

## Professional Competence in Christian Religious Education: Exploring Teacher Challenges and Curriculum Implementation at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru

Rosniati Zebua<sup>1\*</sup>, Lustani Samosir<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

\*correspondence: [zebuarosniati67733@gmail.com](mailto:zebuarosniati67733@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Character and moral education are central to the holistic development of students in Indonesian primary schools, with teachers playing a pivotal role in implementing curriculum and modeling ethical behavior. This study examines the implementation of professional competence by Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, focusing on curriculum mastery and its influence on students' cognitive understanding and moral development. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials. The findings reveal that teachers demonstrate high levels of professional competence by employing active learning strategies, such as storytelling, role-playing, and collaborative discussions, to make religious content accessible and meaningful for students. Teachers' moral exemplarity, patience, and ethical conduct serve as essential mechanisms for shaping students' character, complementing formal instructional efforts. Challenges identified include limited teaching resources, infrastructural constraints, and socio-economic factors, which require adaptive strategies and reflective practices to sustain effective curriculum delivery. Overall, the research underscores that professional competence extends beyond content mastery to include pedagogical skill, ethical modeling, and emotional intelligence. By cultivating these dimensions, teachers enhance students' understanding of Christian teachings and foster internalization of moral values. The study recommends continuous professional development, institutional support, and reflective practices as essential strategies to strengthen teachers' capacity to implement the PAK curriculum effectively and nurture students' moral and cognitive growth.*

**Keywords:** *Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Curriculum*

### INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen, or PAK*) serves not only as an academic subject in Indonesian elementary schools but also as a vital means of fostering

moral, spiritual, and social development among students. At the primary school level, students are in a crucial phase of cognitive, emotional, and social growth, making the role of teachers in guiding their understanding of religious concepts highly significant (Piaget, 1969; Erikson, 1968). Mastery of the PAK curriculum by teachers is therefore essential, as their knowledge, pedagogical skill, and professional competence directly influence how effectively students internalize both theological content and moral principles. In the context of SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, a rural school with diverse student backgrounds, the challenges associated with curriculum mastery are particularly pronounced. Teachers must navigate the complexity of religious content, adapt lessons to students' varying cognitive abilities, and simultaneously address socio-cultural influences that may affect students' learning and value formation. The Indonesian National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003) emphasizes that education aims to develop the full potential of students while fostering character and a dignified civilization. Complementarily, the Teacher and Lecturer Law (Law No. 14 of 2005) specifies four core competencies required of educators: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal. Among these, professional competence, encompassing mastery of the subject matter, instructional design, assessment literacy, and continuous professional development, is critical for the effective delivery of PAK curriculum (Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 16 of 2007). Teachers with strong professional competence are able to present theological content accurately, engage students in meaningful learning activities, and create opportunities for students to reflect upon and apply Christian values in daily life. Conversely, insufficient mastery of curriculum content can lead to superficial instruction, misinterpretation of biblical principles, and weakened character formation. At SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, the implementation of professional competence in teaching PAK encounters multiple challenges. First, teachers must grapple with the complexity of theological material, which often requires sophisticated interpretation and contextualization for young learners. Second, limited access to educational resources, such as reference books, teaching aids, and digital materials, can hinder lesson planning and effective delivery. Third, students' varying levels of prior knowledge, family backgrounds, and exposure to external influences, including technology and social norms, demand adaptive and differentiated teaching approaches. These conditions place a high demand on teachers' ability to integrate professional knowledge with pedagogical strategies that facilitate meaningful learning. Understanding how teachers navigate these challenges is essential for strengthening both curriculum implementation and student outcomes. Existing research suggests that professional competence in religious education is not only about content mastery but also involves the ability to contextualize lessons, engage students actively, and reflect on teaching effectiveness (Bandura, 1977; Bruner, 1966). Teachers who demonstrate high levels of professional competence act as both content experts and moral guides, facilitating the integration of knowledge and values in students' lives. Moreover, professional mastery enables teachers to employ innovative instructional strategies, including active learning, storytelling, project-based learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy, which enhance comprehension and moral application.

This study focuses on exploring the implementation of professional competence by PAK teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, highlighting the intersection between curriculum mastery and instructional effectiveness. It seeks to examine the challenges

teachers face in mastering the curriculum, the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges, and the implications of professional competence for students' cognitive and moral development. By investigating these dynamics, the study aims to provide insights into how PAK instruction can be strengthened in rural educational contexts, ensuring that teachers not only deliver theological content effectively but also guide students in internalizing Christian values in ways that are meaningful, practical, and culturally sensitive.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the implementation of professional competence by Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru. A qualitative methodology was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in mastering and delivering the PAK curriculum within a rural elementary school context. The case study design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the interplay between curriculum knowledge, pedagogical practice, and professional competence, offering rich contextual insights that quantitative methods alone may not capture (Yin, 2018). The research population consisted of all PAK teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, totaling five educators responsible for delivering Christian Religious Education across grades one through six. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that participants possessed relevant teaching experience, familiarity with the PAK curriculum, and active engagement in professional development activities. This approach ensured that the data collected reflected authentic and practical insights into curriculum mastery and professional competence. Classroom observations were conducted over a four-week period to examine teaching strategies, student engagement, and the application of professional competencies in real instructional settings. The analysis followed a thematic coding process. Data from interviews and observations were transcribed, categorized, and coded according to emergent themes related to curriculum mastery, instructional strategies, professional competence, and encountered challenges. A combination of inductive and deductive coding was used, allowing patterns to emerge from the data while aligning with theoretical constructs of teacher competence and curriculum implementation. Reliability was ensured through peer debriefing, in which two independent researchers reviewed the coding scheme and resolved discrepancies through discussion. Collectively, this methodology enabled a thorough examination of how PAK teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru navigate curriculum complexities, exercise professional competence, and address practical challenges in promoting both cognitive understanding and moral development among their students.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to explore the implementation of professional competence by Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, focusing on curriculum mastery and its impact on students' cognitive and moral development. The findings are presented in two main sections: the implementation of professional competence and its influence on students' learning outcomes. The teachers at SD Negeri

076070 Tugala Luru demonstrated a strong commitment to mastering the PAK curriculum, despite facing various challenges typical of rural educational settings. Observations revealed that teachers employed a range of instructional strategies to engage students actively. These included storytelling, role-playing, group discussions, and the use of visual aids, all aimed at making biblical teachings relatable and accessible to young learners. Interviews with teachers indicated a deep understanding of the theological content and a conscious effort to integrate Christian values into daily lessons. Teachers emphasized the importance of modeling ethical behavior, demonstrating patience, and providing moral guidance, aligning with the concept of teacher professionalism as outlined by Lustani Samosir. According to Samosir, the personality competence of PAK teachers significantly influences students' moral development, as teachers serve as role models in instilling Christian values (Samosir, 2024). However, the study also identified several challenges in implementing professional competence. Limited access to teaching resources, inadequate classroom facilities, and large class sizes were reported as barriers to effective curriculum delivery. Despite these obstacles, teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru exhibited resilience and creativity in adapting their teaching methods to the available resources.

The impact of teachers' professional competence on students' learning outcomes was assessed through student focus groups and analysis of academic performance records. The results indicated a positive correlation between the quality of PAK instruction and students' understanding of religious concepts. Students demonstrated improved knowledge retention, critical thinking skills, and the ability to apply Christian teachings in their daily lives. The study observed notable improvements in students' moral development. Teachers' consistent modeling of ethical behavior, coupled with the integration of character education into the curriculum, contributed to students' increased empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. These findings are consistent with those of Samosir, who reported that the personality competence of PAK teachers positively affects students' moral development, with a significant influence observed in the fifth-grade students at SD Negeri No. 030286 Parsaoran (Samosir, 2024). The implementation of professional competence by PAK teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru plays a crucial role in enhancing students' cognitive and moral development. Despite facing challenges inherent in rural educational contexts, teachers' dedication to mastering the curriculum and modeling Christian values significantly impacts students' learning outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development for educators and the need for supportive educational policies that address resource limitations in rural schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has highlighted the critical role of professional competence in the teaching of Christian Religious Education (PAK) at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, emphasizing its influence on both curriculum mastery and student development. The findings demonstrate that teachers who possess strong professional competence are able to deliver the PAK curriculum effectively, translating complex theological concepts into accessible lessons that resonate with students' daily experiences. By integrating instructional strategies such as storytelling, role-playing, group discussions, and culturally

relevant examples, teachers not only foster cognitive understanding but also actively promote the internalization of Christian values. The research further reveals that professional competence extends beyond mere subject knowledge. It encompasses pedagogical skill, ethical modeling, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt teaching to diverse student needs. Teachers' dedication to mastering content, planning meaningful lessons, and demonstrating moral integrity serves as a powerful mechanism for shaping students' character. The personality and professional competence of PAK teachers significantly influence students' moral development, particularly in elementary school contexts. By serving as both content experts and moral exemplars, teachers reinforce ethical values such as responsibility, empathy, honesty, and respect, which students gradually internalize through observation and interaction. The study also acknowledges the challenges inherent in rural educational settings. Limited access to teaching resources, infrastructural constraints, and socio-economic factors can hinder the full implementation of professional competence. The resilience and creativity of teachers at SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru demonstrate that these challenges can be mitigated through adaptive strategies, peer collaboration, and reflective practice. The study underscores the importance of institutional support, professional development programs, and policy interventions to sustain and enhance teachers' ability to master the curriculum and implement it effectively. Professional competence is a cornerstone of effective Christian Religious Education in elementary schools. Its impact extends beyond cognitive achievement to encompass moral and character formation, highlighting the inseparable link between teachers' expertise and students' holistic development. For SD Negeri 076070 Tugala Luru, investing in the professional growth of PAK teachers is not merely an administrative obligation but a strategic priority for nurturing ethically grounded, knowledgeable, and socially responsible students. Future research should explore longitudinal outcomes of curriculum mastery and professional competence, as well as the effectiveness of targeted interventions aimed at supporting teachers in rural educational contexts.

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