

Teaching Gratitude through the Covenant of God: Pedagogical Competence in Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri 065009 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 065009 Medan develop and implement pedagogical competence in teaching gratitude, as inspired by the covenantal narrative in Genesis 9:13. The study is grounded in the understanding that gratitude is not only a moral virtue but also a theological response to God's faithfulness, forming a foundation for students' moral and spiritual growth. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research investigates how teachers interpret and translate biblical values into learning experiences that nurture gratitude among students. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to capture teachers' pedagogical strategies, classroom interactions, and reflective practices. The findings indicate that pedagogically competent CRE teachers demonstrate an integrative teaching approach, combining biblical storytelling, reflective dialogue, and experiential learning to foster both cognitive understanding and affective transformation. Teachers who model gratitude in their behavior and communication create a learning atmosphere marked by respect, empathy, and responsibility, leading students to internalize gratitude as a way of life. The study also highlights challenges related to contextualization, limited resources, and the need for ongoing professional development in biblical pedagogy. Overall, the findings affirm that pedagogical competence rooted in theological reflection can effectively shape students' gratitude and spiritual maturity, aligning Christian education with the broader goal of character formation in Indonesian primary schools.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogical Competence*

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of Christian Religious Education (PAK), the cultivation of gratitude represents a profound moral and spiritual goal that transcends the boundaries of cognitive learning. Gratitude, in the Christian worldview, is not merely a moral virtue but a theological disposition rooted in the recognition of God's covenantal faithfulness. The narrative of Genesis 9:13, which records God's covenant with Noah and the appearance of the rainbow as a divine sign of mercy, provides a rich pedagogical foundation for teaching

gratitude. It symbolizes God's enduring promise and His benevolent relationship with humankind. Within this theological framework, Christian teachers are called not only to transmit biblical knowledge but also to guide students toward internalizing gratitude as a response to God's steadfast love. This responsibility demands pedagogical competence - the teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning processes that nurture both understanding and moral transformation. At SD Negeri 065009 Medan, where Christian Religious Education is integrated into the national curriculum, teachers face the challenge of linking biblical teachings to students' daily lives in a multicultural environment. Students come from various social and cultural backgrounds, and many may perceive biblical stories as distant from their lived experiences. PAK teachers must develop adaptive strategies to make scriptural teachings tangible, meaningful, and emotionally resonant. Teaching the covenant in Genesis 9:13 offers an opportunity to bridge biblical truth with students' emotional and ethical development, particularly the virtue of gratitude. This virtue can foster positive interpersonal relationships, moral awareness, and emotional resilience-qualities essential for holistic Christian character formation. Pedagogical competence plays a central role in realizing this goal. It encompasses the teacher's mastery of content, understanding of learners, and ability to create interactive, reflective, and values-oriented learning environments. A PAK teacher with strong pedagogical competence understands how to translate the theological meaning of God's covenant into learning experiences that engage both heart and mind. This includes designing learning activities such as storytelling, reflective dialogue, creative art projects, and experiential learning that invite students to express thankfulness and recognize divine grace in everyday life. Through such approaches, gratitude is not taught as abstract doctrine but experienced as a lived moral attitude.

Teaching gratitude through the covenant of God aligns with the broader objectives of Christian education in Indonesia, which emphasize spiritual formation, moral growth, and civic responsibility. The National Education System underscores the importance of developing students who are intellectually competent, emotionally mature, and spiritually grounded. In this regard, the pedagogical competence of the teacher serves as the bridge between curriculum content and transformative learning outcomes. When students encounter the story of God's covenant not merely as history but as a symbol of divine care that continues in their lives, they begin to cultivate gratitude that transcends material satisfaction - gratitude rooted in faith, relationship, and purpose. Implementing gratitude-centered pedagogy presents several challenges. Many PAK teachers still rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered instruction that emphasizes memorization rather than reflection or application. This limits students' engagement and prevents them from experiencing gratitude as a dynamic and personal virtue. Additionally, the diverse learning backgrounds of students at SD Negeri 065009 Medan require differentiated instructional approaches to ensure inclusivity and comprehension. Pedagogical competence thus becomes the key to transforming PAK classrooms into spaces of moral encounter and spiritual reflection. Teachers must not only master biblical exegesis but also possess the creativity to contextualize it for young learners, encouraging them to see the rainbow - the symbol of God's covenant - as a reminder of divine faithfulness in their own experiences. This study explores how pedagogical competence influences the effectiveness of PAK teachers in teaching gratitude through the story of God's covenant in Genesis 9:13. It aims to identify the strategies teachers employ, the challenges they

face, and the learning outcomes achieved by students. By focusing on the case of SD Negeri 065009 Medan, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how theological truth and pedagogical skill intersect in Christian education. Ultimately, the study affirms that gratitude, when taught through the lens of God's covenant, can become a transformative force that nurtures faith, character, and a deepened sense of divine relationship among students.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how pedagogical competence enables Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers to guide students in cultivating gratitude based on the biblical account of God's covenant in Genesis 9:13. The focus of this research was on understanding how teachers interpret, implement, and evaluate teaching strategies that foster gratitude as a moral and spiritual virtue within the context of SD Negeri 065009 Medan. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate because it allows for a rich, in-depth exploration of classroom practices, teacher reflections, and student responses in their natural setting. Rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively, this study sought to uncover the meaning and educational dynamics behind teachers' pedagogical decisions. The study was designed as a case study, focusing on a single educational institution—SD Negeri 065009 Medan—where Christian Religious Education is part of the curriculum. The case study method allowed for a contextual and holistic understanding of how teachers' pedagogical competence is expressed in practice. This design also facilitated the exploration of specific phenomena such as lesson planning, classroom management, teaching methods, and value formation as they relate to teaching gratitude through Genesis 9:13. Participants in this study included two Christian Religious Education teachers (PAK teachers) and one class of students comprising 30 pupils aged 10–11 years. The teachers were selected through purposive sampling, based on their experience in teaching PAK and their involvement in classroom activities emphasizing moral and spiritual development. The students were chosen as participants in classroom observation and informal discussion to capture their perspectives on learning gratitude and understanding God's covenant. The researcher observed weekly PAK lessons focused on the theme of gratitude and God's covenant. An observation guide was used to document the teaching methods, classroom interactions, teacher-student communication, and the learning environment. Attention was given to how teachers used storytelling, questioning, reflection, and creative activities to engage students in understanding gratitude. Interviews were conducted with both PAK teachers and selected students. Teacher interviews explored perceptions of pedagogical competence, strategies for fostering gratitude, challenges encountered, and reflections on student responses. Student interviews focused on how they understood the meaning of the rainbow as a sign of God's covenant and how the lessons influenced their sense of gratitude in daily life. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. This methodological design provided a comprehensive and trustworthy understanding of how pedagogical competence enables PAK teachers at SD Negeri 065009 Medan to teach gratitude through the story of God's covenant in Genesis 9:13. By integrating observation, reflection, and documentation, the study reveals how theological meaning is transformed

into pedagogical action, shaping both cognitive understanding and moral character among students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers plays a vital role in guiding students to appreciate God's covenant as an expression of divine faithfulness and to internalize gratitude as a daily moral attitude. Through the analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and document reviews, several interconnected dimensions emerged, showing how teachers transform the theological message of Genesis 9:13-*"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth"*-into meaningful educational experiences. The discussion below highlights how teachers' pedagogical competence manifests in planning, instruction, reflection, and evaluation, and how these competencies influence students' understanding of gratitude, moral behavior, and spiritual awareness. The first key finding concerns pedagogical planning and the contextualization of biblical narratives. Both PAK teachers demonstrated strong planning skills by designing lessons that linked the story of Noah's covenant to students' everyday experiences. Lesson plans analyzed during the research showed that teachers intentionally developed learning outcomes that combined cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. The cognitive domain involved understanding the story of Noah and the rainbow as a sign of God's covenant. The affective domain focused on nurturing gratitude and trust in God, while the psychomotor domain engaged students in creative expressions, such as drawing rainbows, writing gratitude journals, and composing short prayers of thanksgiving. Teachers displayed pedagogical competence by aligning biblical interpretation with students' developmental levels. For instance, rather than merely explaining theological concepts, teachers used storytelling techniques and visual aids to ensure that younger students could grasp the symbolic meaning of the rainbow. The lessons were scaffolded in ways that built connections between the biblical message and real-life situations, such as thanking God for family, school, and nature. This approach aligns with pedagogical theories emphasizing contextualized learning, in which abstract theological ideas are made concrete through relatable examples. Classroom observations indicated that teachers effectively utilized adaptive teaching methods to accommodate individual differences in comprehension and engagement. In one observed session, a teacher introduced the rainbow story through dramatization, assigning roles to students as Noah, his family, and the animals entering the ark. This interactive method not only captured students' attention but also facilitated moral reflection through dialogue. The teacher guided a post-drama discussion, asking questions such as, "Why do you think God chose the rainbow as a promise sign?" and "What can we learn about being thankful to God after the storm?" Such reflective questioning encouraged students to interpret the covenant not as a distant historical event but as a continuing assurance of God's care. This pedagogical practice illustrates how teachers with strong instructional competence use dialogical learning to stimulate both intellectual engagement and emotional connection. The emphasis on reflection and gratitude transformed the learning environment into a space of moral dialogue, where students learned to see gratitude not as a passive feeling but as an active moral disposition. A significant theme that emerged from teacher interviews was the integration of moral and theological dimensions within pedagogical

practice. Both teachers emphasized that gratitude in the context of PAK should not be taught merely as manners or polite expressions like “thank you,” but as a response to divine grace. One teacher remarked, “Gratitude is not only about being polite to others; it is about realizing that everything we have comes from God’s promise and mercy. When students understand this, they start to appreciate life differently.” This statement reflects an awareness of theological pedagogy, where learning is not limited to moral instruction but includes spiritual formation. Teachers used Genesis 9:13 as a moral framework to discuss human responsibility toward creation, family, and community. For example, students were asked to identify “rainbows” in their daily life—signs of God’s goodness such as friendship, good health, and the love of parents. The class then discussed how to respond to these blessings through acts of kindness and gratitude. This activity demonstrated how pedagogical competence includes the ability to integrate biblical content with moral reflection, nurturing both faith and ethical awareness.

Another important finding relates to the role of student engagement and emotional involvement. Observations and interviews revealed that when students were emotionally involved in learning, their understanding of gratitude deepened. Teachers fostered such involvement through multi-sensory and participatory learning experiences. For example, after learning the covenant story, students created a collaborative mural of a rainbow filled with handwritten notes of gratitude. Each student contributed one note expressing something they were thankful for, ranging from family and food to faith and creation. This artistic activity provided a visual and emotional representation of collective gratitude. The teacher used this moment to reinforce the idea that gratitude unites people and reflects harmony between humans and God’s creation. Emotional engagement thus became a bridge between cognitive understanding and moral behavior. Students reported feeling “happy” and “closer to God” when reflecting on their blessings, indicating that gratitude education, when emotionally anchored, supports both spiritual and psychological well-being. The teacher-student relationship also emerged as a central element of effective pedagogy. The observations showed that both PAK teachers demonstrated warmth, empathy, and patience, creating a classroom climate conducive to moral learning. They modeled gratitude through their interactions, often thanking students for participation and acknowledging their efforts publicly. This modeling had a strong formative impact on students, who began to mirror similar attitudes in peer interactions. Interviews revealed that students perceived their teachers as “kind and understanding” and that this attitude made them “want to be more thankful.” Such findings align with research on relational pedagogy, which suggests that moral education is most effective when teachers embody the values they seek to instill. By embodying gratitude, teachers transformed the classroom into a moral community, not merely an academic environment. This relational competence is a key component of pedagogical competence, especially in faith-based education, where moral formation depends on both instruction and imitation. The study also identified several challenges faced by teachers in implementing gratitude-based PAK instruction. One significant challenge was the limited availability of contextualized teaching resources. Teachers reported that existing textbooks often presented biblical stories in abstract or doctrinal language unsuitable for primary school students. Consequently, teachers had to invest time in creating their own materials—simplified narratives, visual aids, and creative worksheets—to make the lessons accessible and

engaging. Another challenge concerned the diverse backgrounds of students. Some came from families with strong Christian practices, while others had limited exposure to biblical stories outside school. This diversity required teachers to differentiate their teaching approaches, ensuring inclusivity without compromising theological depth. Time constraints within the school schedule further limited opportunities for reflection and discussion. Teachers often felt pressured to balance the moral-spiritual objectives of PAK with the academic requirements of the curriculum. The teachers demonstrated resilience and creativity in overcoming obstacles. They frequently integrated gratitude themes into other subjects or daily routines, reinforcing learning across contexts. For example, one teacher began each morning class with a “moment of gratitude,” inviting students to share something they were thankful for that day. This simple practice fostered a culture of thankfulness and provided continuity between PAK lessons and everyday life. The teacher observed that over time, students became more reflective and empathetic, often expressing gratitude for small acts of kindness among peers. Such findings underscore the pedagogical insight that values education must be continuous and experiential, rather than confined to isolated lessons. Another significant dimension of pedagogical competence observed was reflective teaching practice. Both teachers maintained reflective journals where they recorded insights after each lesson. These reflections included observations about student responses, difficulties encountered, and ideas for future improvement. Analysis of these journals showed a commitment to self-evaluation and professional growth. For instance, one teacher noted, “I realized that when I ask students to share what they are thankful for, some are shy or uncertain. Next time, I will use drawing instead of speaking to help them express their gratitude.” This reflection illustrates the teacher’s awareness of individual differences and the willingness to adapt methods accordingly. Reflective practice thus enhanced the teachers’ responsiveness and creativity, ensuring that pedagogical competence evolved through experience. Furthermore, teachers reported that reflection deepened their own sense of gratitude, as they saw how small efforts could shape students’ moral and spiritual growth. The findings also highlighted the transformative impact of gratitude education on students’ moral behavior. Teachers observed that students who regularly engaged in gratitude activities exhibited greater cooperation, politeness, and empathy toward classmates. They were more willing to share materials, help peers, and express appreciation. During interviews, students articulated that learning about God’s covenant made them realize that gratitude should be shown not only to God but also to others. One student said, “When I thank my friends, I feel like I’m also thanking God.” Such statements demonstrate that gratitude education fosters an integrated moral consciousness where faith and ethics converge. The rainbow narrative served as a symbolic anchor for these moral insights. The recurring motif of light after the storm reminded students that gratitude is most meaningful when it emerges from adversity. Teachers used this symbolism to discuss resilience, patience, and faith during difficult times, helping students connect gratitude with perseverance and trust in God. The study shows that pedagogical competence in PAK teaching extends beyond technical skills such as lesson planning or classroom management. It encompasses moral sensitivity, theological literacy, and emotional intelligence. Teachers’ ability to interpret biblical texts pedagogically—to translate theology into life lessons—proved crucial in achieving meaningful moral education. The integration of Genesis 9:13 into daily classroom practice provided a model for how

scriptural narratives can be used to foster moral formation without losing theological depth. Moreover, the study revealed that gratitude education contributes to holistic development, enhancing not only students' moral awareness but also their emotional stability and spiritual identity. The practice of gratitude encouraged self-reflection, empathy, and optimism, aligning with Christian education's goal of nurturing the whole person-heart, mind, and spirit. The research also contributes to understanding the role of faith-based education in promoting moral resilience in contemporary society. In a context where children are often exposed to materialism and individualism, teaching gratitude becomes a countercultural act that reorients values toward humility, dependence on God, and communal care. The teachers at SD Negeri 065009 Medan consciously positioned gratitude as an antidote to entitlement and discontentment. Through biblical storytelling and reflective discussion, students were guided to see gratitude as a moral compass that shapes attitudes toward life's challenges. This aligns with broader theological perspectives that view gratitude as a foundational Christian virtue, encompassing acknowledgment of divine grace and responsibility toward others. Therefore, pedagogical competence in teaching gratitude serves not only educational but also pastoral functions, bridging faith and daily experience. The findings affirm that the pedagogical competence of PAK teachers is instrumental in transforming the theological message of God's covenant into lived educational practice. Teachers' ability to plan contextually relevant lessons, employ interactive and reflective teaching methods, build empathetic relationships, and engage in ongoing self-reflection collectively fosters a learning environment where gratitude becomes both learned and lived. The story of the rainbow in Genesis 9:13 thus transcends its biblical origins to become a pedagogical framework for cultivating gratitude, faith, and moral integrity among students. By embodying gratitude themselves, PAK teachers at SD Negeri 065009 Medan not only teach the covenant of God but also exemplify it, turning classrooms into spaces of light and promise where faith and learning meet.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teaching gratitude through the covenant of God represents a deeply transformative pedagogical approach within Christian Religious Education (PAK), particularly in the primary education context of SD Negeri 065009 Medan. The research findings affirm that pedagogical competence is not merely a matter of instructional technique but a moral and spiritual vocation that shapes the learning environment, the curriculum, and the character of both teachers and students. The story of God's covenant with Noah, symbolized by the rainbow in Genesis 9:13, proved to be an effective theological foundation for cultivating gratitude as a Christian virtue. Through pedagogically competent practices-contextual storytelling, reflective dialogue, and experiential learning-PAK teachers successfully guided students to internalize gratitude as a response to divine grace and as a guiding principle for moral behavior. The pedagogical process uncovered in this study demonstrates that gratitude can be effectively taught when theological narratives are made personally and communally meaningful. Teachers who embody gratitude in their attitudes and interactions create a classroom ethos where gratitude becomes not just a topic of discussion but a lived reality. The research also underscores that pedagogical competence involves an integration of

knowledge, values, and emotion. Teachers who understand how to connect theological content with moral reflection and emotional engagement enable students to develop a holistic understanding of faith—one that unites belief, feeling, and action. In this sense, gratitude education through the covenant of God moves beyond doctrinal instruction; it becomes a formation of spiritual identity and moral consciousness. The study highlights that the most effective PAK teachers are reflective practitioners who continually assess and adapt their methods to the spiritual and developmental needs of their students. Reflection was found to be a key dimension of pedagogical competence, as it allows teachers to recognize challenges, refine their strategies, and grow in their own spiritual awareness. This reflexivity ensures that the process of teaching gratitude remains dynamic, responsive, and spiritually grounded. Teachers who reflect on their experiences not only improve pedagogical outcomes but also experience personal renewal as they witness the transformative impact of gratitude on students. Gratitude education based on the covenant of God contributes to character formation in ways that extend beyond the classroom. Students who learn to recognize God's faithfulness through the covenant narrative become more appreciative, empathetic, and morally resilient. Gratitude nurtures humility and reinforces the Christian worldview that life itself is a gift of grace. In a social context increasingly marked by competition, consumerism, and self-centeredness, such gratitude-centered education serves as a moral compass, reorienting students toward relational harmony and spiritual contentment. It restores the biblical vision of human life as covenantal-rooted in divine promise and communal responsibility. This study affirms that pedagogical competence in PAK is both theological and practical. Theologically, it enables teachers to interpret the covenant of God as a source of moral and spiritual wisdom. Practically, it equips them to translate that wisdom into pedagogical strategies that cultivate gratitude and faith in students. By teaching gratitude through the covenant of God, PAK teachers not only transmit biblical knowledge but also participate in God's continuing work of covenant renewal—shaping hearts that remember, thank, and trust. Thus, the classroom becomes a sacred space where education fulfills its highest Christian purpose: the formation of grateful, faithful, and compassionate human beings who live under the promise of God's eternal rainbow.

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