Understanding The Concept And Application Of Islamic Education Evaluation Based On The Independent Curriculum In Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education in junior high schools plays an important role in shaping students’ character and morality. In this context, the concept of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum emerged as an effort to improve the quality of learning and ensure its relevance to the needs of the times. This study aims to understand the concept and application of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools. This is done to explore the effectiveness of this evaluation method in improving students’ understanding of Islamic values and to see the extent of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of religious education. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis related to the curriculum and evaluation of Islamic education in junior high schools. The results showed that the evaluation of Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum can improve students’ understanding of Islamic teachings and integrate them into their daily lives. The conclusion of this study highlights the importance of using Merdeka Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation in junior high schools as an effort to increase the relevance of learning to the context of students’ lives. Effective implementation of this concept requires strong support from the school and teachers, as well as a commitment to continuously develop evaluation methods that are in line with Islamic values and the demands of the times.

Keywords: Evaluation Application, Independent Curriculum, Islamic education, junior high school.
INTRODUCTION

The learning concept of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum highlights the integration of Islamic values with a learning approach that provides freedom and flexibility for teachers in adjusting the evaluation process to student needs (Adiyono et al., 2023). This concept emerged in response to the challenges of the times that require Islamic education to not only provide a strong understanding of religious teachings, but also be relevant to the context of students' lives and empower them to become responsible individuals and contribute positively to society (Abdillah & Syafe'i, 2020). First of all, the learning concept of evaluating Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the integration of Islamic values in every aspect of learning (“Mechanisms For Implementing Assessments in The Independent Curriculum,” 2019). This includes not only an understanding of religious teachings, but also the application of Islamic moral and ethical values in everyday life (Abu Bakar et al., 2023). In this context, the evaluation process is not only considered as a tool to measure students' knowledge, but also as an opportunity to explore their understanding of Islamic values and how these values can be applied in various life situations (Sittika & Bintang Kejora, 2022). Furthermore, this concept emphasizes flexibility and freedom in the evaluation process. With the Merdeka Curriculum approach, teachers have the authority to adapt evaluation strategies to student characteristics, learning needs, and the school context (“A Framework for Curriculum Management - The Use of Outcome-Based Approach in Practice,” 2014). This means that evaluation is not limited to conventional methods such as written exams, but can also involve various evaluation techniques and instruments that are more in line with learning objectives and student characteristics (Junanto & Kusna, 2018). For example, teachers can use projects, presentations, group discussions or portfolios as forms of evaluation that allow students to express their understanding in different ways.

In addition, the learning concept of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student empowerment in the evaluation process (Amalina, 2019). This is reflected in a learning approach that emphasizes the active role of students in the construction of their own knowledge. In the context of evaluation, this means that students are not only objects of evaluation, but also subjects who are actively involved in the evaluation process. They are encouraged to think critically, analyze information, and relate learning to their own experiences.
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(Iivari et al., 2020). Thus, evaluation becomes more than just a tool to measure achievement, but also a means to develop students' thinking skills. This concept also recognizes the importance of context and student needs in the evaluation process. Each student has an individual background, needs and uniqueness that need to be considered in the planning and implementation of evaluation. Thus, evaluation should not be an instrument that imposes a single standard, but should be able to accommodate the diversity of students and provide appropriate support according to their needs. For example, students with special needs may require customized assessments or additional support in the evaluation process.

The concept of learning to evaluate Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the involvement of all stakeholders in the evaluation process (Prendergast & Treacy, 2018). This includes not only teachers and students, but also parents, communities and other related institutions. By involving all stakeholders, evaluation can be more holistic and take into account various points of view and needs that may differ. For example, parents can provide feedback on their child's progress and provide support in overcoming challenges faced in the learning and evaluation process. Finally, the concept of learning to evaluate Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the development of a sustainable and adaptive evaluation system (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). Evaluation should not be considered as a one-off task, but as a continuous and ongoing process to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Thus, evaluation must be able to adapt to rapid developments in the field of education and the changing needs of students and society (Imania & Bariah, 2019). This requires a strong commitment from all stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation process and to continuously develop and improve evaluation practices that are in line with Islamic values and the demands of the times.

Literatur of Refiew

Independent curriculum in education

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational concept that emphasizes freedom, independence, and local relevance in learning (Barrón Tirado & Diaz Barriga, 2017). In the Indonesian context, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as an effort to overhaul the education system, which has been considered rigid and less responsive to the real needs of society and students. This concept aims to provide greater space for schools and teachers to adjust the curriculum to the needs, conditions, and potential of students at the local level, including in learning Islamic education at Junior High School (SMP). First of all, the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum is to give freedom to schools and teachers in determining content, learning methods, and assessments that suit the needs of learners (Darma, 2019). Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes a more contextual and relevant approach in the learning process, including in teaching Islamic education in junior high schools. Schools and teachers are given the freedom
to adapt the existing curriculum to the richness of Islamic values and local wisdom, so that learning can be more related to the reality of students' lives. In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the development of life skills and a deep understanding of the subject matter (Choiri & Sidiq, 2023). In the context of Islamic education, this can be reflected in the emphasis on the formation of noble morals, leadership based on Islamic values, and mastery of in-depth religious knowledge. Thus, learning Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools does not only aim to transfer knowledge, but also to shape character and equip students with relevant skills to face the challenges of modern life (Hafni & Aiyub, 2021).

Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a student-centered learning approach. This means that learning must be tailored to the needs, interests and learning styles of individual students. In the context of Islamic education, this can be implemented through the use of diverse learning methods, such as group discussions, problem-based projects, or experiential learning (Rahman & Madhakomala, 2024). By paying attention to student diversity, the Merdeka Curriculum ensures that Islamic education learning in junior high schools can create relevant and interesting learning experiences for every student (Prastowo et al., 2020). In addition to aspects of freedom, local relevance, and student approach, the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes the development of students' holistic competencies (Latif & Latif, 2022). This includes the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects through various learning activities. In the context of Islamic education, this holistic competence includes understanding religious concepts, practicing worship, and developing attitudes and moral values in accordance with Islamic teachings (Suryati et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum allows Islamic education learning in junior high schools to not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also integrate affective and psychomotor aspects in students' learning experiences (Nazmi et al., 2023). Apart from the curriculum side, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also relies on the active role and involvement of various stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, and local communities (Bawadi et al., 2023). All of these parties are expected to collaborate in designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum and learning of Islamic education in junior high schools. Thus, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is not only the responsibility of teachers or schools, but is a shared responsibility in creating a conducive and relevant learning environment for students (Mustafiyanti et al., 2023). However, despite having the potential to improve the quality of Islamic education learning in junior high schools, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also faced with a number of challenges (Ni’mah & Sari, 2022). One of them is limited resources, both in terms of funds and qualified educators. In addition, paradigm and cultural changes in the education system also require sufficient time and commitment to be implemented thoroughly and sustainably.
Application of Islamic Education Evaluation

Evaluation in Islamic education is an important process that aims to measure students’ achievement in understanding and applying Islamic teachings, as well as to ascertain the effectiveness of learning in achieving the goals of Islamic education (Zainuddin, 2016). It covers a wide range of aspects, from academic assessment to assessment of students' moral and spiritual development. In the context of Islamic education, evaluation also has a broader dimension, which includes measuring students’ understanding of Islamic values, practical ability to apply Islamic teachings in daily life, and the development of character and morality in accordance with religious teachings (Hamdi et al., 2022). One of the main applications of evaluation in Islamic education is to monitor students' progress in understanding and applying religious teachings in their daily lives (Hanani & Rohmadi, 2023). This involves the use of various evaluation methods, such as written tests, practical projects, group discussions, as well as observation of students' behavior in the context of religious and moral activities (Azis et al., 2022). With the right application of evaluation, teachers can provide meaningful feedback to students, assist them in improving their religious understanding and practices, and motivate them to continuously improve themselves in aspects of spirituality and morality (Murodah, 2022). In addition, the application of evaluation also enables teachers to customize teaching strategies according to students' needs, as well as to identify areas where students need additional help in developing their understanding of Islam (Ayuningsih et al., 2020). Therefore, evaluation of Islamic education aims not only to measure students' knowledge, but also to shape and strengthen students' religious identity, moral values and spiritual attitudes. Effective evaluation in Islamic education requires a holistic and integrated approach that incorporates a variety of assessment methods and instruments and takes into account students' cultural, social and religious contexts (Nursyamsiyah, 2023). It also requires the active involvement of teachers, parents and the community in the evaluation process and an awareness of the importance of providing constructive and supportive feedback for students' holistic development. Thus, Islamic education evaluation is not only about measuring academic achievement, but also about building students’ character, morality and spirituality in accordance with Islamic values.

There are several previous research opinions. The first research according to (Salim, 2023), with the research title Islamic Religious Education (Pai) Learning Based On The Independent Curriculum Of Elementary School At Yogyakarta. The results of his research stated that the implementation of learning begins with greetings, apperceptions, basic activities with various methods and approaches used. Assessment is done in different ways, not only relying on exams, but reflection on learning activities is an important aspect of the assessment instrument. Freedom in achieving PAI learning is an important point in this independent curriculum, teachers and students have the freedom to master certain material until it is completed in one semester. The second research according to (Nazaruddin et al., 2023), with the
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research title Implementation Of Islamic Education Learning (Pai) Design Based Independent Curriculum At Namira Islamic High School Medan. The results of his research stated that learning evaluation uses the concept of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments, all of which become a measuring tool for the achievement of student learning outcomes. The third research according to (Syafaruddin et al., 2022), with the research title Evaluating of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Management Program at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in North Sumatera. The results of his research stated that program The Islamic Religious Education curriculum can be implemented well even though it is not optimal and sometimes there are still activities that are carried out, some are appropriate and some are not appropriate, in terms of product, the PAI curriculum provides a new direction that can build positive and negative civilizations both madrasas, teachers and student.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study as the main framework to understand the concept and application of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum in Junior High School (SMP). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of complex and multi-dimensional phenomena, such as the Islamic education evaluation process (Buto, 2019). In addition, the case study was chosen because it allows researchers to examine phenomena in the real context in the field, thus allowing research to explore the complexity and variation in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation in various junior high schools (Amra, 2016). The research process begins with the selection of representative research sites from various Islamic education contexts in junior high schools. After that, a sample consisting of several junior high schools that implement Merdeka Curriculum and have active Islamic education programs was selected. The sample was purposively selected to ensure representation from a variety of different school backgrounds and contexts. Data were collected through several techniques, including classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis related to the Islamic education curriculum and evaluation.

Classroom observations were conducted to gain an understanding of how the Merdeka Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation is implemented in daily learning practices. Observations are conducted in an unstructured manner to provide flexibility to researchers in capturing various aspects of the evaluation process, including evaluation techniques used by teachers, students' responses to evaluations, and the integration of Islamic values in evaluation activities (Sujana, 2023). In-depth interviews were conducted with Islamic education subject teachers in each sample school. This interview aims to gain insights directly from practitioners on how they understand and apply the concept of Islamic education evaluation based on Merdeka Curriculum in their daily learning. In addition, interviews are also used to explore
their challenges, successes, and perceptions of the effectiveness of this evaluation method. In addition to interviews with teachers, interviews were also conducted with a number of students involved in the Islamic education evaluation process. These interviews aimed to get students' perspectives on their experiences in undergoing the evaluation process, including their perceptions of the relevance, fairness and effectiveness of the evaluation methods used by teachers.

All data collected from observations, interviews and document analysis were then thematically analyzed to identify patterns, trends and key findings that emerged. Thematic analysis is carried out using an inductive approach, where findings that emerge from the data are identified and grouped into main themes that reflect the concept and application of Islamic education evaluation based on the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of the analysis are then used to describe and comprehensively understand the concept and application of Islamic education evaluation in junior high schools. By combining a qualitative approach, diverse data collection techniques, and careful analysis, this research will provide an in-depth understanding of the concepts and applications of the Merdeka Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation in junior high schools. Through this better understanding of evaluation practices, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of more effective and relevant educational policies, as well as provide practical guidance for Islamic education practitioners in improving the quality of learning and teaching in junior high schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Islamic education is a systematic process that aims to measure, evaluate, and monitor students' progress in understanding, applying, and internalizing Islamic teachings, moral values, and spirituality in the context of Islamic learning. This evaluation not only focuses on student academic achievement, but also on developing character, morality and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. In other words, evaluation of Islamic education includes an assessment of students' understanding of religious concepts, worship practices, moral behavior and spiritual attitudes in relation to Islamic teachings. The uses of evaluating Islamic education are very broad and varied. First of all, this evaluation helps teachers and educational institutions to ensure that Islamic learning objectives are achieved well. By evaluating students' understanding of religious concepts, religious practices, and moral values, teachers can identify areas where students need additional help and improvement. This allows teachers to adapt teaching strategies, teaching materials, and evaluation approaches according to students' needs, thereby increasing students' learning effectiveness and academic achievement.

Apart from that, evaluation of Islamic education also plays a role in shaping students' character, morality and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. By assessing students' character development, such as integrity, responsibility, empathy and concern for others, educational institutions can pay special attention to the formation of good
personalities. Evaluation also helps in monitoring students' progress in applying religious values in their daily lives, thereby strengthening the connection between religious knowledge and daily life practices. Furthermore, evaluation of Islamic education plays an important role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Islamic educational institutions. By evaluating the teaching methods, teaching materials, and learning approaches used by teachers, educational institutions can evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and identify areas that require improvement. This allows them to develop teaching strategies that are more innovative, interactive, and tailored to student needs, thereby improving the overall quality of learning.

Evaluation of Islamic education based on the Independent Curriculum in Junior High Schools is an important process that involves assessing students' understanding of Islamic teachings, development of moral character, and the application of religious values in everyday life. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, evaluation of Islamic education has a more flexible and integrated approach with the aim of strengthening students' religious identity, morality and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. The evaluation application in the Merdeka curriculum does not only aim to measure students' academic achievements, but also to form good personalities, moral awareness and strong spiritual appreciation.

Table 1: Aspects in evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Aspects evaluation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Evaluation of students' understanding of basic Islamic concepts, such as aqidah, worship, morals, as well as Islamic history and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Evaluation of students' abilities in carrying out religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, and reading the Koran, as well as in applying religious values in everyday life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Evaluation of student character development, including moral awareness, responsibility, integrity, and empathy, as well as the ability to make decisions based on Islamic values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Evaluation of students' appreciation of spiritual values in Islam, such as gratitude, fortitude, compassion and piety, as well as concern for others and the environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The evaluation aspects mentioned above reflect a holistic approach in evaluating Islamic education in junior high schools based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Evaluation does not only focus on aspects of knowledge, but also includes students' practices, character, and spirituality, all of which are integral parts of comprehensive Islamic education. Such as evaluating students' knowledge of basic Islamic concepts through various methods, such as written tests, oral exams, and research projects. Teachers use various evaluation instruments, including multiple-choice questions, essays and interviews, to measure students' understanding of aqidah, worship, morals, and Islamic history and culture. In addition, evaluation can also be done through class discussions, student presentations, and structured tasks that allow students to demonstrate their understanding verbally and visually. Evaluation of students' religious practices is done through direct observation by teachers or through observing students' participation in religious activities at school or in the community. Teachers can use checklists or assessment rubrics to assess the quality of students' religious practices, such as the quality of prayers, accuracy in reading the Quran, and consistency in performing daily worship. In addition, the evaluation also includes assessing students' ability to apply religious values in daily life, such as in social interaction, problem solving, and decision making.

Evaluation of student character is done through observation of student behavior and attitudes in various contexts, both inside and outside the school environment. Teachers use assessment rubrics that cover various aspects of character, such as integrity, responsibility, cooperation and leadership, to assess students' character development over time. In addition, evaluation also includes students' self-reflection and self-evaluation of their own behavior, as well as feedback from peers and parents. Evaluation of students' spirituality is done through observation of students' spiritual expressions in various activities, such as prayer, dhikr, and other religious rituals. Teachers can use direct observation, reflection journals or in-depth interviews to assess students' appreciation of spiritual values in Islam. In addition, evaluation also includes observation of students' attitudes and behaviors that reflect gratitude, fortitude, compassion, and concern for others and the environment. By using various evaluation methods and instruments that are appropriate to the objectives and context of Islamic education in junior secondary schools, Merdeka Curriculum enables a holistic and integrated approach in evaluating students' understanding, practice, character and spirituality. It assists schools in ensuring that Islamic education evaluation focuses not only on students' academic achievement, but also on the formation of a good personality, moral awareness, and deep spiritual appreciation in accordance with Islamic teachings. Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation application in junior high schools not only improves the quality of learning, but also strengthens the relevance of Islamic education to the needs and values of society.

In the context of Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum, various forms of evaluation applications are used to ensure the effectiveness of learning integrated with Islamic values, as well as to monitor student progress in understanding religious teachings, worship practices, and moral character development. The Merdeka Curriculum offers greater
flexibility in evaluation approaches, allowing educational institutions to adopt a variety of assessment methods and instruments that suit diverse Islamic learning objectives. One form of evaluation application that is often used in Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum is student portfolios. Student portfolios include a collection of works, projects, or notes that reflect student development in religious understanding, worship practices, and character and morality development in accordance with Islamic teachings. This portfolio can contain writings, pictures, audio or video recordings, as well as students' self-reflections that show how they internalize Islamic values in their daily lives. By using portfolios, teachers can get a comprehensive picture of students' development over time and provide personalized feedback to help them in the learning process. Apart from portfolios, observation is also an important form of evaluation application in Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Observation is carried out to observe student behavior in the context of learning, both inside and outside the classroom. This observation includes religious practices, social interactions, and moral behavior of students in various situations. Teachers use observation to assess the quality of students' religious practices, the level of involvement in religious activities, and observations of students' character and moral attitudes in everyday life. These observations help teachers to gain a better understanding of students' development beyond academics and provide relevant feedback to support their growth. Furthermore, practical projects are a form of evaluation application that can be used in Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Practical projects involve students in activities that apply religious knowledge in a real context, such as organizing religious events, community service, or research on relevant religious issues. The project allows students to experience experiential learning and develop practical skills and a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. Teachers can use practical projects as a tool to evaluate students' ability to apply religious concepts in their daily lives and provide concrete feedback to improve their understanding and practice.

In addition to the forms of evaluation mentioned above, tests and exams also remain an important part of the evaluation application in Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Written tests and exams are used to measure students' understanding of religious concepts, Islamic history, and worship practices. However, the approach taken in the Merdeka Curriculum allows these tests and exams to focus more on understanding concepts and application in the context of everyday life, rather than mere memorization or reproduction of information. Teachers can design questions that demand students' critical thinking, analysis and reflection on Islamic values and how they can be applied in their lives. The usefulness of various forms of evaluation applications in Islamic education based on the Merdeka Curriculum is very diverse. First of all, this evaluation helps teachers and educational institutions to ensure that Islamic learning objectives are well achieved. By using various forms of evaluation that match the learning objectives, teachers can measure students' understanding of Islamic teachings, level of engagement in religious practices, and development of their character and morality. This allows teachers to customize teaching strategies, teaching materials and evaluation approaches according to students' needs, thereby
improving learning effectiveness and students' academic achievement. In addition, evaluation also plays a role in shaping students' character, morality and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. By evaluating students' character development, social interactions, as well as their worship practices, educational institutions can pay special attention to the formation of a good personality and solid moral awareness. Evaluation also allows teachers to monitor students' progress in applying religious values in their daily lives, thus strengthening the link between religious knowledge and daily life practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that it is important to use Independent Curriculum-based Islamic education evaluation in junior high schools as an effort to increase the relevance of learning to the context of students' lives. Effective implementation of this concept requires strong support from schools and teachers, as well as a commitment to continue developing evaluation methods that are in line with Islamic values and the demands of the times. The concept and application of evaluating Islamic education based on the Independent Curriculum in Junior High Schools (SMP) has had an impact in improving the quality of Islamic education, strengthening religious identity, and forming students' moral character. This integrated and holistic approach to evaluation allows Islamic education to not only focus on students' academic achievements, but also on developing practical aspects, character and spirituality that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. Through this comprehensive evaluation, schools can ensure that Islamic education is not just an additional subject, but also an integral part of the curriculum that covers all aspects of learning. The concept of evaluating Islamic education based on the Independent Curriculum also integrates Islamic values into the entire curriculum, providing opportunities for students to understand and apply Islamic teachings in various contexts of their lives. This creates a more relevant and authentic learning environment, where students can experience Islamic values in their daily learning experiences. In addition, the flexibility provided by the Merdeka Curriculum allows schools to adapt the curriculum to local, cultural, and social needs, thereby strengthening students' ties to their cultural and religious values.

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