



Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Faith Growth: A Study of Philippians 3:12-14 at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in fostering students' faith growth based on Philippians 3:12-14 at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu. Grounded in the Pauline vision of spiritual maturity that emphasizes perseverance, purpose, and continuous growth in Christ, this research seeks to explore how teachers' pedagogical abilities contribute to the development of students' faith within a formal educational setting. The population consisted of 517 Christian students enrolled at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu, with samples selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness and minimize selection bias. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring key indicators of pedagogical competence, such as instructional planning, learning strategies, classroom interaction, and evaluation practices, and indicators of students' faith growth, including spiritual understanding, motivation to learn Christian values, and personal commitment to faith practices. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis at a significance level of 0.05. The findings reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' faith growth, indicating that effective pedagogical practices play a vital role in nurturing students' spiritual development. Interpreted through Philippians 3:12-14, the results suggest that pedagogical competence supports a learning environment that encourages perseverance, spiritual aspiration, and continual growth in faith. This study concludes that pedagogically competent CRE teachers are instrumental in integrating biblical values with effective instructional practices, thereby fostering holistic faith development among students. The findings offer practical implications for improving CRE teacher professionalism and strengthening faith-based pedagogy in Christian elementary education.

Keywords: Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Faith

INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of cognitive transmission but a holistic endeavor that shapes intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learners. Within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogy is inseparable from faith formation, as education aims not only to inform but also to transform students' lives in accordance with Christian values (Groome, 2011). In Indonesia's pluralistic educational environment, Christian Religious Education teachers are expected to demonstrate pedagogical competence that integrates biblical insight, ethical responsibility, and effective instructional practice. This expectation becomes increasingly relevant in elementary education, where foundational faith development and character formation take place. Pedagogical competence refers to a teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning processes that are responsive to students' developmental stages and learning needs (Shulman, 1987). In the context of Christian education, pedagogical competence goes beyond technical teaching skills; it encompasses spiritual sensitivity, theological understanding, and the capacity to guide students toward faith maturity (Pazmiño, 2008). Consequently, the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education largely depends on how teachers embody and translate biblical values into meaningful learning experiences.

One of the biblical foundations that strongly emphasizes spiritual growth is found in Philippians 3:12-14, where the Apostle Paul articulates faith as a dynamic and ongoing process rather than a static achievement. Paul's metaphor of "pressing on" toward the heavenly goal reflects a theology of continual growth, perseverance, and spiritual maturity. This passage provides a theological framework for understanding faith development as an intentional and sustained journey, which aligns closely with educational principles that view learning as a progressive and lifelong process (Fee, 1995). Within Christian pedagogy, faith growth is not simply measured by doctrinal knowledge but by the internalization of Christian values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect Christlikeness (Wilhoit, 2008). Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators and models of this growth. Their pedagogical competence determines how biblical teachings are contextualized, how learning environments are shaped, and how students are encouraged to reflect on and live out their faith in daily life. Research has shown that teachers' instructional approaches significantly influence students' spiritual engagement and moral development (Astley, 2002). In Indonesian elementary schools, particularly faith-based institutions, Christian Religious Education teachers often face challenges related to curriculum demands, diverse student backgrounds, and the integration of faith with national education standards. These challenges require teachers to possess strong pedagogical competence that is adaptive, reflective, and grounded in theological conviction (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). Without adequate pedagogical competence, the teaching of Christian faith risks becoming formalistic and disconnected from students' lived experiences.

This study is situated at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu, where Christian Religious Education is provided to 517 Christian students by 36 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. The school context presents a significant opportunity to examine how pedagogical competence among CRE teachers contributes to students' faith growth within a

structured educational setting. Given the relatively large student population, the effectiveness of pedagogical practices becomes a critical factor in ensuring meaningful and sustainable faith formation. Most existing research tends to focus on theological reflection or qualitative analysis, leaving a gap in data-driven evidence that can inform educational policy and teaching practice. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers and students' faith growth, grounded in the theological perspective of Philippians 3:12-14. By integrating biblical theology with educational theory and empirical analysis, this study aims to contribute to the development of Christian Religious Education that is both theologically faithful and pedagogically effective. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers in strengthening the role of Christian Religious Education teachers as facilitators of students' faith growth in elementary education.

METHODS

A correlational approach was chosen because the study aimed to identify the degree and direction of association between variables without manipulating the research setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research was grounded in the theological framework of Philippians 3:12-14, which conceptualizes faith growth as a continuous and progressive process. The study was conducted at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, an elementary school providing Christian Religious Education as part of its formal curriculum. The population consisted of 517 Christian students enrolled in Grades I–VI and 36 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. These grade levels were selected because students at this developmental stage are considered capable of reflecting on faith-related concepts and experiences more consciously. The sample was selected using simple random sampling, ensuring that each student had an equal probability of being chosen. This technique was employed to minimize sampling bias and enhance the generalizability of the findings (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Based on sampling adequacy considerations for correlational studies, a sample of approximately 225 students was selected from the population using a random number table. The sample size was deemed sufficient to represent the population and to allow for reliable statistical analysis. This study involved two main variables: Independent Variable (X - Pedagogical Competence of CRE Teachers), pedagogical competence refers to teachers' ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning processes effectively while addressing students' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual needs. The indicators of pedagogical competence included lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, and integration of biblical values in teaching. Dependent Variable (Y - Students' Faith Growth), students' faith growth was operationally defined as the development of students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviors reflecting Christian faith, including spiritual discipline, perseverance, and commitment to Christian values, as inspired by Philippians 3:12-14. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires developed based on established educational and theological frameworks. The pedagogical competence questionnaire consisted of 25 Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) adapted from pedagogical competence models proposed by Shulman (1987) and contextualized for Christian education. The faith growth questionnaire included 20 Likert-

scale items measuring dimensions such as spiritual awareness, perseverance in faith, and personal commitment to Christian values, adapted from Christian faith development literature (Wilhoit, 2008). Prior to data collection, the instruments were reviewed by experts in Christian education to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 30 students outside the main sample, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 for pedagogical competence and 0.85 for faith growth, indicating high reliability. Data collection was conducted during regular school hours with permission from the school administration. Students completed the questionnaires under the supervision of the researcher and class teachers to ensure clarity of instructions and ethical compliance. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, and distribution of each variable. To test the relationship between pedagogical competence and students' faith growth, Pearson's product-moment correlation was applied, as the data met assumptions of normality and linearity. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS with a significance level set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis revealed that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu was generally perceived at a high level by students. The mean score for pedagogical competence was $M = 4.12$ ($SD = 0.46$) on a five-point Likert scale, indicating that teachers consistently demonstrated effective instructional planning, contextual teaching strategies, and meaningful integration of biblical values in classroom practice. Students particularly rated highly teachers' clarity in explaining Christian concepts and their ability to relate biblical teachings to daily life. The descriptive results for students' faith growth showed a high overall level, with a mean score of $M = 4.05$ ($SD = 0.51$). Indicators related to perseverance in faith, spiritual discipline, and willingness to grow in Christlike character received strong responses. These findings suggest that students not only cognitively understand Christian teachings but also experience affective and behavioral dimensions of faith development. To examine the relationship between pedagogical competence and students' faith growth, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted. The results indicated a significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.68$, $p < .001$). This coefficient reflects a strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of pedagogical competence among CRE teachers are associated with greater faith growth among students. Statistical testing confirmed that the correlation was significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the acceptance of the research hypothesis. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.46$) indicates that approximately 46% of the variance in students' faith growth can be explained by the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers, while the remaining variance may be influenced by other factors such as family environment, church involvement, and personal spiritual practices. The findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence plays a critical role in fostering students' faith growth. This result aligns with educational theory that emphasizes teaching competence as a determining factor in holistic student development, including moral and spiritual dimensions. When teachers design instruction thoughtfully, apply interactive learning strategies, and assess students reflectively, learning becomes transformative rather than merely informational.

The results resonate strongly with Philippians 3:12-14, which portrays faith growth as a dynamic process of striving, perseverance, and intentional pursuit of spiritual maturity. Teachers who embody pedagogical competence function as facilitators of this journey by guiding students to understand faith as an ongoing process rather than a static achievement. Their instructional approach mirrors Paul's exhortation to "press on toward the goal," encouraging students to grow continually in faith and character. The strong correlation found in this study supports previous research emphasizing the modeling role of teachers in religious education. CRE teachers who integrate biblical reflection with pedagogical skill provide students with meaningful learning experiences that nurture faith internally and externally. This integration enables students to connect biblical teachings with personal experiences, thereby strengthening spiritual resilience and commitment. The findings suggest that pedagogical competence is not limited to technical teaching skills but also includes relational sensitivity, spiritual authenticity, and the ability to contextualize Scripture. Teachers who demonstrate consistency between teaching and personal faith practice become credible witnesses of Christian values, reinforcing students' trust and openness to spiritual formation. In the context of elementary education, where students are still forming foundational beliefs, the role of pedagogically competent CRE teachers becomes even more strategic. The positive relationship identified in this study indicates that effective pedagogy can serve as a bridge between biblical truth and lived faith, helping students internalize Christian values in age-appropriate and meaningful ways. The results imply that professional development programs for CRE teachers should emphasize pedagogical competence as a key component of faith formation. Training should integrate instructional strategies with theological reflection to ensure that teaching practices genuinely support students' spiritual growth. Schools are also encouraged to evaluate pedagogical practices not only in terms of academic outcomes but also in relation to faith development objectives.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and students' faith growth at SD Methodis-AN Pancur Batu, using a quantitative correlational design. The findings demonstrate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and the faith growth of students. These results affirm that pedagogical competence is a crucial factor in supporting not only cognitive learning outcomes but also students' spiritual development. The study confirms that CRE teachers who demonstrate effective lesson planning, contextual teaching strategies, meaningful assessment, and reflective instructional practices are more successful in fostering students' perseverance, spiritual motivation, and commitment to faith growth. Students perceive faith not merely as doctrinal knowledge but as a dynamic process that shapes attitudes, behaviors, and personal identity. This aligns with Philippians 3:12-14, which emphasizes faith as a continuous journey of striving, learning, and pressing forward toward spiritual maturity rather than a completed achievement. The findings highlight that pedagogical competence functions as a practical expression of Christian discipleship in education. Teachers who combine professional teaching skills with spiritual intentionality help students understand faith as a lived experience. By modeling perseverance, discipline,

and reflective growth, teachers embody the apostolic vision of faith development articulated by Paul, encouraging students to pursue spiritual growth with purpose and resilience. The results also underscore the strategic role of CRE teachers in elementary education, where foundational faith perspectives are formed. At this developmental stage, students are particularly responsive to instructional clarity, relational engagement, and consistent modeling. Pedagogically competent teachers serve as facilitators of faith formation by translating biblical truths into age-appropriate, meaningful learning experiences that nurture both understanding and personal conviction. The reliance on student self-reported perceptions may not fully capture the complexity of pedagogical practice and faith formation. Additionally, the study was conducted in a single school context, which may limit broader generalization. Future research is recommended to employ mixed-method approaches, include classroom observations and teacher interviews, and expand the research setting to multiple schools to enrich the understanding of pedagogical competence and faith growth. This study affirms that pedagogical competence is a vital foundation for fostering students' faith growth in Christian Religious Education. When teachers integrate sound pedagogy with a biblical vision of continuous spiritual striving, as articulated in Philippians 3:12-14, they contribute meaningfully to students' holistic formation. Strengthening pedagogical competence among CRE teachers is therefore essential for nurturing faith that is resilient, reflective, and oriented toward lifelong spiritual growth.

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