

The Role of Fieldwork Practice in Developing Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Students

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Abstract

This study examines how fieldwork practice improves the professional competence of Christian Religious Education students. It evaluates the program to inform us of its next semester's development. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study collected data through interviews with 11 mentor teachers and 52 randomly selected students of fieldwork practice. The data was analyzed using Atlas.ti, following the steps outlined by Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that the students demonstrate teaching planning, implementation, and evaluation skills. They are also proficient in integrating technology and instructional media. Overall, the students effectively fulfilled their responsibilities and performed their roles and functions in the learning process well. They demonstrated satisfactory professional competence, including understanding and explaining course materials, classroom management, communication, feedback reception, ethics, and integrity. With some of the challenges of fieldwork practice, the faculty must improve the program preparations and implementation quality.

Keywords: Fieldwork practice, professional competence, teachers, school, Christian religious education

Article History

Received: July 15, 2024
 Revised: April 12, 2025
 Accepted: April 19, 2025

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How to cite this article:

Serdianus, Rando, A.A., Parai', N. & Rumono, B.G. (2025). The Role of Fieldwork Practice in Developing Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Students. *Didache: Journal of Christian Education*, 6(1), 42–63. <https://doi.org/10.46445/djce.v6i1.871>

Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in the continuity of education in Indonesia. One of the key indicators of their importance is the enactment of Law No. 14 of 2005 by the Republic of Indonesia concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The primary objective of this law is to ensure the quality of education in Indonesia by enhancing teacher competencies. Quality assurance for teachers in Indonesia should ideally begin during their academic education, starting from their time in university. This vision has been embraced by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at the State Christian Institute of Toraja (IAKN Toraja), particularly within the Christian Religious Education Program. Fieldwork practice is implemented during the odd semester of each new academic year.

The Christian Religious Education Program at IAKN Toraja has developed a *Fieldwork Practice Guidebook*, which outlines the objectives of the fieldwork practice as follows: a) To provide students with real-world exposure to the scope and field of work or ministry they will face in the future; b) To train students in designing learning implementation plan and developing teaching skills; c) To evaluate students' teaching abilities and competencies; d) To equip students with sufficient knowledge and skills in preparation for becoming professional Christian Religious Education teachers; e) To enable students to analyze, evaluate, and formulate the outcomes of their fieldwork practice to improve the quality of education, particularly in the field of Christian Religious Education (Toban et al., 2023, pp. 2-3). Objectives b, c, and d refer to enhancing students' professional competencies as future Christian Religious Education teachers.

As future educators, Christian Religious Education Program students must prepare themselves thoroughly to become professional teachers. They are expected to develop competencies similar to those teachers require. These include pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies (Febriana, 2021). These four competencies are interrelated and are integral to a teacher's identity. Although they complement each other, each has distinct characteristics, allowing for partial study and assessment.

Professional competence refers to a teacher's ability to master relevant academic aspects and apply them effectively in teaching (Widyaningrum et al., 2019, p. 36). Mu'arif (2023, p. 180) further defines professional competence as the mastery of subject matter in depth and breadth, enabling teachers to guide students according to the guidelines outlined in Indonesia's Ministry of National

Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007. These guidelines cover mastery of content, understanding of competency standards, development of learning materials, and the use of technology. A. Aisah et al. (2024, p. 3073) even state that professional competence is a crucial step in advancing the quality of education at the elementary level. This highlights that professional competence is inseparable from the teaching profession. It plays a significant role in enhancing a teacher's performance, particularly in academic proficiency. A teacher's ability to interpret and deliver learning material effectively is closely tied to their capacity to plan instruction, which strongly influences the success of classroom learning.

Competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable an individual to perform tasks or work responsibilities effectively and excellently. Conversely, professionalism refers to a person's expertise or proficiency that meets established quality standards in a particular field (Gultom & Aliyyah, 2022, pp. 37-38). In the context of teaching, a teacher's professional competence refers to their expertise in conducting learning activities under established educational quality standards. Madjid (2019, p. 2) explains that being professional means possessing a certain expertise that not everyone has. He further emphasizes that a professional teacher must have essential teaching capabilities, which are demonstrated through mastery of subject matter and the ability to deliver it effectively using appropriate methodologies (Madjid, 2019). In his explanation, Madjid differentiates between two aspects: mastery of subject matter – *what to teach*, which falls under professional competence – and mastery of methodology – *how to teach*, which is categorized as pedagogical competence (Fitriyanti, 2024, p. 94).

Dudung (2018), in his explanation, combines both subject mastery and methodological expertise under the broader scope of professional competence. According to him, professional competence includes the following elements: a) Understanding and the ability to apply the fundamentals of education, including philosophical, psychological, and sociological aspects; b) Possessing knowledge of learning theories that align with student development and the ability to apply them effectively; c) The ability to manage and develop the subject matter under one's responsibility; d) The capacity to understand and apply a variety of teaching methods to create diverse learning experiences; e) Proficiency in developing and utilizing various tools, media, and relevant learning resources to support the teaching and learning process; f) The ability to plan and implement

learning programs effectively; g) The ability to evaluate student learning outcomes to understand their stages of comprehension and achievement throughout the learning process (Dudung, 2018, pp. 12–13). Viani dan Arifianto (2022) express a similar view. They assert that an educator must possess professional competence, which includes mastery of the subject matter and a deep understanding of the material to enrich the students' knowledge. Based on these definitions, professional competence in education can be understood as the educator's ability to plan, implement, and evaluate the learning process. Planning involves the educator's skill in understanding the content to be taught. Implementation refers to the educator's ability to deliver the material using methods or strategies that suit the students' characteristics. Evaluation entails the educator's capability to observe and assess the strengths and weaknesses within the learning process. This includes the ability to reflect on and improve teaching practices to enhance the overall quality of education.

Indicators of a teacher's professional competence include the ability to effectively plan instruction by developing a lesson plan that takes into account students' characteristics, appropriate methods, learning media, and assessment strategies (Dudung, 2018; Febriana, 2021). Teachers must also be capable of fulfilling their role as educators by fostering students' potential, creating a conducive learning environment, and managing the classroom professionally (Febriana, 2021). This role encompasses instructional, educational, and managerial functions, such as planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process (Wijaya et al., 2023, pp. 118–119). The necessary key teaching skills include starting and closing lessons effectively, reinforcing student learning, asking questions, providing clear explanations, managing classroom dynamics, and using technology and learning media to enhance teaching effectiveness (Madjid, 2019). Moreover, teachers are expected to communicate well, remain open to feedback, and uphold ethical conduct and integrity throughout the teaching process (Febriana, 2021).

Given the importance of professional competence, it is essential to analyze how students in the Christian Religious Education Program improve their professional competence after completing their fieldwork practice (Tendu, 2023). Such analysis is also crucial for gathering data on how well students implement their professional skills in accordance with the knowledge and competencies they acquired during their studies. Fieldwork practice is a key component in shaping

future educators. When used as a moment to strengthen professional competence, it can significantly support students before they fully enter the teaching profession (Asrivi et al., 2024, p. 948). It must be acknowledged that becoming a teacher is not easy. Therefore, students as future educators must be fully committed to their personal and professional development. This can be achieved if each individual takes every phase of the educational process seriously, especially the development stages provided through the fieldwork practice program.

The fieldwork practice is designed to train students in real-life teaching situations at schools. However, reports from supervising lecturers and evaluations from mentor teachers have indicated that some students still receive low scores in aspects of professional competence. In light of this, the present study aims to analyze the improvement of students' professional competence, including identifying the key factors or aspects that contribute to its development. The urgency of this research lies in its focus on evaluating the progress students make after completing the program. The findings are expected to serve as a valuable evaluation tool not only for the students themselves but also for the Christian Religious Education Program and the Field Supervising Lecturers in the fieldwork practice program. Another important reason for the urgency of this research is that the fieldwork practice currently concludes with a final report submitted by both the students and the supervising lecturers without a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes. In other words, this study is conducted to emphasize the importance of follow-up measures regarding the improvement of student competencies after participating in the fieldwork practice.

Numerous studies have explored students' professional competence in relation to their fieldwork practice. One such study by Huda and Susilo (2014) found that a semi-classroom Action Research-based model of fieldwork practice is more effective than the conventional model in enhancing students' pedagogical and professional competencies. This effectiveness stems from the model's emphasis on designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction based on real classroom problems. However, the study has several limitations. It did not evaluate the impact of the acquired competencies on students' learning outcomes, nor did it examine the long-term sustainability of the student-teachers' professional skills. Furthermore, technical challenges during implementation and comparisons with other field practice models were not thoroughly analyzed. These limitations highlight the need for further research to strengthen the

effectiveness of fieldwork practice programs in fostering professionalism among future educators.

Second, S. Aisah (2017) examined students' perceptions regarding the role of the fieldwork practice program in shaping the professional competence of future teachers. The results showed that 97% of respondents had a strong understanding of professional teacher competence, and 84% believed that the fieldwork practice significantly contributed to the development of that competence. However, this study was limited to visual arts education students. It did not explore the program's impact on student learning outcomes or its effectiveness within other academic contexts, such as the Christian Religious Education Program.

Third, Ismail et al. (2018) found that educational internship programs, including fieldwork practice, were effective in enhancing students' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. These included skills such as lesson plan, communication, adaptability, and teamwork. Nonetheless, when it comes to students in the Christian Religious Education Program, there has been limited research focusing on how the professional competencies acquired during fieldwork practice are applied in value-based or religious classroom settings. Moreover, the long-term impact of fieldwork practice on the professional development of Christian Religious Education students—particularly their ability to navigate the dynamics of faith-based education—has yet to become a specific area of study. Therefore, further research is needed to provide a more focused and in-depth analysis.

However, in the context of students in the Christian Religious Education Program, research has yet to specifically explore how professional competencies gained through fieldwork practice are applied in value-based or faith-oriented learning environments. Additionally, the long-term impact of fieldwork practice on the professional development of Christian Religious Education students, particularly in terms of their readiness to navigate the complexities of religious education, has not been a central focus of existing studies. This highlights the need for more targeted and in-depth research.

Fourth, Sjafei's (2018) study revealed that pre-service teacher education students participating in fieldwork practice demonstrated strong pedagogical competence. This included a sound understanding of learners, the ability to design effective instruction, appropriate use of assessment tools, and the capacity

to nurture student potential. However, the study did not specifically examine how professional competencies are developed among Christian Religious Education students during their undergraduate years, particularly throughout the internship or practicum phase.

Fifth, Oktariana's (2021) research indicates that the fieldwork practice program, interests, and academic achievements significantly affect students' readiness to become professional teachers, both simultaneously and partially. However, this study has limitations in analyzing the improvement of students' professional competence through fieldwork practice, as it only focuses on Economic Education students at STKIP Pembangunan Indonesia. Hence, the results are less relevant to other study programs. In addition, this study does not specifically measure the aspects of professional competence that are improved, and the quantitative approach used tends to be less in-depth in exploring students' experiences and perceptions during fieldwork practice. This study also has not considered contextual variables, such as institutional support, quality of guidance, or the school environment where the fieldwork practice is implemented, which have the potential to influence the results.

Sixth, Turmuzi and Wahidturrahmi's (2021) research indicates that students have pedagogical competence with an average score of 85.11 and professional competence with an average score of 88.94, both in the good category. However, this study is limited to Mathematics Education students, so the results are not fully applicable to students of the Christian Religious Education Study Program.

The studies discussed above indicate that fieldwork practice is effective in enhancing the pedagogical and professional competencies of pre-service teachers, particularly through classroom action research models, practical skill development, and alignment with professional demands. However, some of these studies are limited in scope due to the specific academic programs they focus on as the subject of research. Given these limitations, there is a need for research that specifically addresses the improvement of professional competencies among students in the Christian Religious Education Program. The aim is to obtain empirical data on how their professional competencies develop after participating in fieldwork practice. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the further development of the program, particularly in enhancing the professional competencies of Christian Religious Education students in

subsequent semesters. Therefore, the central research question to be addressed in this study is: “How is the professional competence of Christian Religious Education students shaped after completing their fieldwork practice?”

Research Method and Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method. According to Arifin (2014, p. 41), descriptive research describes and explains events as they occur in the present. This method was chosen because one of the primary functions of descriptive research is to collect factual and current information to identify specific problems. Additionally, this approach allows researchers to examine how others have handled similar situations, enabling informed decisions to be made when facing comparable circumstances in the future (Arifin, 2014). Given the broad geographical scope of the fieldwork practice locations in Tana Toraja and North Toraja Regencies, the research was narrowed to focus on two subdistricts in Tana Toraja: Mengkendek and Gandangbatu Sillanan. The study was conducted from September 13 to 18, 2023, across eleven schools within these two subdistricts. The schools involved in this research were: 1) UPT SDN 5 Mengkendek, 2) UPT SDN 3 Gandangbatu Sillanan, 3) UPT SMP Kristen Gandangbatu, 4) UPT SMPN 4 Gandangbatu Sillanan, 5) UPT SMAN 3 Tana Toraja, 6) UPT SMK PGRI Mebali, 7) UPT SMPN 3 Mengkendek, 8) UPT SDN 7 Mengkendek, 9) UPT SMA PGRI Ge'tengan, 10), UPT SMP Kristen Kandora, and 11) UPT SMPN 1 Mengkendek.

Research data consisted of interview results gathered from 11 mentor teachers and 52 students who were randomly selected from the classes where students conducted their fieldwork practice. The selection of students from each class also considered their readiness to be interviewed at the time the research team arrived at the respective locations. The stages of the research included: a) Data collection, which was carried out through interviews (Sugiyono, 2021). Two main indicators served as the basis for assessment: First, the ability to carry out responsibilities effectively. Second, the ability to perform their roles and functions in teaching and learning activities. b) Data Analysis, which involved processing the interview results using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti version 9.0.15 (Warsono et al., 2022, pp. 13–15), and c) Discussion and conclusion, which involved interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data.

Findings

Students' Ability to Carry Out Responsibilities during Fieldwork Practice

Lesson plan

Based on interviews with mentor teachers, students have demonstrated the ability to develop a structured learning implementation plan. These design learning activities incorporate teaching aids and implement those plans in the classroom. Four mentor teachers confirmed that the students were able to prepare the learning implementation plan properly, while five others stated that the students had shown strong skills in designing well-thought-out lessons. Additionally, three student groups who were part of the research affirmed that the students delivered lessons effectively, indicating that the implementation of the learning implementation plan had been carried out successfully.

However, several challenges were still identified in the learning planning process. Some students did not submit their learning implementation plan to the mentor teachers at the beginning of the practicum, while others prepared it but did not follow the required structure. There were also cases where the learning materials were not properly organized, which could potentially affect the effectiveness of their teaching. Although overall, the students had a good understanding of how to design learning, aspects of discipline still needed improvement, particularly in terms of punctuality and the systematic preparation of teaching materials.

Learning Implementation Plan

In classroom practice, students have applied various strategies that support the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process during their fieldwork practice. One notable aspect is their effort to stimulate students' recall of previously learned material before introducing new lessons. This approach aims to build a stronger foundational understanding and enhance student engagement in the learning process. Additionally, the students consistently conveyed the learning objectives at the beginning of each session as part of their strategy to provide clear direction for the students.

Confirmation from both mentor teachers and student groups indicated that the students had performed their roles well in delivering instructional

content. Four classes reported that before teaching, the students explained the topic that would be covered, giving them an initial overview of the lesson they were about to receive. Furthermore, mentor teachers from four schools stated that the students successfully executed the learning implementation plan, demonstrating their ability to implement their teaching plans systematically and purposefully.

Integration of Technology and Learning Media

Integration of technology in learning is one aspect observed in this study. The students of fieldwork practice have shown efforts in utilizing various learning technologies and media to improve teaching effectiveness. Some of them are the use of Google Form for learning evaluation, the utilization of PowerPoint as a presentation tool, and the use of images and video media to clarify the concepts taught. In addition, students also use LCD projectors to deliver materials, which provides a more interactive learning experience for students.

However, in its implementation, there are still some obstacles, especially related to school facilities that do not fully support the maximum use of technology. Mentor teachers in several schools stated that the limited devices and infrastructure are obstacles for students of fieldwork practice in optimizing technology in learning. Nevertheless, under the existing conditions, students still try to utilize the available technology to improve the quality of their teaching.

Learning Evaluation

In the aspect of learning evaluation, students of fieldwork practice have shown good competence. Based on the findings in the field, students apply various evaluation methods, such as giving individual and group assignments, asking students questions to measure their understanding, and assessing student attendance. In addition, students also carry out remedial work for students who have difficulty understanding the material, explain assignment instructions before they are given to students, and prepare questions for midterm exams and end-of-semester assessments.

One of the positive aspects of this study is that students not only focus on cognitive evaluation but also appreciate their work. This attitude reflects their understanding of the importance of building learning motivation through recognizing students' efforts. No significant obstacles were found in this aspect

of evaluation, so it can be concluded that students have a fairly good ability to carry out learning evaluation.

The Ability of Students of Fieldwork Practice in Carrying out Learning Roles and Functions

Understanding and Delivery of Teaching Materials

One key factor in the effectiveness of learning is students' ability to understand and deliver teaching materials. The results of interviews with five mentor teachers indicate that students have a good understanding of the material they teach. This understanding is reflected in their clear and systematic delivery of the material, which helps students more easily understand the concepts taught.

However, some challenges remain in this area. Some students have not yet become familiar with how to communicate their teaching materials to their mentor teachers before they begin teaching. Additionally, there are instances where students do not fully grasp their peers' learning styles, resulting in a lack of variation in material delivery techniques. This suggests that while students generally possess a solid understanding of the teaching material, they still require guidance in pedagogical methods to ensure the material is contextualized and tailored to their peers' needs.

Ability to Manage Class

Students' ability to manage the class can be viewed from several aspects, such as assertiveness in reprimanding students who are not focused, giving sanctions for students who are less orderly, and persuasive approaches in dealing with students who disrupt the learning process. The results of interviews with mentor teachers indicate that the majority of students have been able to apply this strategy well. In addition, students also try to attract students' attention by applying more interactive learning methods.

However, some challenges remain, such as difficulties defusing the commotion in the classroom and a lack of attention to student attendance. Nevertheless, students have shown good progress in managing the class in general, although discipline and more effective classroom management strategies still need strengthening.

Communication Skills, Feedback Acceptance, and Ethics

In terms of communication, students of fieldwork practice have shown the ability to adapt to the school environment by adjusting their speech accents with students. They also use language that is easy to understand and are friendly when interacting with students. Although some students still face obstacles such as monotonous voice intonation or awkwardness when speaking, overall, they have shown fairly good communication skills.

In terms of receiving feedback, the results indicated that students have an open attitude towards criticism and suggestions, both from the mentor teachers and students. This attitude is an important indicator in learning as it shows students' readiness to continue learning and improve their teaching quality.

Finally, in terms of ethics and integrity, students of fieldwork practice have indicated polite behavior, upheld moral values, and maintained good relations with all school residents. No obstacles were found in this area, which indicates that students have a good understanding of the importance of maintaining professionalism in the world of education.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that students in fieldwork practice have fairly good professional competence, although some aspects still need improvement. Improvements can be focused on lesson planning, material delivery techniques, and classroom management strategies to be more effective. With optimal assistance, students of fieldwork practice are expected to be better prepared to carry out their duties as educators in the future.

Discussion

Carrying Out Responsibilities Effectively

Students of fieldwork practice have an important role in the world of education, especially in honing teaching skills that reflect their readiness as prospective educators. Success in carrying out this responsibility is measured not only by their ability to compile a learning implementation plan but also by the extent to which they are able to implement the plan properly in the classroom.

Learning Plan

In general, students of fieldwork practice demonstrate a good ability to develop a systematic learning plan. Structured learning plans allow students to

design a learning flow that suits their needs and the basic competencies to be achieved (Nguyen, 2023, p. 4). However, some obstacles remain, such as the inaccuracy in preparing the learning plan format and the lack of discipline in collecting the document.

The discipline in preparing and submitting the learning implementation plan is important as it reflects an educator's readiness and responsibility. In practice, a teacher who lacks a well-thought-out learning plan will have difficulty adjusting teaching strategies to students' needs (Saidah & Simamora, 2020, p. 36). Therefore, there is a need for more intensive evaluation and supervision for Students of fieldwork practice so that they can understand the importance of a comprehensive learning plan.

Learning Implementation

Successful learning implementation depends not only on the lesson plan but also on teaching skills in stimulating students' memories, conveying learning objectives, and executing the plan effectively. Students of fieldwork practice who are active in creating interesting learning tend to be more able to build positive interactions in the classroom (Zhou et al., 2024, p. 80).

This aligns with Maydiantoro et al. (2024, p. 58) statement, which emphasizes that young educators should be more active in bringing change to schools. Therefore, students of fieldwork practice are expected to not only act as facilitators of learning but also as agents of change who can innovate teaching methods.

Utilization of Technology and Learning Media

In the digital era, the integration of technology in learning is an aspect that cannot be ignored. Students of fieldwork practice reflect a good ability to utilize various learning media, such as educational videos, interactive presentations, and digital platforms for learning evaluation. However, the main challenge is the limited school facilities that do not fully support the use of technology in the learning process (Serdianus & Saputra, 2023, p. 6).

This constraint requires field teaching students to be more creative in optimizing available resources. For example, they can use the *blended learning* method by effectively combining face-to-face and online learning. Thus, facility constraints can be minimized while the effectiveness of learning is maintained.

Learning Evaluation and Reflection

Evaluation is a crucial part of the learning process that aims to measure the extent to which students understand the material taught. Students of fieldwork practice reflect good skills in evaluating learning, such as by giving assignments, asking reflective questions, and carrying out remedial for students who need it.

This evaluation process should focus on academics as well as students' critical thinking skills and creativity (Thaanyane & Jita, 2025, pp. 294–295). Students of fieldwork practice should be able to apply varied evaluation methods, such as project-based assessments or group discussions, to measure students' understanding more comprehensively.

Students of fieldwork practice have great potential to bring positive changes to the world of education. Their success in preparing lesson plans, implementing innovative teaching methods, and optimally utilizing technology is an important indicator of their readiness as prospective teachers. Although there are still some obstacles, such as inaccuracies in the preparation of lesson plans and limited facilities (Thaanyane & Jita, 2025), efforts to improve the quality of learning continue to be made.

Therefore, more intensive supervision, training, and guidance for students in the fieldwork practice need to be strengthened so that they can better carry out their responsibilities as educators. With an awareness of the importance of their role in the world of education, it is hoped that Students of the fieldwork practice can become inspiring educators and create a better-quality learning environment.

Carrying out their Roles and Functions in Learning

Students of fieldwork practice act as prospective educators who are honing their professional skills in a school environment. In practice, they are not only responsible for delivering teaching materials but also for managing classes, building communication with students, and demonstrating ethics and integrity as educators. Their success in carrying out this role is a measure of their readiness to enter the world of education professionally.

Understanding and Delivery of Teaching Materials

The ability to understand and deliver teaching materials is a fundamental aspect of the teaching profession. Students of fieldwork practices have generally demonstrated a fairly good mastery of the material they teach. This ability allows

them to explain concepts systematically and make it easier for students to understand the material presented (Asrivi et al., 2024).

However, contextualized delivery techniques still present challenges. Some students have not been able to adapt their teaching strategies to their level of understanding fully. For example, in subjects that require a lot of modeling or concrete examples, a more visual and interactive approach is still underutilized by some students (Wahyuddin, 2023, p. 1008). To overcome this, students of fieldwork practice need to explore more teaching methods that align with the characteristics of students and the subjects taught.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is a crucial skill for an educator. Students of fieldwork practice have demonstrated good classroom management, but some still face challenges in dealing with undisciplined students or classes that are not conducive. Skills in defusing commotion and maintaining student focus are one aspect that needs to be continuously developed (Nguyen, 2023).

Effective classroom management strategies include body language, firm but friendly voice intonation, and clear and consistent rule application. In addition, building positive relationships with students through a more personalized approach can help students in the fieldwork practice create a more orderly and comfortable classroom environment for learning (Widodo, 2021, p. 130).

Communication

The ability to communicate with students greatly affects the effectiveness of learning. Students of the fieldwork practice have tried to adjust their communication style to the language and accent of students so that the material can be more easily understood. However, there are still obstacles in interaction that have not been maximized. Some students seem hesitant to build a more open dialogue with students, so their involvement in the learning process is not optimal (Bada & Jita, 2023, pp. 9-10).

Effective communication in the classroom includes the ability to listen actively, provide constructive feedback, and create a learning environment that encourages students to express their opinions (Bada & Jita, 2023). To improve interaction, field experience students can apply more participatory

communication techniques, such as small group discussions or reflective questions that engage students more deeply.

Accepting Feedback as a Self-Development Process

One indicator of the readiness of students for fieldwork practice as prospective professional teachers is their willingness to accept criticism and suggestions. In practice, students in the fieldwork practice reflect a good attitude when receiving feedback from host teachers and students. This positive response to feedback reflects their open attitude in developing teaching skills and improving aspects that are still lacking (Arrobi et al., 2023, pp. 174–175).

The ability to receive feedback well is part of a teacher's professional competence. Effective teachers are always willing to learn from experience, adapt to changing situations, and continuously improve the quality of their teaching based on evaluations provided by others. Therefore, students in the fieldwork practice are expected to internalize the criticism they receive and use it as a basis for continuous improvement.

Ethics and Integrity in the School Environment

Ethics and integrity are fundamental aspects of the teaching profession. Students of the fieldwork practice have demonstrated good ethical behavior while carrying out their duties at school, including in interactions with students and fellow teachers and in carrying out their academic responsibilities. This professional attitude reflects their readiness to carry out their duties as teachers in the future (Widodo, 2021).

The application of ethics in education is not limited only to discipline and responsibility but also includes aspects of moral leadership and role models for students. Teachers who have high integrity can be role models for students, create a conducive learning environment, and build a positive academic culture in schools (Hutauruk & Irawati, 2024; Widodo, 2021). Therefore, students in the fieldwork practice need to continue to maintain ethical values in every aspect of their work.

Overall, students of the fieldwork practice have carried out their roles and functions in learning quite well. Mastery of the material, classroom management, communication, and the ability to receive input are aspects that continue to develop during the fieldwork practice process. Although challenges remain, such

as a lack of skills in contextual teaching techniques and obstacles in interacting with students, efforts to improve are continuously being made.

Through continuous reflection and evaluation, students of the fieldwork practice can continue to improve their competencies and be better prepared to become inspiring and professional educators. With a strong understanding, effective communication skills, and high integrity, they are expected to be able to contribute to creating a better learning environment in the future.

Implication

Theoretical Implications

This study strengthens the understanding that professional competence is a fundamental element in teacher education, especially in the context of Christian religious education. This finding confirms that professional competence not only includes mastery of teaching materials but also aspects of the learning plan, implementation, evaluation, communication, and classroom management. From the perspective of educational theory, this study supports the constructivist approach, which emphasizes that direct experience in the real world is an integral part of the learning process of prospective teachers.

Furthermore, the results of this study provide new insights into the development of teacher education curricula, which should place more emphasis on the balance between theory and practice. Students in the fieldwork practice are not only equipped with a conceptual understanding of pedagogy, but must also gain deeper practical experience to face real classroom dynamics. Thus, this study contributes to enriching the academic discourse on the professional development of prospective teachers and can be a reference for further research that focuses on strategies to increase the effectiveness of fieldwork practice programs in higher education.

Practical Implications

In terms of implementation, this study provides insights for educational institutions and managers of fieldwork practice programs in designing strategies to improve student competency. Although students in the fieldwork practice have demonstrated a fairly good level of competency, several aspects still need to be improved, such as discipline in preparing and submitting learning

implementation plans, more effective classroom management, and the use of technology in learning. Therefore, educational institutions need to develop more systematic training programs, which include teaching simulations, classroom management coaching, and training in the use of technology in education.

In addition, the role of mentor teachers in assisting students in the fieldwork practice needs to be reinforced. They not only act as mentors but also as facilitators who can provide constructive feedback on the student's learning process. Continuous feedback will help students in the fieldwork practice gradually reflect on and improve their teaching skills. In this context, a collaborative approach is needed between educational institutions and schools where students undergo fieldwork practice, so that this program can run more effectively and provide maximum benefits for students and related educational institutions.

Strengths of the Study

This study possesses several strengths that offer meaningful contributions to the field of education. First, it presents empirical data from direct interviews with mentor teachers and students. It accurately depicts students' professional competence during the fieldwork practice in real-world settings. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities encountered throughout the practicum.

Second, the study offers practical recommendations that can be directly applied by educational institutions, particularly IAKN Toraja, to improve the curriculum and mentoring programs for Christian Religious Education students who are preparing to become teachers. The suggestions regarding enhancing student competencies in the learning implementation plan, classroom management strategies, and the use of technology can serve as a valuable reference for developing more effective and relevant education policies.

Third, this research strengthens the connection between theory and practice in teacher religious education. By emphasizing the significance of hands-on experience in shaping professional competencies, the study encourages a more practice-oriented learning approach, helping teacher education graduates to be better equipped to meet the demands of the professional teaching work environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is required to deepen our understanding of students' professional competence during the fieldwork practice, particularly in the context of Christian religious education. First, future studies should broaden the scope of respondents by involving more schools and incorporating students' perspectives to gain a more holistic view of the effectiveness of student instruction.

Second, methodological innovations are necessary, such as using a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between field teaching experience, institutional support, and technology integration in teaching. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the long-term impact of fieldwork practice programs on students' professional development.

Third, this study's limitations—such as its primary focus on mentor teachers and the limited diversity of respondent backgrounds—should be addressed in broader future investigations. Additionally, evaluating the effectiveness of fieldwork practice mentoring programs across various institutions may offer valuable insights for improving future teacher education policies.

Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that the professional competence of students during fieldwork practice in Christian religious education is influenced by various factors, particularly in lesson planning, implementation, evaluation, communication, and classroom management skills. The students demonstrated a fairly good ability to design and implement lessons. However, several areas still need improvement, such as consistency in developing lesson plans, understanding students' learning styles, and adopting more effective classroom management strategies.

In addition, most students have incorporated technology into their teaching, although limited facilities in some schools remain challenging to optimize their use. Their lesson evaluations have also been carried out effectively, as shown through various assessment methods such as assignments, quizzes, and remedial activities. However, the role of mentor teachers in providing feedback still needs to be strengthened to help students reflect more deeply on their teaching practices.

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