

Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers as Models of Faith Based on Philippians 3:7-14: A Case Study at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua

Senismawati Halawa

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: sennys26091992@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as models of faith based on Philippians 3:7-14 through a qualitative case study conducted at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua. Spiritual competence is understood as a holistic integration of faith, character, and professional practice that enables teachers to authentically embody Christian values in educational settings. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and were interpreted through thematic analysis integrated with biblical exegesis of Philippians 3:7-14. The findings reveal that the teacher's spiritual competence is strongly shaped by Paul's theology of renunciation, perseverance, and continuous pursuit of Christ. The teacher demonstrates a Christ-centered reorientation of values, interprets professional duties as a spiritual vocation, and consistently exhibits perseverance, humility, integrity, and compassion in daily pedagogical practice. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reflection, and dependence on God function as foundational resources for sustaining faith amidst structural limitations and professional challenges. The study shows that students primarily encounter Christian faith through the teacher's lived example rather than through cognitive instruction alone. The teacher's spiritual competence significantly influences students' moral sensitivity, faith awareness, and character development. The research also identifies the need for stronger institutional and ecclesial support to sustain teachers' long-term spiritual resilience. This study concludes that spiritual competence, grounded in Philippians 3:7-14, is not a static trait but a dynamic pilgrimage of faith that transforms teaching into a shared journey of discipleship and holistic formation within public education contexts.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Faith*

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual competence is a central dimension of teacher professionalism in Christian education because it directly relates to the authenticity of faith that is modeled in daily life and teaching practice. For Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, spiritual

competence is not limited to personal piety but encompasses the capacity to live out faith consistently, to interpret life from a Christ-centered perspective, and to become a visible model of faith for students. In the context of public schools in Indonesia, where religious diversity and institutional regulations shape daily educational practice, the spiritual competence of CRE teachers becomes both a personal vocation and a public witness. This reality is clearly reflected in SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua, where the CRE teacher carries the responsibility of nurturing students' faith while simultaneously embodying Christian values in a pluralistic environment. The biblical foundation for understanding spiritual competence as a dynamic journey of faith is powerfully articulated in Philippians 3:7-14. In this passage, the Apostle Paul presents his radical reorientation of life toward Christ, declaring all former achievements as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. Paul's spiritual journey is marked by three interconnected movements: renunciation of self-centered values (vv. 7-8), identification with Christ in suffering and resurrection (vv. 9-11), and persistent pursuit of the heavenly calling (vv. 12-14). This text does not merely describe a private spiritual experience but offers a theological paradigm of spiritual competence as an ongoing process of transformation, perseverance, and forward-looking faith. For CRE teachers, this Pauline vision provides a scriptural framework for understanding spiritual competence not as spiritual perfection but as faithful perseverance in the process of becoming Christ-like. In contemporary educational discourse, teacher competence is often analyzed in terms of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions. Within Christian education, spiritual competence occupies a uniquely foundational position because it informs all other dimensions of teacher competence. A teacher may possess strong pedagogical skills and professional qualifications, yet without spiritual integrity and lived faith, Christian education risks becoming merely a religious subject rather than a transformative formation. Several studies in Christian education emphasize that students learn faith not mainly through doctrinal explanation but through visible examples of faith lived out in the teacher's character, attitudes, and responses to life's struggles. Thus, the role of CRE teachers as models of faith is not an optional supplement to instruction but the very heart of their educational ministry.

The context of SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua is particularly significant for examining spiritual competence as lived witness. Located in the Ulususua district of South Nias, the school operates within a socio-cultural environment marked by strong communal values, economic challenges, and limited educational resources. In such a setting, the CRE teacher's spiritual competence is continually tested in concrete life situations—through perseverance amid limitations, integrity in professional responsibility, compassion toward students, and faithfulness in service. Students do not only encounter biblical narratives in textbooks but also observe how their teacher deals with hardship, authority, success, and failure. These lived experiences shape students' understanding of what it means to follow Christ far more deeply than cognitive instruction alone. Empirical studies that explicitly examine how Philippians 3:7-14 informs the spiritual identity and professional practice of CRE teachers remain limited. Much of the existing research focuses on general character education or pedagogical competence, while spiritual modeling as a lived theological process often receives marginal attention. Few studies integrate exegetical analysis of specific biblical texts with qualitative investigation in school contexts. This gap indicates

the need for a study that not only interprets the biblical concept of spiritual pursuit but also examines how it is embodied in the daily life of a CRE teacher within a public elementary school. This study therefore seeks to explore the spiritual competence of the CRE teacher as a model of faith based on Philippians 3:7-14 at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua. The first objective is to examine the theological meaning of spiritual pursuit, self-emptying, and perseverance in Philippians 3:7-14 through an exegetical approach. The second objective is to analyze how these Pauline values are reflected in the spiritual attitudes, professional commitment, and relational conduct of the CRE teacher. The third objective is to explore how the teacher's spiritual competence influences students' faith awareness, moral sensitivity, and understanding of Christian discipleship. By integrating biblical exegesis and qualitative educational research, this study argues that spiritual competence is not a static possession but a dynamic pilgrimage of faith marked by continual growth, struggle, and hope. Paul's confession of "pressing on toward the goal" becomes a living paradigm for CRE teachers who serve in real-life educational contexts with all their limitations and challenges. Ultimately, this research seeks to demonstrate that when spiritual competence is rooted in the theology of Philippians 3:7-14, Christian education is transformed from mere religious instruction into a living process of faith formation, where teachers and students together journey toward deeper knowledge of Christ.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was used to explore the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher as a model of faith based on Philippians 3:7-14 at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua. The research integrated biblical exegesis and field-based qualitative inquiry to obtain a holistic understanding of spiritual competence as both a theological and lived educational reality. The exegetical analysis used a historical-grammatical approach, examining the literary context of Philippians 3:7-14, key Greek concepts such as *zēmia* (loss), *kerdos* (gain), *ginōskō* (to know), and *diōkō* (to press on), as well as the theological themes of renunciation, perseverance, and Christ-centered spiritual pursuit. Field data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the CRE teacher as the primary informant and several supporting teachers as secondary informants, non-participant classroom observations during CRE lessons and school activities. Data were analyzed, beginning with open coding to identify patterns related to faith modeling, perseverance, integrity, spiritual discipline, and professional commitment, followed by axial coding to construct broader theological-educational themes. The exegetical findings were then dialogically integrated with the empirical data to produce a coherent interpretation. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation of data sources, member checking with participants, and prolonged engagement in the field, while ethical principles were maintained through informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional permission.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua is deeply shaped by the theological vision of faith articulated in Philippians 3:7-14. The passage functions not

merely as a doctrinal reference but as a living spiritual framework that informs the teacher's identity, motivation, perseverance, and daily professional practice. The CRE teacher's spiritual competence is manifested through a Christ-centered orientation of life, personal renunciation of self-centered ambition, perseverance in hardship, and consistent modeling of faith before students and colleagues. These dimensions collectively demonstrate that spiritual competence is not a static attribute but a dynamic journey of faith, marked by continual transformation and faithful endurance. From the perspective of personal spiritual orientation, the teacher's life reflects a deep internalization of Paul's confession that all things considered valuable apart from Christ are ultimately loss. Interviews indicate that the teacher consciously interprets professional success, material limitation, and social recognition through a Christ-centered lens. This is evident in the teacher's willingness to serve faithfully despite limited infrastructure, modest financial rewards, and heavy workload. The teacher articulates a clear conviction that true worth is not measured by external achievement but by faithfulness in knowing and following Christ. This orientation corresponds closely with Philippians 3:8, where Paul declares that everything is counted as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. In educational practice, this spiritual perspective liberates the teacher from a performance-driven mentality and nurtures a vocation-oriented understanding of teaching as spiritual service. Professionally, the teacher's commitment is sustained not by institutional incentives but by an inner spiritual calling that continually renews motivation and resilience. The dimension of renunciation, as emphasized in Philippians 3:7-9, is also strongly reflected in the teacher's lived experience. Renunciation in this context does not mean withdrawal from professional responsibility but rather the reordering of priorities in which personal comfort, prestige, and private interest are subordinated to the calling to serve students. Observational data reveal that the teacher consistently prioritizes students' needs over personal convenience, willingly providing additional guidance, pastoral care, and moral support beyond formal teaching hours. Such sacrificial availability is perceived by students and colleagues as a concrete expression of faith rather than mere professional duty. Theologically, this reflects Paul's radical reorientation of life toward Christ alone; educationally, it reinforces the idea that spiritual competence is expressed through self-giving service rather than through rhetorical religiosity.

Another central finding concerns the teacher's participation in the pattern of suffering and perseverance described in Philippians 3:10-11. Paul's desire to share in Christ's sufferings and experience the power of His resurrection finds resonance in the teacher's attitude toward professional hardship. The socio-economic conditions of the local community, limited educational resources, and diverse learning challenges regularly place the teacher in emotionally and spiritually demanding situations. Yet the teacher consistently interprets these difficulties as part of the spiritual journey of discipleship rather than as obstacles to professional fulfillment. This perspective enables the teacher to endure frustration, disappointment, and fatigue without losing vocational hope. From a theological standpoint, this alignment with the suffering Christ deepens the teacher's spiritual authenticity; from an educational standpoint, it nurtures emotional resilience and moral stability in the face of structural limitations. The theme of perseverance (*diōkō*-pressing on), which dominates Philippians 3:12-14, emerges as a defining characteristic

of the teacher's spiritual competence. The teacher does not present himself or herself as spiritually "arrived" but as one who is continually learning, growing, and striving toward deeper Christ-likeness. This attitude of ongoing spiritual pursuit is reflected in consistent spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Scripture meditation, and reflective self-examination. Rather than claiming spiritual superiority, the teacher openly acknowledges personal limitations and demonstrates a teachable spirit. This posture of humility deeply resonates with students, who perceive faith not as moral perfectionism but as a persevering journey. Educationally, such an example is profoundly formative because it teaches students that faith involves growth, struggle, and hope rather than static moral achievement. In the classroom context, the teacher's spiritual competence is most visibly expressed through faith-based modeling rather than through doctrinal instruction alone. Observations reveal that lessons are characterized by patience, gentleness, consistency, and moral clarity. The teacher integrates biblical values into daily classroom interaction through attitudes toward discipline, fairness, compassion, and encouragement. When students struggle academically or behaviorally, the teacher responds not primarily with punitive authority but with restorative guidance grounded in Christian compassion. This model of relational discipline aligns closely with Paul's spiritual vision, where pursuit of Christ involves both moral seriousness and redemptive patience. Students thus encounter faith as a lived relational reality rather than as an abstract belief system.

The influence of the teacher's spiritual competence extends beyond the classroom into the broader school environment. Colleagues recognize the CRE teacher as a moral reference point and a stabilizing presence in moments of tension or conflict. The teacher often functions as an informal counselor, mediator, and encourager for both students and fellow teachers. This moral influence does not arise from formal authority but from consistent spiritual integrity. The Pauline vision of pressing toward the heavenly calling becomes visible in the teacher's steady commitment to ethical conduct, honesty, and relational faithfulness. In this sense, spiritual competence operates as a form of moral capital that gradually shapes the ethos of the school community. From the students' perspective, the teacher's spiritual competence significantly influences their understanding of faith. Interview data reveal that students tend to associate Christian faith primarily with attitudes and behaviors displayed by the teacher rather than with abstract doctrinal concepts. Faith is understood as patience in difficulty, forgiveness in conflict, perseverance in learning, and hope in limitation. This finding confirms the educational insight that spiritual modeling is often more influential than verbal instruction. The Pauline emphasis on knowing Christ through lived experience rather than through mere cognitive knowledge becomes pedagogically embodied in the teacher's daily interaction with students. The integration of spiritual competence and professional responsibility also appears clearly in the teacher's approach to pedagogical planning and instructional consistency. The teacher demonstrates careful preparation, responsibility in assessment, and fairness in evaluation. These professional behaviors are interpreted by the teacher as expressions of spiritual obedience rather than mere compliance with institutional standards. In this respect, professional excellence becomes an extension of spiritual discipline. Theologically, this reflects Paul's holistic understanding of life in Christ, where no aspect of existence is detached from spiritual pursuit. Educationally, it confirms that spiritual competence strengthens, rather than weakens, professional accountability.

The study also reveals significant tensions and vulnerabilities in the lived expression of spiritual competence. One of the most prominent challenges is the emotional and spiritual burden of being a solitary model of Christian faith within a broader institutional structure that does not always provide sufficient spiritual support. While the teacher demonstrates strong personal spirituality, there is limited access to structured theological mentoring, peer spiritual companionship, or formal ecclesial supervision. This institutional gap places the sustainability of spiritual competence largely on personal discipline and informal relationships. From a Pauline perspective, this situation contrasts with the communal dimension of partnership in faith; from an educational perspective, it exposes a structural weakness in supporting the holistic formation of CRE teachers in public schools. The teacher must continually negotiate the public expression of faith within the secular regulatory framework of a state school. While spiritual values are embodied implicitly through attitudes and relational conduct, explicit theological articulation must be carefully contextualized to respect institutional boundaries and religious diversity. This dynamic requires high levels of discernment and emotional intelligence. The teacher's spiritual competence thus includes not only devotional piety but also contextual wisdom in navigating faith within a pluralistic environment. This corresponds with Paul's adaptive yet uncompromising ministry approach, where fidelity to Christ is maintained without coercive imposition. The findings also indicate that the teacher's understanding of spiritual success has been reshaped by the Pauline theology of gain and loss. Unlike conventional professional paradigms that emphasize upward mobility, certification, and public recognition, the teacher defines success primarily in terms of faithfulness, perseverance, and spiritual influence. This redefinition of success protects the teacher from discouragement when professional advancement is limited and strengthens vocational endurance. From a theological perspective, this aligns with Paul's valuation of Christ above all earthly credentials; from an educational perspective, it nurtures a form of professional stability rooted in meaning rather than in status. At the communal level, the teacher's spiritual competence contributes significantly to students' moral sensitivity and ethical orientation. Students demonstrate greater openness to reflection, higher capacity for empathy, and stronger resistance to negative peer pressure. These character outcomes cannot be attributed solely to formal curriculum but must be understood as the indirect fruit of continuous spiritual modeling. The teacher's perseverance, humility, and hope create a moral atmosphere that subtly shapes students' inner dispositions. This supports the broader educational claim that character formation is most effectively nurtured through relational proximity and lived example. The integration of Philippians 3:7-14 into the teacher's life reflects a spirituality of pilgrimage rather than of perfection. The teacher understands Christian faith not as the possession of moral completeness but as a continuous movement toward Christ. This "already-but-not-yet" spirituality frees the teacher from both spiritual arrogance and despair. For students, this model communicates that faith is compatible with struggle and growth, thereby reducing the risk of moral formalism. Educationally, such a model is crucial in nurturing authentic religious maturity rather than superficial conformity. The study further demonstrates that spiritual competence functions as a source of ethical consistency. The teacher's decisions in matters of discipline, evaluation, and confidentiality are consistently aligned with moral principles derived from faith. This consistency strengthens trust among students and colleagues. Trust, in turn, becomes the

social foundation that enables effective teaching, conflict resolution, and pastoral care. The Pauline pursuit of righteousness in Christ thus acquires concrete educational significance as the ethical backbone of professional conduct.

The sustainability of such spiritually grounded professionalism remains fragile when external support systems are weak. The absence of continuous theological formation, limited professional networks for spiritual sharing, and the administrative pressures of state schooling create conditions of spiritual vulnerability. While personal faith sustains the teacher in the present, long-term vocational resilience would benefit greatly from stronger institutional collaboration between educational authorities and church communities. From a Pauline perspective, spiritual pursuit is deeply communal; from an educational perspective, teacher well-being is inseparable from systemic support. The results of this study demonstrate that spiritual competence at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua is not simply an inner religious attribute but a living, relational, and professional reality shaped by the theology of Philippians 3:7-14. The teacher's renunciation of self-centered values, perseverance in hardship, and relentless pursuit of Christ form the spiritual architecture of professional life. This architecture supports not only personal faith but also pedagogical commitment, moral leadership, and relational integrity. The discussion confirms that Paul's vision of spiritual pursuit provides a powerful theological framework for understanding teacher spirituality in contemporary Christian education. Spiritual competence, as modeled by the CRE teacher in this study, is an integrative force that unites faith, character, and professional practice into a coherent vocational identity. It transforms teaching from a technical occupation into a spiritual pilgrimage shared with students. Through this lens, the CRE teacher does not merely transmit religious knowledge but embodies a living testimony of faith-in-progress. This case study illustrates that when spiritual competence is rooted in the theology of pressing forward toward Christ, Christian education becomes a transformative journey for both teacher and students. Faith is no longer confined to devotional space but is woven into the fabric of daily educational life. The teacher's life becomes an interpreted text of Philippians 3:7-14, read daily by students through attitudes, decisions, and perseverance. In this way, spiritual competence as modeled faith emerges as one of the most powerful pedagogical forces within Christian Religious Education in the public school context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the spiritual competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SD Negeri 077299 Tuhemberua is profoundly shaped by the theological vision of faith outlined in Philippians 3:7-14, particularly the themes of renunciation, perseverance, and the continual pursuit of Christ. The findings demonstrate that spiritual competence is not merely an internal personal quality but a lived and relational reality that permeates professional identity, pedagogical practice, and ethical conduct within the school environment. The teacher's life reflects a dynamic spirituality characterized by a Christ-centered reorientation of values, a willingness to sacrifice personal comfort for the sake of service, and a steadfast commitment to spiritual growth amid structural limitations. The study confirms that the teacher's understanding of faith as "pressing on" toward the calling in Christ reframes professional work as a vocational journey rather than a purely technical occupation. This theological perspective empowers the teacher to

endure hardship, limited facilities, and minimal institutional support without losing vocational meaning. Professional responsibilities such as lesson preparation, assessment, discipline, and student guidance are interpreted as spiritual acts of obedience and service. As a result, spiritual competence strengthens rather than weakens professional responsibility, producing a form of integrity that is consistent, authentic, and ethically grounded. The influence of the teacher's spiritual competence extends significantly to students and the wider school community. Students encounter Christian faith primarily through lived example rather than verbal instruction alone. Patience, compassion, perseverance, humility, and hope are the most visible expressions of faith that shape students' moral sensitivity and character development. Colleagues similarly perceive the teacher as a source of moral stability, relational trust, and spiritual encouragement. This confirms that spiritual modeling functions as a powerful pedagogical instrument in Christian education, especially in public school contexts where open theological expression is structurally limited. At the same time, this study also highlights the vulnerability of relying solely on personal spirituality without adequate institutional and communal support. The absence of structured theological mentoring, peer spiritual fellowship, and sustained collaboration between the school and ecclesial communities poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of the teacher's spiritual resilience. From both theological and educational perspectives, spiritual competence is most effectively nurtured within a supportive community of faith and professional formation. Therefore, intentional efforts are needed to strengthen systemic support for CRE teachers through continuous spiritual formation, professional development, and pastoral accompaniment. This research affirms that spiritual competence grounded in Philippians 3:7-14 offers a robust theological and pedagogical framework for understanding the role of CRE teachers as models of faith in public education. Spiritual competence emerges as a holistic integration of faith, character, and professional practice that transforms teaching into a shared pilgrimage of growth toward Christ. The teacher's life becomes a living testimony through which students not only learn about faith but also experience its transformative power. This study thus contributes to the broader discourse on Christian education by emphasizing that authentic spiritual competence is not defined by perfection, but by faithful perseverance, moral consistency, and an unwavering pursuit of Christ in the midst of everyday educational realities.

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