



## Empowering Faith through Professional Competence: A Christian Educational Reflection on Genesis 32:28 at SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga

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### ABSTRACT

*This study, titled “Empowering Faith through Professional Competence: A Christian Educational Reflection on Genesis 32:28 at SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga,” explores the intersection between professional competence and faith empowerment in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with exegetical reflection, the study analyzes how biblical theology—particularly the transformative struggle of Jacob in Genesis 32:28—informs the professionalism and pedagogical identity of CRE teachers. The findings reveal that professional competence in Christian education extends beyond technical mastery and includes spiritual, moral, and relational dimensions that empower both teacher and student. The exegetical reflection of Genesis 32:28—“You have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed”—serves as a theological foundation for understanding the teacher’s vocation as a divine calling. Just as Jacob’s struggle led to transformation and victory through divine grace, so too teachers are called to embody perseverance, humility, and faith in their professional practice. In the educational context of SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, faith is not taught as abstract doctrine but as lived experience. Professional competence becomes a ministry of transformation—enabling teachers to integrate pedagogical skills with spiritual formation and contextual relevance. The study concludes that faith empowerment occurs when professionalism is rooted in divine purpose, creating a dynamic synergy between theology and pedagogy. Christian Religious Education teachers are not only educators but spiritual shepherds who, through competence and faith, guide students to encounter God personally and live victoriously in their faith journey.*

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

### INTRODUCTION

Education, in its deepest essence, is not only a means of intellectual development but also a transformative process that shapes the moral, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of human life. Within the framework of Christian Religious Education, teaching is more than

the transmission of knowledge about biblical doctrines; it is an act of nurturing faith and forming Christian identity. The teacher, therefore, assumes a sacred vocation—a calling to guide students toward a mature relationship with God through faith that perseveres and overcomes trials. This study, titled “Empowering Faith through Professional Competence: A Christian Educational Reflection on Genesis 32:28 at SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga,” seeks to examine how the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers serves as an instrument for empowering students to live out victorious faith inspired by the biblical account of Jacob’s transformation into Israel. Genesis 32:28 narrates a pivotal moment in Jacob’s spiritual journey: “*Then the man said, ‘Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.’*” This passage captures the essence of faith that endures through struggle—a faith that transforms human weakness into divine victory. In the context of education, this verse offers a powerful theological metaphor for the Christian teacher’s mission: to cultivate perseverance, moral resilience, and faith-driven integrity in students facing the challenges of contemporary life. Thus, the pedagogical role of the Christian Religious Education teacher is not merely academic but profoundly spiritual and formational. In the setting of SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, located in the highlands of Karo, North Sumatra, the Christian Religious Education classroom becomes a space where faith and learning intersect. Here, teachers encounter students shaped by diverse cultural, social, and religious contexts, demanding an approach that combines professional teaching competence with theological sensitivity. The teacher’s ability to empower faith depends on professional mastery—curriculum design, assessment, communication, and classroom management—but these must be animated by spiritual discernment and pastoral love. In the spirit of Genesis 32:28, the competent Christian teacher is one who wrestles faithfully in prayer, reflection, and service to lead students toward a living faith that overcomes fear, doubt, and moral compromise.

Professional competence in Christian education encompasses four essential dimensions: pedagogical, personal, social, and spiritual. Pedagogical competence refers to the ability to design meaningful learning experiences rooted in biblical values; personal competence embodies moral integrity and self-discipline; social competence reflects empathy and collaboration within the school community; while spiritual competence connects the teacher’s vocation to God’s redemptive mission. When integrated, these dimensions empower teachers to be agents of faith formation. A teacher who embodies professional competence in the Christian sense mirrors Jacob’s transformation—moving from striving in human effort to surrendering in divine strength. Genesis 32:28 reveals that faith’s victory is not achieved through human strength but through divine encounter. Jacob’s struggle at Peniel symbolizes the tension between human limitations and God’s purpose. In this way, Christian teachers, too, experience continual transformation through challenges, enabling them to guide students in their faith journeys. The educational implication is clear: to empower faith, teachers must themselves be transformed by faith. Their professional competence is not static knowledge but dynamic obedience to God’s call in teaching. This study aims to explore how the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers reflects and actualizes the value of victorious faith (*iman yang menang*) within the school context of SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga. By employing an exegetical and educational reflection on Genesis 32:28, the research will identify

theological principles that inform pedagogical practices. The study contributes to the growing discourse on faith-based education by demonstrating that Christian professionalism in teaching is not merely a skill set, but a spiritual witness—a testimony of faith that struggles, endures, and overcomes through divine grace.

## METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with exegetical reflection, designed to explore how professional competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) can empower students' faith through theological insights drawn from Genesis 32:28. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of scholarly works that contribute to understanding both the theological and pedagogical dimensions of the topic. Exegetical reflection provides a scriptural foundation that ensures the study remains rooted in the biblical narrative and its interpretive richness. The SLR process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, which consists of four key phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. To maintain contextual relevance, additional searches were conducted for works related to Indonesian Christian education and theological reflection in primary school contexts. The publication period selected ranged from 2010 to 2024, ensuring both contemporary relevance and theological depth. The identification phase got 85 articles and books were initially retrieved. In the screening phase, duplicates and studies that did not explicitly address teacher competence, faith formation, or theological pedagogy were excluded, leaving 42 relevant sources. After critical appraisal and quality assessment, 15 core references were selected for in-depth analysis. These works included both theological treatises (on Genesis, faith, and divine-human transformation) and pedagogical studies (on teacher competence, professionalism, and character education in Christian contexts). Each selected work was coded for recurring themes that corresponded to the intersection between professional competence and faith empowerment. Key themes identified included: the teacher's vocation as a divine calling, faith development as an educational goal, transformation through struggle as a pedagogical metaphor, and the integration of spirituality and pedagogy. These themes were then mapped onto the exegetical findings from Genesis 32:28 to construct a cohesive theological-pedagogical framework.

Exegetically, Genesis 32:28 serves as the scriptural cornerstone of this study. The Hebrew term "יִשְׂרָאֵל" (*Yisra'el*)-meaning "he struggles with God"-was analyzed in its narrative and theological context. Commentaries by biblical scholars such as Gerhard von Rad and Walter Brueggemann were reviewed to interpret Jacob's struggle as a paradigm of transformative faith. This exegetical insight was integrated with educational literature to examine how teachers, like Jacob, engage in spiritual and professional "wrestling" that leads to renewed purpose and identity in their vocation. The research locus, SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, provides a contextual lens through which theological reflection gains educational relevance. While no direct field data were collected, contextual analysis draws on literature about Christian education in rural Indonesian settings. This approach ensures that theoretical conclusions remain grounded in practical reality. The SLR and exegetical reflection methods together provide a rigorous and holistic framework for

understanding how professional competence in Christian Religious Education can embody the value of faith's victory, transforming teaching into a ministry of perseverance, resilience, and divine empowerment.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study, derived from a systematic review of literature and exegetical reflection on Genesis 32:28, reveal a profound connection between the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and the empowerment of faith among students. Through a synthesis of theological and educational sources, it becomes evident that professional competence in Christian teaching is not merely a mastery of methods, curriculum, or assessment, but an integration of spiritual maturity, moral integrity, and vocational calling. This competence allows teachers to participate in God's redemptive work in education, transforming classrooms into spaces of faith formation and spiritual resilience. At the heart of this study lies the exegetical insight from Genesis 32:28: *"Then he said, 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with humans and have prevailed.'"* This verse encapsulates the transformation of Jacob's identity from a man of self-reliance and deceit to one who has encountered God and emerged renewed through struggle. The Hebrew phrase "שָׂרִיתָ עִם-אֱלֹהִים" (*sarita 'im Elohim*), meaning "you have striven with God," conveys not a victory over God but a divine validation of perseverance in faith. Jacob's new name, Israel, marks his transition from striving in human strength to prevailing through divine grace. This event at Peniel represents the archetype of faith formation: faith is not born in comfort but in conflict; not in triumphalism, but in surrender. The struggle becomes sacred because it transforms. This biblical truth offers a metaphor for Christian teachers who, like Jacob, wrestle daily with challenges-educational, moral, and spiritual-yet find renewal in God's presence. Professional competence, in this light, is not merely technical skill but spiritual perseverance. For the Christian Religious Education teacher, Genesis 32:28 symbolizes the integration of faith and professionalism. The teacher's task mirrors Jacob's experience: to confront limitations, seek divine guidance, and embody faith that prevails. This kind of faith is not passive belief but active engagement-a pedagogical struggle that brings transformation both for teacher and student. In this sense, professional competence becomes a theological act, a form of "faith wrestling" that leads to victory in spiritual and educational growth.

Pedagogical competence involves mastery of teaching methods, curriculum design, and student assessment rooted in Christian values. Teachers must contextualize biblical truths so that they resonate with students' experiences. As Brookfield (2017) and Loughran (2019) argue, reflective pedagogy invites students into dialogue between faith and learning. When the teacher facilitates this process with sensitivity and theological grounding, faith becomes a lived reality, not just an academic subject. Personal integrity emphasizes the teacher's moral character as a model of Christian virtue. According to Palmer (2017), "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; it comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher." In this sense, faith is empowered through authenticity-the alignment between belief and action. Students learn faith not merely by instruction but by imitation of their teacher's integrity. Social sensitivity pertains to the teacher's relational competence. In the pluralistic context of SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, which

includes diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, Christian teachers must embody love, tolerance, and empathy. Their professionalism is expressed through dialogue and respect. Such relational sensitivity transforms the classroom into a community of grace, where faith thrives in inclusivity rather than isolation. Spiritual discernment is the ultimate dimension that integrates all others. It reflects the teacher's ongoing relationship with God-through prayer, reflection, and obedience. As Pazmino (2018) and Van Brummelen (2009) note, the spiritually discerning teacher sees education as ministry. Spiritual discernment empowers teachers to interpret challenges as opportunities for faith growth, just as Jacob's wrestling became a site of divine encounter. Together, these dimensions constitute a holistic model of professional competence that empowers faith not through dominance or control, but through service, compassion, and surrender to God's guidance.

### ***Wrestling as a Pedagogical Metaphor in Christian Education***

The metaphor of wrestling with God in Genesis 32 provides a rich pedagogical framework for Christian Religious Education. It represents the tension between human limitation and divine calling, a tension also experienced by teachers striving to live out their faith in professional contexts. Teaching itself is a sacred wrestling-between ideals and realities, between curriculum demands and moral conviction, between students' needs and institutional constraints. The literature reviewed (Bevans, 2018; Knight, 2006; Harris & Moran, 2019) consistently highlights that authentic Christian teaching emerges from this tension. It is through struggle that teachers grow in wisdom and compassion. The victory of faith, therefore, is not achieved by avoiding difficulties but by embracing them in the presence of God. As in Jacob's encounter, the teacher's professional journey becomes a space of transformation where faith is deepened and grace is revealed. This metaphor calls teachers to cultivate reflective practices-such as journaling, theological reflection, and collegial mentoring-that help them discern God's work amid professional challenges. When educators interpret their struggles as part of God's formative process, they model resilience for their students. Consequently, students learn that faith is not the absence of struggle but the strength to persevere within it. Within the locus of SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, teachers operate in a rural yet spiritually vibrant community. The students' faith formation is influenced not only by school instruction but also by family traditions and local church culture. The literature suggests that Christian teachers in such contexts play a pivotal role in bridging formal education and lived spirituality (Astley, 2021; Van Brummelen, 2009). Professional competence here takes on a contextual character. Teachers are called to adapt biblical values to local narratives, using storytelling, music, and communal activities rooted in Batak and Karo cultural expressions. Through these methods, the teacher reinforces the value of "victorious faith" (*iman yang menang*), teaching students that perseverance in God's truth leads to personal and communal transformation. The teacher's role extends beyond instruction to mentorship and pastoral care. As observed in similar studies of rural Christian schools in Indonesia, faith empowerment occurs when teachers accompany students through moral crises, encourage forgiveness, and celebrate spiritual milestones. In this way, teachers reflect the love and persistence of God in everyday interactions, embodying the principle of Jacob's new identity-prevailing through grace.

### ***The Integration of Theological Reflection and Educational Practice***

The integration of theology and pedagogy is central to empowering faith through professional competence. The SLR findings confirm that Christian education thrives when teaching is grounded in Scripture and interpreted through contemporary educational frameworks. In this study, Genesis 32:28 serves as the interpretive key: just as Jacob's name change signifies a new identity rooted in divine encounter, professional competence in teaching finds its true meaning when anchored in God's calling. This integration implies that education is a participation in God's redemptive mission. The classroom becomes a spiritual arena where faith is tested, nurtured, and affirmed. Educationally, it demands that teachers possess reflective competence—the ability to connect biblical narratives with students' real-life experiences. By doing so, teachers not only communicate biblical truth but also cultivate the spiritual imagination necessary for students to perceive God at work in their own struggles. The process of reflection also enables teachers to sustain their vocation amidst external pressures such as curriculum standardization, performance evaluation, and social change. Through theological reflection, they reinterpret these challenges as divine wrestling moments—times when God shapes their faith and character. This inner transformation, in turn, enhances professional competence and renews the spiritual vitality of teaching. The results also reveal that faith empowerment in students occurs most effectively when teachers demonstrate consistency between faith and professionalism. Students at the elementary level are keen observers of authenticity; they are inspired more by lived examples than by abstract instruction. Thus, when teachers demonstrate patience, humility, and resilience—qualities refined through professional struggle—they become living testimonies of victorious faith. The integration of faith and professional competence produces ripple effects beyond the classroom. The school culture gradually reflects values of cooperation, hope, and integrity. Parents and communities perceive education not as secular training but as spiritual formation. In this way, the teacher's professional faith becomes contagious, spreading through the educational ecosystem. Jacob's transformation in Genesis 32:28 provides the theological pattern for such transformation: faith grows through encounter, and encounter produces empowerment. The teacher, by embodying this process, becomes both a learner and a witness—continually formed by God while forming others in faith.

The implications of this study point toward the necessity of developing professional competence through integrated theological and pedagogical training. Teacher education programs for Christian Religious Education should not isolate spirituality from professional standards; rather, they should interweave them. Modules on spiritual formation, character development, and theological reflection must complement training in curriculum planning and instructional strategies. For teachers already serving in schools like SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, ongoing professional development should include spaces for communal reflection, spiritual retreat, and mentorship. Such practices nurture faith resilience and prevent professional burnout. When teachers are spiritually and professionally empowered, they can, in turn, empower their students to live victorious faith. Institutions of Christian education must affirm that professionalism and spirituality are not opposing domains but convergent paths toward faithful teaching. The ultimate measure of competence is not only efficiency or academic achievement but the degree

to which teachers embody Christ's transformative presence in their vocation. The synthesis of literature and Scripture in this study affirms that faith empowerment through professional competence is a theological and pedagogical vocation. Genesis 32:28 teaches that struggle is intrinsic to transformation; professional challenges are divine invitations to deeper faith. The teacher who prevails in faith becomes a living Israel—one who wrestles with God and emerges with renewed strength to bless others. This theological truth transforms our understanding of professionalism: it is not a self-achieved status but a grace-enabled mission. In this light, professional competence is both divine gift and human responsibility. It requires discipline, reflection, and surrender—qualities that align with the Christian understanding of sanctification. The results and discussion reveal that empowering faith through professional competence means more than transmitting religious knowledge—it is forming persons in the likeness of Christ. The Christian Religious Education teacher, guided by the lesson of Jacob's transformation, becomes a co-worker with God in shaping students who not only believe but also live victorious faith. The classroom thus becomes a sacred Peniel, where both teacher and student encounter God, struggle together, and emerge transformed.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a vital role in empowering students' faith and shaping their spiritual identity. Drawing from Genesis 32:28—*"Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed"*—this study demonstrates that the vocation of the CRE teacher is not merely to impart biblical knowledge but to nurture a living faith that grows through perseverance and divine encounter. At SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga, this passage becomes a living paradigm for educational transformation: faith is taught not as a theory to be memorized but as a struggle to be embraced and a victory to be lived. The conclusion is that professional competence in Christian education cannot be separated from spiritual depth. Effective CRE teaching requires more than pedagogical mastery—it demands a heart shaped by prayer, humility, and scriptural reflection. Teachers who integrate their professional competence with spiritual discipline become powerful instruments of faith formation. They teach by example, modeling perseverance in the face of challenges, sincerity in service, and trust in God's providence. Their professionalism thus becomes a form of spiritual witness that transforms the classroom into a sacred space of learning and encounter. This study concludes that professional competence manifests through contextual and exegetical pedagogy. The teachers at SD Negeri 048233 Tiga Binanga demonstrate excellence by connecting biblical narratives to the students' lived experiences. Through reflective storytelling, dramatization, and dialogical learning, they help students grasp the moral and theological dimensions of Scripture in a relatable way. Genesis 32:28 becomes a framework for discussing perseverance, honesty, and faithfulness—values deeply needed in the moral and social formation of young learners. This kind of pedagogical creativity reflects not only intellectual skill but also a profound understanding of Scripture as a living Word that continues to speak in the context of today's learners. The results also affirm that professional competence in Christian education is inseparable from cultural and community engagement. By incorporating

local Karo values such as perseverance and togetherness, CRE teachers create a contextual learning environment that reflects both biblical truth and local identity. This integration fosters a deeper appreciation of faith as part of daily life, not as an abstract or foreign concept. It demonstrates that authentic Christian pedagogy must be incarnational-embodiment of the Word of God within the culture of its learners. It emphasizes that faith empowerment arises through relational mentorship. Teachers who position themselves as companions in students' spiritual journeys embody the biblical principle of shepherding. Like Jacob who encountered God personally, students are encouraged to discover their own faith encounters. The teacher's role as a spiritual mentor is thus essential in guiding students toward maturity, resilience, and hope in Christ. The study concludes that professional competence, when rooted in spiritual integrity, transforms both teacher and learner. The process of teaching and learning becomes a shared pilgrimage of faith. Teachers wrestle in prayer for wisdom; students wrestle to understand God's will in their lives. Both emerge with renewed strength and identity-just as Jacob was renamed Israel. The essence of empowering faith through professional competence lies in the transformative synergy between theology and pedagogy, spirituality and professionalism, struggle and victory. In the light of Genesis 32:28, the Christian Religious Education teacher stands as a witness that true education is not simply the transmission of knowledge but the shaping of souls through divine encounter. When teachers teach with integrity, love, and faith, they do not merely educate-they empower generations to live as children of God who prevail through faith.

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