) explained that collaborative learning transformed their role from a “sage on the stage” to a “guide on the side,” focusing more on monitoring and facilitating rather than directly instructing. Furthermore, student-content interactions also improved, with students engaging more actively in exploring and constructing meaning from CRE materials, applying biblical values to real-life contexts instead of passively receiving information.

Effective communication emerged as a central dimension of the teachers’ social competence in collaborative CRE learning. Teachers deliberately practiced inclusive language that respected the diverse denominational backgrounds of their students, avoiding exclusive terminology and emphasizing universal Christian values. They also employed reflective questioning techniques, such as asking, “How can we apply the value of Christ’s love in a conflict situation at school?” to encourage critical and reflective thinking. Constructive feedback was another key strategy, with teachers focusing not only on final outcomes but also on the collaborative process itself. As one teacher (Informant 2) highlighted, feedback in collaborative learning was designed to acknowledge students’ cooperative efforts while also offering suggestions for improving communication and teamwork. Teachers also modeled Christian communication values, demonstrating honesty, empathy, and respect for differences. This was evident when teachers responded to differing student opinions with openness and affirmation, thereby reinforcing Christian attitudes in classroom discourse.

The implementation of social competence in the context of CRE learning was also evident in the way teachers fostered social interaction. Teachers intentionally created inclusive learning communities in which all students felt accepted and valued. One strategy was the use of a “circle of love” at the beginning of lessons, where students could share experiences and prayer requests, strengthening a sense of fellowship. Teachers also mediated conflicts that arose during group work through Christian approaches to reconciliation. As one teacher (Informant 4) observed, conflicts within groups became opportunities to teach forgiveness and reconciliation, often guided by the principle of WWJD (What Would Jesus Do). Additionally, teachers demonstrated cultural sensitivity by acknowledging the diverse social and denominational backgrounds of their students. They integrated local cultural elements into CRE lessons to make the material more contextual and meaningful for learners. Taken together, these findings illustrate that the application of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education not only enhances students’ academic engagement but also provides a concrete platform for teachers to exercise and model social competence. Through thoughtful lesson design, varied collaborative strategies, and a strong emphasis on effective communication and social interaction, teachers were able to cultivate a classroom environment that reflected Christian values of love, inclusivity, and service. At the same time, challenges such as group dynamics, the risk of domination by certain students, and the additional

preparation required from teachers highlight the need for ongoing professional support. Nevertheless, the study affirms that collaborative learning in CRE has significant potential to strengthen both pedagogical effectiveness and the holistic development of students' social and spiritual capacities.

Collaboration with Multiple Stakeholders in the Context of Christian Religious Education

The implementation of teachers' social competence in the dimension of collaboration was reflected in their ability to build partnerships with various stakeholders. At the school level, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers actively collaborated with colleagues from other subject areas to develop integrated learning experiences. For example, joint projects were carried out with art teachers through biblical drama performances and with Indonesian language teachers in reflective writing assignments on Christian values. This interdisciplinary collaboration enriched the learning process and provided students with a more holistic understanding of faith-based values. Teachers also sought to engage parents in the CRE learning process through the use of a "Christian Values Communication Book," which allowed parents to provide feedback on how Christian values were being applied at home. As one teacher (Informant 5) emphasized, collaborative learning created opportunities for parents to act not merely as recipients of student performance reports but as active partners in reinforcing Christian values in daily family life. In addition, CRE teachers established partnerships with local churches, which included arranging visits and involving church leaders as guest speakers in support of classroom learning. These forms of collaboration demonstrate the crucial role of social competence in extending the learning process beyond the classroom and into the wider community of faith.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Collaborative Learning in Christian Religious Education

The findings also identified a range of factors that either supported or hindered the application of collaborative learning in CRE. Among the key supporting factors was strong school policy support, particularly from the principal, who provided time allocations and resources for innovative CRE initiatives. As one teacher (Informant 6) noted, the principal allocated specific funding for learning media and collaborative projects, signaling institutional commitment. The availability of learning resources further supported this process, with the school library offering a sufficient collection of CRE books and internet access for additional study materials. An inclusive school climate that valued diversity also played an important role, as it aligned with the collaborative learning model, which emphasizes inclusivity and respect for differences. Finally, teachers' intrinsic motivation-driven by their sense of Christian vocation-was a significant factor sustaining their commitment to innovative pedagogy. Several inhibiting factors were also identified. Limited instructional time for CRE, typically two hours per week, restricted the extent to which collaborative learning could be optimally implemented. As one teacher (Informant 1) remarked, collaborative learning required considerably more time than traditional approaches, creating a structural challenge. Student heterogeneity was another obstacle, as varying levels of ability and readiness often necessitated intensive guidance to cultivate collaboration skills. Additionally, not all CRE teachers possessed adequate knowledge or skills in managing collaborative learning. As Informant 4 observed, some teachers remained more comfortable with conventional methods and struggled to adapt to their

new role as facilitators. Finally, physical and technological limitations, such as classroom layouts unsuitable for group work and insufficient supporting facilities, posed further challenges. Despite these barriers, the study confirmed that collaborative learning made a significant contribution to the implementation of teachers' social competence in CRE. This finding aligns with Sidjabat's (2019) perspective that CRE should not merely transmit doctrinal knowledge but also foster transformative communities of faith.

Pedagogical Dimensions of Collaborative Learning in Christian Religious Education

The adoption of strategies such as Jigsaw and project-based learning within CRE reflected a paradigm shift from transmissive to transformative pedagogy, wherein knowledge is constructed collectively rather than delivered unilaterally. This finding resonates with Groome's (2018) concept of *shared praxis*, which emphasizes joint reflection and construction of understanding between teachers and students in the faith community. The observed increase in both the frequency and quality of student interactions further confirmed Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which underscores the pivotal role of social interaction in knowledge construction (Gillies, 2019). Within the context of CRE, these interactions facilitated not only cognitive development but also the cultivation of communal Christian values. The implementation of teachers' social competence through collaborative learning-particularly in terms of effective communication, social interaction, and partnerships-underscored the relational dimension of CRE pedagogy. This aligns with Hutapea's (2020) argument that the effectiveness of CRE is determined largely by the quality of relationships between teachers and students, which should embody Christian values. The use of inclusive language and reflective questioning techniques illustrates how teachers practiced dialogical pedagogy, as advocated by Paulo Freire, which frames dialogue as both liberating and empowering (Nuhamara, 2018). In the context of CRE, such dialogical practices enabled students to explore and interpret Christian values in personal and contextual ways. The creation of inclusive learning communities also reflected an inclusive theology that stresses acceptance and respect for diversity as fundamental Christian principles (Seymour, 2017). This was particularly relevant in SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu, where students came from diverse denominational and cultural backgrounds. Internal and external constraints-such as limited instructional time, diverse student characteristics, and gaps in teacher competence-posed significant difficulties in implementing collaborative learning effectively. Gillies (2019) stressed that successful collaborative learning requires both a shift in mindset and continuous professional development for teachers. This highlights the need for structured and sustainable strategies rather than ad hoc solutions. The findings point to several strategies that may support more effective implementation of collaborative learning in CRE. First, integrating Christian values across subjects can address time limitations by embedding CRE into broader curricula, consistent with Seymour's (2017) integrative curriculum approach. Second, teacher professional development is critical, with mentoring-based training, workshops, and lesson study suggested as effective models for strengthening teachers' pedagogical and facilitation skills. Third, optimizing partnerships with parents and churches is essential, as CRE is not confined to the classroom. By involving families and local church leaders, schools can ensure continuity of Christian values across learning environments. Such cross-contextual collaboration is expected to create a more holistic and sustainable ecosystem for CRE.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the collaborative learning model in Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SD Negeri 091400 Dolok Saribu was carried out systematically through a variety of active learning strategies, including Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, Project-Based Learning, and Role Playing. These approaches enabled students to collectively construct knowledge and internalize Christian values through meaningful social interaction. Furthermore, the collaborative framework encouraged the development of students' social skills, reflecting the spirit of fellowship and Christian love. The implementation of CRE teachers' social competence within collaborative learning was evident in three key aspects. First, in the area of effective communication, teachers demonstrated the use of inclusive language, the ability to provide constructive feedback, and questioning techniques that encouraged critical reflection. Second, in the dimension of social interaction, teachers fostered a classroom atmosphere that nurtured a learning community, displayed sensitivity to students' diverse cultural backgrounds, and acted as mediators in resolving interpersonal conflicts. Third, teachers showcased competence in building cooperative relationships with multiple stakeholders, including fellow educators, parents, and local church communities, thereby creating synergy between school, home, and ecclesiastical contexts. The success of collaborative learning implementation was supported by several enabling factors, such as progressive school policies, the availability of learning resources, an inclusive school climate, and strong teacher motivation. Challenges also emerged, including limited instructional time, diverse student characteristics, constraints in teachers' pedagogical skills, and insufficient supporting facilities. Despite these obstacles, the model proved to be an effective medium for integrating the development of teachers' social competence with students' character formation in a holistic manner. This shift marked a transition from traditional one-directional instruction toward a more transformative and dialogical approach, aligning with the essence of CRE as education that emphasizes relational and spiritual dimensions. In light of these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, CRE teachers are encouraged to establish professional learning communities to share experiences and innovative strategies while documenting collaborative practices through reflective inquiry. The selective use of digital technology is also recommended to enrich the learning process. Second, schools should provide adequate resources and develop continuous training and mentoring programs to equip teachers in managing collaborative learning effectively. Third, the local Department of Education is advised to design policies and curricula that foster innovative pedagogies such as collaborative learning, alongside offering relevant professional development programs for CRE teachers. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct broader studies, including classroom action research, to further explore both the effectiveness and the challenges of this model in diverse educational contexts.

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