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THE ANALYSIS OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of authentic assessment in monitoring young children's development in a kindergarten setting in Denpasar, Bali. Authentic assessment is increasingly recognized as a more suitable approach than traditional testing because it evaluates children in real-life contexts and captures multiple developmental domains. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving one principal and four teachers. The findings highlight four key practices: daily observation and documentation, portfolio-based assessment with a star rating rubric, structured feedback and critical questioning, and consideration of children's emotional states. Daily records and checklists provided systematic evidence of developmental progress, while portfolios and star ratings offered insights into independence and creativity. Feedback cycles and critical questioning supported deeper learning and parent-teacher collaboration. Importantly, children's mood and character were found to significantly influence assessment outcomes, requiring flexible and child-centered negotiation strategies. Overall, authentic assessment functioned not only as an evaluation tool but also as a holistic approach to support children's development. The study contributes to strengthening authentic assessment practices in early childhood education by emphasizing continuous observation, responsive teaching, and collaborative communication with parents.

Keywords: Authentic Assessment, Early Childhood Education, Child Development

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a crucial role in supporting children's growth and development during the most important stage of life. During early childhood, children experience rapid development in cognitive, language, social-emotional, physical, and moral domains. Therefore, educational practices in kindergarten should not only focus on learning activities but also on monitoring developmental progress. Assessment becomes an essential component because it provides information about children's achievements, strengths, and developmental needs. Through appropriate assessment practices, teachers can design learning activities that match children's developmental characteristics and support their holistic growth

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(Amanda et al., 2024; Fauziyah et al., 2025). In addition, assessment helps educators and parents understand whether children are progressing according to expected developmental milestones and whether additional support is needed.

In recent years, authentic assessment has received increasing attention in early childhood education because it is considered more suitable than traditional testing methods. Traditional assessments often focus on final results and cognitive outcomes, while authentic assessment evaluates children in real-life situations and natural learning contexts. Authentic assessment allows teachers to collect evidence of children's development through observation, anecdotal records, portfolios, checklists, and documentation of children's work (Hidayat & Andriani, 2020; Karta et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that authentic assessment provides a more comprehensive picture of children's development and learning outcomes because it examines knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors simultaneously (Mastikawati et al., 2022; Zebua & Zebua, 2024). Consequently, authentic assessment has become an important approach in contemporary early childhood education.

Despite its recognized importance, the implementation of authentic assessment in kindergarten remains challenging. Many teachers still experience difficulties in conducting authentic assessment effectively because young children demonstrate diverse characteristics and developmental patterns. Children's performance may vary from one activity to another, making assessment more complex than in higher levels of education. Furthermore, teachers are often required to observe multiple developmental domains simultaneously while managing classroom activities. As a result, collecting accurate and comprehensive assessment data becomes a demanding task (Amanda et al., 2024). These challenges may affect the quality of assessment results and limit their usefulness for educational decision-making.

Another important issue concerns teachers' understanding and readiness to implement authentic assessment. Research has reported that many early childhood teachers have not fully implemented authentic assessment procedures or applied comprehensive developmental domains during assessment processes (Hidayat & Andriani, 2020). Similarly, studies on teachers' perceptions indicate that although teachers generally view authentic assessment positively, they often face barriers such as limited time, insufficient training, and inadequate institutional support (Hilmiah et al., 2025). These conditions suggest that the gap between the theoretical advantages of authentic assessment and its practical implementation still exists in many kindergarten settings. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how authentic assessment is conducted and how it contributes to monitoring children's development.

Several studies have proposed solutions to improve the implementation of authentic assessment in early childhood education. One important recommendation is the use of multiple assessment techniques that capture children's development from different perspectives. According to Hidayat and Andriani (2020), authentic assessment should involve systematic observation, anecdotal notes, checklists, projects, and portfolios. These techniques enable teachers to gather evidence continuously and naturally during daily learning activities. Similarly, Fahimah et al. (2024) reported that effective assessment practices in early childhood settings include anecdotal records, time sampling, rating scales, portfolios, and developmental reports. The use of diverse assessment methods helps teachers obtain more valid and reliable information regarding children's developmental progress.

Another solution highlighted in the literature is the integration of authentic assessment into everyday learning activities. Authentic assessment should not be treated as a separate activity conducted only at specific times. Instead, it should be embedded within classroom experiences so that assessment and learning occur simultaneously. Karta et al. (2022) emphasized that authentic assessment allows educators to measure actual learning processes and outcomes while supporting children's growth and development. Likewise, Mastikawati et

al. (2022) found that authentic assessment contributes to improvements in cognitive, language, motor, social-emotional, artistic, and moral development because it recognizes the unique abilities of each child. These findings suggest that authentic assessment can function not only as an evaluation tool but also as a strategy to support meaningful learning experiences.

Existing literature consistently demonstrates the value of authentic assessment in early childhood education. Studies have examined teachers' implementation practices (Amanda et al., 2024), teachers' understanding and competencies (Astana & Permatasari, 2025), perceptions and challenges faced by educators (Hilmiah et al., 2025), portfolio assessment for monitoring cognitive development (Fahimah et al., 2024), and the contribution of authentic assessment to learning outcomes (Mastikawati et al., 2022). Other studies have emphasized the importance of formative, continuous, and contextual assessment practices that involve observations, anecdotal records, portfolios, and documentation (Fauziyah et al., 2025). Although these studies provide valuable insights, most focus on the implementation, perceptions, benefits, or technical aspects of authentic assessment. Limited attention has been given to a comprehensive analysis of authentic assessment as a tool for monitoring young children's development across multiple developmental domains in kindergarten settings. This condition creates a research gap that requires further investigation.

Based on the identified gap, the present study aims to analyze authentic assessment for young children's development at kindergarten. The study focuses on examining how authentic assessment is implemented and how it supports the monitoring of children's developmental progress. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on authentic assessment as a holistic developmental assessment approach rather than merely an instructional evaluation tool. By exploring assessment practices within the kindergarten context, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the role of authentic assessment in capturing children's cognitive, social-emotional, language, physical, and behavioral development. The scope of the study is limited to authentic assessment practices conducted in kindergarten settings and their contribution to understanding and supporting young children's overall development. The findings are expected to contribute to the improvement of assessment practices and support the implementation of more meaningful, child-centered evaluation systems in early childhood education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design. A case study approach is appropriate for exploring a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). The study aimed to investigate the implementation of authentic assessment used to assess young children's development in a kindergarten setting.

The research was conducted in a kindergarten in Denpasar, Bali. The kindergarten consisted of two learning groups, namely TK A for children aged 4 years and TK B for children aged 5 years. The participants included one principal and four kindergarten teachers, resulting in a total of five participants. Participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating authentic assessment practices in the school. They are decoded in T1,T2,T3,T4, and P.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and practices regarding authentic assessment for monitoring young children's development. Classroom observations were carried out to directly observe assessment activities during teaching and learning processes in both TK A and TK B classes. The observations focused on how teachers assessed children's development, recorded assessment data, and utilized assessment results.

Document analysis was conducted to examine assessment-related documents, including lesson plans, children's portfolios, observation records, checklists, and developmental reports. These documents were used to support and verify the findings obtained from interviews and observations.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing information gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the implementation of authentic assessment in the kindergarten.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examined authentic assessment practices for young children at the kindergarten level through an in-depth interview with a practicing teacher. The findings are organized around four interrelated themes: daily observation and documentation, portfolio-based assessment and a star rating rubric, feedback and critical questioning, and the influence of children's emotional states. Each finding is presented alongside relevant literature to provide both an empirical description and a theoretical interpretation.

Daily Observation and Documentation

The teacher described a multi-layered daily documentation system consisting of daily descriptive records, anecdotal notes, and checklists applied to both TK A (age four) and TK B (age five). Assessments follow Indonesia's national PAUD standards, using a four-level rating scale: BB (Not Yet Developing), MB (Beginning to Develop), BSH (Developing as Expected), and BSB (Developing Very Well). Weekly lesson themes are planned in advance, and all assessment results are recorded in writing and communicated openly to parents via WhatsApp or direct conversation at pick-up time. The interview and documentation are shown below.

Q: "how do you conduct the daily observation and document all the students' progress?"

T1: "I carry out daily observations using integrated notes on students' development. We record these notes in a notebook so that we can track how our kindergarten children are progressing with the Indonesia national PAUD standards"

T2: We always make sure that our children's development is appropriate for their age. If there are areas that need improvement, we accompany them every day to support their growth and development.

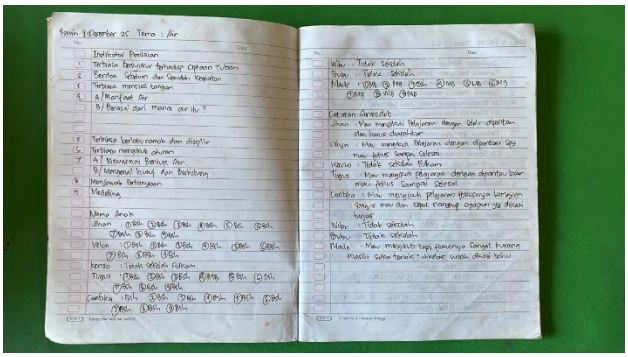


Figure 1. Students Daily Documentation.

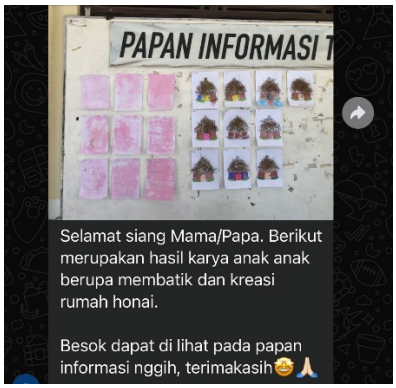


Figure 2. Communication on WhatsApp Group

This multi-method documentation approach aligns closely with international best practices in authentic assessment for early childhood education. Pool and Hampshire (2020) describe intentional, structured observation as one of the most effective strategies in preschool assessment, emphasizing that combining planned and spontaneous observation methods within a consistent curriculum framework significantly increases the validity and developmental relevance of the data collected. The use of checklists alongside anecdotal records is particularly valued because each tool captures a different dimension of development: checklists offer standardized efficiency, while anecdotes provide contextual richness and narrative depth (Bagnato et al., 2023). Together, these instruments reflect a complementary assessment ecology, neither tool alone provides a complete picture of a child's developmental status, but their combination generates a more holistic and reliable evidence base upon which educational decisions can be made.

The practice of planning weekly themes in advance is also noteworthy. When teachers structure learning around coherent, recurring themes, they create predictable contexts in which specific developmental competencies, such as language use, fine motor coordination, or social collaboration, can be observed more consistently and compared across time. This thematic structure supports what Alaçam and Olgan (2021) describe as purposeful portfolio practices, where systematic organization and intentional content selection ensure that documentation serves genuine evaluative and reflective functions rather than becoming a routine administrative exercise.

Portfolio Assessment and The Star Rating Rubric

Authentic assessment also involved the systematic collection of children's physical work products, including flowers, rockets, and cardboard houses, into individual portfolios stored in personal folders and lockers. Every three months, these portfolios are reviewed with parents during report days. Alongside the portfolio system, the teacher applies a three-tier star rating to each completed work: one star indicates the work was almost entirely guided by the teacher, two stars indicate partial independence with some teacher support; and three stars indicate full child autonomy, with the teacher providing only verbal directions. The interview and documentation are shown below.

Q: how do you collect and assess all the students' tasks?
T3: We collect all of our students' assignments in a folder, and whenever the children finish their work, we report it in the WhatsApp group or inform their parents directly when they go home, so that they know about their children's creations.
T4: We also assess the children's work using a star system. One star means that the child's work was still heavily supported by the teacher. Two stars show that the child can work independently, but in some parts still needs the teacher's help. Three stars indicate that the child is already independent and only requires verbal instructions from the teacher.



Figure 3. Students Portfolio and Star-Rating

The portfolio approach is well-supported in the literature as a form of pedagogical documentation that makes children's learning visible to educators, families, and children themselves (Bedel et al., 2024). Yılmaz et al. (2023) further argue that child portfolios serve as more than archival tools, they are dynamic instruments that promote assessment as learning by enabling children to revisit and reflect on their own experiences. This distinction is important: when portfolios function only as storage systems, they risk becoming passive repositories of completed products. Their genuine educational value emerges when they are actively used, by teachers to trace developmental trajectories, by families to understand growth over time, and, ideally, by children themselves to develop early metacognitive awareness of what they have learned and accomplished. Sage Journals

Nafadhila et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated, in an Indonesian early childhood education context, that portfolio documentation is an effective tool for capturing children's holistic development across physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains. This finding is particularly relevant given the national PAUD framework within which the teacher in this study operates, suggesting that portfolio-based assessment is not only internationally endorsed but also contextually validated within Indonesian early childhood practice. Furthermore, research based in Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools found that pedagogical documentation, including portfolios, is primarily used for reporting children's progress and making the learning process visible to families, though educators also valued it as a tool for reflecting on their own teaching practice. This dual function, assessment of children and reflection by teachers, makes portfolios among the richest instruments available in early childhood settings.

The star rating rubric complements the portfolio by providing a developmentally sensitive measure of independence that maps directly onto Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as cited in Rigopouli et al. (2025). The ZPD describes the space between what a child can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from a more capable other. By distinguishing between full assistance (one star), partial assistance (two stars), and independent task completion (three stars), the teacher effectively locates each child within their ZPD at any given point in time. This information is not merely evaluative but instructional: a child consistently rated at one star signals the need for intensive scaffolding, while a child achieving three stars signals readiness to be challenged with more complex or open-ended tasks.

Feedback Mechanisms and Critical Questioning

Feedback to parents occurs every three months, focusing on areas of developmental concern, such as fine motor skills, and serves as a basis for the next evaluation cycle. In parallel, the teacher uses open-ended critical questions during classroom activities. for example, asking children "Why are we making a hot air balloon today? Does anyone know

what one is?" to ensure children understand the conceptual purpose of each task rather than completing it mechanically.

Q: how do you communicate all the process of study including feedbacks to the parents?

T5: "We communicate all learning activities to parents every three months, with a special focus on the development of fine motor skills. We also ask parents how future assessments can continue to support their child's progress. In addition, we often ask the children questions about their daily activities so that they can share these experiences with their parents."

The integration of critical questioning into the assessment-instruction cycle is strongly supported by recent empirical research. A systematic review by O'Reilly et al. (2022) analyzed 25 studies on critical thinking in early childhood and found that open-ended teacher questioning is among the most effective strategies for developing reasoning and problem-solving skills in young children. This is further reinforced by Inonu and Demircan (2023), who found that early childhood educators who employ questioning as a core instructional method believe open-ended questions are essential for internalizing children's conceptual understanding, while also acknowledging that a balanced combination of open and closed questions can be most effective, closed questions build foundational knowledge, while open-ended questions cultivate deeper thinking and critical reasoning. The teacher's example of asking "Why are we making a hot air balloon?" exemplifies this distinction: it does not merely test recall but invites children to reason about purpose and connect the activity to their prior understanding of the world.

Hu et al. (2023) further found that preschool teachers who consistently use concept development questioning strategies, asking children to explain, predict, and justify rather than simply recall significantly enhance the quality of higher-order thinking during group activities. Critically, this type of questioning also serves a formative assessment function: by listening carefully to how children respond to conceptual questions, teachers gain valuable, real-time insight into each child's current level of understanding, which can then inform subsequent instructional decisions. Questioning, in this sense, is not merely a teaching strategy but an embedded assessment tool, one that allows the teacher to assess comprehension without interrupting the natural flow of classroom activity.

When children understand why they are doing something (through questioning) and when their caregivers at home are kept informed (through structured feedback), the child is more likely to internalize learning goals and engage with developmental tasks in a self-directed and motivated manner. This alignment between classroom questioning practices and periodic parent feedback cycles thus represents a coherent, ecologically grounded approach to assessment, one that situates the child not as an isolated subject of evaluation, but as a developing person embedded in interconnected relationships across home and school.

The Influence of Children's Emotional States on Assessment

A particularly salient theme was the teacher's recognition that children's mood and individual character significantly shape their assessment performance. When children are emotionally settled, their results tend to be optimal; when emotionally unsettled, their performance is often below their true developmental level. In such situations, the teacher employs a democratic negotiation approach, allowing the class to collectively decide on the activity for that day, ensuring learning and assessment can proceed in a child-centered and emotionally safe context.

Q: What factors usually influence the assessment of children's development? And how to deal with it?
P: The most influential factors are the child's mood and individual character. If their mood is good, the assessment will show their maximum ability. If not, the results may be lower than their real potential. That is why we often negotiate with the children about what they want to do each day, so their development can be observed in line with their own interests.

This observation is well-grounded in the developmental literature. Perry and Dollar (2021) validated the Early Emotion Regulation Behavior Questionnaire (EERBQ) and demonstrated that children's behavioral emotion regulation strategies are closely linked to their socioemotional functioning and pre-academic competencies in early childhood. Children who struggle to manage negative emotional states may consistently underperform relative to their actual developmental level, introducing a systematic bias into observational assessments. This supports the longitudinal, multi-occasion documentation strategy used in this study, which reduces the risk that any single low-performance observation is taken as representative of a child's overall development. The democratic negotiation strategy described by the teacher also reflects what Nadia and Delliana (2020) found in their study in which negotiation is a process of social communication to influence and complement the different perception in a group, in this context young children in the kindergartens.

CONCLUSION

Authentic assessment in early childhood education provides a comprehensive and child-centered framework for monitoring development. By combining daily documentation, portfolios, star ratings, and critical questioning, teachers can capture children's growth across multiple domains while engaging parents in the process. The findings underscore the importance of considering emotional factors and individual differences, ensuring that assessment reflects children's true potential. This study demonstrates that authentic assessment is most effective when integrated into everyday learning activities, supported by teacher reflection, and aligned with family collaboration. Strengthening teacher training and institutional support will further enhance the quality and sustainability of authentic assessment practices in kindergartens.

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