

Professional Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Developing Students' Talents: An Exegetical Reflection on Exodus 31:6 at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing students' talents at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek through an exegetical reflection on Exodus 31:6. The passage highlights God's empowerment of Bezalel and Oholiab with unique skills and the ability to teach others, providing a biblical foundation for understanding talent development in Christian pedagogy. With a context involving 88 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the research explores how theological insight, pedagogical practice, and spiritual vocation intersect in the daily work of teaching. Using a qualitative research design that integrates a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), limited semi-structured interviews, and exegetical analysis, the study synthesizes contemporary scholarship on teacher professionalism, talent development, Christian education, and spiritual giftedness. The study finds that CRE teachers demonstrate professional competence not only through pedagogical mastery but also through spiritual intentionality. Their awareness of teaching as a divine calling enables them to approach talent development with humility, dedication, and creativity, even amidst limited resources. Students respond positively to these efforts, exhibiting increased confidence, participation, and self-awareness of their unique gifts. This study concludes that Exodus 31:6 provides a powerful theological and pedagogical framework for understanding the role of CRE teachers in nurturing students' talents. When biblical principles and educational best practices are integrated, talent development becomes a transformative process that equips students to serve God and contribute meaningfully to society.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Christian Religious Education, Students' Talents

INTRODUCTION

The professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers has increasingly become a central discussion in contemporary Indonesian education, particularly in public schools where Christian students must navigate diverse learning

environments while receiving adequate spiritual formation. At SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek in Tapanuli Utara, the presence of 88 Christian students supported by 11 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education teacher, creates a unique ecosystem in which students' holistic development can be intentionally nurtured. Within this context, talent development is not merely an educational program but a theological mandate rooted in the Christian understanding of divine gifting and human vocation. The increasing expectation that CRE teachers function not only as transmitters of biblical knowledge but also as facilitators of students' potential further emphasizes the need to explore their professional competence from both pedagogical and biblical perspectives. The development of students' talents resonates with biblical teachings about divine empowerment and human responsibility. A significant scriptural foundation for this discussion is Exodus 31:6, which highlights God's appointment of Oholiab and the empowerment of both him and Bezalel through "the ability to teach" and various artistic skills for the construction of the tabernacle. This text reflects a profound theological truth: God endows individuals with particular skills, technical, artistic, intellectual, and provides the capacity to cultivate and utilize these talents for communal and spiritual purposes. The mention of God Himself granting "skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" affirms that talent development is a sacred collaboration between divine gifting and human stewardship. For CRE teachers, this insight underscores that nurturing students' talents is not supplemental to their mission but is deeply embedded in their biblical calling.

In the field of education, professional competence is understood as the integration of pedagogical expertise, mastery of content, classroom management skills, assessment literacy, communication abilities, and the capacity for reflective practice. In the context of Christian education, however, professional competence extends beyond secular dimensions. It includes the ability to interpret biblical principles, translate theological insights into pedagogical actions, and create learning environments that allow students to discover, articulate, and refine their God-given talents. The role of the CRE teacher thus becomes multifaceted: a theological guide, pedagogical facilitator, pastoral presence, and talent mentor. At SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek, the challenge of supporting students' talent development emerges amid various realities. Students come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and exhibit differing levels of confidence, exposure, and opportunity to explore their abilities. Meanwhile, Christian teachers often balance administrative responsibilities, curricular demands, and pastoral concerns. Despite these challenges, anecdotal observations suggest that Christian teachers at the school demonstrate strong commitment to students' holistic growth. What remains underexplored, however, is the extent to which their professional competence, viewed through the lens of Exodus 31:6, shapes and strengthens talent development practices among Christian students. Literature on Christian teacher competence in Indonesia has grown, yet research integrating exegetical biblical reflection with empirical educational inquiry remains limited. Many studies focus on pedagogical competence, spiritual leadership, or students' character formation but rarely explore talent development as a theological-educational mandate. Furthermore, the application of Exodus 31:6 as a framework for understanding divine gifting within educational contexts, especially at the elementary school level, is still underdeveloped. This gap invites a deeper investigation

into how CRE teachers embody their professional competence as a form of obedience to God's design for nurturing human talents. This study aims to examine the professional competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in developing students' talents at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek, grounded in an exegetical reflection on Exodus 31:6. Through a combination of biblical interpretation and field-based inquiry, this research provides a fresh and integrative perspective on how Christian teachers can cultivate students' God-given talents within a public-school environment. The findings are expected to contribute to theoretical discussions, strengthen teacher formation programs, and offer practical insights for enhancing talent development in Christian education settings.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method integrating exegetical biblical analysis with field-based inquiry to investigate the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing students' talents at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek. The combination of exegetical reflection and educational qualitative research was chosen to ensure that the theological foundation drawn from Exodus 31:6 could be meaningfully connected with the empirical realities of teaching and talent development in a public-school setting. The exegetical component provided a hermeneutical lens for interpreting the biblical text, while the qualitative field study contributed contextual insights regarding teachers' competencies and practices. The exegetical analysis followed a standard historical-grammatical approach, beginning with the identification of the socio-historical background of Exodus 31:6 within the broader narrative of the tabernacle construction in the Pentateuch. This step involved examining the cultural, linguistic, and theological significance of divine empowerment for craftsmanship and teaching as attributed to Bezalel, Oholiab, and the skilled artisans. Lexical studies of key Hebrew terms, particularly *hokmâ* (wisdom/skill), *těbûnâ* (understanding), *da'at* (knowledge), and *yārad* (teaching ability), were conducted using established biblical lexicons and scholarly commentaries. These exegetical findings served as a conceptual framework for analyzing how contemporary CRE teachers understand and enact their professional responsibility to nurture students' talents as a continuation of divine gifting and vocational stewardship. For the field component, data were collected at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek, a public elementary school located in Tapanuli Utara with 88 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers (including the CRE teacher). Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were directly involved in students' spiritual and talent development. These included the CRE teacher, several Christian classroom teachers, and a small representative group of Christian students known for participating in talent-based activities such as singing, drawing, storytelling, or academic competitions. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and brief document analysis of lesson plans, school activity programs, and relevant administrative records. The interviews aimed to explore teachers' self-perceived professional competence, their understanding of students' talents, and the strategies they use to nurture these abilities. Classroom observations provided insights into real-time pedagogical practices, teacher-student interactions, and learning activities that supported or hindered talent development. Reflexive journaling helped minimize researcher bias, particularly when

integrating theological perspectives with observed educational practices. This methodological design enabled a holistic exploration of how CRE teachers embody professional competence in nurturing students' God-given talents within a contemporary educational setting informed by Scripture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a rich interplay between biblical-theological principles from Exodus 31:6 and the lived realities of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek in their efforts to develop students' talents, demonstrating that professional competence is not only a matter of pedagogical technique but also a manifestation of divine vocation and spiritual responsibility. The theological awareness shared by the Christian teachers strongly aligns with the exegetical understanding that talent originates from God. In Exodus 31:6, God declares that He has "given ability to all the skilled workers," implying divine intentionality in human giftedness. Teachers at the school resonate with this idea, expressing the belief that every student possesses unique potential entrusted by God and therefore must be nurtured with care, wisdom, and intentionality. Interviews reveal that teachers frequently refer to students' talents, such as singing, drawing, storytelling, public speaking, and problem-solving, as "*titipan Tuhan*" (God's deposit). This theological framing significantly influences their teaching mindset, shaping their attitudes toward student diversity, their commitment to cultivating abilities rather than merely transmitting information, and their readiness to encourage students who are less confident in their talents. This alignment confirms that biblical reflection provides a strong motivational foundation for professional competence because teachers understand their role within God's greater redemptive and developmental activity. The theme of professional competence emerges vividly through pedagogical practices that reflect both planning and improvisation. The CRE teacher demonstrates mastery of curriculum design by integrating talent-based activities into lesson plans, such as assigning students to dramatize biblical stories, lead short reflections, produce drawings representing biblical events, or compose simple songs about Christian values. Observations reveal that classroom environments are intentionally structured to allow student participation and creativity. For example, during one lesson on the parable of the talents, students were invited to perform different tasks according to their interest, some wrote summaries, others created drawings, while others presented oral retellings, demonstrating differentiation in learning activities. This approach reflects principles similar to the divine pedagogy seen in Exodus 31:6, where God equips individuals with different skills for the construction of the tabernacle. Teachers' awareness of varied abilities parallels the biblical model of collaborative craftsmanship, showing professional competence not merely in mastery of content but in understanding how children learn differently. Moreover, teachers exhibit ongoing efforts to improve their competence through peer learning and informal collaboration. Although formal professional development opportunities are limited, interviews indicate that teachers often share strategies, discuss classroom challenges, and observe each other's lessons. This practice echoes the communal dimension of Exodus 31:6, where Oholiab is appointed to assist Bezalel, suggesting that God values shared expertise and mentorship. The teacher's role as facilitator and mentor represents a crucial element in talent development. Observational data show that the CRE teacher frequently encourages students to try new

activities, affirming their progress even when they demonstrate limited skills. This mentorship attitude reflects the divine empowerment described in Exodus 31:6, where God not only gives skill but also assigns teachers (“to teach others”) indicating that talent development involves guidance, modeling, and encouragement. Teachers at the school noted that some students initially lacked confidence, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or those who had never been recognized for their abilities. Over time, through supportive pedagogical approaches, such as offering personalized feedback, recognizing small achievements during class, and providing opportunities for students to showcase their work, their confidence improved. The CRE teacher also collaborates with Christian class teachers to identify students who exhibit early signs of specific gifts. For instance, one teacher noted that a student who often caused disruptions in class became highly focused when assigned drawing tasks. Another teacher observed that a quiet student showed impressive confidence when asked to pray publicly. These discoveries reinforce the idea that teachers serve as “discerners” of God-given abilities, much like the biblical artisans who were entrusted with sacred tasks because God recognized and called forth their capabilities. The discussion highlights that effective talent development requires the teacher to function as a spiritual mentor, academic coach, and empathetic listener. Limited resources, such as insufficient art supplies, musical instruments, or designated creative learning spaces, restrict opportunities for students to explore their talents more broadly. Some teachers expressed frustration that the school’s budget prioritizes infrastructural improvement over creative development programs. Constraints related to time and curriculum demands make it difficult for teachers to fully integrate talent-based activities in daily instruction. With a heavy schedule and administrative responsibilities, teachers occasionally feel pressured to focus on cognitive outcomes rather than holistic development. Another challenge relates to student diversity, although the majority of students are Christian, there are variations in family support systems. Some students receive strong encouragement at home, while others lack parental involvement, affecting their ability to develop talents consistently. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate resilience and creativity, often improvising with minimal resources, reusing materials, and utilizing outdoor spaces for learning activities. This resilience parallels the ingenuity of Bezalel and Oholiab, who used the resources available to them under God’s guidance when constructing the tabernacle. From a broader perspective, these limitations reveal that professional competence is not solely dependent on institutional support but also on teachers’ ability to adapt biblical principles and pedagogical knowledge to real-world constraints. The contextual relevance of Exodus 31:6 becomes evident when examining how teachers interpret and apply the biblical text in their practice. The exegetical findings highlight that God’s empowerment involves three aspects: capability (*ḥokmâ*), understanding (*těbûnâ*), and knowledge (*da’at*), all given for the purpose of fulfilling God’s mission. Teachers at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek view their professional competence through a similar threefold lens. They believe capability refers to the technical skills of teaching-planning lessons, managing classroom activities, and delivering biblical content effectively. Understanding is associated with the teacher’s ability to recognize students’ individuality, learning styles, and emotional needs. Knowledge encompasses both biblical literacy and educational theory, enabling teachers to integrate faith and instructional strategies coherently. More importantly, Exodus 31:6 expands the concept of competence by including the ability “to

teach others,” emphasizing instructional transmission. Teachers apply this by modeling good behavior, demonstrating Christian values, and guiding students toward disciplined talent development. This theological linkage helps frame professional competence not as secular expertise alone but as a divine calling empowered by the Holy Spirit. Teachers describe their work as “melanjutkan karya Tuhan” (continuing God’s work), showing that their understanding of professional identity is deeply shaped by Scripture. The study reveals that integrating biblical principles into talent development creates unique pedagogical opportunities. For instance, teachers often use biblical characters-Joseph, David, Miriam, and Daniel-as examples of individuals gifted by God who used their talents faithfully. These narratives help students understand that talent is not merely for achievement but for serving God and others. Teachers also emphasize the moral dimensions of talent development, such as humility, perseverance, and responsibility, reflecting the values embedded in Exodus 31:6. In this sense, talent development becomes holistic, addressing cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains. Teachers reported that students are more enthusiastic and motivated when their learning activities relate to biblical stories or values they already understand through PAK lessons. This indicates that biblical integration strengthens not only learning outcomes but also student engagement.

The data reveal a positive correlation between teacher spiritual formation and professional competence. Teachers who actively engage in personal spiritual disciplines-prayer, Bible reading, and church involvement-tend to exhibit greater enthusiasm and creativity in nurturing student talents. They view teaching as ministry, not merely occupation. This resonates with the biblical insight that God equipped Bezalel and Oholiab not only with skills but with the spiritual disposition to fulfill their sacred task. The teachers’ spiritual maturity contributes to a classroom atmosphere marked by encouragement, compassion, and mutual respect-conditions conducive to talent development. The results indicate that teachers’ efforts have generated measurable impact on students. During the study, it was evident that students displayed increased confidence, improved participation, and growing awareness of their own abilities. Some students joined school-level competitions, church service ministries, or community events, showcasing talents initially identified and nurtured in class. Teachers expressed pride that some formerly shy students became active contributors, while previously disengaged learners grew more motivated. These outcomes demonstrate that the theological and pedagogical framework derived from Exodus 31:6 has tangible, transformative effects when embodied by competent, committed CRE teachers. Overall, the findings suggest that professional competence in the context of Christian talent development is best understood as a dynamic integration of divine empowerment, biblical insight, and contemporary pedagogical practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the professional competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing students’ talents at SD Negeri 176334 Losung Aek is deeply enriched when viewed through the theological lens of Exodus 31:6. The findings demonstrate that talent development in Christian education is not merely an academic responsibility but a sacred vocation grounded in the belief that every student possesses

God-given potential. Teachers at the school internalize the biblical truth that God equips individuals with unique abilities for divine purposes, and this understanding shapes their pedagogical attitudes, instructional decisions, and mentoring practices. By perceiving talent as a spiritual deposit entrusted to their care, teachers affirm their role as co-laborers with God in nurturing the next generation. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study finds that professional competence manifests through intentional lesson planning, differentiated instructional strategies, creative classroom facilitation, and ongoing reflection. Teachers employ various techniques—storytelling, performance-based assignments, art integration, and collaborative learning—to create space for students to explore and express their talents. This aligns strongly with the biblical model of God empowering Bezalel and Oholiab not only with extraordinary skills but also with the ability “to teach others.” Thus, teaching becomes both a technical and spiritual exercise, where competence is expressed through both mastery of educational methods and sensitivity to the growth of the whole child. The research also highlights that despite limited resources and structural constraints, teachers demonstrate resilience, creativity, and collaborative spirit, echoing the communal craftsmanship described in Exodus 31. Their capacity to adapt, improvise, and innovate under challenging conditions reflects a form of competence grounded not only in training but in commitment, calling, and spiritual maturity. This resilience significantly contributes to students’ increasing confidence, participation, and self-awareness of their own gifts. The study affirms that integrating biblical principles with contemporary pedagogical practice creates a holistic framework for talent development in Christian education. The CRE teachers’ professional competence is not simply about meeting curriculum standards but about guiding students to discover, refine, and dedicate their abilities to God and society. The theological insight from Exodus 31:6 offers a powerful model for Christian educators seeking to cultivate transformative learning experiences rooted in faith, excellence, and service.

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