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## Textbook Assessment and Religious Education Efforts: How to Achieve Religious Moderation in Schools?

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**Abstract:** This study addresses the growing concern of intolerance and bias in religious education within pluralistic societies, particularly in Indonesia. It aims to examine the role of religious textbook assessment as a strategic effort to promote religious moderation in schools. The research employs a qualitative descriptive-exploratory approach, utilizing document analysis, observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with experts and assessment teams. The study analyzes 237 religious education textbooks from kindergarten to high school levels across five religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The findings reveal that many textbooks still contain elements of violence, bias, intolerance, and inappropriate content, with overall quality ranging from moderate to low, thus requiring substantial revision in content, presentation, language, and graphics. Textbook assessment emerges as a crucial mechanism to ensure alignment with national values, cultural diversity, and principles of tolerance and inclusivity. Furthermore, the study highlights the lack of clear guidelines and training for authors and publishers as a key challenge. This research contributes to strengthening religious moderation through educational policy and offers a practical framework for improving the quality and inclusivity of religious education materials.

**Keywords:** Assessment; Education; Moderation; Religious; Textbooks

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The assessment of religious textbooks is the government's strategy to realise religious moderation in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country like Indonesia (Campbell, 2017; Latif, 2019; Ropi, 2019). According to Franken, in a plural country, there is a challenge to the complex relationships between the state, communities, and schools (Daheri, 2023; Franken, 2017; Hanafi, 2022). In this context, religious education becomes a contentious issue because it is considered an important instrument to promote respect for diversity by emphasising tolerance and respecting differences with a culture of peace (Mutawali, 2023; Sihombing, 2020). In this context, moderation becomes “a bridge” to integrate and accommodate different communities.

Assessment is selecting and testing textbooks to meet the quality standards set out in the curriculum because religious education printed materials are found to be inappropriate (Dutta, 2021; Lee, 2010; Rigaud, 2018). In particular, the content is free from elements that deviate from the norms, values, and culture of the nation, such as content that denigrates SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations - ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations) (Alhumaidan, 2018; Berendes, 2018; Rahmiwati, 2018; Sumarni et al., 2019), violence, extremism, discrimination, intolerance, and radicalism. De facto, these elements have infiltrated educational institutions through religious education textbooks (Pajarianto, 2023; Subchi, 2022)

This is confirmed by various cases of religious textbooks that have caused social unrest because their contents reject religious and cultural diversity (Kurniawan, 2023; Rismawati, 2021). Based on the results of the survey conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) UIN Jakarta (2017), 51.1% of the surveyed students tended to be intolerant of Ahmadiyah and Shia, and 34.3% of these students tended to be intolerant of different religions. Intolerance among students is influenced by religious education. PPIM research (2017) shows that 48.95 per cent of the surveyed students feel that religious education has a significant portion in influencing them not to associate with followers of other religions. Symptoms of this intolerance can be seen at every level of education, from kindergarten to university (Setyono, 2018; Shnirelman, 2017; Suciati, 2022; Sugianto et al., 2022). The same thing happened in South Asia. There have been controversies over religious education textbooks because their content was considered discriminatory against the Shia population, leading to conflicts, riots and deaths (Cutler, 2019; Afifah et al., 2021; Rahmah et al., 2022).

The concept of moderation in Islam is known as *WasaTiyyah*, a just, balanced attitude toward a middle nation or moderate state. According to Yaakub Othman, *Wasatiyyah* generally refers to individual characteristics and collective behaviour considered moderate, balanced, not overreacting, or extreme (Yaakub & Othman, 2016). Moderation is a comprehensive way of living as individuals, communities and nations (Ushama, 2014). In broad terms, moderation is a change process that moves toward the “middle” from radical to moderate (Schwedler, 2013). Therefore, moderation is characterised by non-violence and openness to different world views (Sommer, 2014). From a moderation perspective, religion balances personal interests as a bulwark against injustice (Haan & Lok, 2019). Manshur Husni defines religious moderation as

religious knowledge, religious attitudes, religious behaviour, and religious ethics that uphold diversity, pluralism, tolerance, inclusion, and non-violence (Gunawan et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2018; Suharsiwi et al., 2023).

Religious moderation is a perspective (Sekaryanti et al., 2022), attitude (Cholily et al., 2023), and behaviour that always takes a middle position (Sugianto et al., 2023), always acts fairly (Cahyadi et al., 2023), and is not extreme (Kementerian Agama, 2019). This attitude is critical in a plural and multicultural society because only with moderation can diversity be addressed wisely; tolerance and harmony become real. Religious moderation is a solution to the presence of two extreme poles in religion: the ultraconservative pole or the extreme right on the one hand and the liberal or extreme left on the other (Jayanti et al., 2023; Ridho'i et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2023). Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance and harmony at the local, national, and global levels (Kementerian Agama, 2019). In other words, moderation requires the willingness to dialogue with anyone to create a sense of mutual understanding, work together towards social justice and the greater good, and promote inclusiveness. In essence, religious moderation seeks the creation of human solidarity and harmony through religion (Afifah et al., 2022; Choirudin et al., 2021; Zahroh et al., 2023).

In the diverse context of Indonesia, moderation is essential, so existing differences can be a blessing and create good relations among all human beings (Darmayenti, 2021; Saber, 2022). In this case, it is relevant what Schwedler has stated that moderation implies individual rights, pluralism, and cooperation based on dialogical education (Nwanaju, 2016). In other words, religious moderation is an open attitude for people of all religions to recognise and accommodate each other without denying their essence and identity (Gada, 2016).

Textbooks are the essential elements of the school curriculum (Rasero & Bochaca, 2011). Other scholars argue that textbooks are a rich source of material for analysing the social context and social and political effects of education (McDonald, 2017; Rahim, 2020). This is in line with Jackson, who defines textbooks as the primary source of material teachers use in teaching and formal sources of curriculum content (Jackson, 2015). Other scholars call it the primary tool in teaching and learning for teachers and their students (Engebretson, 2007).

Another opinion says that textbooks are the most effective resource for studying school subjects that can help teachers develop self-confidence through mastery of the subjects (Buchanan, 2009; Höllinger, 2021). They can become suitable historical materials and help track changes in religious representation in public education (Satoko, 2019). Meanwhile, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary says that a textbook is a book that teaches a particular subject and that is used mainly in schools and colleges. According to Stausberg, textbooks are pedagogically more explicitly aimed at guiding teachers in teaching and students in learning (Stausberg & Engler, 2013; Lipnicka, 2021). From the opinions of these scholars, it is clear that textbooks are a constitutive element in the learning process which has a vital role as a medium for delivering learning materials and curriculum.

The other side of textbooks that is important to know is the qualifications of a good textbook. Good religious education textbooks can promote cognitive and intellectual learning, develop cognitive, affective, and transformative dimensions, provide opportunities for students to interact with their contents more profoundly and guide the students' learning assessments. Therefore, the quality of learning becomes better because textbooks empower teachers to emphasise understanding and reasoning, and students have reasonable and appropriate attitudes toward religious education (Daghigh, 2021; Gracin, 2018; Grissett, 2019; Taylor, 2019) explains that religious education textbooks provide understanding, and critical thinking about religious traditions, religious history, literature including religious sacred texts and help teachers to understand current thoughts and understandings about religious education and theological nuances. In the context of national and state life, textbooks are designed to encourage parents and teachers to participate in strengthening national unity (Basil, 2012; González, 2018; Kuhbandner, 2019).

In Indonesia, book evaluation is a mandate of law No. 3 of 2017 on the bookkeeping system. It is stated that the assessment of religious education books is the responsibility of the Ministry of Religion. Further definition is explained in Government Regulation No. 75 of 2019 that book assessment is the determination of the feasibility of educational books based on material standards, presentation, language, and graphic design. Therefore, the government encourages education to contribute to social transformation by developing critical thinking, dialogue and building a relationship with history (Gill & Niens, 2014). In this context, the existence of quality textbooks becomes a necessity that is produced through book assessments. Emerson has shown that book assessment serves to ensure that the contents are aligned with the culture, national identity, and other aspects that can maintain and promote the essence of education (Emerson, 2018; Risager, 2020; Simon, 2019).

Research related to Textbook assessment and religious education efforts has been widely carried out. However, So far, studies on religious education textbooks tend to examine two things. First, they see textbooks as the primary tool and resource in classroom learning (Burchardt, 2018; Rahman, 2022). According to them, the potential contribution of quality textbooks is constructive for teachers in teaching practice in the classroom because it facilitates the learning process and is helpful in curriculum development (Hakim, 2017; Pajarianto, 2022). In addition, textbooks for students are the most effective resources for learning the subject. Second, these studies look at the qualification requirements of a good textbook, namely using simple language for the psychological development of students, being able to invite students to be actively involved, critical-analytical thinking, and embedding pedagogy in its content (Cholil, 2022; Karaosmanoglu, 2018; Mulyana, 2023). On the other hand, seeing the existence of religious education textbooks as a 'bridge' for the manifestation of religious moderation in schools and madrasas is less concerned about its urgency (Fauzan et al., 2022; Hernawan, 2021; Mishra, 2016), especially in the context of a plural-multicultural country like Indonesia.

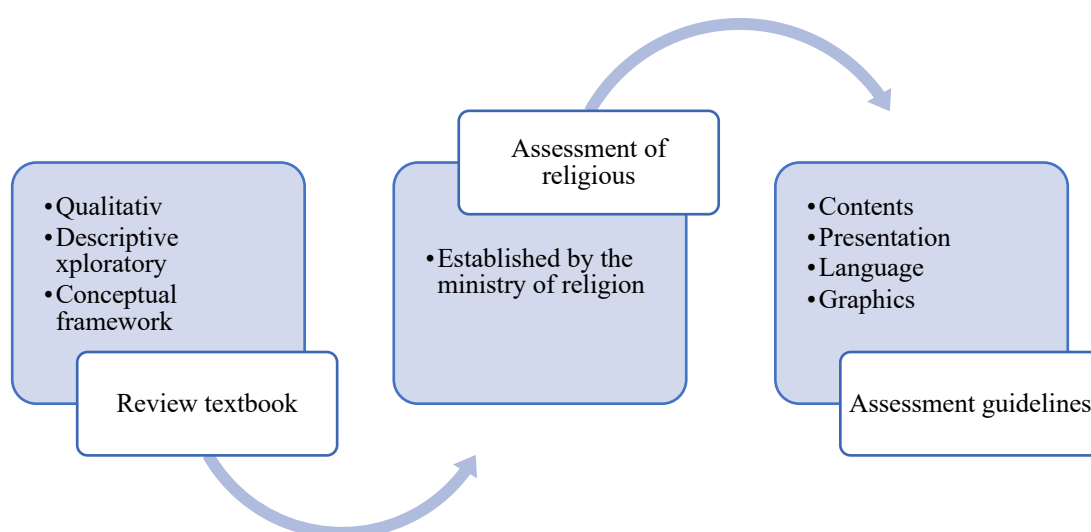
This study aims to complement the lack of literature by demonstrating the vital role of assessing religious textbooks in realising religious moderation in

educational institutions. The assessment of religious education textbooks is a fundamental aspect of ensuring that their contents contain correct and profound concepts, provide space for celebrating diversity, and respect differences, pluralism, inclusion, and tolerance. Since 2003, the model of religious education in Indonesia has been similar to Finland, namely that religious education has been taught by teachers who share the same religion as their students (Aarnio-Linnanvuori, 2013). This model is expected to help students understand religious teachings properly, correctly, and deeply. Andreassen's research confirms that learning about religion leads to understanding and tolerance (Andreassen, 2019). In line with this, three questions can be asked in this paper. First, how is the process of evaluating religious education books carried out? Second, what factors underlie the government's belief in the importance of evaluating religious education books? Third, how does the government reconstruct the practice of religious learning in schools and madrasas? The answers to these three questions are the subjects of this article.

This paper is based on three arguments: religious textbooks have been infiltrated with harmful content such as violence, extremism and radicalism; these elements have resulted in the tendency of students and teachers to find it difficult to accept differences and be intolerant of people of different religions; assessment of religious textbooks is needed as a manifestation of religious moderation in the world of education to reconstruct the practice of religious learning in schools and madrasas.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research is Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Buddhist religious education textbooks for schools and madrasas from kindergarten to high school. The textbook was written in the current curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum. An overview of the methods used in this research and aspects of the guidelines in assessing this book can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Methods used in this research, as well as aspects of the guidelines in assessing this book**

In Figure 1, it can be seen that the research is based on a qualitative-descriptive-exploratory conceptual framework. Assessment of religious education books is carried out based on assessment guidelines established by the Ministry of Religion. These guidelines regulate four aspects that are used as a reference in assessing textbooks, namely contents, presentation, language, and graphics (Vorotnykova, 2019). Among these four aspects, the most decisive aspect is that the contents of the textbook must be based on the values, norms, culture, and ideology of the country. This means that these contents must not denigrate SARA and must be free from elements of pornography, extremism, radicalism, violence, gender bias, and expressions of hatred. If the textbook contains these elements, then the book is immediately judged to be inappropriate even though, in other aspects, it has a high value. This has been determined in the Regulation of the Minister of Religion (PMA) Number 9 of 2018.

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, and document analyses. The instruments used were an open questionnaire and unstructured interviews. The interviews were conducted with the independent assessor team and the book evaluation committee. Observations were made during the assessment period. The author is also involved in the assessment team and the implementing committee. The primary data is obtained from the results of the assessment team, and they are written in the assessment instrument. The scale used in the assessment instrument is a scale of 100 with grouping criteria comprising very poor: 10 – 20, poor: 30 – 50, good: 60 – 80, and very good 90 -100. The determination of the feasibility of the book is based on only two categories, which are proper and improper. A book is declared ineligible if the average overall score of the aspects is <65 and is declared eligible if the average score is 65 and above. A book that is declared proper cannot be published immediately as it is necessary to pay attention to and follow up the assessor's notes on things that still need improvements.

The assessment instrument is tested twice by the assessment team themselves before being used so that they have the same understanding and training in using it. The assessment team consists of experts from each religion, and they also work as lecturers and teachers. These experts consist of five Buddhists, five Hindus, seven Protestants, 11 Catholics, and 81 Moslems. The results of in-depth interviews and observations are used to describe and clarify the findings. Meanwhile, the data analyses are carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification. The primary data are obtained from the results of the assessment team and interviews with the assessment team. The secondary data are obtained from documents and news related to the issue of religious education textbooks. The assessment is conducted for five months, from August to December 2019.

## **RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Contents of Religious Education Books of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism**

The Islamic religious education textbooks that are assessed are Islamic Religious Education and Character Education for Elementary Schools, Islamic

Religious Education and Character for Junior High Schools, Islamic Religious Education and High School Morals, Let's Understand the Qur'an and Hadith for MTs, Development of Learning Al-Qur'an and Hadith for MI, Let's Study the Qur'an and Hadith for MA, Development of Learning Al-Qur'an and Hadith for MI, Let's Study the Qur'an and Hadith for MA, Creative Learning Al-Qur'an Hadith for MI, Fostering Aqidah and Morals for MI, Let's Study Aqidah and Morals for Madrasah Aliyah, Let's Understand Fiqh for MTs, Fiqh Development for MI, Creative Learning Jurisprudence for MI, Thalabul Ilmi Fiqh for MTs, Let's Understand the History of Islamic Culture for MTs, Let's Understand the History of Islamic Culture for Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Development of Islamic Cultural History for MI, Let's Study the History of Islamic Culture for Madrasah Aliyah, Creative Learning History of Islamic Culture for MI, Let's Learn Arabic for MI, Let's Fluent Arabic for Madrasah Aliyah, Let's Understand Arabic for MTS, Creative Arabic Learning for MI, Thalabul Ilmi Arabic for MTs, Let's Understand Aqidah and Morals, and Let's Study the History of Islamic Culture for Madrasah Aliyah.

The Catholic religious education textbooks that are assessed are Catholic Religious Education and Morals for Living with Jesus for Elementary Schools, Catholic Religious Education and Character Learning to Know Jesus for Elementary Schools, Catholic Religious Education and Character Learning to Follow Jesus for Junior High Schools, Catholic Religious Education and Morals of Jesus My Friend and Idol for Junior High School, Catholic Religious Education and Morals of Jesus My Life's Example for High School, and Catholic Religious Education and Morals Sent as Disciples of Jesus for High School.

The Protestant religious education textbooks assessed are Christian Religious Education and the Morals of Jesus the Most Compassionate for Elementary Schools, Christian Religious Education Building Christian Values for Junior High Schools, and Adult Christian Religious Education in Faith and Knowledge for High School. The Hindu textbook is Hindu Religious Education and Character for Elementary Schools. The Buddhist textbooks are the Buddhist Sunday School Module for Adhi Sekha and the Buddhist Sunday School Module for Culla Sekha.

The findings of this study are based on the qualitative notes of the assessment team for the quality of religious textbooks at the Kindergarten to Senior High School levels. The assessment results are still relatively low, with an average score of 65-70. The textbooks that are declared proper have many shortcomings in all four aspects, so they need to be revised. No book passes the assessment without required refinement. The total number of textbooks assessed is 237, 201 of which are declared eligible/proper, and the remaining 36 titles are declared improper because their contents contain elements of violence, extremism, and radicalism and are not by the psychology of child development. In general, these unfit textbooks are elementary school textbooks. This problem can be seen from the narration and diction used. Some examples are the material about the story of Cain killing his brother Abel, Tarsisius dying from being beaten, the story about the adulterous woman who was confronted by Jesus, jihad, and Abraham offering Isaac. Other problems are the illustration of Allah

sitting on His Throne with a king's chair wearing a red carpet, angels, and heaven and hell from a human perspective.

Other findings in the textbooks are presented based on each aspect. From the content aspect, these textbooks do not present core competencies, essential competencies, and indicators (Darmayanti et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2022). The latest references are minimal, and some references were published fifteen years ago. From the presentation aspect, the relationship between examples and concepts is not strong. This can be seen in the material about the natural beauty of God's creation, which is explained using a picture of a man standing. Another thing is the systematic use of concepts that have received little attention, such as the kingdom of God, defending God, sacrifice, jihad, hypocrisy, nature, and essence.

These textbooks do not present competencies that students must master; they do not include learning objectives according to the material. The systematic presentation of the format and structure is not adequate. Some of the books even use an unrevised curriculum and do not present a list of indexes, lists of figures, lists of tables, glossaries, or concept maps (Araya, 2021; Ashwal, 2018; Attwood, 2020; Al-Ghifary et al., 2023). The learning activities are not yet centred on students and do not all appear to involve students. In addition, these learning activities have not stimulated the depth of critical thinking because the method used is still monotonous, namely lecturing. From the language aspect, the sentences used tend to be long and not communicative, and the assignment instructions are not clear.

As a result, the primary intent of the author is challenging to understand, and the message cannot be conveyed optimally. From the graphic aspect, these textbooks are not by the ISO standards; they are not by the standardised A4 and B5 paper sizes standards. Their authors use more than two types of letters with many combinations. However, the appearance of the layouts on the front, back, and back cover is harmonious, consistent, and has rhythm and unity. The composition and size of the layout elements (title, author, illustration, logo) are proportional, balanced, and in tune with the content layout (by pattern).

### **Satisfactory With Religious Education Textbooks**

According to the assessment team, in general, the results of the initial assessment of the religious education textbooks are not satisfactory. All books declared eligible or proper need improvements in all four aspects of the assessment. Several books are declared unfit because their contents do not meet the requirements of the content aspect. The focus of the assessment is to ensure that the quality of these textbooks is by the curriculum and to detect the contents that contain elements of violence, extremism, radicalism, and discrimination. Therefore, the nature of religious education, which is to care for plurality, respect differences, and create tolerance and a culture of peace, can be realised (Latif, 2019). Therefore, if these elements exist, the textbook is immediately declared unfit for publication or rejected without considering other aspects. This great emphasis on the content aspect is in line with Boostrom, who asserts that the fundamental quality of textbooks is their contents (Boostrom, 2001).



This is understandable because the contents of a textbook will have a significant impact on both teachers and students. Content that tends to lead to violence, extremism, and radicalism, such as the story of Cain killing Abel and Tarsius, who died from persecution as he defended his faith, is not suitable for elementary school students; the narrative is violent because there are dictions of 'killing', 'persecuting' and 'died'. Furthermore, the materials containing the stories of the adulterous woman and Abraham offering Isaac have been presented to elementary school students. In cognitive psychology, elementary school students have not been able to understand the meanings of adultery, sacrifice, and faith. This is further complicated by the assignment of asking students to perform a play about the story of Cain and Abel, Abraham, and Tarsius.

Another problem is that the material about jihad has been presented to elementary students. The ability to think critically, analytically and deeply in elementary school students is still limited; they cannot yet understand the concept of jihad correctly, precisely, textually and contextually. This is quite risky and can hurt the development of students' ways of thinking. Another issue about the inaccurate illustration of Allah that leads to 'Hashim' is misguided as it depicts supernatural beings, such as Allah sitting on His Throne, which is illustrated by a king's chair wearing a red carpet and the illustrations of angels and heaven and hell portrayed from the human perspective. These materials are presented without any rationally adequate explanation, even though these textbooks are intended to promote the development of critical thinking in students (Lee, 2010).

Scholars agree that the fundamental purpose of religious education is to create social cohesion, understanding, and tolerance (Andreassen, 2019). In this context, a moderate perspective, giving space to diversity, and respecting differences are constitutive elements of Indonesia. Religion is not only a set of beliefs but also an educational tool for students to understand the essence of religion properly (Cheng & Beigi, 2012). This is the government's primary mission undertaken by making a policy of requiring the assessment of religious education textbooks before their publication. Ensuring religious moderation in the world of education is a response to social phenomena because, especially in the last two decades, there have been cases of problematic religious education textbooks. These textbooks contain materials that reject pluralism and diversity (Setiawan, 2018). The situation is complicated by the findings of the PPIM survey showing the tendency of intolerant attitudes of religion-based school students and teachers (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2018; PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2019a; PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2019b; PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2020). These attitudes are the results of religious education textbooks that have been infiltrated by harmful content (Hasim, 2015). Another reason behind the policy of assessing religious education textbooks is the influence of globalisation, bringing in Western values that are incompatible with the country's cultures, and these values have resulted in unfavourable influences. Besides that, this policy is also triggered by the emergence of religious sects and the publication of their books with diverse contents. This fact needs to be responded to, controlled and brought in order by the government to ensure the integrity of the pluralistic nation. On the one hand,

there is a need to safeguard religious freedom, but on the other hand, there is a risk of using religion in education to indoctrinate students (Cheng & Beigi, 2012).

A moderate attitude is not "given" but exists or grows because it is cultivated, formed, trained and developed to become a part of one's character. This character can be formed effectively through education in schools. School is an incubation space for giving birth to a generation who can appreciate differences in the plural nature of the Indonesian nation (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2019). This is in line with Jackson's research findings that one of the goals of education is to teach students about diversity in society and around the world so that they can appreciate and respect diversity in cultures and views in a pluralistic society (Jackson, 2015). The consequence of pluralistic Indonesia is the primary and fundamental reason for the government to design religious education to develop an awareness of diversity. The goal is that students will be able to appreciate the differences in their social environment. Consequently, the production and expression of textbooks should not be understood only as neutral and objective but instead framed by ideological and political contexts (Newton & Newton, 2006; Peng & Huang, 2012; De Leon Mendiola, 2007).

Textbooks, in particular, serve as the leading carriers of knowledge. For this reason, the state seeks to intervene in the production and distribution of textbooks through a policy of using standard national textbooks that have been well-written, approved, published, and distributed (Chen & Chen, 2006). Juridically, this national standard textbook policy has vital legality based on the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, which states that one of the state's goals is to educate the nation's life. One of them is through the implementation of quality education. The implication is that educational textbooks need to be selected and assessed (Chen & Chen, 2006; Jenkins, 2020; Moore, 2021). For this reason, a comprehensive critical analysis of verbal and image data, as well as illustrative materials, is needed. School textbooks are expected to reflect today's realities and provide values and meanings for today's life (Weinryb, 2006).

One of the competencies that need to be developed in religious education is the ability to interpret and reflect on religious texts and images and a critical understanding of the text (Bi, 2020; Dinh, 2017). The trick is through a series of interpretive actions. In this case, interpretive action can be seen as a cultural artefact that mediates the understanding of religious texts (Vestøl, 2014). Intercultural communication through religious education necessitates the attention of authors and publishers because cultures shape humans and experience a learning process in a cultural context. Cultures influence how teachers teach and engage with each other as teachers and learners (Lee, 2010). In this case, the textbook is understood as a cultural tool that facilitates the development of knowledge and competencies described in the national syllabus (Vestøl, 2014). Textbooks provide spaces for learning about peace and pluralism (Vanner et al., 2019). School textbooks present religion as a good thing and a source of ethical reflections. Textbook narratives help students engage and ask questions responsibly and intelligently (Grady & Metcalfe, 2019). Appreciating pluralism means recognising the existence of many valid and independent safety spaces (De Cea, 2011). Pluralism demands an open study of religious diversity with the possibility of critical evaluation of the various truth claims that underlie

various religious traditions. Pluralism is a non-dogmatic attitude towards other religions (De Cea, 2011).

Another problem lies in the presentation aspect, which is not traceable and not systematic in using concepts from easy, somewhat tricky, and difficult to the most challenging concepts. Likewise, in the use of language, the sentences tend to be long and complicated, and the vocabulary used is not by the psychological development of students. This vocabulary includes hypocrisy, faith, essence, and nature. As a result, the message to be conveyed is not understood by students because the level of readability of the textbooks is difficult (Nawani, 2010). In addition, the images are less relevant to the teaching materials, and the graphics are not by the provisions in the assessment instrument. For example, the maximum number of font types that can be used is only two, but there are more than two font types in some textbooks.

In addition, the problems also relate to the use of narrative images to explain concepts, and the authors do not include the sources of the images. Pictures can be helpful in the learning process if they are confirmed in the sense of having the correct logic of thinking so that it does not cause misunderstanding. Moreover, images are political, evocative, and questioning (Author, 2018). In various disciplines, visual images have been shown to have a strong influence on attitudes and perceptions and influence one's judgment of other individuals. In this context, the power of the influence of visual images in textbooks is to convey information and provide confidence that it is essential. This means that pictures in textbooks can send messages clearly (positive, negative, or neutral) to students (Eisenstein & Clark, 2013).

Based on the interviews with the committee and the assessment team, it turns out that the authors and publishers have not received guidelines for writing textbooks from the government, and there has been no guidance for them. As a result, the quality of the textbooks varies widely because comprehensive information about the four aspects of the assessment has not been disseminated to these authors and publishers. According to the assessment team, a good and proper textbook contains all Competency Standards (SK) and Basic Competencies (KD) according to the demands of the content standards, attractive presentations with standard language, and appropriate illustrations. Therefore, it is hoped that the learning process facilitated by teachers and students can be optimal so that they can achieve Graduate Competency Standards (SKL). Good-quality textbooks also provide insights into current pedagogical approaches to religious education (Buchanan, 2009). Good textbooks concentrate on child-centred values to develop analytical skills, critical thinking, creativity, individual freedom, self-reflection, respect for multiculturalism, social harmony, dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for differences (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2017).

Religious education textbooks for the Indonesian context need to be appropriately designed to encourage the birth of an active tolerance attitude and not to dictate the pedagogical process in the classroom because it can cause more harm than good (Nawani, 2010). Religious education textbooks aim to teach diversity in society, including cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity (Jackson, 2015). Textbooks are also intended to show how the construction of religion in a school context can pose challenges and strive to promote and develop an

understanding of the meaning of religion for believers (Freathy & Aylward, 2010; Zaver, 2013). In other words, religious education aims to develop respect for religions among students and promote a common understanding of religions in all activities with an interpretive approach (Vestøl, 2016). Ultimately, religious education is intended to enable dialogue and peaceful coexistence of the various beliefs that exist in Indonesian society (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2017; Garrido, 2012; Vestøl, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that some religious education textbooks hinder pupils' tolerance and diversity. In a diverse society like Indonesia, this fact might shape pupils' attitudes and character, making them intolerant of differences. Thus, religious textbook evaluation is essential for the government to promote religious tolerance in Indonesia. The administration is also reorganising national education with this assessment.

This textbook assessment research contributes to religious education textbook assessment methodology. It has been shown that four assessors may accurately, thoroughly, and validly evaluate a book. Religious education professionals (lecturers, religious leaders) and education practitioners (teachers and supervisors) comprise these four assessors. The 1945 Constitution requires the state to educate the nation, which is fulfilled by assessing religious textbooks. Thus, the government must ensure the quality of education throughout the archipelago to produce intelligent, ready-to-solve social issues and be able to think and act appropriately in the face of diversity in races, ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures. Because it only examines religious textbooks, this study has limitations. Investigations are underway into why religious education textbook authors and publishers incorporate unsuitable content. Thus, further research is needed to ensure the high quality of religious education textbooks in the future.

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