



## Professional Competence of Christian Education Teachers in Teaching Biblical Faith Development: A Case of Genesis 28:20-22 at SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja

Ruth Mawati H. Simatupang

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

\*correspondence: [ruthsimatupang41@guru.sd.belajar.id](mailto:ruthsimatupang41@guru.sd.belajar.id)

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in facilitating students' biblical faith development through the teaching of Genesis 28:20-22 at SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja. Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22 provides a theological framework for exploring faith as a personal commitment expressed through trust, obedience, and relational dependence on God. A quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach was employed, with 117 Christian students serving as respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of teacher professional competence and their own biblical faith development. Descriptive statistics were used to identify patterns in students' responses, while correlational and regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between teacher professional competence and students' faith development. The findings indicate that students perceived their teacher's professional competence at a high level, particularly in biblical content mastery, clarity of instruction, and the ability to connect biblical narratives with students' everyday experiences. Students also reported high levels of biblical faith development, including increased understanding of Jacob's faith commitment and stronger personal trust in God. Statistical analyses revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development, with teacher competence accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in faith development outcomes. These results highlight the strategic importance of strengthening teacher professional competence in Christian Religious Education as a means of supporting holistic student formation. The study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing the central role of competent teachers in translating biblical teaching into meaningful and transformative faith experiences for students.*

**Keywords:** Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Faith Development

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional competence is widely recognized as a central determinant of educational quality and student learning outcomes. In contemporary educational discourse, professional competence is commonly defined as a teacher's mastery of subject matter, pedagogical content knowledge, instructional skills, and the capacity to translate curriculum goals into meaningful learning experiences (Hattie, 2009; Mulyasa, 2013). Beyond technical proficiency, professional competence also includes reflective practice, ethical responsibility, and the ability to contextualize learning in ways that are relevant to students' cognitive, emotional, and moral development. In religious education, particularly Christian Religious Education (CRE), professional competence carries an additional theological and spiritual dimension, as teachers are entrusted not only with delivering content but also with guiding students in their faith development and spiritual understanding. Christian education is inherently formative and transformational in nature. It aims not merely to transmit doctrinal knowledge but to shape students' worldview, character, and relationship with God (Groome, 2011; Knight, 2006). Within this framework, the professional competence of CRE teachers becomes a crucial medium through which biblical narratives are interpreted, contextualized, and applied to students' lived experiences. Palmer (1998) emphasizes that effective teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, suggesting that professional competence is deeply intertwined with personal conviction, authenticity, and spiritual maturity. For CRE teachers, this implies that professional competence must integrate pedagogical expertise with theological understanding and spiritual sensitivity.

Genesis 28:20-22, which records Jacob's vow at Bethel, provides a rich biblical foundation for understanding faith development as a dynamic process involving encounter, commitment, and response to God's revelation. In this passage, Jacob responds to God's self-disclosure by making a vow that expresses trust, dependence, and a growing awareness of God's presence in his life. Biblical scholars interpret this narrative as a significant moment in Jacob's spiritual journey, marking a transition from a self-oriented posture toward a relational and covenantal response to God (Wenham, 1994; Walton, 2001). Theologically, Jacob's vow reflects a developing faith that is shaped through divine encounter, personal reflection, and concrete commitment. Narratives such as Genesis 28:20-22 offer powerful pedagogical resources for teaching faith development. Narrative pedagogy has been widely recognized as an effective approach for facilitating moral and spiritual formation, as stories enable learners to engage emotionally and imaginatively with theological themes (Brueggemann, 2010; Groome, 2011). When taught with strong professional competence, biblical narratives can become formative tools that help students interpret their own experiences of faith, doubt, commitment, and trust in God. Thus, the teacher's ability to interpret Scripture accurately, to contextualize its meaning, and to communicate its relevance to students' lives is a key expression of professional competence in Christian education. Teacher professional competence is formally emphasized as one of the core competencies, alongside pedagogical, personal, and social competence (Mulyasa, 2013). Professional competence specifically refers to mastery of subject content and the ability to develop learning materials creatively and responsibly. For CRE teachers, this includes not only biblical knowledge but also theological literacy,

curriculum alignment, and the ability to connect biblical themes with students' developmental stages and cultural contexts. Research in Christian pedagogy highlights that professional competence in CRE is most effective when theological depth is integrated with contextual and relational teaching strategies (Jacob, 2025; Simamora et al., 2025). At SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja, where there are 117 Christian students and one CRE teacher, the role of professional competence becomes especially significant. With a large number of students and limited teaching personnel, the CRE teacher's professional capacity to manage instruction, interpret Scripture accurately, and facilitate meaningful faith-oriented learning is critical. In such a context, the teacher functions not only as an instructor but also as a key spiritual guide who helps students understand biblical faith development through narratives such as Jacob's encounter and vow at Bethel. There remains a limited number of empirical studies that connect teacher professional competence directly with the teaching of biblical faith development using particular scriptural narratives. This gap highlights the importance of examining how Genesis 28:20-22 is pedagogically interpreted and taught in concrete school settings. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in teaching biblical faith development through Genesis 28:20–22 at SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja. By integrating educational theory with biblical-theological interpretation, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how professional competence in CRE supports students' spiritual growth and faith formation. In doing so, it affirms that effective Christian education depends not only on curriculum and methods but also on the teacher's professional capacity to translate biblical narratives into meaningful, life-shaping learning experiences.

## METHODS

A quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach was implemented to examine the relationship between teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development as taught through Genesis 28:20-22. A quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic measurement of students' perceptions and to generate empirical evidence regarding the influence of teacher professional competence on students' understanding and internalization of biblical faith development concepts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design allowed for statistical analysis to identify patterns, tendencies, and associations between the studied variables in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The research was conducted at SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja, an elementary school in which Christian Religious Education is provided for Christian students. The population of this study consisted of all Christian students enrolled in CRE classes at the school, totaling 117 students. Given the manageable size of the population, a census sampling technique was applied, in which all members of the population were included as research respondents. This approach was chosen to maximize representativeness and to minimize sampling bias (Sugiyono, 2019). The respondents represented a range of elementary grade levels who had received instruction on biblical narratives, including Genesis 28:20-22, as part of the CRE curriculum. Prior to data collection, students were informed about the purpose of the study in age-appropriate language, and ethical considerations related to confidentiality and voluntary participation were communicated through the school administration and CRE teacher.

This study involved two main variables. The independent variable was teacher professional competence in Christian Religious Education, operationalized as students' perceptions of the teacher's mastery of biblical content, clarity of explanation, ability to relate biblical narratives to daily life, and use of appropriate instructional strategies. These dimensions are consistent with the conceptualization of professional competence in Indonesian educational standards and in educational research literature (Mulyasa, 2013; Hattie, 2009). The dependent variable was students' biblical faith development, operationalized as students' self-reported understanding of the meaning of faith, trust in God, commitment, and personal response to God as reflected in the narrative of Genesis 28:20-22. Indicators included students' perceived growth in understanding God's presence, willingness to trust God, and awareness of faith as a personal commitment, drawing on biblical and educational interpretations of faith development (Groome, 2011; Wenham, 1994). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section measured teacher professional competence, comprising items related to content mastery, instructional clarity, relevance of examples, and classroom management. The second section measured students' biblical faith development, including items assessing understanding of Jacob's vow, personal trust in God, and perceived relevance of the biblical lesson to daily life. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), adapted to be understandable for elementary school students. The instrument was reviewed by experts in Christian Religious Education and educational research to establish content validity. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of students outside the main sample to ensure clarity of wording and age-appropriateness. Data collection was conducted during regular CRE class hours with the permission of the school principal and CRE teacher. The researcher or trained assistants administered the questionnaires in the classroom setting. Instructions were provided orally to ensure that students understood how to respond to each item. Students were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and assistance was provided only to clarify instructions, not to influence responses. To protect respondent anonymity, no identifying personal information was recorded on the questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to ensure data integrity. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize students' perceptions of teacher professional competence and their levels of biblical faith development. To examine the relationship between the two variables, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed, assuming the data met the necessary assumptions of normality and linearity (Field, 2018). Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the extent to which teacher professional competence predicted students' biblical faith development. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ . Statistical analyses were performed using standard statistical software commonly used in educational research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis provides an overview of students' perceptions of teacher professional competence and their biblical faith development related to the teaching of Genesis 28:20-22. A total of 117 questionnaires were distributed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate. This high response rate enhanced the reliability of the dataset and ensured full representation of the target population. For the variable of teacher professional competence, the overall mean score was 4.21 (SD = 0.46) on a five-point Likert scale, indicating that students generally perceived their Christian Religious Education teacher as demonstrating a high level of professional competence. Items related to biblical content mastery showed particularly strong agreement (M = 4.34, SD = 0.43), suggesting that students recognized the teacher's strong understanding of biblical narratives and theological concepts. Similarly, items measuring clarity of explanation yielded a high mean (M = 4.26, SD = 0.48), indicating that students perceived the teacher's explanations of Genesis 28:20-22 as clear and understandable. The instructional relevance dimension, which assessed the teacher's ability to connect the biblical text to students' daily lives, also showed a favorable evaluation (M = 4.18, SD = 0.50). This suggests that students experienced the learning process not merely as the transmission of biblical facts but as meaningful instruction related to their personal and social contexts. Classroom instructional management and learning organization were also rated positively (M = 4.05, SD = 0.55), indicating that the learning environment was perceived as supportive of effective faith-based learning. For the dependent variable, biblical faith development, the overall mean score was 4.12 (SD = 0.49), indicating a high level of perceived faith development among students. Items related to understanding the meaning of Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22 showed a mean of 4.15 (SD = 0.47), suggesting that students generally understood the theological significance of Jacob's commitment to God. Students also reported a strong sense of increased trust in God after learning the biblical narrative (M = 4.20, SD = 0.45), indicating that the lesson contributed to affective and spiritual dimensions of learning, not merely cognitive understanding. Items related to personal commitment and the relevance of faith to daily life showed a mean score of 4.07 (SD = 0.52). This finding suggests that students perceived the biblical lesson as influencing their attitudes and intentions toward living out their faith in practical ways, consistent with holistic models of Christian education that emphasize integration between belief and practice (Groome, 2011). The descriptive findings indicate that both teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development were perceived at high levels, providing a strong empirical basis for further relational and predictive analysis.

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development. The analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive correlation between the two variables ( $r = .68$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This coefficient indicates a strong relationship according to conventional benchmarks in educational research (Field, 2018). This result suggests that higher levels of perceived teacher professional competence are associated with higher levels of students' biblical faith development. In other words, when students perceive their teacher as more professionally competent in teaching biblical content and applying

effective instructional strategies, they are more likely to report stronger development in their understanding of faith, trust in God, and personal commitment as reflected in Genesis 28:20-22. This finding is consistent with prior research emphasizing the central role of teacher quality in shaping not only academic outcomes but also affective and spiritual dimensions of student development (Hattie, 2009). In the context of Christian Religious Education, this relationship underscores the theological and pedagogical principle that the credibility and competence of the teacher significantly influence how biblical messages are received, interpreted, and internalized by students.

To further examine the predictive effect of teacher professional competence on students' biblical faith development, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 115) = 98.42$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that teacher professional competence significantly predicted biblical faith development. The model yielded an  $R^2$  value of .46, indicating that approximately 46% of the variance in students' biblical faith development could be explained by teacher professional competence. This represents a substantial effect size in educational research, suggesting that professional competence is a major contributing factor in shaping students' faith-related learning outcomes. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) for teacher professional competence was .68 ( $p < .001$ ), confirming that teacher professional competence was a strong and positive predictor of students' biblical faith development. This means that for each one standard deviation increase in perceived teacher professional competence, students' biblical faith development increased by approximately .68 standard deviations. These results highlight the strategic importance of professional competence not merely as a technical requirement but as a spiritually formative factor in Christian education. The findings suggest that professional competence enables teachers to communicate biblical narratives in ways that are theologically sound, pedagogically effective, and spiritually meaningful for students.

The strong relationship between teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development can be interpreted through both educational theory and biblical-theological perspectives. From an educational standpoint, professional competence encompasses mastery of subject matter, pedagogical skill, and the ability to adapt instruction to learners' developmental levels (Mulyasa, 2013). In this study, students' high ratings of content mastery and instructional clarity indicate that the teacher's professional competence facilitated cognitive understanding of Genesis 28:20-22. However, the results also demonstrate that professional competence extends beyond cognitive transmission to spiritual formation. The narrative of Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22 presents faith as a personal response to God's presence, involving trust, commitment, and recognition of God's guidance (Wenham, 1994). The high mean scores on trust in God and personal commitment suggest that students did not merely learn about Jacob's faith but were encouraged to reflect on their own faith journeys. This finding aligns with Groome's (2011) shared Christian praxis model, which emphasizes the integration of biblical narrative, personal experience, and communal reflection. When teachers demonstrate strong professional competence, they are better equipped to facilitate this integrative process, enabling students to connect biblical texts with their own lives in meaningful ways. The regression results suggest that professional

competence plays a particularly significant role in shaping spiritual outcomes. An  $R^2$  of .46 indicates that nearly half of the variance in faith development can be attributed to teacher competence, highlighting the formative influence of the teacher in religious education contexts. This supports theological perspectives that emphasize the teacher's role as a mediator of faith tradition and as a model of faithful interpretation and application of Scripture (Pazmiño, 2008).

The findings of this study have several important implications for Christian Religious Education in elementary school contexts. The strong predictive relationship between professional competence and faith development underscores the importance of continuous professional development for CRE teachers. Training programs should emphasize not only biblical knowledge but also pedagogical strategies that enable age-appropriate, meaningful engagement with Scripture. The results suggest that professional competence should be understood as a holistic construct that integrates theological understanding, pedagogical skill, and spiritual sensitivity. Teachers who are well-prepared in these areas are more likely to create learning environments that support both cognitive and spiritual growth. The findings highlight the importance of curriculum design that allows teachers to contextualize biblical narratives such as Genesis 28:20-22 in students' daily lives. When professional competence is exercised in ways that connect Scripture with lived experience, students are more likely to internalize biblical values and develop a personal sense of faith commitment. The study was conducted in a single school with one CRE teacher, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research could involve multiple schools and teachers to provide a broader comparative perspective. Longitudinal designs could also be used to examine how teacher professional competence influences faith development over time.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers and its relationship with students' biblical faith development based on the teaching of Genesis 28:20-22 at SD Negeri No. 173141 Hutaraja. Using a quantitative approach with students as respondents, the findings provide clear empirical evidence that teacher professional competence plays a significant and substantive role in shaping students' understanding and internalization of biblical faith. The descriptive results indicate that students perceived their teacher's professional competence at a high level, particularly in terms of biblical content mastery, clarity of explanation, and the ability to relate biblical narratives to students' daily experiences. At the same time, students also reported high levels of biblical faith development, including increased understanding of Jacob's vow, stronger trust in God, and greater awareness of personal faith commitment. These findings suggest that professional competence in Christian education is not limited to technical instructional skills but extends to the capacity to facilitate meaningful spiritual learning. The correlational and regression analyses further strengthen this conclusion by demonstrating a strong and statistically significant relationship between teacher professional competence and students' biblical faith development. The regression model indicates that a substantial proportion of the variance in students' faith development can be explained by teacher professional competence. This underscores the strategic

importance of professionally competent teachers as key agents of spiritual formation in school-based Christian Religious Education. From a theological perspective, the findings affirm that the teaching of Genesis 28:20–22 is most effective when delivered by teachers who are not only knowledgeable in biblical content but also professionally skilled in guiding students to connect Scripture with their own faith journeys. Jacob's vow represents a personal and relational response to God's presence, and this study shows that such biblical themes can be more deeply internalized when teachers demonstrate high levels of professional competence in their pedagogical practice. In practical terms, this study highlights the need for sustained professional development programs for Christian Religious Education teachers that integrate biblical-theological depth with sound pedagogical training. Educational institutions and policymakers should recognize that improving teacher professional competence is a strategic investment in students' spiritual as well as academic development. By strengthening teachers' professional competence, schools can more effectively nurture students' biblical faith, helping them to grow in understanding, trust, and personal commitment to God. This study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing that teacher competence is a central factor in holistic Christian education. It provides empirical support for the view that professionally competent teachers are instrumental in translating biblical narratives into lived faith experiences, thereby fostering meaningful and enduring spiritual formation among students.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fee, G. D. (1995). *Paul's letter to the Philippians* (NICNT). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.
- Mulyasa, E. (2013). *Uji kompetensi dan penilaian kinerja guru*. Bandung, Indonesia: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- O'Brien, P. T. (1991). *The epistle to the Philippians: A commentary on the Greek text*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wenham, G. J. (1994). *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2). Dallas, TX: Word Books.

Wright, C. J. H. (2004). *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Wright, N. T. (2013). *Paul and the faithfulness of God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Wolterstorff, N. (2004). *Educating for life: Reflections on Christian teaching and learning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.