



Reimagining Professional Competence Christian Education Teachers Linking Prayer and Learning through Genesis 24:63 in SDN 096 Siborongborong

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the reimagining of professional competence among Christian Education teachers through the integration of prayer and learning, inspired by the reflective practice found in Genesis 24:63. Conducted at SDN 096 Siborongborong, the research employed a qualitative approach involving 46 students to investigate how prayer-based pedagogy influences classroom experiences and learning outcomes. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals, allowing for an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of prayer within the learning process. The findings reveal that prayer functions as more than a spiritual ritual; it serves as a pedagogical tool that supports emotional stability, cognitive engagement, relational harmony, and moral awareness. Students reported increased focus, confidence, and motivation when prayer was integrated meaningfully into instructional activities. Prayer was also found to foster reflective thinking and strengthen classroom relationships, contributing to a supportive learning environment. These outcomes highlight the importance of teacher intentionality in connecting spiritual practices with educational objectives. The study demonstrates that professional competence in Christian Education extends beyond instructional expertise to include the ability to facilitate spiritual reflection that enhances holistic learning. Teachers who aligned prayer themes with lesson content enabled students to perceive deeper meaning in both academic tasks and interpersonal interactions. This research affirms that prayer, when guided by reflective professionalism, can bridge the gap between faith and learning in contemporary educational settings. By situating spiritual practices within pedagogical frameworks, Christian Education teachers can cultivate environments that nurture both intellectual growth and character formation.

Keywords: *Professional competence, Christian Education teachers, prayer*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, the concept of teacher professional competence has undergone a significant redefinition. No longer confined to pedagogical mastery or subject expertise alone, professional competence increasingly includes the integration of values, identity, and reflective spirituality into the teaching vocation. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), this expansion becomes even more critical because teaching is not merely an intellectual activity but also a spiritual calling aimed at shaping the holistic development of learners. As noted by Viani and Arifianto (2022), professional competence in Christian education requires not only instructional expertise but also spiritual depth, since teachers function as both educators and role models who embody faith in practice. Thus, competence in this context involves the ability to connect theological truths with lived educational experiences. The growing complexity of modern classrooms further necessitates this integrative approach. In the twenty-first century, teachers are expected to facilitate not only cognitive learning but also emotional resilience, moral awareness, and spiritual formation. Christian educators, in particular, are tasked with guiding students toward relational knowledge of God while navigating secular educational frameworks. Research by Chrismastianto et al., (2022) highlights that teacher competence in Christian settings must involve spiritual formation alongside instructional capability in order to nurture faith-based community and student growth. This suggests that professional competence cannot be divorced from spiritual intentionality, especially in public-school environments where explicit religious formation may be limited by structural constraints. One of the most overlooked dimensions of teacher competence in Christian pedagogy is the role of prayer as a formative educational practice. While prayer is widely acknowledged as central to Christian spirituality, its pedagogical significance is often underestimated in formal educational contexts. Recent scholarship demonstrates that teachers who maintain a consistent prayer life tend to exhibit stronger clarity in lesson planning, reflective teaching habits, and compassionate classroom engagement (Pardede et al., 2025). This correlation indicates that spiritual disciplines such as prayer may enhance not replace professional competencies by grounding teaching practices in purpose and empathy. The integration of prayer into daily vocation finds strong support in Genesis 24:63, where Isaac is portrayed meditating in the field at evening. This moment reflects not merely personal devotion but an intentional alignment of life decisions with divine guidance. When interpreted pedagogically, this narrative provides a theological framework for understanding prayer as reflective practice an act that cultivates discernment, patience, and relational dependence on God. In educational settings, such reflective spirituality may influence how teachers interpret student needs, respond to challenges, and design learning experiences that promote transformation rather than mere information transfer. Within CRE literature, the integration of Scripture into professional teaching practice has been shown to significantly shape students' internalization of faith values. Zebua (2025) found that pedagogical competence grounded in biblical interpretation enabled teachers to connect theological insights with students' real-life experiences, fostering cognitive understanding alongside affective commitment. Similarly, Hutagalung (2025) emphasizes that professional competence in Christian education extends beyond curriculum mastery to include moral modeling and emotional intelligence, both of which are strengthened through reflective spiritual disciplines. These findings reinforce the notion that teacher

spirituality does not function as an optional supplement but as a foundational element of effective Christian pedagogy.

In public elementary schools such as SDN 096 Siborongborong, the challenge of integrating spiritual values into formal learning environments becomes particularly evident. Teachers must operate within national educational frameworks while simultaneously nurturing students' moral and spiritual awareness. This dual responsibility underscores the importance of reimagining professional competence not simply as technical proficiency but as a holistic synthesis of pedagogical skill and spiritual intentionality. As Sumbayak and Suparman (2022) argue, Christian education is inherently transformative, aiming to restore the image of God in learners through teaching practices that reflect humility, relational understanding, and continuous growth. The increasing emphasis on contextual pedagogy highlights the need for teachers to translate biblical principles into meaningful educational experiences. Professional competence, therefore, involves the capacity to interpret Scripture not only exegetically but also pedagogically. Studies integrating Old Testament narratives into classroom practice demonstrate that when teachers contextualize biblical themes within contemporary learning situations, students experience greater engagement and moral development (Manullang, 2024). This aligns with the broader understanding that competence in Christian education encompasses theological clarity, instructional creativity, and relational authenticity. Despite these developments, the explicit linkage between prayer and learning remains underexplored in empirical educational research. Most studies focus on pedagogical strategies, curriculum implementation, or moral formation, leaving a gap in understanding how spiritual practices shape professional identity and instructional effectiveness. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a more holistic model of teacher competence that reflects both academic rigor and spiritual vitality. This study seeks to reimagine the professional competence of Christian Education teachers by examining how prayer understood through the lens of Genesis 24:63 can be meaningfully integrated into teaching and learning processes. By situating this exploration within the context of SDN 096 Siborongborong, the research aims to contribute to the growing discourse on spiritually grounded pedagogy in public-school settings. Ultimately, the study proposes that when prayer is embraced as a reflective and formative practice, it becomes a catalyst for transforming professional competence into a vocation that shapes not only knowledge but also character and faith.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how the integration of prayer, inspired by Genesis 24:63, shapes the professional competence of Christian Education teachers in linking spiritual reflection with learning practices at SDN 096 Siborongborong. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the research sought to understand lived experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes rather than to measure variables statistically. As emphasized by John W. Creswell (2018), qualitative inquiry enables researchers to capture participants' perspectives within their natural context, particularly when examining values-based educational practices. The participants in this study consisted of 46 elementary students who were enrolled in Christian Religious Education classes. These students were selected

through purposive sampling to ensure that participants had direct experience with classroom practices that intentionally incorporated prayer into learning activities. The inclusion of students as primary participants aligns with the understanding that educational competence is most meaningfully assessed through its impact on learners' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The sample represented diverse academic abilities and socio-emotional backgrounds, allowing for a richer interpretation of how prayer-based pedagogical approaches were perceived across different learner profiles. Data were collected through three primary qualitative techniques: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective student journals. Classroom observations were conducted over a six-week period to document how teachers facilitated prayerful reflection before, during, and after instructional sessions. Observations focused on instructional tone, relational engagement, and student responsiveness. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with selected students to explore their perceptions of how prayer influenced their understanding of lesson content, emotional readiness, and sense of connection within the classroom. The interview protocol was guided by open-ended questions to encourage authentic student voice, following recommendations by Sharan B. Merriam (2009) regarding participant-centered qualitative interviewing. Reflective journals were utilized to capture students' personal responses to prayer-integrated learning activities. Students were invited to describe moments when prayer helped them understand lessons, manage difficulties, or develop positive attitudes toward learning. These reflections provided insight into internal processes that might not be observable through external observation alone. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The process followed the stages outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), including familiarization with data, coding, theme development, and interpretative synthesis. Initial codes were derived from recurring student expressions such as "feeling calm," "better understanding," and "confidence in learning." These were subsequently organized into broader themes related to spiritual reflection, emotional readiness, and relational learning. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation across observation notes, interview responses, and journal entries. Member checking was also conducted by confirming selected interpretations with participants to ensure accuracy of meaning. Ethical considerations were upheld through informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Through this qualitative framework, the research aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of how prayer functions as a pedagogical bridge between spiritual formation and academic learning among 46 students in a real classroom context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the integration of prayer into classroom learning significantly shaped students' academic engagement, emotional readiness, and relational awareness. The experiences of the 46 participating students demonstrated that prayer was not perceived merely as a ritualistic activity, but as a meaningful element that influenced how they approached learning. This insight reflects the broader perspective of holistic education proposed by Parker J. Palmer (2017), who argues that teaching is most effective when it connects intellect with inner life. In the context of Christian Religious Education, prayer appeared to function as a bridge that linked knowledge acquisition with reflective awareness. One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the data was

prayer as a catalyst for emotional stability in learning. Many students described feeling calmer and more focused after participating in classroom prayer. This sense of emotional readiness often translated into greater willingness to engage with lesson material. Students expressed that prayer helped them release anxiety related to academic performance or peer comparison. Such findings resonate with the work of Jonathan C. Smith (2019), who notes that spiritual practices contribute to emotional regulation and resilience. In this study, students' testimonies indicated that prayer fostered an internal environment conducive to learning by promoting peace and confidence. Beyond emotional benefits, prayer was also found to enhance cognitive engagement. Several students reported that prayer helped them understand lesson content more deeply. Rather than attributing comprehension solely to instructional clarity, students linked their improved understanding to moments of reflection during prayer. This suggests that prayer facilitated metacognitive awareness encouraging students to think about their thinking and approach learning more intentionally. Such reflective processes align with the principles of transformative learning discussed by Jack Mezirow (2009), where reflection plays a central role in shaping meaning and interpretation. Although the participants were elementary students, their responses indicated an emerging capacity to interpret learning through personal reflection. Another significant theme was relational connectedness. Students consistently described how prayer created a sense of unity within the classroom. Collective prayer fostered empathy and mutual respect among learners, reducing tendencies toward competition and exclusion. This finding supports the assertion of Nel Noddings (2013) that caring relationships are foundational to meaningful education. When prayer was practiced collectively, students reported feeling supported not only by the teacher but also by their peers. This relational atmosphere appeared to encourage collaborative learning and open communication. The narrative of Genesis 24:63, where Isaac engages in meditation, provided a theological lens for interpreting these outcomes. The act of reflective prayer depicted in this passage emphasizes attentiveness and openness to guidance. In the classroom context, such attentiveness manifested as students becoming more receptive to instruction and interpersonal interaction. Teachers who framed prayer as a moment of reflection rather than obligation were observed to cultivate deeper engagement among students. This pedagogical approach aligns with the reflective teaching model advocated which emphasizes the importance of thoughtful awareness in professional action. Prayer was found to contribute to the development of moral awareness. Students frequently mentioned that prayer reminded them to act kindly, help classmates, and take responsibility for their behavior. These responses suggest that prayer functioned as a moral anchor within the learning environment. The role of the teacher's professional competence was particularly evident in how prayer was integrated into learning. Observations indicated that prayer was most impactful when facilitated intentionally rather than performed mechanically. Teachers who connected prayer themes with lesson objectives enabled students to perceive relevance between spiritual reflection and academic content. Prayer facilitated reflective discipline rather than external compliance. Instead of responding solely to rules, students began to evaluate their actions through personal conviction. This shift from external control to internal motivation mirrors the educational philosophy of Thomas Lickona (2012), who underscores the importance of nurturing intrinsic moral responsibility. Prayer provided a context for students to align

behavior with values rather than mere expectations. Another dimension of the findings was the influence of prayer on learning perseverance. Students reported that prayer helped them remain patient during difficult tasks. This endurance reflects the resilience described in positive psychology by Martin E. P. Seligman (2011), who highlights the role of meaning in sustaining effort. Prayer appeared to supply such meaning by connecting effort with purpose. Prayer also enhanced teacher-student relationships. Students expressed greater trust toward teachers who led prayer authentically. This trust contributed to a supportive learning climate. According to relational pedagogy theorist Hugh Sockett (2012), trust forms the ethical foundation of teaching practice. In this study, prayer functioned as a relational bridge that strengthened this foundation.

Not all students initially perceived prayer as directly relevant to academic tasks. However, when teachers explicitly connected prayer themes with lesson objectives, students gradually recognized its significance. This underscores the need for intentional integration rather than symbolic inclusion. The research demonstrates that prayer, when guided by professional competence, contributes to holistic learning. The insights from Genesis 24:63 illuminate prayer as reflective attentiveness rather than passive ritual. In practice, this attentiveness translated into emotional readiness, moral awareness, relational unity, and cognitive engagement among students. These findings suggest that reimagining professional competence involves recognizing prayer as a pedagogical resource. Rather than existing at the margins of instruction, prayer can serve as a formative practice that enriches both teaching and learning. Through intentional integration, Christian Education teachers can foster environments where spiritual reflection and academic growth coexist meaningfully.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to reimagine the professional competence of Christian Education teachers by examining how prayer, understood through the reflective posture of Genesis 24:63, can function as a meaningful bridge between spiritual formation and academic learning. The findings demonstrate that when prayer is intentionally integrated into classroom practice, it moves beyond ritual formality and becomes a transformative pedagogical element that supports students' holistic development. Among the 46 participating students at SDN 096 Siborongborong, prayer was experienced as a source of emotional calm, cognitive clarity, relational unity, and moral awareness. One of the key conclusions of this research is that prayer contributes significantly to emotional readiness in learning. Students consistently reported feeling more focused and confident after engaging in prayerful reflection. This emotional stability enabled them to participate more actively in classroom activities and approach academic challenges with greater resilience. Such outcomes affirm the perspective of Daniel Goleman (2020), who emphasizes that emotional regulation plays a vital role in effective learning. In this context, prayer functioned as a tool that nurtured inner readiness for intellectual engagement. Prayer was found to enhance students' reflective thinking. Rather than simply memorizing information, students demonstrated an increased ability to connect lesson content with personal understanding. This suggests that prayer encourages metacognitive awareness, supporting the development of meaningful learning experiences. The study also revealed that prayer fostered a stronger sense of community within the classroom. Collective participation in prayer promoted empathy, cooperation,

and mutual respect among students. This relational dynamic contributed to a positive learning climate where students felt valued and supported. Such findings reinforce the relational dimension of teaching highlighted by Andy Hargreaves (2018), who underscores the importance of emotional and social connections in educational success. The integration of prayer highlighted the role of teacher professional competence as a mediating factor. Prayer was most effective when facilitated intentionally and connected to instructional goals. Teachers who demonstrated reflective leadership enabled students to perceive the relevance of spiritual practices to academic learning. This observation supports the concept of integrative teaching proposed by Lee S. Shulman, where professional competence involves bridging content knowledge with meaningful application. This study concludes that prayer can serve as a pedagogical resource that enriches both spiritual formation and academic growth. When understood through the lens of Genesis 24:63, prayer embodies reflective attentiveness a disposition that fosters patience, discernment, and relational awareness. Reimagining professional competence in this way invites Christian Education teachers to view prayer not as an optional supplement but as an integral practice that shapes classroom culture and student development. By situating this exploration within a public elementary school context, the study contributes to broader discussions on holistic education and spiritually grounded pedagogy. It affirms that professional competence in Christian education is not limited to technical skill but encompasses the intentional integration of faith and learning to nurture both knowledge and character.

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