



Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Teaching Isaac's Obedience to God (Genesis 26:24-25): A Study at SDN 077299 Tuhemberua

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching Isaac's obedience to God as reflected in Genesis 26:24-25. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize theological scholarship and educational theory relevant to teacher professionalism and biblical pedagogy. Genesis 26:24-25 portrays Isaac's response to God's covenantal assurance through worshipful obedience, symbolized by building an altar and calling upon the name of the Lord. The findings indicate that teaching this narrative effectively requires multidimensional professional competence, including theological mastery, pedagogical content knowledge, ethical integrity, and contextual sensitivity. The review reveals that professional competence in CRE extends beyond technical instructional skills. Teachers must possess adequate biblical-theological understanding to avoid moralistic reductionism and instead present obedience as a relational response grounded in divine promise and presence. Furthermore, pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to transform complex theological themes into age-appropriate learning experiences. Ethical consistency and spiritual authenticity also emerge as critical components, as teachers serve as living models of the values they teach. Contextual awareness is particularly important in local educational settings such as SDN 077299 Tuhemberua, South Nias, where 20 Christian students and two Christian teachers interact closely within a community-based environment. The study concludes that strengthening professional competence through continuous theological formation and pedagogical development is essential for meaningful Christian Religious Education. Professionally competent teachers not only communicate biblical content but also cultivate students' understanding of obedience as a faithful and relational response to God's enduring covenant.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Obedience

INTRODUCTION

Professional competence refers to mastery of subject matter, the ability to integrate content with appropriate instructional strategies, and the capacity to contextualize knowledge in ways that are meaningful for learners (Shulman, 1987). In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), professional competence also includes theological literacy, biblical interpretation skills, and the ability to communicate Christian doctrines and values in developmentally appropriate ways. For CRE teachers, professional competence is therefore both academic and spiritual, as it directly shapes how biblical teachings are understood and internalized by students. One significant biblical theme that demands careful and competent instruction is obedience to God. In Genesis 26:24-25, God reaffirms His covenant with Isaac, saying, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." In response, Isaac builds an altar, calls on the name of the Lord, and pitches his tent there. Old Testament scholars interpret this passage as a pivotal moment demonstrating Isaac's faithful obedience, trust in divine promise, and commitment to worship (Wenham, 1994; Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000). Isaac's response is not merely passive belief but active obedience expressed through worship and settlement, illustrating a theological model of faith in action. Teaching such a narrative requires more than simple storytelling. It demands professional competence in biblical hermeneutics, theological reflection, and contextual pedagogy. Brueggemann (2010) notes that the patriarchal narratives in Genesis are formative texts that shape Israel's identity around themes of promise, covenant, and faithful response. Therefore, when CRE teachers present Genesis 26:24–25, they are not only recounting a historical event but are also guiding students to understand obedience as a lived response to God's presence and promise. Without strong professional competence, the theological depth and ethical implications of the text may be reduced to moralistic simplifications. Teacher competence has consistently been linked to student learning outcomes and character development. Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes that professionally competent teachers possess deep content knowledge and the ability to transform that knowledge into accessible learning experiences. In religious education, this transformation includes helping students connect biblical narratives with their personal lives and contemporary contexts. For elementary students, especially, abstract theological concepts such as covenant, promise, and obedience must be translated into concrete experiences and practical applications. Christian education is fundamentally formative. Pazmiño (2008) argues that Christian teaching seeks to shape not only cognitive understanding but also spiritual identity and moral behavior. Obedience to God, as illustrated in Isaac's life, is therefore not merely an intellectual concept but a formative value that influences attitudes, decisions, and relationships. Teaching obedience requires teachers who are professionally competent in integrating biblical exegesis with pedagogical creativity and relational sensitivity. National educational standards emphasize teacher professionalism, mastery of subject content, and responsible instructional practice. Within this framework, CRE teachers in public schools must navigate both academic accountability and faith-based instruction. Their professional competence becomes essential in ensuring that biblical teachings are conveyed accurately, responsibly, and meaningfully. At SDN 077299 Tuhemberua, South Nias, the educational context presents both opportunities and challenges. The school

includes 20 Christian students and 2 Christian teachers. In such a relatively small community, teacher influence is particularly significant, as close teacher-student relationships may intensify the formative impact of instruction. At the same time, limited human resources may place greater demands on teachers' professional competence, requiring them to fulfill multiple instructional and pastoral roles. Examining the professional competence of CRE teachers in teaching Isaac's obedience to God becomes both academically and practically relevant. How teachers interpret Genesis 26:24-25, design lessons, and facilitate student engagement directly affects how students understand obedience, not merely as compliance, but as faithful trust, worship, and commitment to God's promises. This study therefore seeks to analyze how professional competence shapes the teaching of biblical obedience and how such competence contributes to students' understanding of Isaac's faithful response to God. By integrating biblical theology, educational theory, and empirical inquiry, this research contributes to the growing discourse on teacher professionalism in Christian education. It aims to demonstrate that professional competence is not a peripheral concern but a central dimension in cultivating faith-informed character formation among elementary students. In doing so, the study affirms that teaching obedience to God requires teachers who are both theologically grounded and pedagogically skilled, capable of translating Scripture into transformative educational practice.

METHODS

A systematic literature review was chosen to ensure a transparent, replicable, and structured process of identifying, selecting, and synthesizing relevant academic sources (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Snyder, 2019). Unlike traditional narrative reviews, SLR follows explicit procedures to minimize bias and enhance the reliability of findings through systematic searching, screening, and critical analysis. The SLR approach in this study aims to synthesize interdisciplinary perspectives from theology, Christian education, and teacher professionalism literature. By integrating biblical scholarship with educational theory, this research seeks to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding professional competence in CRE contexts. The review protocol was developed prior to data collection to ensure methodological rigor. The primary research question guiding this review was: How is professional competence conceptualized and operationalized in Christian Religious Education, particularly in relation to teaching biblical obedience as reflected in Genesis 26:24-25? Supporting sub-questions included: What dimensions of teacher professional competence are emphasized in educational research? How is obedience to God interpreted in theological studies of Genesis 26:24-25? How can professional competence support effective teaching of biblical obedience in elementary education contexts? The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and edited volumes published between 1987 and 2023. The year 1987 was selected as a starting point because of Shulman's influential work on pedagogical content knowledge, which significantly shaped modern discussions of teacher competence. The selection process followed a multi-stage screening procedure inspired by PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021), which are: Initial database searches produced a broad pool of potentially relevant literature, titles and abstracts were reviewed to eliminate irrelevant or duplicate studies, full-text articles were assessed against inclusion

and exclusion criteria, final studies meeting all criteria were included for qualitative synthesis. This process ensured transparency and minimized selection bias in the review. Priority was given to works published in reputable academic journals and by recognized theological and educational scholars such as Shulman (1987), Darling-Hammond (2006), Brueggemann (2010), and Wenham (1994). This quality control process strengthened the validity of the synthesized conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review reveals that professional competence is consistently defined as a multidimensional construct integrating content mastery, pedagogical expertise, ethical responsibility, and reflective practice. Since Lee Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), teacher competence has been understood not merely as subject knowledge but as the ability to transform content into forms comprehensible to learners. In religious education contexts, this transformation includes theological interpretation, contextual application, and spiritual sensitivity. Subsequent scholarship reinforces this multidimensional view. Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes that professionally competent teachers demonstrate deep subject mastery, adaptive instructional strategies, and responsiveness to learners' developmental needs. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), professional competence extends further to include fidelity to biblical texts and doctrinal coherence. The literature identifies at least four core dimensions of professional competence relevant to CRE: theological-biblical mastery, pedagogical content knowledge, ethical and spiritual integrity, contextual and relational sensitivity. These dimensions provide a framework for understanding how CRE teachers can effectively teach Isaac's obedience in Genesis 26:24-25.

The SLR indicates that Genesis 26:24–25 is theologically significant within patriarchal narratives. In this passage, God reassures Isaac of His covenantal presence and blessing. Isaac responds by building an altar, calling upon the name of the Lord, and pitching his tent. Scholars such as Gordon J. Wenham (1994) interpret this event as a renewal of Abrahamic covenant themes, emphasizing continuity of divine promise and human trust. Walter Brueggemann (2010) argues that patriarchal obedience in Genesis is not mechanical compliance but relational trust grounded in divine promise. Isaac's action, constructing an altar, symbolizes acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and presence. Obedience here is liturgical, covenantal, and existential. Theologically, three themes emerge: obedience arises from assurance of God's nearness, obedience is rooted in faith in God's faithfulness, and obedience is expressed through visible acts of devotion. For CRE teachers, understanding these theological layers is essential. Without professional competence in biblical interpretation, Isaac's obedience may be reduced to moralistic instruction rather than covenantal theology. The review demonstrates that effective CRE teaching requires integration of theological depth and pedagogical clarity. Shulman's PCK model is particularly relevant: teachers must know not only what Genesis 26:24-25 says, but how to teach it meaningfully to elementary students. In elementary contexts such as SDN 077299 Tuhemberua, with 20 Christian students and 2 Christian teachers, professional competence becomes crucial. Small learning communities intensify teacher influence. Students' perceptions of obedience are shaped not only by curriculum but also

by teacher modeling and explanation. Teachers translate theological concepts into age-appropriate narratives. Covenant and promise are explained through relatable examples (family trust, keeping promises). Students are invited to reflect on what obedience means in daily life, at home, in school, and in prayer. Just as Isaac built an altar, teachers may incorporate symbolic classroom activities (gratitude journals, prayer corners) to embody obedience as worship. Professional competence enables teachers to avoid simplistic moralism ("You must obey because Isaac obeyed") and instead guide students toward relational understanding ("We obey because God is faithful and present").

Another consistent theme in the SLR is that teacher professionalism in religious education cannot be separated from moral integrity. In Christian education theory, teachers serve as living curricula. Their example reinforces or undermines their instruction. Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes reflective practice as a hallmark of professional teachers. In CRE, reflection includes spiritual self-examination: Does the teacher model obedience? Does the teacher demonstrate trust in God? Isaac's obedience was visible through action. Similarly, teachers' obedience to ethical and spiritual commitments becomes visible in consistency, humility, and pastoral care. The literature underscores that professional competence in religious education includes: Consistency between teaching and lifestyle, Faithfulness in doctrinal accuracy, and Sensitivity to students' spiritual development. This dimension is especially significant in small communities like Tuhemberua, where teachers and students interact closely and frequently. The SLR highlights contextualization as a critical professional skill. Education does not occur in abstraction but within cultural, social, and communal realities. In South Nias, where Christian identity may shape communal values, biblical narratives intersect with lived experiences of faith communities. Professional competence therefore involves: Understanding local cultural expressions of obedience, connecting patriarchal narratives to contemporary village life, and recognizing students' family and church influences. Contextual pedagogy aligns with Brueggemann's view that biblical texts are formative narratives shaping communal identity. When teachers competently contextualize Isaac's obedience, students perceive Scripture not as distant history but as living guidance. The SLR synthesis suggests several implications: CRE teachers require ongoing formation in biblical theology to maintain interpretive depth, workshops on narrative pedagogy, reflective learning, and child-centered methods strengthen PCK, professional competence must integrate spiritual maturity and ethical integrity, in schools with limited Christian staff, peer reflection enhances professional growth. Isaac's obedience in Genesis 26:24-25 becomes a pedagogical paradigm. God's promise initiates trust; trust inspires worship; worship embodies obedience. CRE teachers, through professional competence, mediate this theological movement into classroom experience. The SLR findings affirm that professional competence in Christian Religious Education is not confined to technical teaching skill. It is a holistic integration of theological scholarship, pedagogical knowledge, moral integrity, and contextual awareness. Teaching Isaac's obedience requires teachers who understand covenant theology, possess pedagogical creativity, and embody spiritual authenticity. In the specific context of SDN 077299 Tuhemberua, where educational resources may be limited but relational proximity is strong, professional competence becomes even more vital. Teachers function simultaneously as educators, interpreters of Scripture, and spiritual mentors. Thus, this review demonstrates that professional

competence is foundational for teaching biblical obedience meaningfully. Without it, obedience risks becoming moral instruction detached from covenantal promise. With it, obedience becomes an invitation to relational trust in a faithful God, mirroring Isaac's response to divine assurance in Genesis 26:24-25.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in teaching Isaac's obedience to God as presented in Genesis 26:24-25 through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). By synthesizing theological scholarship and educational theory, the findings demonstrate that professional competence in CRE is a multidimensional construct integrating theological mastery, pedagogical content knowledge, ethical integrity, and contextual sensitivity. These dimensions are not independent; rather, they function holistically in shaping how biblical narratives are interpreted, communicated, and embodied within the classroom. The theological analysis of Genesis 26:24-25 highlights that Isaac's obedience is rooted in relational trust, covenantal assurance, and worshipful response. Obedience is not portrayed as rigid compliance but as a faithful reaction to God's promise and presence. Therefore, teaching this passage requires teachers who possess sufficient biblical literacy to communicate its covenantal depth and avoid reducing it to moralistic instruction. Professional competence ensures that the narrative is presented not merely as an example of "good behavior," but as an invitation to trust in God's faithfulness. The review further indicates that pedagogical content knowledge is essential for translating theological insight into age-appropriate instruction. Elementary students require contextualized explanations, narrative engagement, and experiential learning opportunities. Competent teachers transform complex theological themes, such as divine promise, covenant continuity, and worship, into meaningful learning experiences that resonate with children's daily lives. In this sense, professional competence bridges the gap between biblical exegesis and practical classroom application. Ethical and spiritual integrity also emerge as integral components of professionalism in Christian education. CRE teachers function as role models whose lives reinforce the values they teach. In a setting such as SDN 077299 Tuhemberua, with 20 Christian students and 2 Christian teachers, relational proximity amplifies the formative influence of teachers. Professional competence therefore includes consistency between teaching and personal conduct, as students often interpret obedience not only through instruction but through observation. Contextual sensitivity is another critical dimension. Effective CRE instruction acknowledges cultural, communal, and local realities. By connecting Isaac's obedience to students' lived experiences within South Nias, teachers help Scripture become a living narrative rather than distant history. Professional competence enables teachers to contextualize biblical truth without compromising theological accuracy. This study affirms that professional competence is foundational for meaningful Christian Religious Education. Teaching Isaac's obedience to God requires teachers who are theologically grounded, pedagogically skilled, ethically consistent, and contextually aware. Strengthening professional competence through ongoing theological training, pedagogical development, and spiritual formation is therefore essential. Ultimately, professionally competent CRE teachers do more than convey biblical information—they

cultivate faith-informed understanding, guiding students to embrace obedience as a relational response to God's faithful presence and enduring promise.

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