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Exploring Meaningful Learning Practice in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the comprehensive process of meaningful learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). This study used a descriptive qualitative research method, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques, with data validation through source triangulation. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of meaningful learning has not thoroughly followed the procedural stages outlined by David Ausubel. However, the theory's core values are applied in practice. In the planning stage, teachers develop learning modules, emphasizing the selection of relevant learning objectives that have a real impact on students. The implementation stage focuses on active and participatory learning that connects the material to students' daily lives. Meanwhile, learning evaluation is conducted formatively and summatively and is complemented by regular supervision to reflect on teaching effectiveness. The implications of this study indicate that implementing a contextual, flexible, and meaningful learning approach can strengthen the quality of IRE learning while also serving as a reference for curriculum development and teacher training. These findings form the basis for further research aimed at exploring the integration of learning theory with Islamic values-based educational practices.

Keywords: High School, Islamic Religious Education, Meaningful Learning.

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Introduction

The learning process in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) across various educational units remains dominated by conventional approaches that emphasize memorization and one-way lectures. This results in low student involvement in the learning process, a lack of deep understanding of Islamic values, and difficulty in linking the subject matter to the realities of their daily lives (Abdullah, 2022; Ucan, 2020; Ulfat, 2020). As a result, learning becomes

less meaningful, purely cognitive, and requires external motivation to recognize its importance (Erawati & Rahmayanti, 2021; Ikhrom et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2024; Wahyuni & Bhattacharya, 2021).

In this context, the meaningful learning approach offers an alternative solution, oriented towards deep understanding and relevant to students' lives. By providing space for experience and reflection and by linking new concepts with existing knowledge, meaningful learning is believed to address latent problems in IRE learning today (Parhan et al., 2024). Educational psychologist David Ausubel first introduced the concept of meaningful learning. He asserted that the learning process is not just memorizing, but linking existing knowledge with new information to make it easier to understand and remember (Ausubel, 1960; Bryce & Blown, 2024). This concept is the basis for the development of meaningful learning theory. Over time, meaningful learning has developed significantly. From relying solely on the teacher's verbal ability, this approach now utilizes technological advances (Makinde et al., 2024; Zawawi & Judi, 2020).

This change is also in line with the demands of the 21st Century, which encourage students to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Project-Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, and collaborative learning strategies are applications of meaningful learning principles designed to support mastery of these competencies (Almulla, 2020; Pandey et al., 2025). In recent years, contextual teaching and learning, as learning that leads to meaningful learning, or meaningful learning practices, has gained attention in global education, including in religious education. Studies indicate that implementing contextual teaching and learning in IRE learning can enhance students' active engagement and foster an understanding of Islamic values relevant to their lives (Dirgantoro & Soesanto, 2023; Parhan et al., 2024; Satrial et al., 2024).

Other research even confirms that integrating contextual teaching and learning with digital technology significantly improves student motivation and academic achievement (Abubakar et al., 2024; Calderón et al., 2020; Kistoro et al., 2023). This trend points to a shift away from conventional teaching methods focused on memorization and lectures toward a more participatory, meaningful approach. However, some of these studies still have gaps, especially regarding their application in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Previous research has not extensively explored how this approach can be adapted to cultural diversity, school characteristics, and students' affective needs in Islamic education.

Therefore, it is crucial to link these global insights with local pedagogical practices by developing meaningful learning models that integrate real experiences, reflection, and value reinforcement. This effort will not only enrich IRE learning practices in Indonesia but also bridge the gap between the Islamic theory taught and students' daily realities. By implementing this approach, students will become active learners, more independent in managing their learning process, active in group discussions, and more emotionally and cognitively involved in understanding the material (Ardiansyah & Cahyanto, 2023; Ma'arif et al., 2022; Vargas-Hernández & Vargas-González, 2022). In addition, they are also encouraged to apply knowledge in real life and develop adaptability (Hosaini et al., 2024; Ibrohim et al., 2025; Levin, 2015).

In this context, the *Merdeka* Curriculum has begun to be implemented at various levels of education in Indonesia. This approach is believed to address the need for IRE learning that not only provides knowledge but also encourages students to understand, live, and apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Meaningful learning is highly relevant in this context because it encourages students to apply knowledge in real-world settings and build meaningful learning experiences (Andrews et al., 2023; Hsbollah & Hassan, 2022; Ibrohim et al., 2025). Nonetheless, significant challenges remain, especially regarding disparities in access to and quality of education. In some remote areas, meaningful education remains difficult to implement due to limited infrastructure and a shortage of educators (Stenman & Pettersson, 2020). Education that remains overly focused on cognitive aspects is also an obstacle that needs to be overcome immediately (Chew & Cerbin, 2021; Koć-Januchta et al., 2020; Lepore, 2024; Skulmowski & Xu, 2022).

One clear example is the IRE learning, which tends to rely primarily on lectures. This method has its advantages, but if used continuously, it can reduce students' interest in learning, especially for topics that can be delivered more interactively (Abrori et al., 2024; Budianti et al., 2024; Jenuri et al., 2025). Reliance on conventional methods also makes the classroom atmosphere passive and boring, and it makes it difficult for teachers to assess students' understanding accurately. Therefore, the meaningful learning approach can be an effective alternative in IRE learning. By involving more senses and direct activities, students not only hear or see, but also feel and engage in action, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful (Ibrohim et al., 2025). That shows the importance of implementing meaningful learning in religious subjects.

Research on meaningful learning for IRE learning in Indonesian senior high schools remains limited. Some studies have examined the application of meaningful methods, but few have comprehensively explored the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages within Ausubel's framework. Meanwhile, international literature, such as that presented by Bryce & Blown, updates Ausubel's concept and emphasizes the importance of progressive differentiation in meaningful learning (Bryce & Blown, 2024). Previous studies have focused more on general subjects such as mathematics, science, history, and teacher education (Kostiainen & Pöysä-Tarhonen, 2025; Polman et al., 2021; Raven & Wenner, 2023; Rivera & Pérez, 2023; Van Doorselaere, 2025). Some existing studies also tend to focus on theoretical aspects or general strategies rather than on actual implementation and do not specifically examine the holistic planning, implementation, and evaluation process. Therefore, this study focuses on the implementation of meaningful learning in full in Islamic Religious Education and Ethics at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI, Bandung. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on Islamic religious education and learning theory by presenting a contextual, practical, and relevant case study of the dynamics of the developing national curriculum in Indonesia.

Methods

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach to describe in depth the processes of planning, implementing, and evaluating meaningful learning in Islamic Religious Education subjects in the even semester of 2024-2025 at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI, Bandung, which implements meaningful learning in its curriculum (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024; Nassaji, 2015; Villamin et al., 2025). The school was chosen because there are still very few schools in Bandung that implement meaningful learning in their curricula. Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, direct observation of learning activities, and document analysis of teaching modules and evaluation tools. Informants were selected purposively to ensure the relevance and depth of the data obtained, in line with the research focus, while considering class representation and the diversity of their learning.

The research informants are the vice principal of the curriculum section, the Islamic religious education teacher, and 6th and 11th-grade students. The collected data were analyzed thematically through an inductive approach. The analysis used open coding to identify initial categories, followed by grouping relevant themes based on patterns emerging

from the data. Interpretation was conducted by considering the natural context in which the research took place, to authentically and deeply reflect the participants' perspectives. Data were analyzed using Miles et al.'s interactive model, which includes data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, and were then validated using source triangulation (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Results

The Lesson Plan of Practice Meaningful Learning

Based on interviews and documentation, meaningful learning planning at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI is systematically and continuously designed. One example of the school's commitment to meaningful learning is the foundation's monthly training activities. These training sessions are attended not only by high school teachers but also by all teachers from kindergarten through elementary, junior, and high schools under the foundation's umbrella. The primary objective of these training sessions is to strengthen teachers' understanding of meaningful learning concepts and to develop their skills in designing and reflecting on their teaching practices. The Vice Principal for Curriculum explained that: *"Teachers are trained once a month. This training covers all levels from kindergarten to high school. In addition to the training facilities provided by the foundation, we also invite supervisors to help analyze the curriculum and explore appropriate learning strategies."* (I. I, personal communication, February 2025).

The IRE teacher reinforces this statement: *"Training is conducted with teachers from all levels once a month. I also take the initiative to seek additional references independently to deepen my understanding of meaningful learning."* (I. II, personal communication, February 2025). In addition to serving as a platform for reinforcing concepts, the monthly training also serves as an evaluation forum for learning tools, including teaching modules, learning media, and lesson plans. The modules developed by teachers are reviewed and provided with feedback by the foundation's team before being used in the learning process. That aims to ensure the overall readiness of the learning administration. The Vice Principal for Curriculum explained that: *"The learning tools that have been developed will be evaluated and given feedback. For example, if there are shortcomings, they will be discussed further. Since we also implement KPIs and ISO audits, evaluations are conducted regularly and systematically."* (I. I, personal communication, February 2025).

From the observation notes and analyzed documents, it is evident that the planning process is not based solely on mapping the *Merdeka* Curriculum, but also on selecting and processing Learning Objectives (LOs). Teachers do not simply present all available LOs; instead, they choose and adapt them to students' needs and context. The Vice Principal for Curriculum: *"We usually evaluate the LOs for each subject first, identifying which ones are most relevant and impactful. So not all LOs are presented. We prioritize those that are more meaningful for the students."* (I. I, personal communication, February 2025).

In general, the research findings indicate that lesson planning at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI is conducted using a comprehensive and reflective approach. The school adheres to the principles of meaningful learning planning as outlined by David Ausubel, which include: (1) setting learning objectives; (2) identifying student characteristics (prior knowledge, motivation, learning styles); (3) selecting materials appropriate to student characteristics and organizing them into teaching modules; and (4) planning assessment strategies for both the learning process and outcomes (Ausubel, 1960). This finding is supported by the school's annual work plan documents, teacher training reports, and IRE teacher teaching modules, which indicate that the school actively updates its learning plans every semester and involves various parties in their evaluation (Penyusun, 2025b).

The Practice of Meaningful Learning

Introductory Activities

In the preliminary stage (pre-activity) of the learning process, IRE teachers consistently use provoking questions as a bridge between prior knowledge and new material to be learned. These questions are light but focused, aiming to activate students' prior knowledge and foster curiosity about the topic to be discussed. One IRE teacher explained this practice during an interview:

"I usually start with a prompting question, for example, in the topic of handling the deceased, I ask, 'When was the last time you witnessed a funeral process?' or 'Have you ever participated in the ritual of washing the deceased?' Because most high school students have never been directly involved. After that, I connect it to the material and usually ask them to search for initial information online before I explain it in more detail." (I. II, personal communication, February 2025).

This approach not only encourages active student engagement but also provides space for students to explore independently, in line with the principle of meaningful learning. Classroom observations also show that some students respond enthusiastically to the

activity, and the discussion becomes more lively because they have an initial context before the teacher explains the material. In addition to using prompting questions, pre-learning activities include routine practices that serve as mental conditioning to prepare students for the main activity. The teacher begins the class with a greeting, a group prayer, an attendance check, and an apperception tailored to the learning topic.

This practice is not only administrative but also pedagogical, as it fosters emotional closeness between the teacher and students and enhances students' readiness to learn. If the meeting is held at the beginning of a new chapter or topic, the teacher also uses this opportunity to conduct a brief diagnostic assessment to gauge students' initial understanding (Teacher, 2025). In general, the preliminary stages at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI involve combining the cognitive and affective approaches characteristic of IRE learning. This strategy aligns with Ausubel's meaningful learning approach, which emphasizes connecting new information to students' existing knowledge structures and engaging students from the outset of learning (Ausubel, 1960; Bryce & Blown, 2024).

Core Activities

After the initial activities are completed, in the core activities, depending on the material presented, the teacher would assign individual or group assignments. Students were always allowed to ask questions, and when a question was asked, the teacher did not immediately answer; instead, the teacher invited other students to respond, fostering active learning. The implementation of core activities begins with the delivery of learning objectives, followed by the delivery of material, whether it is a continuation of the teacher's triggering questions or a response to the apperception made. The activity continues with assignments, either individual or group, and is accompanied by interactive discussions among students, teachers, and even among other students. Some teachers also prepare games or icebreakers to reduce boredom during learning. In other words, the school is really focused on how to deliver material to students more effectively and on implementing learning activities in a variety of formats, including classwork, group work, and individual work.

Final Activities

At the end of the lesson, IRE teachers routinely invite students to reflect on the material presented. This reflection is conducted through two approaches: first, students are allowed to ask questions or summarize the core material orally; second, the teacher provides a summary and outlines follow-up actions, such as assignments, key notes, and explanations of the material to be studied in the next session. That is intended to ensure that students have

initial preparation and can conduct self-study before the lesson begins. Informant 2, the IRE teacher, stated in the interview session that:

“Most of the time is spent summarizing, and there were also follow-up questions related to the material. There are daily exams, for example, in grade 11, there are Quran and Hadith exams, and memorization is also a daily exam. At the end of each chapter, there is an exam, either oral or written. After each chapter is completed, there is an evaluation.” (I. II, personal communication, February 2025).

This finding is reinforced by classroom observation results, which show that teachers not only present conclusions but also incorporate motivational reinforcement and explicitly explain the following material as part of the advance organizer strategy, a hallmark of meaningful learning (Observation, February 10, 2025). In addition to intraschool classroom activities, SMA Bintang Madani OMNI also organizes various extracurricular programs and real-world experience-based projects that support the meaningful learning approach. One flagship program is the Student Internship Program, which sends students in grades 11 and 12 to partner companies to gain on-the-job experience. According to school documentation and teacher supervisors, partner companies have responded positively to students' performance during the internship period, noting that students demonstrated discipline and strong communication skills (Penyusun, 2025a).

Another supporting program is OMNI Goes To Village, a community service activity based on collaborative and interdisciplinary learning. Students are sent to partner villages to learn about village management while applying religious and social practices they have become accustomed to at school, such as *duha* prayer, reading *al-Ma'tsurat*, and participating in thrift charity. The IRE teacher explained that:

“We have the OMNI Goes To Village activity. There, students learn about village management, and activities such as *Duha* prayer, *Qiyamullail*, and reading *Al-Ma'tsurat* are still carried out. We also hold a social bazaar, selling used clothing in good condition at affordable prices for the local community.” (I. II, personal communication, February 2025).

Such activities align with the spirit of meaningful learning that encourages students' emotional, spiritual, and social engagement in real-world contexts. In addition to strengthening the internalization of religious values, this program also serves as a platform for developing social skills, leadership, and sensitivity to societal issues. These aspects are essential in an IRE grounded in the *Merdeka* Curriculum and a holistic approach.

The Evaluation of Meaningful Learning

The evaluation of meaningful learning covers two main aspects: student learning outcomes and teacher performance in designing and implementing meaningful learning. Based on data from interviews, observations, and documentation, the evaluation is carried out systematically and continuously to ensure the quality of learning. One of the main components under evaluation is the teaching module prepared by the teachers. These modules are designed and updated monthly and are regularly reviewed during internal training sessions conducted by the educational foundation. During these sessions, the school management team provides feedback on the completeness of content, the appropriateness of methods, and the effectiveness of the modules in supporting meaningful learning. The Vice Principal for Curriculum stated, *“Usually, the learning tools are evaluated, and feedback is provided. For example, what is lacking, how the assessment is conducted, because we also have KPIs and ISO audits, so they are always evaluated.”* (I. I, personal communication, February 2025).

Evaluations of teachers' teaching practices are also conducted through classroom supervision by the principal, vice principal, or management team. This process aims to observe the alignment between lesson planning and classroom implementation, and to provide feedback if any aspects requiring improvement are identified. To support this process, the school also provides a teacher performance evaluation guidebook used as a reference throughout the academic year. The book records achievements, shortcomings, and other evaluative notes discussed in semesterly and weekly evaluations. As explained by the Vice Principal for Curriculum:

“We have a book that serves as a guide for activities throughout the year. Now we usually conduct evaluations every semester; for example, we assess the learning that has been done and then evaluate it together. Since there is a TPMPS team, it is usually evaluated together. We also have an education director so that we can evaluate weekly as well.” (I. I, personal communication, February 2025).

Additionally, student learning outcomes are evaluated through various techniques, including written tests, oral exams, individual or group assignments, and religious practices such as memorization and worship. This evaluation is given after completion of one learning unit (per chapter) and is a summative evaluation at the end of the semester. That is, the assessment of students' learning outcomes must consider their level of development and diversity and use a range of techniques, such as written, oral, and practical tests, as well as assignments. In practice, IRE teachers consistently conduct formative and summative

evaluations. Formative evaluations are conducted through question-and-answer sessions, daily exercises, or group reflections. Summative evaluations are conducted through chapter-end exams, mid-semester exams, and promotion exams. IRE Teacher explained that:

“At the end of each chapter, there is an evaluation, both oral and written. For example, if there is memorization, it becomes part of the daily exam. At the end of the semester or year, there are also summative exams as usual.” (I. II, personal communication, February 2025).

As part of the appreciative learning culture, evaluation is not only used to measure achievement but also as a form of appreciation and constructive feedback for teachers and students. Students are given space to understand their weaknesses and are motivated to improve themselves. At the same time, teachers receive feedback to continue developing their teaching approaches, making them more meaningful and relevant to students' needs.

Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the conclusion that meaningful learning evaluation at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI is conducted comprehensively and systematically, with a focus on improving learning quality. This process not only assesses the achievement of learning objectives and learning outcomes but also includes continuous improvement of teaching practices through supervision, management team evaluations, and regular audits by the education director.

Discussion

Pedagogical Implications of Lesson Planning for Meaningful Learning

The findings of this study indicate that meaningful learning planning has been designed systematically, reflectively, and sustainably, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects. That is reflected in the monthly teacher training conducted by the foundation, as well as in teachers' active involvement in developing and evaluating learning tools, such as teaching modules, lesson plans, and learning media. It aligns with research findings that emphasize the importance of adequate professional development for teachers and the crucial role of lesson planning, as it represents teachers' creative action and reflection (König et al., 2020; Stenman & Pettersson, 2020). From the perspective of meaningful learning, the instructional planning process at this school aligns with the framework developed by Ausubel, particularly in emphasizing the importance of: setting contextual learning objectives; identifying student characteristics, including prior knowledge, interests, and motivation; organizing content into a cohesive and sequential

conceptual structure, and; designing assessments that reflect students' understanding and real-world application (Ausubel, 1960).

It is demonstrated in teachers' practice of sorting Learning Objectives (LOs), who do not deliver all LOs linearly but rather select and adapt them to students' needs based on their level of significance. That supports the principle of advance organizers in Ausubel's theory, which aims to systematically and meaningfully connect new material to concepts students already understand (Ausubel, 1978; Bryce & Blown, 2024). It is important to note that, in the context of IRE learning, a deep understanding of Islamic values cannot be built solely through memorization or cognitive approaches; it must also engage affective and psychomotor aspects through habit formation, concrete experiences, and reflection. Thus, regular teacher training is not only a means of improving teachers' pedagogical competencies but also a way to strengthen the professional learning community that supports transformative learning for students.

That is in line with the statement that planning is carried out in accordance with the important components that must be prepared, namely: the topics or main subjects to be taught, learning objectives, teaching materials, learning media, teaching methods or strategies, learning resources, and components for evaluating student learning outcomes (De Souza Martins et al., 2017; Krepf & König, 2022). These components were consistently present in the planning documents analyzed and in the regular teacher training conducted by the foundation. Furthermore, this planning process reflects the principles that good learning planning must have the characteristics of significance, relevance, flexibility, accuracy, adaptability, and continuity, and include all essential components such as topics, objectives, media, methods, learning resources, and evaluation (De Souza Martins et al., 2017; Hosaini et al., 2024; Krepf & König, 2022; Kwangmuang et al., 2021; Nyoni, 2022).

The lesson-planning efforts are also highly relevant to its objectives, which aim to foster an understanding and appreciation of Islamic teachings that can be applied in students' real lives. Planning that encourages teachers to deliver truly relevant content, motivates students to think critically, and connects Islamic teachings with contemporary life dynamics is one indicator of meaningful learning practices (Budiarto & Salsabila, 2022; Samsuddin & Siregar, 2024; Sholeh et al., 2024). Furthermore, regular evaluations of teaching tools and learning strategies by management teams and external supervisors demonstrate that schools are committed to the principle of continuous reflection, which, in the context of meaningful learning, is key to ensuring that the learning process is not merely a transfer of information

but a transformative learning experience that directly impacts students' religious awareness and practices.

Finally, such planning practices also contribute to increased student motivation and curiosity, as learning designed around real-life contexts and an approach that actively involves students indirectly strengthens the internalization of Islamic values, which are at the core of IRE. Thus, based on these findings, it can be concluded that the IRE learning planning has applied contextual, meaningful learning, which not only adheres to Ausubel's principles but also adapts them to the needs of value-based learning and students' spiritual experiences.

Classroom Dynamics and Student Engagement in Meaningful Learning Practice

The practice of meaningful learning in the classroom has three learning stages. *First* is the introductory activity. This learning stage is an essential foundation for creating a meaningful IRE learning process. IRE teachers consistently begin learning with contextual, relevant trigger questions. This strategy aims to activate students' prior knowledge, connect with previous experiences, and foster curiosity about the material to be learned. This strategy reflects one of the main characteristics of meaningful learning, the importance of linking new information to students' cognitive structures. By utilizing students' schemata or prior experience, the learning process does not start from "point zero" but instead builds on what learners already have (Bryce & Blown, 2024). It helps students build a more profound, contextual understanding rather than simply memorizing concepts verbally. In addition to building cognitive aspects, pre-learning practices also touch the affective dimension. Activities such as reading prayers together, exchanging greetings, engaging in apperceptions, and other initial interactions are carried out routinely and purposefully.

These activities are not just administrative formalities; they are part of a pedagogical approach that strengthens the emotional attachment between teachers and students and creates mental readiness to learn. It aligns with the principle of student-centered, meaningful learning, which provides students with exploratory space and encourages them to construct meaning rather than passively receive it. Thus, it can be concluded that the early stages of IRE learning have applied the meaningful learning approach thoroughly. Aspects of connecting new information with prior knowledge, deep understanding, motivation, and readiness to learn are systematically addressed through a combination of cognitive and affective strategies (Ausubel, 1960; Bryce & Blown, 2024). It provides a solid foundation

for a learning process that is not only academic but also has a spiritual and emotional impact on students.

Second is core activities. The core activities begin with the delivery of learning objectives to students, followed by the description of teaching materials. The delivery of this material is not done in a one-way manner, but rather as a continuation of the apperception or trigger questions previously posed by the teacher. The core activities are followed by assignments, both individual and group, that not only emphasize theoretical understanding but also demand active participation and student involvement in the exploration process. In practice, students are always allowed to ask questions, but the teacher does not immediately provide the answer. Instead, the teacher invites other students to respond first to encourage discussion and create a more lively, collaborative learning environment. This process shows an effort to build deep understanding, train critical thinking skills, and foster the courage to express opinions in the context of religious learning.

The classroom observations showed that the learning atmosphere became more dynamic and fun when the teacher introduced ice breaking or educational games. This strategy is crucial for creating a pleasant learning environment and reducing boredom, especially when the IRE material being discussed is dense or abstract. It aligns with students' opinion that *“ice breaking liven up the classroom atmosphere, eliminates drowsiness, and increases learning enthusiasm.”* (I. III, personal communication, February 2025). With this approach, students become more motivated and can actively and reflectively participate in learning (Jumini et al., 2025). This practice emphasizes that in implementing meaningful learning, all techniques and approaches must be carefully considered, and the implementation of learning must be carefully prepared (Hsbollah & Hassan, 2022; Zawawi & Judi, 2020). It means that teachers are not only tasked with delivering material but also with facilitating a learning process that engages students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

These core activities are highly relevant because religious learning is not only intended to understand concepts but also to internalize Islamic values into students' behavior and daily lives. When students are involved in discussions, given space to think, and asked to complete tasks that require real-world application, they not only learn intellectually but also spiritually and emotionally. Thus, the learning that occurs becomes not only meaningful but also transformative. Overall, the core activities at SMA Bintang Madani OMNI have integrated various main principles of meaningful learning into the implementation of IRE

learning, such as connecting old knowledge with new knowledge; encouraging deep understanding; enabling concrete application in learning tasks; fostering students' motivation and curiosity; and building positive social interactions through discussion and collaboration (Bryce & Blown, 2024; Mystakidis, 2021). These findings reinforce the view that IRE learning, when implemented actively, reflectively, and contextually, will be more effective at instilling Islamic values fully and meaningfully in students' lives.

Third is the final activity. This stage of the IRE learning process demonstrates consistency in applying the meaningful learning approach, especially in reflection, motivation, and reinforcing the material's connection to real life. In practice, teachers routinely invite students to conduct a final reflection by providing space for them to convey their understanding or questions about the material just learned. In addition, the teacher provides a summary of the core material, along with follow-up assignments and an explanation of the topics to be discussed at the next meeting. This strategy supports the principle of advance organizers in meaningful learning, as described by Ausubel, in which teachers prepare students for the next learning by providing an initial cognitive structure that makes upcoming information easier to understand and internalize (Ausubel, 1978). Teachers also instill motivation, which not only serves as emotional reinforcement but also builds students' mental and spiritual readiness (Jenuri et al., 2025; Sholeh et al., 2024).

Furthermore, learning evaluation is not only done formatively through oral questions and assignments, but also summatively through daily exams that include memorization and understanding of Qur'anic verses and Hadith. That underscores the importance of applying religious materials in IRE learning and encourages students to connect Islamic values directly to daily life. In line with that, extracurricular activities and experiential projects, such as *the Student Internship Program* and *OMNI Goes to Village*, are concrete ways to implement meaningful learning that extend beyond the classroom. In the internship program, students not only gain work experience but also practice Islamic values in a professional context, such as discipline, integrity, and interpersonal communication. As for *OMNI Goes to Village*, students are directly involved in community service, including worship practices such as *Duha* and *Qiyamullail* prayers, as well as social activities such as charity bazaars.

These activities realize the transfer of religious values from the classroom to the broader community. These programs align with the holistic approach to IRE learning, which emphasizes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of students. In the context of meaningful learning, this strengthens the internalization of values because students not only

know, but also experience and practice religious teachings in real social contexts. Thus, the closing and supporting activities contribute to students' deep understanding and internal motivation, as well as to the development of social skills and sensitivity to people's realities, the main objectives of meaningful IRE learning. It indicates that meaningful learning should maximize the application of knowledge in real life and shape learners' adaptive abilities across various life situations (Levin, 2015; Vargas-Hernández & Vargas-González, 2022).

Assessment Challenge and Its Alignment in Meaningful Learning Practice

Assessment of meaningful learning practice in IRE learning focuses on two main areas: students' learning outcomes and teachers' performance in designing and implementing meaningful learning. The assessment is conducted systematically, in a structured manner, and sustainably, reflecting the institution's commitment to the quality of adaptive and meaningful learning. In assessing learning outcomes, IRE teachers implement formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluation is conducted during the learning process, such as through questions and answers, short exercises, group discussions, and worship practices. While summative evaluation is applied at the end of the unit or semester, it includes written exams, oral exams, memorization, and practical assessments. This approach aims to measure students' cognitive understanding and to evaluate their practical skills and spiritual attitudes. As stated by the IRE teacher, *“at the end of each chapter, there is an evaluation, either oral or written. For example, if there is memorization, it becomes part of the daily exam.”* (I. II, personal communication, February 2025).

This evaluation model aligns with the principle of meaningful learning, which emphasizes the learning process as the linking of new concepts with existing knowledge structures. Through practice-based assessment (e.g., memorization and worship practices), students are not only asked to remember, but to internalize and apply Islamic teachings in real life. This evaluation also takes into account students' motivation and curiosity. By providing space for exploration, IRE teachers help learners construct personal and contextual meaning from the lesson. That is consistent with findings that meaningful evaluation not only measures results but also strengthens reflective and participatory learning (Ardiansyah & Cahyanto, 2023; Ibrohim et al., 2025).

On the other hand, teacher evaluation is conducted through regular classroom supervision by principals, deputy principals, the TPMPS team, and education directors. The primary purpose of supervision is to evaluate the congruence between planning and

implementation and to provide professional development feedback. This evaluation reflects the principle that the learning process should be assessed by monitoring the implementation of activities according to plan, reporting deviations, and taking corrective actions oriented towards continuous improvement (Budianti et al., 2024; Samsuddin & Siregar, 2024).

The learning module used by IRE teachers is also a vital evaluation object. Modules are compiled monthly and evaluated in the foundation's regular training. This evaluation considers the relevance of the content, the learning strategies, and the effectiveness of the teaching media in supporting meaningful IRE learning objectives. Uniquely, evaluation is used not only as an assessment instrument but also as a tool for appreciation and reflection for teachers and students. Teachers receive professional input that strengthens their teaching capacity, while students are guided to understand their strengths and weaknesses through constructive feedback. In line with several studies, appreciation in meaningful learning evaluation creates a pleasant learning experience and encourages students' intrinsic motivation (Clanton Harpine, 2024; Jääskä et al., 2022; Merdiaty & Sulistiasih, 2024).

Overall, the evaluation reflects the practice of meaningful learning in IRE learning that integrates aspects: connecting new information to prior knowledge through contextual and reflective assessment; deep understanding through critical dialogue, meaningful memorization, and the application of religious values; concrete application, in the form of worship practices and social activities, was reported in the evaluation of learning outcomes; motivation and curiosity are developed through process-based evaluation and appreciation of student effort. With this approach, the evaluation process and forms not only assess an administrative procedure but also bring it to life as a transformational learning process for both students and teachers.

Conclusion

This study concludes that implementing meaningful learning in IRE demonstrates the school's strong awareness and commitment to providing a learning process that is relevant, contextual, and impactful in students' real lives. Although it does not fully follow the procedural stages in David Ausubel's meaningful learning theory, the main principles of meaningful learning are reflected in teachers' practices, particularly in linking instructional materials to students' life experiences and values. IRE learning planning involves selecting objectives and materials that are meaningful and tailored to students' needs and realities. During the implementation stage, Islamic Education teachers strive to create an active,

enjoyable classroom atmosphere that encourages students' emotional involvement. Evaluation is conducted both formatively and summatively, combining cognitive and affective assessments that are relevant to the characteristics of religious education.

These findings imply that the meaningful learning approach in IRE has excellent potential to shape students who are not only conceptually knowledgeable but also capable of practicing Islamic teachings in their daily lives. However, the limitations of this study lie in its scope, which is restricted to a single school, and in the narrow representation of informants. Therefore, further research is recommended in various school contexts, using a cross-curricular approach and a broader population, to enrich understanding of the effectiveness of meaningful learning in IRE.

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