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Problems and Strategies of Teachers in Evaluating the Independent Curriculum in IRE Subjects at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to examine the problems faced by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in carrying out learning evaluations in the Independent Curriculum, as well as identify adaptive strategies used by teachers in overcoming these various challenges at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi. **Theoretical framework:** This research is based on the Independent Curriculum assessment paradigm, which emphasizes process-based assessment and learning outcomes, combined with the concept of authentic assessment and the character of IRE evaluation, which includes cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions holistically. **Literature review:** A literature review reviews the paradigm shift in evaluation in the Independent Curriculum from results-oriented to formative and sustainable assessment. In addition, the complexity of evaluation in religious education was also discussed, especially in measuring attitude and spiritual aspects that tend to be difficult to objectify and document. **Method:** This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with IRE teacher subjects in grades VII, VIII, and IX. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, learning observations, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. **Results:** The results of the study show structural and conceptual problems, such as the limitation of official training related to the evaluation of the Independent Curriculum, the reduction of IRE learning hours, and difficulties in formalizing the assessment of attitude and spiritual aspects. To overcome this, teachers apply adaptive strategies in the form of continuous observation, the use of religious activities as formative assessments, adjustments to teaching tools, and capacity building through independent learning and informal collaboration. **Implications:** Adequate training support and the development of flexible and contextual evaluation instruments for IRE are required. **Novelty:** This study affirms the evaluation of IRE as a form of negotiation between the demands of the curriculum and the character of value education, and reveals the adaptive strategies of teachers in real practice.

Keywords: learning evaluation, islamic religious education, independent curriculum, assessment, ire teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum changes are a necessity in the education system in response to social dynamics, scientific developments, and the demands of 21st-century competencies [1]. In the context of Indonesia's national education, the Independent Curriculum is present as a strategic policy that aims to provide more flexible, contextual, and student-centered learning. This curriculum provides a wider space of autonomy for educational units and teachers to design learning according to the characteristics of students and the learning environment. However, the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum is not only determined by the planning and

implementation aspects of learning, but is also determined by the quality of the learning evaluation applied [2].

The evaluation of learning in the Independent Curriculum has undergone a significant paradigm shift, from outcome-oriented assessments to process-based assessments and competency achievements. Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are designed to provide a complete picture of student development sustainably [3]. In practice, this change in evaluation paradigm requires the readiness of teachers, both in terms of conceptual understanding, pedagogical skills, and technical skills in compiling and implementing authentic assessment instruments. Various findings in the field show that teachers still face difficulties in translating the evaluation principles of the Independent Curriculum into systematic and consistent learning practices [4].

These problems become more complex when applied to the subject of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). IRE has special characteristics because it not only aims to develop the cognitive aspects of students, but also to shape Islamic attitudes, values, and characters. The Independent Curriculum requires an evaluation of IRE that is able to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions holistically, in line with strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile based on religious values [5]. However, in practice, IRE teachers are often still stuck in the conventional evaluation model that focuses on mastery of the material, so that aspects of character formation and value internalization have not been optimally measured.

Normatively, Islamic education has a strong theological foundation regarding the importance of the learning process and the development of science. The Qur'an in Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1–5, affirms the commandment to read (iqra'), learn, and acquire knowledge as the main foundation of human development. This verse not only emphasizes cognitive activity, but also shows that the educational process is a means of forming civilized human beings through divine guidance [6]. This concept is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful, reflective, and oriented learning towards the development of students' potential as a whole. Therefore, the evaluation of IRE learning should ideally not only measure academic achievement, but also the development of attitudes and character as a manifestation of Islamic values [7].

However, the implementation of the evaluation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE subjects at the junior high school level still faces various obstacles. Several previous studies have shown that teacher readiness is a key factor in the success of the Independent Curriculum, but these studies tend to focus on aspects of planning and learning strategies [8]. Studies that specifically examine the problems of IRE learning evaluation within the framework of the Independent Curriculum are still relatively limited [9]. In fact, evaluation is a crucial component that determines the direction of learning, the achievement of competencies, and the effectiveness of internalizing religious values [10]. This condition shows that there is a research gap that needs to be studied more deeply.

In an empirical context, SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi, as one of the schools that implements the Independent Curriculum, shows diverse adaptation dynamics, especially in the evaluation of IRE learning. Initial observations indicate that there are differences in teachers' understanding of the concept of the Independent Curriculum assessment, limitations in the preparation of authentic evaluation instruments, and challenges in assessing aspects of students' attitudes and character in an objective and sustainable manner. This condition shows that IRE teachers are in a dilemmatic position between the demands of curriculum policy and the reality of learning practices in the field.

Based on these conditions, the novelty of this research lies in the focus of the study that specifically examines the evaluation problems of the Independent Curriculum in IRE subjects from the perspective of the teacher's empirical experience. This research not only identifies the barriers faced but also explores the adaptive strategies developed by teachers in responding to the limitations and challenges of learning evaluation. The author's assumptions about this study provide a contextual perspective that has not been widely revealed in previous studies.

This study aims to in-depth examine the practice of learning evaluation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the framework of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi, by placing the empirical experience of teachers as the main focus of the analysis. In particular, this research is directed to reveal various pedagogical and conceptual problems faced by IRE teachers in implementing assessments based on the Independent Curriculum, especially related to the shift in evaluation paradigm from cognitive assessment to assessments that are authentic, holistic, and sustainable. In addition, this study aims to analyze the adaptive strategies developed by IRE teachers in responding to the limitations of understanding, technical challenges, and the demands of integrating Islamic values and the Pancasila Student Profile in the learning evaluation process. Through this analysis, this research is expected to be able to formulate conceptual understanding and practical recommendations that contribute to strengthening the IRE learning evaluation model that is contextual, competency-oriented, and in line with the principles of the Independent Curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of Indonesia's Independent Curriculum represents a significant shift in educational philosophy, emphasizing student-centered learning, competency development, and authentic assessment. Unlike previous curricula that primarily focused on summative evaluation, the Independent Curriculum encourages formative, continuous, and competency-based assessment to monitor students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development comprehensively. Authentic assessment is expected to provide meaningful feedback that supports learning improvement while fostering critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and character development. Consequently, teachers are required to possess strong pedagogical competence in designing, implementing, and documenting diverse assessment strategies that accurately reflect students' learning progress [9].

Within the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), assessment becomes considerably more complex because learning objectives extend beyond academic achievement to include the cultivation of Islamic values, moral character, spiritual awareness, and ethical behavior. Effective IRE evaluation should therefore integrate cognitive understanding with observable attitudes, religious practices, and behavioral transformation. Previous studies emphasize that evaluating affective and spiritual dimensions is inherently challenging because these aspects develop gradually, are context-dependent, and cannot be measured solely through conventional written examinations. Continuous observation, reflective activities, portfolios, and performance-based assessments are therefore recommended as complementary approaches to capture students' holistic development [9].

Existing literature has identified numerous challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. These include limited professional development opportunities, inadequate understanding of authentic assessment principles, insufficient instructional time, increased administrative responsibilities, and the absence of standardized evaluation instruments adapted to specific subjects. For IRE teachers, these challenges are even greater because they must balance curriculum requirements with the unique characteristics of religious education, which prioritizes value internalization and long-term character formation. The reduction of instructional hours further limits opportunities for observing students' moral and spiritual development consistently, making comprehensive assessment increasingly difficult [10].

Several studies have explored teacher readiness, instructional innovation, curriculum adaptation, and learning strategies under the Independent Curriculum. However, most investigations concentrate on classroom implementation rather than the specific problems of evaluating Islamic Religious Education. Research examining how teachers adapt assessment practices to reconcile curriculum accountability with the philosophical objectives of Islamic education remains relatively limited. Furthermore, few studies provide empirical evidence regarding teachers' practical strategies for documenting character and spiritual assessment while maintaining alignment with competency-based evaluation standards. Therefore, a

significant research gap remains concerning the implementation of authentic assessment in IRE within the Independent Curriculum. This study addresses that gap by examining teachers' evaluation challenges and identifying adaptive strategies developed in everyday educational practice. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on curriculum evaluation, Islamic education, and authentic assessment while providing practical recommendations for strengthening teacher competence and improving assessment quality in Indonesian secondary schools [\[10\]](#).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the problems encountered by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in evaluating learning under the Independent Curriculum, as well as the adaptive strategies they developed to overcome these challenges. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the research focused on exploring teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices within their natural educational setting rather than measuring variables quantitatively. This approach enabled the researchers to examine the complexity of curriculum implementation and assessment practices from the perspectives of participants who were directly involved in the teaching and evaluation process [\[11\]](#).

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 11 Muaro Jambi, one of the junior high schools implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia. The participants consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers responsible for teaching Grades VII, VIII, and IX. Informants were selected using purposive sampling because they possessed direct experience and sufficient knowledge regarding the implementation of curriculum-based learning evaluation. Their involvement provided rich and relevant information concerning the practical challenges of assessing students' cognitive, affective, and spiritual competencies within the framework of the Independent Curriculum. Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure comprehensive and credible findings. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding assessment practices and the obstacles they encountered. Classroom observations were undertaken to examine how evaluation was implemented during teaching and learning activities, including the application of authentic assessment, classroom interaction, and the integration of character and spiritual values. In addition, documentation was collected from teaching modules, lesson plans, assessment instruments, observation sheets, and other relevant school documents to support and validate the interview and observation data [\[11\]](#).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting, organizing, and simplifying information relevant to the research objectives. The organized data were subsequently presented systematically to facilitate interpretation and identify recurring themes and relationships. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified throughout the analytical process to ensure consistency and accuracy. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied several validation techniques, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement in the research setting, and continuous comparison among interview, observation, and documentary evidence. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings while ensuring that the interpretations accurately represented the participants' experiences and the actual practices of learning evaluation within the implementation of the Independent Curriculum [\[11\]](#).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Main Problems of IRE Teachers in the Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum

Based on interview and observation data, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi has been going on since 2021, so that the evaluation of the accompanying learning is still in the phase of adaptation, consolidation, and practice improvement. In this transition phase, IRE teachers basically show a positive acceptance of the policy direction of the Independent Curriculum. The curriculum is understood to provide flexibility for schools and teachers to develop more contextual learning, as well as encourage the strengthening of competencies and the development of students' character. One of the teachers expressed a "very positive and enthusiastic" attitude because he views the Independent Curriculum as an innovative step that provides space to strengthen students' competencies [12], while other teachers emphasized their orientation on developing talents, potential, and character [13]. This interpretation shows that the Independent Curriculum is perceived as not just an administrative change, but a pedagogical opportunity to strengthen the quality of learning that is value-oriented and character-building.

However, the positive reception does not necessarily negate the problems in the evaluation. Field findings show that there is a gap between the ideals of the evaluation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes the measurability of learning outcomes, assessment evidence, and the sustainability of assessment, with the factual conditions of system support, technical readiness, and IRE learning structure in schools [14]. The most prominent problem is the limited support of formal training, in particular, the evaluation training of the Independent Curriculum that is relevant to the characteristics of IRE subjects. Teachers stated that in Religious Education, they have never received official training from the government, so strengthening evaluation competencies is more often done through independent training or internal learning in schools. This condition has an impact on the potential for variation in evaluation quality because the understanding of assessment is more dependent on the initiative and experience of each teacher. In the framework of learning evaluation, the limitations of this training have implications for the lack of optimal standardization of assessment procedures, starting from the reduction of CP to operational indicators, determination of the form of evidence, selection of instruments, and governance of assessment documentation [15].

The next problem is related to the limited time of IRE learning, which has a direct effect on the depth, completeness, and continuity of evaluation. One of the teachers highlighted that the Independent Curriculum has both positive and negative impacts, but the most obvious problem lies in the reduction of IRE hours from three hours to two hours [16]. This reduction puts teachers in a dilemmatic situation: on the one hand, the Independent Curriculum encourages meaningful learning through continuous assessment, but on the other hand, the time structure demands adjustments to the scope of materials, learning activities, and evaluation in a narrower duration. For IRE, the issue of time becomes increasingly crucial because IRE not only evaluates the (cognitive) aspect of knowledge, but also the development of attitudes, morals, and spirituality that requires repeated coaching, continuous observation, and behavioral evidence formed through a long-term process. Under conditions of limited time, evaluation tends to be easier to focus on quickly administered achievements, while affective evaluation and spiritual habituation demand more complex, consistent, and sustainable instrument design.

In addition to training and time, evaluation problems also appear in the challenge of integrating the character and spiritual dimensions of Islam into an orderly and systematic formal assessment mechanism. Interview data shows that IRE teachers have tried to insert character and spiritual values through various paths, such as approaches during the teaching and learning process, religious activities, and self-development or extracurricular activities [17]. These findings indicate that the integration of values runs in the realm of the learning process and school culture. However, when the value dimension has to be transformed into structured assessment evidence (rubrics, behavioral journals, observation sheets, or portfolios), teachers face limitations due to the lack of reinforcement of instruments that are truly compatible with the peculiarities of IRE. Thus, the problem does not lie in the absence of character development, but in the lack of optimal formalization and documentation of character-spiritual assessment to be in line with the principles of evaluation of the Independent Curriculum based on achievement and evidence [18].

The results of IRE learning observations strengthen this dynamic. In the aspect of learning implementation, teachers are seen to have tried to carry out the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Learning begins with prayer/greetings and perception, learning objectives refer to learning outcomes, the methods used are active-collaborative, digital media/teaching modules are utilized, character and spiritual values are integrated, and students are involved in discussions and projects. However, in the assessment/authenticity aspect, observation placed teachers' practices in the category of "good" and had not reached "very good." Analytically, the "good" category indicates that the evaluation system is already in place and refers to CP, but it is not yet fully in-depth and sustainable, especially to assess the character and spiritual dimensions that require special instruments and the consistency of recording evidence [19].

The evaluation problems of the Independent Curriculum in IRE subjects at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi reflect the challenges of transition that require a shift in the assessment paradigm. IRE teachers are in a situation where the ideals of achievement-based assessment must be carried out in the midst of the limitations of official training, the narrowing of learning time, and the need for evaluation instruments that are more compatible with the characteristics of IRE as value education.

Table 1. Map of Problems for Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE Subjects

Problematic Dimensions	Problematic Forms	Field Findings	Implications for Evaluation
Conceptual	The understanding of the evaluation of the Independent Curriculum is not yet fully mature.	Teachers understand the curriculum positively, but still interpret the evaluation adaptively.	Evaluation is not completely based on learning outcomes consistently.
Structural	Limited IRE learning time	IRE lesson hours reduced from three hours to two hours	Character and spiritual assessments are less profound and sustainable
Pedagogical	Difficulty assessing spiritual and moral aspects	Character values are more observed informally	Affective aspects are difficult to document systematically
Policy	Lack of formal training on IRE evaluation	Teachers have not received special training from the government	Evaluation standards between teachers are not yet uniform
Administrative	Assessment documentation demands	Evaluation is required to be measured and in an administrative order	Teachers tend to choose practical and fast assessments

The Meaning of Evaluation Problems in the Context of Islamic Religious Education

The problem of evaluating the Independent Curriculum in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi cannot be reduced to a purely administrative technical problem, such as difficulties in compiling instruments or filling in the assessment format. Based on interview and observation data, these problems actually contain a deeper conceptual meaning, namely the occurrence of shifts and tensions in the meaning of evaluation when religious education oriented to the formation of values and morals is placed in a curriculum framework based on learning outcomes that demand measurability and formal evidence.

IRE teachers interpret the Independent Curriculum positively and do not position it as a threat to the existence of religious education. One of the teachers stated that the Independent Curriculum "is actually good because it focuses on developing the character and potential of students". This statement shows that ideologically, teachers see an alignment between the goals of the Independent Curriculum and the orientation of Islamic Religious Education. In Islamic education, learning is not only directed at the mastery of knowledge, but also at the formation of religious personality and noble morals. Therefore, teachers' acceptance of the Independent Curriculum indicates that the evaluation problem does not come from value resistance or rejection of curriculum policies.

However, such acceptance begins to experience friction when learning must be translated into evaluation practices. A teacher revealed that although the Independent Curriculum is "good conceptually", its implementation in the evaluation faces obstacles because "the time available is very little to assess the character seriously". This expression is important because it shows that the problem of IRE evaluation is closely related to the imbalance between long-term learning objectives and evaluation mechanisms that demand rapid and documented results. In this context, evaluation is no longer just a question of assessment techniques, but touches on structural issues that affect the meaning of evaluation itself [20].

In Islamic Religious Education, evaluation has a different character from general subjects. IRE teachers assess aspects of attitude, morals, and spirituality through the observation of students' daily lives. One of the teachers explained that character assessment "is more seen from the students' daily lives, how they behave in class, and how they participate in religious activities". This statement shows that IRE evaluation is procedural and contextual. Learning outcomes are not always visible in a single moment of learning, but are accumulated through habits, examples, and social interactions that take place continuously.

However, teachers also emphasized that there is a gap between the practice of evaluation and the demands of a formal assessment system. One teacher said that the main problem of evaluation was not in the assessment process, but in the difficulty of "writing it systematically and neatly according to the demands of the assessment." Analysis of this statement shows that there are epistemological problems in the evaluation of IRE. In a learning outcome-based evaluation system, learning outcomes are understood as something that can be clearly identified, measured, and proven through assessment documents. In contrast, in Islamic education, learning outcomes are often implicit and can only be understood through long-term observation of changes in attitudes and behaviors.

The meaning of evaluation problems is even stronger when it is associated with limited learning time. The teacher revealed that the reduction of IRE lesson hours from three hours to two hours had a direct impact on the depth of character and spiritual evaluation. One teacher stated that under these conditions, the evaluation "should be simplified." An analysis of this statement shows that the simplification of evaluation is

not merely a pedagogical choice, but a consequence of a curriculum structure that does not fully provide room for continuous evaluation of grades. As a result, evaluation tends to be directed at aspects that are easy to record and report, while the dimension of moral development is ongoing but does not entirely acquire formal legitimacy [21].

The interview data also showed that IRE teachers conducted evaluations adaptively and reflectively. One of the teachers said that the evaluation was "more tailored to the conditions of students and the school environment." This statement indicates that, substantively, teachers continue to carry out evaluation as a coaching process, even without a really specific evaluation guide. In this context, the problem of IRE evaluation does not mean the absence of evaluation, but rather the disconnect between the practice of grade evaluation carried out by teachers and the formal evaluation framework recognized by the curriculum system [22].

The results of learning observations reinforce the meaning of these problems. IRE teachers have shown conformity with the principles of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process, such as formulating goals based on learning outcomes, using active and collaborative methods, and integrating character and spiritual values in learning activities. However, in the aspect of authentic assessment, evaluation practices are still in the "good" category and do not fully reflect the depth of the coaching process that occurs. Analysis of these findings shows that the problem of IRE evaluation does not stem from the weak pedagogical competence of teachers, but from the limitations of the evaluation system in representing the work of religious education that is processual [23].

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, evaluation is actually an integral part of the process of tarbiyah and tazkiyah. Evaluation is not understood as a separate activity from learning, but is integrated with mentoring, example, and habituation carried out by teachers. However, when evaluation is placed within a curriculum framework that demands administrative evidence, the meaning of evaluation is at risk of being reduced. Evaluation tends to shift from a means of value development to a tool for reporting learning outcomes [24].

As an outline, evaluation problems in the context of Islamic Religious Education can be interpreted as a symptom of an evaluation paradigm transition. IRE teachers are at the crossroads between maintaining evaluation as a process of fostering values and adapting it to the demands of evaluation based on learning outcomes. This tension is not just a technical issue, but a conceptual issue of how religious learning outcomes are interpreted and presented in the formal education system. The evaluation of IRE, in this context, is a mirror of the encounter between the ideals of Islamic education and the rationality of the modern curriculum [25].

IRE Teachers' Strategies in Response to Evaluation Problems

The problem of evaluating Islamic Religious Education that has been explained earlier does not stop as a passive condition that is taken for granted by teachers. Field data shows that IRE teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi develop various evaluation strategies as a form of pedagogical adaptation to the limitations of the system, time, and formal guidelines of the Independent Curriculum. This strategy was not born from a standard policy design, but from the practical reflection of teachers in keeping the evaluation meaningful for the development of students' Islamic values.

The first strategy that stands out is attitude assessment through continuous observation. This strategy emerged as a direct response to the problem of the measurability of spiritual and moral aspects. Teachers realize that religious values cannot be assessed instantly through a written test. One of the teachers said that attitude assessments "are more often done by looking at students' daily lives, how they behave in class, how disciplined they are in worship, and how they interact with friends". This

statement suggests that observation is positioned as the primary instrument of IRE evaluation, not a complement.

An analysis of this strategy shows that the teacher moves the evaluation center from product to process. In conditions of limited time and administrative demands, continuous observation is a middle way so that moral development is monitored. Teachers do not judge character as momentary achievements, but as behavioral tendencies that appear consistently [26]. This strategy is also a response to teachers' difficulties in pouring grades into a formal assessment format, as observation allows teachers to store assessments in pedagogical memory before selectively pouring them into reports.

The second strategy that has developed is the use of religious activities as a formative assessment. Previous evaluation problems show that religious activities are often outside the formal assessment structure, even though they are the main space for students' spiritual formation. Realizing this, IRE teachers began to interpret worship activities as part of the evaluation process. One of the teachers explained that spiritual values "can be seen in the students' participation in religious activities and how earnestly they carry them out".

This strategy shows a shift in the teacher's perspective on evaluation. Evaluation is no longer understood as an activity separate from learning, but integrated into students' religious practices. Reflection on worship, discipline in participating in religious activities, and students' attitudes during these activities were treated as evaluative data, although they were not always reduced to numbers. Analysis of this strategy shows that teachers try to maintain the meaning of IRE evaluation as a coaching process (tarbiyah), not just a measurement [27].

The third strategy that emerged in response to the limitation of learning time was the adaptation of teaching modules and the simplification of evaluation. The reduction in IRE lesson hours encourages teachers to make a selection of materials and forms of evaluation. One of the teachers stated that in limited time conditions, the evaluation "must be adjusted to the conditions of the students and the available hours". This statement shows that teachers do not reject the demands of the curriculum, but conduct pedagogical negotiations so that the evaluation continues.

Analysis of this strategy shows that teachers prioritize the substance of learning over administrative completeness. Evaluations are focused on the essential indicators that are considered most relevant to character building, while overly technical or repetitive aspects are simplified. This strategy is also a response to the problems of teacher workload and the limitations of specific IRE evaluation guidelines [28].

In addition, teachers also develop informal collaborative strategies in response to the lack of formal training. Interview data showed that IRE teachers learned a lot through discussions with peers and joint reflection at school. One teacher said that because "there is no special training yet", the evaluation was developed through "independent learning and sharing with other teachers". This strategy shows that teachers build an organic learning community as an adaptation mechanism.

An analysis of this strategy shows that teachers are not waiting for formal policies to move. Instead, they produce evaluative knowledge in a practical manner based on field experience. However, this strategy also shows systemic limitations, because without clear guidance, evaluation practices have the potential to develop in a diverse manner and depend on the individual capacity of teachers [29].

The evaluation strategies developed by IRE teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi are a direct response to the problems they face. The strategy is contextual, adaptive, and oriented towards the meaning of evaluation as a value development process. The teacher does not completely submit to the administrative logic of evaluation, but also does not

reject it frontally. They chose the middle path by adjusting the demands of the curriculum to the character of Islamic Religious Education [30].

Thus, the evaluation strategy of IRE teachers can be understood as a form of pedagogical negotiation between the ideals of Islamic education and the reality of the Independent Curriculum. This strategy emphasizes that in the context of IRE, evaluation is not just a matter of instruments and formats, but a matter of maintaining meaningful religious education in the midst of changing curriculum paradigms.

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies as a Response to Evaluation Problems

The problem of evaluating Islamic Religious Education in the Independent Curriculum is not treated by IRE teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi as an obstacle that stops learning practices, but as a condition that demands pedagogical adjustment. Field data show that teachers do not wait for the arrival of a fully established evaluation guide, but develop evaluation strategies based on experience, reflection, and negotiation with the reality of the classroom. These strategies are not born from formal policy design, but from the practical need to maintain a meaningful IRE evaluation as a process of fostering Islamic values [31].

The first strategy that stands out the most is attitude and spiritual assessment through continuous observation. This strategy emerged as a direct response to the difficulty of formalizing moral and spiritual judgments into written instruments. The teacher realizes that these dimensions cannot be captured through a single measurement. One teacher explained that character assessments "are more often seen from students' daily lives, how they behave in class, discipline in worship, and how they interact with friends". This statement shows that observation is positioned as the main instrument of evaluation, not just a complement. Analytically, this strategy represents a shift in evaluation orientation from product to process, where behavioral consistency is more important than momentary achievements.

The second strategy is the integration of religious activities as formative assessments. Previous problems show that religious activities are often outside the formal assessment system, even though they are the main space for internalizing values. Teachers respond to this condition by interpreting students' participation and seriousness in religious activities as part of evaluative data. One of the teachers stated that spiritual values "can be seen from how students participate in religious activities and their seriousness in carrying out worship". This strategy shows that teachers expand the meaning of evaluation by making religious practices a source of learning evidence. Evaluation, in this context, is not separated from learning, but is attached to real activities that reflect the spiritual development of students [32].

A third strategy was developed in response to the limited IRE learning time, particularly after the reduction in lesson hours. Teachers realize that it is impossible to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all indicators in a limited duration. Therefore, teachers adapt teaching modules and select evaluation focuses. One of the teachers said that in limited hours conditions, the evaluation "must be adjusted to the conditions of students and existing hours". Analysis of this strategy shows that teachers engage in pedagogical negotiations with the curriculum: not rejecting learning outcomes, but prioritizing the indicators that are considered most essential for the formation of students' character and Islam.

The fourth strategy is to strengthen evaluation capacity through independent learning and informal collaboration between teachers. The lack of formal training related to the evaluation of IRE in the Independent Curriculum encourages teachers to build a collective learning mechanism at the school level. Teachers admitted that "there has never been official training from the government, except for independent learning at

school". In this situation, discussions with peers, sharing experiences, and shared reflection are key strategies for structuring and adjusting evaluation practices. This strategy shows that IRE teachers play a role as producers of practice-based evaluative knowledge, even without detailed policy directions [33].

The fifth strategy looks at simplifying the form of administrative evaluation without eliminating value coaching. Teachers realize that not all moral formation processes can be outlined in detail in the assessment report. Therefore, teachers choose to record the most representative aspects, while the process of building values continues through daily interactions. This strategy reflects efforts to maintain a balance between the demands of curriculum administration and the essence of Islamic Religious Education as a value education. Administrative evaluations are adequately fulfilled, but they are not used as a center for learning practices [34].

The strategy of IRE teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi is an adaptive and reflective response to the problems of evaluating the Independent Curriculum. The strategy is not idealistic, but is born from the reality of time constraints, lack of training, and the complexity of IRE assessment objects. The teacher does not completely submit to the administrative logic of evaluation, but also does not reject it frontally. They chose the pedagogical negotiation path to keep evaluation functioning as a means of fostering students' morals and spirituality [35].

Analysis of Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies from the Perspective of Independent Curriculum and Islamic Education

The evaluation strategy developed by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi cannot be understood as a mere technical decision, but as a pedagogical response to the meeting of two demands of different characters. On the one hand, the Independent Curriculum requires evaluation-based learning outcomes (CP), continuous assessment, and evidence of orderly and traceable assessments. On the other hand, Islamic Religious Education is oriented towards the formation of morals and spirituality of students whose internalization process is gradual, contextual, and not always visible instantly [36]. Field data show that teachers' strategies are born from efforts to bridge these tensions in real learning conditions, not from a fully established evaluation policy framework.

IRE teachers accept the Independent Curriculum conceptually as a curriculum that provides space for character development and the potential of students. However, at the evaluation stage, teachers feel that changes are happening quickly and have not been accompanied by adequate system support. One teacher stated that the implementation of the curriculum was felt to be "too fast with little time in developing students' character". This statement reflects the initial conditions that shape teacher evaluation strategies: evaluations must be ongoing, even if time, technical guidance, and capacity building are not ideal.

In this context, the strategy of strengthening evaluation capacity through independent learning and informal collaboration between teachers is the most tangible response. Teachers openly said that "in Islamic Religious Education, there has never been official training from the government, except for independent training" and there are even those who affirm that "there is no official training except independently in schools". This situation encourages teachers to develop evaluation practices through peer discussion, sharing teaching experiences, and reflection.

This strategy shows the adaptive power of teachers within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, which places teachers as lifelong learners. Evaluations are still carried out because teachers do not wait for formal policies. However, this strategy also has important limitations. When evaluation instruments and procedures are compiled based on individual interpretations, assessment standards can potentially vary between

teachers [37]. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, which still demands consistency in learning outcomes, this variation is a serious challenge to the reliability of IRE evaluations.

Another prominent strategy is the adaptation of teaching tools and the simplification of evaluation forms in response to limited learning time. Teachers stated that there were "significant changes in the preparation of learning tools" after the Independent Curriculum was implemented. This change cannot be separated from the reduction of IRE lesson hours, which teachers call "from three hours of learning to only two hours". This reduction in time directly narrows the evaluation space, as continuous assessments require sufficient frequency of interaction and observation opportunities.

In these conditions, teachers choose the evaluation materials and indicators. One of the teachers said that the evaluation "must be adjusted to the condition of the students and the existing hours". This statement indicates a pedagogical negotiation: the teacher does not reject the demands of the CP, but prioritizes the aspects that are considered the most essential and realistic to be evaluated. This strategy is in line with the principle of flexibility of the Independent Curriculum, but also has consequences in the form of a potential reduction in the depth of evaluation, especially in the affective and spiritual realms that require repeated observation and long-term coaching [38].

From the perspective of the goals of Islamic Religious Education, the strategy that best reflects the character of IRE can be seen in the expansion of evaluation space into the learning process and daily life of students. The teacher explained that character and spiritual values are inserted through "approaches when the teaching and learning process", "religious activities", and "self-development", including extracurricular and cultural activities. One teacher emphasized that attitude assessments "are more often done by looking at students' daily lives, how they behave in class, how disciplined they are, and how they interact with friends".

The statement shows that teachers are moving the evaluation center from results to processes. Morality and spirituality are understood as behavioral tendencies formed through habituation, not as momentary achievements that can be measured through written tests. This perspective is in line with the essence of Islamic education, which places evaluation as a means of coaching, not just a tool for classifying learning outcomes [39].

However, when this strategy is faced with the demands of the Independent Curriculum that emphasizes assessment evidence, a fairly basic limitation emerges. Field data show that although the observation of students' attitudes and involvement in religious activities is carried out intensively, the results of these observations have not been fully supported by systematic documentation instruments [40]. No consistent use of periodic observation rubrics, attitude journals, or portfolios was found. As a result, character and spiritual assessments remain pedagogically ongoing, but are difficult to present as evidence of a strong and administratively orderly evaluation.

The findings of the classroom observations reinforce this picture. IRE learning has been designed by referring to learning outcomes, using active-collaborative methods, utilizing digital media or teaching modules, and integrating character and spiritual values in the learning process. Student involvement in discussions and projects seems to be going well. However, in the aspect of authentic assessment, teachers' practices are still in the "good" category, not yet showing in-depth and sustained evaluation documentation. This indicates that learning innovation has not been fully offset by the strengthening of a commensurate evaluation system [41].

If read in the framework of the Independent Curriculum, the strategies of IRE teachers at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi show a strong compatibility in the aspects of flexibility, adaptation of teaching tools, and process-based assessment. This strategy is also relevant

to the goals of Islamic Religious Education in fostering character and spirituality through habituation [42]. However, field data show that this pedagogical strength is still limited by an evaluation ecosystem that is not yet fully supportive, especially related to formal training, time allocation, and assessment documentation tools.

The academic value of these findings lies in the understanding of teachers' strategies as pedagogical negotiation practices in the context of curriculum transition. IRE teachers are not completely subservient to the administrative logic of evaluation, but they also do not ignore it. They strive to maintain the meaning of Islamic Religious Education as a value education, while adjusting to the evaluation framework of the Independent Curriculum, which demands accountability for learning outcomes. The tension between pedagogical flexibility and the demands of evidence is what forms the face of IRE evaluation in the field [43].

The evaluation strategy of IRE teachers cannot be read as an immature practice, but as a reflection of the real dynamics of religious education in the curriculum policy that is being transformed [44]. IRE evaluation is in the space between moral development and the demands of the modern assessment system, and teachers' strategies show conscious efforts to keep religious education meaningful in the midst of a change in evaluation paradigm.

CONCLUSION

The problems of evaluating the Independent Curriculum in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMPN 11 Muaro Jambi are structural and conceptual, not just technical. Teachers are required to implement assessments based on learning processes and outcomes, but have not been optimally supported by training, learning time allocation, and evaluation instruments that are in accordance with the character of IRE. The main obstacles include the limitation of teachers' competence in assessing attitude and spiritual aspects, reduced learning hours that have an impact on the continuity of assessments, and difficulties in documenting character assessments in an accountable manner. This condition reflects the gap between the demands of the Independent Curriculum and the practice of evaluating IRE as value education. In response, teachers develop adaptive strategies in the form of continuous observation, the use of religious activities as formative assessments, adjustments to teaching tools, and capacity building through independent learning and informal collaboration. However, these efforts have not been fully supported by a robust evaluation system, especially in terms of standardization of instruments and documentation of evidence. Therefore, more concrete systemic support is needed, especially in strengthening IRE assessment literacy and developing evaluation instruments that are in line with the character of Islamic education.

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Author Contribution

Both authors equally contributed to conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, manuscript preparation, critical revision, and approval of the final version for publication together.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct or reporting of this research.

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