

# The Use of Varied Teaching Methods to Enhance the Effectiveness of Catholic Religious Education

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of varied teaching methods by Catholic Religious Education (CRE) teachers in supporting learning effectiveness at the elementary school level. Learning effectiveness in CRE remains a challenge because students often show low motivation, limited participation, and difficulty maintaining focus during classroom activities. The study aimed to analyze the implementation of varied teaching methods, their application in classroom learning, their relationship to learning effectiveness, and the challenges faced by teachers. This study employed a descriptive design with a qualitative approach. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 001 Laham, Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan, from December 2025 to April 2026. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving one CRE teacher, one principal, and six fifth-grade students. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the teacher applied various teaching methods, including lectures, storytelling, group discussions, problem-solving, and literacy activities. These methods created active, interactive, and enjoyable learning environments that improved students' motivation, participation, focus, and understanding of learning materials. Despite limitations in learning media and differences in students' abilities, the teacher addressed these challenges through flexible and contextual learning strategies. The study concludes that varied teaching methods support meaningful and student-centered learning experiences in CRE.

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Catholic Religious Education; Learning Effectiveness; Pedagogical Competence; Student Engagement; Varied Teaching Methods

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## Introduction

Learning effectiveness stands as one of the key indicators of successful education, particularly in Catholic Religious Education (CRE) at the elementary school level (Toron, 2025). Effective learning encourages students to engage

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actively in the learning process, enabling them not only to comprehend the material but also to internalize and practice the values learned in daily life (Fitri et al., 2026; Singh, 2025). The challenges of religious education have grown increasingly complex, as teachers are required to adapt their teaching strategies to students' development and the evolving educational context (Elshof, 2019), while also building communicative, student-responsive learning environments to ensure the process runs optimally (Fitri et al., 2026; Nelson & Yang, 2023).

Prior studies indicate that student motivation and participation in learning are strongly influenced by the teaching methods teachers apply (Aseery, 2024; Augustine & Permana, 2024; Sihotang et al., 2023). A persistent problem in Catholic Religious Education instruction is students' low focus and participation during lessons (Tibo & Tobing, 2022), with many students appearing inattentive while teachers explanations, engaging in conversation with peers, and showing limited interest in learning (Kessin et al., 2025)—conditions that undermine the effectiveness of instruction and hinder the achievement of learning objectives (Kessin et al., 2025; Sihotang et al., 2024). Catholic Religious Education teachers bear significant responsibility for instilling character and moral values through active, meaningful learning (Lorensius & Anggal, 2026; Tibo & Tobing, 2022), and research shows that applying appropriate learning models can improve both learning outcomes and student participation in Catholic Religious Education classrooms (Tibo & Tarigan, 2024). Students' low concentration has further been linked to limited pedagogical innovation and reliance on monotonous teaching methods (Kumanireng et al., 2025; Sabon et al., 2025).

One promising approach to improving learning effectiveness is the use of varied teaching methods (Killen & O'Toole, 2023), which help teachers create a more engaging, dynamic, and interactive classroom atmosphere (Kinanti & Hernawan, 2023; Vercellotti, 2018). Vaughn and Baker (2001) argue that successful learning depends on the balance between teaching style, learning style, and the methods applied, with this approach emphasizing the flexible, responsive use of diverse strategies suited to students' differing needs and characteristics. Evidence shows that applying varied methods enhances student engagement, motivation, and comprehension by expanding opportunities for active participation (Sivarajah et al., 2019). Within Catholic Religious Education specifically, these diverse methods have similarly been found to boost student motivation, learning outcomes, and participation (Oros, 2025; Permana & More, 2025; Rebong & Aprianto, 2024).

Teaching methods themselves represent the approach teachers use to deliver material in pursuit of effective learning outcomes (Sutikno, 2019), functioning as structured, purposeful patterns for shaping students' learning experiences (Joyce et al., 2015); their selection must align with learning objectives, student characteristics, subject matter, and the learning environment for instruction to proceed optimally. Varied teaching methods refer to the rotating or integrated application of multiple methods according to instructional needs, helping teachers sustain a dynamic, engaging, and communicative learning atmosphere that prevents student boredom (Kinanti & Hernawan, 2023; Vercellotti, 2018). Hamalik (2014) emphasizes that such variation is essential for maintaining student attention and motivation, while also allowing teachers to accommodate differences

in students' learning styles—a view supported by [Vaughn and Baker \(2001\)](#), who stress that teachers must understand students' learning needs before selecting appropriate methods, and by [Sivarajah et al. \(2019\)](#), who note that diverse, participatory methods increase engagement, motivation, and understanding by fostering more student-centered learning. Within Catholic Religious Education, varied teaching methods help students grasp the values of faith more deeply through communicative and contextual instruction. [Oros \(2025\)](#) contends that religious education requires a balance between pedagogical tradition and instructional innovation to remain relevant to students' development, and the use of varied methods has consistently been associated with increased motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes ([Al-Said, 2023](#); [Rodriguez-Largacha et al., 2015](#); [Sihotang et al., 2023](#)).

Catholic Religious Education teachers play a vital role in shaping students' moral, spiritual, and character development through the learning process. [Groome \(1998\)](#) describes religious education as a process of faith formation that helps students understand and internalize religious values in daily life. This positions Catholic Religious Education teachers as both instructors and faith companions who model these values for their students.

In fulfilling their roles as educators, guides, facilitators, motivators, and role models, teachers must possess pedagogical, personal, social, professional, and leadership competencies ([Menteri Agama RI, 2010](#)). These competencies form the foundation for designing, implementing, and evaluating learning suited to student needs. Furthermore, [Tibo and Lumban Tobing \(2022\)](#) note that Catholic Religious Education teachers are responsible for shaping student character through active, contextual learning. Therefore, teacher competency becomes a key determinant of whether instruction remains engaging rather than monotonous.

According to [Nelson and Yang \(2023\)](#), teachers' instructional practices are shaped by their understanding of and beliefs about religious education, which in turn influence their choice of strategies and methods. Consequently, Catholic Religious Education teachers are called to build dialogical, reflective, and participatory learning that actively involves students. This view is consistent with [Moran's \(1997\)](#) theory of religious education, which holds that religious instruction must integrate learners' cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Additionally, teachers are expected to adapt to the demands of modern education. However, they continue to face challenges in implementing Catholic Religious Education instruction, particularly regarding pedagogical innovation and curriculum change ([Simbolon et al., 2025](#)). This underscores the need for continued creativity and pedagogical growth to sustain effective, engaging, and relevant instruction.

Learning effectiveness itself reflects the degree to which the instructional process achieves its predetermined objectives ([Sutikno, 2019](#)). It can be accessed through instructional quality, method appropriateness, student engagement, and learning outcomes ([Slavin, 2018](#)). Furthermore, effective learning is marked by an active, interactive atmosphere that optimally supports student development. [Uno \(2016\)](#) attributes learning effectiveness to teachers' capacity to manage the instructional process, select appropriate methods, and foster conducive interaction. He notes that monotonous instruction tends to diminish student

attention and motivation, whereas active student involvement enhances comprehension and the learning experience. Student motivation and engagement are thus critical to the effectiveness of religious education (Aseery, 2024), with instruction that successfully captures student attention and participation tending to produce more meaningful learning experiences. Specifically, studies by Kumanireng et al. (2025) and Sabon et al. (2025) demonstrate that instructional innovation can meaningfully boost student motivation and interest in Catholic Religious Education. Ultimately, Catholic Religious Education effectiveness is measured through students' knowledge acquisition, attitudinal development, moral values, and internalization of faith. This makes it essential for teachers to apply varied, contextual teaching methods that help students better understand the material and live out the values of faith in daily life.

Existing research on Catholic Religious Education instruction has generally concentrated on specific learning models and the use of digital media in religious education, while studies examining the use of varied teaching methods by Catholic Religious Education teachers at the elementary level remain relatively limited. This gap forms the basis for the present study's novelty, which lies in its focus on the combined application of varied teaching methods to optimize learning outcomes. methods to support Catholic Religious Education learning effectiveness at the elementary school level.

Building on this background, the study seeks to address the following questions: 1) What teaching methods are used by Catholic Religious Education teachers in elementary school instruction; 2) How are varied teaching methods applied in the Catholic Religious Education learning process; 3) How does the use of varied teaching methods relate to Catholic Religious Education learning effectiveness; and 4) What challenges do teachers encounter, and what strategies do they employ, in applying varied teaching methods? The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective, dynamic Catholic Religious Education instructional strategies that foster active student participation.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach to describe the use of varied teaching methods by Catholic Religious Education (CRE) teachers in supporting learning effectiveness. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 001 Laham, Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan, from December 2025 to April 2026. The informants consisted of eight individuals: one Catholic Religious Education teacher, one school principal, and six fifth-grade students. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in the process of Catholic Religious Education instruction and their possession of information relevant to the research focus.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation served to directly examine the learning process, the implementation of varied teaching methods, and student participation during instructional activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with the Catholic Religious Education teacher, the school principal, and the students to gather insights regarding the use of teaching methods, instructional effectiveness, the obstacles

encountered, and the strategies employed by the teacher to overcome those obstacles. Finally, documentation supplemented the research data through the review of instructional materials, activity photographs, and other documents relevant to the implementation of Catholic Religious Education instruction.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method, following the interactive model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2018). The analytical process was carried out continuously from the data collection stage until the completion of the study. Data reduction was performed by selecting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data were then presented in narrative form to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the patterns, relationships, and meanings within the data. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying them against the findings obtained in the field.

The validity of the data was examined through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the Catholic Religious Education teacher, the school principal, and the students to ensure the consistency of data regarding the use of varied teaching methods and the effectiveness of learning. Technique triangulation was implemented by comparing data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, so that the information gathered could complement and reinforce each another. The application of these two triangulation techniques was intended to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

## Results

### *Variation in Teachers' Instructional Methods*

The findings indicate that teachers of Catholic Religious Education employed a variety of instructional methods tailored to the nature of the material, the learning objectives, and classroom conditions. These methods included lectures, storytelling, discussions, problem-solving, and library-based literacy activities. Field observations further revealed that teachers combined several methods to make lessons more engaging and comprehensible for students.

According to the interviews, teachers reported that the methods most frequently employed included lecture, storytelling or narrative-experiential approaches, discussion, and problem solving. One teacher (Informant 1) stated, "The methods I most often use are lecture, storytelling or narrative, experiential learning, discussion... essentially, we give them a case, and they work it out themselves, finding the answer on their own." This teacher also noted that method selection was carried out flexibly, taking into account the nature of the material and students' abilities. Observations confirmed that teachers combined lecture, storytelling, and discussion within a single learning session.

Interviews with students reinforced these findings. One student (Informant 2) remarked, "I prefer it when the teacher alternates between different approaches, such as storytelling, discussion, and role play, because varying the methods makes the lesson more exciting and less boring." Another student (Informant 3) likewise noted that the storytelling method made the material easier to understand and remember. These data indicate that the use of varied methods

fosters a more dynamic learning atmosphere and encourages greater student engagement.

These findings suggest that Catholic Religious Education teachers have made deliberate efforts to implement adaptive and creative instruction suited to the needs of elementary school learners. This aligns with [Joyce et al. \(2015\)](#), who argue that learning must build meaningful experience through the active engagement of learners. [Hamalik \(2014\)](#) likewise contends that variation in instructional method is essential for sustaining students' attention and motivation. These findings further corroborate [Kessin et al. \(2025\)](#), who demonstrated that the creativity of Catholic Religious Education teachers plays a significant role in fostering active and enjoyable learning. Pedagogically, the use of varied methods enables teachers to construct more contextualized instruction, thereby helping students more readily grasp the faith values being taught.

### ***Implementation of Varied Methods in Instruction***

Teachers implemented varied instructional methods in a structured manner across each stage of the lesson—introduction, core activities, and closing. Observational data show that, during the introductory stage, teachers established students' readiness to learn through apperception, stimulating questions, and brief explanations linking new material to prior learning experiences. In the core activities, teachers facilitated students' exploration of the material through learning activities that encouraged thinking, discussion, and the articulation of ideas. At the closing stage, teachers guided students in reflecting on the messages and values gained through the lesson. This pattern demonstrates that instruction was systematically designed to help students grasp the material progressively and meaningfully.

Observations further show that teachers sought to connect the material with real situations close to students' lives. This was evident in the lesson on the story of King Solomon, in which students were guided to grasp the meaning of wisdom through problems encountered in daily life. As one teacher (Informant 1) explained, "At the beginning, I usually deliver the material through lecture... then I move into an experiential narrative... then into discussion... and finally the students present their work. This statement indicates that instruction was designed contextually, enabling students not only to grasp the content but also to relate it to relevant lived experiences.

Student engagement throughout the learning process was evident in a range of classroom activities. Observations showed that students actively posed questions, exchanged views with group members, and presented the results of their discussions before the class. This finding was corroborated by an interview with a student (Informant 3), who stated, "It's more fun when the teacher uses many different methods, so we don't get bored." This statement indicates that the use of varied methods afforded students broader opportunities for active engagement in the learning process. The teacher's role thus shifted from being the sole source of information to serving as a facilitator who guided students in constructing understanding through collaborative and reflective learning experiences.

This finding aligns with [Vercellotti \(2018\)](#), who demonstrated that interactive instruction can enhance both student participation and learning achievement. [Singh \(2025\)](#) likewise affirms that active, collaborative pedagogical strategies contribute to greater engagement and comprehension among learners throughout the instructional process. Within the context of Catholic Religious Education, active student engagement is a critical dimension, since instruction is oriented not only toward mastery of content but also toward the formation of attitudes and the internalization of faith values ([Moran, 1997](#); [Oros, 2025](#)). [Fitri et al. \(2026\)](#) explain that the pedagogical competence of Catholic Religious Education teachers plays a vital role in producing instruction that is contextual and relevant to learners' lives. These findings indicate that Catholic Religious Education teachers are able to manage the learning process with due consideration for students' characteristics, learning objectives, and lived experience, as part of a broader effort to cultivate a more meaningful understanding and appropriation of the faith.

### ***The Impact of Varied Methods on Instructional Effectiveness***

The findings reveal a clear relationship between the use of varied instructional methods and increased attention, motivation, and participation among students throughout the learning process. Observations indicate that students were more actively engaged when teachers employed learning activities that involved them directly. Students took part in question-and-answer sessions, group discussions, and other learning activities until the closing stage. This finding was reinforced by an interview with a student (Informant 2), who remarked, "With such varied approaches, I feel more drawn to the lesson and don't get bored easily."

These findings suggest that the use of diverse methods helps create a more dynamic learning atmosphere and fosters greater student involvement in the learning process. This is consistent with [Aseery \(2024\)](#), who found that student engagement in religious education is strongly shaped by the instructional strategies teachers employ. [Rodriguez-Largacha et al. \(2015\)](#) likewise note that participatory learning can enhance students' motivation and engagement in the classroom.

The use of diverse methods was also associated with improved student comprehension of the material. Interview data indicate that students found the material easier to grasp when teachers connected it to everyday experience, provided opportunities for discussion, and involved students in solving problems relevant to their own lives. One student (Informant 3) remarked, "Yes, it helps, because the teacher gives examples, so I can understand how to act in accordance with Jesus' teaching." Another student (Informant 4) stated, "Yes, it helps a great deal... so I can understand the lesson and know how to apply it." Observations further show that students were able to restate what they had learned using examples drawn from their own lives. This finding indicates that varied learning experiences help students develop a deeper understanding of Catholic Religious Education content.

Field observations further reveal that student focus tended to decline when instruction proceeded monotonously, whereas methodological variation helped sustain student concentration throughout the lesson. Students followed each stage of the lesson more effectively when teachers introduced varied learning activities suited to the characteristics of elementary-age learners. This finding indicates that instructional effectiveness is shaped by teachers' ability to select and implement strategies appropriate to students' needs—consistent with [Slavin \(2018\)](#), who argues that instructional effectiveness is influenced by the quality of instruction, learner engagement, and the appropriateness of the strategies employed by the teacher. The findings of [Tibo and Tarigan \(2024\)](#) likewise show that the use of appropriate instructional strategies can support both student engagement and learning outcomes in Catholic Religious Education.

The use of varied methods in Catholic Religious Education instruction is also closely linked to the development of learners' character. Observations show that students demonstrated confidence in expressing their opinions, worked cooperatively in groups, and showed respect for their peers' views throughout the learning process. This finding was reinforced by student interviews indicating that the lessons helped them understand how to apply Christian values in daily life. Consequently, this suggests that Catholic Religious Education instruction supports the internalization of faith values that underlie character formation among learners. This aligns with [Groome \(1998\)](#), who asserts that religious education aims to help learners live out and embody faith values in daily life. [Augustine and Permana \(2024\)](#) similarly explain that meaningful religious instruction contributes to increased learning motivation and character formation among students.

### ***Challenges and Teachers' Strategies***

Although the use of varied instructional methods was found to support instructional effectiveness, teachers continued to face a range of challenges in implementing such methods within Catholic Religious Education instruction. According to the interviews, the primary challenge concerned differences in students' learning abilities. As one teacher (Informant 1) explained, "One obstacle is that students' abilities vary—some grasp things quickly, others do not." This teacher also noted that limited facilities and learning resources posed a further challenge: "Another obstacle is the limited facilities at this school. There is no Bible provided, so we prepare it ourselves, and books are sometimes lacking as well, particularly student textbooks." Observations confirmed that certain students required more intensive guidance than others in following discussions and grasping the material. These findings indicate that the implementation of varied methods demands sound pedagogical skill and classroom management to ensure that all learners receive optimal educational learning opportunities.

Teachers sought to address these challenges by making use of available resources and cultivating creativity in managing instruction. As one teacher (Informant 1) affirmed, "As teachers, we have to be creative. We cannot simply give in to circumstances; we must make use of the resources at hand." This teacher further explained that, when instructional facilities were limited, various alternatives remained available, such as printed materials, laptops, the library, and other simple media to support learning. Observations show that teachers

combined multiple instructional methods and drew on the facilities available at the school to keep students engaged in learning activities. This strategy reflects teachers' capacity to adapt the instructional process to actual field conditions without losing sight of the intended learning objectives.

This finding supports [Sihotang et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that the strategies employed by Catholic Religious Education teachers play a decisive role in enhancing elementary students' learning interest. The challenge of implementing religious education within the framework of the modern curriculum demands that teachers possess creativity and innovative capacity in managing instruction ([Simbolon et al., 2025](#)). This view is reinforced by [Killen and O'Toole \(2023\)](#), who contend that instructional effectiveness depends on teachers' ability to select strategies appropriate to learners' needs. These findings indicate that limitations in facilities or diversity in student characteristics do not necessarily hinder instruction, provided that teachers are able to implement adaptive and creative strategies.

Catholic Religious Education teachers bear a professional responsibility to foster instruction that is active, creative, and meaningful, as affirmed in Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16 of 2010 concerning the Management of Religious Education in Schools. These findings demonstrate that the use of varied instructional methods represents one viable means of accommodating learners' needs while addressing the various challenges that arise during instruction. Teachers' capacity to identify obstacles, make use of available resources, and develop appropriate instructional strategies constitutes an essential component in sustaining the effectiveness of Catholic Religious Education at the elementary level.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that Catholic Religious Education teachers employ a range of teaching methods, including lecturing, storytelling, group discussions, problem-solving, and literacy-based activities, with method selection tailored to student characteristics and intended learning objectives. These findings indicate that Catholic Religious Education teachers have made deliberate efforts to deliver more adaptive and varied instruction suited to the needs of elementary school students. The application of varied teaching methods is carried out flexibly across each stage of the lesson—from the introductory and core activities through to the closing session—as teachers combine different instructional activities to build student engagement, connect the material to students' everyday experiences, and facilitate reflection on the values being taught. This practice reflects teachers' pedagogical competence in managing contextual and meaningful learning.

The study further identifies a clear relationship between the use of varied teaching methods and the effectiveness of Catholic Religious Education instruction. The application of diverse methods is associated with increased student attention, motivation, participation, and comprehension of the material, while also supporting character development and the internalization of faith values in daily life. Nevertheless, teachers continue to encounter several challenges in implementing varied teaching methods, particularly limited instructional media and learning resources, as well as differences in students' abilities. These

challenges are addressed through the use of available learning resources, simple instructional media, the combination of multiple teaching methods, and the adjustment of instructional strategies to suit student needs. Taken together, these findings suggest that varied teaching methods can be regarded as an efficient strategy for supporting the effectiveness of Catholic Religious Education instruction at the elementary school level.

## Recommendations

Catholic Religious Education teachers are encouraged to continue developing their creativity and pedagogical competence through the use of varied, contextual teaching methods aligned with students' developmental needs. Schools are encouraged to support the learning process by providing adequate instructional media, learning resources, and supporting facilities to enable more effective and interactive instruction. Future research is recommended to further explore the use of varied teaching methods across different educational levels and learning contexts, including the integration of digital technology to support Catholic Religious Education instruction.

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