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Assessment as Learning in Islamic Religious Education: A Literature Review of Its Implementation in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the elementary school level through a systematic literature review. The problem addressed in this research is the dominance of traditional, cognitively oriented assessment practices that limit students' engagement and the internalization of Islamic values. This study aims to analyze the conceptual framework, implementation strategies, and challenges of assessment as learning in PAI. The method employed is a systematic literature review (SLR) of 18 scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2025, collected from academic databases using specific keywords and analyzed through content analysis. The findings reveal that although there has been a shift toward authentic and holistic assessment approaches, the implementation of assessment as learning remains limited and not yet systematically integrated into classroom practices. Reflective strategies such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and learning journals are identified but are applied inconsistently and depend largely on teacher initiative. The study also finds that assessment as learning has significant potential to enhance students' metacognitive awareness, learning responsibility, and internalization of Islamic values. However, its implementation is hindered by challenges such as limited teacher understanding, lack of training, time constraints, and the absence of practical assessment instruments. Overall, this study highlights a gap between theoretical developments and practical application, emphasizing the need for more systematic and context-based assessment models in Islamic education.

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Introduction

Assessment plays a crucial role in the learning process, not only as a tool to measure learning outcomes but also as a means to support and enhance the learning process itself. In the context of 21st-century education, assessment has undergone a significant paradigm shift from assessment of learning toward assessment for learning and assessment as learning, which emphasize formative and reflective dimensions of assessment. This transformation reflects the need for more meaningful learning experiences that promote critical thinking, self-regulation, and lifelong learning skills. In this paradigm, students are no longer passive recipients of evaluation but active participants who engage in evaluating and reflecting on their own learning processes, thereby fostering deeper understanding and autonomy (Zubaidi et al., 2025).

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), assessment is essential in developing students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in a balanced and holistic manner. The objectives of PAI extend beyond knowledge acquisition to include the internalization of Islamic values, moral development, and the cultivation of religious attitudes and practices in daily life. However, several studies indicate that assessment practices in elementary schools are still dominated by traditional approaches that primarily focus on cognitive achievement through written tests and summative evaluation. Such practices tend to overlook affective and behavioral aspects, which are central to Islamic education, thereby limiting student engagement and reducing the effectiveness of value internalization (Sa'adah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, PAI learning in elementary schools faces significant challenges, particularly in terms of instructional strategies and assessment practices. Many teachers still rely on teacher-centered approaches that position students as passive learners, with limited opportunities for interaction, reflection, and active participation. In addition, the lack of innovation in assessment design often results in monotonous evaluation practices that do not accommodate diverse student needs and learning styles. These conditions contribute to low student motivation, superficial understanding of learning materials, and a gap between knowledge and practice. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more contextual, reflective, and student-centered assessment approaches that can bridge this gap (Biabdillah et al., 2025).

The concept of assessment as learning offers a promising alternative that emphasizes students' active involvement in the assessment process through strategies such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and reflective activities. This approach not only focuses on learning outcomes but also highlights the importance of the learning process, enabling students to monitor their progress, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and make informed decisions about their learning strategies. As a result, assessment becomes a tool for learning rather than merely a tool for measuring learning. In the context of Islamic education, this approach is highly relevant as it aligns with the concept of *muhasabah* (self-reflection), which is not only a cognitive process but also a spiritual practice that encourages individuals to continuously evaluate and improve their actions, intentions, and moral conduct in accordance with Islamic teachings (Villarroel et al., 2018).

Despite its theoretical relevance and potential benefits, studies on the implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education, particularly at the elementary school level, remain limited. Most existing research tends to focus on

authentic assessment, formative assessment, or general evaluation practices without specifically examining how assessment as learning is conceptualized and applied in classroom settings. Moreover, there is a lack of systematic literature review that comprehensively analyzes this approach within the specific context of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary level. This indicates a significant research gap, particularly in understanding how reflective assessment contributes to students' metacognitive development, character formation, and internalization of Islamic values (Subhan et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level using a systematic literature review approach. This study seeks to identify key concepts, implementation strategies, and challenges found in previous studies, as well as to synthesize findings to provide a clearer understanding of current practices. In addition, this research intends to offer practical insights and theoretical contributions to improve assessment practices in PAI, particularly in fostering reflective, student-centered, and value-oriented learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more systematic and context-based assessment models, thereby advancing the discourse on assessment in Islamic education (Indriani et al., 2025).

Method

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to analyze the implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous studies. The SLR method has been widely used in Islamic education research to provide comprehensive insights into educational phenomena (Azmi et al., 2024). In addition, this approach allows for the identification of research gaps and the development of a structured understanding of assessment practices in Islamic education contexts.

The data sources were obtained from scholarly articles indexed in Google Scholar published between 2015 and 2025. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) studies discussing assessment in Islamic Religious Education, (3) research conducted in elementary school contexts, and (4) articles written in English or Indonesian. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included non-journal publications such as theses and dissertations, conference papers without peer-review, and articles without accessible full texts (Tamami et al., 2025).

The data collection process was conducted using keywords such as “assessment as learning,” “Islamic religious education assessment,” and “authentic assessment in PAI.” The article selection process followed a systematic procedure adapted from the PRISMA framework, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. The initial search resulted in approximately 120 articles. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts, 45 articles were identified as potentially relevant. These articles were further assessed through full-text analysis, resulting in 18 articles that met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final review. This staged selection process ensured both the relevance and quality of the selected studies (Biabdillah et al., 2025).

To enhance the rigor of the review, a quality assessment was conducted by evaluating each selected article based on its relevance to the research topic, clarity of research methodology, and contribution to the discussion of assessment practices. Furthermore, a thematic coding process was applied to systematically organize the data. The coding focused on three main categories: (1) the conceptual framework of assessment as learning, (2) implementation strategies in PAI classrooms, and (3) challenges in its application at the elementary school level.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across the selected studies. The analysis not only highlighted dominant findings but also considered less frequently discussed perspectives to provide a more balanced interpretation. This approach enabled the study to move beyond descriptive reporting toward analytical synthesis, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education (Savana & Sutiyono, 2025).

Results

The analysis of 18 scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2025 reveals a growing emphasis on the development of assessment practices in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), particularly at the elementary school level. A majority of the studies indicate a gradual shift from traditional summative assessment toward more holistic and authentic assessment approaches, emphasizing the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. However, only a limited number of studies explicitly address assessment as learning as a distinct framework, suggesting that this approach remains underrepresented compared to assessment of learning and assessment for learning. This imbalance highlights a dominant trend toward authentic assessment, while reflective, student-centered assessment practices receive comparatively less attention (Baroroh & Hamani, 2022).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that assessment as learning is conceptualized as an approach that positions students at the center of the assessment process, emphasizing reflection, metacognitive awareness, and self-regulation. Most studies consistently define it as involving self-assessment and peer assessment activities that promote active student engagement. However, a smaller number of studies extend this conceptualization by linking it to deeper reflective learning processes and long-term character development, indicating variation in how comprehensively the concept is understood and applied. This suggests that while the foundational idea of assessment as learning is widely recognized, its depth of interpretation differs across studies (Amri et al., 2024).

In terms of classroom implementation, the literature shows that several studies report the use of reflective strategies such as learning journals, self-assessment sheets, peer assessment activities, and group discussions. These practices are identified as key entry points for implementing assessment as learning. However, most studies also highlight that such practices are applied inconsistently and are not systematically integrated into instructional design or curriculum frameworks. Only a few studies demonstrate structured implementation models, indicating that the majority of applications remain teacher-dependent and situational rather than institutionalized practices (Hanafi et al., 2025).

Regarding assessment instruments, the findings reveal that most teachers continue to rely on conventional evaluation methods. Most studies report that written tests, multiple-choice exams, and summative assessments continue to be the primary tools used by teachers. In contrast, reflective instruments such as portfolios, learning journals, and self-assessment rubrics are less frequently utilized. This contrast indicates a significant gap between theoretical recommendations and actual classroom practices. While some studies advocate for the use of reflective instruments, their adoption remains limited, suggesting that the transition toward assessment as learning is still in its early stages (Kadir & Hasri, 2021).

The findings also demonstrate that the implementation of assessment as learning has significant positive impacts on students' development, particularly in the affective and character domains. Most studies report improvements in self-awareness, responsibility, and the internalization of Islamic values among students engaged in reflective assessment practices. In addition, several studies highlight enhanced critical thinking and independent learning skills. However, a smaller number of studies provide empirical evidence of these impacts, indicating that while the perceived benefits are widely acknowledged, further empirical validation is still needed (Amri et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the literature identifies several challenges in implementing assessment as learning. A dominant issue across studies is the limited understanding among teachers regarding the concept and practical application of reflective assessment. In addition, factors such as time constraints, heavy workloads, and limited access to professional training are frequently reported. While these challenges are widely acknowledged, some studies also point to contextual factors such as institutional support and school culture as additional influences, suggesting that implementation barriers operate at multiple levels (Tamami et al., 2025).

In addition to teacher-related factors, systemic and policy-related issues also contribute to the challenges. Most studies indicate that curriculum structures and assessment systems remain heavily oriented toward cognitive achievement and standardized testing. This encourages teachers to maintain traditional practices and limits opportunities for innovation. Only a few studies highlight efforts to integrate more flexible and reflective assessment approaches within curriculum frameworks. This indicates that systemic constraints play a significant role in shaping assessment practices in PAI (Savana & Sutiyono, 2025).

Overall, the findings indicate that although assessment as learning holds significant potential for improving the quality of PAI learning, its implementation at the elementary level remains limited and uneven. The literature shows a clear dominance of authentic assessment discourse, while assessment as learning is still emerging as a complementary but underdeveloped approach. This suggests the need for more systematic models, empirical studies, and practical frameworks to bridge the gap between theory and practice in Islamic Religious Education (Ramli et al., 2026).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that assessment practices in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) are currently in a transitional phase from traditional approaches toward more reflective and student-centered assessment models. This shift reflects broader transformations in 21st-century education, where student engagement, self-regulation, and active participation are increasingly emphasized. However, while this trend is consistent with global developments in assessment practices, the implementation of assessment as learning in PAI remains relatively limited and fragmented. This suggests that although the paradigm shift has been conceptually recognized, its practical adoption in Islamic education contexts—particularly at the elementary level—still lags behind and is not yet fully institutionalized (Idris & Asyafah, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, assessment as learning aligns closely with the fundamental objectives of Islamic Religious Education, which extend beyond cognitive achievement to include character development and the internalization of Islamic values. The emphasis on self-reflection within this approach resonates strongly with the Islamic concept of *muhasabah*, which encourages continuous self-evaluation and moral awareness. However, unlike general educational frameworks that emphasize metacognition primarily as a cognitive process, the Islamic perspective integrates both cognitive and spiritual dimensions of reflection. This indicates that assessment as learning in PAI has the potential to offer a more holistic model of reflective learning, although this integration is not yet fully explored in existing empirical studies (Ubaidillah et al., 2021).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that reflective assessment practices can enhance student engagement, metacognitive awareness, and overall learning quality. Similar trends have been observed in broader educational contexts, where self-assessment and peer assessment are recognized as effective tools for promoting deeper learning. However, some studies reveal inconsistencies, particularly in terms of implementation depth and sustainability. While certain contexts demonstrate successful integration of reflective strategies, others report only partial adoption, suggesting that the effectiveness of assessment as learning is highly dependent on contextual factors such as teacher competence, institutional support, and learning culture (Adiyono et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the primary challenges in implementing assessment as learning are not only pedagogical but also structural. While teacher readiness remains a dominant issue, the problem extends to systemic constraints such as curriculum rigidity, assessment policies, and institutional expectations that prioritize measurable cognitive outcomes. This finding is consistent with studies in both Islamic and general education contexts, which highlight that innovative assessment practices often struggle to be implemented within exam-oriented systems. Therefore, the challenge of implementing assessment as learning should be understood as a multi-level issue involving individual, institutional, and policy dimensions (Sahlan et al., 2023).

The implications of this study suggest that improving assessment practices in PAI requires a more comprehensive and systemic approach. At the practical level, teachers need structured professional development that not only introduces reflective assessment strategies but also provides practical tools and examples for classroom implementation. At the institutional level, schools need to create supportive environments that encourage

innovation and reduce the dominance of purely summative evaluation practices. At the policy level, curriculum and assessment frameworks should be redesigned to accommodate more flexible and reflective approaches. Without alignment across these levels, the implementation of assessment as learning is likely to remain fragmented and inconsistent (Rosyidah et al., 2025).

Finally, this study highlights important directions for future research. While the current literature provides valuable conceptual insights, there is still a lack of empirical studies that examine the real-world implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education classrooms. Future research should focus on developing and testing context-based assessment models that integrate reflective, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions. In addition, comparative studies across different educational contexts—both within and beyond Islamic education—would provide a deeper understanding of how assessment as learning can be adapted and optimized. Such efforts are essential for bridging the gap between theory and practice and for advancing the development of more meaningful and holistic assessment practices (Al-Banjari & Wahab, 2025).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of assessment as learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the elementary school level remains limited, fragmented, and not yet systematically integrated into classroom practices. The findings indicate that although assessment practices in PAI have shifted toward more authentic and holistic approaches, they are still largely dominated by traditional, cognitively oriented evaluation methods. The concept of assessment as learning, which emphasizes students' active involvement through reflection, self-assessment, and metacognitive awareness, has not been widely adopted despite its strong alignment with both contemporary educational paradigms and Islamic principles such as *muhasabah*. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the gap between theoretical developments and practical implementation, particularly in the context of Islamic education. However, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data through a literature review approach, which does not capture direct classroom practices or empirical evidence from specific educational settings. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the reviewed literature and should not be generalized beyond similar contexts.

Based on these findings, this study recommends the need for further research that explores the implementation of assessment as learning in real classroom settings through empirical and experimental approaches. Future studies should focus on developing practical and context-based assessment models that can be easily implemented by teachers in Islamic Religious Education. In addition, research examining the effectiveness of reflective assessment strategies in improving both cognitive and affective learning outcomes is highly encouraged. It is also important for future studies to investigate the role of teacher training, institutional support, and educational policies in facilitating the adoption of assessment as learning. These efforts are expected to strengthen the integration of reflective and student-centered assessment approaches, thereby enhancing the quality of learning and character development in Islamic education.

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