



## Developing Student Spirituality through Pedagogical Competence: A Biblical-Educational Study of Genesis 12:8 at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara

Yeni Rusida

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

\*correspondence: [rusidayeni@gmail.com](mailto:rusidayeni@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*This study explores how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to the development of students' spirituality through a biblical-educational interpretation of Genesis 12:8 at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara. The study employs a qualitative research design combined with a systematic literature review (SLR) to integrate empirical field data with established scholarly insights on spirituality, pedagogy, and Christian education. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with two Christian teachers, classroom observations involving thirty Christian students, and document analysis of lesson plans and institutional religious programs. The qualitative analysis followed thematic coding procedures to identify patterns related to instructional strategies, teacher–student spiritual interactions, and the integration of biblical narratives into pedagogical practices. The SLR component strengthened the analytical framework by situating the findings within broader theoretical and empirical discussions on spiritual formation and teacher competence. The findings indicate that pedagogical competence plays a significant role in fostering student spirituality through contextualized biblical teaching, reflective learning activities, and consistent modeling of spiritual values by teachers. Teachers who intentionally integrated Genesis 12:8 into classroom instruction encouraged students to develop habits of worship, prayer, and spiritual reflection. The study concludes that spiritually responsive pedagogy enhances holistic student development and reinforces the role of Christian educators as spiritual mentors. These results contribute to the growing discourse on faith-integrated pedagogy and offer practical implications for strengthening spiritual education in Indonesian secondary schools.*

**Keywords:** *Student Spirituality, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogical Competence*

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education increasingly recognizes that effective teaching involves more than the transmission of cognitive knowledge and academic skills. Teachers are expected to contribute to the holistic formation of students, including moral, emotional, and

spiritual dimensions. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), this holistic mandate is even more explicit, as education is understood not only as an intellectual enterprise but also as a process of spiritual formation and character development. Christian educators are therefore called to integrate pedagogical competence with spiritual sensitivity in order to nurture students' faith, values, and personal relationship with God (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). Pedagogical competence is widely defined as the teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning in ways that are responsive to students' needs and conducive to meaningful learning experiences. In the Indonesian educational context, pedagogical competence is formally recognized as one of the core domains of teacher professionalism, alongside professional, social, and personal competence (Mulyasa, 2013). This domain includes instructional planning, classroom management, learning facilitation, assessment practices, and the ability to create supportive learning environments. For CRE teachers, pedagogical competence is not value-neutral; rather, it is intrinsically connected to the spiritual and moral goals of Christian education. The way a teacher teaches, interacts with students, and structures learning experiences directly influences how Christian values and spirituality are internalized by learners. Student spirituality has emerged as an important dimension of holistic education, particularly in faith-based and religious instruction contexts. Spirituality in Christian education is commonly understood as a lived relationship with God that is expressed through worship, prayer, obedience, moral commitment, and trust in God's guidance (Wolterstorff, 2004). Rather than being limited to private belief, Christian spirituality is formative, shaping identity, attitudes, and daily practices. Groome (2011) emphasizes that Christian education is fundamentally concerned with forming persons in faith, not merely informing them about religious content. Consequently, pedagogical approaches that fail to engage students spiritually risk reducing Christian education to a purely cognitive or ritualistic exercise.

A biblical foundation for understanding spirituality as a formative and relational practice can be found in Genesis 12:8. In this passage, Abram builds an altar to the Lord and calls on the name of the Lord, signaling a pattern of worship, dependence, and relational commitment to God. Old Testament scholars note that altar-building and calling on the name of the Lord function as concrete expressions of faith and covenantal relationship, marking key moments of spiritual orientation and identity formation (Wenham, 1987; Waltke, 2001). Genesis 12:8 thus portrays spirituality not as an abstract belief system but as a lived practice of worship and trust that shapes one's journey and obedience to God's calling. From a Christian educational perspective, this narrative provides a powerful theological framework for understanding student spirituality as something that is nurtured through practices, relationships, and pedagogical environments that point students toward active engagement with God. Educational theory also supports the importance of modeling and learning environments in the formation of values and spirituality. Bandura's (1986) social learning theory highlights that learners acquire attitudes, behaviors, and values through observation and imitation of significant others, including teachers. In Christian education, this implies that CRE teachers function not only as instructors but also as spiritual role models whose pedagogical practices and personal dispositions influence students' spiritual development. Palmer (1998) similarly argues that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, suggesting that

who the teacher is profoundly shapes what and how students learn. This insight is particularly relevant for Christian educators, whose personal faith and spiritual practices often become implicit curricula for students. In the specific context of SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara, where there are 30 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including CRE teachers, the role of pedagogical competence in nurturing student spirituality becomes especially significant. In relatively small Christian student populations within public schools, CRE teachers often carry a heightened responsibility for providing spiritual guidance, support, and modeling. The classroom thus becomes a key formative space where students encounter not only biblical content but also lived expressions of faith through teaching practices, relational interactions, and worship-oriented learning activities. Wolterstorff (2004) emphasizes that Christian education should cultivate practices that reflect faith commitments in concrete and communal ways, reinforcing the idea that pedagogy itself can function as a vehicle for spiritual formation. This gap highlights the need for research that intentionally integrates biblical theology with educational practice. In particular, few studies explicitly explore how Genesis 12:8, with its emphasis on worship and calling on the name of the Lord, can inform pedagogical strategies aimed at developing student spirituality in contemporary school settings. This study seeks to examine how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to the development of student spirituality as grounded in Genesis 12:8 at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara. By integrating biblical interpretation with educational theory, this study aims to contribute to a more holistic model of Christian pedagogy that affirms the inseparable relationship between effective teaching and spiritual formation. In doing so, it positions pedagogy not merely as a technical skill but as a spiritually formative practice that shapes students' faith, identity, and lived relationship with God.

## METHODS

A qualitative approach was selected in order to gain an in-depth understanding of pedagogical practices, spiritual formation processes, and the lived experiences of teachers and students within their natural educational context, to explore how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to the development of student spirituality as grounded in Genesis 12:8 at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara.. This design is appropriate for examining meaning, interpretation, and contextualized practices that cannot be fully captured through numerical measurement alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The field component of the study was conducted at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara, where there are 30 Christian students and two Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were directly involved in Christian Religious Education and spiritual formation activities. The primary participants included the two CRE teachers, while a subset of Christian students was selected to represent different grade levels and levels of participation in CRE activities. This sampling strategy was intended to capture diverse perspectives while maintaining a focus on those most relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with CRE teachers to explore their understanding of pedagogical competence, their

interpretation of Genesis 12:8, and the strategies they use to nurture student spirituality. Student interviews or focus group discussions were used to capture students' perceptions of how CRE teaching practices influence their spiritual life, including worship habits, prayer, and personal faith development. Classroom observations were conducted during CRE lessons to document pedagogical interactions, instructional strategies, and observable expressions of spiritual formation, such as prayer, worship-oriented activities, and teacher modeling of faith practices. In addition, relevant school documents, such as lesson plans, syllabi, and CRE program guidelines, were analyzed to identify how spirituality and pedagogical competence are formally integrated into instructional planning. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) component was conducted to provide a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for interpreting the field findings. The SLR followed established procedures, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. Academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus-indexed journals, and major theological and Christian education publishers were used to identify peer-reviewed literature related to pedagogical competence, Christian education, student spirituality, and biblical foundations for spiritual formation, particularly studies engaging Genesis narratives, worship practices, and faith development. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded inductively and deductively to identify recurring themes related to pedagogical competence, spiritual practices, teacher modeling, and student spiritual development. Themes were also informed by the theological framework of Genesis 12:8, particularly the motifs of worship, calling on the name of the Lord, and faith-oriented practices. The findings from the field data were then triangulated with the results of the SLR to enhance credibility and to situate the local findings within broader scholarly and theological discussions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative findings reveal that pedagogical competence among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara is closely intertwined with intentional efforts to nurture student spirituality. Across interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, a consistent pattern emerged in which pedagogical strategies were not merely instructional in nature but were consciously oriented toward spiritual formation. This orientation reflects a holistic understanding of pedagogy, aligning with Christian education scholarship that emphasizes the inseparability of teaching practice and spiritual-moral formation (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). One major theme that emerged from the data is the integration of worship-oriented practices into classroom pedagogy. Teachers reported that they regularly begin lessons with prayer and short devotional reflections, often connecting biblical texts with students' daily experiences. Observational data confirmed that these practices are not treated as formal rituals detached from learning but are embedded within the instructional flow. For example, prayer was frequently used as a transition into learning activities, framing the lesson as a space for encountering God as well as acquiring knowledge. This finding resonates with the theological motif of Genesis 12:8, where Abram builds an altar and calls on the name of the Lord as an expression of worship and relational dependence on God. Old Testament scholarship emphasizes that altar-building and invoking God's name

function as concrete practices of faith and covenantal orientation (Wenham, 1987; Waltke, 2001). In this sense, the observed classroom practices reflect a pedagogical parallel to Abram's act of worship, positioning the classroom as a formative spiritual space. A second prominent theme is teacher modeling as a central mechanism for spiritual development. Both teachers and students highlighted the importance of teachers' personal conduct, attitudes, and relational style as influential factors in shaping student spirituality. Students described their teachers as examples of prayerfulness, patience, and moral consistency, indicating that spirituality is learned not only through explicit instruction but also through observation of lived faith. This finding aligns strongly with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals acquire values and behaviors through modeling and observational learning. Within Christian education, this dynamic is further intensified, as teachers are perceived as spiritual role models whose personal faith becomes an implicit curriculum. Palmer's (1998) argument that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher provides a helpful interpretive lens for these findings. The data suggest that pedagogical competence at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara is not limited to technical teaching skills but includes the embodied spirituality of teachers, which functions as a powerful formative influence on students.

Another key theme concerns the role of relational pedagogy in nurturing spirituality. Classroom observations revealed that teachers consistently sought to create a supportive and respectful learning environment characterized by open communication, attentiveness to student needs, and empathetic responses to personal challenges. Students reported that they felt comfortable sharing personal concerns and spiritual questions with their teachers, indicating a level of relational trust that facilitates deeper spiritual engagement. This relational dimension is consistent with broader educational research emphasizing the importance of teacher-student relationships for holistic development (Hattie, 2009). From a Christian pedagogical perspective, such relational practices can be interpreted as expressions of pastoral care and spiritual accompaniment, which are central to faith formation. The literature on Christian education underscores that spiritual growth is often mediated through relationships marked by trust, care, and authenticity (Groome, 2011; Wolterstorff, 2004). The findings suggest that pedagogical competence in this context includes the ability to cultivate relational environments that support spiritual openness and growth. Document analysis further revealed that lesson plans and instructional materials explicitly incorporate spiritual objectives alongside cognitive learning outcomes. Teachers included goals related to prayer, reflection, and application of biblical principles in daily life. This intentional integration reflects an understanding of pedagogy as a spiritually formative practice rather than a purely academic exercise. The SLR findings support this approach, as numerous studies in Christian education emphasize that curriculum and pedagogy should be intentionally designed to support spiritual formation, not merely religious knowledge acquisition (Knight, 2006; Groome, 2011). The alignment between documented instructional planning and observed classroom practices strengthens the credibility of the findings and suggests a coherent pedagogical vision among CRE teachers.

The Genesis 12:8 framework provides a particularly rich theological lens for interpreting these results. Abram's act of building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord represents a pattern of worship, trust, and ongoing relational commitment to God. The qualitative data suggest that teachers at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara implicitly translate this biblical pattern into pedagogical practice by encouraging students to develop regular habits of prayer, reflection, and dependence on God. Teachers described their efforts to help students see prayer and worship not as isolated religious activities but as integral to daily life and learning. This reflects theological interpretations that view Genesis 12 as foundational for understanding faith as a lived journey marked by worship and obedience (Wenham, 1987; Waltke, 2001). In this way, the biblical narrative is not merely taught as content but is embodied as a pedagogical model for spiritual formation. The SLR further reinforces the significance of pedagogical competence in shaping spiritual outcomes. Across reviewed studies, effective Christian pedagogy is consistently associated with intentional modeling, reflective practices, relational engagement, and integration of faith into learning processes. These findings are consistent with broader theoretical frameworks that conceptualize Christian education as transformational rather than merely informational (Knight, 2006). The integration of SLR findings with field data suggests that the practices observed at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara are not idiosyncratic but reflect broader patterns identified in Christian education scholarship. This strengthens the interpretive validity of the study and situates the local findings within a wider academic and theological discourse. Another important dimension that emerged from the data is the contextual significance of CRE in a public school setting with a relatively small Christian population. Teachers emphasized that their pedagogical role extends beyond formal instruction to include providing spiritual support and identity reinforcement for Christian students who may be a minority within the broader school environment. This contextual factor intensifies the importance of pedagogical competence, as teachers become key figures in sustaining students' spiritual identity and practices. The literature on minority faith education contexts highlights the importance of supportive pedagogical and relational structures for maintaining religious identity and spiritual resilience (Wolterstorff, 2004). The findings suggest that pedagogical competence in this setting includes contextual sensitivity and the ability to address the unique spiritual needs of students within a pluralistic school environment.

The triangulation of interviews, observations, documents, and SLR findings also reveals a convergence around the concept of pedagogy as spiritual mediation. Teachers are not merely conveyors of biblical knowledge but function as mediators of spiritual experience, helping students to interpret and integrate faith into their personal lives. This mediating role aligns with theological perspectives that view Christian education as participation in God's formative work in the lives of learners (Groome, 2011). The data indicate that pedagogical competence includes the capacity to design learning experiences that invite spiritual reflection, foster worshipful attitudes, and encourage personal engagement with God. At the same time, the findings also highlight challenges and areas for further development. Teachers acknowledged constraints related to time, curriculum demands, and limited resources, which sometimes restrict the depth of spiritual activities that can be incorporated into lessons. This echoes findings in the broader literature, which note that institutional and curricular pressures can limit opportunities for intentional spiritual

formation within formal schooling contexts (Knight, 2006). These constraints suggest the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to strengthen the integration of spirituality and pedagogy. The qualitative results and SLR integration support a holistic understanding of pedagogical competence as a spiritually formative practice. The data demonstrate that at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara, pedagogical competence is enacted through worship-oriented practices, teacher modeling, relational pedagogy, intentional curriculum integration, and contextual sensitivity. These practices collectively contribute to the development of student spirituality in ways that are consistent with the biblical pattern of Genesis 12:8 and with established scholarship in Christian education. The findings affirm that student spirituality is not developed through isolated religious activities alone but through sustained pedagogical environments that embody faith in action. This supports theological and educational perspectives that emphasize spirituality as a lived and relational reality rather than merely a cognitive construct (Groome, 2011; Wolterstorff, 2004). The integration of biblical theology, qualitative field data, and SLR findings thus provides a robust framework for understanding how pedagogical competence functions as a key mechanism for spiritual formation in Christian Religious Education. The results and discussion demonstrate that pedagogical competence at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara plays a central role in fostering student spirituality through practices that reflect worship, modeling, relational engagement, and intentional curriculum design. Grounded in Genesis 12:8 and supported by Christian education scholarship, these findings underscore the importance of viewing pedagogy as a spiritually formative endeavor. This integrative perspective strengthens the theoretical and practical foundations of Christian pedagogy and highlights the vital role of CRE teachers in shaping students' spiritual identity and lived faith within the school context.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined how the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers contributes to the development of student spirituality as grounded in Genesis 12:8 at SMP Negeri 58 Bengkulu Utara. By employing a qualitative design integrated with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the study provides a holistic and theologically informed understanding of pedagogy as a spiritually formative practice. The findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence in Christian education extends beyond technical instructional skills and encompasses intentional efforts to nurture students' spiritual lives through worship-oriented practices, teacher modeling, relational pedagogy, and curriculum integration. The results indicate that teachers' consistent integration of prayer, devotional reflection, and faith-based discussions into classroom activities creates a learning environment that supports spiritual awareness and dependence on God. These practices reflect the biblical pattern found in Genesis 12:8, where Abram's act of building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord symbolizes an ongoing posture of worship, trust, and relational commitment to God. By embedding similar practices within classroom pedagogy, CRE teachers translate biblical spirituality into concrete educational experiences that shape students' daily faith practices. This demonstrates that biblical narratives can function not only as instructional content but also as pedagogical models for spiritual formation. The study highlights the central role of

teacher modeling in the development of student spirituality. Teachers' personal integrity, prayerfulness, and relational attitudes were perceived by students as influential in shaping their own spiritual habits and values. This finding aligns with social learning theory and Christian education scholarship, which emphasize that learners internalize values through observation of significant role models. In this sense, pedagogical competence includes the embodied spirituality of teachers, affirming that who the teacher is remains as important as what the teacher teaches. This insight reinforces the view that Christian educators are called to integrate personal faith and professional practice in ways that authentically reflect their spiritual identity. The relational dimension of pedagogy also emerged as a key factor in fostering student spirituality. Supportive teacher-student relationships characterized by trust, empathy, and openness created spaces where students felt comfortable engaging in spiritual reflection and sharing personal concerns. Such relational pedagogy is consistent with theological and educational perspectives that view spiritual formation as a communal and relational process. The findings suggest that pedagogical competence in Christian education must include relational sensitivity and pastoral awareness, especially in contexts where Christian students form a minority within a broader pluralistic school environment. The integration of field findings with the SLR further strengthens the conclusion that effective Christian pedagogy is inherently transformational. The convergence between local practices and broader scholarship affirms that intentional modeling, reflective practices, and integration of faith into learning processes are widely recognized as essential components of spiritually formative education. At the same time, the study also acknowledges contextual challenges, such as time constraints and curricular demands, which may limit the depth of spiritual activities within formal classroom settings. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to strengthen the integration of spirituality and pedagogy. This study contributes to Christian education scholarship by demonstrating that pedagogical competence functions as a key medium for spiritual formation when grounded in biblical theology and enacted through intentional educational practices. By drawing on Genesis 12:8 as a theological framework, the study affirms that student spirituality is nurtured through lived practices of worship, trust, and relational engagement with God. The findings underscore the importance of viewing pedagogy not merely as a technical or cognitive enterprise but as a spiritually formative vocation. Future research is encouraged to expand this line of inquiry by involving larger samples, diverse educational contexts, and mixed-method approaches to further explore the complex relationship between pedagogical competence and spiritual formation in Christian education.

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