

Pedagogical Competence in Teaching God's Truth: A Reflection on Exodus 23:25 at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I

Dinar Nurlela Hutabarat

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: hutabaradinar18@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in teaching God's truth, using Exodus 23:25 as an exegetical foundation within the context of SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I, where 128 Christian students are guided by 10 Christian teachers, including the PAK teacher. The verse "Worship the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water; I will take away sickness from among you" provides a theological framework that connects worship, obedience, and God's sustaining grace. Through a qualitative descriptive design integrating textual exegesis, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews, the study explores how the teacher internalizes and translates biblical principles into instructional practices. Findings show that the PAK teacher demonstrates strong pedagogical competence expressed through thoughtful lesson planning, contextualized teaching methods, and the integration of biblical truth with character formation. Instructional strategies such as storytelling, guided reflection, class discussions, and contextual illustrations enable students to understand the covenantal relationship between worship and obedient living. The study also highlights the importance of personal spirituality in shaping pedagogical quality. The teacher's consistent devotional life and lived example reinforce the authenticity of instruction, making the teaching of God's truth both credible and impactful. The findings conclude that effective PAK pedagogy requires an integration of biblical mastery, spiritual maturity, contextual creativity, and relational wisdom. Strengthening these dimensions is essential for equipping Christian teachers to become transformative educators who faithfully teach God's truth in Indonesian public schools.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Truth*

INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical competence remains one of the most decisive factors in determining the effectiveness of Christian Religious Education (CRE) within Indonesian public schools. As educators face increasingly diverse classrooms, rapid digitization, and shifting cultural patterns, their ability to deliver instruction that is both academically sound and spiritually formative becomes central to the mission of Christian education. In this context, teachers

are not merely transmitters of information but interpreters of divine truth who guide students toward moral clarity, faith maturity, and holistic character formation. Within SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I in Humbang Hasundutan, where 128 Christian students are taught by ten Christian teachers including the CRE teacher, these expectations assume particular urgency, as students rely on the consistency, clarity, and spiritual integrity of their teachers to understand the meaning of God's truth in their daily lives. Pedagogical competence in CRE encompasses a broad spectrum of abilities: designing meaningful learning experiences, integrating Scripture into age-appropriate pedagogy, managing classroom dynamics effectively, utilizing diverse instructional methods, and aligning spiritual lessons with students' social realities. Unlike secular subjects, CRE requires teachers to embody the values they teach. Pedagogical skill must therefore be intertwined with spiritual depth, ethical clarity, and a theology of teaching rooted in the biblical narrative. Contemporary scholars emphasize that pedagogical competence in Christian settings involves shaping learning environments where students feel valued, guided, and challenged to reflect on their spiritual identity (Van Brummelen, 2019). This dual responsibility, pedagogical and spiritual, demands a refined capacity to teach God's truth in ways that are transformative rather than merely informative.

Exodus 23:25 provides a foundational theological lens for understanding the pedagogical responsibility of CRE teachers. The verse declares, *"Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you."* Although rooted in the covenantal context of Israel's journey under divine guidance, the verse carries enduring educational implications. At its core, the text emphasizes faithfulness, obedience, and the promise of God's sustaining presence. For Christian educators, the verse signifies that teaching God's truth is not a neutral or mechanistic task; it is a spiritual discipline grounded in worship and obedience. When teachers faithfully communicate God's truth, they participate in God's redemptive work-bringing spiritual nourishment, protection, and holistic well-being to the community they serve. In the school environment of SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I, the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers becomes a channel through which these covenantal themes find contemporary relevance. Students who live in a rapidly changing world, shaped by digital influences, cultural complexity, and socio-emotional challenges, require teaching that is both spiritually grounded and educationally rigorous. The CRE teacher serves as a guide who helps students interpret their experiences in the light of Scripture and cultivate the capacity to live faithfully and responsibly. Through well-designed lessons, inclusive learning environments, and consistent modeling of Christian virtues, the teacher enables students to experience the "blessing" that comes from understanding and practicing God's truth. The communal nature of education in Humbang Hasundutan amplifies the significance of pedagogical competence. The region's strong Christian heritage provides fertile ground for integrating biblical values with formal schooling, yet it also requires intentional pedagogical strategies to ensure that faith is taught not as routine tradition but as living truth. By reflecting on Exodus 23:25, this study seeks to explore how CRE teachers at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I embody and operationalize pedagogical competence in ways that honor the biblical mandate to teach God's truth faithfully and responsibly. The present research highlights the interplay between biblical theology, educational competence, and classroom practice. It aims to demonstrate that effective CRE

instruction, rooted in pedagogical expertise and guided by covenantal principles, plays a crucial role in cultivating spiritually mature and morally grounded young learners in the contemporary Indonesian educational context.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design integrating exegetical analysis, a limited case study approach, and a systematic review of relevant literature was used to explore how pedagogical competence is enacted in teaching God's truth, as reflected through the lens of Exodus 23:25. This qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the research is interpretive, contextual, and meaning-oriented, seeking to understand how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers embody spiritual and pedagogical principles within real classroom settings. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of teaching practices, teacher beliefs, and the lived experience of faith-based instruction at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I. The exegetical analysis of Exodus 23:25 served as the theological foundation of the research. Using standard methods in biblical interpretation, including textual analysis, historical-contextual examination, lexical study of key Hebrew terms, and theological synthesis, the verse was interpreted within its covenantal setting in the Book of Exodus. The exegetical insights provided criteria for identifying pedagogical implications, such as faithfulness, obedience, spiritual discipline, and God-centered instruction. These biblical principles were then used as analytical categories for evaluating the pedagogical competence of the CRE teacher in the school context.

SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I in Humbang Hasundutan was selected as the research site because it represents a rural public school with a strong Christian student population. The school has 128 Christian students and 10 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher whose pedagogical competence forms the focus of this study. Data collection centered on understanding teacher practices within this localized environment, making the case study approach appropriate for capturing the cultural, institutional, and spiritual dynamics shaping CRE instruction. Semi-structured interviews with the CRE teacher and two additional Christian teachers to provide supporting insights. These interviews explored teaching philosophy, lesson planning, methods used to communicate biblical truth, classroom interaction patterns, and perceived challenges. Non-participant observation conducted virtually through teacher-provided documentation and reflective teaching logs. Observations focused on instructional strategies, student engagement, integration of Scripture, and the teacher's modeling of Christian virtues. Systematic literature review, drawing from peer-reviewed sources on pedagogical competence, Christian education, biblical pedagogy, and character formation. Literature from the past decade was prioritized to ensure theoretical relevance to contemporary educational contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, which combined document analysis, limited classroom observations, and brief qualitative interviews with the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher and six Christian students at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I in Humbang Hasundutan, reveal several integrated insights into the pedagogical competence of the PAK teacher in

teaching the biblical truth reflected in Exodus 23:25. The verse *“Worship the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you”* implicitly emphasizes obedience, covenantal fidelity, divine reward, and holistic well-being, which together shape the theological foundation for Christian teaching practice. The data highlight how this biblical theme becomes operational not merely as a theological concept, but as an educational framework that directs instructional design, interactional dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and classroom spiritual atmosphere. The results demonstrate that the effectiveness of pedagogical competence in PAK is strongly mediated by the teacher’s ability to integrate biblical truth with pedagogical strategies, student engagement, and contextual realities of rural school settings. One of the most prominent findings is the teacher’s intentional effort to embed biblical truth into lesson planning, which correlates with the dimension of pedagogical literacy. The teacher prepares lesson plans that not only follow the national curriculum but also incorporate thematic reflections from Exodus 23:25, particularly the emphasis on worship and obedience as pathways to divine blessing. The lesson documents show that competency targets, learning objectives, and instructional activities are formulated with a biblical-integrative approach, combining rational understanding of the text with character and spiritual formation. For example, lesson plans include activities such as guided reflection, personal response writing, and stories illustrating God’s faithfulness to those who obey Him. Students reported that these activities help them see the relevance of the biblical message to daily life, especially in family practices, worship routines, and moral choices. This alignment between biblical foundation and learning design reflects the teacher’s strong mastery of content, which is a core aspect of pedagogical competence. It also shows the capacity to transform theological truths into teachable, age-appropriate concepts for elementary students.

Another significant result relates to instructional delivery. Observation revealed that the PAK teacher uses a mixed pedagogical style combining storytelling, dialogical teaching, question-and-answer strategies, singing, and simple project-based assignments. These methods create a dynamic atmosphere that supports comprehension and internalization of Exodus 23:25. Storytelling is used to communicate biblical narratives about obedience and blessing, such as the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, while dialogical pedagogy allows students to share personal reflections on how they experience God’s blessing through worship and obedience. Students expressed that the teacher’s approachable and interactive style makes learning enjoyable and meaningful. This strengthens the argument that pedagogical competence in PAK is deeply dependent on relational engagement, empathy, and the capacity to create a spiritually nurturing learning community. In rural contexts such as Humbang Hasundutan, where students often have strong familial and communal religiosity but limited exposure to critical theological reflection, this dialogical pedagogical approach becomes essential. The teacher’s classroom management competence also emerges as a key component in reinforcing an environment conducive to teaching biblical truth. The observation shows that the teacher is consistent in setting classroom norms rooted in Christian values, respect, attentiveness, participation, and discipline. Rules are explained not as authoritarian commands but as expressions of obedience to God, echoing the spirit of Exodus 23:25. The teacher emphasizes that when students obey rules, they are

participating in a life pattern that honors God and brings His blessing. This theological framing transforms classroom discipline from merely behavioral regulation into spiritual formation. Students responded positively to this approach, indicating that they felt responsible not only to the teacher but also to God. This adds a layer of moral-spiritual awareness in their learning participation. The integration of spirituality into classroom management is a hallmark of pedagogical competence specific to PAK teachers, differentiating it from general pedagogy. Relational competence also significantly contributes to the pedagogical process. Interview results indicate that the PAK teacher builds strong relationships with students by showing care, listening to their struggles, and praying with them individually or collectively. Students mentioned that the teacher often encourages them when they face family difficulties, sickness, or anxiety. This pastoral dimension strengthens the transmission of Exodus 23:25, which promises God's presence and protection. When students experience the teacher's genuine concern, they are more receptive to the message of divine blessing. This suggests that pedagogical competence in the context of Christian education cannot be detached from pastoral sensitivity and spiritual mentoring. The PAK teacher at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I embodies a holistic approach that integrates pedagogy and ministry, allowing biblical truth to be communicated not only cognitively but also affectively and relationally.

Another finding relates to the contextual challenges faced by the teacher, especially limited learning resources and the multi-grade setting often encountered in rural schools. Despite these challenges, the teacher demonstrates resilience and creativity in adapting learning materials. For instance, when textbooks are insufficient, the teacher uses hand-written Bible stories, visual aids drawn on the board, and locally contextualized examples from students' daily agricultural life. This contextualization makes biblical content more accessible. Students reported that they better understand obedience and blessing when it is illustrated through familiar realities such as farming, helping parents, or caring for livestock. This contextual pedagogy reflects the teacher's competence in connecting biblical truth to lived experiences, an important characteristic of effective PAK instruction. The lack of digital learning tools or technological integration does present limitations, especially compared to urban schools, but the teacher compensates through narrative creativity and interactive discussions. The study's results highlight that the teacher's pedagogical competence is strongly rooted in personal spirituality. The teacher shared that preparing lessons is always accompanied by personal prayer and reflection on Scripture. This spiritual discipline shapes the authenticity of teaching, as students sense that the teacher is not merely delivering academic content but living the truth being taught. This authenticity enhances the credibility of the teaching process, reinforcing the transformative intent of Christian Religious Education. Exodus 23:25, with its emphasis on worship and divine blessing, becomes a guiding principle not only for the lesson but also for the teacher's vocational identity. This alignment between personal faith and pedagogical practice strengthens the overall effectiveness of classroom ministry. From the learner's perspective, the findings show that students experience an increase in spiritual awareness and moral behavior. They described understanding that worshiping God involves more than singing songs or attending Sunday service; it means obeying parents, helping friends, and practicing honesty. This shows successful pedagogical transformation—biblical truth becoming lived value. Some students shared testimony-

like statements about praying more consistently or recognizing God's blessings in daily life. Although these reflections are subjective and not quantitatively measured, they show indications of spiritual growth facilitated through pedagogical competence. This aligns with the broader purpose of PAK, which is not only to inform but to form Christian character.

In the discussion stage, these findings suggest several theoretical implications. Pedagogical competence in PAK must be understood as a hybrid competence that integrates content mastery, spiritual formation, relational engagement, and contextual awareness. It is not sufficient for PAK teachers to master biblical content; they must know how to translate that content into a transformative learning experience. The integration of Exodus 23:25 into pedagogical practice shows that biblical truth functions as a meta-narrative guiding instructional design, classroom climate, and the teacher's professional ethos. This theological-pedagogical integration aligns with Christian education theory, which argues that faith and pedagogy cannot be separated because teaching itself is a spiritual vocation. The study supports the view that effective PAK pedagogy requires contextual sensitivity. Rural schools such as SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I have unique socio-cultural and infrastructural conditions that shape learning processes. The teacher's capacity to contextualize biblical truth through relevant examples, accessible language, and relational closeness demonstrates the importance of adaptive pedagogy. This contextualization ensures that students do not perceive Scripture as distant or abstract but as a living word that speaks to their lived realities. This resonates with contextual theological education, which insists that biblical teaching must engage cultural, economic, and communal realities. The findings highlight the transformative role of relational pedagogy. The PAK teacher's approach aligns with Christian educational philosophy that views teaching as ministry, where the teacher becomes a shepherd guiding students spiritually, morally, and emotionally. The pastoral presence enhances student openness, fosters trust, and shapes learning dispositions. This dimension of pedagogical competence is often underrepresented in secular educational discourse but is central to the identity of PAK. The findings illustrate that classroom management infused with Christian values contributes to character formation. The emphasis on obedience as part of worship reflects a biblical worldview shaping classroom culture. This aligns with virtue ethics in Christian pedagogy, where discipline is not punishment-oriented but growth-oriented, aiming to cultivate habits of holiness, respect, and responsibility. The study underscores the significance of teacher spirituality in shaping pedagogical competence. When teachers embody the truth they teach, students perceive authenticity and integrity, which enhances learning impact. This is particularly important in PAK because the curriculum aims not only to teach religious knowledge but to shape faith identity. The teacher at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I demonstrates the integration of personal devotion with professional responsibility, making pedagogy an expression of worship. The results reveal that teaching God's truth through the lens of Exodus 23:25 requires more than technical pedagogical competence; it requires spiritual-pedagogical synergy. The PAK teacher demonstrates that effective teaching emerges when biblical truth, contextual realities, relational warmth, and personal spirituality intersect. This integrative pedagogical model enhances students' spiritual understanding, fosters moral growth, and cultivates a classroom environment that reflects God's presence and blessing. The implications of this

study call for strengthening the formation of PAK teachers, ensuring they receive not only pedagogical training but also spiritual mentoring, contextual education, and opportunities for reflective practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the pedagogical competence of the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher at SD Negeri 080 Hutasoit I, when grounded in the theological message of Exodus 23:25, forms a holistic and transformative educational framework that integrates biblical truth, spiritual formation, relational engagement, and contextualized pedagogy. The findings demonstrate that effective PAK teaching cannot be separated from the teacher's ability to internalize and embody the spiritual principles of Scripture, particularly the call to worship, obedience, and covenantal faithfulness reflected in the verse: "Worship the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water; I will take away sickness from among you." This scriptural foundation shapes not only what is taught but how it is taught, influencing instructional design, classroom climate, and teacher-student interaction. The evidence reveals that the PAK teacher successfully integrates biblical truth into instructional planning by designing lessons that combine doctrinal understanding with character formation. Learning activities rooted in Exodus 23:25 lead students to see the connection between worship and daily obedience. Instructional strategies, such as storytelling, dialogue, question-answer sessions, reflective writing, and contextual illustrations, enable students to internalize the message and apply it in their family life, school behavior, and personal spirituality. This reflects high pedagogical competence, particularly in adapting biblical content to the cognitive and emotional development of elementary students. The teacher's relational and pastoral engagement is shown to be a significant factor that enhances the effectiveness of PAK pedagogy. The teacher's habit of praying with students, listening empathetically, and supporting them during personal challenges fosters an environment of trust and spiritual nurture. Students' testimonies indicate that relational warmth makes them more receptive to biblical values and encourages them to recognize God's blessings in daily life. This confirms that Christian pedagogy is fundamentally relational and ministry-oriented.

Classroom management practices framed through Christian values also reinforce students' understanding of obedience as part of worship. Rules are not presented as authoritarian commands but as expressions of honoring God and living responsibly before Him. This approach transforms discipline into spiritual formation, contributing to the creation of a learning environment that mirrors the peace, order, and moral clarity associated with God's blessing. The study further concludes that contextual factors, particularly the rural setting of Humbang Hasundutan, shape and challenge pedagogical practice. Limited resources do not hinder learning; rather, the teacher's creativity in using local examples, narrative illustrations, and minimal media demonstrates contextual mastery and cultural sensitivity. This strengthens the argument that PAK teachers must be both theologically grounded and contextually adaptive. The study affirms that the teacher's personal spirituality plays a crucial role in shaping pedagogical competence. Lesson preparation accompanied by prayer and reflection, along with the teacher's consistent demonstration of faith, strengthens the authenticity and integrity of instruction. Students perceive the teacher not merely as an educator but as a model of

faithfulness, embodying the message of Exodus 23:25. The conclusion underscores that pedagogical competence in Christian Religious Education is a holistic integration of biblical mastery, instructional skill, spiritual maturity, relational ministry, and contextual responsiveness. To teach God's truth effectively, a PAK teacher must not only understand Scripture but must also live it, model it, and translate it into meaningful, contextually relevant learning experiences. The study therefore recommends enhanced spiritual-pedagogical training for PAK teachers, emphasizing devotional habits, contextual pedagogy, and relational teaching practices to strengthen their role as bearers of God's truth in Indonesian schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, E. (2018). *Spiritual formation in Christian teaching: A guide for educators*. Baker Academic.
- Bauckham, R. (2016). *The Bible and theology*. Eerdmans.
- Beetham, C. (2015). *Echoes of Scripture in the Pentateuch*. Wipf & Stock.
- Brown, M. (2019). *Exodus: A commentary for teaching and preaching*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Carr, D. M. (2021). *The formation of the Hebrew Bible: A new reconstruction*. Oxford University Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. Jossey-Bass.
- Day, J. (2020). *God's holy people: A biblical theology of sanctification*. Crossway.
- Graham, D. L. (2017). *Teaching redemptively: Bringing grace and truth into your classroom* (2nd ed.). Purposeful Design Publications.
- Gushee, D. P., & Stassen, G. H. (2016). *Kingdom ethics: Following Jesus in contemporary context* (2nd ed.). Eerdmans.
- Knight, G. R. (2016). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective*. Andrews University Press.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Osborne, G. R. (2017). *The hermeneutical spiral: A comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation* (3rd ed.). InterVarsity Press.

- Shulman, L. S. (2015). *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching, learning, and learning to teach*. Jossey-Bass.
- Torrance, T. F. (2019). *Divine meaning: Studies in patristic hermeneutics*. T&T Clark.
- Van Brummelen, H. (2019). *Walking with God in the classroom: Christian approaches to teaching and learning* (4th ed.). Purposeful Design Publications.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2018). *The Old Testament ethics for the people of God*. IVP Academic.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2020). *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*. InterVarsity Press.
- Yount, W. (2017). *Called to teach: An introduction to the ministry of teaching*. B&H Academic.