

Professional Competence and the Development of Instructional Materials on Divine Faithfulness in Christian Education (Case Study at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo)

Debora Sembiring

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

* correspondence: vmedan07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the professional competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in developing instructional materials on the theme of divine faithfulness based on Book of Genesis 35:9-13. The research was conducted at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo, a public elementary school with 36 Christian students taught by one CRE teacher. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to professional competence, biblical integration, pedagogical strategy, and contextual adaptation. The findings indicate that the teacher's professional competence significantly influences the quality and effectiveness of instructional material development. The teacher demonstrates strong mastery of biblical theology, particularly in interpreting Genesis 35:9-13 as a narrative of covenant renewal, divine blessing, and the faithfulness of God. This theological understanding is translated into systematically designed, age-appropriate, and contextually relevant learning materials. Pedagogical strategies such as dialogical learning, reflective activities, creative projects, and holistic assessment enable students to internalize the concept of divine faithfulness not only cognitively, but also affectively and behaviorally. The instructional materials foster students' spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and confidence in God's promises. This study concludes that professional competence is a central determinant in transforming biblical content into meaningful and transformative learning experiences. In a public-school context where Christian students are a minority, professionally developed instructional materials on divine faithfulness function as an essential medium for nurturing faith, shaping character, and strengthening students' religious identity while promoting ethical and social responsibility.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Instructional Materials

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism is a central pillar in determining the quality of educational processes and learning outcomes, particularly in religious education where cognitive understanding, spiritual formation, and character development are inseparably connected. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), professional competence does not merely refer to the teacher's ability to manage classrooms and deliver curriculum content, but also includes mastery of biblical theology, instructional material development, and the capacity to translate doctrinal truths into meaningful learning experiences for students (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2017). In public elementary schools within pluralistic societies such as Indonesia, this competence becomes even more critical, as CRE teachers are required to ensure both theological integrity and pedagogical relevance in diverse educational environments. One of the core theological themes in Christian education is the faithfulness of God, which forms the foundation of Christian belief, trust, and perseverance. The theme of divine faithfulness is vividly expressed in Genesis 35:9-13, where God reaffirms His covenant with Jacob, renews His promises of blessing and multiplication, and establishes Jacob's new identity as Israel. Exegetically, this passage highlights several important theological dimensions: God's initiative in revealing Himself, the continuity of His covenantal promises across generations, and the unchanging nature of His faithfulness despite human weakness (Wenham, 1994; Walton, 2001). Jacob's past failures and struggles do not nullify God's promises; instead, God's faithfulness remains constant and sovereign. This narrative establishes divine faithfulness as a foundational truth that shapes human trust, obedience, and hope within the covenant relationship. The theological richness of biblical texts such as Genesis 35:9-13 cannot automatically shape students' faith and character without being mediated through professionally developed instructional materials. CRE teachers are required to interpret Scripture accurately, identify essential theological concepts, organize them systematically, and contextualize them according to students' cognitive levels and socio-cultural backgrounds (Groome, 2011). Professional competence in instructional material development therefore becomes a decisive factor in determining whether biblical theology is conveyed merely as abstract information or as living truth that transforms students' perspectives and behavior. In the context of public elementary education, instructional material development faces additional pedagogical challenges. Students at the elementary level are still in the early stages of abstract thinking and theological reflection, requiring learning materials that are concrete, narrative-based, visually supported, and closely connected to daily life experiences (Fosnot, 2005). Without strong professional competence, CRE instruction risks becoming either overly dogmatic or overly simplified, both of which may hinder authentic faith formation. Therefore, CRE teachers must function not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but as curriculum developers and theological interpreters who are capable of bridging biblical truth and pedagogical practice.

At SDN 104217 Sidomulyo, there are 36 Christian students who are served by one CRE teacher. This relatively large number of students places significant demands on the teacher's professional competence in developing systematic, engaging, and theologically sound instructional materials. The theme of God's faithfulness, as drawn from Genesis 35:9-13, must be translated into learning modules, worksheets, media resources, and

assessments that are appropriate for diverse student abilities and spiritual maturity levels. In this context, professional competence becomes not merely an individual attribute of the teacher but a determining factor in the sustainability and quality of Christian education within a public-school setting. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of professional competence in enhancing instructional quality and student learning outcomes across disciplines (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Within the field of Christian education, research has also highlighted the role of biblical integration, spiritual pedagogy, and teacher modeling in faith formation (Knight, 2006; Groome, 2011). Empirical studies that specifically examine how CRE teachers professionally develop instructional materials based on particular biblical themes—especially the theme of divine faithfulness—remain limited, particularly within Indonesian public elementary schools. Much of the existing literature remains theoretical or normative, with insufficient attention to concrete classroom practices of material development. This research seeks to address that gap by focusing on the professional competence of a CRE teacher in developing instructional materials on divine faithfulness based on Genesis 35:9–13 at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo. The central question guiding this study is: How does the professional competence of the CRE teacher manifest in the development of instructional materials on God’s faithfulness within a public elementary school context? By examining the processes of biblical interpretation, material organization, contextualization, media utilization, and assessment design, this study aims to provide a comprehensive portrait of professional competence as it is enacted in daily instructional practice. The significance of this study is threefold. It contributes to the discourse on professional competence in Christian education by demonstrating the integrative relationship between biblical exegesis and instructional material development. It also offers practical insights for CRE teachers on how to translate complex theological themes into age-appropriate and meaningful learning resources. Socially, it affirms the role of Christian education in strengthening students’ spiritual resilience and moral responsibility within a pluralistic public-school environment. Through this lens, the development of instructional materials on divine faithfulness is not merely a technical pedagogical task but a formative process that shapes students’ worldview, identity, and trust in God.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore in depth the professional competence of a Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in developing instructional materials on the theme of divine faithfulness based on Genesis 35:9-13. The research was conducted at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo, a public elementary school with a minority Christian population consisting of 36 Christian students served by one CRE teacher. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical practices, professional competencies, and the pedagogical-theological integration occurring within a real educational context. The case study design was chosen to capture the uniqueness, depth, and complexity of professional competence as it is enacted in a specific institutional and social setting. Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted during several CRE instructional

sessions to examine how instructional materials related to divine faithfulness were developed, implemented, and contextualized in teaching practice. The observations focused on instructional planning, teaching strategies, learning resources, classroom interaction, and student engagement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher as the main participant to explore professional preparation, pedagogical decision-making, theological understanding of Genesis 35:9-13, and challenges encountered in material development. Additional informal interviews with a small number of students were carried out to gain supportive insights into how the instructional materials were perceived and how the theme of divine faithfulness was understood and internalized. Document analysis included the review of lesson plans, teaching modules, learning worksheets, assessment instruments, and reflective teaching notes used by the teacher. All interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were carefully read and coded to identify significant patterns related to professional competence and instructional material development. The data were categorized into key themes, including mastery of subject matter, pedagogical strategy, theological integration, material contextualization, and assessment practices. These themes were interpreted in relation to professional competence theory and biblical pedagogy, particularly the theological message of divine faithfulness in Genesis 35:9–13. Data triangulation across observation, interview, and documentation was applied to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The study seeks to provide a reliable and meaningful portrayal of professional competence in the development of faith-based instructional materials within a public-school context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo plays a decisive role in shaping the quality, theological depth, and pedagogical effectiveness of instructional materials on the theme of divine faithfulness. With 36 Christian students and only one CRE teacher, the material development process becomes not merely a technical task but a comprehensive professional endeavor that integrates biblical mastery, curriculum adaptation, didactic creativity, and contextual sensitivity. Classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis consistently indicate that the teacher's professional competence is reflected in three interrelated dimensions: mastery of biblical-theological content, instructional design and pedagogical execution, and contextual adaptation within a pluralistic public-school environment. The teacher's mastery of biblical content is primarily demonstrated through a careful exegetical engagement with Book of Genesis 35:9-13, where God reaffirms His covenant with Jacob, renews His blessing, changes Jacob's name to Israel, and confirms the promises of fruitfulness, nationhood, and land inheritance. The analysis of lesson plans and teaching modules shows that the teacher does not treat the passage merely as a narrative text but as a theological foundation for understanding divine faithfulness as a continuous, covenantal, and transformative reality. In classroom practice, the teacher emphasizes that God's faithfulness is not momentary or conditional but rooted in His unchanging promise and character. This exegetical depth is professionally significant because it ensures that instructional materials are not reduced to moralistic storytelling but remain anchored in sound biblical theology. Students are guided to understand that divine faithfulness involves both God's initiative and human

response, particularly in the form of obedience, trust, and spiritual renewal, as reflected in Jacob's renewed identity and commitment.

From a pedagogical perspective, the professional competence of the teacher is evident in the systematic design of instructional materials aligned with learning objectives, biblical content, and student developmental stages. The teacher develops structured lesson plans that integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning outcomes. Learning objectives are formulated not only in terms of knowledge acquisition about Genesis 35:9-13 but also in terms of affective formation, cultivating gratitude for God's faithfulness, and behavioral embodiment, encouraging students to practice faithfulness in daily life. In this process, the teacher demonstrates strong mastery of curriculum planning, sequencing of material, selection of learning strategies, and formulation of assessment tools. The teaching modules analyzed in this study incorporate narrative exposition, guided discussion, reflective questions, group assignments, and creative projects such as storytelling, poster design, and short dramatizations of Jacob's encounter with God. These varied learning activities indicate a high level of professional pedagogical creativity that allows biblical material to be presented in ways that are both theologically accurate and pedagogically engaging for elementary school students. Professional competence is further reflected in the teacher's ability to translate abstract theological concepts into concrete and age-appropriate learning experiences. Divine faithfulness, as a theological doctrine, is inherently abstract for young learners. However, through the use of analogies, personal testimonies, and situational examples drawn from students' daily lives, the teacher successfully bridges the gap between biblical text and lived experience. For instance, students are encouraged to relate God's faithfulness to real-life situations such as family care, academic challenges, friendship loyalty, and answered prayers. In classroom observations, students were seen actively sharing their own experiences of trusting God during sickness, examinations, and family difficulties, which demonstrates that the instructional materials effectively stimulate personal reflection and internalization of faith-based values. This pedagogical translation represents a core element of professional teaching competence, where mastery of content is inseparably linked to mastery of instructional communication.

The development of instructional materials is also characterized by systematic alignment with learning assessment. The teacher designs formative and summative assessments that evaluate not only students' cognitive understanding of Genesis 35:9-13 but also their affective and behavioral responses to the theme of divine faithfulness. Written tests assess basic biblical comprehension, while reflective journals and oral presentations assess students' personal appropriation of the lesson. In several observed sessions, the teacher invited students to write short reflections on how they experienced God's faithfulness in the past week. This assessment strategy reflects a holistic pedagogical orientation in which learning is understood as an integrated process of knowing, feeling, and acting. Such an approach demonstrates advanced professional competence because it moves beyond traditional rote memorization toward transformative learning that shapes students' character and spirituality. A significant dimension of the findings concerns the teacher's ability to contextualize instructional materials within the social and institutional realities of a public elementary school. As a minority group within a pluralistic

environment, Christian students face limitations in terms of instructional time, learning facilities, and peer social dynamics. Nevertheless, the teacher professionally adapts the material on divine faithfulness to encourage religious confidence without fostering exclusivity or social withdrawal. The instructional materials emphasize that God's faithfulness motivates students to live faithfully toward others, practice honesty, respect diversity, and contribute positively to the school community. In this sense, the doctrine of divine faithfulness is not taught as an inward-looking spiritual concept but as a foundation for ethical and social responsibility. This contextual adaptation enhances the relevance of Christian education within a broader civic framework and demonstrates the teacher's professional ability to integrate theological education with national educational values.

From the perspective of learning interaction, classroom observations reveal that the teacher practices dialogical and student-centered instruction. Rather than relying solely on lecture-based teaching, the teacher facilitates interactive discussions that invite students to interpret biblical text, ask questions, and relate the lesson to their personal experiences. During discussions on God's promise to Jacob, students are encouraged to explore why God remains faithful even when humans are imperfect. This inquiry-based process cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, and spiritual discernment. The teacher's ability to manage classroom interaction, stimulate participation, and guide theological dialogue further reflects strong professional competence in pedagogical communication and classroom management. The discussion of findings also highlights the central role of the teacher's theological integrity in shaping instructional material quality. Interviews indicate that the teacher regularly engages in personal biblical study, theological reading, and professional development training. This continuous professional learning directly influences the depth and accuracy of instructional materials. The teacher's understanding of covenant theology, divine blessing, and spiritual transformation shapes how Genesis 35:9-13 is interpreted and taught. This confirms that professional competence in Christian education cannot be separated from ongoing theological formation. Instructional material development is thus not merely a technical process but a spiritual-intellectual vocation that requires sustained growth in both pedagogy and theology. In relation to students' learning outcomes, the data indicate that the instructional materials on divine faithfulness significantly enhance students' biblical understanding, personal faith awareness, and ethical sensitivity. Most students demonstrate a clear comprehension of the main narrative elements of Genesis 35:9-13, including God's appearance to Jacob, the renewal of divine blessing, and the affirmation of Jacob's new identity as Israel. Beyond cognitive understanding, students also express personal trust in God's promises and increased motivation to practice faithfulness in their daily relationships. Several students describe efforts to be more obedient to parents, more responsible in school tasks, and more forgiving toward peers, which they explicitly attribute to their understanding of God's faithfulness. This indicates that professionally developed instructional materials have a tangible impact on students' character formation and spiritual growth.

The teaching of Genesis 35:9-13 as a foundation for understanding divine faithfulness is highly appropriate for elementary-level Christian education. The passage presents God as a faithful covenant-keeper who remains committed to His promises despite human

weakness. Jacob's life narrative, marked by struggle, failure, and divine restoration, offers a powerful framework for teaching children about grace, transformation, and hope. The professional competence of the teacher lies in the ability to extract these theological truths and present them in a manner that is faithful to the biblical text while also accessible to young learners. The instructional materials developed in this study successfully emphasize that divine faithfulness is not earned by human perfection but flows from God's gracious initiative, which in turn calls for a faithful human response. The findings align with broader perspectives on professional teacher competence, which emphasize mastery of subject matter, pedagogical expertise, curriculum development skills, and reflective practice. The CRE teacher's ability to integrate biblical theology with instructional design demonstrates the convergence of professional, pedagogical, and spiritual competencies required in Christian education. The development of instructional materials is shown to be a reflective process shaped by theological insight, student needs, institutional context, and educational standards. This confirms that professional competence in Christian education is multi-dimensional and cannot be reduced solely to technical teaching skills. Limited teaching time, minimal access to Christian education resources, and the need to adapt to a national curriculum that prioritizes general subjects all influence how CRE materials are prepared and delivered. However, the teacher's professional competence is precisely demonstrated through the ability to navigate these constraints creatively. By utilizing simple teaching media, locally available learning resources, and personal teaching notes, the teacher compensates for institutional limitations without compromising theological substance. This resilience and adaptability are essential indicators of professional competence in minority educational settings. The findings of this study underscore the strategic importance of professional competence in safeguarding theological integrity while ensuring pedagogical relevance. Instructional materials on divine faithfulness become a medium through which students encounter not only biblical knowledge but also an interpretive framework for understanding their lives in relation to God's promises. The teacher's professional capacity to design, implement, and evaluate such materials determines whether Christian education functions merely as a formal curricular requirement or as a transformative spiritual pedagogy. The integration of Genesis 35:9-13 into instructional materials also contributes to students' understanding of identity formation. Jacob's renaming as Israel symbolizes spiritual transformation and vocational calling. The teacher explicitly connects this biblical theme with students' own identity as children who are loved, called, and guided by God. This theological-pedagogical integration fosters a sense of spiritual self-worth and moral responsibility among students. Such identity formation is particularly significant in a public-school context where religious affirmation may be limited. Professional competence thus becomes a vehicle for nurturing spiritual resilience and moral confidence in young learners.

The overall discussion confirms that the development of instructional materials on divine faithfulness is not an isolated pedagogical task but a comprehensive expression of the teacher's professional vocation. The quality of biblical interpretation, the coherence of lesson design, the effectiveness of classroom interaction, and the depth of student transformation all reflect the teacher's professional competence. This competence enables Christian education to function as both an academic discipline and a formational

ministry within the public education system. Through professionally developed instructional materials, the doctrine of God's faithfulness becomes a living pedagogical reality that shapes students' minds, hearts, and actions. The results and discussion demonstrate that the professional competence of the CRE teacher at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo significantly enhances the development and effectiveness of instructional materials on divine faithfulness based on Genesis 35:9-13. The teacher's mastery of biblical theology, pedagogical design, contextual adaptation, and reflective practice enables Christian education to fulfill its dual mandate: transmitting theological truth and forming faithful character. These findings affirm that professional competence is the central pillar that sustains the quality, relevance, and transformative power of instructional materials in Christian education, particularly within the challenging context of public elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professional competence of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher plays a decisive and transformative role in the development of instructional materials on divine faithfulness based on Book of Genesis 35:9-13 at SDN 104217 Sidomulyo. Professional competence in this context is not limited to technical mastery of teaching skills but encompasses the integrated capacity to interpret biblical texts theologically, design pedagogically sound materials, contextualize learning within a public-school environment, and evaluate learning outcomes holistically. Through this integration, biblical theology and educational practice converge into a unified instructional process that is both academically credible and spiritually formative. The findings demonstrate that the CRE teacher's mastery of the biblical narrative of Jacob's divine encounter, the renewal of God's covenant, and the reaffirmation of divine blessing serves as a strong theological foundation for developing learning materials on divine faithfulness. The teacher successfully transforms this theological content into structured, age-appropriate, and contextually relevant instructional resources that address students' cognitive understanding, affective formation, and moral behavior. As a result, the teaching of divine faithfulness is not confined to doctrinal transmission but is experienced by students as a lived spiritual reality that shapes their daily attitudes, commitments, and relationships. This research also affirms that professional competence is reflected in the teacher's ability to apply diverse pedagogical strategies, including dialogical learning, reflective practice, creative assignments, and holistic assessment. These strategies enable students to engage actively with biblical texts, articulate personal faith experiences, and translate theological insight into concrete ethical action. The observable growth in students' biblical understanding, spiritual awareness, and moral responsibility indicates that professionally developed instructional materials function as an effective medium for character and faith formation within Christian education. The study highlights the strategic importance of contextual adaptation in public-school settings where Christian students exist as a minority. The teacher's professional competence allows the theme of divine faithfulness to be taught in a manner that strengthens students' religious identity without isolating them from the broader school community. Instead, the doctrine of God's faithfulness is presented as the ethical foundation for honesty, responsibility, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. This confirms that professional competence in Christian education contributes not only to personal spirituality but also to social harmony

and civic character. This study reinforces the understanding that instructional material development in Christian education is a reflective and vocational process. It is shaped by the teacher's theological depth, pedagogical insight, contextual sensitivity, and commitment to continuous professional growth. The CRE teacher's ability to navigate limited resources, time constraints, and institutional challenges further demonstrates that professional competence is revealed most clearly in creative resilience and faithful educational service. This study affirms that professional competence is the central pillar that determines the quality, relevance, and transformative impact of instructional materials in Christian education. When grounded in sound biblical exegesis, enriched by pedagogical expertise, and adapted to real educational contexts, instructional materials become powerful instruments for nurturing students' faith, character, and moral integrity. The findings of this research therefore provide both theoretical and practical implications for the ongoing development of professional competence among Christian Religious Education teachers, particularly in public elementary schools where their vocation serves not only as an academic task but also as a spiritual and social mission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, B. W. (2018). *Understanding the Old Testament* (5th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Banks, R., & Banks, J. (2013). *The church comes home: A new basis for community and mission*. Baker Academic.
- Borg, M. J. (2014). *Reading the Bible again for the first time: Taking the Bible seriously but not literally*. HarperOne.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Christian religious education: Sharing our story and vision* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Andrews University Press.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Richards, L. O. (2002). *The Bible teacher's commentary*. Victor Books.
- Scheller, J. (2019). Professional competence and reflective teaching in religious education. *Journal of Religious Education* 67(2), 145-160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-019-00089-2>
- Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. Jossey-Bass.

Wenham, G. J. (2017). *Genesis 16-50* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2). Zondervan Academic.

Wright, C. J. H. (2004). *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*. InterVarsity Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.