



Enhancing Teachers' Social Competence through the Implementation of the Think-Pair-Share Method in Christian Religious Education Discussions at SMK Negeri 1 Galang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method in enhancing the social competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Galang. Teachers' social competence is a crucial aspect in fostering effective and meaningful learning for students. This school-based action research was conducted in two cycles, involving eight CRE teachers as research subjects. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires, and analyzed using both qualitative descriptive and quantitative approaches. The findings indicate that the implementation of the TPS method in CRE discussions significantly improved teachers' social competence from 63.5% in the initial condition to 74.8% in the first cycle and 87.2% in the second cycle. This improvement was evident in teachers' ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with colleagues, and build constructive relationships within the school community. The TPS method proved to be effective as it provided opportunities for teachers to individually reflect on their thoughts, share ideas with a partner, and present insights in a broader forum. The implication of this study underscores the importance of developing teachers' social competence through collaborative learning methods such as TPS to enhance the quality of CRE instruction in schools.

Keywords: *teachers' social competence, Think-Pair-Share, Christian Religious Education*

INTRODUCTION

Social competence constitutes one of the essential aspects of a teacher's professionalism, as stipulated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The law asserts that teachers are not only responsible for mastering subject matter and instructional methodologies but are also required to possess social skills that enable them to interact constructively with various stakeholders within the educational ecosystem. Teachers' social competence encompasses the ability to establish effective communication, foster harmonious interpersonal relationships, and actively collaborate with students, fellow teachers, educational staff, parents, and the broader

community (Mulyasa, 2023). In the context of religious education, particularly Christian Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Kristen), this social dimension becomes even more significant, as teachers are not merely conveyors of subject matter but also serve as role models in instilling Christian values. Teachers are expected to act as extensions of the church in shaping students' Christian character. Teachers of Christian Religious Education are not simply instructors; they are also spiritual mentors who guide students toward understanding values, morality, and the practice of Christian living in everyday life (Sidjabat, 2019). Consequently, the ability of teachers to build healthy, open, and empathetic relationships with students is indispensable so that the values of Christ are transmitted not only cognitively but also through authentic life examples and social relationships. The reality in practice does not always align with theoretical expectations. A preliminary study conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Galang revealed several critical issues related to the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers. The main problem identified was the suboptimal ability of teachers to establish effective communication with students. The observed communication was predominantly one-directional, with limited student engagement, and insufficient attention paid to the students' social and psychological backgrounds. Collaboration among Christian Religious Education teachers in designing and developing instructional materials collectively was minimal. Lesson planning and reflective practices remained largely individualistic, which in turn constrained innovation and the exchange of ideas among teachers. Another notable issue was the limited involvement of Christian Religious Education teachers in social activities within the school environment. In many instances, they were less active in educational community forums such as subject teacher groups (MGMP), school-based religious organizations, or cross-disciplinary activities. This indicates challenges in the holistic application of teachers' social competence. Initial observations of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Galang showed that their level of social competence was still in the "adequate" category, with an average score of 63.5%. This score highlights the need for more systematic interventions and development strategies to enhance teachers' social competence. One promising approach to improving teachers' social competence is the Think Pair Share (TPS) method. This method, introduced by Frank Lyman in 1981 as part of cooperative learning strategies, broadly involves three main stages: individual reflection (*think*), discussion in pairs (*pair*), and sharing results with the larger group (*share*). Such a structure fosters a participatory environment that enhances interpersonal communication, collaboration, and empathy among both students and educators (Arends, 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that the TPS method is effective in promoting interaction and teamwork among learners. For instance, Raba (2017) found that employing TPS in English language learning significantly improved students' speaking skills. Similarly, Kothiyal et al. (2018), in their study in engineering education, reported that TPS increased students' active participation in class discussions and reinforced social interaction within the learning environment. Nevertheless, research remains limited on the effectiveness of TPS in developing teachers' competencies, particularly within the domain of Christian Religious Education. Given this gap in the literature, the present study seeks to further examine the potential application of the Think Pair Share method in enhancing the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Galang. The objectives of this study: first, to conduct an in-depth analysis of how the TPS method can be implemented

in Christian Religious Education discussions, both in teacher meetings and professional development training; second, to measure the extent to which the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers improves following TPS-based learning or training activities; third, to identify the factors that influence the success or failure of TPS implementation in the context of teacher professional development. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on pedagogical approaches for teacher competence development. The findings are anticipated to serve as a reference for schools, educational authorities, and teacher training institutions in designing contextual and applicable programs to improve teachers' social competence. In the long run, enhancing the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers will also have a positive impact on the quality of classroom learning, as teachers will be better equipped to create inclusive, dialogical, and Christ-centered learning environments. Considering the social and cultural context of schools, the TPS method can be developed not only as an instructional strategy for students but also as a professional training tool for teachers. Through TPS, Christian Religious Education teachers can learn to listen to one another, provide constructive feedback, and refine their interpersonal skills in a safe and supportive environment. This is particularly vital in Indonesia's pluralistic society, where teachers must act as agents of unity and bridges across differences through communicative and collaborative approaches. Focused research on this topic will provide deeper insights into how cooperative strategies can be adapted within the framework of teacher professional development, particularly in the field of Christian Religious Education.

METHODS

This study employed a School Action Research (*Penelitian Tindakan Sekolah*, PTS) approach using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted over two cycles between January and March, with each cycle consisting of three sessions, each lasting 120 minutes. The participants in this study were two Christian Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Kristen) teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Galang, Tolitoli Regency, Central Sulawesi. The subjects were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) permanent teachers of Christian Religious Education; (2) having at least two years of teaching experience; and (3) willingness to be actively involved in all stages of the research. The research procedure was carried out in several stages. The planning stage included: (a) analyzing the initial situation of teachers' social competence, (b) developing discussion scenarios using the Think Pair Share (TPS) method, (c) designing research instruments, and (d) conducting program orientation for the Christian Religious Education teachers. The implementation stage involved the application of the TPS method in Christian Religious Education discussions through three main steps: (a) *Think*, where teachers individually reflected on the discussion topic; (b) *Pair*, where teachers shared and discussed their reflections with a partner; and (c) *Share*, where each pair presented their discussion outcomes in a larger forum. The observation stage focused on monitoring the discussion process and collecting data on the development of teachers' social competence. Finally, the reflection stage involved analyzing the collected data, identifying weaknesses, and designing improvement plans for the subsequent cycle.

The discussion topics for each session were designed to highlight aspects of Christian Religious Education relevant to the enhancement of social competence. These included: (1) strategies for effective communication in Christian Religious Education instruction; (2) fostering collaboration among teachers and educational stakeholders; and (3) integrating Christian values into social interactions within the school environment. Data were collected through four methods: (1) structured observation sheets to record teacher interactions during the TPS-based discussions; (2) semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of the TPS experience and its impact on their social competence; (3) questionnaires on teachers' social competence, adapted from performance evaluation instruments with a focus on the social competence dimension; and (4) documentation such as field notes, discussion recordings, and other supporting materials. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of improvement in teachers' social competence. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was applied. The research was considered successful if: (1) at least 75% of Christian Religious Education teachers demonstrated an improvement in social competence; (2) the average score of teachers' social competence reached a minimum of 80% of the maximum score; and (3) positive changes occurred in the interaction and communication patterns among Christian Religious Education teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Prior to the implementation of the Think Pair Share (TPS) method, an initial assessment of the social competence of Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen*) teachers was conducted using a questionnaire instrument consisting of four dimensions: (1) effective communication, (2) collaboration with colleagues, (3) social adaptability, and (4) involvement in the school community. The results of this initial measurement revealed that the average level of teachers' social competence was 63.5%, with the following distribution: effective communication (65.3%), collaboration (62.7%), social adaptability (67.2%), and community involvement (58.8%). These data indicate that "community involvement" had the lowest score (58.8%), while "social adaptability" achieved the highest (67.2%). Nevertheless, all four dimensions of social competence were still categorized as "adequate" and required further development.

Cycle I: Initial Implementation of the TPS Method

In the first cycle, the TPS method was implemented across three discussion sessions focusing on predetermined topics. Observations of the learning process indicated that during the initial stage of implementation, some teachers faced difficulties in following the TPS procedure, particularly in the *Think* phase, where several teachers immediately shared their ideas without prior individual reflection. Furthermore, the *Pair* stage tended to be dominated by more senior teachers. Following the completion of Cycle I, a reassessment of teachers' social competence was conducted. The results showed significant improvements across all dimensions, with an average increase of 11.3%. The most notable progress was in the "community involvement" dimension, which increased by 12.1%, despite remaining the lowest overall. Interviews with teachers highlighted that the TPS method provided valuable opportunities for deeper reflection before sharing

ideas with colleagues. One teacher noted: *“This method gave me space to organize my thoughts first. I usually speak without much reflection, but with the ‘Think’ stage, I became more structured in conveying my ideas.”* (G3, Cycle I Interview). Despite the improvements, the reflection stage of Cycle I identified several challenges, including: (1) insufficient time allocation for the *Think* phase, (2) unequal participation among participants, and (3) limited summarizing skills during the *Share* phase. Based on these findings, a revised plan was developed for Cycle II.

Cycle II: Refinement of the TPS Implementation

In Cycle II, several adjustments were made to the TPS implementation, including: (1) extending the time allocated for the *Think* stage, (2) changing the composition of discussion pairs at each session, and (3) providing structured guidelines for the *Share* phase. Observations revealed significant improvements in discussion dynamics. Teachers demonstrated greater confidence in expressing their ideas, engaged more actively in listening to their partners, and presented their discussion outcomes in a more structured manner during the *Share* stage. The results of the post-Cycle II assessment confirmed these positive changes, with consistent improvements across all dimensions. The average increase was 12.4% compared to Cycle I and 23.7% compared to the baseline condition. The “community involvement” dimension, which had previously been the lowest, showed the most significant improvement, rising by 25.6% from the initial measurement. Teachers also reported that TPS not only enhanced their communication skills in discussions but also influenced their classroom teaching practices. As one teacher remarked:

“The experience of discussion through the TPS method made me more aware of the importance of giving students time to think. I am now more patient in waiting for students’ responses and more skilled in facilitating group discussions in class.” (G7, Cycle II Interview)

In addition, there were noticeable changes in teachers’ interaction patterns outside the research setting. The Christian Religious Education teachers began to hold informal regular meetings to share experiences and best practices in teaching—something rarely practiced prior to TPS implementation. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the TPS method effectively enhanced the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers, with average scores increasing from 63.5% at the baseline to 74.8% in Cycle I and 87.2% in Cycle II. These results support the initial hypothesis that TPS can serve as an effective strategy for developing teachers’ social competence.

Effectiveness of the TPS Method in Developing Teachers’ Social Competence

The observed improvement in teachers’ social competence through the TPS method can be explained through several theoretical perspectives. According to Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism, learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration with others (Schunk, 2020). TPS provides a structured framework that facilitates the social construction of knowledge through its three stages: independent reflection, paired discussion, and group sharing. The *Think* stage enables teachers to engage in individual reflection, which is a crucial prerequisite for developing effective communication skills. As Dewey (2018) argued, reflection is a fundamental component of learning, allowing individuals to organize their thoughts and articulate more coherent arguments. The

findings of this study indicate that after the implementation of TPS, Christian Religious Education teachers demonstrated greater ability to express ideas in a structured and systematic manner, reflecting improved communication competence.

The *Pair* stage develops collaboration skills through paired discussions. Johnson and Johnson (2020) identified five essential elements of cooperative learning: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. In this study, the paired discussions fostered positive interdependence, where the success of one teacher depended on the success of their partner. This dynamic is reflected in the notable increase in the “collaboration” dimension, which rose from 62.7% at the baseline to 86.5% by the end of Cycle II.

The *Share* stage significantly contributed to the enhancement of “community involvement,” the dimension that showed the most substantial improvement (25.6% from the initial measurement). Wenger (2018) emphasized that learning within a community of practice allows for the exchange of knowledge and experiences that enrich professional perspectives. In this research, the *Share* sessions created opportunities for Christian Religious Education teachers to participate in a broader learning community, present their ideas, receive feedback, and strengthen their sense of belonging to the school community.

Implications of Enhancing Teachers’ Social Competence in Christian Religious Education Learning

The improvement of social competence among Christian Religious Education teachers has important implications for the quality of Christian Religious Education learning at SMK Negeri 1 Galang. Sidjabat (2019) emphasizes that Christian Religious Education learning is not merely concerned with the transfer of religious knowledge but also with shaping character and Christian values through meaningful social interaction. In this regard, teachers with strong social competence can serve as role models for students in developing social interaction skills that reflect Christian values. Interviews with Christian Religious Education teachers revealed that the enhancement of their social competence had a direct impact on classroom practices. Teachers began to adapt the principles of the Think Pair Share (TPS) method in Christian Religious Education instruction by providing students with greater opportunities to reflect on material, engage in peer discussions, and share their insights in class forums. This approach aligns with Groome’s (2022) paradigm of Christian Religious Education learning, which highlights the importance of dialogue and critical reflection in religious education. The improvement in the “Community Engagement” dimension opened opportunities for better integration of Christian Religious Education learning with broader social contexts. Seymour (2019) argues that effective religious education requires a strong connection between learning content and the socio-cultural contexts of students. In this study, Christian Religious Education teachers began to initiate activities that engaged the school and church communities in the learning process, thereby creating a more holistic and contextualized learning experience for students.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the TPS Method

This study also identified several factors that influenced the effectiveness of the TPS method in developing Christian Religious Education teachers’ social competence: first,

Time Allocation: Adjustments to time allocation, particularly in the “Think” stage, significantly improved the quality of teachers’ reflection and contributions during discussions. This finding corroborates Tanner’s (2019) assertion that sufficient “wait time” in professional discussions produces more thoughtful and reflective responses; second, Pairing Composition: Changing discussion partners at each meeting fostered more productive dynamics and enhanced teachers’ social adaptability. This reflects Page’s (2018) concept of “cognitive diversity,” in which the presence of diverse perspectives within a group enhances problem-solving and innovation; third, Structured Guidance: Providing structured guidelines for the “Share” stage helped teachers organize their presentations and improve communication quality. This confirms the importance of scaffolding in professional learning, as discussed by Vygotsky (in Schunk, 2020); fourth, Relevance of Discussion Topics: Topics closely related to the Christian Religious Education learning context increased teachers’ motivation and engagement in the discussion process. This supports Knowles et al.’s (2020) principle of adult learning (andragogy), which asserts that professional learning must be relevant to participants’ needs and work contexts; fifth, Psychological Climate: Creating a safe and supportive discussion climate enabled teachers to express ideas openly without fear of judgment. This finding resonates with Edmondson’s (2019) concept of “psychological safety” as a critical prerequisite for collaborative learning.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the Think Pair Share (TPS) method is effective in enhancing the social competence of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Galang. Significant improvements were recorded across all dimensions of social competence, with an average increase of 23.7% from baseline. The effectiveness of the TPS method lies in its structured design, which enables teachers to reflect individually, engage in paired discussions, and share within larger forums. This study contributes theoretically to the development of professional learning models for teachers, particularly in the context of Christian Religious Education instruction. Practically, it offers an alternative strategy that schools and other educational institutions can adapt to improve teachers’ social competence. Furthermore, the enhancement of Christian Religious Education teachers’ social competence carries important implications for the quality of Christian Religious Education learning, which should not only focus on the transfer of religious knowledge but also on character formation and the embodiment of Christian values through meaningful social interaction. The following recommendations are proposed: (1) integrating the TPS method into ongoing professional development programs for teachers; (2) establishing communities of practice among Christian Religious Education teachers to strengthen collaboration and the sharing of best practices; and (3) developing implementation guidelines for the TPS method that can be adapted to different instructional contexts.

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