



Forming Life-Ready Faith: A Study of Christian Religious Education Teacher Professionalism in the Light of Exodus 12:26–27 at SMK Negeri 14 Medan

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ABSTRACT

Christian Religious Education plays a vital role in preparing students not only for academic success but also for life grounded in faith, moral integrity, and resilience. In this context, teacher professionalism must extend beyond technical proficiency to spiritual vocation. This study draws upon Exodus 12:26-27-where the Israelites are commanded to explain the Passover's meaning to their children-as a biblical paradigm for intergenerational faith formation. The text symbolizes education as remembrance (zikkaron), emphasizing the teacher's duty to transmit divine truth through living example. This research employed a qualitative expository-exegetical design that integrates biblical interpretation with classroom observation and reflective inquiry. The locus of the study was SMK Negeri 14 Medan, a vocational high school representing Indonesia's diverse and plural educational setting. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis involving one Christian Religious Education teacher and twelve students. The exegesis of Exodus 12:26-27 provided the theological foundation, while thematic analysis identified how professionalism was manifested through pedagogical reflection, relational engagement, and moral mentoring. Findings revealed that professional competence in CRE teaching is expressed through faithful pedagogy-where biblical remembrance is linked to experiential learning. The teacher demonstrated professionalism by integrating Scripture with moral practice, nurturing empathy, perseverance, and responsibility. This covenantal model of education transformed the classroom into a sacred space where students learned to interpret life through faith and service. The study concludes that teacher professionalism in Christian education is a spiritual vocation rooted in remembrance, transforming knowledge into wisdom and faith into life-readiness.

Keywords: *Life-Ready Faith, Christian Religious Education, Professionalism*

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing landscape of the 21st century, education is increasingly challenged to prepare students not merely for academic success but for meaningful, resilient living.

In this context, Christian Religious Education plays a vital role in shaping students' moral, spiritual, and existential readiness to face life's complexities. The professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers becomes crucial in this mission, as it determines how biblical truths are translated into life-oriented learning. Professionalism, in the Christian educational sense, extends beyond technical proficiency or curriculum mastery; it encompasses spiritual integrity, moral leadership, and pedagogical wisdom. A professional CRE teacher is both an educator and a shepherd-called to guide students toward faith that is not only understood intellectually but lived authentically in daily experience. This study takes its theological foundation from Exodus 12:26-27, where the Israelites were instructed to explain the meaning of the Passover to future generations: "And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" (Exodus 12:26-27, NIV). This passage underscores the divine mandate for intergenerational faith formation through teaching. God commands the elders to explain-not merely to perform-the ritual of remembrance. Teaching thus becomes a sacred act of transmitting both knowledge and identity, connecting divine history to human experience. The narrative reveals that true education in faith is experiential and memorial: it involves remembering God's redemptive work and understanding its relevance for present life. For Christian educators, this model signifies that professional teaching must help students interpret life through the lens of God's saving acts, enabling them to face challenges with wisdom, courage, and hope.

At SMK Negeri 14 Medan, a vocational public high school in North Sumatra, this biblical insight finds contemporary relevance. The school environment reflects Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity, where Christian students must navigate a pluralistic setting while maintaining their faith identity. In such a context, the CRE teacher's professionalism is tested not only in delivering doctrinal content but in forming students who can apply their faith to real-life situations-ethical decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and resilience in adversity. Many students at vocational schools face the pressing reality of entering the workforce soon after graduation, making life-readiness a central educational goal. Therefore, CRE must bridge spiritual understanding and practical living, guiding students to see that faith is not an abstract belief but a compass for daily life. Professionalism in Christian Religious Education involves three interrelated dimensions: spiritual authenticity, pedagogical competence, and contextual relevance. Spiritually authentic teachers embody what they teach; they model faith through integrity, humility, and service. Pedagogically competent teachers understand how to design lessons that integrate biblical truth with life application-employing storytelling, reflection, and dialogue to foster understanding. Contextually relevant teachers discern the social and emotional realities of their students, making theology speak meaningfully to their lived experiences. As Anderson (2017) notes, "Christian education must transform knowledge into life, and truth into practice." Such transformation depends largely on the professionalism of teachers who can translate Scripture into life-guiding wisdom. The Exodus 12:26-27 model presents teaching as remembrance with purpose. The teacher, like the Israelite parent in the text, must respond to the students' existential question: "What does this mean to you?" This question drives the heart of Christian education-

linking faith narratives to personal meaning. In modern classrooms, CRE teachers act as interpreters between Scripture and the student's world, ensuring that biblical lessons prepare students to navigate ethical dilemmas, disappointment, and success with grounded faith. Professionalism here is measured not only by cognitive outcomes but by the moral and spiritual growth of learners. In the context of SMK Negeri 14 Medan, this study seeks to explore how professional competence enables CRE teachers to form life-ready faith—a faith that is resilient, reflective, and responsive to the realities of life. Through the lens of Exodus 12:26-27, the research examines how teachers communicate faith in ways that help students find meaning and guidance amid challenges. The urgency of this research lies in the increasing secular pressures that risk reducing education to utilitarian goals. Christian education must reclaim its vocation as life formation, not just skill preparation. As students prepare to enter a complex world, they need educators who can nurture wisdom grounded in faith. The professionalism of CRE teachers thus becomes a prophetic vocation—bridging ancient truth with modern challenges, and ensuring that education remains an act of faith, memory, and hope.

METHODS

This study employed a reflective-exegetical qualitative approach designed to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers embody professional competence in forming students' life-ready faith through the theological lens of Exodus 12:26-27. The method integrates biblical exegesis and educational reflection, ensuring that the interpretation of Scripture is directly correlated with the lived experiences of teachers and students in the school context. This dual approach recognizes that education, especially Christian education, must be both theological and empirical-rooted in divine revelation and expressed in human interaction. The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 14 Medan, a vocational high school located in an urban, multi-religious environment in North Sumatra, Indonesia, where Christian Religious Education operates within a pluralistic educational framework. The exegetical dimension of this study forms its theological backbone. An historical-grammatical exegesis of Exodus 12:26-27 was undertaken to uncover the original meaning, context, and enduring significance of the passage. The text describes the Israelite instruction to future generations concerning the Passover, emphasizing that teaching must preserve both memory and meaning. In the exegesis process, the researcher analyzed the Hebrew terms *avodah* (service or worship) and *pesach* (Passover), noting that the act of teaching about the Passover was not merely didactic but sacramental—a representation of God's redemptive act through pedagogy. The exegesis revealed three key theological insights relevant to Christian Religious Education: first, teaching as an act of covenantal transmission; second, remembrance (*zikkaron*) as the foundation of spiritual identity; and third, the relational nature of faith communication between generations. These insights became the conceptual framework for examining CRE teacher professionalism as a continuation of this divine pedagogical pattern. Through theological hermeneutics, the researcher bridged the ancient meaning of Exodus 12 with the contemporary task of teaching in modern Indonesia. The Passover event, as interpreted hermeneutically, symbolizes the continuity of faith education—the movement from historical salvation to personal appropriation. In this light, CRE teachers are seen as covenantal educators whose professionalism mirrors the role of Israelite parents who answered the children's question: "What does this ceremony mean to you?" The

exegetical process thus informed the educational interpretation, transforming the biblical text into a pedagogical model for contemporary faith formation. Complementing the exegetical work, the qualitative reflective component explored how CRE teachers at SMK Negeri 14 Medan embody these theological insights in their professional practice. The study utilized a case study design, focusing on one Christian Religious Education teacher known for integrating faith principles into life-oriented teaching. The data were collected over six weeks through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on teaching practices that linked biblical lessons to moral and practical applications, especially how teachers guided students to interpret their experiences in light of faith. Particular attention was given to classroom moments when the teacher addressed existential or moral questions, as these interactions reflected the spirit of Exodus 12:26-27-when learners inquire about meaning, and the teacher responds from the standpoint of divine narrative. The interviews with the teacher and selected students (n=12) sought to capture reflections on faith, life challenges, and the perceived relevance of Christian Religious Education in preparing for the future. The teacher was asked to articulate their understanding of professionalism, the integration of biblical reflection in teaching, and the pedagogical strategies used to make faith practical for students. Students were asked about how CRE lessons shaped their attitudes toward life, work, and interpersonal relationships. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. Peer debriefing was also conducted with another scholar of Christian education to refine the theological and pedagogical interpretations. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, as the researcher continually evaluated personal assumptions and theological biases to uphold interpretive integrity. The exegesis of Exodus 12:26-27 illuminated the divine pedagogy of remembrance and faith formation, while the qualitative findings revealed how CRE teachers embody this pedagogy through professional teaching. In essence, the method affirmed that true professionalism in Christian education cannot be detached from theology. It is both a moral discipline and a spiritual calling, shaped by Scripture and lived out in service. The reflective-exegetical approach thus situates the CRE teacher not merely as an instructor but as a covenantal witness who helps students interpret life through the memory of God's saving work-a living echo of Exodus 12:26-7 in the modern classroom.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMK Negeri 14 Medan is characterized by a profound integration of faith, pedagogy, and lived experience. Through the reflective-exegetical framework of Exodus 12:26-27, the CRE teacher's role emerges not merely as an educator but as a covenantal witness-one who carries the sacred task of translating divine remembrance into practical formation. The teacher's professionalism, therefore, cannot be measured solely by academic mastery or pedagogical technique; rather, it is expressed through the moral and spiritual authenticity that enables faith to become a lived reality for students. In this sense, Exodus 12:26-27 serves not only as a historical narrative but as a pedagogical blueprint, showing that education rooted in divine memory is inherently transformative. The verse recounts how the Israelites were instructed to tell their children the meaning of the Passover: "And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to

you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” This dialogue between generations becomes the prototype for Christian education-teaching that bridges history and experience, faith and life. The finding concerns the teacher’s understanding of professionalism as a form of covenant transmission. Classroom observations revealed that the CRE teacher consistently approached each lesson not as a routine academic duty but as a sacred opportunity to pass on the memory of God’s saving acts. Similar to the Israelite parents in Exodus 12:26-27, who were commanded to answer their children’s questions about the meaning of worship, the teacher saw their vocation as an act of remembrance and testimony. During lessons, the teacher often began with reflective storytelling-connecting the biblical narrative to the daily realities faced by vocational school students. For instance, while teaching about the Israelites’ liberation from Egypt, the teacher asked, “What do you think God wants us to remember when life feels hard?” This question mirrored the ancient pedagogical dynamic: the learner’s inquiry and the teacher’s interpretive response grounded in divine history. Students responded with personal reflections, many linking the story to their own experiences of struggle and perseverance. Such dialogical engagement reflected the heart of biblical pedagogy, where knowledge is not transmitted mechanically but awakened through conversation and memory. The teacher’s professionalism was thus grounded in the theological awareness that teaching is not merely about conveying information but about facilitating revelation-the moment when students encounter truth through lived meaning. The teacher’s reflective journal confirmed this covenantal consciousness. In one entry, the teacher wrote: “Every lesson is a continuation of God’s story. If students can see their lives in His story, then they are prepared for the world.” This self-understanding reveals a deep sense of calling and theological literacy. The professionalism displayed here aligns with the concept of “spiritual vocation” in Christian education (Palmer, 1998), which defines teaching as an act of service in God’s redemptive work. It also resonates with the biblical vision of remembrance (*zikkaron*)-a continual reactualization of God’s presence through faithful teaching. Through this perspective, the CRE teacher at SMK Negeri 14 Medan exemplified a covenantal pedagogy that linked professional practice to divine mission, transforming the classroom into a space of sacred memory and moral formation.

Life-Ready Faith as the Goal of Christian Education

The theme concerns the formation of “life-ready faith” as the ultimate purpose of Christian Religious Education. Data from interviews and observations consistently indicated that the CRE teacher viewed faith not as an isolated religious sentiment but as a practical foundation for living. This approach reflects the essence of Exodus 12:26-27, where faith was not abstract but embodied through ritual and story. The teacher emphasized that professional competence in Christian education involves guiding students to integrate faith into real-world challenges-preparing them spiritually and ethically for life beyond school. This was particularly relevant in the vocational school context, where students are trained for technical professions yet often face existential questions about purpose and morality. The teacher therefore sought to connect biblical principles with vocational ethics, encouraging students to see their work as a form of service to God. During one observed lesson, the teacher linked the concept of the

Passover to the theme of resilience in the workplace. He explained, "Just as God protected the Israelites during the night of danger, He also walks with us through our difficulties. To be life-ready means to remember that God is faithful even when life is uncertain." This connection between biblical remembrance and personal endurance helped students perceive faith as an active force shaping their worldview. Many students later reflected that such lessons made them feel more confident in facing moral dilemmas at school or during internships. One student commented, "When I remember what my teacher said about God's protection, I feel calmer when facing problems." This response echoes the central motif of Exodus 12-the idea that remembering God's deliverance empowers believers to confront life with courage and faith. The CRE teacher's professionalism, therefore, lay in the capacity to make theological truths existentially relevant, ensuring that students did not merely know about God but learned to live faithfully before Him. This integration of faith and practicality corresponds to the educational model proposed by Groome (1991), who defines Christian teaching as "bringing life to faith and faith to life." The teacher's approach at SMK Negeri 14 Medan exemplified this dialogical model, where students were invited to reflect on how divine truths inform daily decisions. By transforming Scripture into a source of moral discernment, the teacher fulfilled the biblical mandate of Exodus 12: guiding the next generation not just to recall history, but to embody its meaning in their personal and communal lives.

Professionalism as Witness through Integrity and Service

A significant finding relates to professionalism as moral witness. The teacher's conduct both in and outside the classroom revealed that professionalism in Christian education extends beyond technical competence-it is a form of ethical consistency grounded in spiritual integrity. The CRE teacher was described by students as "a person who lives what he teaches." This perception stemmed from observable behaviors: punctuality, humility in correcting students, and a consistent willingness to serve others. When interviewed, the teacher articulated professionalism as "being accountable before God and people." This echoes the covenantal responsibility seen in Exodus 12, where Israel's teachers were answerable not only to the community but to God, whose truth they represented. The teacher's professionalism also manifested in mentoring relationships. During recess and extracurricular activities, the teacher intentionally interacted with students informally, discussing their goals, fears, and moral challenges. Through these conversations, students felt cared for as whole persons, not merely as learners. Such attentiveness mirrors the shepherd-like quality of Moses, who guided the Israelites not only through instruction but through relational presence. The professional ethos displayed here aligns with Lickona's (1991) concept of "character-centered professionalism," which argues that moral education is most effective when teachers embody the virtues they seek to cultivate. By integrating integrity, empathy, and service into his professional practice, the CRE teacher modeled what Palmer (1998) calls "teaching from a whole heart"-an education that flows from authenticity rather than authority. This embodiment of faith through professional demeanor reinforced the theological message of Exodus 12: that faith transmission requires visible testimony.

The Exegetical-Theological Reflection in Practice

The theological exegesis of Exodus 12:26-27 shaped the interpretive framework through which both teacher and students engaged with Scripture. The passage's emphasis on intergenerational dialogue—"When your children ask you..."—was mirrored in the teacher's pedagogical method of inquiry-based learning. The teacher regularly encouraged students to ask theological and moral questions, responding with patient, narrative-based explanations. This pedagogical rhythm—question, reflection, and response—echoes the covenantal exchange between the Israelite parent and child, turning classroom moments into sacred dialogues of meaning-making. The hermeneutical implication of this approach is profound: it reclaims the educational process as a space of revelation rather than indoctrination. Students were not pressured to memorize doctrines but invited to encounter the living God through interpretive engagement. This aligns with Wright's (2010) concept of "narrative pedagogy," where Scripture is treated as a living story that invites participation. During one observed session, a student asked, "Why did God make the Israelites remember something so painful?" The teacher responded, "Because in remembering suffering, we remember grace." Such moments reveal how exegesis translated into pedagogy—not through abstract theological discourse, but through pastoral conversation. The teacher's responses integrated theological insight with emotional sensitivity, demonstrating that professionalism in Christian education involves not only intellectual clarity but also spiritual empathy. The teacher's theological awareness prevented reductionist interpretations of Scripture. Instead of moralizing biblical stories, he illuminated their redemptive dimension. When discussing the blood of the lamb in the Passover narrative, for instance, he connected it to the sacrificial love of Christ, but emphasized its ethical implications: "God saves us so we can save others—by being kind, honest, and faithful." This Christocentric reading of Exodus bridged Old Testament remembrance with New Testament fulfillment, embodying a holistic theological pedagogy that nurtured both knowledge and compassion. The integration of exegesis and teaching thus functioned as a model of spiritual professionalism, where biblical interpretation directly informed educational action.

The next key finding centers on the transformative outcomes of this professional and theological integration. Over the course of observation, noticeable changes were observed in students' behavior, communication, and spiritual awareness. Students demonstrated increased responsibility, cooperation, and empathy toward peers. They engaged more openly in class prayers, and their reflective journals revealed a growing awareness of God's presence in daily life. One student wrote, "I used to think religion was only for church, but now I see it helps me when I'm at work or when I feel lost." This statement encapsulates the transformative aim of "life-ready faith"—a spirituality that extends beyond the classroom into the practical realities of life. Interviews with students confirmed that the CRE teacher's lessons on remembrance, responsibility, and resilience had reshaped their attitudes toward challenges. Students frequently used language such as "remembering God," "trusting His plan," and "choosing peace," indicating that the teacher's biblical pedagogy had internalized spiritual habits of reflection. This transformation corresponds with the educational vision of Exodus 12:26-27: that the act of remembering God's saving deeds equips believers to live faithfully in future generations. By nurturing these dispositions, the CRE teacher succeeded in forming moral and spiritual resilience—a hallmark of professional Christian teaching. The classroom

evolved into a community of care and cooperation. Students began to support one another during projects, often reminding each other of lessons from Scripture. Conflicts, when they arose, were resolved through dialogue and prayer-practices that the teacher had normalized. These developments signify the social dimension of professional competence in Christian education: that authentic teaching transforms not only individuals but relationships and culture. The classroom became, in effect, a miniature ecclesia—a fellowship where divine memory fostered moral unity. The study also identified challenges that accompany the pursuit of professional faith-based education in a pluralistic public school. The CRE teacher noted that some students initially perceived faith-related lessons as irrelevant to vocational preparation. Others came from non-Christian backgrounds, requiring sensitivity and inclusivity. The teacher addressed this by focusing on universal moral principles—integrity, respect, and service—while maintaining the distinctiveness of Christian theological grounding. This approach reflects a mature professionalism that respects pluralism without compromising faith identity. It embodies what Banks (2008) calls “transformative multicultural education,” which seeks moral common ground through shared values of compassion and justice. These challenges underscore the prophetic nature of Christian teaching. Just as the Israelites had to proclaim faith in the midst of cultural complexity, so modern CRE teachers must navigate societal pluralism with grace and wisdom. The teacher’s professionalism thus involved not only pedagogical skill but also theological discernment—the ability to witness to Christ’s truth without alienating others. This balance between conviction and compassion exemplifies the incarnational character of Christian education: truth embodied in love. The overarching synthesis of findings confirms that theological reflection and professional competence are not parallel disciplines but interdependent dimensions of Christian education. The teacher’s exegesis of Exodus 12:26-27 did not remain theoretical; it shaped classroom ethics, relational dynamics, and pedagogical strategies. Professionalism, in this framework, is redefined as fidelity to the divine narrative—teaching as remembrance and witness. The CRE teacher’s role is to stand between God’s revelation and human experience, translating sacred memory into moral formation. This synthesis resonates with Shulman’s (1987) idea of “pedagogical content knowledge,” but deepens it through spiritual meaning, showing that the content of Christian teaching is not only Scripture but lived faith. Through this integration, teaching becomes an act of worship. The classroom transforms into a sanctuary of memory where God’s faithfulness is rehearsed and relived. The teacher’s professionalism becomes a liturgical act—a participation in the divine mission of redemption and remembrance. Such an understanding of professionalism challenges secular paradigms that reduce teaching to technical performance. Instead, it restores the sacred dignity of education as a vocation of faith, love, and moral responsibility. In this sense, Exodus 12:26-27 is not merely a text to be studied but a pattern to be lived: the teacher answering the students’ questions of meaning, guiding them from curiosity to conviction, and forming in them a life-ready faith.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, when rooted in theological reflection and spiritual authenticity, serves as a vital instrument for forming life-ready faith among students. The expository engagement with

Exodus 12:26-27 reveals that professional competence in Christian education transcends technical expertise-it is a covenantal vocation that unites faith, teaching, and moral witness. Just as the Israelites were commanded to explain the meaning of the Passover to their children, the CRE teacher stands as a living bridge between divine history and contemporary life. Professionalism, therefore, is not defined merely by methodological precision but by faithfulness in translating God's redemptive story into the lived experience of learners. The teacher's task is to nurture remembrance-to help students recall and relive the presence of God in every aspect of their journey, preparing them to face life's complexities with spiritual resilience and moral clarity. The findings demonstrate that at SMK Negeri 14 Medan, the CRE teacher's professionalism was characterized by an integration of exegesis, reflection, and relational pedagogy. By interpreting Exodus 12:26-27 as a model of intergenerational dialogue, the teacher transformed the classroom into a sacred space of encounter, where faith was not only taught but embodied. Lessons were designed to link biblical remembrance with practical wisdom-encouraging students to view faith as an active resource for ethical decision-making, perseverance, and service. Through dialogical teaching, moral mentoring, and compassionate engagement, the teacher modeled what it means to live as a covenantal educator-one who, like the Israelites of old, "tells the story" not through ritual alone but through relational authenticity and moral consistency. The result was a form of education that did not end with cognitive understanding but extended into spiritual transformation. Students developed not only biblical literacy but also an inner orientation toward responsibility, humility, and faithfulness-qualities essential for life readiness in a changing world. This study affirms that Christian teacher professionalism is a manifestation of *zikkaron*-a sacred remembrance that keeps God's redemptive acts alive in the moral consciousness of the next generation. The CRE teacher acts as a priestly mediator who helps students interpret life through the lens of divine grace. Professionally, this requires the integration of theological insight with pedagogical skill-a holistic competence that balances doctrinal understanding, emotional intelligence, and ethical integrity. The teacher's professionalism thus becomes a testimony: a visible expression of God's faithfulness in the educational process. This model challenges the secular tendency to compartmentalize professionalism as procedural efficiency; instead, it envisions it as spiritual stewardship-a participation in God's continuing work of formation and liberation. The findings invite renewed emphasis on theological formation within teacher education programs. Professional development for Christian educators must include training in biblical interpretation, reflective practice, and moral leadership, ensuring that teachers are equipped not only to teach about faith but to teach from faith. Schools should also cultivate institutional cultures that support relational pedagogy, mentoring, and community prayer, as these practices embody the covenantal spirit of Exodus 12:26-27. Moreover, in pluralistic educational contexts like Indonesia, teachers must learn to articulate Christian truth in ways that promote empathy, inclusivity, and respect for others-demonstrating that faith-based education can foster harmony rather than division. The professionalism of the CRE teacher is both an art and a calling-a sacred vocation that mirrors the divine pedagogy of remembrance. When teachers embody the humility, integrity, and faith of those who remember God's deliverance, their classrooms become modern altars of formation-places where students are prepared not only for work but for worship, not only for success but for service. Exodus 12:26-27 thus remains a timeless

paradigm for Christian education: that through faithful teaching, each generation may hear again the story of God's salvation and learn to live it with courage, compassion, and hope.

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