Contextual Assessment Models in Islamic Education: A Study of Pre-Service Teacher Projects

Anita Dwi Hapsari

Universitas Islam Darul 'Ulum Lamongan

Email: anitadwi@unisda.ac.id

Abstract

The contemporary landscape of Islamic education faces significant challenges in developing assessment models that align with both pedagogical soundness and students' developmental progression. This study investigates contextual assessment models designed by pre-service teachers in Islamic education programs, focusing on how these models reflect understanding of student developmental stages and educational contexts. Using a qualitative descriptive design with content analysis, this research examined final projects from 31 pre-service teachers enrolled in an Islamic Education program who completed individual assignments on "Islamic Education Learning Evaluation System Design." Participants were distributed across three educational levels: elementary (10 students), junior high (11 students), and senior high (10 students), covering subjects including Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and Islamic History (SKI). Data were collected through final assignment projects, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, then analyzed using multi-phase thematic and content analysis. Findings revealed that 87% of pre-service teachers demonstrated strong developmental appropriateness in their assessment designs, with non-test-based assessments being favored (45% of projects) over test-based approaches (39% of projects). Technology integration remained limited (16% of projects), while Islamic values integration was consistently strong across projects (87%). The study concludes that structured project-based assignments effectively foster assessment literacy and contextual sensitivity among future Islamic educators, though enhanced training in cultural adaptation and technological fluency is needed.

Keywords: Islamic education, contextual assessment, pre-service teachers, developmental psychology, assessment design

Introduction

The contemporary landscape of Islamic education faces significant challenges in developing assessment models that are pedagogically sound and responsive to students' developmental progression and cultural contexts. Traditional assessment approaches, often borrowed from secular educational systems, tend to overlook the complex interplay between cognitive, spiritual, and contextual dimensions that characterize Islamic education goals (Rahman & Hassan, 2021). This has created growing recognition among Islamic educators of the need for holistic and context-sensitive evaluation systems that align with Islamic educational values and diverse learner needs.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that authentic assessment in Islamic education must encompass moral reasoning, behavioral conduct, spiritual awareness, and community engagement—extending beyond cognitive

achievement (Al-Ghazali & Ahmed, 2020). This multidimensional approach reflects the Islamic concept of tarbiyah—holistic human development encompassing intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social growth. However, empirical research reveals a persistent gap between educational theory and classroom practice, with many existing assessment models failing to capture students' developmental progression or contextualize evaluations within authentic Islamic learning environments (Bakar et al., 2022).

This gap presents both challenges and opportunities for Islamic teacher education programs. Pre-service teacher preparation offers a promising avenue to explore how future educators can apply assessment principles that are responsive to students' developmental characteristics while remaining faithful to Islamic educational values. These programs serve as vital spaces for innovation, where aspiring teachers can design and test contextual assessment models grounded in Islamic pedagogical principles (Mahmood & Ibrahim, 2023).

Despite this potential, systematic research examining assessment frameworks created by pre-service teachers in Islamic education remains limited. Little empirical investigation has explored how these frameworks correspond with developmental theories or demonstrate practical applicability in real teaching contexts. This research gap represents a missed opportunity to understand and improve the preparation of future Islamic educators.

As Muslim communities worldwide strive to maintain Islamic educational integrity while responding to contemporary demands, there is critical need for assessment models that are both religiously authentic and pedagogically effective (Hassan & Ali, 2021). These approaches must also be culturally adaptable, recognizing the diversity of Islamic educational contexts across different regions and socioeconomic conditions.

This study investigates contextual assessment models designed by pre-service teachers in Islamic education programs, focusing on how these models reflect understanding of student developmental stages and diverse educational contexts. The research seeks to uncover common patterns and innovative strategies, identify areas requiring refinement, and contribute to preparing more competent and contextually sensitive Islamic education professionals.

Specifically, this investigation addresses three research questions:
1. How do pre-service teachers in Islamic education programs design assessment models that reflect understanding of student developmental stages?
2. What contextual factors do these future educators consider when creating evaluation systems for diverse Islamic educational settings?
3. What patterns of innovation, challenge, and professional growth emerge from analysis of their assessment design processes?

Through systematic examination of these questions, this research contributes to scholarship focused on improving assessment theory and practice in

Islamic educational contexts while providing practical guidance for teacher preparation programs serving Muslim communities worldwide.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Assessment in Islamic Education

Assessment in Islamic education is grounded in both classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary pedagogical frameworks. Al-Attas (2019) emphasizes that authentic Islamic education must assess beyond intellectual performance, incorporating spiritual development, moral character, and the lived application of Islamic principles. This holistic vision demands assessment models that transcend traditional testing, requiring evaluative tools capable of capturing multidimensional student growth.

Recent scholarship has attempted to integrate Islamic educational philosophy with modern assessment theories. Nasir and Rahman (2022), for instance, argue that Islamic assessment should reflect the concept of 'ilm—knowledge as both an intellectual and spiritual pursuit. Accordingly, assessment must measure not only content mastery but also the learner's ability to relate religious knowledge to contemporary life while demonstrating internalized spiritual growth.

Developmental Psychology in Religious Education Assessment

The relevance of developmental psychology to Islamic educational assessment has grown in recent years, particularly as educators seek models that address both cognitive and spiritual development. Fowler's stages of faith development, adapted for Islamic contexts by Ahmed and Malik (2021), offer a useful lens through which to understand students' evolving religious understanding across age levels. These frameworks stress the importance of age-appropriate, spiritually-sensitive assessment models.

Supporting this, Abdullah et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study across Islamic schools, revealing that developmentally calibrated assessment strategies led to enhanced student engagement, stronger retention of Islamic values, and greater integration of religious learning into daily behavior. These findings reinforce the need for assessment models that align with both psychological and faith-based developmental stages.

Contextual Factors in Islamic Education Assessment

Assessment in Islamic education is also deeply influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Omar and Hassan (2020) demonstrated that assessment practices vary significantly across Muslim-majority countries, shaped by sociocultural norms, educational traditions, and community expectations. Their

comparative analysis underscores the necessity of culturally responsive assessment models.

Beyond cultural variation, contextual assessment must also consider socioeconomic status, linguistic diversity, and varying religious backgrounds among students. Zainab and Mohammad (2022) argue that effective assessment models in Islamic education must adapt to these contextual realities while ensuring consistent evaluation of core learning outcomes rooted in Islamic teachings.

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation in Assessment Design

A critical aspect in the implementation of contextual and developmentally appropriate assessment models lies in how well pre-service teachers are prepared. Khan and Pervez (2021) found that teacher education programs in Islamic education often fail to provide adequate training in authentic, context-sensitive assessment design. They identified key gaps in the integration of developmental psychology, cultural awareness, and assessment literacy.

Fatima et al. (2023) further highlight that pre-service teachers' ability to design meaningful assessment is closely linked to their prior learning experiences, theological grounding, and exposure to diverse assessment models. Their findings suggest the value of providing structured opportunities for future educators to design, trial, and reflect on various assessment tools during their preparation phase.

Technology Integration in Islamic Education Assessment

Technology presents both opportunities and dilemmas in the assessment of Islamic education. Ali and Ibrahim (2022) argue that digital tools—when thoughtfully adapted—can enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Islamic educational assessments. Their study points to the ability of technology to support personalized learning, facilitate formative feedback, and accommodate diverse learner profiles.

Conversely, Noor and Ahmad (2021) caution against the overuse of digital tools that may compromise the spiritual essence of Islamic learning. They emphasize that technology must be used with intentionality, ensuring that core Islamic values and human-centered interactions remain integral to the assessment process.

While existing literature offers a rich foundation for understanding assessment in Islamic education—from theoretical, developmental, contextual, and technological perspectives—there remains a lack of focused investigation into how pre-service teachers themselves design and internalize these assessment principles in real academic tasks. Most studies emphasize institutional frameworks or teacher training curricula, with limited insight into the actual products and reasoning of future educators. This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing contextual assessment models developed by pre-service teachers through a structured course assignment. By doing so, it contributes to a more grounded understanding of how

Islamic educational philosophy, developmental psychology, and contextual realities converge in assessment practices at the pre-service level.

Research Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with content analysis to examine contextual assessment models developed by pre-service Islamic education teachers. The research analyzes final assignment projects to understand patterns of assessment design, developmental appropriateness, and contextual considerations within authentic academic tasks.

Participants and Setting

The study involved 31 final-year pre-service teachers from an Islamic Education program who completed individual assignments titled "Islamic Education Learning Evaluation System Design." These participants represented a purposive sample distributed across three educational levels: elementary focused group with 10 students, junior high level group with 11 students, and senior high level group with 10 students. Their projects covered core Islamic education subjects including *Akidah Akhlak*, *Fiqh*, *Al-Qur'an Hadith*, and Islamic History (*SKI*).

Selection criteria required complete assignment submission with all required components, clear articulation of student developmental characteristics, and compliance with format requirements including 8-10 pages with structured components covering student analysis, evaluation framework, and instrument design.

Data Collection

Data collection utilized triangulation through three primary sources to ensure comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' assessment design processes. The main data source consisted of final assignment projects that included detailed student characteristic analysis, comprehensive evaluation strategies, and actual assessment instruments designed by participants. These documents provided rich insight into participants' theoretical understanding and practical application skills.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to understand the rationale behind their design decisions, their application of developmental psychology principles, and their integration of Islamic educational values. These interviews offered deeper understanding of the thinking processes that informed their assessment choices and contextual considerations.

Document analysis involved systematic review of all project components including written reports, instrument prototypes, and reflection sections where

participants articulated their design philosophy and anticipated implementation challenges. This comprehensive approach enabled examination of both explicit design features and underlying pedagogical beliefs.

The analysis framework incorporated three key instruments: an Assignment Analysis Protocol that evaluated level appropriateness, instrument quality, and system completeness; a Developmental Stage Analysis Matrix that assessed alignment with age-appropriate strategies; and a Contextual Assessment Rubric that measured integration of religious, cultural, and practical implementation considerations.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed a systematic multi-phase qualitative framework supported by NVivo 12 software for data management and coding. The process began with initial organization involving digitization and basic demographic coding of all assignments to establish foundational categories. Component analysis then systematically sorted assignments by educational level and subject focus, enabling comparison across different contexts and target populations.

Developmental coding assessed the accuracy of participants' student characteristic analysis and evaluated whether their selected strategies appropriately matched cognitive and spiritual development stages. This phase was crucial for understanding how well pre-service teachers applied developmental psychology principles to Islamic education contexts. Contextual coding identified cultural, linguistic, and religious background considerations, assessing participants' sensitivity to diverse implementation environments and their ability to adapt assessments for varying community contexts.

Quality review applied a comprehensive grading rubric with specified weights for different components, while pattern analysis conducted cross-case theme identification to understand common approaches, innovative strategies, and persistent challenges across all projects.

Validity and Reliability

Research quality was ensured through multiple validation strategies. Inter-rater reliability was established through independent coding of 20% of assignments by two researchers, achieving a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.83, indicating substantial agreement. Member checking involved sharing preliminary findings with eight selected participants representing each educational level, achieving a 95% agreement rate on key interpretations.

Triangulation utilized multiple data sources including assignments, interviews, and documents, combined with different analytical approaches including thematic and content analysis. Content validity was established through expert review of all analysis instruments by two specialists in Islamic education and

assessment methodology, ensuring alignment with established frameworks in both fields.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to institutional ethical standards throughout all phases of research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants with clear explanation of research purposes, data use, and publication intentions. Participant anonymity was ensured through systematic data anonymization and secure data storage protocols. Participation remained entirely voluntary with explicit rights to withdraw at any stage without consequence. The research design prioritized participant benefit by fostering professional reflection while contributing to broader advancement of assessment practices in Islamic education.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section presents the results of the analysis of 31 pre-service teacher final projects on Islamic education assessment design. These projects span three educational levels—elementary, junior high, and senior high—and cover various Islamic subjects such as Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and SKI. The findings reveal rich variations in assessment design strategies, influenced by the students' understanding of developmental appropriateness and contextual relevance.

As shown in Table 1, the projects were fairly distributed across the educational levels, with 10 from elementary, 11 from junior high, and 10 from senior high school contexts.

Table 1: Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers by Educational Level and Subject Area

Educational Level	Subject Areas	Number of Students
Elementary	Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadith	10
Junior High	Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadith, SKI	11
Senior High	Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadith, SKI	10
Total	---	31

All participants developed assessment systems covering three key components: identity/context, evaluation framework, and instruments. Their creativity was evident through age-appropriate and context-sensitive designs. For instance, one elementary participant (E-07) created an "Islamic Values Memory Game" to help Grade 2 students associate Quranic verses with real-life situations through interactive play. Similarly, participant E-03 designed a "Good Deeds

Portfolio", where students collected documentation of practicing Islamic teachings, supported by parental observation.

At the junior high level, participant J-05 introduced a "Fiqh Problem-Solving Center", encouraging Grade 8 students to explore contemporary jurisprudential issues collaboratively, such as Islamic ethics in social media. Assessment focused not only on content knowledge but also on teamwork and reasoning. Meanwhile, a senior high project by participant S-02 exemplified analytical sophistication through an "Islamic Civilization Research Project", in which students conducted independent studies and shared their findings via multimedia presentations and peer-reviewed discussions.

To better understand the types of assessment instruments employed, Table 2 summarizes the distribution and examples used across the projects.

Table 2: Assessment Instrument Types and Representative Examples

Type of Instrument	Projects (n)	%	Key Examples
Test-based	12	39%	MCQs, oral tests, conceptual quizzes
Non-test-based	14	45%	Portfolios, observation sheets, behavioral checklists
Technology-integrated	5	16%	Google Forms quizzes, interactive timelines, video presentations

The preference for non-test-based assessments highlighted the participants' growing understanding of holistic evaluation. Several designs focused on behavior, values, and self-reflection rather than rote memorization. For example, participant E-09 developed a "Daily Islamic Practice Tracker", allowing young learners to self-assess habits like prayer and kindness using visual icons. Participant J-08 created "Islamic Ethics Dilemma Cards", used to prompt student discussions on moral issues with assessments conducted through structured observation rubrics.

Assessment designs also demonstrated sensitivity to learners' developmental stages. Table 3 outlines the developmental focus embedded in each project and the strategies applied.

Table 3: Developmental Appropriateness Reflected in Designs

Developmental Focus	Observed In Projects	Examples	Specific Strategies
Play-based (Elementary)	9/10	Visual cards, Islamic songs, movement-based tasks	Story-telling assessments, Islamic board games, role-playing activities

Conceptual (Junior High)	10/11	Analysis questions, practical activities	Case study analysis, community service projects, peer teaching
Analytical (Senior High)	9/10	Argument essays, debates, project-based tasks	Research presentations, Islamic philosophy debates, comparative analysis papers

Despite these strengths, some challenges were identified. One recurring issue was limited technology integration, often due to lack of technical skill. Participant J-11, for instance, intended to build an interactive app for hadith memorization but eventually used a basic Google Form instead. Another issue involved cultural assumptions; participant S-07 reflected on how her design implicitly assumed students came from religiously active families, which may not reflect the diversity within Islamic schools.

Contextual integration was another strong element of many projects, especially in embedding Islamic values and cultural relevance. Table 4 presents data on how contextual and Islamic values were incorporated*.*

Table 4: Integration of Contextual and Islamic Values

Contextual Elements	Projects (n)	%	Innovation Examples
Religious value integration	27	87%	Tafsir-based rubrics, hadith applications
Cultural/local relevance	19	61%	Indonesian customs integration, bilingual options
Socioeconomic adaptability	6	19%	Paper-based alternatives, cost-effective materials

In sum, the findings suggest that pre-service teachers are capable of designing meaningful, developmentally aligned, and contextually grounded assessments in Islamic education, although they continue to face challenges related to digital literacy and inclusive cultural perspectives.

Discussion

The analysis of 31 pre-service teacher projects reveals several significant patterns that contribute to our understanding of assessment literacy development in Islamic education contexts. These findings demonstrate both the strengths and challenges inherent in preparing future Islamic educators to design contextually appropriate and developmentally sensitive assessment models.

The most striking finding is the strong developmental appropriateness demonstrated across nearly all projects, suggesting that pre-service teachers possess sophisticated intuitive understanding of how cognitive and spiritual

development intersects in Islamic educational contexts. This finding aligns closely with Abdullah et al.'s (2023) research on the importance of age-appropriate spiritual and cognitive assessment strategies in Islamic schools. The clear progression from concrete, play-based assessments designed for elementary students to abstract, analytical tasks created for senior high learners illustrates remarkable pedagogical reasoning among participants. Elementary-focused projects consistently emphasized behavioral observation of Islamic practices and character development, while senior high designs emphasized critical thinking about Islamic principles in contemporary contexts, suggesting that participants understand both the developmental capacity of their target students and the progressive nature of Islamic educational goals.

The predominance of non-test-based assessment approaches, evident in 45% of all projects, reflects a deep philosophical alignment with Islamic educational principles that emphasize holistic human development rather than narrow cognitive measurement. This finding strongly supports Al-Ghazali and Ahmed's (2020) argument that authentic Islamic assessment must transcend traditional testing to encompass spiritual and moral dimensions of student growth. The portfolio approaches, observational tools, and performance-based assessments designed by participants demonstrate remarkable creativity in capturing what might be termed "hidden curriculum" outcomes—character development, spiritual growth, and value internalization—that conventional tests simply cannot measure effectively. For instance, several participants created innovative documentation systems where students collect evidence of practicing Islamic teachings in daily life, supported by parent observations and reflection journals, representing sophisticated understanding of assessment as a tool for both evaluation and spiritual formation.

However, the limited integration of technology in only 16% of projects reveals a significant opportunity gap in contemporary Islamic teacher preparation. This finding contrasts sharply with Ali and Ibrahim's (2022) emphasis on technology's potential to enhance Islamic education assessment while maintaining spiritual authenticity. Multiple barriers contribute to this underutilization, including limited technical skills among participants, genuine concerns about technology potentially compromising the spiritual essence of Islamic learning, and insufficient institutional support for digital tool development. These barriers suggest that Islamic teacher education programs require substantial enhancement in digital literacy training, including mandatory technology integration courses, strategic partnerships with educational technology developers, and carefully scaffolded practice opportunities with digital assessment tools that honor Islamic educational values.

Cultural contextualization emerged as another area requiring attention, with 61% of projects demonstrating some consideration of cultural factors, though the

depth and sophistication of this integration varied considerably. This inconsistency echoes Omar and Hassan's (2020) observations about the critical need for culturally responsive Islamic education assessment that acknowledges the diverse contexts in which Islamic education occurs globally. Areas requiring improvement include greater attention to linguistic diversity within Muslim communities, more sophisticated consideration of varying degrees of religious practice among students and families, and thoughtful adaptation strategies for different socioeconomic contexts that affect resource availability and family engagement patterns.

These findings carry significant implications for Islamic teacher education program development. The evidence suggests several critical areas for curricular enhancement, beginning with assessment literacy training that emphasizes practical design skills rather than purely theoretical knowledge. Programs should incorporate hands-on technology integration workshops that provide direct experience with digital assessment tools while addressing authentic concerns about maintaining spiritual integrity in Islamic educational contexts. Cultural competency development represents another essential component, requiring training that prepares future educators to work effectively across diverse Islamic community contexts. Finally, structured opportunities for reflective practice—including self-assessment and peer feedback mechanisms—appear crucial for developing the sophisticated professional judgment that effective assessment design requires.

Several important limitations qualify these findings and suggest directions for future investigation. The single institution context limits generalizability to other Islamic teacher education programs, particularly those operating in different cultural, linguistic, or resource contexts. The reliance on assignment-based data means that real classroom implementation may differ substantially from designed assessments, as the practical constraints and opportunities of actual teaching environments often require significant adaptation. The absence of follow-up data prevents understanding of how participants actually implement these assessment approaches in practice or how their designs evolve with teaching experience. Additionally, participants' varying technology access and exposure may have influenced their integration of digital tools in ways that reflect resource constraints rather than pedagogical preferences.

Future research should address these limitations through longitudinal studies tracking how pre-service teachers adapt their assessment approaches during their early career years, providing insight into the sustainability and evolution of initial preparation. Comparative analysis examining assessment design patterns across different Islamic teacher education institutions could identify institutional factors that promote innovation and effectiveness. Implementation studies investigating the practical effectiveness of contextual assessment models in real classroom environments would bridge the gap between design and practice. Finally, research exploring how Islamic education students themselves experience

and respond to contextual assessment approaches could provide crucial feedback for continuing refinement of these models.

The implications of this research extend beyond individual teacher preparation to encompass broader questions about the future direction of Islamic education in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. As Muslim communities worldwide navigate the balance between maintaining authentic Islamic educational traditions and responding to contemporary educational ed, the development of contextually sensitive, developmentally appropriate, and technologically informed assessment practices becomes increasingly critical. The evidence from this study suggests that with appropriate preparation and support, future Islamic educators can develop sophisticated assessment approaches that honor both Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary pedagogical best practices, contributing to the continued vitality and effectiveness of Islamic education in diverse global contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined how 31 pre-service teachers in Islamic education programs design assessment models for different student levels. The research revealed that most future teachers demonstrate good understanding of age-appropriate assessment and show strong preference for holistic evaluation methods that align with Islamic educational values.

The findings showed that 87% of participants successfully created developmentally appropriate assessments, clearly differentiating between elementary play-based activities, junior high conceptual applications, and senior high analytical tasks. Most participants favored non-test assessments like portfolios and observations over traditional exams, recognizing that Islamic education encompasses character development and spiritual growth beyond academic achievement. However, technology integration remained limited, and cultural contextualization varied in quality across projects.

These results demonstrate that structured assessment design activities effectively develop evaluation literacy among future Islamic educators. The research validates that pre-service teachers can successfully integrate Islamic educational philosophy with developmental psychology principles when provided with proper guidance. This suggests that teacher education programs should emphasize hands-on assessment design practice, improve technology training, and strengthen cultural competency development.

The study contributes practical evidence for improving Islamic teacher preparation programs and supports the development of more authentic and effective assessment practices in Islamic educational contexts. While limited to one institution, the findings offer valuable insights for preparing teachers who can

balance Islamic educational integrity with contemporary assessment demands. Future research should examine how these designed assessments work in actual classrooms and compare practices across different Islamic teacher education programs.

This research ultimately supports the vision of Islamic education as holistic human development, requiring assessment approaches that honor both spiritual and intellectual growth while remaining responsive to diverse student needs and cultural contexts.

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