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Analysis of the Learning Design Concept of Islamic Religious Education from the Perspective of Constructivist Theory

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Abstract

This study analyzes the concept of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning design from the perspective of constructivist theory. The study aims to synthesize recent scholarship on how constructivist principles can be translated into coherent IRE planning, implementation, learning experiences, and assessment. A qualitative literature study was employed using books, journal articles, and relevant academic documents, with data analyzed through reduction, thematic presentation, comparison, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that constructivist IRE is best understood through five interconnected dimensions: students as active constructors of religious understanding; teachers as facilitators, guides, motivators, and role models; authentic experiences as resources for contextual meaning-making; collaborative and reflective learning as mechanisms for knowledge construction; and authentic assessment across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The novelty of the study lies in integrating these dimensions into a single learning-design architecture in which experience, interaction, reflection, application, and assessment operate as a continuous cycle while remaining guided by authoritative Islamic sources. The model positions constructivism not as unrestricted relativism but as guided construction of understanding within the normative and ethical purposes of Islamic education.
Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, learning design, constructivism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep desain pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dari perspektif teori konstruktivisme. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menyintesis kajian terkini mengenai bagaimana prinsip-prinsip konstruktivisme dapat diterjemahkan ke dalam perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pengalaman belajar, dan penilaian PAI yang koheren. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka kualitatif dengan memanfaatkan buku, artikel jurnal, dan dokumen akademik yang relevan; data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi, penyajian tematik, perbandingan, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PAI berbasis konstruktivisme paling tepat dipahami melalui lima dimensi yang saling terkait: siswa sebagai penyusun aktif

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pemahaman keagamaan; guru sebagai fasilitator, pembimbing, motivator, dan teladan; pengalaman autentik sebagai sumber untuk memaknai konteks; pembelajaran kolaboratif dan reflektif sebagai mekanisme konstruksi pengetahuan; serta penilaian autentik yang mencakup ranah kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi dimensi-dimensi tersebut ke dalam satu arsitektur desain pembelajaran, di mana pengalaman, interaksi, refleksi, penerapan, dan penilaian berjalan sebagai siklus berkelanjutan namun tetap berlandaskan pada sumber-sumber Islam yang otoritatif. Model ini menempatkan konstruktivisme bukan sebagai relativisme tanpa batas, melainkan sebagai konstruksi pemahaman yang terarah dalam koridor tujuan normatif dan etis pendidikan Islam.
Kata kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, desain pembelajaran, konstruktivisme

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a distinctive position within the Indonesian educational system because its purpose extends beyond the acquisition of religious information. It is expected to cultivate faith, understanding, moral dispositions, and the capacity to practice Islamic teachings in everyday situations. This multidimensional purpose requires learning designs that connect conceptual knowledge with experience, reflection, action, and character formation.(Ghuni et al., 2026; Yahya et al., 2025) Contemporary discussions of IRE increasingly emphasize the need to move beyond transmission-oriented instruction toward learning that engages students as active participants. Such a shift is consistent with constructivist assumptions that learners develop understanding by interpreting experiences and relating new information to existing cognitive structures. Recent scholarship on IRE likewise identifies student activity, contextual learning, and critical engagement as important responses to the limitations of conventional teacher-centered instruction (Ilma et al., 2025; Datuzuhriah et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2026).

The challenge is particularly important because religious knowledge cannot be reduced to memorized propositions if education is expected to influence conduct. Students may recall definitions of faith, worship, morality, or Islamic law while still experiencing difficulty applying those concepts when confronted with real social situations. A learning design therefore needs to create opportunities for students to interpret, discuss, practice, and evaluate the meaning of Islamic teachings in contexts that resemble their lives.(Abdullah et al., 2026; Fatikhah et al., 2026) Constructivist learning provides a useful conceptual lens because it treats knowledge construction as an active process involving experience, interaction, interpretation, and reflection. In IRE, these processes can be directed toward internalizing Islamic values without abandoning the normative foundations of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Studies of constructivist IRE have reported that contextual and student-centered activities can support deeper understanding and more active participation (Ariansyah, 2022; Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024).

Learning design is consequently not merely a technical document containing objectives, materials, methods, and assessments. It represents a pedagogical architecture that determines how learners encounter knowledge, how teachers organize experiences, and how evidence of learning is interpreted. In a constructivist design, objectives need to encompass processes of meaning-making and application rather than only the reproduction of information. Learning activities should provide intellectual and social space for questioning, investigation, collaboration, and

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reflection.(Husna et al., 2025; Mukhlis et al., 2025; Norhaliza et al., 2026) Assessment should also examine whether students can use what they understand in authentic situations. This broader interpretation is consistent with recent work connecting learning design in IRE with contextualization, active participation, and alignment among objectives, activities, and assessment (Urika, 2022; Ilma et al., 2025).

Constructivism itself is not a single classroom technique but a theory of learning that changes how knowledge, learners, and teachers are understood. From this perspective, learners do not simply receive finished meanings from an instructor; they construct and reorganize understanding through interaction with experiences and social environments. Piagetian constructivism emphasizes cognitive development through active interaction with the environment, whereas Vygotskian perspectives highlight dialogue, mediation, and social interaction. Both perspectives offer important implications for IRE because religious understanding develops through individual reflection as well as guided interaction with teachers and peers. Recent studies specifically examining Piaget and Vygotsky in IRE argue that constructivist principles can support contextual, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024; Ariansyah, 2022). This makes constructivist design relevant to the broader effort to make IRE more meaningful, participatory, and applicable.

The relevance of constructivism becomes clearer when the objectives of IRE are examined across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Understanding a Qur'anic concept, for example, is different from appreciating its ethical significance and different again from demonstrating the value through conduct. A coherent learning design should provide a pathway from conceptual encounter to interpretation, personal reflection, social practice, and behavioral evidence.(A.Yasin & Saputera, 2026; Wahyudi, Suraijiah, et al., 2026) This pathway requires teachers to design learning situations in which students can connect religious principles with meaningful experiences. Recent research on IRE stresses that the subject should address cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor dimensions rather than treating religious learning as a purely cognitive enterprise (Yasir et al., 2024). Such integration strengthens the rationale for constructivist learning design.

Student-centered learning is another central consideration in contemporary IRE design. Student-centeredness does not mean that teachers withdraw from the learning process or that every interpretation is treated as equally valid. Instead, it means that students receive structured opportunities to inquire, reason, collaborate, practice, and reflect while the teacher provides intellectual and moral guidance. This distinction is especially important in religious education because the teacher remains responsible for maintaining conceptual accuracy and ethical direction. Recent constructivist studies in IRE describe the teacher as facilitator, guide, motivator, and role model rather than merely a transmitter of information (Ilma et al., 2025; Ariansyah, 2023).

The teacher's role therefore changes in quality rather than disappearing. A constructivist IRE teacher must diagnose students' prior understanding, formulate meaningful problems, select appropriate resources, scaffold inquiry, stimulate dialogue, and provide feedback. At the same time, the teacher models Islamic conduct so that the pedagogical process itself becomes part of moral education. This combination of facilitation and exemplarity is especially significant because students learn values not only through verbal explanation but also through social interaction and observation. Recent research emphasizes that IRE teachers need to function simultaneously as

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facilitators of knowledge construction and agents of value internalization (Ariansyah, 2023; Ilma et al., 2025).

Students likewise require a clearly defined role within the learning design. They should be expected to activate prior knowledge, formulate questions, examine evidence, discuss interpretations, solve problems, complete collaborative tasks, and reflect on implications.(Hanafiah, 2024; Hatmiah, 2026) These activities transform students from recipients into participants whose experiences become resources for learning. In religious education, participation can also involve practicing ethical behavior, performing worship correctly, or analyzing moral dilemmas in everyday settings. Research on constructivist learning in IRE indicates that active participation can strengthen critical thinking, responsibility, collaboration, and the internalization of Islamic values (Harahap, 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025).

Real experience is another defining element of the proposed design. Abstract religious concepts become more meaningful when students can connect them with situations they recognize from family, school, community, digital environments, and social relationships. Experiential learning can involve observation, simulation, community activities, problem solving, religious practice, reflective journals, or projects that address authentic issues.(Wahyudi, Amin, et al., 2026) Such experiences provide material for students to interpret and reorganize their understanding rather than merely memorize definitions. Recent research on experiential learning in IRE argues that direct experience can strengthen contextual understanding and facilitate the internalization of religious and moderation values (Abas & Majid, 2025). This makes constructivist design relevant to the broader effort to make IRE more meaningful, participatory, and applicable.

Problem-based learning offers one practical mechanism for translating constructivist principles into IRE. Instead of beginning exclusively with a lecture, the teacher can introduce a real or plausible problem that requires students to mobilize Islamic concepts to formulate a response.('Afifah et al., 2026; Nurhidayah & Handayani, 2025) The problem can involve ethical choices, social responsibility, transactions, environmental stewardship, digital behavior, or interpersonal relations. Students investigate the problem, consult relevant sources, discuss alternatives, and justify conclusions under teacher guidance. Studies of PBL in Islamic education have found that problem-centered activities can connect religious knowledge with practical application and critical reasoning (Rohman, 2022; Azizah, 2022). This makes constructivist design relevant to the broader effort to make IRE more meaningful, participatory, and applicable.

Project-based learning can extend this process by requiring students to produce a meaningful artifact or action after investigating a contextual issue. In IRE, projects can involve campaigns for honesty, environmental care, charitable initiatives, digital ethics, documentation of local religious practices, or collaborative products that communicate Islamic values. The project process creates repeated opportunities for planning, collaboration, revision, reflection, and application. It therefore fits the constructivist emphasis on knowledge construction through purposeful activity. Recent studies report that project-based IRE can make learning more contextual and participatory while supporting religious attitudes, responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness (Sari & Handayani, 2025; Sari & Handayani, 2026). This makes constructivist

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design relevant to the broader effort to make IRE more meaningful, participatory, and applicable.

Social interaction is equally important because knowledge construction is not exclusively an individual cognitive process. Dialogue with teachers and peers can expose students to alternative interpretations, challenge assumptions, and provide opportunities to articulate reasons.(Baiti et al., 2026; Hutfhi et al., 2026; Khairiyah et al., 2024) In IRE, structured dialogue is particularly valuable when students encounter contemporary issues that require them to relate normative principles to complex social realities. Collaborative learning can cultivate respectful disagreement, tolerance, responsibility, and the ability to negotiate meaning. Recent research on collaborative IRE learning shows that interaction can create space for inclusive dialogue and the development of tolerance (Hadi et al., 2025).

Reflection provides the bridge between experience and durable understanding. Without reflection, an activity may remain an event rather than becoming a source of conceptual or moral learning. Constructivist IRE should therefore include reflection before, during, and after learning activities through questions, journals, dialogue, self-assessment, or guided discussion.(Mujani et al., 2024; Nabriz et al., 2026) Reflection allows students to compare prior assumptions with new experiences and consider how Islamic teachings should inform their decisions. Research on experiential and constructivist learning supports reflection as an important mechanism for transforming experience into meaningful understanding (Abas & Majid, 2025; Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024). This makes constructivist design relevant to the broader effort to make IRE more meaningful, participatory, and applicable.

Assessment must be redesigned alongside learning activities because conventional written tests cannot fully capture the objectives of constructivist IRE. If students are expected to understand, internalize, and practice Islamic values, assessment should collect evidence from multiple domains and situations. Projects, portfolios, observations, performance tasks, reflective journals, oral explanations, and written assessments can be combined according to the learning objectives. Authentic assessment is particularly relevant because it examines performance in contexts that resemble actual use of knowledge and values. Contemporary studies of Islamic education assessment emphasize the importance of assessing attitudes and skills alongside cognitive understanding (Alifa & Mukminin, 2025; Julhadi et al., 2026).

The integration of constructivism into IRE also requires attention to curriculum and institutional conditions. A constructivist lesson cannot be sustained if teachers lack time to facilitate inquiry, if learning resources are inaccessible, or if assessment systems reward memorization alone.(Aslamiah et al., 2026; Mufid et al., 2026; Muslihah et al., 2026) Professional development is therefore essential because teachers need practical competence in designing problems, scaffolding discussion, facilitating projects, and constructing authentic assessment instruments. Recent curriculum research identifies teacher understanding, resources, and school culture as continuing challenges in the implementation of constructivist IRE (Apriyani et al., 2024). These findings indicate that learning design should be considered at classroom and institutional levels rather than as an isolated teacher technique.

The Indonesian curriculum context further increases the relevance of this discussion. Current educational reforms emphasize learner agency, competency development, contextual learning, and character formation, all of which can be

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supported by constructivist principles. However, constructivism should not be adopted mechanically as a foreign pedagogical formula; it needs to be interpreted in relation to the epistemological and ethical aims of Islamic education. Recent theoretical work argues that constructivist pedagogy can be integrated with Islamic educational values when active learning remains connected to authoritative religious sources and moral purposes (Rahma et al., 2026; Zaqiah et al., 2026). This integration offers a more context-sensitive understanding of constructivism in IRE.

Although the literature on constructivist IRE is expanding, there remains a need for a more integrated conceptual analysis of learning design. Existing studies often focus on one dimension, such as critical thinking, curriculum, PBL, PjBL, teacher roles, or assessment. Less attention has been given to how these elements form a coherent design architecture linking learner activity, teacher facilitation, experience, reflection, and assessment. The source study underlying this article identifies five interrelated indicators that provide a useful organizing framework for such an analysis. This article therefore aims to deepen that framework by synthesizing recent literature and clarifying the pedagogical relationships among the five indicators (Ahyai et al., 2026).

Literature Review

Constructivist learning theory provides the conceptual foundation for positioning learners as active constructors of meaning. Its central proposition is that learning involves the development and reorganization of understanding through interaction with experience, prior knowledge, and social environments.(Fitriani et al., 2026; Ghani et al., 2026) In educational design, this proposition shifts attention from what the teacher intends to transmit toward what learners are expected to do with ideas and experiences. For IRE, the shift is significant because religious concepts need to be understood, interpreted, internalized, and practiced rather than simply recalled. Recent reviews of constructivist IRE consistently identify active participation, contextual learning, interaction, and reflection as core characteristics (Putri et al., 2026; Datuzuhriah et al., 2026).

Piaget's constructivist perspective is relevant because it emphasizes learners' active adaptation through interaction with their environment. From this perspective, students develop understanding by integrating new experiences with existing cognitive structures and reorganizing those structures when new experiences create cognitive tension. In IRE, learning tasks can therefore be sequenced from familiar experiences toward more complex religious concepts.(Isna et al., 2026) Teachers can use concrete situations, questions, cases, and practical activities before asking students to formulate more abstract explanations. A recent literature review on Piaget's constructivism and IRE concludes that contextual and experience-based learning can make religious education more developmentally responsive (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity.

Vygotsky's contribution complements the individual cognitive emphasis by explaining learning as socially mediated. His perspective highlights interaction, language, cultural tools, and guided support in the development of understanding. This is highly relevant to IRE because students often clarify religious meanings through discussion with teachers and peers. Scaffolding can be provided through guiding questions, examples, source analysis, feedback, and gradually reduced assistance. Research on Vygotsky and the Indonesian IRE system argues that social interaction and teacher

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mediation can reduce the limitations of rigid indoctrinative approaches and support critical awareness (Ariansyah, 2022). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity.

Constructivism also has implications for the formulation of learning objectives. Objectives should not be limited to verbs such as identify, define, or memorize when the broader aim is religious understanding and practice. They can include interpreting, comparing, reasoning, applying, creating, reflecting, collaborating, and demonstrating ethical action.(Isna et al., 2026) Such objectives provide a stronger basis for aligning learning activities and assessment. Recent research on learning design in IRE notes that planning needs to connect objectives, learning activities, and assessment so that the intended competencies are genuinely developed (Urika, 2022; Ilma et al., 2025).

The student role in constructivist IRE is supported by research emphasizing learning independence and active engagement. Students need opportunities to make decisions about how they investigate questions, use learning resources, and communicate conclusions. Independence, however, should be understood as guided autonomy rather than the absence of instructional structure. Teachers remain responsible for defining learning boundaries, ensuring access to authoritative sources, and supporting students who have difficulty constructing understanding. Recent studies of constructivist approaches in IRE associate active participation with stronger engagement, independence, and critical thinking (Ramadhani et al., 2026; M. et al., 2026).

Teacher facilitation is another recurring theme in the literature. Constructivist teachers organize environments in which students can ask meaningful questions, test ideas, discuss evidence, and revise their understanding. In religious education, facilitation must be combined with subject expertise because students need guidance in distinguishing sound religious reasoning from unsupported claims.(Isna et al., 2026) The teacher also functions as a moral model whose conduct communicates the practical meaning of Islamic values. Research on IRE teacher roles emphasizes facilitation, guidance, motivation, and exemplary behavior as complementary dimensions of professional practice (Ariansyah, 2023; Ilma et al., 2025).

Contextual learning provides a bridge between Islamic concepts and students' lived realities. When lessons begin from situations that students recognize, they can use prior experience as a basis for interpreting religious teachings. Contextualization may involve family relationships, peer interaction, social media, environmental responsibility, economic behavior, or community service.(Isna et al., 2026) It does not mean changing the substance of religious teaching to fit every situation; rather, it means designing opportunities to apply stable principles to changing contexts. Recent research on constructivist IRE emphasizes that contextual learning can strengthen the relevance and meaning of religious concepts (Ilma et al., 2025; Datuzuhriah et al., 2026).

Problem-based learning is particularly compatible with constructivism because problems create a reason for learners to seek and organize knowledge. In IRE, problems can be constructed around authentic questions such as how to respond to misinformation, manage disagreement, conduct ethical transactions, or practice social responsibility. Students can identify what they know, determine what they need to learn, investigate sources, propose solutions, and reflect on the values involved. Research in Indonesian pesantren shows that PBL can be designed around religious

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problems and structured inquiry while retaining the educational purposes of Islamic learning (Rohman, 2022). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity. It also creates a clear connection between religious concepts and the practical reasoning students use outside the classroom.

Other research confirms the practical value of PBL for connecting IRE learning with everyday behavior. Azizah (2022) found that PBL could support students in implementing what they learned in daily life, while later studies have emphasized critical thinking as a major outcome of problem-centered IRE. The significance of these findings lies not simply in improved activity but in the connection between conceptual understanding and action. Constructivist design is strengthened when the problem is meaningful enough to require students to mobilize multiple forms of knowledge. Thus, PBL can function as an operational strategy within a broader constructivist learning architecture (Azizah, 2022; Siregar et al., 2025).

Project-based learning extends the problem-centered logic by requiring sustained inquiry and the production of a tangible or socially meaningful outcome. In IRE, projects can be designed around charitable action, environmental stewardship, religious communication, ethical digital behavior, or documentation of community practices. Students must plan, divide responsibilities, use sources, revise products, and explain the values underlying their work. Such processes support knowledge construction through purposeful activity and social interaction. Recent studies indicate that PjBL can create contextual and participatory IRE environments and support religious attitudes and character formation (Sari & Handayani, 2025; Sari & Handayani, 2026). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity.

Collaborative learning provides another important constructivist mechanism. Collaboration requires students to externalize their reasoning, encounter different perspectives, negotiate meaning, and take responsibility for shared outcomes. In IRE, collaboration can be organized through discussion groups, peer teaching, case analysis, project teams, or structured debates. The teacher must establish norms so that disagreement remains respectful and evidence-based. Research on collaborative IRE learning reports that such interaction can contribute to tolerance, inclusive dialogue, and social responsibility (Hadi et al., 2025).

Experiential learning is closely related to constructivist design because experience supplies the material from which learners construct meaning. In IRE, experience can include religious practice, community engagement, observation, simulation, service activities, or encounters with ethical dilemmas. The value of experience depends on how it is structured and reflected upon, because unexamined activity does not automatically produce deep learning. Teachers therefore need to design prompts that help students identify what happened, interpret it through Islamic concepts, and consider future action. Recent scholarship on experiential IRE emphasizes this connection between direct experience, reflection, value internalization, and contextual learning (Abas & Majid, 2025). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity.

Reflection is a key mechanism for integrating experience and knowledge. Reflective activities encourage students to articulate prior assumptions, identify new

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insights, evaluate their actions, and formulate intentions for future practice. In IRE, reflection can also help students connect personal experiences with ethical and spiritual dimensions of Islamic teachings. Reflective journals, learning logs, guided conversations, and self-assessment can provide evidence of this process. Recent studies of constructivist and experiential learning emphasize reflection as a means of strengthening critical and meaningful understanding (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024; Abas & Majid, 2025). This principle is especially useful when learning objectives require students to demonstrate understanding through meaningful activity.

Assessment literature increasingly supports multidimensional approaches that recognize knowledge, skills, attitudes, and performance. Authentic assessment is especially relevant when learning outcomes include the application of Islamic values in real or realistic situations. Projects, portfolios, observations, performance demonstrations, reflective journals, and written tasks can provide complementary evidence. Such assessment also allows teachers to observe development over time rather than relying exclusively on a single test. Recent Islamic education assessment studies describe authentic assessment as a way to capture cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions more comprehensively (Alifa & Mukminin, 2025; Julhadi et al., 2026).

Curriculum research shows that constructivist principles can also inform the broader organization of IRE. Apriyani et al. (2024) report that constructivist curriculum development can increase engagement and understanding while still facing challenges in teacher competence and learning resources. More recent systematic work suggests that constructivism can function as a central pedagogical orientation within contemporary IRE curricula, especially for contextual projects and character formation. At the same time, other learning theories may remain useful for specific purposes such as procedural practice or conceptual organization. This suggests that a constructivist IRE design should be principled and integrative rather than dogmatically exclusive (Apriyani et al., 2024; Zaqiah et al., 2026).

Recent theoretical scholarship has begun to examine the relationship between constructivism and Islamic educational epistemology more directly. Rahma et al. (2026) argue that constructivist pedagogy has implications for planning, implementation, and evaluation of IRE, while also identifying the need to consider Islamic pedagogical foundations. This is important because Islamic education has normative sources and moral purposes that cannot simply be reduced to a generic theory of knowledge construction. A constructivist approach is therefore most defensible when it is used as a pedagogical framework for active learning while maintaining fidelity to authoritative Islamic sources. The resulting model is not knowledge relativism but guided construction of understanding within an ethical and religious framework (Rahma et al., 2026).

The reviewed literature reveals a clear research opportunity. Existing studies have generated useful findings about constructivist theory, critical thinking, PBL, PjBL, collaboration, experiential learning, curriculum, and assessment, but these strands are often examined separately. The source article's five-indicator framework offers a concise way to integrate them into one learning-design concept. The five indicators are mutually dependent because active students require facilitative teachers, contextual experiences require reflection, and meaningful outcomes require aligned assessment. The present analysis therefore contributes a synthesized framework that interprets

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constructivist IRE as a coherent design system rather than a single teaching method (Ahyai et al., 2026; Putri et al., 2026).

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature study approach to analyze the concept of Islamic Religious Education learning design from the perspective of constructivist theory. The choice of literature research is appropriate because the study seeks to synthesize conceptual arguments, theoretical explanations, and findings from previous studies rather than collect primary field data. The primary analytical focus follows the five indicators identified in the source study: constructivist principles, student roles, teacher roles, real experiences, and assessment in IRE. The literature was selected from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant academic documents published mainly within the most recent five- to ten-year period, while older foundational works were used only when necessary to explain established concepts. This approach is consistent with recent literature-based studies of constructivism and IRE that use qualitative synthesis to examine theoretical and pedagogical relationships (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024; Rahma et al., 2026). The resulting analysis is therefore interpretive and conceptual rather than statistical.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and systematic reading of literature relevant to IRE learning design and constructivist theory. Sources were identified according to their relevance to student-centered learning, teacher facilitation, contextual and experiential learning, collaborative or problem-based activities, project-based learning, critical thinking, curriculum, and authentic assessment. The source article served as the initial conceptual reference because it explicitly organizes the topic around five indicators and describes the research as qualitative library research involving data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Ahyai et al., 2026). Additional recent studies were then used to broaden, compare, and critically interpret those indicators, including studies on Piaget, Vygotsky, PBL, PjBL, collaboration, experiential learning, and assessment. Attention was given to methodological fit, publication recency, conceptual relevance, and the direct connection between findings and IRE. This procedure helps reduce dependence on a single article and allows the analysis to identify convergence, differences, and research gaps across the literature.

Data analysis followed three interconnected stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, relevant statements from the selected literature were extracted and grouped according to the five analytical indicators and their associated pedagogical dimensions. During data presentation, the findings were organized into thematic descriptions and a comparative table showing the relationship between constructivist principles and IRE learning-design components. During conclusion drawing, the themes were compared across studies to determine how they collectively explain a coherent constructivist design for IRE. Source triangulation was used conceptually by comparing findings from different types of studies rather than relying on one publication or one methodological tradition. This analytical procedure follows the structure of the source study while expanding it through contemporary literature on constructivist IRE and related learning models (Ahyai et al., 2026; Zaqiah et al., 2026).

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Results and Discussion

The synthesis demonstrates that constructivist Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning design should be conceptualized as a holistic instructional system rather than as the application of a single teaching method. The five indicators identified in the source study remain analytically relevant because they illuminate the interconnected relationships among learners, teachers, learning experiences, and assessment processes. Central to this framework is the principle that students construct understanding through experience, interaction, questioning, and reflection. Recent literature similarly characterizes constructivist IRE as a pedagogical orientation that moves beyond knowledge transmission toward active and contextual meaning-making. Such an orientation does not imply the elimination of teacher authority; rather, it requires a transformation in how that authority is exercised within the learning process. This interpretation is consistent with recent theoretical and empirical studies concerning constructivist approaches to IRE (Ahyai et al., 2026; Datuzuhriah et al., 2026).

Within this learning framework, students occupy a central position as active participants in the process of internalizing and applying Islamic values. Their participation involves activating prior knowledge, engaging in dialogue, investigating problems, completing meaningful tasks, and reflecting critically on learning experiences. Through these processes, religious concepts are transformed from isolated bodies of information into knowledge that can be interpreted, contextualized, and applied to concrete situations. Active participation therefore contributes not only to students' cognitive development but also to the development of learning independence, critical thinking, responsibility, and moral awareness. Student engagement in IRE consequently carries both epistemic and ethical dimensions, as the construction of religious understanding is closely connected with the formation of attitudes and behavior. Recent scholarship on constructivist learning and critical thinking in Islamic Religious Education provides empirical support for this interpretation (Ramadhani et al., 2026; M. et al., 2026; Yasir et al., 2024).

Correspondingly, the teacher's position within constructivist IRE undergoes a significant pedagogical reorientation from being primarily a transmitter of knowledge to functioning as a facilitator, guide, motivator, and moral role model. Such a transformation should not be interpreted as a rejection of direct instruction, since explicit explanation remains essential when students require conceptual clarification, methodological direction, or accurate religious guidance. Rather, direct instruction becomes one component of a broader instructional design that incorporates inquiry, discussion, practical activities, collaboration, and feedback. The teacher consequently assumes responsibility for creating learning environments that enable students to construct knowledge while providing appropriate scaffolding when they encounter conceptual or procedural difficulties. At the same time, the teacher's conduct serves as an important source of modeling because the moral values taught through IRE are expected to be reflected in everyday behavior. This multidimensional understanding of the teacher's role is supported by recent scholarship on teacher professionalism and constructivist pedagogy (Ariansyah, 2023; Ilma et al., 2025).

Another essential dimension of constructivist IRE is the integration of authentic experiences as meaningful sources of learning. Religious concepts become more comprehensible and relevant when students are encouraged to connect them with

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situations encountered in family life, school environments, community relations, digital spaces, and broader social interactions. Learning experiences may be facilitated through religious practices, problem-based cases, projects, simulations, community service, observation, or structured reflective activities. These forms of engagement enable students to establish connections between conceptual knowledge, practical decision-making, and the behavioral consequences of applying religious principles. Nevertheless, the incorporation of experience into learning should be deliberately designed because activity alone does not necessarily produce meaningful learning or deeper understanding. Students need opportunities to interpret their experiences, relate them to Islamic principles, and reflect on the values and lessons emerging from those experiences. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the contribution of experiential and contextual approaches to Islamic Religious Education (Abas & Majid, 2025).

Assessment constitutes an equally important component of constructivist IRE because the evaluation process needs to correspond with the multidimensional nature of Islamic education objectives. A constructivist learning design should generate evidence not only of students' conceptual understanding but also of their capacity to reason about problems, demonstrate relevant skills, and apply Islamic values in meaningful contexts. Conventional written examinations remain relevant for measuring particular cognitive outcomes; however, their use should be complemented, where appropriate, by observation, project assessment, portfolios, performance tasks, and reflective journals. Such forms of assessment provide broader evidence concerning students' capacity to integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values within authentic learning situations. Authentic assessment is particularly significant because the ultimate purpose of IRE extends beyond the acquisition of religious information toward the ability to translate religious understanding into responsible action. Recent research in Islamic education consequently supports a more comprehensive assessment orientation that addresses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, positioning assessment as an integral element of learning design rather than merely as a final administrative procedure (Alifa & Mukminin, 2025; Julhadi et al., 2026).

Taken together, these dimensions indicate that constructivist principles become particularly evident when learning activities integrate contextual problems with meaningful social interaction. A learning sequence may begin with an authentic situation that encourages students to identify what they already know, recognize gaps in their understanding, formulate relevant questions, examine appropriate Islamic sources, and discuss possible responses with their peers. Throughout this process, the teacher provides scaffolding, clarification, and feedback, while students continuously revise their understanding and communicate the conclusions they have developed. Such a sequence brings together individual cognitive processes, social construction of knowledge, and moral reasoning within a coherent instructional framework. Problem-based learning (PBL) and collaborative learning can provide practical structures for implementing this process while preventing constructivism from being reduced to unstructured discussion or unrestricted student activity. Research on PBL and collaborative approaches in Islamic Religious Education further indicates their potential to facilitate knowledge application, student engagement, critical reasoning, and the development of tolerance (Rohman, 2022; Hadi et al., 2025).Project-based learning adds a longer temporal dimension to the same constructivist process. A project

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requires students to plan, investigate, collaborate, produce an outcome, receive feedback, revise work, and reflect on what they have learned. In IRE, the project should be selected because it expresses a meaningful Islamic value or addresses a relevant social issue rather than because it merely produces an attractive product. The teacher must therefore establish clear learning outcomes and criteria before the project begins. Recent research indicates that PjBL can create participatory IRE environments and strengthen the internalization of religious values through practical activity (Sari & Handayani, 2025; Sari & Handayani, 2026). It is therefore the quality of project design, not the mere presence of a project, that determines its constructivist value.

Another finding is that reflection functions as the connecting mechanism among experience, interaction, and assessment. Students need structured opportunities to explain what they learned, identify changes in understanding, evaluate their actions, and determine how Islamic principles should guide future behavior. Reflection can be individual or collective and can be expressed through journals, dialogue, self-assessment, or presentations. The process makes learning visible because students articulate meanings that may not be captured by a conventional test. Experiential and constructivist literature treats reflection as essential for turning activity into learning. This supports the inclusion of reflective practice as a design component rather than an optional closing activity (Abas & Majid, 2025; Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024).

The findings also reveal that constructivist IRE requires careful alignment between objectives, activities, resources, and assessment. If objectives emphasize critical interpretation but activities consist mainly of lectures and recall tests, the design becomes internally inconsistent. Likewise, if students are asked to complete authentic projects but are assessed only through factual examinations, the assessment does not represent the intended learning. Learning design must therefore be planned backward from the competencies and values students are expected to demonstrate. This principle is especially important in IRE because cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes are interdependent. Research on IRE learning design and curriculum development supports the importance of such alignment (Urika, 2022; Apriyani et al., 2024).

The final result before the comparative synthesis is that constructivist IRE should be understood as guided construction rather than unrestricted personal interpretation. Students actively construct meaning, but their construction takes place within a learning environment that provides authoritative religious sources, teacher expertise, ethical boundaries, and opportunities for critical examination. This distinction addresses a common concern that constructivism might imply that every belief is equally valid simply because it is personally constructed. In Islamic education, the learner's active role can coexist with normative guidance from the Qur'an, Sunnah, scholarly interpretation, and the ethical purposes of education. Recent theoretical work explicitly argues for a context-sensitive integration of constructivist pedagogy with Islamic educational foundations (Rahma et al., 2026; Zaqiah et al., 2026).

Table 1
Integrated Constructivist Learning Design for Islamic Religious Education

Constructivist indicator	Learning-design principle	Teacher role	Student activity	Assessment evidence

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Constructivist indicator	Learning-design principle	Teacher role	Student activity	Assessment evidence
Constructivist principles	Learning begins from prior knowledge, inquiry, interaction, experience, and reflection.	Designer of learning situations; facilitator; scaffold provider.	Questioning, exploring, discussing, interpreting, and revising understanding.	Formative questioning, concept explanations, reflection, and performance evidence.
Student role	Students are active agents who construct and apply religious understanding.	Motivator and learning coach who supports guided autonomy.	Independent inquiry, collaboration, problem solving, practice, and value application.	Projects, portfolios, observations, presentations, and reflective journals.
Teacher role	Teacher authority is exercised through facilitation, guidance, modeling, and feedback.	Facilitator, guide, role model, motivator, and source of corrective feedback.	Interaction with teacher, peer dialogue, feedback use, and self-regulation.	Observation of participation, communication, reasoning, and ethical conduct.
Real experiences	Authentic situations connect Islamic concepts with students' lived realities.	Contextualizer who selects meaningful cases, practices, and projects.	Religious practice, case analysis, PBL/PjBL, service, simulation, and reflection.	Performance tasks, project products, observation, and transfer-of-learning evidence.
Assessment	Assessment is continuous, authentic, multidimensional, and aligned with objectives.	Evaluator and feedback provider who uses multiple evidence sources.	Self-assessment, peer feedback, revision, and demonstration of learning.	Cognitive tests plus affective and psychomotor evidence through authentic tasks.

Note. The table synthesizes the five indicators identified in the source manuscript and extends them through recent literature on constructivist IRE, PBL/PjBL, experiential learning, collaborative learning, and authentic assessment.

The integrated findings can be represented through five mutually reinforcing components of constructivist IRE learning design. The first component is active construction, which establishes students as participants in meaning-making. The second is guided participation, which defines the teacher as facilitator, scaffold, motivator, and

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role model. The third is contextual experience, which supplies authentic situations through which Islamic concepts can be interpreted and practiced. The fourth is reflective and collaborative processing, which allows students to articulate and revise their understanding. The fifth is authentic and multidimensional assessment, which provides evidence of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and application. Together, these components form a design architecture rather than a collection of disconnected techniques.

Effective constructivist IRE lesson planning should begin with the formulation of meaningful learning outcomes rather than with the adoption of particular or fashionable teaching methods. Teachers need to establish what students are expected to understand, which Islamic values they are expected to internalize, and what forms of knowledge, skills, and behavior they should ultimately be able to demonstrate. Learning experiences and problems should subsequently be selected on the basis of their capacity to facilitate the achievement of these intended outcomes. Instructional activities such as discussion, problem-based learning (PBL), or project-based learning (PjBL) acquire pedagogical significance only when they are systematically connected to clearly defined competencies. Such an approach helps prevent the mechanical use of active-learning strategies without a coherent instructional rationale or clearly identifiable learning purpose. Recent scholarship on learning design in Islamic Religious Education emphasizes the importance of establishing alignment among learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment processes (Urika, 2022; Ilma et al., 2025).

The incorporation of students' prior knowledge represents another essential consideration in the development of constructivist IRE lesson designs. Learners enter educational settings with diverse experiences, beliefs, assumptions, vocabulary, and informal interpretations of religious issues that influence how they perceive and interpret new information. Teachers can identify these cognitive and experiential starting points through diagnostic questions, brief cases, concept maps, reflective prompts, or other forms of preliminary assessment. Instruction can subsequently be structured to establish meaningful connections between students' existing understanding and newly introduced religious concepts. This approach is particularly relevant to topics that students encounter in their everyday lives, including honesty, friendship, digital communication, charitable behavior, and environmental responsibility. Both constructivist theory and recent studies in IRE emphasize that meaningful learning is strengthened when new knowledge is connected to learners' existing cognitive structures and experiential resources (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024; Putri et al., 2026).

The quality of classroom dialogue also requires deliberate pedagogical planning because meaningful interaction cannot be assumed to emerge automatically from placing students in groups or encouraging them to communicate. Questions and discussion prompts should stimulate explanation, comparison, justification, interpretation, and application rather than merely elicit brief factual responses. Teachers can strengthen the quality of interaction by establishing structured discussion roles, requiring the use of relevant evidence, incorporating peer feedback, and employing probing follow-up questions. Within Islamic Religious Education, such dialogue should simultaneously cultivate intellectual openness, respectful disagreement, and responsible engagement with authoritative Islamic sources. Carefully structured interaction therefore has the potential to develop critical thinking without separating

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intellectual inquiry from ethical communication. Recent research on collaborative and constructivist approaches to IRE indicates that purposeful social interaction can contribute to students' tolerance, engagement, and ability to articulate religious understanding (Hadi et al., 2025; M. et al., 2026).

Contextualization in constructivist IRE should likewise extend beyond the superficial inclusion of everyday examples within instructional materials. The mere presentation of a real-life situation at the beginning of a lesson does not constitute contextual learning if students subsequently return to passive reception of predetermined information. Meaningful contextualization requires learners to analyze situations, relate them to Islamic principles, formulate possible responses, and consider the consequences of different courses of action. For instance, instruction on Islamic ethics may present students with a dilemma involving digital communication and require them to analyze the situation and justify an ethical response based on relevant Islamic principles. Such an instructional process integrates conceptual knowledge, critical reasoning, moral values, and practical action within a coherent learning sequence. Recent studies of experiential and problem-based approaches in Islamic Religious Education provide support for this more substantive understanding of contextual learning (Abas & Majid, 2025; Rohman, 2022).

The provision of teacher scaffolding constitutes an important mechanism for maintaining an appropriate balance between learner autonomy and instructional guidance. Complex learning tasks may initially require students to receive examples, guiding questions, recommended sources, conceptual frameworks, or partially structured procedures. As students develop greater understanding and confidence, the teacher can progressively reduce the level of assistance while increasing students' responsibility for inquiry, interpretation, problem solving, and decision making. Such graduated support prevents the learning process from moving toward either excessive teacher control or insufficient pedagogical guidance. The balance is particularly significant in Islamic Religious Education because students need opportunities to develop independent reasoning while simultaneously receiving reliable conceptual, methodological, and ethical direction. Scholarship concerning Vygotskian constructivism and teacher facilitation reinforces the importance of combining learner agency with appropriately structured instructional support (Ariansyah, 2022; Ariansyah, 2023).

Assessment should also be positioned as an ongoing component of learning rather than merely as a mechanism for documenting achievement after instruction has been completed. In a constructivist IRE environment, assessment generates information that enables students to identify misconceptions, revise their understanding, and improve their performance throughout the learning process. Formative observation, strategic questioning, peer feedback, draft evaluation, self-assessment, and reflective journals can therefore be integrated into classroom activities as sources of continuous learning evidence. Summative assessment may subsequently combine written examinations with performance tasks, projects, portfolios, or other forms of evidence when these are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes. This orientation is particularly relevant to IRE because the development of religious understanding, attitudes, and practices occurs progressively and cannot always be adequately represented through a single examination. Recent scholarship on authentic assessment in Islamic education consequently advocates broader and more continuous

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forms of evidence collection that capture multiple dimensions of student development (Alifa & Mukminin, 2025; Julhadi et al., 2026).

The successful implementation of constructivist IRE also depends substantially on teacher competence and institutional support. Constructivist pedagogy requires teachers to possess more than mastery of subject matter because they must be capable of designing meaningful problems, facilitating substantive dialogue, managing collaborative learning, providing scaffolding, and developing assessment instruments that correspond with diverse learning outcomes. Schools therefore need to provide professional development that demonstrates how constructivist principles can be translated into practical and contextually appropriate IRE lesson designs. The availability of adequate learning resources, flexible classroom arrangements, technological support where necessary, and sufficient instructional time further influences the feasibility of such implementation. Research concerning curriculum implementation continues to identify teacher understanding and limitations in learning facilities as important constraints on pedagogical transformation. Constructivist reform should consequently be approached as an institutional responsibility involving school-level planning, professional development, resource allocation, and pedagogical support rather than being placed exclusively on individual teachers (Apriyani et al., 2024).

The integration of constructivist principles with Islamic epistemological commitments requires particular conceptual attention. Constructivist IRE should not be interpreted as an educational model in which students independently determine or invent religious truth without reference to authoritative Islamic sources. Rather, learners construct and refine their understanding through active engagement with experiences, questions, dialogue, interpretation, and evidence, while teachers provide guidance in accurately understanding and contextualizing authoritative Islamic teachings. This formulation preserves meaningful learner agency without disregarding the normative foundations and ethical purposes of Islamic education. Within this framework, constructivism can be understood as a pedagogical approach to the process of learning and meaning-making, while Islamic revelation and authoritative religious sources provide an essential epistemological and normative orientation. The resulting model may therefore be characterized as guided constructivism within an Islamic pedagogical framework. Recent theoretical scholarship similarly emphasizes the need to integrate active-learning principles with the distinctive epistemological, ethical, and educational foundations of Islamic education (Rahma et al., 2026; Ferianto et al., 2024).

Character formation can consequently be understood as an intrinsic outcome of constructivist IRE learning design rather than as a separate educational program added to the curriculum. When students repeatedly analyze moral situations, collaborate responsibly, practice Islamic values, reflect on their conduct, and receive constructive feedback, character development becomes embedded within ordinary learning activities. Such integration is more consistent with the broader objectives of Islamic Religious Education than an approach that treats character education as an additional activity detached from subject content. The interrelationship among knowledge, experience, social interaction, teacher modeling, and assessment provides a pedagogical foundation through which religious understanding can progressively influence attitudes and behavior. Active and reflective learning approaches, including PjBL and constructivist IRE, have similarly been associated with the development of

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religious attitudes, responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness (Sari & Handayani, 2025; Harahap, 2025). Character formation thus becomes part of the learning process itself, developing continuously through repeated cycles of understanding, practice, reflection, and feedback.

Taken as an integrated whole, constructivist IRE can be conceptualized as a continuous cycle involving experience, interpretation, interaction, application, reflection, and assessment. The process begins with students' prior knowledge and engagement with a meaningful situation, develops through inquiry and social interaction, and proceeds toward the application of Islamic concepts within real or realistically constructed contexts. Reflection enables learners to evaluate their newly acquired understanding and examine the relationship between their actions and Islamic values. Assessment subsequently provides evidence of learning achievement while also identifying areas that require further development, and teacher feedback functions as a mechanism for supporting the subsequent learning cycle. This integrated formulation extends the five-indicator framework identified in the source article by demonstrating that its components should not be understood as isolated characteristics but as interconnected stages and conditions within a coherent learning system. The resulting synthesis is consistent with recent scholarship on constructivist IRE, experiential learning, authentic assessment, and contemporary curriculum development, while simultaneously emphasizing the need for coherence among epistemology, pedagogy, assessment, and character formation (Ahyai et al., 2026; Abas & Majid, 2025; Zaqiah et al., 2026).

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Conclusion

This study concludes that constructivist learning design offers a coherent pedagogical framework for strengthening Islamic Religious Education when it is adapted to the distinctive aims of Islamic education. The analysis confirms five central dimensions: active construction of understanding, active student participation, facilitative and exemplary teacher roles, meaningful real-life experience, and holistic authentic assessment. These dimensions are not independent techniques but mutually reinforcing elements of a learning system. Constructivist IRE should therefore move from a predominantly transmission-oriented model toward guided inquiry, dialogue, experience, reflection, application, and feedback. At the same time, active student construction must remain connected to authoritative Islamic sources and the ethical purposes of education. This synthesis is consistent with recent literature that links constructivist pedagogy with contextual understanding, critical thinking, character development, and authentic assessment in IRE (Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2024; Rahma et al., 2026). The main novelty of the study lies in presenting the five dimensions as a continuous learning-design cycle rather than as separate characteristics of constructivist teaching. In the proposed cycle, students begin from prior knowledge and authentic situations, interact with teachers and peers, investigate relevant Islamic sources, apply concepts to problems or projects, reflect on their understanding and conduct, and demonstrate learning through multidimensional assessment. This model provides a practical conceptual bridge between constructivist theory and the normative objectives of Islamic Religious Education. Its implementation, however, depends on teacher competence, appropriate resources, adequate learning time, and institutional support. Future research should test the proposed framework through classroom-based studies across different educational levels and IRE topics, including comparative or mixed-method designs. Such research would be important for determining how the conceptual model performs under different curricular, cultural, and technological conditions.

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