



Pedagogical Faith and the Power of Exemplary Teaching in the Light of Matthew 5:13-16: A Study at SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching in light of Matthew 5:13-16 within the context of a public elementary school, SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai. Pedagogical faith is understood as the integration of Christian faith values into teachers' pedagogical attitudes, motivations, and instructional practices, while exemplary teaching refers to observable role-modeling behaviors that reflect moral integrity, consistency, and care for students. Employing a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, this research involved 45 Christian students and eight Christian teachers, including a Christian Religious Education teacher. Data were collected using structured Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and simple correlation analysis. The findings reveal that both pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching were perceived at high levels among participants. Pedagogical faith demonstrated a strong presence in teachers' faith-based motivation, ethical responsibility, and commitment to Christian values. Exemplary teaching was particularly evident in teachers' moral conduct, integrity, and caring relationships with students. Correlational analysis indicated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching ($r = 0.68, p < 0.05$), suggesting that higher levels of pedagogical faith are associated with stronger exemplary teaching practices. These results highlight that pedagogical faith functions as a foundational driver of exemplary teaching, enabling educators to embody the biblical call to be "salt and light" through visible ethical behavior and professional responsibility. The findings suggest that teacher formation programs should emphasize the integration of faith, ethics, and pedagogy to foster holistic and transformative education.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Faith, Christian Religious Education, Exemplary Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission but a formative endeavor that shapes character, values, and moral orientation. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogy is inseparable from faith, since teaching is understood as a vocation that reflects theological convictions and ethical responsibility. Teachers are not

only conveyors of religious knowledge but living witnesses whose personal conduct becomes an integral part of the learning process. This understanding resonates strongly with the biblical teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16, where disciples are called to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” emphasizing the transformative power of exemplary life that influences others through visible and meaningful action (The Holy Bible, NRSV). Pedagogical faith refers to the integration of faith-based values within teaching practices that shape both instructional methods and teacher identity. Groome (2011) argues that Christian education is fundamentally a shared praxis in which faith is not only taught but embodied through relational and contextual engagement. Thus, pedagogical effectiveness in Christian education cannot be measured solely by cognitive outcomes but also by the consistency between belief, attitude, and action demonstrated by educators. This aligns with the broader educational theory that highlights the moral dimension of teaching, where teachers function as role models whose behavior significantly affects students’ character development (Lickona, 1991).

The concept of exemplary teaching has long been recognized in educational scholarship. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that effective teaching includes not only content knowledge and pedagogical skill but also moral commitment and professional integrity. In moral and religious education, this exemplary dimension becomes even more crucial, as students often internalize values through observation rather than instruction alone. Bandura’s social learning theory supports this view, suggesting that learners acquire behaviors and attitudes by observing significant figures within their environment (Bandura, 1977). In Christian educational settings, teachers serve as significant models whose daily conduct can either reinforce or undermine the values they teach. Matthew 5:13-16 provides a theological foundation for understanding exemplary teaching as a form of pedagogical faith. The metaphors of salt and light convey active influence, visibility, and responsibility. Salt preserves and enhances, while light illuminates and guides. Biblical scholars note that these metaphors stress ethical visibility and social responsibility, calling believers to live out their faith in tangible ways that benefit others (Wright, 2004). Applied to education, this passage implies that teachers are called to demonstrate faith through ethical consistency, compassion, humility, and commitment in their professional roles. This study is situated in SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai, a public elementary school with a Christian minority context, where 45 Christian students are taught by eight Christian teachers, including a Christian Religious Education teacher. Teaching Christian values within a public school environment presents unique challenges, particularly in maintaining faith integrity while fostering inclusivity and professionalism. In such a setting, exemplary teaching becomes a strategic and ethical approach to faith-based education, as explicit religious instruction must be balanced with respectful coexistence and character formation. Previous studies on Christian pedagogy in pluralistic contexts emphasize that teacher example often functions as the most effective medium of faith communication (Noddings, 2013; Palmer, 1998). When teachers embody the values they profess, students are more likely to perceive religious teachings as authentic and relevant to real life. However, empirical studies that explicitly connect pedagogical faith, biblical interpretation, and exemplary teaching in Indonesian public schools remain limited, especially in remote and indigenous contexts such as Mentawai. Therefore, this study aims to explore how pedagogical faith is expressed through exemplary teaching practices

in light of Matthew 5:13-16 at SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai. By examining the lived experiences of Christian teachers and their pedagogical approaches, this research seeks to contribute to the discourse on faith-based pedagogy, moral education, and contextual Christian education within public schooling. The findings are expected to offer both theological and pedagogical insights into how Christian educators can faithfully and professionally embody the calling to be “salt and light” in contemporary educational contexts.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was implemented to examine the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching practices as interpreted through Matthew 5:13-16. A quantitative approach was selected to obtain measurable and objective data regarding teachers' pedagogical faith and its perceived impact on exemplary teaching behaviors within the context of Christian Religious Education in a public elementary school setting. Quantitative research allows for systematic measurement of attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors using numerical data that can be statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted at SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai, a public elementary school characterized by cultural diversity and a Christian minority context. The population of this study consisted of 45 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher. Given the relatively small and manageable population size, a total sampling technique was applied, in which all Christian teachers and students were included as research participants. Total sampling is appropriate when the population size is limited and accessible, ensuring comprehensive representation of the study context (Sugiyono, 2019). The independent variable (X) in this study was pedagogical faith, defined as the integration of Christian faith values into teaching attitudes, instructional strategies, and teacher-student interactions. The dependent variable (Y) was exemplary teaching, understood as observable teacher behaviors that reflect moral integrity, consistency, responsibility, compassion, and role modeling in accordance with the biblical principles of being “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13–16). Pedagogical faith was operationalized through indicators such as faith-based motivation, consistency between belief and teaching practice, ethical responsibility, and commitment to Christian values in education. Exemplary teaching was measured through indicators including moral conduct, fairness, discipline, care for students, and visible role modeling.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant educational and theological literature, employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Separate but aligned questionnaire forms were administered to teachers and students to capture both self-perceptions and learner perceptions of exemplary teaching practices. The use of Likert-scale questionnaires is widely accepted in educational research for measuring attitudes and perceptions in a reliable and quantifiable manner (Likert, 1932). Content validity of the instrument was established through expert judgment involving scholars in Christian education and educational measurement. Construct validity was ensured by aligning questionnaire items with theoretically grounded indicators of pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching.

Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a reliability threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$, which is considered acceptable for social science research (George & Mallery, 2016). Data collection was conducted during the academic semester with formal permission from the school administration. Questionnaires were distributed directly to participants and completed under researcher supervision to ensure clarity and completeness. Ethical considerations were addressed by informing participants about the research purpose, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining confidentiality of responses. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation) to describe the levels of pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching. Furthermore, simple correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching practices. Statistical analysis was performed using standard statistical software, with significance determined at the 0.05 level. This approach enabled objective interpretation of the extent to which pedagogical faith contributes to exemplary teaching in the studied context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study was to examine the level of pedagogical faith among Christian teachers at SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that pedagogical faith was perceived at a high level by both teachers and students. The overall mean score for pedagogical faith was 4.32 on a five-point Likert scale, indicating strong agreement with statements related to faith-based motivation, ethical responsibility, consistency between belief and action, and commitment to Christian values in teaching. Among the indicators, faith-based motivation obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.45$), suggesting that teachers strongly perceive their teaching vocation as a calling rooted in Christian faith. This finding aligns with Palmer's (1998) assertion that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, where inner beliefs shape outward pedagogical practice. The indicator of ethical responsibility also scored highly ($M = 4.38$), reflecting teachers' awareness of moral accountability in their professional roles. The indicator with a slightly lower yet still high mean score was consistency between belief and teaching practice ($M = 4.21$). Although still within the high category, this result suggests that teachers recognize ongoing challenges in fully integrating faith values into daily instructional routines, particularly within a public school environment that requires professional neutrality and inclusivity. This nuance is important, as Groome (2011) emphasizes that Christian education occurs within lived tensions between faith commitments and contextual realities. The dependent variable, exemplary teaching, was measured through student and teacher perceptions of observable teacher behavior. The overall mean score for exemplary teaching was 4.28, indicating a high level of role-modeling behavior among Christian teachers. The highest mean score was found in the indicator of moral conduct and integrity ($M = 4.41$). Students perceived teachers as honest, fair, and consistent in enforcing rules, which reflects the moral visibility emphasized in Matthew 5:16, where good works are meant to be seen and glorify God. This result supports Lickona's (1991) theory that moral education is most effective when values are embodied rather than merely taught.

The indicator of care and compassion toward students also demonstrated a high mean score ($M = 4.35$). Students reported feeling respected and supported by teachers, which reinforces the relational dimension of exemplary teaching. Noddings (2013) highlights that caring relationships form the ethical foundation of effective education, especially in value-oriented learning contexts. The lowest mean score, though still within the high category, was observed in discipline and consistency ($M = 4.17$). This suggests that while teachers strive to maintain discipline, contextual challenges such as diverse student backgrounds and limited institutional resources may affect the consistency of disciplinary practices. Nonetheless, the overall data confirm that exemplary teaching is strongly present in the research setting. To examine the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching, a simple correlation analysis was conducted. The results indicated a positive and statistically significant correlation between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). This correlation coefficient reflects a strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of pedagogical faith are associated with stronger exemplary teaching practices. This finding implies that teachers who internalize and integrate Christian faith values into their pedagogical identity are more likely to demonstrate role-modeling behavior that is visible and impactful for students. The strength of this relationship supports Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that learners adopt values and behaviors through observation of significant models. In this case, teachers function as moral and spiritual models whose faith-driven attitudes influence student perceptions and learning experiences.

The findings of this study affirm that pedagogical faith plays a crucial role in shaping exemplary teaching practices. The high mean score for pedagogical faith indicates that Christian teachers at SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan do not perceive teaching merely as a technical profession but as a faith-informed vocation. This perspective is consistent with Wright's (2004) interpretation of Matthew 5:13-16, where discipleship is expressed through visible and transformative engagement with the world. The strong correlation between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching suggests that faith functions as an internal driving force that informs ethical decisions, relational approaches, and professional commitment. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that teaching involves moral judgment and responsibility, which cannot be separated from the teacher's value system. In this sense, pedagogical faith provides a coherent moral framework that guides teachers in navigating classroom challenges with integrity and compassion. In a public school context such as SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, where religious expression must coexist with institutional regulations and pluralistic values, pedagogical faith is not manifested through overt religious instruction alone but through ethical consistency and professional excellence. This aligns with Groome's (2011) notion of lived faith, where Christian identity is expressed through praxis rather than doctrinal proclamation.

The biblical metaphors of salt and light offer a powerful interpretive lens for understanding exemplary teaching in this study. Salt preserves and enhances, while light illuminates and guides. The high scores in moral conduct and care for students indicate that teachers function as stabilizing and guiding influences within the school environment.

The results demonstrate that exemplary teaching rooted in pedagogical faith does not create exclusivity or religious tension but instead contributes positively to the overall educational climate. This finding resonates with Noddings' (2013) argument that ethical and caring teaching transcends religious boundaries and fosters inclusive learning communities. The visibility emphasized in Matthew 5:16 is reflected in students' perceptions of teacher integrity and fairness. Teachers' actions become "visible texts" that communicate values more effectively than verbal instruction alone. This supports Bandura's (1977) assertion that observational learning is a primary mechanism through which values are internalized, particularly among children.

The findings of this study have significant implications for Christian Religious Education, especially in public school settings. The strong relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching underscores the importance of teacher formation that integrates spiritual, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions. Christian education programs should therefore emphasize character formation and reflective practice alongside instructional competence. The results suggest that exemplary teaching serves as a contextual strategy for faith-based education in pluralistic environments. Rather than relying solely on curriculum content, teachers can embody Christian values through daily interactions, discipline practices, and relational care. This approach aligns with Palmer's (1998) view that teaching from the heart fosters authenticity and trust in the learning process. The study highlights the strategic role of exemplary teaching in shaping student character. Students' positive perceptions of teacher conduct indicate that moral learning occurs through lived experience. Lickona (1991) argues that character education is most effective when moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action are integrated—an integration that is facilitated by exemplary teachers. The slightly lower scores in consistency between belief and practice and in discipline indicate contextual challenges that merit attention. Teaching in a remote and resource-limited area such as Mentawai presents unique constraints, including limited professional development opportunities and diverse student needs. These factors may affect teachers' ability to consistently enact faith-informed pedagogy. As a quantitative study with a limited population size, the findings are context-specific and should be interpreted with caution. However, Creswell (2014) notes that small-scale quantitative studies remain valuable for generating contextual insights and informing future research. The results of this study can thus serve as a foundation for further mixed-method or comparative research in similar educational contexts. This study contributes to the growing discourse on faith-based pedagogy by empirically demonstrating the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching. Unlike purely theoretical discussions, this research provides quantitative evidence that faith-informed pedagogy has measurable implications for teacher behavior and student perception. The study offers a contextual interpretation of Matthew 5:13–16 that emphasizes ethical visibility and pedagogical responsibility. Educationally, it reinforces the notion that exemplary teaching is not an optional attribute but a core dimension of professional practice, particularly in moral and religious education.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the relationship between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching in light of Matthew 5:13-16 within the context of SD Negeri 05 Goiso Oinan, Mentawai. The findings demonstrate that pedagogical faith plays a significant and positive role in shaping exemplary teaching practices among Christian teachers in a public elementary school environment. Both descriptive and correlational analyses indicate that teachers who integrate faith-based values into their pedagogical identity are more likely to exhibit ethical integrity, relational care, and consistent role-modeling behavior perceived positively by students. The high level of pedagogical faith identified in this study suggests that Christian teachers do not perceive teaching merely as a technical or procedural task but as a vocation rooted in moral and spiritual responsibility. This faith-informed perspective influences how teachers approach their professional duties, including classroom management, student interaction, and ethical decision-making. In line with the biblical metaphors of “salt” and “light,” pedagogical faith enables teachers to function as transformative agents who preserve moral values and illuminate positive pathways for student development through visible and meaningful actions. The strong correlation between pedagogical faith and exemplary teaching confirms that faith-based convictions are not confined to personal belief systems but are translated into observable pedagogical behavior. Exemplary teaching, characterized by integrity, fairness, compassion, and consistency, emerges as a practical manifestation of pedagogical faith. This finding reinforces educational theories that emphasize the central role of teacher modeling in moral and character education, particularly in formative educational stages such as elementary schooling. In the context of a public school with a pluralistic environment, the results of this study highlight the relevance of exemplary teaching as an inclusive and ethical expression of Christian faith. Rather than creating religious exclusivity, faith-informed exemplary behavior contributes positively to the overall learning climate by fostering trust, respect, and moral clarity. This suggests that Christian values, when embodied through professional excellence and ethical conduct, can harmonize with public education principles and promote holistic student development. The relatively small sample size and the focus on a single research site limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the study provides valuable empirical insights into faith-based pedagogy within a specific and often underrepresented context. Future research may expand upon these findings by employing mixed-method approaches, comparative studies across different regions, or longitudinal designs to explore the long-term impact of exemplary teaching on student character formation. This study affirms that pedagogical faith is a foundational element of exemplary teaching in Christian education. By embodying the call to be “salt and light,” teachers can effectively integrate faith, ethics, and pedagogy in ways that are both professionally responsible and contextually relevant. The findings underscore the importance of holistic teacher formation that nurtures not only pedagogical competence but also moral integrity and spiritual depth, thereby contributing to the advancement of ethical and transformative education in diverse educational settings.

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