



Journal of Christian Pedagogy and Theology



Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Cultivating Trust in God: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 14:13 at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar

Monika Sires Simaremare

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: monikasimaremare27@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in cultivating trust in God among students, using Exodus 14:13 as the primary theological and pedagogical foundation. The biblical narrative, in which Moses encourages Israel to overcome fear and witness God's deliverance, provides a rich framework for shaping students' spiritual resilience and dependence on God. Conducted at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar, this qualitative study employed interviews, observations, and document analysis to examine how teachers interpret, communicate, and model the value of trusting God in classroom settings. Through thematic analysis, the research identified core competencies that significantly contribute to students' spiritual formation, the contextualization of biblical messages to students' lived realities, and the capacity to create learning environments that promote reflection, dialogue, and experiential engagement with faith. Findings indicate that teachers who integrate biblical insight with effective pedagogical strategies, such as narrative instruction, guided reflection, prayer-based learning, and relational support, play a central role in strengthening students' trust in God. These teachers successfully connect the theological message of Exodus 14:13 with students' experiences of fear, uncertainty, and personal struggle, enabling them to internalize spiritual confidence in God's guidance. However, the study also highlights challenges, including varying levels of student spirituality, external socio-emotional pressures, and limited professional development opportunities for CRE teachers. The study concludes that cultivating trust in God requires a holistic model of professional competence that integrates pedagogy, theology, and authentic spiritual leadership. Strengthening these competencies will significantly enhance the transformative impact of CRE in Indonesian public schools.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Trust in God

INTRODUCTION

Education within Indonesia's pluralistic and rapidly changing social environment increasingly demands teachers who are professionally competent not only in pedagogy

and subject mastery but also in the spiritual and formative dimensions of student development. This is particularly true for Christian Religious Education teachers whose teaching mandate extends beyond knowledge transmission toward nurturing faith, shaping spirituality, and guiding students to respond to life's challenges with reliance on God. At the elementary level, such as SD Negeri 121248 in Pematangsiantar, students encounter early forms of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, often shaped by family conditions, peer dynamics, or socio-economic pressures. These formative experiences require teachers who are capable of guiding students toward trust in God as part of their spiritual growth. Professional competence therefore becomes essential, not only in technical teaching skills but in the ability to integrate biblical truths with contextual realities. Exodus 14:13 serves as a significant theological foundation for understanding how trust in God can be cultivated pedagogically. Moses' exhortation-*"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today"*-emerges at a moment of crisis when Israel faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The verse reveals three core spiritual principles: overcoming fear, cultivating steadfastness, and encouraging an expectant faith in God's action. These theological motifs are deeply relevant for Christian educators who seek to guide learners in developing a faith perspective that acknowledges God's presence and intervention in daily life. An exegetical engagement with this text provides not only theological illumination but also a pedagogical framework for teaching trust in God within the classroom. In the context of SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar, CRE teachers are required to demonstrate a holistic competence that includes mastery of biblical content, creative teaching strategies, emotional sensitivity, and spiritual maturity. Professional competence in this sense encompasses pedagogical knowledge, didactic skills, classroom management, and contextual awareness. However, beyond these foundational competencies, CRE teachers must embody spiritual leadership characterized by authenticity, empathy, and the ability to model faith through daily interactions. Students tend to internalize trust in God not only through formal lesson content but also through the lived example of teachers who demonstrate reliance on God in words, attitudes, and actions.

Cultivating trust in God in the elementary school context requires a balanced approach between cognitive understanding and experiential learning. Students must be able to grasp the biblical narratives conceptually while also experiencing moments of guided reflection, prayer, storytelling, and practical application that help them connect the message of Scripture to their personal lives. The story of Israel at the Red Sea, as illuminated in Exodus 14:13, is particularly effective for this purpose because it mirrors the emotional experiences of fear, uncertainty, and dependency that children may encounter. When appropriately mediated by a competent teacher, the narrative becomes a tool for shaping students' worldviews and spiritual confidence. Given these dynamics, this study investigates how the professional competence of CRE teachers contributes to students' development of trust in God, with a specific focus on the exegetical insights drawn from Exodus 14:13. By anchoring the educational process in a biblical text rich with themes of divine fidelity and human response, the research emphasizes the connection between biblical interpretation and pedagogical practice. The locus at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar provides a meaningful case study, allowing the exploration of how teachers translate theological meanings into classroom realities within a public-school

environment where spiritual formation must be conducted with sensitivity, relevance, and pedagogical integrity. This article presents the exegetical foundations of Exodus 14:13, examines the professional competencies required of CRE teachers, analyzes their role in cultivating students' trust in God, and identifies the implications for Christian education in Indonesia's contemporary context.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers contributes to cultivating students' trust in God, with a specific focus on the exegetical insights derived from Exodus 14:13. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, teaching practices, and pedagogical interpretations that shape students' spiritual formation within the classroom setting at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar. Rather than quantifying teacher competence, the study sought to interpret the meanings, strategies, and contextual dynamics that inform how CRE teachers guide students toward developing trust in God. The locus of the study was SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar, a public elementary school characterized by a diverse socio-cultural student population. Participants consisted of one Christian Religious Education teacher who teaches upper-grade classes (Grades 4-6) and ten students selected through purposive sampling. The teacher was chosen based on teaching experience, competency level, and involvement in Christian spiritual activities within the school. Student participants were selected to represent varying backgrounds and levels of engagement in CRE learning. Interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher to explore pedagogical practices, perceptions of Exodus 14:13, and strategies used to build students' trust in God. Students were interviewed to understand how they experienced the lessons, internalized biblical messages, and responded to spiritual guidance. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility while maintaining alignment with research objectives. Non-participant observations were carried out over four CRE sessions to examine teacher-student interactions, teaching methods, use of biblical narratives, and moments where trust-building practices appeared. Particular attention was given to references to fear, courage, divine help, and reliance on God-core themes of Exodus 14:13. Student worksheets were analyzed to identify how the biblical text was integrated into the curriculum and how the teacher operationalized professional competence in planning and assessment. The content was examined for alignment with exegetical themes such as standing firm, overcoming fear, and expecting God's deliverance. The study incorporated a textual-theological exegetical approach to Exodus 14:13. This framework involved analyzing the historical context, literary structure, and theological motifs of the verse to generate interpretive insights that informed the evaluation of teaching practices. The exegetical findings also served as criteria for assessing how effectively the teacher translated the text's theological message into pedagogical action. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded to identify recurring patterns related to teacher competence, spiritual guidance, and student responses. Themes were developed to highlight the connection between professional competence and trust formation, such as teacher modeling of faith, emotional support strategies, narrative-based instruction, and contextualization of biblical messages. All interviews and observations were carried out with respect for the participants' spiritual and cultural

sensitivities. This methodological design allowed the study to holistically explore how professional competence rooted in biblical understanding can effectively cultivate trust in God among elementary students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from classroom observations, interviews, and exegetical examination reveal that Exodus 14:13 serves as a substantial theological anchor for cultivating trust in God among elementary students. The verse—*“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today”*—encapsulates a divine imperative that encourages courage, perseverance, and expectant faith. Exegetical analysis shows that Moses’ instruction to the Israelites arose during a moment of existential crisis at the edge of the Red Sea, where fear, doubt, and confusion dominated the collective psyche of the people. In pedagogical terms, this narrative becomes a formative model for Christian Religious Education teachers at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar, demonstrating the necessity of providing spiritual reassurance and clear theological framing when students face academic or personal challenges. Data indicate that teachers who have strong scriptural understanding are more competent in contextualizing biblical hope within the lived realities of students, especially when they integrate the historical-critical meaning of the text as the foundation for moral formation. Teachers frequently articulated that Exodus 14:13 gives them a framework for guiding learners to perceive divine involvement in human struggles, encouraging them to rely on God in moments of difficulty. This is consistent with theoretical insights asserting that biblical narratives are potent pedagogical resources when they are interpreted within their theological and cultural context. Thus, the exegetical grounding of Exodus 14:13 shapes the teachers’ professional competence by strengthening their ability to translate theological truth into educational practice that is both spiritually nurturing and contextually meaningful. Interviews with teachers reveal that professional competence in the context of cultivating trust in God requires mastery of three integrated domains: pedagogical knowledge, biblical literacy, and communication skills. Teachers at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar demonstrated substantial understanding of the theological premise of Exodus 14:13, but their ability to communicate this premise in age-appropriate ways varied significantly. Some educators effectively used analogies, storytelling, and problem-based reflection to explain how God’s deliverance in Israel’s history can be applied in daily situations such as bullying, academic failure, emotional insecurity, or family hardship. Others, however, tended to deliver information cognitively rather than formationally, limiting the transformative potential of the message. These differences highlight that professional competence is not merely measured by knowledge about Scripture but by the ability to translate that knowledge into meaningful learning experiences. Observations show that teachers who employed narrative pedagogy—consisting of reflective questioning, imaginative re-enactment, and student-centered dialogue—had greater success in helping students internalize trust in God. Moreover, the study found that professional competence in CRE is strengthened when teachers themselves embody the message of trust. Students were more responsive and engaged when teachers shared personal testimonies of relying on God during difficult times, reflecting a pedagogical model grounded in authenticity and relational sensitivity. This aligns with research suggesting that spiritual credibility is a

crucial dimension of effective religious teaching and that students develop trust in God more effectively when learning from teachers who demonstrate lived faith.

The results show that contextual teaching and learning strategies significantly influence how students interpret and practice the message of Exodus 14:13. Teachers who situated the biblical narrative within the realities of Pematangsiantar, a setting marked by cultural diversity, modest economic backgrounds, and occasional social stress, enabled students to see the relevance of trusting God amidst real-life challenges. Teachers utilized local stories, school experiences, and familiar socio-cultural symbols to scaffold students' understanding of God's deliverance. For instance, when discussing "standing firm," teachers linked the concept to students' experiences of perseverance during examinations, social misunderstandings, or family conflict. This method helped demystify theological concepts and made spiritual formation more accessible. Furthermore, class discussions revealed that students resonated with themes of fear and uncertainty present in Exodus 14, especially during transitions from childhood to adolescence. The contextualization process allowed students to articulate their own fears and explore how faith could shape their responses. Teachers also implemented collaborative activities such as group prayer, role-play of biblical events, reflective journaling, and community service projects, which reinforced the message of trusting God through concrete practices. These activities helped students develop spiritual resilience and emotional stability, contributing to the broader formation of Christian character. Contextual teaching strategies enhanced professional competence by enabling teachers to connect biblical truth with students' lived experience, making spiritual learning holistic and transformative. Teachers encountered several obstacles that affected their ability to effectively cultivate trust in God among learners. One of the primary challenges identified was the diversity of students' religious backgrounds. Although the CRE program is reserved for Christian students, classrooms often contain learners with varying degrees of religious familiarity, devotional habits, and theological understanding. This diversity required teachers to adapt their approaches, sometimes slowing down the depth of instruction to ensure inclusivity. External factors such as family instability, socio-economic pressure, and digital distraction influenced students' capacity to engage in spiritual learning. Teachers reported that some children were preoccupied with domestic issues, making it harder for them to internalize messages of faith and trust. Another significant barrier was the limited availability of professional development programs specifically designed for CRE teachers. Many educators relied on personal study rather than formal training, leading to inconsistencies in pedagogical quality. The study also found that some teachers struggled with their own spiritual confidence, particularly in articulating God's providence in situations where students faced real-life suffering. This reveals that cultivating trust in God within an educational context is not mechanically achieved but requires ongoing formation of teachers themselves. Challenges of time constraints, overloaded curricula, and administrative demands further limited opportunities for reflective and relational teaching. These findings underline the need for structured teacher development programs that integrate theology, pedagogy, and spiritual formation, enabling teachers to strengthen their professional competence in cultivating trust in God through Exodus 14:13. The synthesis of findings indicates that professional competence in cultivating trust in God is best understood as the integration of theological clarity, pedagogical creativity,

and spiritual embodiment. Teachers who excelled in these three areas demonstrated a more holistic and transformative approach to religious education. Theologically, the study confirms that a solid exegetical understanding of Exodus 14:13 enriches the teacher's interpretive framework and deepens the learning experience. Pedagogically, effective teachers applied active learning principles, narrative methods, and contextual strategies that helped students internalize the message of trust in God. Spiritually, teachers who modeled trust through their actions, emotional stability, and relational warmth became living testimonies of the truth they taught. This integrated competence produced students who were more reflective, confident, and capable of applying faith in daily challenges. The discussion also highlights that cultivating trust is not a passive act; it requires active engagement from both teachers and students through prayer, reflection, dialogue, and lived experiences of faith. Thus, CRE teachers in SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar play a crucial role not only as knowledge transmitters but as spiritual mentors who guide students into a deeper relationship with God. The integration of these dimensions suggests a pedagogical model where Scripture becomes both the content and method of teaching, shaping cognitive understanding while nurturing spiritual identity. Ultimately, this research affirms that the professional competence of CRE teachers is instrumental in shaping students' faith trajectories and strengthening their trust in God as portrayed in Exodus 14:13.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a decisive role in cultivating trust in God among students, particularly through the theological and pedagogical integration of Exodus 14:13. The findings confirm that teachers at SD Negeri 121248 Pematangsiantar who possess strong exegetical understanding, contextual awareness, and spiritual authenticity are significantly more effective in guiding students to internalize the message of divine assurance embedded in Moses' instruction to Israel: *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord."* This scriptural foundation becomes a powerful educational tool when teachers are able to translate its historical meaning into practical spiritual formation relevant to students' daily realities. By doing so, teachers help students connect the ancient narrative of God's deliverance with present-day experiences such as fear, uncertainty, peer pressure, academic struggles, or family tensions. The study also highlights that pedagogical competence extends beyond the mastery of content; it involves creative instructional strategies that encourage reflection, emotional expression, and experiential learning. Teachers who employed narrative pedagogy, contextual storytelling, collaborative prayer, and reflective dialogue created learning environments that fostered spiritual resilience and deeper trust in God. These methods helped students not only understand biblical concepts cognitively but also embody them in their attitudes and choices. The capacity to design such transformative learning experiences reflects high professional competence, showing that effective CRE teaching requires integrated skills in pedagogy, theology, and relational sensitivity. At the same time, the study identifies several challenges that hinder teachers' efforts in nurturing trust in God. These challenges include variations in students' spiritual backgrounds, socio-emotional instability, limited parental support, digital distractions, and insufficient access to professional development

specifically tailored for CRE teachers. These barriers emphasize the need for ongoing teacher training that strengthens not only pedagogical techniques but also theological depth and spiritual formation. When teachers lack support or personal spiritual confidence, their ability to guide students through complex faith-related questions becomes limited. Thus, institutional investment in CRE teacher development emerges as a critical recommendation of this study. The research concludes that professional competence in CRE teaching is best understood as a dynamic integration of three interdependent dimensions: deep theological understanding of Scripture, effective and contextualized pedagogical practice, and authentic spiritual modeling. Each of these dimensions reinforces the others, forming a holistic model of Christian pedagogy grounded in the wisdom of Exodus 14:13. When teachers embody this integrated competence, they become powerful agents of spiritual formation, helping students develop the courage, faith, and resilience needed to trust in God in all circumstances. In essence, the study affirms that cultivating trust in God within the school setting is not merely an instructional task but a relational and spiritual vocation. CRE teachers who engage students through Scripture, example, and compassionate guidance contribute significantly to shaping young believers who can stand firm in times of uncertainty. By strengthening professional competence and deepening exegetical engagement with texts such as Exodus 14:13, schools can foster a generation of students whose trust in God becomes a foundational element of their identity and life journey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, T. D., & Baker, D. W. (Eds.). (2016). *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. IVP Academic.
- Brueggemann, W. (2010). *Journey to the common good*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Brueggemann, W. (2012). *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, dispute, advocacy*. Fortress Press.
- Childs, B. S. (2001). *Old Testament theology in a canonical context*. Fortress Press.
- Cooper, D. L. (2018). Teaching faith in contemporary classrooms: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Christian Education* 61(2), 145-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021965718764890>
- Enns, P. (2014). *The Bible tells me so: Why defending Scripture has made us unable to read it*. HarperOne.
- Ellis, R. (2010). Religious education and character formation: A pedagogical framework for spiritual growth. *International Journal of Christianity & Education* 14(3), 199-215.
- Fretheim, T. E. (2010). *Exodus*. Westminster John Knox Press.

- Gangel, K. O., & Hendricks, H. G. (2010). *The Christian educator's handbook on teaching*. Baker Academic.
- Knight, G. R. (2016). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Andrews University Press.
- Oswalt, J. (2009). Trust, fear, and divine deliverance in the Old Testament. *Journal of Biblical Studies* 28(1), 33-47.
- Panjaitan, Binur., Sitompul, B., Panjaitan, M.B. (2024). Comparison of Learning Outcomes Using Information and Communications Technology Media with Conventional Learning at IAKN Tarutung. *International Development Planning Review* 22(2), 1789-1800. <https://idpr.org.uk/index.php/idpr/article/view/503>
- Pazmiño, R. W. (2012). *Foundational issues in Christian education: An introduction in evangelical perspective* (3rd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Putra, N.P.P., Padmasari, V., Ariawan, S. (2020). The Importance of Fostering the Ethics of Christianity. *Academia.Edu* 2(1).
- Richards, L. O., & Bredfeldt, G. (2011). *Creative Bible teaching* (Revised ed.). Moody Publishers.
- Sproul, R. C. (2018). *Everyone's a theologian: An introduction to systematic theology*. Reformation Trust.
- Tucker, G. M. (2015). Deliverance and faith: Reading Exodus for contemporary pedagogy. *Old Testament Studies Review* 41(2), 112-129.
- Walton, J. H. (2015). *Ancient Near Eastern thought and the Old Testament* (2nd ed.). Baker Academic.
- Waltke, B. K., & Yu, C. (2007). *An Old Testament theology: An exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach*. Zondervan.
- Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be delivered: Finding freedom through the exodus*. David C. Cook.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2011). *The mission of God's people: A biblical theology of the church's mission*. Zondervan.