



Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching the Importance of Prayer: A Study of Exodus 29:42 at SDN 11 Langkai

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching the importance of prayer, drawing theological insight from Book of Exodus 29:42. Conducted at SDN 11 Langkai, Palangka Raya, the research focuses on a school community consisting of 290 Christian students and three Christian teachers. The verse's depiction of the "tent of meeting" as a place where God promises to meet and speak with His people provides a theological framework for understanding prayer as relational encounter rather than mere ritual practice. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that professional competence is demonstrated through accurate biblical interpretation, systematic curriculum planning, effective classroom management in large-group settings, interactive and reflective instructional strategies, consistent modeling of prayer, and varied assessment methods. Teachers intentionally integrate theological depth with pedagogical structure, enabling students to understand prayer as an ongoing, personal meeting with God. The study concludes that professionalism in Christian education requires the integration of subject mastery, pedagogical expertise, and spiritual authenticity. When these dimensions converge, classroom instruction on prayer becomes both theologically grounded and experientially meaningful, fostering deeper spiritual awareness among students.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Prayer occupies a central place in Christian theology and practice, functioning as the primary mode of communication between God and believers. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), teaching about prayer is not limited to instructing students in verbal forms or liturgical habits but involves cultivating theological understanding, spiritual

discipline, and relational awareness of God's presence. The theological foundation for such instruction can be illuminated through Book of Exodus 29:42, which describes the regular burnt offering at the entrance of the tent of meeting "where I will meet with you, to speak to you there." This verse underscores the idea of appointed, consistent encounter between God and His people. Prayer, therefore, is framed not merely as human initiative but as a divinely invited meeting grounded in covenant relationship. Old Testament scholarship highlights the significance of Exodus 29 within Israel's worship structure. Brevard S. Childs interprets the "tent of meeting" as a theological symbol of divine accessibility within the covenant framework (Childs, 1974). Similarly, Terence E. Fretheim notes that God's declaration of meeting and speaking with His people reveals relational intentionality at the heart of Israel's worship (Fretheim, 1991). These perspectives suggest that teaching prayer in Christian education should emphasize encounter and relationship rather than ritual formality alone. Prayer is an ongoing rhythm of communion that shapes identity and obedience. Professional competence among CRE teachers plays a decisive role in transmitting this theological depth. Professional competence includes mastery of subject matter, the ability to interpret biblical texts accurately, curriculum development skills, assessment literacy, and ongoing professional development. In the context of religious instruction, such competence must be exercised with theological precision and pedagogical clarity. Teachers who lack exegetical understanding risk reducing prayer to moral instruction or repetitive recitation, while those who integrate biblical scholarship with classroom strategy can guide students toward meaningful spiritual practice. Robert W. Pazmiño argues that Christian educators must combine theological integrity with pedagogical excellence to nurture authentic faith formation (Pazmiño, 2008). Professionalism in this sense is both academic and spiritual.

George R. Knight further explains that Christian teaching must intentionally direct learners toward restored relationship with God, which includes disciplined habits such as prayer (Knight, 2006). From this perspective, professional competence extends beyond lesson preparation to the modeling of spiritual practice. Teachers who teach prayer effectively must themselves demonstrate consistent devotional life, theological clarity, and sensitivity to students' developmental stages. Professionalism therefore involves both content mastery and personal credibility. In the Indonesian educational system, professional competence is one of the four mandated teacher competencies, emphasizing mastery of subject content and continuous development. Within SDN 11 Langkai, Palangka Raya, where 290 Christian students and three Christian teachers form a substantial faith-learning community, the responsibility of teaching prayer carries considerable influence. The size of the student population amplifies the impact of instructional quality. Teachers must navigate large classroom settings while maintaining theological depth and interactive engagement. This context demands structured lesson planning, effective classroom management, and creative strategies to foster participation. Exodus 29:42 provides a compelling theological anchor for exploring how professional competence shapes the teaching of prayer. The text emphasizes regularity ("continual burnt offering"), location ("tent of meeting"), and divine initiative ("I will meet with you"). These elements offer pedagogical parallels: consistency in spiritual discipline, designated spaces for encounter, and recognition of God's active presence. Translating such theological motifs into classroom practice requires professional discernment and

strategic planning. Teachers must determine age-appropriate explanations, integrate Scripture with experiential learning, and evaluate students' understanding beyond rote memorization. Empirical research examining how CRE teachers exercise professional competence in teaching prayer remains limited, particularly in Indonesian primary school contexts. Many discussions focus on spirituality in general without analyzing the interplay between exegetical understanding, curriculum design, and instructional implementation. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how professional competence is enacted by Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 11 Langkai in teaching the importance of prayer through reflection on Exodus 29:42. By examining instructional strategies, theological interpretation, and student responses, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of professionalism in faith-based education. Through this inquiry, the study affirms that teaching prayer effectively requires more than devotional enthusiasm; it demands informed interpretation, structured pedagogy, and reflective practice. When professional competence and theological insight converge, the classroom can become a space that echoes the tent of meeting, an environment where students learn not only about prayer but also to encounter the God who invites them to draw near.

METHODS

A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand how teachers interpret Exodus 29:42, design instructional strategies, and enact professional standards in real classroom contexts rather than to measure numerical outcomes. The case study framework allowed for an in-depth and contextually grounded investigation within a school community consisting of 290 Christian students and three Christian teachers. Given the relatively large number of students and the limited number of Christian teachers, the study focused particularly on how professional competence is exercised to ensure theological clarity and effective learning management in sizable classroom settings. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in Christian Religious Education. The primary participants were the CRE teachers responsible for teaching religious instruction. To enrich the analysis, selected Christian students from upper and middle grade levels were invited to share their learning experiences and perceptions regarding how prayer is taught and practiced in the classroom. This combination of teacher and student perspectives enabled the study to examine both instructional intention and learner reception. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews with teachers explored their theological understanding of Exodus 29:42, lesson planning processes, curriculum alignment, assessment strategies, and professional development experiences related to teaching prayer. Student interviews focused on their understanding of prayer, classroom experiences, and perceived relevance of lessons to their daily spiritual practices. Classroom observations were carried out during CRE sessions that addressed prayer themes, with attention given to instructional methods, teacher explanations, classroom management techniques, student engagement, and integration of Scripture. Detailed field notes were recorded to capture instructional flow, teacher–student interaction patterns, and contextual factors influencing learning. Document analysis included review of lesson plans, syllabi, teaching materials, and assessment instruments to identify how

professional standards were reflected in planning and evaluation processes. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the data. Open coding was conducted to identify key patterns related to exegetical accuracy, curriculum design, pedagogical strategy, classroom management, assessment of spiritual understanding, and modeling of prayer practices. Codes were then grouped into broader themes representing dimensions of professional competence in teaching prayer. Triangulation across data sources enhanced credibility by confirming consistency of findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to verify accuracy and reduce potential bias. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from teacher participants and from parents or guardians of student participants. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, and identifying details were omitted in reporting. Through this qualitative methodological approach, the study sought to provide a trustworthy and comprehensive account of how professional competence shapes the teaching of prayer within a primary school Christian education context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that professional competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 11 Langkai, Palangka Raya, significantly shapes how the importance of prayer is understood, taught, and practiced within the school community. In a context where 290 Christian students are guided by three Christian teachers, professionalism is not merely an administrative requirement but a decisive factor in ensuring theological depth, pedagogical clarity, and classroom effectiveness. Reflection on Book of Exodus 29:42 provided a foundational interpretive lens for teachers, particularly the theological motif of divine encounter at the “tent of meeting.” Teachers consistently emphasized that prayer is not simply a religious routine but an intentional meeting initiated by God, echoing the text’s declaration, “I will meet with you, to speak to you there.” This theological understanding informed both instructional design and classroom practice, demonstrating the integration of exegetical competence with pedagogical execution. One of the most prominent findings concerns teachers’ mastery of biblical interpretation as a core component of professional competence. Interviews revealed that teachers engaged in personal study of Exodus 29:42 prior to classroom instruction, consulting study Bibles, theological commentaries, and denominational teaching guides to ensure doctrinal accuracy. Rather than presenting the verse in isolation, they contextualized it within Israel’s sacrificial system and covenant relationship with God. Classroom observations confirmed that lessons frequently began with historical background explanations, clarifying the function of the tent of meeting and the symbolism of continual offerings. By grounding instruction in biblical context, teachers avoided superficial moralism and instead highlighted relational theology, God’s initiative to dwell among His people. Students responded positively to such structured explanations, expressing that they better understood why prayer matters rather than merely how to perform it. This alignment between content mastery and instructional clarity reflects a strong dimension of professional competence.

Curriculum planning also demonstrated systematic organization. Document analysis of lesson plans showed clear learning objectives aligned with national curriculum standards while integrating spiritual outcomes. Objectives typically included cognitive targets such as “students explain the meaning of Exodus 29:42” alongside affective goals such as “students demonstrate awareness of prayer as a personal encounter with God.” Teachers structured lessons into sequential stages: biblical exposition, guided discussion, practical application, and reflective prayer activity. Such organization was particularly important given the large student population. Observations indicated that teachers managed classroom flow efficiently, using structured time allocations and clear instructions to maintain engagement. Professional competence in classroom management enabled spiritual themes to be communicated effectively without disorder or distraction. Another significant theme emerging from the data is the integration of modeling within professional practice. Teachers consistently described prayer not only as a subject to be taught but as a habit to be exemplified. Observations showed that CRE teachers began classes with sincere and thoughtfully structured prayers rather than perfunctory recitations. The tone of these prayers reflected theological depth, often referencing God’s presence and covenant faithfulness in language drawn from Exodus. Students reported that hearing teachers pray with understanding helped them perceive prayer as meaningful and relational. This modeling function aligns with the professional expectation that teachers embody the values they instruct. In this context, professionalism includes personal credibility and authenticity. Student interviews revealed a growing conceptual understanding of prayer as dialogue rather than monologue. Many students articulated that prayer involves listening as well as speaking, reflecting the Exodus theme of divine speech within the meeting place. Such responses suggest that professional instruction successfully translated biblical theology into accessible language. Teachers employed analogies appropriate for primary school learners, comparing the tent of meeting to a designated place of conversation within a family home. These contextualized illustrations enhanced comprehension and retention. Professional competence was evident in teachers’ ability to adapt theological concepts to developmental levels without distorting meaning. The study also found that assessment strategies reflected professional intentionality. Rather than relying solely on written tests, teachers incorporated reflective journals, oral sharing, and group presentations in which students described personal experiences of prayer. These varied assessment forms allowed evaluation of both cognitive and experiential learning. Teachers reported that such formative assessments provided insight into students’ spiritual engagement and helped adjust instructional methods accordingly. The use of diverse assessment tools demonstrates professional literacy in evaluating complex learning outcomes, particularly those related to faith and spiritual growth.

Classroom observations further highlighted effective use of interactive pedagogy. Teachers facilitated small group discussions where students explored questions such as “Why does God invite us to meet Him?” and “How can we prepare our hearts for prayer?” These collaborative settings encouraged peer learning and mutual reflection. Despite the large number of students, teachers implemented rotational group systems to ensure participation. Such strategies reveal adaptive competence, balancing logistical challenges with educational goals. Students expressed appreciation for being actively involved rather

than merely listening. Engagement levels were notably high during experiential segments of lessons, such as guided silent prayer or dramatization of the tent of meeting narrative. A recurring theme in interviews was the emphasis on consistency, reflecting the “continual offering” described in Exodus 29:42. Teachers encouraged daily prayer habits and integrated brief prayer moments throughout the school day, not limiting prayer to CRE periods. This consistent practice reinforced theological understanding with routine discipline. Students reported becoming more intentional in praying at home, suggesting transfer of learning beyond the classroom. The professional capacity to design routines that support spiritual formation demonstrates long-term pedagogical vision rather than episodic instruction. Discussion of these findings suggests that professional competence in teaching prayer involves a multidimensional synthesis of exegetical knowledge, curricular alignment, instructional strategy, classroom management, modeling, and assessment literacy. Teachers at SDN 11 Langkai demonstrated awareness that theological precision safeguards instructional integrity. By grounding lessons in the historical and covenantal context of Exodus 29:42, they preserved doctrinal coherence while translating meaning into age-appropriate language. This careful integration reflects the essence of professionalism in faith-based education.

The scale of the student body magnified the importance of structured planning. Managing 290 Christian students across multiple grade levels required clear scheduling, resource allocation, and coordinated collaboration among the three Christian teachers. Interviews revealed regular planning meetings to ensure thematic coherence and mutual support. Such collegial professionalism strengthened instructional consistency and prevented fragmentation of spiritual messaging. Students benefited from unified emphasis on prayer across grade levels, reinforcing learning continuity. The discussion also underscores the relational dimension of professional competence. Teachers’ respectful demeanor, attentive listening, and willingness to address students’ questions fostered trust. Students indicated feeling comfortable discussing personal prayer struggles, demonstrating that professionalism creates safe spaces for spiritual exploration. In this sense, professional competence transcends technical skill; it cultivates relational trust necessary for authentic faith dialogue. Teachers responded with creative solutions, such as integrating prayer themes into extracurricular activities and school assemblies. Their commitment to ongoing professional development, participating in workshops and engaging in peer learning, reflects dedication to growth. Professional competence is thus dynamic rather than static, requiring continual refinement. In evaluating overall impact, qualitative evidence suggests that structured, theologically informed instruction enhanced students’ appreciation for prayer as relational encounter. Many students articulated understanding that prayer is not merely asking for help but meeting with God who desires communication. This shift from transactional to relational perception reflects successful pedagogical implementation of Exodus 29:42’s theological vision. Professional competence at SDN 11 Langkai enables CRE teachers to translate biblical theology into meaningful educational practice. Through accurate interpretation, systematic planning, interactive pedagogy, credible modeling, and diverse assessment, teachers create learning environments that mirror the tent of meeting, a structured yet relational space where students learn to approach God intentionally. The findings affirm that

professionalism in Christian education is indispensable for sustaining theological depth and pedagogical effectiveness in teaching the importance of prayer.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that professional competence plays a decisive role in shaping how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 11 Langkai, Palangka Raya, teach the importance of prayer. Grounded in theological reflection on Book of Exodus 29:42, teachers demonstrated that prayer is best understood not merely as religious routine but as an intentional encounter initiated by God. Their ability to interpret Scripture accurately, contextualize its meaning, and translate it into age-appropriate instruction reflects strong mastery of subject matter and pedagogical skill. The findings show that professional competence is expressed through structured lesson planning, effective classroom management in large student settings, interactive and reflective teaching strategies, consistent modeling of prayer practices, and diverse assessment methods that evaluate both understanding and engagement. The integration of theological depth with instructional clarity enabled students to perceive prayer as relational dialogue rather than mechanical recitation. Moreover, collaboration among the three Christian teachers reinforced coherence in spiritual messaging across grade levels, strengthening continuity in faith formation. Teaching the importance of prayer requires more than spiritual enthusiasm; it demands informed exegesis, strategic curriculum design, and reflective professional practice. When professional competence is exercised with theological intentionality, the classroom becomes a structured space of encounter, an educational reflection of the “tent of meeting” where students are guided not only to learn about prayer but to experience its significance in their daily lives.

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