

## Exploring Cognitive Domain Assessment Practices in Islamic Religious Education Learning at The Elementary School Level

Risa Melinda Septiani<sup>1)</sup>, Saepul Anwar<sup>2\*)</sup>, Ganjar Eka Subakti<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1),2),3)</sup>Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>1)</sup>Email: [risamlnds@upi.edu](mailto:risamlnds@upi.edu)

<sup>2)</sup>Email: [saefull@upi.edu](mailto:saefull@upi.edu)

<sup>3)</sup>Email: [ganjarekasubakti@upi.edu](mailto:ganjarekasubakti@upi.edu)

**Abstract:** While cognitive assessment is crucial, elementary Islamic Religious Education (IRE) faces a specific pedagogical crisis: a severe disconnect between students' theoretical religious knowledge and actual moral behavior, exacerbated by curriculum overload and rigid evaluation metrics. This study analyzes the cognitive assessment ecosystem of Islamic Education learning to reveal how teachers understand, implement, strategize, and utilize assessment results in a public elementary school in Bandung. Employing a qualitative instrumental case study, five IRE teachers were purposively selected ensuring variation in teaching experience and grade levels to capture the full spectrum of cognitive developmental phases and guarantee data representativeness. Data were gathered via interviews, observations, and document analysis. Moving beyond the extensively researched finding that assessments stagnate at lower cognitive levels, this study reveals a novel epistemological dynamic: teachers pragmatically navigate the misalignment between heavy curriculum demands and students' cognitive readiness by implicitly merging cognitive evaluations with affective mechanisms and behavioral tracking. Resolving this crisis requires a transformative policy shift. Policymakers must systematically redesign the IRE assessment framework into an integrative-authentic model that formally bridges cognitive achievement with character actualization, empowering teachers as adaptive pedagogical designers.

**Keywords:** Bloom's Taxonomy; Cognitive Assessment; Elementary School; Islamic Religious Education; Merdeka Curriculum

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## INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a fundamental component of the learning process that not only measures learning outcomes but also provides feedback to improve instructional practices and ensure educational quality (McConnell et al., 2021; Mustofa & Hamdi, 2022). In Indonesia, this role is reinforced through Permendikbudristek No. 21 of 2022 and the Independent Curriculum, which promote diverse assessment methods such as formative tests, portfolios, and performance-based evaluations to enhance conceptual understanding and critical thinking (Hadiastriani et al., 2024; Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024). These developments align with the cognitive domain in Bloom's Taxonomy, which emphasizes knowledge mastery alongside critical thinking, problem-solving, and reasoning skills (Alafnan, 2025; Caro et al., 2026; Lemos et al., 2025). In this context, authentic assessment plays an important role by focusing not only on what students know but also on how they apply, reflect on, and use knowledge in real-life situations (Larsen et al., 2022). In Islamic Religious Education (IRE), this approach is essential to ensure that students are able not only to understand religious teachings but also to analyze, evaluate, and implement them in daily life, as emphasized in QS. Shaa'd verse 29 regarding the importance of reflection and understanding.

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

*"(This is) a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, (O Muḥammad), that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded."*

Furthermore, cognitive processes are closely linked to metacognitive skills, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which support self-regulated learning (Cera et al., 2013). In Islamic Religious Education, assessment becomes more complex as it is expected to measure cognitive achievement while also fostering the internalization of values and character formation (Warsah et al., 2024). This is particularly important in the modern context, where moral degradation among students is increasingly evident. One manifestation of this issue is the high prevalence of bullying in Indonesia, especially in West Java and Bandung, where students frequently experience or engage in bullying behaviors despite having learned moral values (Borualogo et al., 2020; Chodijah, 2019). This condition indicates a gap between students' moral knowledge and their actual behavior.

At the same time, classroom assessment practices tend to focus on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), with limited emphasis on higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Although curricula have incorporated HOTS indicators, many teachers still face difficulties in designing assessment instruments that effectively measure complex cognitive abilities, leading to a reliance on summative written tests and limited variation in assessment strategies (Le & Pham, 2025; Petersen et al., 2020; Zana et al., 2024). Over the past decade, studies on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) assessment have highlighted the effectiveness of holistic-integrative approaches such as the PHIKAP model, the use of ICT-based tools (e.g., Google Forms, WhatsApp, and Google Meet), and the combination of test and non-test techniques in improving the quality and comprehensiveness of learning assessment across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Adiyono et al., 2023; Khotib Al Chariz et al., 2023; Sulaeman et al., 2023). Additionally, authentic assessment implemented through systematic procedures has been shown to provide a more complete evaluation of students' achievement, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Baroroh & Hamani, 2022).

Although these studies indicate that well-designed assessments can improve learning outcomes, they largely emphasize results rather than investigating the

underlying process of how assessments are conceptualized and implemented by teachers. Therefore, there remains a critical gap in understanding how cognitive assessments are actually designed, interpreted, and applied by teachers, especially at the elementary school level where foundational thinking skills are developed. As emphasized by Anwar et al. (2021), every teacher must demonstrate competence in planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction as part of pedagogical proficiency.

This study addresses the gap by examining cognitive assessment practices in Islamic Religious Education at a public elementary school in Bandung. Specifically, this study explores teachers' understanding of cognitive assessment, their planning and implementation strategies, the use of assessment results, and their professional development experiences. This study aims to contribute not only empirically but also theoretically to the discourse on assessment in Islamic religious education. The findings are expected to provide insights into the challenges of implementing assessments that are meaningful both cognitively and pedagogically, as well as to inform the development of more reflective, adaptive, and student-centered assessment practices in elementary-level Islamic religious education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a field research employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, specifically an instrumental case study (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). The design was chosen because the purpose of the research was not merely to explore teachers' subjective experiences, but to examine cognitive assessment practices systematically, with a focus on the connections between documents, classroom observations, and interviews. Conducted at SD Negeri 200 Leuwipanjang Bandung from June to August 2025, the study involved five PAI teachers selected through purposive sampling (Kothari, 2004) based on their active roles in assessment practices. The analysis in this study is focused on five main aspects: 1) teachers' understanding of cognitive assessment; 2) assessment planning by teachers; 3) assessment strategies and techniques; 4) utilization of assessment results; and 5) teacher professional development.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods:

**1. In-depth and structured interviews** (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022) were used as the primary instrument to explore teachers' conceptual understanding as well as their pedagogical and professional experiences in planning, implementing, and utilizing cognitive domain assessments in Islamic Religious Education. Although limited to five teachers in a single public elementary school, the sample was selected to maximize variation across grade levels (Grades I–VI) and teaching experience (ranging from 5 to 30 years). Data saturation was reached because recurring patterns and themes emerged among the participants, indicating sufficient depth to address the research objectives.

Data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews with a 31-item instrument to obtain detailed and consistent information on teachers' understanding, planning, implementation, evaluation, and professional development. Each teacher was assigned a code (GPAI01–GPAI05) to ensure consistent data presentation and maintain confidentiality in accordance with research ethics. An explanation related to the informant codes can be seen in the following Table 1.

**Table 1. Informant Codes**

No	Teacher	Information
1	Informant 1	GPAI01
2	Informant 2	GPAI02
3	Informant 3	GPAI03
4	Informant 4	GPAI04
5	Informant 5	GPAI05

**2. Classroom observations** (Siregar & Murhayati, 2024) were conducted to obtain empirical data on the actual practices of cognitive assessment in the classroom, reducing reliance on teachers' verbal reports. The study employed non-participant observation, where the researcher acted solely as an observer without engaging in instructional activities. Observations used structured guidelines in the form of observation sheets, including descriptive field notes and documentation to capture classroom situations. Conducted across grade levels, the observations focused on assessment implementation, types of tasks, cognitive levels in learning activities, feedback provision, and alignment with students' characteristics and needs, aiming to verify consistency between planning, teachers' perceptions, and classroom practices in Islamic Religious Education (IRE).

**3. Document analysis** (Nilamsari, 2014) was used to examine instructional documents representing the formal planning and implementation of cognitive assessment, including teaching modules, lesson plans, learning objectives, assessment instruments, and sample test items. The analysis focused on mapping the alignment between learning objectives and assessment instruments, the distribution of cognitive levels based on Bloom's Taxonomy, the variety of assessment formats, and indications of differentiated instruments according to students' abilities. The process involved document collection, categorization of items into knowledge dimensions and cognitive processes, and triangulation with interview and observation data to ensure consistency between planning and classroom practice, thereby providing objective evidence of the quality of teachers' cognitive assessment planning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the elementary level.

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three important stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In the data reduction stage, information obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis is selected, focused, and simplified according to the research objectives. Next, the reduced data is presented in narrative descriptions and tables to clarify patterns and relationships among the findings. The final stage involves drawing conclusions by interpreting the meaning of the presented data and formulating implications relevant to the research focus. The validity and legitimacy of the data are maintained through several techniques. First, the interview transcripts are returned to the PAI teacher for review and confirmation, then signed as proof that the data is accurate and mutually agreed upon. Second, the authenticity of documents is ensured by collecting teaching modules and test instruments that have been validated through the signatures of the compiling teachers. Third, triangulation is conducted by comparing the results of interviews, written documents, and field observation notes to ensure consistency between plans, statements, and assessment practices in the classroom.

## RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Understanding of Cognitive Assessment in Islamic Religious Education

This section shows that IRE teachers perceive cognitive assessment as a structured evaluation of the knowledge domain through diagnostic, formative, and summative stages to continuously monitor comprehension. As emphasized by GPAI01, *"when we (teachers) already understand the concept of assessment and cognition, only then can we implement it for students."*

However, teachers recognize that assessment cannot be applied uniformly due to students' diverse cognitive abilities and learning conditions, particularly for those with special needs. GPAI02 illustrated this challenge:

*"In grade I, there are students with special needs who when asked to learn and understand the meaning of Surah Al-Ikhlâs, cry because they struggle with the task. While other students are already able to write cursive Arabic letters, students with special needs may only be able to write basic hijaiyah letters like the alif."* (GPAI02, personal communication, July 21, 2025).

In terms of cognitive assessment practices, teachers demonstrated an implicit application of hierarchical thinking aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy. Instruments used in lower grades predominantly measured cognitive levels C1–C2 (remembering and understanding), such as identifying hijaiyah letters, defining words in surahs, or sequencing verses. In higher grades, items began to target levels C3–C4 (applying and analyzing), such as arranging verse fragments, identifying moral messages, or linking verse content to daily behavior. Additionally, reward and punishment are used as pedagogical strategies to reinforce learning, discipline, and moral awareness, as noted by GPAI04. Teachers also distinguish between character (socially constructed) and akhlak (divinely grounded), reflecting the spiritual orientation of IRE assessment.

Furthermore, variations in students' integration of knowledge and practice—ranging from theoretical understanding without application, balanced integration, to practice without understanding—highlight a key challenge, where cognitive achievement does not necessarily translate into behavioral or spiritual outcomes. The table below summarizes teachers' understanding of cognitive assessment, displaying perspectives, conceptual interpretations, and representative quotes that illustrate how cognitive assessment is understood and applied.

**Table 2. Summary IRE Teachers' Understanding of Cognitive Assessment**

Informant Code	General Understanding	Key Quotation
GPAI01	Understanding cognitive assessment as a structured process that includes diagnostic, formative, and summative stages to map student abilities.	<i>"There is diagnostic assessment at the beginning of learning, formative during instruction, and summative at the end."</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI02	Assessment is directed toward students' thinking abilities according to cognitive levels, with modifications to test items to make them more engaging and easier to understand.	<i>"HOTS questions are too lengthy (for lower-grade students)... so I added illustrative pictures."</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI03	Assessment is considered essential and mandatory in accordance with	<i>"Cognitive assessment plays a significant role... it should be</i>

Informant Code	General Understanding	Key Quotation
	curriculum requirements. Every teacher, needs to carry it out consistently as an important part of the teaching and learning process.	<i>implemented at all stages of learning.</i> " (personal communication, July 22, 2025)
GPAI04	Understanding assessment as an evaluation of knowledge and reasoning, including the application of Islamic values in everyday life.	<i>"...the extent to which they can answer reflects the outcome."</i> (personal communication, July 25, 2025)
GPAI05	Emphasizes the importance of assessing all cognitive levels (C1-C5) both in the learning process and in instrument development.	<i>"Assessment of students' knowledge in understanding, remembering, analyzing, and applying material in daily life."</i> (personal communication, August 12, 2025)

Based on the descriptive data above, the findings reveal that elementary school IRE teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of cognitive assessment as a structured process encompassing diagnostic, formative, and summative dimensions, aligned with the principle of assessment for learning (Budiharso et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2023). Cognitive assessment is also viewed within an integrative Islamic paradigm that connects knowledge ('ilm) with practice ('amal), where assessment not only measures students' understanding but also supports the internalization of values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy through Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)-based formative practices (Maksum et al., 2025; Yusoff et al., 2025).

In practice, teachers implicitly apply Bloom's Taxonomy by adjusting assessment to students' developmental stages, with dominance of C1-C2 in lower grades and progression to C3-C4 in higher grades, reflecting alignment with cognitive development theories, such as those proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, which suggest that children experience stages of intellectual growth, shifting from concrete to more abstract thinking as they age (Pedapati, 2022; Yıldız, 2025). However, the limited implementation of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) indicates constraints in students' readiness and teachers' capacity to design valid assessments (Epinasti et al., 2021). Additionally, the integration of reward and punishment strategies reflects the interconnectedness of cognitive and affective domains, emphasizing moral and character development rooted in Islamic values (Maksum et al., 2025; Maslani et al., 2023).

Moreover, the identification of gaps between students' knowledge and practice—ranging from conceptual understanding without application to practice without sufficient understanding—highlights that cognitive achievement does not automatically lead to behavioral change (Ashoumi et al., 2024; Nasir, 2022; Supriyanto et al., 2024). Therefore, a more integrative and authentic assessment approach, incorporating students' practices, reflections, and experiences, is necessary to bridge this gap and support holistic educational goals encompassing academic, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Nasir, 2022).

## Teachers' Planning of Cognitive Assessment in Islamic Religious Education

This section shows that elementary school IRE teachers plan cognitive assessment not merely as an administrative task, but as a pedagogical process aligned with students' characteristics and needs. Teachers begin by mapping students' characteristics and learning styles through diagnostic assessment. As explained by GPAI03:

*"In designing cognitive assessments, the first thing a teacher needs to do is to first recognize the character and learning style of each student. At the beginning of the lesson, a diagnostic assessment is usually conducted by providing questions to determine their understanding."* (GPAI03, personal communication, July 21, 2025).

Classroom observations confirm this, with teachers adapting strategies such as songs in lower grades and group discussions in higher grades to accommodate different learning styles.



Figure 1. Teaching the Material *Introduction to the Qur'an and Hijaiyah Letters* in Grade I through Singing Activities



Figure 2. Group Discussion Learning in Fifth Grade

Curriculum serves as the main reference in planning, where learning objectives are aligned with *Capaian Pembelajaran (CP)*, curriculum standards, and *KKM*. GPAI04 stated that, *"learning becomes facilitated and effective when references such as curriculum, teaching modules, and lesson plans are available"* (GPAI04, personal communication, July 25, 2025). However, teachers identified gaps between curriculum demands and students' readiness. Some materials are considered too complex for students' developmental stages, such as the topic of puberty, which is delivered only at a general level to avoid excessive curiosity, as noted by GPAI03. Similarly, the inclusion of lengthy and dense memorization materials—such as *Surah Al-Hujurat* and *Surah Al-Ma'idah*—was considered burdensome for elementary-level learners, particularly when combined with limited instructional time, as noted by GPAI01.

In response to these challenges, teachers reported prioritizing foundational religious competencies, including the ability to read and write the *Qur'an* correctly,

demonstrate proper prayer (salat) and ablution (wudhu) practices, and exhibit good moral conduct in daily life. This prioritization reflects a pragmatic adjustment in planning, where essential and applicable skills are emphasized over the completion of extensive curricular content. The table below summarizes findings regarding cognitive assessment planning by PAI teachers, presenting key practices, underlying considerations, and representative quotes that show how assessments are systematically designed in accordance with student characteristics, curriculum demands, and classroom realities.

**Table 3. Summary of IRE Teachers' Planning of Cognitive Assessment**

<b>Informant Code</b>	<b>Planning of IRE Cognitive Assessment</b>	<b>Key Quotation</b>
GPAI01	Planning begins with identifying the characteristics, abilities, and learning styles of students and adapting the material to the developmental stage of elementary school children and the basic objectives of Islamic Religious Education learning.	<i>"First, knowing and identifying each student's characteristics and learning styles... what matters is that elementary students can correctly read and write the Qur'an and perform prayer."</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI02	The assessment is designed according to developmental stages with a fun learning approach (songs, games, coloring) to introduce the hijaiyah letters.	<i>"Students respond with the name of the letter when shown, and then color and write the letter according to the example."</i> (classroom observation notes, July 25, 2025)
GPAI03	Planning takes into account students' actual abilities because the curriculum demands are considered quite heavy, so assessments need to be more contextual and realistic.	<i>"The material taught now... feels too heavy compared to their abilities... therefore, cognitive assessment planning must truly consider students' capabilities."</i> (personal communication, July 22, 2025)
GPAI04	Planning includes the preparation of modules/lesson plans, graded questions (easy-difficult), and media selection; focusing on memorization, tartil, writing verses, and understanding meaning.	<i>"Preparing lesson plans, then creating questions... starting with easy questions first, then moderate, and finally difficult."</i> (personal communication, July 25, 2025)
GPAI05	Planning is based on curriculum guides, teacher books, and student books with an emphasis on alignment of objectives, indicators, and materials.	<i>"In learning, the steps must be clear... all aligned with the material being taught."</i> (personal communication, August 12, 2025)

Based on the descriptive data above, the findings show that IRE teachers perceive cognitive assessment planning not merely as an administrative task but as a contextual

and adaptive pedagogical process grounded in student-centered learning principles. Planning begins with mapping students' learning styles and initial abilities through diagnostic assessment, which supports differentiated instruction and inclusive practices by adjusting content, processes, and products to students' needs, while encouraging active engagement through strategies such as self-assessment, peer feedback, and performance-based tasks (Che Mat & Jamaludin, 2024; Romlah et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, assessment planning demonstrates alignment with curriculum demands, particularly Learning Outcomes (CP) in the Independent Curriculum, through the formulation of clear objectives, indicators, and rubrics to ensure validity and accountability, while also reflecting teachers' roles as active interpreters who adapt curriculum guidelines to classroom realities (Alhunaini et al., 2020; Remesal & Estrada, 2023). However, a gap between curriculum complexity and students' cognitive readiness reveals challenges in aligning material with developmental stages, prompting teachers to apply adaptive strategies such as simplifying sensitive content and prioritizing essential religious competencies (Hidayat et al., 2023; Katsantonis & McLellan, 2023; Rathner & Schier, 2017). Overall, effective cognitive assessment planning in IRE requires balancing curriculum demands, student characteristics, and holistic educational goals that integrate knowledge with practical and value-based dimensions.

### Strategies and Techniques of Cognitive Assessment in Islamic Religious Education

This section shows that elementary school IRE teachers employ varied strategies and techniques in cognitive assessment by combining multiple methods to capture students' learning comprehensively. Teachers use written tests, oral examinations, practice, memorization, and peer tutoring, as stated by GPAI01. In Grade V, teachers employed group learning methods such as writing verses on the board with immediate correction, while in Grade I, teachers introduced the Qur'an and hijaiyah letters through singing activities. GPAI01 further added, "For the lesson on Allah's obligatory and impossible attributes, I used a wall-posting technique so that children could see them every day." (GPAI01, personal communication, July 21, 2025).

Assessment strategies are adapted to students' learning styles. GPAI02 explained, "Some memorize through audio, some while moving, and some need to focus seriously" (GPAI02, personal communication, July 21, 2025). Observations in Grade VI showed the application of the *talqin* method for memorizing Surah Ad-Dhuha, in which the teacher repeatedly recited the verses and students imitated them.



Figure 3. Teacher Applying the *Talqin* Method in Teaching the Material of *Surah Ad-Duha*

Differentiated approaches were a key principle in selecting assessment techniques as highlighted by GPAI02, *“Every child has different potentials and abilities... differentiation is important so that children understand the material”* (GPAI02, personal communication, July 21, 2025). This was reflected in teaching modules that included varied assessment activities, ranging from individual exercises and group work to simple project-based assignments. GPAI03 stressed that individualized approaches were provided for students with special needs, using simplified instructions and personal guidance. However, cognitive assessment techniques remain largely conventional, relying on written, oral, and memorization methods with minimal use of digital tools. This limitation is influenced by resource constraints and perceptions of limited effectiveness for younger students, indicating that traditional approaches are still considered relevant when aligned with students’ needs.

The table below summarizes the cognitive assessment strategies and techniques used by PAI teachers, showing a variety of approaches, practical implementation in the classroom, as well as representative quotes that illustrate the execution of assessments in a flexible, differentiated, and student-centered manner.

**Table 4. Summary of IRE Teachers’ Strategies and Techniques of Cognitive Assessment**

<b>Informant Code</b>	<b>Strategies and Techniques of Assessment</b>	<b>Key Quotation</b>
GPAI01	Using educational games to build initial understanding and support memorization; assessments include written tests, practice, memorization, and peer tutoring.	<i>“Given educational games... the expectation is that children will memorize the material through games...”</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI02	Adapting assessments to developmental stages through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches, accompanied by individual guidance.	<i>“Visual (pictures), auditory (songs), kinesthetic (writing)... the teacher accompanies students one by one.”</i> (classroom observation notes, July 25, 2025)
GPAI03	Combine reading, writing, memorization, and discussion, and relate the material to everyday life; use alternative approaches if students do not understand.	<i>“If there is material not understood... I will re-explain it in a simpler way or use another method.”</i> (personal communication, July 22, 2025)
GPAI04	Using lectures, summaries, discussions, and presentations for historical material; assessment includes oral, written, and practical.	<i>“For lessons on Islamic history, such as stories of the Prophet’s companions... they summarize and discuss, then each group presents in front of the class.”</i> (personal communication, July 25, 2025)
GPAI05	Emphasizes individual practice to clearly see student abilities; uses lectures, icebreakers, and out-of-class learning; assessments include written, oral, and practical tests.	<i>“For practice exercises, it is better to work individually rather than in groups.”</i> (personal communication, August 12, 2025)

Based on the descriptive data above, the findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers apply multimodal and flexible cognitive assessment strategies by combining written tests, oral tests, observation of religious practices, and memorization, enabling personalized learning, enhancing student engagement, and improving understanding and retention (Amirudin et al., 2025; Dimyathi et al., 2025; Liu & Lahoz, 2024; Miller, 2017; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2025). Assessment is thus positioned not only as a measurement tool but also as a means of facilitating meaningful learning aligned with students' learning styles.

Furthermore, the use of differentiated strategies—such as singing in lower grades, group discussions in higher grades, and the talqin method for memorization—demonstrates teachers' efforts to accommodate diverse learning preferences and promote inclusivity, including individualized support for students with special needs (Meeuwissen et al., 2025). However, assessment practices remain largely conventional with limited integration of digital technology, reflecting pedagogical considerations regarding students' developmental stages and the continued effectiveness of traditional methods such as repetition and direct interaction (Masalimova et al., 2024). Overall, these findings highlight a balance between variation, adaptation, and contextual decision-making, while emphasizing the need for selective and meaningful integration of innovation to enhance assessment quality without compromising pedagogical principles and Islamic values.

#### **Utilization of Cognitive Assessment Results in Islamic Religious Education**

This section shows that elementary school IRE teachers utilize cognitive assessment results as diagnostic and formative tools to improve students' learning quality. Teachers consistently process results to determine follow-up actions such as remedial and enrichment, as explained by GPAI01. Meanwhile, GPAI02 added everyday behavioral aspects into the evaluation, stating, *"The results are processed along with attendance and daily behavior, because those are also part of the assessment... If a student's assessment results are good but their daily conduct or character is poor, or they are frequently absent, their score can be reduced"* (GPAI02, personal communication, July 21, 2025). Assessment results are also used to provide additional support, for example through extra learning sessions for students who have not yet mastered basic skills, as emphasized by GPAI03.

Classroom observations in Grade V showed that feedback was given directly during learning activities, such as correcting students' work and providing immediate explanations. This practice aligned with the teaching module objective, which required students to write Surah Al-Mā'ūn accurately in Arabic script.



**Figure 4. Direct Feedback Provided by the Teacher in Teaching the Material of Surah Al-Ma'un in Grade V**

Analysis of test instruments showed that teachers utilized results from written tests, memorization, and practice to map students' achievements. GPAI05 emphasized

that cognitive assessment results were used to design subsequent instruction: *“If many students have not yet reached the KKM, then in the following session a review, re-explanation, or remedial is conducted so they can understand the material”* (GPAI05, personal communication, July 21, 2025). Although most teachers provide differentiated treatment according to students’ abilities, the analyzed test instruments indicate that specific adaptations for students with special needs have not been consistently implemented. This constitutes an important note for the development of more inclusive assessment practices.

The table below summarizes findings regarding the use of cognitive assessment results by PAI teachers, showing how they use the results for follow-up, learning improvement, and student support, as well as representative quotes that illustrate how assessment promotes a reflective, adaptive, and continuous learning process.

**Table 5. Summary of IRE Teachers’ Utilization of Cognitive Assessment Results**

<b>Informant Code</b>	<b>Utilization of Assessment Results</b>	<b>Key Quotation</b>
GPAI01	The assessment results are processed to determine differential follow-up: enrichment for students who have achieved the target and remedial for those who have not achieved the KKM.	<i>“Processed and evaluated, of course. Sometimes there is enrichment... For those who fall short, usually there is remedial.”</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI02	Used to map initial abilities, especially the recognition of the hijaiyah letters; students who are not yet capable are given individual guidance.	<i>“If there are students who cannot yet read letters, they are guided again one by one.”</i> (classroom observation notes, July 25, 2025)
GPAI03	Determine follow-up in the form of remedial and enrichment and become the basis for changes in learning strategies.	<i>“There is follow-up in the form of remedial for students who have not reached the KKM and enrichment for those with better comprehension.”</i> (personal communication, July 22, 2025)
GPAI04	Determine follow-up in the form of remedial and enrichment and become the basis for changes in learning strategies.	<i>“The final score is not only from knowledge, but also from character...”</i> (personal communication, July 25, 2025)
GPAI05	Used for reflection and evaluation of learning; incomplete material is repeated, students below the KKM are required to undergo remedial, with an emphasis on home learning and parental support.	<i>“If below the KKM, it means they did not pass or are incomplete... learning that is incomplete must be completed first.”</i> (personal communication, August 12, 2025)

Based on the descriptive data above, the findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers utilize cognitive assessment results not only to measure learning outcomes but also as a basis for reflection and systematic follow-up through

remedial and enrichment activities, demonstrating assessment as a diagnostic and formative tool for continuous improvement (Im, 2025). Assessment results are used to identify students' cognitive levels, diagnose individual performance, and provide feedback that supports adaptive learning, reflecting its integral role within the learning cycle. Furthermore, the integration of behavior, attendance, and character into assessment results reflects a holistic approach that combines cognitive and affective dimensions, aligning with the epistemological characteristics of IRE, although it raises concerns regarding assessment objectivity.

The use of holistic instruments such as HCAT and HALDO supports more structured and reliable evaluation through clear rubrics and validated measurement of non-cognitive aspects (Krupar & D'Sa, 2024; Wu et al., 2016). In addition, the provision of immediate and specific feedback and the use of results to redesign learning strategies demonstrate the application of assessment for learning principles and a reflective teaching cycle (Ismail et al., 2022; Sirianansopa, 2024; Uludağ, 2025). However, despite the implementation of differentiated follow-up, adaptations for students with special needs remain inconsistent, indicating a gap between conceptual awareness and practical application, thus requiring further training in inclusive and differentiated assessment design (Cortoni, 2025; Woltran et al., 2022). Overall, the use of cognitive assessment results in IRE reflects a transformative function that integrates academic achievement, character development, and responsiveness to individual student needs.

### **Professional Development of Elementary School Islamic Religious Education Teachers**

This section shows that elementary school IRE teachers develop their competencies in cognitive assessment through a combination of formal training, collaborative forums, and informal learning. Teachers actively participate in workshops, seminars, and KKG, as stated by GPAI01. These trainings cover both theoretical and practical aspects, including instrument development and the application of Bloom's Taxonomy. GPAI04 described training as *"like a charger... refreshing teachers' understanding."* with evidence from teaching modules showing adjustments in assessment strategies, such as varied techniques and integration of Islamic values. The need for continuous professional development remains a shared concern, as emphasized by GPAI02, particularly in areas such as assessment for students with special needs, digital assessment, and HOTS-based instruments.

Collaboration among teachers occurred in two forms: formally through KKG forums and informally through spontaneous discussions at school. Teacher 5 explained, *"We often hold informal discussions at school with colleagues, for example when preparing test items or discussing assessment methods more suitable for students' conditions"* (GPAI05, personal communication, July 25, 2025). Teachers also recognize their limitations, with GPAI02 highlighting that new approaches like game-based learning were initially unfamiliar but became understood through training.

The table below presents a synthesis of the research findings on teachers' professional development in cognitive assessment, highlighting the various forms of development activities undertaken by each informant, their contributions to enhancing assessment competencies, and representative quotations to illustrate how collaboration support teachers' professional growth.

**Table 6. Summary of IRE Teachers' Professional Development in Cognitive Assessment**

<b>Informant Code</b>	<b>Teachers' Professional Development</b>	<b>Key Quotation</b>
GPAI01	Actively participate in workshops and seminars to improve cognitive assessment competency and broaden professional insight.	<i>"Attending workshops and seminars... helps expand our knowledge and insights as teachers."</i> (personal communication, July 21, 2025)
GPAI02	Actively involved in KKG as a follow-up to training for discussion, collaboration, and assessment development with teachers at the same level.	<i>"Workshops or seminars are followed up in KKG... Grade 1 teachers gather... KKG can be held twice a month."</i> (classroom observation notes)
GPAI03	Viewing professional development as important because it has a direct impact on the quality of student learning and understanding.	<i>"Workshops and training are very important... it certainly has an impact..."</i> (personal communication, July 22, 2025)
GPAI04	Develop competencies through formal forums (workshops, seminars) and informal forums (discussions between teachers) to gain new insights.	<i>"Formally... workshops, seminars... and informally through chatting and sharing..."</i> (personal communication, July 25, 2025)
GPAI05	Actively participate in seminars in KKG and national training outside KKG, as evidenced by obtaining a competency certificate.	<i>"In KKG... I obtained eight certificates from training outside KKG... at the national level."</i> (personal communication, August 12, 2025)

Based on the descriptive data above, the findings indicate that the professional development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in cognitive assessment is conducted continuously through formal, collaborative, and informal channels, such as workshops, seminars, and Teacher Working Group (KKG) forums, reflecting teachers' reflective awareness and contributing to improved teaching strategies and student engagement (Diseth, 2025; Li, 2025; Maharjan et al., 2025). Training activities function not only as knowledge transfer but also as a means of updating assessment practices, with content covering Bloom's Taxonomy, instrument development, and integration of Islamic values, thereby bridging conceptual understanding and classroom implementation while supporting alignment with curriculum demands and the integration of higher-order thinking skills (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Otaña et al., 2025; Zana et al., 2024).

Furthermore, collaborative practices through formal forums such as KKG and informal peer discussions highlight the role of professional learning communities in fostering shared reflection and collective responsibility for improving teaching quality (Admiraal et al., 2021). Teachers' awareness of their limitations also reflects a reflective attitude that supports ongoing growth. However, challenges such as limited access to sustained training and unequal mastery of assessment technology remain obstacles, necessitating stronger systemic support and policy reinforcement (Nakar & Trevarthen,

2024; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2024; Steyer et al., 2025). Overall, professional development demonstrates a synergy between individual and collective efforts, though more systematic and targeted programs are needed to promote innovative, inclusive, and higher-order thinking-oriented assessment practices that enhance the overall effectiveness of IRE learning.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the overall research findings, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in elementary schools have demonstrated significant efforts in implementing cognitive assessment systematically and oriented towards learning, although there are still a number of gaps between conceptual understanding and practice in the field. Teachers generally understand the importance of assessment as an integral part of the learning process, which is reflected in planning based on student characteristics, the use of diverse assessment strategies and techniques, and the utilization of assessment results for remedial and enrichment activities. However, assessment practices are still dominated by low to intermediate cognitive levels (C1–C3), while the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) has not been optimally implemented. In addition, differentiation of learning and assessment has begun to be implemented, especially for students with special needs, but has not yet fully reached the full diversity of learners proportionally.

This research also confirms the uniqueness of PAI assessment practices, namely the integration of cognitive, affective, and religious values dimensions as the basis for a more holistic learning evaluation. In terms of professionalism, teachers demonstrated a high level of commitment through active participation in training and collaborative forums, although they still need to strengthen more specific competencies, particularly in the development of HOTS instruments, the use of digital technology, and inclusive assessment. Although these findings were obtained through comprehensive data triangulation, this study was limited by the number of subjects, the scope of the locations, and its purely qualitative approach, so the generalizability of the results is still limited. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve a broader sample, use a mixed-methods approach, and examine the dynamics of assessment practices longitudinally to make a stronger contribution to the development of more effective, adaptive, and equitable assessment policies and practices in Islamic Religious Education learning.

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