



Empowering Pedagogical Excellence: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Developing Teacher Competence through Matthew 3:16 at SDN No 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the Holy Spirit in developing teacher competence by examining Matthew 3:16 as a theological foundation for pedagogical excellence at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano. Anchored in a qualitative descriptive design, the research integrates biblical exegesis, interviews, and classroom observations to investigate how Christian teachers understand and experience spiritual empowerment in their professional practice. Matthew 3:16—depicting the opening of heaven, the descent of the Spirit as a dove, and the divine affirmation of Jesus—serves as a hermeneutical lens for interpreting teachers' identity, motivation, and pedagogical actions. The findings reveal that teachers perceive competence as both a professional requirement and a spiritual vocation sustained by the Holy Spirit's presence. Five key dimensions of Spirit-empowered competence emerged: vocational affirmation, reflected in teachers' sense of calling and purpose, emotional resilience and compassion shaped through spiritual formation, pedagogical discernment enabling wise, ethical, and creative instructional decisions, character-based leadership expressing integrity, humility, and relational care, and spiritual endurance that strengthens teachers amid resource limitations and classroom challenges. These dimensions demonstrate that the Holy Spirit does not substitute for professional skills but enriches them, enabling teachers to integrate faith, values, and effective pedagogy holistically. The study contributes to the growing discourse on spirituality in education by showing how biblical narratives can inform practical competence formation. It concludes that Matthew 3:16 provides a transformative model for understanding the empowerment of teachers, highlighting that spiritual depth is an essential component of pedagogical excellence in Christian educational contexts.

Keywords: *Teacher Competence, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogical*

INTRODUCTION

Educational transformation in the twenty-first century places increasing demands on teachers to demonstrate not only strong pedagogical competence but also moral

integrity, emotional maturity, and spiritual depth. Within the Indonesian educational landscape-particularly in public schools located in rural areas-teachers are expected to carry responsibilities that extend beyond academic instruction. They are called to become facilitators of character formation, mentors for personal development, and agents of holistic transformation. In this context, Christian teachers often articulate that the source of sustained competence and resilience is not merely professional training but also a deep spiritual grounding. This study explores the significant theological and pedagogical question of how the Holy Spirit contributes to shaping teacher competence, with particular reference to Matthew 3:16 and its application in the teaching practices at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano. Matthew 3:16 narrates a pivotal moment in Jesus' life and ministry: His baptism at the Jordan River. The text states, "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him." The verse portrays the descent of the Spirit not as a symbolic ornament but as a divine empowerment inaugurating Jesus' public ministry. Theologically, this moment reveals that effective ministry flows from divine enablement; Jesus' identity as the Son is affirmed, and His mission is empowered by the Spirit. For Christian educators, this narrative provides an interpretive key for understanding teacher competence not as a merely human construct but as a vocational calling strengthened by spiritual empowerment. The descent of the Holy Spirit signifies illumination, guidance, renewal, and empowerment-elements that can shape teachers' attitudes, ethics, relationships, and instructional practices. A deeper exegetical reading of Matthew 3:16 reveals several theological insights relevant to educational practice. First, the phrase "heaven was opened" (Greek: *aneōchthēsan hoi ouranoi*) suggests divine initiative and accessibility. It implies that the empowerment for ministry is not self-generated but granted through a relationship with God. This challenges teachers to recognize that competence includes openness to divine guidance. Second, the verb *katabainō* ("descending") indicates purposeful divine movement toward Jesus, highlighting the Spirit's active involvement in preparing Him for mission. This descent symbolizes enabling power-suggesting that Christian teachers can understand their professional growth as a process assisted by the Spirit's ongoing work. Third, the imagery of the dove reflects purity, peace, and gentleness. In pedagogical contexts, this points to competencies such as patience, compassion, emotional regulation, and relational sensitivity, all of which are foundational to effective teaching. The locus of this study, SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, represents a learning environment marked by unique challenges and potentials. Located in a socioeconomically modest region, many students come from households with limited educational resources, requiring teachers to exert additional emotional and pedagogical effort. Teachers frequently navigate issues related to student motivation, behavioral difficulties, and varied learning capacities. In such a setting, competence cannot be conceptualized merely in technical or procedural terms. Teachers need spiritual resilience, moral clarity, and a strong sense of calling. Therefore, understanding the role of the Holy Spirit-particularly as depicted in the baptismal narrative of Jesus-offers insight into how teachers can sustain excellence amid difficulties. Existing scholarship has largely focused on teacher competence from psychological, pedagogical, or policy perspectives. However, fewer studies explore competence from a Christian theological lens that integrates spiritual empowerment as a central factor. By engaging Matthew 3:16, this study attempts to

bridge this gap, proposing that the Spirit's empowering work has significant implications for character formation, ethical behavior, relational sensitivity, and pedagogical creativity. These dimensions resonate with the daily experiences of Christian teachers at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, who often perceive their role as a spiritual vocation rather than merely a civil appointment. This research seeks to examine how the Holy Spirit contributes to developing teacher competence through theological reflection and contextual analysis. By integrating biblical exegesis with educational praxis, this study aims to construct a framework in which spiritual empowerment becomes a core component of pedagogical excellence. This exploration is expected to contribute not only to theoretical discourse but also to practical transformation in the lived experiences of Christian teachers serving in challenging educational environments.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how Christian teachers understand and experience the role of the Holy Spirit in developing their pedagogical competence, framed by theological insights from Matthew 3:16. The research was conducted at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, a rural public elementary school whose socioeducational dynamics provided a meaningful context for examining the interplay between spirituality and teaching competence. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select Christian teachers who were willing to articulate their spiritual reflections and demonstrate how these inform their teaching practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis involving lesson plans and reflective notes, ensuring triangulation across multiple sources. Interviews were designed to elicit teachers' interpretations of Matthew 3:16, their experiences of spiritual empowerment, and the ways in which they perceive the Holy Spirit influencing their professional growth and daily instructional decisions. Classroom observations focused on identifying behavioral indicators of spiritually grounded competence—such as patience, compassion, clarity in instruction, and adaptive pedagogical strategies—while document analysis provided additional insight into how teachers express or operationalize spiritual motivations in their planning and reflection. All data were analyzed using thematic analysis, beginning with open coding and progressing toward the development of conceptual themes that integrate exegetical insights from Matthew 3:16 with empirical findings from the field. Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, method triangulation, and the maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytic decisions, while ethical considerations were addressed through informed consent, confidentiality safeguards, and respect for participants' theological perspectives. This methodological approach allowed for a rich and coherent understanding of how spiritual empowerment, grounded in the biblical narrative of Jesus' baptism, informs and enriches teacher competence within the contextual realities of SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a rich and multidimensional relationship between teachers' spiritual experiences and their professional competence, demonstrating that the narrative of the Holy Spirit's descent in Matthew 3:16 provides a theological lens

through which Christian educators interpret, sustain, and strengthen their pedagogical identity. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, several themes emerged that illuminate the ways in which teachers at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano understand the Holy Spirit as an active agent in their teaching vocation. These themes include: spiritual empowerment as the foundation of teacher identity, the Holy Spirit as a source of emotional regulation and compassion, spiritual discernment shaping pedagogical decisions, the integration of biblical values into instructional practice; and the Holy Spirit as a sustaining force amid contextual challenges. Together, these findings demonstrate how theological exegesis of Matthew 3:16 informs the daily experiences of educators, while simultaneously offering insight into the crucial role of spirituality in developing robust teacher competence. The first major theme emerging from the data concerns the Holy Spirit as the foundation of teachers' vocational identity. Participants consistently expressed that their calling as educators extends beyond professional obligation to a spiritual mission grounded in divine empowerment. This perspective is deeply connected to their reading of Matthew 3:16, in which Jesus' ministry begins not with human acclaim or institutional endorsement but with the descent of the Spirit. Many teachers described this verse as a reminder that competence is not merely a matter of skill acquisition but of spiritual readiness. By interpreting the opening of heaven (*aneōchthēsan hoi ouranoi*) as symbolic of divine initiative, teachers articulated that their work begins with openness to God's guidance rather than self-reliance. This finding aligns with theological scholarship that emphasizes the Spirit's role in affirming vocational identity and enabling mission (Fee, 1994). Participants voiced that moments of prayer, reflection, and Scripture meditation each morning serve as formative practices through which they sense divine affirmation similar to the divine voice in the baptism narrative. As one teacher noted, *"My competence comes alive when I feel the Holy Spirit affirming me; without that, I am just performing tasks."* Such reflections demonstrate that for these educators, competence is inseparable from spiritual empowerment, reflecting a worldview in which teaching is fundamentally relational and divinely guided. The second emergent theme relates to the Holy Spirit's role in shaping emotional regulation and compassionate engagement with students. Classroom observations revealed that teachers who reported a strong reliance on the Holy Spirit exhibited higher levels of patience, gentleness, and empathetic responsiveness when encountering behavioral or academic difficulties among students. Teachers repeatedly described the Spirit as the one who "softens the heart," "calms the mind," or "gives patience when it is needed most." These experiences resonate with the dove imagery in Matthew 3:16, which symbolizes peace, purity, and gentleness—qualities that participants identified as essential to managing classroom interactions. Emotional regulation is widely regarded in educational research as a key dimension of teacher competence, influencing student motivation, classroom climate, and relational trust (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, unlike psychological models that root such regulation in cognitive strategies alone, participants attributed their emotional steadiness to spiritual intervention. One teacher explained that when facing disruptive behavior, she silently prays for "the Spirit's calmness" before responding, resulting in a more thoughtful and compassionate reaction. This form of spiritually guided emotional regulation highlights the integration of theological identity with pedagogical practice, demonstrating how teachers at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano draw upon transcendent resources to navigate classroom challenges. A

third theme that emerged is the teachers' reliance on spiritual discernment to guide pedagogical decisions. Teachers described moments of uncertainty—such as choosing instructional methods, addressing student conflict, or modifying lesson plans—as opportunities to seek the Spirit's guidance. This reliance reflects an interpretive link to *katabainō*, the Greek verb describing the Spirit's descent upon Jesus, which participants viewed as symbolic of the Spirit's ongoing involvement in human decision-making. The teachers' testimonies revealed that spiritual discernment functions not as a substitute for professional training but as a complement to it. They emphasized that technical knowledge and pedagogical skill form the structural framework of competence, while the Spirit's guidance animates their decisions with wisdom, creativity, and moral clarity. This dynamic relationship between competence and discernment echoes Shulman's concept of pedagogical reasoning, which argues that effective teaching involves not only skill but also the capacity for wise judgment (Shulman, 1987). Participants noted instances when unexpected teaching opportunities emerged—such as addressing student anxiety, mediating interpersonal conflict, or adapting materials for struggling learners—and described sensing an inner prompting that helped them respond effectively. Such experiences illustrate that for these educators, divine guidance is woven into the reflective processes that shape instructional praxis. Another significant theme concerns the integration of biblical values into instructional practice. Teachers expressed that the Holy Spirit not only empowers them internally but also enables them to embody and communicate values such as love, honesty, discipline, and responsibility within the learning environment. Document analysis of lesson plans revealed that although the school is public and thus adheres to secular curriculum standards, Christian teachers intentionally incorporate values derived from biblical principles into their pedagogy. These values often manifest implicitly through modeling behavior, relational engagement, and the moral framing of classroom norms. Participants frequently likened their teaching posture to Jesus' ministry, which began after His baptism and was characterized by compassion, integrity, and transformative teaching. They saw the Spirit's descent as empowering them to emulate Christlike attributes within professional boundaries. This practice aligns with literature that views teacher character as central to competence, particularly in holistic or faith-based educational models (Arthur, 2015). The Holy Spirit, in their understanding, functions as the moral compass shaping their educational influence, enabling them to transmit values not through proselytization but through ethically grounded teaching and relational authenticity. The fifth major theme pertains to the Holy Spirit as a sustaining force amid contextual and structural challenges. Teachers at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano reported facing multiple difficulties, including limited learning resources, diverse student needs, family-related student stress, and high workloads. Many participants described experiencing fatigue, discouragement, or frustration, but consistently noted that spiritual empowerment served as the sustaining element enabling them to persevere. The opening of heaven in Matthew 3:16—interpreted as divine presence breaking into human struggle—resonated deeply with their narratives. Several teachers spoke of feeling “refreshed,” “strengthened,” or “renewed” through prayer or spiritual reflection, particularly during emotionally taxing periods. This sense of being spiritually sustained aligns with Christian theological perspectives that highlight the Spirit's role in providing endurance and hope (Stott, 2006). Observations corroborated these accounts, as teachers demonstrated consistency, attentiveness, and

resilience even in challenging circumstances. The spiritual dimension of perseverance emerges as a distinctive form of competence, allowing teachers to maintain high professional standards despite contextual limitations. Beyond identifying themes, this study also reveals significant implications for understanding competence as a holistic construct. The experiences of teachers at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano suggest that competence involves not only knowledge, skills, and dispositions—as emphasized in conventional educational theory—but also spiritual orientation and empowerment. The narrative of Matthew 3:16 provides a theological framework in which competence is tied to calling, character, and divine empowerment. While secular models view teaching primarily as a cognitive and technical profession, participants articulated an integrated model in which the Holy Spirit provides motivation, ethical grounding, emotional depth, and pedagogical insight. This integration enhances what educational research terms “relational competence,” the capacity to build trust, foster empathy, and create supportive learning environments (Hargreaves, 2001). Teachers in this study reported that spiritual empowerment enriched their relational capacities by fostering humility, gentleness, and attentiveness—qualities that are difficult to cultivate through training alone. The discussion further highlights that spiritual empowerment does not replace professional development but rather strengthens it. Teachers saw themselves as co-laborers with God, responsible for mastering pedagogical skills yet dependent on the Spirit for wisdom and strength. This balanced understanding counters misconceptions that reliance on spirituality leads to professional complacency. In fact, participants described being motivated by their spiritual convictions to plan lessons more diligently, respond more patiently to student needs, and continuously improve their teaching practices. This dynamic reflects the biblical principle that divine empowerment inspires human excellence rather than diminishing it (Willard, 1997). The Spirit’s empowerment thus becomes a catalyst for pedagogical growth, fostering a professional identity rooted in humility, purpose, and ethical responsibility. These findings illuminate the profound relevance of Matthew 3:16 for educational contexts. Just as Jesus’ ministry was inaugurated through the empowering presence of the Spirit, Christian teachers interpret their vocation as requiring continual spiritual renewal. The descent of the Spirit becomes a metaphor for the ongoing process through which educators receive inspiration, guidance, and strength. This theological interpretation enriches the concept of competence, presenting it as a dynamic interplay between human effort and divine empowerment. Ultimately, the integration of exegesis and empirical data demonstrates that spirituality serves not as an abstract belief but as a lived reality that shapes teachers’ attitudes, relationships, and instructional practices in meaningful ways. The results and discussion of this study illustrate that teacher competence at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano is deeply intertwined with spiritual empowerment derived from the Holy Spirit, as reflected in the narrative of Matthew 3:16. The teachers’ testimonies, classroom behaviors, and documented practices reveal that competence is expressed through spiritual identity, emotional regulation, wise discernment, ethical integrity, and resilience. By linking biblical exegesis with pedagogical experience, this study demonstrates that the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in shaping holistic and transformative teacher competence. This expanded understanding offers valuable implications for Christian educators, educational institutions, and theological reflection on the nature of teaching as both a professional and spiritual vocation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teacher competence at SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano is profoundly shaped by the dynamic interplay between professional skill and spiritual empowerment, with Matthew 3:16 serving as a central theological lens for understanding this relationship. The findings reveal that Christian teachers conceptualize their vocation not merely as a technical profession but as a spiritually grounded calling sustained by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus—depicted in Matthew 3:16 as the opening of heaven, the movement of divine empowerment, and the symbolic descent of the dove—provides a framework through which teachers make sense of their identity, purpose, and daily pedagogical challenges. This biblical narrative becomes more than a historical moment; it functions as a spiritual paradigm informing contemporary educational practice. The results indicate several key dimensions through which the Holy Spirit influences teacher competence. First, the Spirit forms the foundational sense of vocation, affirming teachers with divine assurance similar to the affirmation Jesus received at His baptism. Second, the Spirit shapes emotional regulation and compassion, enabling teachers to respond with patience, gentleness, and empathy—qualities essential for creating supportive learning environments. Third, the Spirit provides discernment in pedagogical decision-making, complementing professional training with wisdom, creativity, and moral clarity. Fourth, teachers integrate biblical values into their instructional practice through Spirit-shaped character, modeling integrity, humility, and relational authenticity. Finally, the Spirit sustains teachers amid systemic limitations and personal fatigue, offering strength and resilience that extend beyond human capacity. These findings challenge narrow conceptions of competence that reduce teaching to technical expertise, proposing instead a holistic model that includes spiritual depth, ethical sensitivity, and relational wisdom. In this integrated framework, the Holy Spirit does not replace professional competence but enriches and animates it, enabling teachers to embody pedagogical excellence rooted in divine empowerment. Such a model is particularly relevant in contexts like SDN No. 074065 Balaekha Hilisimaetano, where teachers must navigate socioeconomic challenges, diverse learning needs, and emotional complexities. The study therefore underscores that spirituality is not peripheral but central to effective teaching, especially for educators who understand their work as a vocational ministry. This research contributes to the growing discourse on faith and education by demonstrating how biblical exegesis, particularly of Matthew 3:16, can inform and strengthen educational practice. It affirms that the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in shaping teacher competence by empowering identity, guiding decisions, cultivating virtues, and sustaining educators through adversity. Future research could expand this inquiry by exploring comparative contexts, examining student perspectives, or analyzing institutional factors that support spiritually grounded competence. Ultimately, this study highlights that when teachers embrace both professional discipline and spiritual openness, pedagogical excellence becomes not only achievable but transformative for both educators and students.

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