



Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching God's Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18): A Study at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba. Pedagogical competence is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of religious instruction, particularly in helping elementary students understand biblical theology in meaningful and contextual ways. The research employed a quantitative descriptive approach involving 105 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring key dimensions of pedagogical competence, namely lesson planning, instructional implementation, classroom management, and learning evaluation. The findings indicate that the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers is generally in the good category, with the strongest aspect found in classroom management and the relatively lower score in the use of varied instructional strategies. Students demonstrated a positive level of understanding regarding the meaning of God's covenant with Abraham, particularly in recognizing God's faithfulness and promise. Statistical analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' comprehension of the biblical material. These results affirm that well-developed pedagogical skills contribute substantially to effective faith-based learning in elementary contexts. The study recommends continuous professional development for CRE teachers, especially in the integration of interactive and contextual teaching methods, to strengthen students' theological understanding and spiritual formation. This research contributes to the discourse on faith education by highlighting the strategic role of pedagogical competence in transmitting biblical truths to young learners.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Covenant*

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical competence is widely acknowledged as one of the most decisive factors influencing the effectiveness of classroom instruction and student learning outcomes. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), pedagogical competence is not merely concerned with the technical delivery of content but also with the meaningful transmission of biblical values that shape students' faith formation and moral development. Teachers of Christian Religious Education (*Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen/PAK*) are therefore expected to demonstrate professional mastery in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning processes that are both pedagogically sound and theologically faithful. According to Shulman (1987), effective teaching requires the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into what he terms pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), a concept highly relevant for teachers who communicate biblical narratives to young learners. The teaching of Christian Religious Education carries a dual mandate: fulfilling national curriculum standards while nurturing students' spiritual maturity. Government regulations emphasize that teachers must possess pedagogical competence that includes understanding learner characteristics, designing instruction, implementing interactive learning, and conducting authentic assessment (Mulyasa, 2013). However, several studies indicate that CRE teachers often face challenges in translating abstract theological concepts into age-appropriate learning experiences for elementary students (Groome, 2011). This gap becomes particularly significant when teaching covenant theology, which requires both biblical literacy and pedagogical sensitivity. One foundational biblical theme taught in CRE is God's covenant with Abraham, especially as recorded in Genesis 15:18. The covenant narrative is central to biblical theology because it reveals God's faithfulness, promise, and redemptive plan for humanity (Goldingay, 2015). For elementary students, however, the concept of covenant can be abstract and difficult to grasp without effective pedagogical mediation. Therefore, the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers becomes crucial in helping students understand not only the historical content of the text but also its theological meaning and contemporary relevance.

Previous research highlights that teacher competence significantly affects students' cognitive and affective learning outcomes in religious education (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In the Indonesian context, studies on teacher competence in PAK have generally focused on character education, spiritual formation, or general instructional quality. Nevertheless, limited empirical attention has been given specifically to how pedagogical competence shapes students' understanding of key biblical doctrines such as the Abrahamic covenant, particularly at the primary school level. This indicates a clear research gap that warrants scholarly investigation. The present study is situated at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba, a public elementary school with a significant Christian student population. Based on school data, there are 105 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher. This demographic context provides a strategic setting to examine how pedagogical competence is enacted in real classroom practice. Despite the favorable religious composition, preliminary observations suggest variations in instructional approaches, student engagement, and depth of theological understanding among learners. From a theoretical standpoint, effective CRE

teaching should embody learner-centered pedagogy, contextual biblical interpretation, and reflective spiritual formation (Groome, 2011; Shulman, 1987). When teachers lack adequate pedagogical competence, biblical instruction risks becoming rote, doctrinally shallow, or disconnected from students' lived experiences. Conversely, pedagogically competent teachers are more likely to employ interactive strategies such as storytelling, discussion, visual media, and contextual application that make biblical truths meaningful for children. This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the level of teachers' pedagogical competence, describe instructional practices used in teaching the Abrahamic covenant, and evaluate how such competence influences students' understanding of the biblical material. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the discourse on pedagogical content knowledge in Christian education and practically to the improvement of CRE teaching quality in Indonesian primary schools.

METHODS

A quantitative descriptive approach was used to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18). A quantitative design was chosen because it enables objective measurement of teacher competence and students' understanding through numerical data and statistical analysis. The descriptive orientation allows the researcher to portray the existing condition of pedagogical practices without manipulating variables, thereby reflecting authentic classroom realities. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba. The school context is particularly relevant because it has a substantial Christian population that supports the implementation of CRE instruction. The study involved two groups of participants: Students, the population consisted of 105 Christian students enrolled at the school. Because the population size was manageable, the study used a total sampling technique, meaning all 105 students were included as respondents to measure their learning outcomes and perceptions of instructional practices; Teachers, the school has 8 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher. Given the small number, the study applied saturated sampling, in which all eight teachers were involved as research subjects to provide data on pedagogical competence. The primary variable of the study was teachers' pedagogical competence, operationalized through the following indicators adapted from national teacher competency standards (Mulyasa, 2013): understanding students' characteristics, designing CRE lesson plans, implementing interactive and meaningful learning, utilizing learning media and resources, conducting assessment and evaluation, providing feedback and follow-up learning. Student understanding of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) functioned as the outcome variable, measured through cognitive comprehension indicators, including: knowledge of the biblical narrative, understanding of the covenant concept, ability to explain the meaning of God's promise, ability to relate the lesson to daily Christian life. Data were collected using structured instruments: Teacher Pedagogical Competence Questionnaire, a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) was administered to measure teachers' self-reported pedagogical competence. Student

Learning Test, A multiple-choice and short-answer test was developed to assess students' understanding of Genesis 15:18 and the Abrahamic covenant. Student Perception Questionnaire, students completed a Likert-scale questionnaire evaluating classroom teaching practices. Before data collection, the instruments underwent content validation by experts in Christian Religious Education and educational measurement. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable coefficient of 0.70.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba, and to analyze its relationship with students' understanding of the biblical material. The analysis involved quantitative data obtained from 8 Christian teachers and 105 Christian students. Prior to the main statistical analysis, the dataset was screened for completeness, distribution, and linearity. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test indicated that both the pedagogical competence variable and the student learning outcome variable were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Linearity testing further confirmed that the relationship between the two variables met the assumptions required for Pearson correlation and regression analysis. These preliminary findings ensured that the subsequent inferential statistics could be interpreted with confidence. Descriptive analysis revealed that the overall pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education teachers was in the high category, with a mean score of 4.12 on a five-point Likert scale and a relatively small standard deviation, indicating consistency among the eight teachers. This result suggests that, procedurally, the teachers at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon have demonstrated adequate mastery of core pedagogical functions expected in Indonesian educational standards. Teachers generally reported strong ability to understand student characteristics, design lesson plans, implement learning, conduct assessment, and provide feedback. The strongest dimension appeared in the provision of feedback and follow-up learning, while the relatively weaker area, though still categorized as high, was the utilization of learning media. This pattern indicates that the teachers' pedagogical competence is structurally sound but still exhibits areas that require enrichment, particularly in the domain of instructional innovation. The high score in understanding student characteristics reflects teachers' awareness of developmental differences among elementary learners. In practice, teachers reported adjusting explanations of Genesis 15:18 using simplified language, storytelling approaches, and familiar analogies. This finding aligns with Shulman's (1987) concept that effective teaching begins with deep knowledge of learners and the transformation of subject matter into forms accessible to students. In the context of Christian Religious Education, such sensitivity is especially important because biblical covenant theology involves abstract theological constructs that must be translated into concrete learning experiences for children. The teachers' ability to recognize learners' needs therefore constitutes a positive foundation for effective CRE instruction at the school.

In terms of instructional planning, the teachers also demonstrated relatively strong competence. Most lesson plans reviewed during the study contained clearly stated

objectives, structured learning steps, biblical references, and evaluation procedures. This indicates compliance with national teacher competency expectations (Mulyasa, 2013). However, closer examination suggests that while the lesson plans were administratively complete, the depth of theological contextualization varied. Some plans emphasized narrative retelling of Genesis 15:18 without sufficiently elaborating the covenant concept as a theological theme of divine promise and faithfulness. This finding implies that formal planning competence does not automatically guarantee depth of pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers may meet structural requirements while still needing support in developing richer theological pedagogy. The implementation of learning in the classroom generally reflected a teacher-guided interactive model. Storytelling was the dominant strategy used to communicate the Abrahamic covenant narrative, followed by question-and-answer sessions and brief discussions. These approaches are developmentally appropriate for elementary learners and likely contributed to the relatively positive student perception scores. However, the data also indicate that more participatory and inquiry-based strategies, such as cooperative learning, role-play, or problem-based biblical reflection, were used less frequently. This pedagogical tendency may help explain why students demonstrated stronger narrative recall than deeper conceptual understanding. As Groome (2011) emphasizes, faith education becomes transformative when learners actively interpret and appropriate biblical meaning rather than passively receiving information. The utilization of learning media emerged as the comparatively weakest dimension of teacher competence, with a mean score of 3.78. Although still categorized as high, classroom evidence suggested reliance primarily on textbooks, verbal narration, and whiteboard explanations. Visual aids, digital media, and contextual learning tools were used only occasionally. For elementary-level religious education, this limitation is pedagogically significant because younger learners typically benefit from multimodal learning environments that integrate visual, auditory, and experiential elements. The relatively modest performance of students in the higher-order understanding of covenant theology may be partially attributed to this limited media integration. Darling-Hammond (2006) notes that effective teachers not only master content but also employ varied instructional resources that support deeper student engagement. Student learning outcomes regarding Genesis 15:18 were categorized as moderate to high, with a mean score of 78.6 on a 0-100 scale. At the surface level, most students were able to correctly identify Abraham, recall that God made a promise, and recognize the general storyline. This indicates that the narrative transmission function of CRE instruction is functioning effectively at the school. However, when assessment items required students to explain the meaning of the covenant, interpret God's faithfulness, or relate the lesson to their personal faith experience, performance declined noticeably. This pattern confirms a common phenomenon in elementary religious education: cognitive recall develops earlier and more easily than theological abstraction and personal application. Groome (2011) argues that movement from "knowing the story" to "living the story" requires intentional pedagogical scaffolding, guided reflection, and contextual engagement.

Students' perceptions of CRE teaching were generally positive, with an overall mean of 4.07. Most students reported that teachers explained lessons clearly, used interesting storytelling methods, and created a supportive classroom atmosphere. These positive

affective responses are important because emotional engagement often supports religious learning motivation. Nevertheless, students gave comparatively lower ratings to the variety of learning media and opportunities for group discussion. This perception data triangulates with the teacher self-report findings and strengthens the internal validity of the study. It suggests that both teachers and students recognize similar areas for pedagogical improvement, particularly in expanding interactive and media-supported learning. Inferential analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' understanding of the Abrahamic covenant ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$). This coefficient indicates a strong relationship in the context of educational research and provides empirical support for the pedagogical content knowledge framework proposed by Shulman (1987). The finding demonstrates that classrooms led by teachers with higher pedagogical competence tend to produce students with better comprehension of Genesis 15:18. This relationship is particularly meaningful in Christian Religious Education because the teacher's role involves not only transmitting information but also mediating theological meaning in developmentally appropriate ways. Regression analysis further confirmed the predictive role of pedagogical competence. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.38$) indicates that approximately 38 percent of the variance in students' understanding of God's covenant with Abraham can be explained by the pedagogical competence of the teachers. In educational studies, this represents a substantial and practically meaningful effect size. At the same time, the remaining 62 percent of unexplained variance points to the influence of additional factors beyond classroom pedagogy. These likely include students' family religious environment, church involvement, prior biblical exposure, personal motivation, and access to learning resources. This finding reinforces the ecological perspective of faith education, which views spiritual learning as occurring across interconnected contexts rather than solely within the classroom.

The demographic composition of SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon provides an interesting backdrop for interpreting the findings. With 105 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the school environment is structurally supportive of Christian Religious Education. One might expect such a context to naturally produce high levels of theological understanding. However, the data clearly demonstrate that favorable religious demographics alone do not guarantee deep learning. Pedagogical intentionality remains the decisive factor. This insight is important for policymakers and school leaders who may assume that religious homogeneity automatically ensures effective faith education. The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on teacher competence in religious education in several ways. They empirically confirm that pedagogical competence is a significant determinant of student learning in CRE, consistent with the broader teacher effectiveness literature (Darling-Hammond, 2006). They highlight a specific pedagogical depth gap between narrative mastery and theological internalization among elementary students. They identify media integration and participatory pedagogy as strategic areas for professional development among CRE teachers. Fourth, they demonstrate that even in supportive religious environments, instructional quality remains the key lever for improving learning outcomes. The teaching of God's covenant with Abraham requires more than historical explanation; it demands careful pedagogical mediation of divine promise, faithfulness, and relational

commitment. When instruction emphasizes storytelling without sufficient guided reflection, students may retain the narrative but miss the covenantal significance. Conversely, when pedagogical competence integrates clear explanation, visual representation, interactive dialogue, and life application, the biblical text becomes more meaningful and formative. Therefore, strengthening pedagogical content knowledge specific to covenant theology should become a priority in CRE teacher development programs. The results suggest several directions for improvement at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon and similar schools. Teachers would benefit from targeted training in multimodal biblical instruction, including visual storytelling, digital media use, and collaborative learning structures. Assessment practices should gradually incorporate higher-order theological reasoning and personal faith application rather than focusing predominantly on recall. Additionally, partnerships between schools, families, and churches could help address the substantial portion of learning variance explained by out-of-school factors. Future research employing mixed-method or longitudinal designs would be valuable in exploring these ecological influences more comprehensively. The results and discussion of this study demonstrate that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a significant and measurable role in shaping elementary students' understanding of God's covenant with Abraham. While the teachers at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon generally exhibit high competence, the depth of theological learning among students indicates the need for continued pedagogical enrichment. Strengthening interactive strategies, media utilization, and meaning-centered biblical teaching represents a strategic pathway for enhancing the effectiveness and spiritual impact of Christian Religious Education in Indonesian primary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyze the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE/PAK) teachers in teaching God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) at SD Negeri 175820 Batu Nabolon, Toba, and to examine its relationship with students' understanding of the biblical material. Based on quantitative analysis involving 8 Christian teachers and 105 Christian students, several important conclusions can be drawn. The overall pedagogical competence of CRE teachers at the research site falls within the high category. The teachers demonstrated strong performance in understanding student characteristics, planning instruction, conducting assessment, and providing feedback. These findings indicate that, procedurally, the teachers have met the expected national competency standards for professional educators. The relatively consistent scores among teachers also suggest a stable level of instructional professionalism within the school context. However, the study also identified that the utilization of learning media and the implementation of more participatory learning strategies remain comparatively less optimized. This indicates that while the structural aspects of pedagogy are well established, there is still room for strengthening pedagogical depth and instructional innovation. Students' understanding of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) was categorized as moderate to high. Most students were able to recall the biblical narrative and identify the central figures and events. Nevertheless, their ability to interpret the theological meaning of the covenant and to relate the lesson to their personal faith experience was comparatively weaker. This finding confirms that

elementary students tend to master narrative knowledge more readily than abstract theological concepts. It also highlights the ongoing need for CRE instruction that moves beyond information transmission toward guided meaning-making and life application. The study found a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' understanding of the Abrahamic covenant ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$). This result empirically reinforces the theoretical framework of pedagogical content knowledge, demonstrating that effective transformation of biblical material into developmentally appropriate instruction significantly supports student learning. The regression analysis further showed that pedagogical competence accounts for approximately 38 percent of the variance in students' understanding. This represents a substantial educational effect, while also indicating that other ecological factors, such as family religious environment, church involvement, and student motivation, contribute to learning outcomes. The demographic context of the school, which includes a fully Christian student sample supported by Christian teachers, provides a conducive environment for CRE implementation. The findings clearly demonstrate that favorable religious composition alone does not automatically produce deep theological understanding. Instructional quality, particularly pedagogical competence, remains the decisive factor in effective Christian Religious Education. This insight is important for both school leaders and policymakers who may otherwise overestimate the impact of contextual religious homogeneity. This study contributes to the discourse on Christian Religious Education by empirically validating the importance of pedagogical competence in teaching foundational biblical doctrines at the elementary level. It extends the application of pedagogical content knowledge into the specific domain of covenant theology instruction in Indonesian primary schools. The findings suggest that professional development for CRE teachers should prioritize strengthening interactive pedagogy, multimodal media integration, and strategies that facilitate theological reflection and life application. In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed. CRE teachers are encouraged to deepen their pedagogical content knowledge related to covenant theology and to expand the use of visual, digital, and collaborative learning approaches. Schools should support continuous professional development focused on transformative rather than merely procedural pedagogy. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables, such as family and church influences, using mixed-method or longitudinal designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting students' biblical learning. This study confirms that pedagogical competence is a significant and meaningful predictor of students' understanding of God's covenant with Abraham in the primary school context. Strengthening this competence represents a strategic pathway for enhancing both the academic quality and the spiritual formation outcomes of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia.

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