



Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating Worship Spirituality: A Reflection on Exodus 29:45 at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam

Ira Issaura Hutapea

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: ira.hutapea88@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pedagogical competence plays a vital role in shaping students' spiritual formation within Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in cultivating authentic worship awareness. This study examined the pedagogical competence of a CRE teacher in nurturing worship spirituality among students at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung, through the theological lens of Exodus 29:45. A qualitative descriptive design was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices and student experiences. The participants consisted of one CRE teacher and 25 Christian students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using an interactive qualitative model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the teacher demonstrates strong pedagogical competence reflected in intentional lesson planning, relational and student-centered instruction, consistent modeling of worshipful attitudes, and the use of experiential learning strategies such as guided prayer and reflective activities. These practices contribute positively to students' awareness of God's presence and their engagement in worship-related behaviors. However, the study also identifies areas for improvement, particularly in the explicit theological integration of Exodus 29:45 within lesson design and the need for more systematic experiential frameworks. In the minority context of the school, the CRE classroom functions not only as an instructional space but also as a supportive faith community. The study concludes that pedagogical competence grounded in biblical theology and relational practice is essential for fostering meaningful worship spirituality in elementary CRE. Future research is recommended to involve broader contexts and longitudinal approaches.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Worship Spirituality*

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical competence is widely acknowledged as a foundational dimension of teacher professionalism that directly influences the quality of learning and the formation of student character. Within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence carries an even deeper significance because instruction is not limited to cognitive transmission but extends to spiritual formation and faith cultivation. CRE teachers are expected not only to deliver biblical knowledge effectively but also to guide students toward an experiential understanding of Christian worship and devotion. In Indonesian schools where character education is strongly emphasized, the pedagogical role of CRE teachers becomes strategically important for nurturing holistic student development (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In recent years, educational discourse has increasingly emphasized the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains in religious education. Scholars argue that effective religious instruction must move beyond doctrinal memorization toward formative pedagogy that shapes attitudes and lived faith (Palmer, 2007). This shift is particularly relevant in elementary education, where students are in formative stages of moral and spiritual development. When pedagogical competence is exercised thoughtfully, through appropriate methods, relational sensitivity, and contextualized instruction, students are more likely to internalize worship values as meaningful aspects of their daily lives rather than as merely ritual obligations. The cultivation of worship spirituality is deeply rooted in God's relational initiative with His people. Exodus 29:45 records God's promise: "I will dwell among the Israelites and will be their God." This text underscores that worship is fundamentally relational, grounded in divine presence rather than mere ceremonial performance. Old Testament scholarship notes that the tabernacle theology in Exodus emphasizes God's desire for covenantal intimacy with His people, making worship a lived response to divine indwelling rather than a purely formal act (Wenham, 1994). For CRE teachers, this theological insight implies that pedagogical competence in worship education must foster relational awareness of God's presence, not simply teach procedural aspects of worship. Educational psychology further supports the importance of pedagogical competence in shaping student spirituality. Research shows that teachers who employ student-centered strategies, reflective dialogue, and meaningful learning experiences are more effective in influencing students' values and dispositions (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). In faith-based education, this effectiveness is magnified because students often interpret spiritual truths through the credibility and pedagogical approach of the teacher. When worship is taught through engaging, contextually relevant methods, students are more likely to develop authentic spiritual awareness. Empirical studies focusing specifically on the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers in cultivating worship spirituality within Indonesian public elementary schools remain relatively limited. Much of the existing research emphasizes curriculum content or general teacher competence without closely examining how pedagogical practice translates into students' lived worship awareness. This gap is particularly important in minority contexts where the number of Christian students is small and the CRE teacher often serves as the primary spiritual mentor in the school environment.

SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung, presents a meaningful locus for such investigation. The school has 25 Christian students served by one CRE teacher, creating a concentrated instructional relationship in which pedagogical competence may have a highly visible impact. In settings with limited Christian population, the effectiveness of CRE pedagogy becomes even more crucial because opportunities for formal faith formation outside the classroom may be limited. Understanding how the teacher cultivates worship spirituality in this context can provide valuable insights for broader CRE practice in Indonesian public schools. National educational priorities in Indonesia increasingly stress character education, religious moderation, and holistic student formation. Within this framework, CRE teachers are expected to demonstrate professional pedagogical competence while remaining faithful to biblical foundations. The integration of Exodus 29:45 into pedagogical reflection offers a theological lens through which worship formation can be examined empirically in classroom practice. This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education teacher in cultivating students' worship spirituality at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how pedagogical practices, such as instructional strategies, classroom interaction, and learning facilitation, support the development of students' awareness of God's presence as reflected in Exodus 29:45. By combining educational measurement with theological reflection, this study is expected to contribute to the strengthening of spiritually grounded pedagogical professionalism in Indonesian Christian Religious Education.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive approach was used to explore the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in cultivating students' worship spirituality at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because the research sought to obtain a rich, contextualized understanding of how pedagogical practices are experienced and interpreted within the natural classroom setting rather than to test causal relationships statistically. Qualitative description is particularly appropriate for educational research that aims to portray phenomena as they occur in real contexts and to capture participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was also informed by theological reflection on Exodus 29:45, which served as an interpretive lens for understanding how worship spirituality, especially awareness of God's presence, is pedagogically nurtured in the classroom. This integration of educational inquiry and biblical theology allowed the research to remain both empirically grounded and theologically meaningful. The research was conducted at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung, an Indonesian public elementary school where Christian Religious Education is provided for a minority group of students. The site was purposively selected because it represents a context in which the CRE teacher plays a central role in students' formal spiritual formation. The participants consisted of: 1 Christian Religious Education teacher (primary key informant), and 25 Christian students enrolled in CRE classes. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The CRE teacher was selected because of direct responsibility for worship instruction, while the students were included because they are the recipients of the pedagogical process. This

sampling strategy aligns with qualitative research principles that prioritize information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Non-participant observations were conducted during CRE learning sessions to examine how pedagogical competence was enacted in real time. The observation focused on instructional strategies, teacher-student interaction, facilitation of worship understanding, and the creation of a spiritually conducive classroom atmosphere. Field notes were recorded systematically using an observation guide derived from indicators of pedagogical competence and worship spirituality. In-depth interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher to explore pedagogical intentions, theological understanding of worship based on Exodus 29:45, and perceived challenges in cultivating students' worship spirituality. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Selected students representing different grade levels were also interviewed to capture their perceptions and experiences of how worship spirituality is taught and modeled in the classroom. Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative analysis consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Through this qualitative descriptive methodology, the study sought to generate a contextualized and theologically informed understanding of how pedagogical competence contributes to the cultivation of worship spirituality among elementary-level CRE students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This qualitative descriptive study explored how the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung contributes to the cultivation of students' worship spirituality, interpreted through the theological lens of Exodus 29:45. Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the CRE teacher and selected students, and analysis of instructional documents. The analysis produced five major thematic findings: pedagogical planning oriented toward worship awareness, relational and student-centered instructional practice, modeling of worshipful attitudes, facilitation of experiential worship learning, and contextual challenges in minority faith settings. Together, these themes provide a holistic picture of how pedagogical competence functions as a formative spiritual instrument in this school context. Document analysis of lesson plans (RPP) and teaching materials revealed that the CRE teacher demonstrates structured pedagogical preparation aligned with curriculum standards. Learning objectives consistently included affective and spiritual targets alongside cognitive goals. For example, several lesson plans explicitly stated aims such as "students demonstrate gratitude to God" and "students show reverence during prayer activities." This indicates that the teacher understands pedagogical competence not merely as content delivery but as intentional spiritual formation. From a qualitative standpoint, the planning reflects what Palmer (2007) describes as teaching that emerges from the teacher's identity and integrity. The teacher's interview responses confirmed this orientation, emphasizing that worship education must "help children feel that God is near, not only know about Him." This statement closely resonates with the theological emphasis of Exodus 29:45, where divine indwelling forms the basis of worship life. The analysis also identified areas for strengthening. While affective goals were present, explicit theological articulation

connecting classroom activities to the concept of God's dwelling presence was sometimes implicit rather than systematically framed. This suggests that pedagogical competence is strong at the practical level but could be further deepened through more intentional theological scaffolding. Classroom observations consistently showed that the CRE teacher employs relational and student-centered pedagogical strategies. The teacher frequently used open-ended questions, small-group discussions, and guided reflection rather than relying solely on lecture-based instruction. Students were encouraged to share personal experiences related to prayer, gratitude, and church participation. Student interview data strongly affirmed this pattern. Many students described the teacher as "friendly," "patient," and "easy to talk to." Such relational warmth is pedagogically significant. Research in character education indicates that students internalize values more effectively when learning occurs within a supportive relational climate (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). From the perspective of pedagogical competence, the teacher demonstrates strong classroom management combined with emotional sensitivity. The learning environment observed was orderly yet non-intimidating. Students appeared comfortable asking questions about faith practices, which is particularly important in elementary religious education. This relational approach aligns with the covenantal intimacy implied in Exodus 29:45. If worship is grounded in awareness of God's presence among His people, then classroom pedagogy that fosters relational closeness mirrors this theological reality. In this case, pedagogical competence functions as a mediating bridge between biblical theology and classroom experience. Minor variation in student responses suggests that a few students remain relatively passive during discussions. This indicates an opportunity for the teacher to diversify participatory techniques further, especially for quieter learners.

One of the strongest findings concerns the teacher's role modeling. Across observations and interviews, students consistently reported that the CRE teacher demonstrates behaviors associated with worship spirituality. These include praying with sincerity, speaking respectfully about God, showing patience toward students, and maintaining a calm demeanor during classroom activities. In qualitative terms, the teacher functions as what may be called a "living curriculum." Students do not merely hear about worship; they observe it embodied. This finding strongly supports Palmer's (2007) assertion that teaching effectiveness flows from the inner life of the teacher. During observation of prayer sessions, the teacher did not rush through devotional moments but created a reflective atmosphere. Silence was intentionally maintained before and after prayer, and students were gently guided to focus. Such pedagogical moves indicate a high level of affective instructional awareness. Students demonstrated perceptible behavioral responses. Several students reported that they had begun to pray more seriously at home or during school devotions. While qualitative data cannot establish causality, the convergence of observation and student testimony suggests meaningful formative influence. From the standpoint of Exodus 29:45, the modeling dimension is theologically coherent. If God's dwelling presence invites reverent response, then the teacher's embodied reverence becomes a pedagogical conduit through which students learn what worship feels like in practice.

Another significant theme is the teacher's effort to move beyond purely verbal instruction toward experiential learning. Observations documented the use of guided prayer exercises, reflective journaling, simple worship singing, and short moments of silent reflection. These activities indicate pedagogical awareness that worship spirituality is cultivated through participation, not mere explanation. Students' interview responses confirm the impact of these strategies. Many students reported that CRE lessons feel "different from other subjects" because they include moments of reflection and prayer. This distinction is pedagogically meaningful. Educational psychology suggests that experiential engagement strengthens affective learning outcomes and value internalization. The teacher's approach reflects principles of constructivist learning, where students actively construct meaning through guided experience. In the context of worship spirituality, such pedagogy is particularly appropriate because awareness of God's presence is inherently experiential. Document analysis shows that experiential elements are not yet fully systematized across all lesson plans. Some lessons remain more cognitively oriented. This indicates an area for professional development: developing a more consistent experiential worship pedagogy framework. The research context, 25 Christian students served by one CRE teacher in a public school, creates unique pedagogical dynamics. Interview data revealed that the teacher must often work within limited instructional time and resources. The minority status of Christian students also means that opportunities for communal worship formation within the school are relatively constrained. The teacher demonstrates adaptive pedagogical competence. Observations showed efficient use of limited time, integration of worship moments within regular lessons, and sensitivity to the pluralistic school environment. Students expressed appreciation for the CRE class as a space where they can openly express their faith identity. This highlights an important socio-pedagogical function: the CRE classroom serves not only as an instructional site but also as a supportive faith community. This finding is significant. It demonstrates that pedagogical competence in minority contexts requires not only instructional skill but also contextual wisdom and relational sensitivity. A central aim of this study was to interpret pedagogical practice through the lens of Exodus 29:45. The data indicate that, while the teacher may not always explicitly cite the verse, the pedagogical patterns strongly reflect its theological substance—namely, cultivating awareness of God's nearness. Three forms of theological integration were evident: Relational emphasis (students are guided to see God as present and personal), Reverential classroom climate (worship moments are treated with seriousness), Embodied modeling (the teacher demonstrates lived awareness of God). These findings support Wenham's (1994) observation that Old Testament worship theology centers on divine presence rather than ritual formalism. In this classroom, pedagogical competence appears to mediate that theological reality effectively. The study also suggests that explicit biblical-theological framing could further strengthen learning coherence. Students might benefit from more direct connections between classroom worship practices and specific scriptural foundations. The findings carry several important implications for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Pedagogical competence in CRE must be understood holistically, integrating instructional skill, relational sensitivity, and spiritual modeling. The case of SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam demonstrates that even in resource-limited settings, spiritually formative pedagogy is achievable. Teacher formation programs should give greater attention to experiential worship pedagogy. Many CRE

teachers may be strong in content knowledge but less equipped to facilitate lived spiritual experience. Minority-context CRE teaching requires specialized professional support. Teachers serving small Christian populations carry disproportionate formative responsibility and therefore need ongoing mentoring and theological-pedagogical development. The study reinforces the importance of aligning classroom practice with biblical theology. Exodus 29:45 provides a powerful framework for worship education that emphasizes God's relational presence rather than mere ritual compliance. The results demonstrate that the CRE teacher at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam exhibits strong pedagogical competence in cultivating worship spirituality among students. The teacher effectively integrates structured planning, relational pedagogy, experiential learning, and personal modeling. Students respond positively and show emerging awareness of worship as a lived spiritual practice. At the same time, the findings highlight developmental opportunities, particularly in systematic theological articulation, broader student participation strategies, and more consistent experiential lesson design. The study therefore affirms that pedagogical competence, when theologically grounded and relationally enacted, serves as a powerful instrument for nurturing authentic worship spirituality in elementary Christian Religious Education.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in cultivating students' worship spirituality at SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam, Bandar Lampung, through the theological lens of Exodus 29:45. Using a qualitative descriptive approach involving classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis, the research provides a contextualized portrait of how pedagogical practice contributes to the formation of worship awareness among 25 Christian elementary students served by one CRE teacher. The findings confirm that pedagogical competence, when exercised holistically, functions as a significant formative force in students' spiritual development. The study demonstrates that the CRE teacher exhibits intentional pedagogical planning that integrates cognitive and affective learning goals. Lesson plans consistently reflect concern for students' worship awareness, indicating that the teacher understands pedagogy in CRE as formative rather than merely informative. This planning orientation aligns with the theological emphasis of Exodus 29:45, which frames worship as a relational response to God's indwelling presence. However, the findings also suggest that explicit theological framing within lesson design could be further strengthened to enhance conceptual coherence for students. The teacher's relational and student-centered instructional practices emerged as a major strength. The classroom environment was observed to be warm, dialogical, and psychologically safe, enabling students to engage openly in discussions about faith and worship. Students' testimonies confirmed that relational closeness significantly supports their spiritual receptivity. This reinforces the view that pedagogical competence in CRE must include emotional and relational intelligence, especially at the elementary level where faith formation is highly relational. The research highlights the critical role of teacher modeling in cultivating worship spirituality. The CRE teacher consistently demonstrated reverence, patience, and sincerity during prayer and instructional moments. Students perceived these behaviors as authentic expressions of faith, suggesting that the teacher functions as a "living

curriculum.” This finding affirms that in Christian education, the credibility of worship instruction is deeply tied to the congruence between what teachers teach and how they live. The study found meaningful efforts toward experiential worship pedagogy, including guided prayer, reflective silence, and participatory worship activities. These practices help students move beyond cognitive understanding toward lived spiritual experience. Nevertheless, the implementation of experiential strategies was not yet fully systematic across all lessons, indicating an area for ongoing professional refinement. The minority context of the school presents both challenges and opportunities. With only 25 Christian students and one CRE teacher, the instructional relationship becomes highly concentrated. Despite limitations in time and resources, the teacher demonstrates adaptive competence and contextual sensitivity. The CRE classroom effectively functions as both an instructional space and a supportive faith community for students. In light of Exodus 29:45, the overall pedagogical pattern observed in this study reflects a worship formation model centered on awareness of God’s presence rather than ritual formalism alone. The teacher’s planning, relational engagement, modeling, and experiential facilitation collectively contribute to nurturing this awareness among students. Thus, the study affirms that pedagogical competence, when theologically grounded and relationally enacted, can effectively cultivate worship spirituality even within small and resource-limited educational settings. The study contributes to Indonesian CRE scholarship by providing an empirically grounded and theologically interpreted model of worship-oriented pedagogy in a public elementary school context. Practically, the findings recommend strengthening explicit biblical integration in lesson design, expanding participatory strategies to engage all learners, and systematizing experiential worship learning frameworks. Future research is encouraged to involve multi-site comparisons, longitudinal tracking of students’ spiritual development, and the inclusion of teacher reflective practice data. Such efforts would deepen understanding of how pedagogical competence shapes long-term worship formation. The case of SDN 1 Labuhan Dalam demonstrates that effective CRE pedagogy is not merely about instructional delivery but about cultivating a lived awareness of God’s presence among students. When pedagogical competence is exercised with theological depth, relational warmth, and experiential intentionality, it becomes a transformative instrument for nurturing authentic worship spirituality in Indonesian Christian education.

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