



Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Developing Instructional Materials on the Justice of God (Genesis 18:25): A Study at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing instructional materials on the justice of God based on Genesis 18:25 at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya, Simalungun. The research departs from the assumption that professional competence in CRE requires more than administrative proficiency; it demands exegetical responsibility, pedagogical translation, and contextual sensitivity. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with CRE teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of lesson plans and teaching modules. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to theological understanding, curriculum integration, and instructional strategies. The findings reveal that teachers demonstrate professional competence through four integrated dimensions: biblical-theological literacy in interpreting Genesis 18:25 within the narrative of Abraham's intercession; alignment of theological themes with national curriculum standards, particularly in character education; pedagogical adaptation that translates abstract concepts of divine justice into age-appropriate learning activities; and reflective professional practice supported by collegial collaboration. Teachers present the justice of God not merely as punitive judgment but as righteous consistency rooted in divine moral integrity, thereby fostering students' understanding of fairness and responsibility. CRE teachers exhibit initiative and collaborative commitment in refining instructional materials. The study concludes that professional competence in CRE is multidimensional, integrating theological depth, pedagogical expertise, and ethical intentionality in order to communicate biblical truth effectively within a public elementary school context.

Keywords: *Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Justice of God*

INTRODUCTION

Professional competence constitutes a central pillar of teacher professionalism in contemporary educational discourse. It refers to mastery of subject matter, the ability to

develop relevant instructional materials, engagement with scholarly resources, and continuous professional growth. Shulman (1986) emphasizes that effective teaching requires deep content knowledge integrated with pedagogical content knowledge, enabling teachers to transform disciplinary understanding into meaningful learning experiences. Within the field of Christian Religious Education (CRE), professional competence acquires an additional theological dimension. Teachers are not only expected to understand biblical texts academically but also to interpret and communicate them responsibly within diverse educational settings. Professional competence is formally recognized as one of the four core competencies mandated for teachers under national regulation (Republik Indonesia, 2005). This competence includes mastery of curriculum content, development of learning materials aligned with standards, and the ability to contextualize subject matter according to learners' needs. For CRE teachers serving in public schools, such as SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya in Simalungun, professional competence requires both academic rigor and theological sensitivity. The school community includes 49 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. In a setting where the Christian population represents a distinct segment of the broader school environment, teachers' professional competence significantly influences how biblical themes are articulated and understood. One theological theme demanding careful instructional development is the justice of God as articulated in Genesis 18:25. In this verse, Abraham appeals to God's character, asking, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" This question arises within the narrative of intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah and reveals profound theological reflection on divine justice. Wenham (1994) observes that Abraham's appeal reflects confidence in God's moral integrity, framing divine judgment within covenantal righteousness. Similarly, Waltke (2001) interprets Genesis 18:25 as an affirmation that God's governance of the world is inseparable from ethical consistency. The verse has generated sustained theological reflection because it integrates themes of judgment, mercy, and moral order. Developing instructional materials on such a complex theological theme requires professional competence that goes beyond surface-level explanation. Teachers must engage exegetical scholarship, understand narrative context, and translate theological concepts into age-appropriate pedagogical forms. According to Hill and Walton (2009), responsible interpretation of Old Testament texts demands attention to literary structure, historical context, and canonical theology. Without such depth, biblical teaching risks oversimplification or distortion. For elementary-level students, the concept of divine justice must be communicated in ways that nurture moral understanding without inducing fear or misunderstanding. This task requires careful curricular planning and theological literacy.

Scholars of Christian education argue that instructional material development is a key indicator of professional maturity. Pazmiño (2008) contends that Christian educators must demonstrate faithfulness to Scripture through disciplined study and contextual application. Likewise, Knight (2006) underscores that Christian teaching involves integrating biblical truth with sound educational methodology. In the context of Genesis 18:25, this integration entails presenting God's justice as both righteous and relational, helping students perceive divine justice as consistent with love and moral order. The demographic composition of SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya provides a significant

backdrop for this study. With 49 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, the CRE classroom becomes a strategic space for theological formation within a pluralistic public-school environment. Teachers' professional competence in developing instructional materials directly shapes how students understand foundational doctrines such as God's justice. Educational research consistently affirms that teacher expertise in content development enhances conceptual clarity and learner engagement (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In religious education, such expertise ensures that doctrinal themes are communicated responsibly and coherently. Relatively few empirical studies examine how CRE teachers develop instructional materials grounded in specific biblical texts. Many discussions remain theoretical, focusing on general competencies rather than contextualized practice. This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing how professional competence is manifested in the development of instructional materials on the justice of God based on Genesis 18:25 at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya, Simalungun. By integrating biblical scholarship and educational theory, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of faith-informed professionalism in Christian Religious Education.

METHODS

A qualitative research design using a case study approach was used to explore the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing instructional materials on the justice of God based on Genesis 18:25 at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya, Simalungun. A qualitative design was selected because the research seeks to understand processes, meanings, and contextual practices rather than to measure statistical relationships. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, qualitative inquiry is appropriate when researchers aim to interpret participants' perspectives and examine phenomena within their natural settings. In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the way CRE teachers conceptualize, interpret, and translate the theological theme of divine justice into classroom instructional materials. The research adopted a single-site case study design, focusing specifically on SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya as a bounded system. According to Yin (2018), case study methodology is suitable when the researcher seeks to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when contextual factors are significant. The school context is particularly relevant because it includes 49 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. This demographic composition provides a focused environment for examining how professional competence is enacted in a public elementary school setting with a defined Christian population. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in the development and implementation of CRE instructional materials. The primary participants consisted of CRE teachers responsible for teaching Christian Religious Education. Additional informants included selected Christian teachers and school administrators to provide triangulated perspectives on instructional development practices. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows the researcher to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research focus (Patton, 2015). Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to articulate their

understanding of professional competence, their interpretation of Genesis 18:25, and their strategies for developing teaching materials on the justice of God. Interview questions were open-ended and designed to probe both theological reasoning and pedagogical decision-making processes. Document analysis involved reviewing lesson plans (RPP), teaching modules, worksheets, and assessment instruments developed by CRE teachers. This analysis aimed to identify how theological concepts were translated into structured learning objectives, content outlines, and evaluation criteria. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how developed materials were implemented in practice, focusing on clarity of explanation, contextualization for elementary learners, and integration of biblical exegesis with pedagogical strategy. Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and instructional documents were coded inductively to identify recurring themes related to content mastery, theological interpretation, material adaptation, and professional reflection. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a flexible method for identifying patterns within qualitative data. Codes were grouped into broader categories reflecting dimensions of professional competence, such as biblical literacy, curricular alignment, contextual adaptation, and evaluative reflection. Data triangulation across interviews, documents, and observations was employed to enhance credibility and reduce interpretive bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored how the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is manifested in the development of instructional materials on the justice of God based on Genesis 18:25 at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya, Simalungun. Drawing on in-depth interviews, document analysis of lesson plans and teaching modules, and classroom observations, the findings reveal that professional competence in this context is expressed through four interrelated dimensions: biblical-theological literacy, curricular alignment and pedagogical translation, contextual adaptation for elementary learners, and reflective professional responsibility. These dimensions collectively illustrate how theological content is transformed into pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate instructional practice within a public elementary school setting comprising 49 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. CRE teachers demonstrated a clear awareness that teaching Genesis 18:25 requires more than citing the verse in isolation. In interviews, teachers consistently described the importance of situating the verse within the broader narrative of Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah. They articulated that Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" reflects both confidence in God's righteousness and concern for moral order. Document analysis of lesson plans confirmed this interpretive approach. Rather than presenting the verse as a detached moral slogan, teachers structured lessons beginning with narrative context: God's announcement of judgment, Abraham's dialogue with God, and the progressive negotiation regarding the number of righteous people in the city. This contextual framing indicates a level of exegetical awareness consistent with professional competence. Classroom observations further reinforced this finding. Teachers did not portray divine justice in simplistic or punitive terms; instead, they emphasized that God's justice is inseparable from righteousness and moral consistency.

One teacher explained to students that justice means “God always does what is right and fair, even when humans do not fully understand His decisions.” This explanation illustrates an effort to preserve theological nuance while adapting it to elementary comprehension levels. Professional competence here is visible in the capacity to translate doctrinal depth into accessible language without distorting meaning. Theological literacy thus functions as a core element of professional mastery.

Analysis of instructional documents shows that CRE teachers aligned Genesis 18:25 with national curriculum standards for character education, particularly values related to honesty, fairness, and responsibility. Teachers explicitly connected the theme of divine justice to practical moral formation, encouraging students to practice fairness in peer relationships and classroom interactions. This alignment demonstrates professional awareness of curriculum integration rather than isolated theological instruction. Teachers’ lesson plans included clearly formulated learning objectives, such as “Students are able to explain the meaning of God’s justice” and “Students demonstrate fairness in daily school activities.” Pedagogical translation was evident in the use of age-appropriate teaching strategies. Teachers employed storytelling, guided discussion, role-playing, and visual aids to help students internalize abstract concepts. In one observed session, students participated in a role-play scenario involving a classroom dispute, after which the teacher facilitated reflection by connecting their responses to Abraham’s appeal to God’s justice. This method indicates professional competence in bridging biblical narrative and lived experience. The instructional approach avoided moralism detached from Scripture; instead, it integrated narrative exposition with experiential learning. Such integration reflects an understanding that professional competence includes the ability to connect theological content with pedagogical method. Teachers acknowledged during interviews that the concept of divine judgment can evoke fear or confusion if not carefully explained. Therefore, they intentionally balanced discussion of justice with themes of mercy and relational care. In developing materials, teachers incorporated illustrations emphasizing that justice means fairness rooted in love. For example, one lesson module presented a comparison between a fair teacher distributing rewards based on effort and God as the righteous Judge who evaluates actions truthfully. This analogy reflects thoughtful contextualization, demonstrating sensitivity to students’ cognitive and emotional development. Observation data revealed that teachers consistently checked students’ understanding through formative questions. Rather than assuming comprehension, they asked students to restate the meaning of justice in their own words. This practice indicates reflective awareness of learning processes. Professional competence, therefore, is not limited to content knowledge but includes attentiveness to how learners receive and process theological concepts. The integration of questioning strategies and interactive discussion underscores the teachers’ commitment to meaningful understanding rather than rote memorization. Teachers described instructional material development as an ongoing process requiring prayerful preparation, consultation with biblical commentaries, and peer discussion among Christian colleagues. Although the school operates within a public framework, the presence of 8 Christian teachers fosters collaborative reflection. Interview data suggest that teachers often review each other’s lesson plans and share insights regarding interpretive challenges. This collegial exchange strengthens professional competence by

promoting accountability and shared learning. Document analysis indicates that teachers revise lesson plans annually based on classroom experience. Notes appended to teaching modules reveal adjustments such as simplifying terminology, adding illustrative stories, or allocating additional time for discussion. Such revisions demonstrate professional growth and responsiveness. Rather than treating instructional materials as static documents, teachers approach them as dynamic tools subject to improvement. This orientation aligns with the broader understanding of professionalism as continuous development. Another important aspect of the findings concerns the integration of theological conviction and professional identity. Teachers consistently expressed that teaching about God's justice carries moral responsibility. They emphasized that students' perceptions of God are shaped significantly by how teachers present biblical themes. Consequently, they sought to avoid misrepresentations that might portray God as arbitrary or harsh. This awareness reflects ethical sensitivity within professional competence. The teachers' sense of accountability parallels the seriousness of Abraham's dialogue in Genesis 18, where the character of God's justice is publicly affirmed. The demographic context of 49 Christian students creates a relatively intimate instructional environment. Teachers reported that the small class sizes allow for deeper discussion and personalized guidance. Observations confirmed that teachers often address students by name and invite individual reflections. This relational closeness facilitates exploration of complex theological questions. Professional competence in this context includes the ability to sustain dialogue rather than merely deliver information. Teachers acknowledged limitations in access to updated theological resources and formal professional development opportunities specifically focused on Old Testament interpretation. Some instructional materials rely heavily on standard textbooks, requiring teachers to supplement with additional explanations. These constraints highlight the importance of institutional support for sustaining high professional standards. Nevertheless, teachers compensate through collaborative study and personal initiative, demonstrating resilience in maintaining instructional quality.

The discussion of findings indicates that professional competence in developing materials on Genesis 18:25 is multidimensional. It integrates exegetical understanding, curriculum alignment, pedagogical strategy, contextual adaptation, and reflective practice. The justice of God is presented not as an abstract doctrine but as a living moral principle connected to students' daily experiences. This integration affirms that professional competence in CRE extends beyond technical compliance with curriculum standards; it involves theological responsibility and ethical intentionality. The findings illustrate that even within a public elementary school setting, theological depth can coexist with professional rigor. Teachers at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya demonstrate that biblical scholarship and pedagogical skill are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they reinforce one another when teachers approach Scripture with disciplined study and educational sensitivity. The justice of God, as articulated in Genesis 18:25, becomes a focal point for cultivating fairness, moral reasoning, and trust in divine righteousness. The qualitative evidence shows that professional competence among CRE teachers at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya is concretely expressed in the careful development and implementation of instructional materials on the justice of God. Teachers demonstrate theological literacy, pedagogical creativity, contextual sensitivity, and reflective growth.

While resource limitations pose challenges, collaborative commitment and vocational awareness sustain instructional quality. The study underscores that professional competence in Christian Religious Education is not merely the mastery of doctrinal content but the disciplined, contextually responsive, and ethically responsible translation of biblical truth into transformative educational practice.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is manifested in developing instructional materials on the justice of God based on Genesis 18:25 at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya, Simalungun. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the findings confirm that professional competence in this context is not limited to administrative compliance or procedural teaching skills. Rather, it is expressed as an integrated capacity that unites biblical-theological understanding, pedagogical expertise, curricular alignment, contextual sensitivity, and reflective practice. The teachers demonstrated solid exegetical awareness in interpreting Genesis 18:25 within its narrative framework of Abraham's intercession. They did not isolate the verse as a moral aphorism but situated it within the theological discourse concerning divine justice and righteousness. This indicates that professional competence in CRE requires responsible engagement with Scripture, ensuring doctrinal integrity while avoiding reductionism. The justice of God was presented as consistent, righteous, and morally trustworthy, preserving theological depth even at the elementary level. Professional competence was evident in pedagogical translation. Teachers successfully transformed abstract theological concepts into developmentally appropriate learning experiences through storytelling, role-play, discussion, and contextual examples. Instructional materials were aligned with national curriculum objectives, particularly in character formation themes such as fairness, honesty, and responsibility. This alignment demonstrates that professional competence involves the ability to integrate theological content with formal educational standards without compromising either domain. Contextual adaptation emerged as a defining strength. Teachers balanced the theme of divine justice with pastoral sensitivity, ensuring that students understood justice not merely as judgment but as fairness rooted in divine righteousness. Their instructional decisions reflected attentiveness to students' cognitive and emotional development. Collaborative reflection among Christian teachers contributed to ongoing material refinement, reinforcing a culture of professional growth. Although resource limitations and restricted access to advanced theological materials present challenges, the teachers' initiative and collegial cooperation sustain instructional quality. Therefore, this study concludes that professional competence in CRE at SD Negeri 091315 Pematang Raya is embodied in the disciplined, reflective, and contextually responsive development of instructional materials that faithfully communicate the justice of God while fostering moral formation. Professionalism in this setting is theological, pedagogical, and ethical at once, integrating biblical truth with transformative educational praxis.

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