

Teachers' Professional Competence in Integrating Catholic Values at Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the professional competence of Catholic Religious Education (CRE) teachers in integrating Catholic's values explicitly and in a structured manner into learning at Santo Don Bosco Catholic Elementary School, Palangka Raya. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The primary data sources were three CRE teachers, reinforced by a learning experience questionnaire administered to 18 students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and questionnaires, then analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through triangulation. The results show that the professional competence of CRE teachers in integrating Catholic's values is good and developing, reflected in the dimensions of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Value integration is carried out through three domains, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The questionnaire results indicate that 66.7% of students stated that Catholic's values were always explained in an easily understandable way, and 66.7% stated they were always given tasks to do good to others. The teachers' main challenges are being consistent role models, dealing with the diversity of student characteristics, and forming faith habits in lower-grade children, which require repeated and patient processes.

Keywords: *Teacher Professional Competence, Catholic's Values, Catholic Religious Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher competence is a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that an educator must possess in order to carry out professional duties optimally. Law Number 14, 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers affirms that a teacher must possess four core competencies, namely pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. Among these four, professional competence demands a deep and broad mastery of the subject matter, enabling teachers to deliver material in a structured and meaningful way for students (Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16, 2007).

Catholic Religious Education (CRE) holds an important position in shaping students' character so that they are not only intellectually intelligent but also faithful, of good character, and able to implement Catholic's values in daily life. In this context, CRE teachers play a fundamental role because the success of faith education depends not only on the curriculum and facilities but is greatly determined by the competence of the teachers who teach. A CRE teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but also a formator of faith and a Catholic's servant who exerts a spiritual influence on students (Hamu, 2023).

The Catholic Church has long recognized the importance of teacher competence in faith education. The Declaration Gravissimum Educationis (1965) affirms that Catholic's educators must be thoroughly prepared so that they are competent in both the field of knowledge and the living out of faith. The Directory for Catechesis (2020) further emphasizes that a competent faith teacher must be able to facilitate students' personal encounter with Christ, rather than merely conveying doctrinal information. The professional competence of CRE teachers requires a deep mastery of Scripture, Church teaching, liturgy, and Catholic's morality (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The focus of this study is the ability to integrate Catholic's faith values into the learning process explicitly and in a structured manner. The integration in question is not merely inserting opening and closing prayers, but designing the entire learning process to address the three dimensions of students' development holistically, namely the cognitive dimension through moral knowing, the affective dimension through moral feeling, and the conative dimension through moral action. This three-dimensional framework aligns with Thomas Lickona's (1991) thinking on holistic character education, and in the CRE context it is reinforced by Gravissimum Educationis (1965).

A real challenge in CRE practice is the tendency for learning to focus more on the transmission of doctrinal knowledge (moral knowing), while the dimensions of internalizing faith (moral feeling) and concrete action (moral action) have not been explicitly and systematically addressed. Previous studies have discussed the professionalism and competence of CRE teachers in general terms (Dhajo, Wahyuningrum, & Adinuhgra, 2022; Labuan, 2022; Arzulia, Wahyuningrum, & Adinuhgra, 2023); however, few have specifically examined the integration of Catholic's values through the three-dimensional moral framework at the elementary school level. This is where the novelty of this study lies.

Don Bosco Catholic Elementary School in Palangka Raya was chosen as the research site because it bears the responsibility of providing quality education rooted in Catholic's values amid the plural society of Palangka Raya, which is diverse in ethnicity, culture, and religion. Based on this background, this study aims to describe the level of CRE teachers' professional competence in integrating Catholic's values, the factors influencing its development, and the challenges teachers face in carrying out their professional duties.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Descriptive qualitative research aims to describe social phenomena in detail through the collection of data in the form of words, narratives, actions, or documents, focusing on meaning, perceptions, and individual experiences rather than on numbers (Sugiyono, 2015). This approach was chosen because it aligns with the study's aim of deeply understanding teachers' professional competence in integrating Catholic's values.

The study was conducted at Santo Don Bosco Catholic Elementary School, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan Province, in May 2026. The research subjects or informants were determined using the following criteria: (1) Catholic Religious Education teachers, several students, and the school principal; (2) willingness to serve as informants; and (3) the ability to communicate well. The main informants were three CRE teachers who taught grades I through VI. To strengthen the data, a learning experience questionnaire was also distributed to 18 students who participated in CRE learning.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, documentation study, and questionnaires. In-depth interviews served as the main technique for exploring informants' subjective experiences using a structured interview guide developed based on the research focus. The documentation study examined teachers' lesson modules, while the questionnaire was used to determine the level of engagement, internalization of faith, and the supporting and inhibiting factors of learning. The main instrument in this qualitative research was the researcher as the key instrument.

The data analysis technique followed an interactive model comprising three stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes. Data display was carried out in the form of narrative text and tables. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and increased persistence of observation (Sugiyono, 2015).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

1. The Level of Teachers' Professional Competence in Integrating Catholic's Values.

The results of the interview data reduction with the three CRE teachers show that professional competence in integrating Catholic's values is manifested through three integrated dimensions, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. A summary of the interview results is presented in Table 3.

Table 1. Interview Data Reduction: The Level of Teachers' Professional Competence in Integrating Catholic's Values

No	Informant	Summary of Findings
1	Reti, S.Pd	A professional teacher delivers material in a simple way for the lower grades by explaining the meaning of prayers (the Sign of the Cross, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be), setting memorization targets, and practicing spontaneous prayer. Children not only understand the theory but become accustomed to practicing it in daily life.
2	Supiaty, S.Pd	A professional CRE teacher is a role model who combines competence, morality, and Catholic's values in contextual learning, through developing lesson modules suited to students' understanding, simplifying language, setting an example, and habituating spontaneous prayer in class and prayer at home.
3	Resiana, S.Ag	A religion teacher for lower-grade children must be not only a good instructor but also a shaper of faith habits, through simplifying prayer material, setting memorization targets, and practicing spontaneous prayer for real situations, so that faith grows as authentic character in their daily prayers.

Source: Researcher's processed interview data, 2026

Based on Table 1, the professional competence of CRE teachers in integrating Catholic's values explicitly and systematically is good and continues to develop. In the planning dimension, teachers design learning by selecting themes relevant to students'

real lives, simplifying the language of the guidebook, and formulating learning objectives that encompass the cognitive, internalization, and application of values. In the implementation dimension, teachers carry out learning through modeling attitudes, habituating spontaneous and daily prayer, direct practice such as picking up litter as a form of caring for God's creation, and adapting methods to the diversity of student characteristics. In the evaluation dimension, teachers conduct self-evaluation by varying methods each week, directly asking about students' learning comfort, and observing changes in students' behavior in daily life.

2. Challenges Teachers Face in Carrying Out Professional Duties.

The interview results regarding the challenges faced by teachers are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Interview Data Reduction: Challenges Teachers Face in Carrying Out Professional Duties

No	Informant	Summary of Findings
1	Reti, S.Pd	Being a role model through attitude and appearance and adapting methods to student diversity. In grades 1-2, the teacher prioritizes patience, gradual habituation, concrete practice (picking up litter), and repetition so that faith values become life habits. A reflective approach with moments of silence is applied to cultivate reverence in prayer.
2	Supiaty, S.Pd	Being a role model through neat appearance and polite speech, and adapting methods to the diversity of student characteristics (bright, slow, special needs). The teacher experiments with various approaches, asks about students' comfort, and focuses attention on the most active and the brightest children so that the religious message is well conveyed.
3	Resiana, S.Ag	Realizing that teaching is not merely conveying material but living as a reflection of faith. The greatest challenge is in grades 1-2 because habit formation is not instant, thus requiring extra patience, gradual habituation, repetition, and concrete practice so that faith values are manifested in action.

Source: Researcher's processed interview data, 2026

Table 2. shows that the teachers' main challenges are complex, including the demand to be consistent role models because their profession is always observed, internal struggles in the form of natural weaknesses and dual responsibilities as both catechists and educators, as well as external challenges in the form of the diversity of student characteristics. The greatest obstacle is felt when teaching grades 1 and 2, because forming faith character in young children requires a repeated process that is not instant.

Student Questionnaire Results. To strengthen the interview data, a learning experience questionnaire was distributed to 18 students. The questionnaire was structured based on the three dimensions of Catholic's value integration, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The questionnaire results are presented as percentages in Table 5.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Student Learning Experience Questionnaire Results (n = 18)

No	Statement	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Dimension
1	The teacher explains Catholic's values (love, honesty, forgiveness) in an easily understandable way	66.7	22.2	11.1	MK
2	The teacher provides stories, real examples, or accounts of how Catholic's values are applied in daily life	55.6	38.9	5.6	MK
3	After the CRE lesson, students feel moved in their hearts to become better people	55.6	38.9	5.6	MF
4	The teacher invites students to reflect, pray, or share feelings about the Catholic's value being studied	22.2	44.4	33.3	MF
5	Students feel the CRE lesson touches their hearts and makes them think about their faith	22.2	44.4	33.3	MF
6	The teacher gives tasks that encourage doing good (helping, forgiving, sharing)	66.7	27.8	5.6	MA
7	After studying CRE, students strive to do good deeds in daily life	38.9	5.6	55.6	MA

Note: MK = Moral Knowing, MF = Moral Feeling, MA = Moral Action. Source: Researcher's processed questionnaire data, 2026

Table 3 shows that in the moral knowing dimension, the majority of students stated that the teacher always (66.7%) or often (22.2%) explained Catholic's values in an easily understandable way, and always (55.6%) or often (38.9%) provided stories and real examples. This indicates that understanding Catholic's values has become an integral part of learning. In the moral feeling dimension, most students felt moved to become better (always 55.6%; often 38.9%), although invitations to reflect and pray as well as heart-touching experiences still had a relatively high sometimes proportion (33.3%). In the moral action dimension, tasks to do good to others were always given according to 66.7% of students, but the manifestation of good deeds in daily life was stated as always by only 38.9% of students, while 55.6% stated sometimes.

Discussion

The research findings affirm that the professional competence of CRE teachers at Santo Don Bosco Catholic Elementary School does not stop at mastery of the material but encompasses the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning that integrates Catholic's values holistically. Professional competence is understood as the teacher's ability to comprehend duties and responsibilities in accordance with the field, enabling them to prepare well-designed and structured learning through Catholic's values. This finding aligns with the view that professional teachers must understand the preparation before teaching so

that the material is delivered in a structured manner (Bagou, 2020), and it is consistent with competency theory, which emphasizes that superior performance is determined by a person's underlying characteristics rather than merely formal qualifications (McClelland, 1973; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

The integration of Catholic's values through the three-dimensional framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action is a central finding of this study. The questionnaire data show that the moral knowing dimension is the most strongly internalized, whereas the moral action dimension, particularly the independent manifestation of good deeds in daily life, still needs to be strengthened. This pattern confirms the concern of the Directory for Catechesis (2020) that authentic catechesis must not stop at teaching about the faith but must lead students to a personal encounter with Christ that transforms the way they feel and act. It also reinforces Lickona's (1991) idea that holistic character education requires the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

The teachers in this study did not rely solely on classroom methods but also read the situation and condition of students through pastoral and personal approaches. This finding aligns with the view that improving the quality of students' faith cannot be done in the classroom alone but must be accompanied by learning experiences and formation activities, with teachers acting as facilitators who provide learning media (Dey & Usun, 2021). The exemplary Catholic's life demonstrated by the teachers, through attitude, appearance, and speech, affirms that in CRE the teacher is a witness whose life is part of the message, as emphasized by Gravissimum Educationis (1965) and Hamu (2023).

The continuity of professional competence development is evident from the teachers' willingness to attend training, especially regarding children with special needs and psychology, as well as their ongoing reflection and experimentation with methods. This practice reflects continuous professional development, which is a hallmark of professional teachers (Lias & Dewantara, 2022). Thus, the teachers' competence is at a mature level because they master not only planning and implementation but also continuously make adjustments based on student characteristics and field challenges.

This study has limitations. The number of teacher informants was limited to three at a single school, and the questionnaire involved only 18 students, so the results are not intended for generalization but rather to deeply understand the specific context of the research site. In addition, the quality of students' faith is also influenced by factors beyond the teacher's role, such as the family environment and personal spiritual experiences, which were not the focus of this study.

The practical implication of this study is the importance of strengthening the moral feeling and moral action dimensions in the design of CRE learning, not stopping at moral knowing. Schools and the Church need to strengthen continuous training programs for CRE teachers, while teachers need to continue developing their insight as well as their ability to implement faith values in the real lives of students. For future researchers, it is recommended to examine the contribution of the family environment, personal spiritual experiences, and social-cultural conditions to the formation of students' faith more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the professional competence of Catholic Religious Education teachers at Santo Don Bosco Catholic Elementary School in Palangka Raya in integrating Catholic's values explicitly and systematically is good and

continues to develop. This competence is realized through three integrated dimensions, namely learning planning that encompasses the cognitive, affective, and action domains; implementation through modeling, prayer habituation, and concrete practice; and continuous self-evaluation based on the characteristics and needs of students.

The integration of Catholic's values is carried out through the framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The questionnaire results show that the moral knowing dimension is the most strongly internalized, whereas the moral action dimension, particularly the independent manifestation of good deeds, still needs to be strengthened. The main challenges faced by teachers include the demand to be consistent role models, internal struggles in the form of natural weaknesses and dual responsibilities, the diversity of student characteristics, and the formation of faith habits in lower-grade children, which requires a repeated and patient process.

Teachers overcome these challenges by being aware of their inner calling as instruments of God, adapting methods contextually and individually, and continuing to attend training and engage in reflection. Thus, the professionalism of CRE teachers plays an important role in cultivating Catholic's values so that they truly come alive in students' daily lives, although the quality of students' faith is also influenced by factors beyond the teacher's role that warrant further study.

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