



Bridging Sacred Text and Classroom Practice: Pedagogical Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers Reflecting on Exodus 26:33 at SD N 11 Pekanbaru

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of pedagogical competence in facilitating students' understanding of biblical teachings within the Christian Religious Education classroom. Grounded in a reflective interpretation of Exodus 26:33, the research explores how teachers translate scriptural content into meaningful learning experiences for elementary students. Employing a qualitative research design, the study involved 40 students who participated in classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective learning activities. The purpose was to capture students' perspectives on how teaching practices influenced their comprehension of biblical messages. The findings indicate that pedagogical competence significantly shapes students' engagement with Scripture. Teachers who employed clear explanations, storytelling methods, reflective questioning, collaborative discussions, and experiential learning strategies were more successful in helping students understand both the literal and symbolic meanings of biblical texts. In particular, Exodus 26:33 was understood not only as a description of sacred space but also as a value-based framework emphasizing respect, boundaries, and reverence. Students reported that interactive and supportive classroom environments encouraged deeper reflection and personal connection with biblical teachings. The study reveals that effective facilitation of biblical learning requires more than content mastery. Emotional support, structured lesson planning, and contextualized instruction emerged as essential elements of pedagogical competence. These practices enabled students to move beyond memorization toward meaningful interpretation and application. Pedagogical competence plays a vital role in transforming biblical instruction into a reflective and formative learning process. By integrating theological insight with student-centered teaching strategies, teachers can foster deeper biblical understanding and spiritual growth in the classroom.

Keywords: *Pedagogical competence, biblical learning, Christian Religious Education*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a vital role in shaping students not only cognitively but also spiritually and morally. Unlike general academic subjects that primarily emphasize intellectual mastery, CRE seeks to cultivate faith-based understanding, ethical awareness, and spiritual sensitivity through engagement with biblical texts. In this context, the pedagogical competence of teachers becomes a decisive factor in determining whether biblical instruction remains merely informational or transforms into meaningful spiritual formation. Pedagogy itself refers to the discipline concerned with teaching methods and the process of guiding learners toward understanding. Within Christian education, pedagogy carries an even deeper responsibility, as teaching is expected to bridge divine revelation and students' lived realities. The increasing complexity of contemporary classrooms requires CRE teachers to move beyond traditional instructional approaches that rely heavily on memorization or doctrinal transmission. Effective biblical learning today demands contextualization, reflective engagement, and experiential understanding. Research in Christian pedagogy indicates that pedagogical competence encompasses the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate instruction that nurtures students' cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously (Harefa, 2025). When teachers possess strong pedagogical skills, they are able to communicate biblical truths in ways that resonate with students' developmental stages and socio-cultural contexts, thereby fostering deeper comprehension and internalization. Pedagogical competence in Christian education is not limited to methodological expertise but also includes theological understanding and relational sensitivity. Studies show that teachers who integrate biblical insights with interactive and experiential learning strategies enable students to internalize faith principles more effectively (Trihendrati, 2024). Such competence allows the classroom to function not merely as an academic space but as a formative environment where spiritual growth can occur. This aligns with the broader educational view that teaching competence involves guiding students from surface-level knowledge toward meaningful interpretation and application. One of the essential dimensions of facilitating biblical understanding lies in the ability to interpret Scripture responsibly and communicate its relevance to contemporary life. This process often involves exegesis, which refers to the critical interpretation of texts, especially sacred writings, to uncover their original meaning and contextual significance (Wikipedia, 2026). In educational settings, exegetical engagement enables teachers to present biblical narratives not as distant historical accounts but as living truths that speak to present realities. Without such interpretive depth, biblical instruction risks becoming detached from students' everyday experiences. Within the Old Testament, Exodus 26:33 presents a theological framework that holds pedagogical significance. The verse describes the function of the veil in separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place within the tabernacle. Symbolically, this separation represents boundaries that preserve sacredness while simultaneously guiding access to divine presence. When interpreted pedagogically, this imagery offers a metaphor for structured learning environments that facilitate reverence, understanding, and gradual spiritual growth. Educational research in Christian pedagogy emphasizes that biblical texts can provide foundational frameworks for shaping teaching practices when interpreted through reflective and contextual approaches (Pardosi & Sitopu, 2025).

In the classroom, pedagogical competence allows teachers to translate theological symbolism into age-appropriate learning experiences. Studies highlight that competent CRE teachers employ narrative instruction, reflective dialogue, and experiential activities to connect biblical messages with students' daily lives (Simaremare, 2024). Such strategies encourage students to move from passive reception toward active engagement with Scripture. This transformation is essential because meaningful biblical understanding involves not only knowing what the text says but also discerning its implications for personal faith and behavior. Contemporary scholarship underscores the importance of integrating spiritual formation with instructional effectiveness. Pedagogical competence has been shown to play a crucial role in enabling students to internalize biblical values such as obedience, trust, and perseverance (Lubis, 2025). Teachers who demonstrate mastery of content alongside contextual teaching methods create opportunities for students to relate scriptural teachings to their own life experiences. This integrative approach reflects a shift from purely doctrinal teaching toward holistic education that nurtures both understanding and transformation. The relevance of pedagogical competence becomes particularly significant in public elementary school settings, where CRE must be delivered in ways that respect diverse learning needs while maintaining theological integrity. Research suggests that teacher competence is multidimensional, involving instructional clarity, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and ethical guidance (Pangaribuan, 2025). These dimensions enable teachers to guide students through complex spiritual concepts in ways that are both accessible and meaningful. In light of these considerations, facilitating biblical understanding requires a pedagogical approach that integrates theological insight, instructional creativity, and relational engagement. Exodus 26:33 offers a symbolic lens through which such facilitation can be conceptualized, emphasizing structured access to sacred truth. When applied in educational contexts, this perspective highlights the importance of creating learning environments that balance reverence with accessibility, enabling students to encounter biblical teachings in transformative ways. This study seeks to explore how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to facilitating biblical understanding in the classroom. By reflecting on Exodus 26:33 as a theological foundation, this research aims to examine how instructional strategies, interpretive approaches, and relational practices can support students in engaging meaningfully with Scripture. Through this lens, the classroom becomes not merely a site of knowledge transmission but a space for spiritual formation and reflective learning.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers facilitates students' understanding of biblical teachings in the classroom. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the focus of the research was not to measure learning outcomes numerically but to examine students' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of how biblical instruction was delivered and understood. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to capture participants' voices and construct meaning from their perspectives within natural educational settings (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the study sought to understand how pedagogical practices influenced students' engagement with

biblical material, particularly in relation to the symbolic meaning of Exodus 26:33. The research was conducted in an elementary school context involving 40 students who participated in Christian Religious Education classes. These students were selected using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to choose participants who are directly involved in the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). The selected students had experienced classroom instruction related to biblical narratives and were therefore capable of reflecting on how teaching practices shaped their understanding. By focusing on students rather than teachers alone, the study aimed to examine the effectiveness of pedagogical competence from the learners' perspective. Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective student responses. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how teachers facilitated biblical learning, including their instructional strategies, use of questioning, and engagement methods. Observation is a key qualitative tool that allows researchers to document naturally occurring interactions and teaching dynamics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were carried out with selected students to gain deeper insight into how they interpreted biblical lessons and how teacher guidance influenced their comprehension. This form of interviewing enables flexibility while maintaining focus on research objectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, students were invited to write brief reflections on their learning experiences to capture personal responses that might not emerge during interviews. Data analysis followed an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Initial coding was conducted to identify recurring themes related to instructional clarity, engagement strategies, spiritual reflection, and comprehension of biblical symbolism. These themes were then organized into broader categories that reflected how pedagogical competence supported students' understanding of Scripture. To ensure credibility, the study applied triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and written reflections (Budiana, 2025). This process strengthened the trustworthiness of the data by confirming consistency across different sources. Ethical considerations were also observed by obtaining consent from participants and ensuring confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a central role in facilitating students' understanding of biblical teachings in meaningful and transformative ways. Based on classroom observations, student interviews, and reflective responses from the 40 participants, it became evident that biblical learning was not merely influenced by what was taught, but significantly shaped by how it was taught. Students consistently indicated that their comprehension of Scripture was enhanced when teachers employed structured, interactive, and reflective instructional approaches. This supports the view that pedagogical competence involves the ability to translate complex subject matter into accessible learning experiences (Law Davis, et al, 2019). One of the most prominent findings relates to instructional clarity. Students reported that they were better able to understand biblical messages when teachers explained Scripture using simple language, relatable examples, and storytelling techniques. Rather than presenting biblical content

as abstract theological information, teachers who demonstrated strong pedagogical competence contextualized lessons within students' everyday experiences. For example, when discussing the concept of sacred separation in Exodus 26:33, teachers did not merely describe the tabernacle structure but guided students to reflect on the importance of boundaries in maintaining respect and reverence. Such approaches align with constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that learners build understanding through connections between new information and prior experiences (Groome, 2011).

The use of narrative pedagogy also emerged as a powerful instructional tool. Observations showed that storytelling helped students visualize biblical events and engage emotionally with the text. Students expressed that stories made lessons "easier to imagine" and "more real," enabling them to grasp not only the content but also the underlying spiritual significance. Narrative teaching is widely recognized as an effective method for communicating moral and spiritual values, as it allows learners to interpret meaning through lived imagination (Pardede, 2025). In this study, narrative pedagogy enabled students to interpret Exodus 26:33 symbolically, understanding the veil not only as a physical object but as a representation of respect for sacredness. Another significant finding concerns the role of questioning strategies. Teachers who used open-ended questions encouraged students to think critically about biblical texts rather than passively receiving information. For instance, instead of asking factual questions about the tabernacle's structure, teachers posed reflective questions such as, "Why do you think certain spaces were separated?" and "How can we apply this idea of respect in our daily lives?" These questions prompted students to explore deeper meanings and connect biblical teachings with personal experiences. According to Bloom's taxonomy, higher-order questioning promotes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are essential for meaningful learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Students reported that such discussions helped them move beyond memorization toward understanding. Collaborative learning also played an important role in facilitating comprehension. Group discussions allowed students to share interpretations and learn from one another's perspectives. Observations indicated that when students worked together to reflect on biblical passages, they became more engaged and confident in expressing their thoughts. Social interaction has long been considered a key factor in cognitive development, as learning is mediated through dialogue and shared experience (Sumbayak, 2023). In this context, collaboration enabled students to negotiate meaning collectively, thereby deepening their understanding of scriptural symbolism. The integration of experiential learning activities further enhanced biblical understanding. Teachers occasionally incorporated role-playing, drawing activities, and reflective journaling to help students internalize lessons. For example, students were asked to create visual representations of spaces they considered "special" or "important," drawing parallels with the concept of sacred space in Exodus 26:33. These activities enabled students to translate abstract theological concepts into concrete experiences. Experiential learning theory suggests that knowledge is constructed through active participation and reflection. Students' reflections confirmed that such activities helped them understand the significance of boundaries and respect in both spiritual and social contexts.

Emotional engagement emerged as another key factor influenced by pedagogical competence. Students noted that teachers who demonstrated warmth, patience, and encouragement created a safe learning environment where they felt comfortable asking

questions. This emotional support fostered trust and openness, allowing students to explore spiritual concepts without fear of judgment. Educational research highlights that emotional climate significantly affects students' motivation and engagement. In this study, emotional availability was closely linked to students' willingness to participate in discussions and reflect on biblical meanings. The findings also indicate that pedagogical competence includes the ability to integrate theological interpretation with developmental appropriateness. Teachers adapted their explanations to suit the cognitive levels of elementary students, avoiding overly abstract theological language. Instead, they used analogies and visual aids to communicate symbolic meanings. This approach aligns with the principle that effective teaching requires understanding learners' developmental stages (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Students reported that visual aids such as diagrams of the tabernacle helped them grasp the structural and symbolic aspects of Exodus 26:33 more effectively. Reflective dialogue emerged as a critical component of meaningful biblical learning. Teachers who encouraged students to relate scriptural themes to personal experiences facilitated deeper understanding. Students described how discussions about respect, boundaries, and sacredness helped them think about their relationships with family, friends, and God. Reflection is widely regarded as essential for transforming knowledge into personal insight. In this study, reflective dialogue enabled students to interpret biblical teachings as relevant to their daily lives rather than distant historical narratives.

The role of classroom structure was also noteworthy. Teachers who organized lessons systematically from introduction to exploration, reflection, and application enabled students to follow the learning process more effectively. Structured instruction mirrors the symbolic order found in Exodus 26:33, where spatial organization reflects theological meaning. Students reported that clear lesson sequences helped them understand how different ideas were connected. Instructional organization is a hallmark of pedagogical competence, ensuring that learning progresses logically. The findings suggest that pedagogical competence contributes to spiritual sensitivity. Students who experienced interactive and reflective instruction demonstrated greater awareness of the sacred dimensions of biblical narratives. They expressed an understanding that Scripture is not merely a historical record but a guide for living. Spiritual sensitivity involves recognizing the moral and relational implications of faith-based teachings. In this study, pedagogical competence enabled students to perceive biblical messages as personally meaningful.

Some students initially struggled to understand symbolic concepts, indicating the need for continuous scaffolding. Teachers who revisited key ideas through multiple methods such as storytelling, visuals, and discussion were more successful in facilitating comprehension. Scaffolding supports learners as they move from basic understanding toward deeper insight. Students acknowledged that repeated explanation helped them grasp complex meanings. Another challenge involved maintaining engagement across diverse learning styles. Teachers who employed varied strategies were better able to address differences in student preferences. Differentiated instruction is essential for accommodating diverse learners (Tomlinson, 2001). Observations confirmed that students responded positively to varied teaching methods. The study demonstrates that pedagogical competence is instrumental in transforming biblical learning into a meaningful and reflective process. Through clarity, narrative teaching, questioning, collaboration, experiential activities, emotional support, and structured instruction,

teachers facilitated students' understanding of Exodus 26:33 as both a theological and practical concept. These findings highlight that facilitating biblical understanding requires more than doctrinal knowledge. It demands the integration of instructional skill, relational sensitivity, and theological insight. When these elements are combined, the classroom becomes a space where Scripture is not only learned but experienced. This aligns with contemporary views that education should nurture holistic development, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Noddings, 2005). The pedagogical competence of CRE teachers significantly influences how students engage with and interpret biblical teachings. By employing diverse and reflective instructional strategies, teachers enable students to connect scriptural symbolism with their own lives. Exodus 26:33, when taught through competent pedagogy, becomes not merely a historical description but a framework for understanding respect, boundaries, and sacredness. Thus, pedagogical competence serves as a bridge between biblical text and student experience, fostering deeper comprehension and spiritual growth.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of pedagogical competence in facilitating students' understanding of biblical teachings within the Christian Religious Education classroom. The findings demonstrate that effective biblical learning does not occur solely through the transmission of scriptural content but through thoughtful instructional practices that enable students to interpret, reflect upon, and apply biblical messages in their daily lives. In this research, the pedagogical competence of teachers was shown to function as a crucial bridge connecting theological knowledge with students' lived experiences. Through qualitative exploration involving 40 elementary students, it became evident that instructional clarity, narrative approaches, reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and experiential activities contributed meaningfully to students' comprehension of Scripture. When teachers contextualized biblical texts such as Exodus 26:33 using age-appropriate explanations and relatable examples, students were better able to grasp both the literal and symbolic meanings embedded in the passage. The concept of sacred separation portrayed in the verse was no longer perceived merely as a structural element of the tabernacle but as a value-laden principle emphasizing respect, boundaries, and reverence. The study underscores that pedagogical competence extends beyond technical teaching skills. It involves emotional sensitivity, adaptability, and the ability to foster a supportive learning environment where students feel encouraged to explore spiritual ideas openly. Students' reflections revealed that when teachers demonstrated patience and openness, they became more willing to engage in discussions and express personal interpretations of biblical themes. This suggests that relational dynamics are integral to facilitating meaningful spiritual learning. The integration of structured lesson planning and reflective questioning also emerged as essential components of effective pedagogy. Teachers who organized lessons systematically and invited students to think critically about biblical meanings helped transform passive learning into active engagement. As a result, students moved beyond memorization toward deeper understanding and personal relevance. This transformation aligns with the broader goal of Christian education, which seeks not only to inform but also to form character and faith. The reflection on Exodus 26:33 provided a valuable framework for conceptualizing

structured access to sacred truth within the learning process. Just as the veil in the tabernacle symbolized reverent approach to divine presence, pedagogical competence enables teachers to guide students thoughtfully toward understanding spiritual concepts. In this way, the classroom becomes a formative space where respect for Scripture is cultivated alongside intellectual growth. The study affirms that pedagogical competence is essential for facilitating biblical understanding among students. By integrating instructional expertise with theological insight and relational care, teachers can transform biblical learning into a meaningful and transformative experience. Future research may further explore how these pedagogical practices can be adapted across different educational levels and contexts to support holistic spiritual development.

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