

Pedagogical Competence in Christian Religious Education: Guiding Students to Understand God's Redemptive Plan through Genesis 45:7-8 at SDN 060879 Medan Timur

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in guiding elementary students to understand God's redemptive plan as reflected in Genesis 45:7-8, focusing on instructional practices at SDN 060879 Medan Timur. Recent concerns regarding students' limited biblical comprehension and the need for meaningful theological engagement highlight the importance of examining how teachers interpret and communicate Scripture in the classroom. Using a qualitative descriptive design, this research integrates classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to explore how pedagogical strategies, theological clarity, and learner-centered approaches contribute to students' understanding of Joseph's narrative. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher demonstrated strong competence in narrative pedagogy, employing storytelling, guided questioning, and interpretive scaffolding to help students grasp the themes of divine sovereignty, reconciliation, and purposeful suffering. Contextualization strategies effectively linked Joseph's experiences to students' daily realities, enabling them to relate biblical values—patience, forgiveness, and trust in God—to real-life challenges. Dialogic instruction further supported deeper reflection as the teacher invited students to express doubts, ask questions, and articulate their own interpretations. While the teacher exhibited high proficiency in integrating theological content and instructional methods, challenges emerged in managing theological complexities and sustaining student engagement across diverse learning abilities. Nonetheless, the study concludes that pedagogical competence in CRE must encompass theological understanding, instructional design, moral formation, and contextual relevance. The results underscore the importance of holistic and responsive pedagogy in enabling students to internalize biblical truths in transformative ways and recommend continued professional development to strengthen theological-pedagogical integration in Christian education.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, Redemptive Plan*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Indonesian education, Christian Religious Education (CRE) continues to play a strategic role in shaping students' faith, character, and worldview, particularly within public schools where students encounter diverse intellectual, cultural, and moral influences. As societal change accelerates—marked by digital saturation, declining attention spans, shifting family dynamics, and the weakening of youth resilience—CRE teachers face growing pedagogical challenges in guiding students to understand God's redemptive plan as presented in Scripture. One of the most significant biblical narratives for cultivating theological understanding in learners is found in Genesis 45:7-8, where Joseph proclaims that God sovereignly orchestrated his suffering to "preserve a remnant" and "save lives." This text reveals the divine initiative behind human events and integrates themes of providence, resilience, forgiveness, and redemptive purpose. Teaching this passage requires pedagogical competence that blends biblical exegesis, contextual sensitivity, and child-appropriate instructional strategies. Pedagogical competence in CRE is not merely technical proficiency but a holistic ability to facilitate meaningful learning that nurtures spiritual formation. Scholars widely recognize pedagogical competence as involving mastery of subject matter, understanding of learners' characteristics, the ability to design learning experiences, skill in managing diverse classroom interactions, and the capacity to assess learning effectively (Shulman 1987; Darling-Hammond 2021). Within CRE, pedagogical competence becomes even more nuanced because teachers must interpret and communicate theological truths in ways that are developmentally appropriate and transformative (Groome 2011). This means that CRE teachers must not only know the biblical text but also understand how to translate divine revelation into learning processes that inspire faith, critical reflection, and moral commitment. At SDN 060879 Medan Timur, Christian teachers are tasked with enabling students, many of whom come from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, to perceive God as an active, purposeful agent in human history. The narrative of Joseph in Genesis 45:7-8 is particularly relevant to the educational needs of today's students. In this passage, Joseph reframes his painful experiences by locating them within God's redemptive mission. Rather than attributing his journey to human betrayal alone, he emphasizes divine sovereignty: "But God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:7). This theological perspective fosters resilience, forgiveness, and trust in God's providence—virtues urgently needed among children navigating emotional pressures, interpersonal conflicts, and academic challenges. Previous studies show that biblical narratives, when taught with pedagogical intentionality, significantly strengthen students' capacity to interpret their life experiences through a faith-based lens (Wright 2018; Brueggemann 2016). Thus, the ability of CRE teachers to guide learners into understanding God's redemptive plan constitutes a vital dimension of their pedagogical competence.

Several challenges threaten the effectiveness of CRE pedagogy in public schools. Many teachers continue to rely on lecture-centered methods that transmit doctrinal information without engaging students in active learning or reflective processes (Siregar 2022). Others may understand the biblical text devotionally but lack exegetical competence to interpret narratives like Genesis 45:7-8 with theological accuracy. In some cases, teachers struggle to translate the doctrinal richness of Scripture into concrete learning experiences that connect with children's real-life situations. Studies on CRE

effectiveness in Indonesia highlight gaps in pedagogical planning, integration of biblical themes into learning outcomes, and the use of contextualized instructional strategies (Simanjuntak 2023). Such limitations restrict students' ability to grasp the depth of God's redemptive purposes and to internalize biblical virtues. Therefore, investigating the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers in teaching Genesis 45:7-8 is both timely and necessary. This study seeks to explore how teachers at SDN 060879 Medan Timur design, implement, and assess instructional activities that help students understand God's redemptive plan as articulated through Joseph's confession of divine providence. By analyzing pedagogical practices through exegetical insight, learning theory, and empirical data, the research aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how theological content is transformed into meaningful educational experiences. Ultimately, the study contributes to the development of biblically grounded and pedagogically sound approaches to CRE that can enrich students' spiritual worldview and strengthen their faith in God's purposes.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design was used to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 060879 Medan Timur demonstrate pedagogical competence in guiding students to understand God's redemptive plan as reflected in Genesis 45:7-8. A qualitative design was chosen because the research sought to capture natural classroom processes, interpret teacher-student interactions, and understand the pedagogical reasoning behind scriptural instruction in a real educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design enabled the researcher to interpret teachers' pedagogical decisions, communication strategies, and instructional patterns within their authentic school setting. The study was conducted at SDN 060879 Medan Timur, a public elementary school in Medan, North Sumatra, where CRE classes are offered to Christian students. The site was selected due to its diverse student population and the school's commitment to character-based education. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in CRE instruction. The participants included: one senior CRE teacher with more than ten years of teaching experience, twenty Christian students from grades 4-6 who had received lessons on Genesis 45:7-8, one vice principal for curriculum who provided institutional perspectives. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants possessed adequate experience and exposure to the instructional material (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Non-participant observations were carried out for three CRE lessons where the teacher taught themes related to Joseph's life and God's redemptive plan. Observation sheets were used to document instructional methods, student engagement, questioning techniques, story-based pedagogy, and interpretive activities. Observations allowed the researcher to examine pedagogical competence as it unfolded in real time (Patton, 2015). Individual interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher, vice principal, and selected students. The interviews explored teachers' pedagogical reasoning, their interpretation of Genesis 45:7-8, and students' comprehension of God's redemptive plan. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility while maintaining consistency across respondents (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Supporting documents were analyzed to identify how biblical themes were structured pedagogically. This method provided insights into alignment between planned instruction and classroom enactment, will increase the credibility of the findings through

triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). This approach enabled systematic exploration of how pedagogical competence shaped students' understanding of God's redemptive plan. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, data confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Parental consent was secured for all student participants. Data were anonymized using pseudonyms, adhering to ethical standards for research involving minors (BERA, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex interplay between pedagogical competence, biblical interpretation, and the socio-cultural realities of students at SDN 060879 Medan Timur. Observations, interviews, and document analysis collectively demonstrate that the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher exhibits a multifaceted pedagogical approach when teaching Genesis 45:7-8, emphasizing not only the theological meaning of God's redemptive plan but also its relevance to students' lived experiences. The results show that pedagogical competence is manifested through strategic storytelling, guided interpretation, moral scaffolding, contextualization, and dialogic engagement-components that align with the broader theoretical frameworks of effective religious pedagogy, which underscore the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in students' learning processes (Miller, 2018; Groome, 2019). One of the most prominent findings concerns the teacher's capability to use biblical storytelling as the primary pedagogical tool for presenting Genesis 45:7-8. During classroom observations, the teacher narrated Joseph's story with expressive intonation, pauses, and visual cues, creating an emotional environment that captured students' attention. Such storytelling competence illustrates what Miller (2018) identifies as narrative pedagogy, where the teacher positions biblical narratives as living stories that speak to current human struggles. The teacher did not merely recount Joseph's experiences; instead, she highlighted key emotional moments-betrayal, suffering, forgiveness, and reconciliation-thus enabling students to grasp the profound meaning behind Joseph's acknowledgement that "God sent me before you to preserve life." Students responded to the narrative with curiosity, occasionally raising questions about why God allowed Joseph to suffer or how Joseph could forgive his brothers. This interaction demonstrates the pedagogical effectiveness of storytelling as a medium for deep theological inquiry, consistent with Bunge's (2020) assertion that narrative engagement encourages students to explore ethical and spiritual questions embedded in Scriptural texts. The teacher's interpretive scaffolding further contributed to students' comprehension of the theological message in Genesis 45:7-8. Instead of merely presenting doctrinal explanations, the teacher guided students through inductive reflection. She began by asking them to identify the turning points in the story, such as Joseph's decision to reveal his identity and his recognition of God's providential role in sending him ahead of his brothers. This approach aligns with socio-constructivist learning theory, which argues that understanding emerges when learners are encouraged to construct meaning through guided questioning (Vygotsky, 1978; Hammond, 2020). The teacher used prompts such as, "*Why do you think Joseph said God sent him?*" or "*What does it mean that God had a plan even when Joseph was suffering?*" These questions gradually led students to articulate theological insights in their own words. Through this method, the teacher was able to stimulate cognitive

engagement while grounding students' reflections in biblical truth, demonstrating the alignment between pedagogical competence and instructional clarity. In the context of CRE, the ability to connect Scripture with students' everyday experiences is essential. The results show that the teacher skillfully employed contextualization as a bridge between the ancient biblical story and the contemporary realities of students at SDN 060879 Medan Timur. She explained Joseph's suffering in a manner that resonated with students who face challenges such as family conflicts, academic stress, or feelings of being misunderstood. For example, the teacher encouraged students to consider moments when they felt treated unfairly and how Joseph's response provides a model for maintaining faith, patience, and forgiveness. This pedagogical move echoes Groome's (2019) shared Christian praxis framework, which advocates for an integration of students' life experiences with biblical reflection in order to cultivate transformative learning. Students reported during interviews that Joseph's story helped them understand the possibility of redemption in difficult situations, suggesting that contextualization effectively strengthened their spiritual meaning-making. This finding underscores that pedagogical competence in religious education extends beyond content delivery and requires a relational and empathetic understanding of learners' contexts.

Another significant result concerns the teacher's emphasis on moral formation, which reflects an integration of theological instruction with character education. The teacher used Genesis 45:7-8 to teach students about forgiveness, perseverance, and trust in God's providence. She pointed out how Joseph chose not to retaliate but instead embraced reconciliation, interpreting his past pain as part of God's plan to save many lives. The teacher then linked this moral message to issues commonly found among students, such as peer conflicts, bullying, and sibling rivalry. Through guided discussion, she encouraged students to practice forgiveness and view challenges through the lens of faith. This reflects the broader literature on Christian moral pedagogy, which highlights the importance of teaching virtues through biblical exemplars (Knight, 2021). Students expressed that the story encouraged them to reflect on their behavior and attitudes, especially in moments of anger or disappointment. This suggests that the teacher's pedagogical competence lies not only in transmitting doctrinal knowledge but also in nurturing moral and spiritual dispositions rooted in biblical narratives.

The study found that dialogic learning plays an important role in the teacher's pedagogical approach. During lessons, students were invited to share their interpretations, ask questions, and relate the story to personal experiences. This dialogic space enabled students to express doubts, explore theological questions, and articulate their understanding of God's redemptive plan. According to Alexander (2020), dialogic teaching enhances students' critical and reflective capacities by positioning them as active participants in the learning process. Through this approach, the teacher affirmed students' contributions, guiding them toward deeper insights rather than simply correcting their misunderstandings. This method promoted a learning environment where theological exploration was encouraged, reflecting Freire's (2005) idea that dialogue fosters critical consciousness. Such findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence in CRE involves cultivating a learning atmosphere where students can engage meaningfully with Scripture and articulate their beliefs. Analysis of lesson plans and

instructional documents further reveals that the teacher demonstrates strong instructional planning competence. Lesson plans were structured with clear objectives, learning activities, biblical references, reflection questions, and assessment strategies. The RPPs showed a coherent progression from narrative introduction to interpretive exploration and personal application. This planning ensured instructional consistency and alignment, as recommended by Richards and Bredfeldt (2011), emphasizing that biblical instruction requires an integration of hermeneutical accuracy and pedagogical clarity. The CRE teacher's documents reflected a thoughtful integration of curriculum standards with theological goals, enabling students to engage both cognitively and spiritually with Genesis 45:7-8. This finding suggests that pedagogical competence is not limited to classroom performance but begins with deliberate instructional preparation. A particularly notable finding from the interviews was the teacher's conscious effort to maintain theological accuracy while teaching children. She emphasized that Joseph's statement-*"God sent me before you"*-does not imply that God causes suffering arbitrarily, but that God can transform human wrongdoing into a redemptive purpose. The teacher took care to avoid deterministic explanations that could confuse children, instead framing Joseph's experience within the larger biblical theme of divine sovereignty working through human history. This reflects what Wright (2018) describes as responsible biblical pedagogy, which requires teachers to convey theological nuance even to young learners. Students demonstrated understanding of this nuance in their interviews, expressing that God "can make something good from something painful," indicating successful pedagogical transmission of complex theological ideas. The findings also reveal that students developed a clearer understanding of God's redemptive plan after receiving instruction. Many students articulated that Joseph's suffering was not meaningless but part of God's greater purpose to save people from famine. They also identified themes of forgiveness, patience, and divine providence as central to the text. This suggests that the teacher's pedagogical strategies effectively facilitated comprehension of biblical themes that might otherwise be abstract for elementary-level learners. This aligns with studies showing that religious understanding deepens when children are guided to interpret stories through symbolic and moral lenses (Astley & Francis, 2017).

The results reveal several challenges. Some students found it difficult to reconcile Joseph's suffering with the idea of a loving God. This tension is common in children's theological development, as noted by Fowler (2000), who explains that children often struggle to integrate the concept of divine goodness with the reality of human suffering. The teacher addressed this challenge by offering age-appropriate explanations, but the complexity of theodicy remains an area requiring ongoing pedagogical attention. Additionally, classroom management was occasionally hindered by students' varied attention spans, which disrupted the flow of interpretive discussion. The teacher attempted to mitigate this through storytelling and visual aids, but inconsistencies in student focus reflect broader challenges in religious education settings. The integration of findings demonstrates that the teacher's pedagogical competence aligns with widely recognized components of effective CRE pedagogy: biblical literacy, theological understanding, instructional clarity, interactive engagement, moral formation, contextual relevance, and pastoral sensitivity. Each of these elements appeared consistently across observation data, interviews, and document analysis. This comprehensive alignment

confirms the theoretical assumption that pedagogical competence is not a singular skill but an integrated set of practices that mutually reinforce one another (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2021). In this study, the teacher's competence is evidenced by her ability to bring students into a deeper engagement with Scripture while simultaneously addressing their emotional and moral needs. This dual focus reflects a holistic philosophy of Christian education, which emphasizes both spiritual growth and cognitive understanding. The discussion of findings reveals that the teacher's approach to teaching Genesis 45:7-8 fosters both interpretive maturity and spiritual resilience among students. By emphasizing God's faithful presence in Joseph's suffering, the teacher offered a theological framework that students could apply to their own difficulties. This aligns with Osmer's (2008) claim that practical theology in education involves helping learners interpret their experiences in light of God's redemptive activity. Students expressed that Joseph's story encouraged them not to give up when facing problems, demonstrating the transformative impact of biblically grounded pedagogical practices. The results highlight that pedagogical competence in CRE involves a delicate integration of narrative skill, theological precision, reflective inquiry, contextual adaptation, and moral guidance. The CRE teacher at SDN 060879 Medan Timur successfully guided students toward a meaningful understanding of God's redemptive plan through pedagogical strategies that align with contemporary theories of religious education and biblical pedagogy. The findings underscore the importance of equipping teachers with both theological literacy and pedagogical expertise to ensure that biblical narratives such as Genesis 45:7-8 are taught in ways that are engaging, accurate, and spiritually formative. Despite the challenges encountered, the teacher's pedagogical practice demonstrates a model of effective Christian education that fosters understanding, character development, and faith formation among young learners.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a decisive role in guiding students to understand the meaning of God's redemptive plan in Genesis 45:7-8. Through qualitative analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and instructional documents at SDN 060879 Medan Timur, it becomes evident that effective CRE instruction requires an integration of narrative pedagogy, theological clarity, contextual relevance, dialogic engagement, and moral formation. The teacher demonstrated strong competence in using biblical storytelling as an interactive and emotionally resonant medium for presenting Joseph's story. This approach not only captured students' attention but also facilitated their cognitive and spiritual engagement with the biblical text. The teacher's guided questioning and interpretive scaffolding enabled students to articulate theological insights using their own language, reflecting an understanding that was both developmentally appropriate and spiritually meaningful. The findings also show that contextualization is essential for making biblical themes relevant to students' lived realities. By relating Joseph's experiences of suffering, perseverance, and reconciliation to the everyday challenges faced by students, the teacher succeeded in bridging the historical distance between Scripture and contemporary life. This demonstrates that pedagogical competence in CRE extends beyond content delivery and includes the ability to nurture affective and moral

dimensions of learning. The teacher's emphasis on forgiveness, patience, and trust in God's sovereignty contributed to students' moral formation, helping them internalize values embodied in Joseph's story. The study highlights that dialogic teaching fosters deeper theological reflection among students. By encouraging students to ask questions, voice doubts, and share interpretations, the teacher created a learning environment where critical engagement with Scripture was welcomed. This underscores the importance of relational and responsive pedagogy in religious education. Instructional planning also emerged as a foundation of pedagogical competence, as demonstrated through the teacher's well-structured lesson plans that aligned biblical content with learning objectives and classroom activities. Some students struggled with theological tensions related to suffering and divine goodness, demonstrating the need for continuous pedagogical refinement and age-appropriate theological explanation. Classroom management issues also surfaced, reflecting the complexity of sustaining student attention in interpretive and reflective learning contexts. The study affirms that pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education is multidimensional, combining theological literacy, instructional strategy, moral guidance, and contextual sensitivity. When these elements are integrated, as demonstrated by the CRE teacher at SDN 060879 Medan Timur, students are better equipped to understand the theological message of Genesis 45:7-8 and apply its moral and spiritual implications in their own lives. This research contributes to ongoing discussions on effective pedagogy in religious education by illustrating how Scripture can be taught in a way that is engaging, accurate, developmentally appropriate, and transformative. Future research may explore comparative studies across different schools, developmental stages, or theological themes to further deepen the understanding of pedagogical competence in Christian education.

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