



## AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY COMPETENCE IN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of authentic assessment in developing students' literacy competencies within the framework of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia. The study aims to analyze how performance based, contextual, and meaningful assessment strategies can effectively measure and enhance literacy skills in Bahasa Indonesia education. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research draws on curriculum documents, theoretical literature, and educational policy to examine the conceptual and practical aspects of authentic assessment. The findings indicate that authentic assessment, through activities such as portfolio creation, reflective writing, project based tasks, and peer evaluation, significantly supports the growth of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Challenges in implementation include teacher preparedness and institutional support. This paper contributes to the field of Indonesian language and literature education by offering insight into how authentic assessment can be strategically integrated to foster literacy development in alignment with the student centered philosophy of Kurikulum Merdeka.

Keywords: Authentic Assessment, Literacy Competence, Merdeka Curriculum, Indonesian Language Education, Student Centered Evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education systems in the 21st century has sparked a global discourse on the relevance of assessment practices to student learning. In Indonesia, the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum) marks a pivotal moment in redefining teaching, learning, and evaluation strategies. Central to this curriculum reform is the emphasis on student-centered, meaningful, and differentiated instruction that caters to diverse student needs and real-world competencies. Among the critical domains addressed in this new curriculum is literacy competence, which is not only the foundation of academic success but also a key to personal, social, and civic participation in a rapidly evolving information society.

The Merdeka Curriculum reimagines literacy as a multidimensional construct that goes far beyond the ability to read and write. It includes critical reading, analytical thinking, synthesizing information from various sources, and effectively communicating ideas across multiple modes and platforms. Such an expanded understanding of literacy requires assessment practices that are authentic, formative, and integrative, reflecting the complexity of real-world tasks rather than the simplicity of standardized tests. In this context, authentic assessment emerges as a crucial instrument to align instructional goals with the holistic development of students' literacy competence.

Conventional assessments primarily summative, decontextualized, and often limited to multiple-choice formats fail to capture the depth of student understanding or

encourage the application of knowledge in meaningful contexts. These assessments tend to prioritize rote memorization and discrete skills rather than synthesis, creativity, or problem-solving. In contrast, authentic assessments demand that students apply their knowledge in realistic scenarios, perform tasks that professionals in the field would undertake, and engage in reflective learning. Wiggins (1990) asserts that authentic assessment provides a window into students' actual capabilities by focusing on performance-based outcomes that are directly linked to curricular objectives. Thus, authentic assessment becomes not only a measure of learning but also a powerful driver of deeper learning itself.

The urgency to adopt authentic assessment is further underscored by Indonesia's educational challenges. Reports such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) have consistently shown that Indonesian students underperform in reading and writing literacy compared to global standards. According to the 2018 PISA results, Indonesia ranked 74th out of 79 countries in reading literacy (OECD, 2019). These findings reveal a pressing need to revise both instructional practices and the mechanisms used to evaluate student competencies. The Merdeka Curriculum responds to this challenge by embedding project-based learning, interdisciplinary tasks, and differentiated instruction into its framework conditions under which authentic assessment naturally thrives.

Scholars such as Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2014) have emphasized that authentic assessment is essential for the development of higher-order thinking skills, especially in literacy. Through tasks such as writing portfolios, multimedia presentations, critical essays, debates, and reflective journals, students demonstrate their ability to interpret texts, articulate arguments, and engage with complex ideas. These performance-based activities mirror the communicative demands of the 21st-century workplace and civil society, thereby preparing students for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

Moreover, the concept of authentic assessment is deeply rooted in constructivist learning theory, which views learning as an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it passively. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs most effectively in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners engage in tasks slightly beyond their current abilities with appropriate support. Authentic assessments serve as scaffolding tools that enable learners to explore, hypothesize, test ideas, and ultimately internalize new understandings through meaningful social interactions and real-life problem solving. In literacy education, this constructivist approach is manifested in collaborative writing tasks, inquiry-based reading activities, and multimodal text productions.

The theoretical and empirical support for authentic assessment is not limited to Western pedagogical contexts. In Indonesia, various educational studies and pilot programs have demonstrated its effectiveness in increasing student engagement, fostering critical literacy, and promoting equitable learning outcomes. For example, Zainuddin and Perera (2019) explored the integration of digital literacy into flipped classrooms and found that performance-based tasks led to more meaningful learning experiences among Indonesian students. Similarly, curriculum guidelines from the Ministry of Education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) advocate for the use of reflective journals, project documentation, and peer assessments as integral tools for evaluating student learning within the Merdeka Curriculum.

Nevertheless, the integration of authentic assessment into mainstream Indonesian classrooms remains limited. Teachers often face systemic barriers such as rigid



administrative expectations, lack of training, time constraints, and insufficient resources for designing and implementing rich assessment tasks. Furthermore, the shift from traditional testing culture to performance-based evaluation demands a fundamental reorientation in both mindset and pedagogical practice. Many educators are still unfamiliar with rubric-based assessment, qualitative feedback techniques, and the management of student-led projects. These challenges underscore the importance of capacity building and institutional support to fully realize the potential of authentic assessment in enhancing literacy outcomes.

Given these circumstances, this article seeks to investigate the role of authentic assessment in developing students' literacy competence within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. It aims to bridge theoretical foundations with practical applications by drawing on curriculum documents, academic literature, and empirical research. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis, this study addresses the following core questions:

1. What constitutes authentic assessment in the context of literacy education?
2. How does authentic assessment contribute to the development of literacy competencies as outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities for implementing authentic assessment in Indonesian schools?

By answering these questions, this article contributes to ongoing efforts to improve literacy education in Indonesia through the lens of assessment reform. It highlights the necessity of aligning assessment practices with pedagogical innovations and the socio-cultural realities of learners. The findings are intended to inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on strategic approaches to integrating authentic assessment into classroom instruction, thereby fostering a more responsive and empowering learning environment.

In conclusion, the transformation of literacy assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum cannot be viewed in isolation. It is intricately linked to broader educational reforms, cultural expectations, and global trends that emphasize student agency, lifelong learning, and real-world relevance. Authentic assessment stands as a critical pillar in this transformation not merely as an alternative evaluation method, but as a pedagogical approach that cultivates the very competencies the curriculum aspires to develop. Its strategic implementation holds the promise of making literacy instruction more meaningful, equitable, and future-oriented for Indonesian learners.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative literature review as its primary research method. The choice of this approach is grounded in the objective of the research: to synthesize and analyze the conceptual and practical intersections between authentic assessment and literacy competence development within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. A literature review allows the researcher to comprehensively examine scholarly discourse, policy documents, and empirical findings to construct a coherent understanding of the phenomenon under study.

## **Research Design**

The qualitative literature review is descriptive and analytical in nature. It aims to explore how authentic assessment is conceptualized, contextualized, and implemented in literacy instruction, particularly under the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The

analysis does not involve the collection of new empirical data through fieldwork, surveys, or interviews. Instead, it relies on secondary sources to identify prevailing trends, challenges, theoretical frameworks, and best practices. The review draws upon both international and Indonesian sources to ensure a well-rounded and contextually grounded perspective.

In conducting this review, the research follows a conceptual framework rooted in three main domains:

1. Authentic assessment theory and practice
2. Literacy pedagogy and development
3. Educational policy in the context of Kurikulum Merdeka

These domains are analyzed in relation to one another to produce a synthesized understanding of how assessment practices can foster meaningful literacy learning.

### **Data Sources**

The primary data sources for this study include:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles on authentic assessment, literacy education, constructivist learning theory, and educational reform.
- Policy documents and curriculum guidelines issued by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*), especially those related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.
- Books and academic monographs discussing foundational concepts of assessment, literacy, and 21st-century skills.
- Reports from international education organizations, such as OECD's PISA assessments and UNESCO publications on competency-based learning.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Concept of Authentic Assessment in Education**

Authentic assessment refers to the evaluation of student learning through tasks that replicate real-world challenges and contexts. It is grounded in the belief that students demonstrate true understanding when they apply knowledge to complex, meaningful activities rather than merely selecting answers on standardized tests. According to Wiggins (1990), authentic assessment involves "engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively." In contrast to traditional assessments, which often assess lower-order thinking skills, authentic assessments emphasize higher-order competencies such as analysis, synthesis, and reflection.

In literacy education, authentic assessment might take the form of essay writing, book reviews, oral presentations, critical reflections, or multimedia productions all of which demand that students think critically, communicate effectively, and connect their knowledge with personal or societal issues. For example, having students develop a podcast series on local folklore requires them to synthesize reading, writing, speaking, and digital literacy skills. Such tasks go beyond checking content recall; they require students to construct meaning, collaborate, and solve problems.

Moreover, authentic assessment has a formative orientation. Rather than simply measuring outcomes at the end of instruction, it serves as a continuous process that informs both teachers and students about progress toward learning goals. Black and Wiliam (1998) emphasized that formative assessment when embedded authentically into learning can significantly enhance student achievement and motivation. Thus, authentic



assessment is not only a pedagogical tool but also a catalyst for student agency and engagement.

### **Literacy Competence in the Merdeka Curriculum**

The Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia in response to the dynamic demands of the 21st century, redefines literacy competence not merely as the ability to read and write, but as a broad and integrative set of skills. These skills include critical thinking, communication, information processing, digital engagement, and civic participation. Within this framework, literacy becomes a foundational competency that supports not only academic achievement but also the holistic development of learners as active, informed, and ethical citizens.

### **A Broader Definition of Literacy**

The Merdeka Curriculum aligns with global perspectives that view literacy as multidimensional and dynamic. UNESCO (2017) asserts that literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. In the 21st century, this definition extends to include digital, cultural, media, and financial literacies, as learners must navigate increasingly complex social and technological environments.

In Indonesia's context, literacy in the Merdeka Curriculum encompasses the ability to:

- Access and interpret diverse types of texts (narrative, expository, multimodal, digital);
- Evaluate sources of information critically and identify bias;
- Express ideas creatively and clearly through various communication forms;
- Collaborate and solve problems using language as a tool;
- Engage with cultural heritage and contemporary issues through reading and writing.

This comprehensive view reflects the curriculum's emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and real-world relevance, moving beyond rote memorization and passive reception of information.

### **Literacy as Part of the Pancasila Student Profile**

One of the central innovations of the Merdeka Curriculum is the integration of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Pancasila Student Profile), which serves as a national vision for the character and competence development of Indonesian students. Literacy is inherently embedded in several of the profile's six dimensions, including:

- Critical and creative thinking
- Independent learning
- Global citizenship
- Communicative and collaborative skills

Thus, literacy is no longer a stand-alone subject, but a cross-cutting competence embedded in every learning experience. This shift challenges teachers across all disciplines not just Bahasa Indonesia or English to incorporate literacy practices into their pedagogical design. For example, a science teacher might ask students to write a persuasive report on environmental sustainability, thereby developing both scientific understanding and argumentative writing skills.

### **The Role of Literacy in Project-Based and Contextual Learning**

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages project-based learning (PjBL), problem-based learning (PBL), and inquiry-based instruction, all of which provide rich contexts for students to practice and develop literacy. In contrast to traditional instruction that separates reading and writing from content areas, these approaches integrate literacy into meaningful, real-world tasks.

Consider a Bahasa Indonesia project in which students investigate local cultural practices and publish their findings in a bilingual magazine. This task demands a range of literacies:

- Reading ethnographic texts and community interviews (comprehension);
- Writing summaries and reflections (composition);
- Designing layouts and editing content (visual and digital literacy);
- Presenting findings to school or community members (oral communication).

These activities illustrate how literacy in the Merdeka Curriculum is contextualized, relevant, and participatory. Rather than being taught in isolation, literacy is embedded in authentic learning experiences, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) view that literacy emerges most effectively through social interaction and purposeful engagement.

### **Multimodal and Digital Literacy**

In line with contemporary realities, the Merdeka Curriculum expands its literacy goals to include multimodal and digital literacy. Students are expected not only to read printed texts but also to interpret videos, infographics, social media content, and interactive platforms. Similarly, they must be able to produce content using digital tools skills that are essential for academic and professional success in the modern world.

Zainuddin & Perera (2019) emphasized that digital literacy, when integrated into classroom learning, enhances student engagement and promotes deeper cognitive processing. In literacy-rich classrooms, students might be tasked with producing short documentaries, podcasts, blogs, or digital zines that require them to synthesize information, make rhetorical choices, and reach authentic audiences. Such practices not only improve reading and writing skills but also foster media awareness, ethical communication, and creativity.

Nevertheless, digital literacy also presents new challenges, especially in schools with limited technological infrastructure. Teachers must find ways to ensure equitable access while gradually integrating digital tools into assessment and instruction. Hybrid models that combine low-tech and high-tech strategies can bridge this gap during the transition period.

### **Culturally Responsive Literacy**

A unique feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is its emphasis on local wisdom and cultural heritage. Literacy tasks are designed to draw upon students' cultural identities, home languages, and community contexts. This orientation supports culturally responsive pedagogy, which research has shown to increase motivation, reading comprehension, and relevance in learning (Gay, 2010).

For instance, a literacy unit might ask students to interview elders about traditional storytelling and then retell those stories in written, digital, or performative formats. These activities affirm students' identities while developing core literacy skills. They also build bridges between school knowledge and community knowledge essential for meaningful and sustainable education.

Cultural responsiveness in literacy education also involves linguistic diversity. Indonesia is a multilingual country, and students often speak regional languages or



dialects at home. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages the use of translanguaging strategies the purposeful movement between languages as a way to strengthen comprehension, expression, and critical thinking.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

While the vision of literacy in the Merdeka Curriculum is progressive and comprehensive, several challenges remain in its classroom realization. These include:

- Overemphasis on textbook-based learning, which limits creativity and critical engagement;
- Teacher unfamiliarity with multimodal and project-based instruction;
- Inadequate assessment tools to measure broad and integrated literacy competencies;
- Lack of collaboration among subject teachers to embed literacy across the curriculum;
- Persistent focus on national exams, which often assess narrow aspects of reading and writing.

To address these challenges, ongoing professional development, curriculum integration planning, and assessment reform are necessary. Teachers need support in designing interdisciplinary literacy projects, evaluating student work authentically, and using formative feedback to guide literacy growth over time.

### **Integrating Authentic Assessment to Foster Literacy Competence**

Authentic assessment naturally complements the literacy goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. By requiring students to perform real-world tasks, it ensures that literacy instruction is relevant, contextual, and student-centered. A study by Darling-Hammond & Adamson (2014) demonstrated that performance-based tasks such as analytical writing, oral defense, and collaborative projects significantly enhance students' critical reading and expressive writing abilities. These findings resonate in the Indonesian context, where authentic assessment has been linked to improved reading engagement and deeper textual understanding (Yuliani, 2020).

In practical terms, authentic assessments in literacy classrooms can include:

- Portfolios documenting student progress across different genres of writing
- Book trailers or short videos summarizing and critiquing texts
- Reading response journals that reflect on literature from multiple perspectives
- Peer editing and collaborative publishing projects
- Creative multimodal storytelling using digital platforms

For instance, a project that asks students to analyze traditional folktales and adapt them into modern comic strips not only builds textual comprehension but also develops skills in visual literacy, narrative construction, and intercultural understanding. Furthermore, such assessments enable students to demonstrate their individuality and creativity two core attributes of 21st-century literacy.

Evidence also shows that when students know they are creating work for an authentic audience peers, parents, or the broader community they are more motivated to refine their language, structure arguments, and consider the impact of their words. This sense of purpose often leads to deeper learning and greater ownership over the literacy process (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021).

### **Alignment with Student-Centered and Differentiated Learning**

The Merdeka Curriculum is underpinned by the philosophy that every student is unique and capable of learning in different ways. This student-centered orientation calls for differentiated instruction and assessment, where tasks are tailored to students' interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Authentic assessment supports this by offering multiple pathways for students to demonstrate learning. Instead of enforcing a one-size-fits-all test, teachers can offer varied formats oral, visual, written, performative allowing students to choose modes that best reflect their strengths.

Tomlinson (2001) argues that differentiated assessment is not only more equitable but also more effective in promoting learner autonomy. In literacy education, this might mean offering students the choice to respond to a text through:

- A critical essay
- A podcast episode
- A dramatic monologue
- A visual art piece with a reflective explanation

By giving students agency, authentic assessment encourages self-directed learning, which aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's aspiration to cultivate lifelong learners. Additionally, it shifts the teacher's role from evaluator to facilitator, promoting a dialogic classroom culture where feedback and reflection are integral to the learning journey.

### **Implementation Challenges in Indonesian Classrooms**

Despite its pedagogical advantages and alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum's vision, the integration of authentic assessment into classroom practice across Indonesian schools remains uneven and problematic. While pilot programs and model schools have shown promising results, widespread implementation continues to face a series of systemic, institutional, and instructional challenges. These issues not only affect the effectiveness of assessment but also limit the broader development of literacy competence in accordance with national goals.

### **Limited Teacher Capacity and Professional Readiness**

A primary barrier to the implementation of authentic assessment lies in teacher preparedness. Many Indonesian educators are still rooted in the culture of summative, standardized testing and are unfamiliar with the conceptual underpinnings, methods, and benefits of performance-based assessment. According to a survey conducted by Hapsari & Nuryadi (2022), over 60% of secondary school teachers in Central Java expressed uncertainty about how to design authentic tasks aligned with learning outcomes, while more than 70% reported difficulties in constructing rubrics for qualitative evaluation. The shift to authentic assessment demands pedagogical re-skilling, including the ability to:

- Identify competencies and design performance indicators;
- Create complex, open-ended tasks that reflect real-world challenges;
- Manage formative feedback loops;
- Evaluate creative or subjective student work fairly and consistently.

Such skills are not typically covered in pre-service teacher education in Indonesia, nor are they systematically developed through in-service programs. Even when training workshops are available, they tend to be short-term, theoretical, and lack follow-up mentoring, which limits sustained transformation in teaching practice.

### **Time Constraints and Workload Pressure**



Another significant challenge is time management. Authentic assessment is inherently more demanding than traditional testing in terms of both preparation and implementation. Designing differentiated tasks, monitoring student progress during projects, facilitating peer assessment sessions, and providing constructive feedback all require additional time and effort. Teachers particularly those handling large classes or multiple subjects often struggle to allocate sufficient time for these processes while also meeting curriculum coverage targets.

This time pressure is exacerbated by the administrative workload that many teachers carry, including bureaucratic reporting, classroom management, and extracurricular responsibilities. As a result, authentic assessment is frequently perceived as impractical or reserved only for “model lessons” rather than adopted as a routine instructional strategy.

### **Inadequate Infrastructure and Technological Barriers**

Implementing authentic assessments especially those involving digital or multimedia products requires access to adequate infrastructure. However, technological inequality between urban and rural schools remains a serious issue in Indonesia. Many schools outside major cities lack reliable internet access, functioning digital devices, or appropriate software for creating, storing, and evaluating performance-based work. This digital divide poses a major barrier to projects such as e-portfolios, podcasting, video production, or digital storytelling activities that are central to 21st-century literacy development. Furthermore, in schools where resources are limited, the use of basic instructional materials takes priority over innovative or technology-integrated assessment practices. Teachers in such environments may feel demotivated or excluded from national curriculum reforms that presume a level of resource availability not reflected in reality.

### **Institutional Culture and Assessment Policy Misalignment**

Indonesia’s education system is still influenced by a strong emphasis on national examinations and high-stakes testing, which creates a misalignment between assessment philosophy and practice. Although the Merdeka Curriculum promotes competency-based and student-centered assessment, school accountability structures often continue to reward quantifiable achievement based on standardized test scores. This duality can confuse teachers and create tensions in instructional priorities.

In addition, school leaders may not fully understand the value of authentic assessment, or they may view it as too subjective and unstructured. Without institutional support from principals, supervisors, or curriculum coordinators, efforts to shift assessment culture are likely to be isolated and unsustainable. In some cases, innovative teachers who implement authentic assessments face pressure to conform to traditional evaluation models during internal monitoring and teacher performance reviews.

### **Lack of Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing**

Another challenge is the fragmentation of professional practice. Many teachers work in isolation, with limited opportunities to collaboratively plan assessments, co-develop rubrics, or reflect on student work. As a result, assessment practices remain inconsistent and dependent on individual initiative. This lack of professional dialogue hinders the growth of a shared assessment culture that values authenticity, feedback, and student agency.

Studies have shown that professional learning communities (PLCs) can help overcome these barriers by creating spaces where teachers:

- Share and critique assessment designs;
- Observe and analyze student responses together;
- Develop consensus on assessment criteria and standards;
- Reflect on classroom challenges and successes.

However, few Indonesian schools have formalized PLC structures, and even where they exist, time constraints and lack of facilitation often limit their effectiveness.

### **Cultural Attitudes toward Assessment**

Cultural perceptions also play a role in shaping how assessment is understood and practiced. In many Indonesian communities, assessment is still equated with ranking, comparison, and final grades, rather than as a means for learning improvement. This can lead to resistance from parents or school stakeholders when alternative forms of assessment such as group projects or student self-assessment are introduced.

Teachers may also internalize this view, leading to reluctance in adopting practices that are perceived as too informal or subjective. Overcoming these attitudes requires long-term cultural change, which must be supported by clear communication, success stories, and policy alignment at every level of the education system.

### **Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Learning and Authentic Assessment**

Authentic assessment is deeply rooted in the principles of constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners rather than passively received. Constructivist theorists such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner emphasize that learning is a dynamic, context-bound process shaped by prior knowledge, social interaction, and meaningful engagement with tasks. In the context of literacy education, constructivist principles provide a strong rationale for implementing authentic assessment as both a learning and evaluative tool.

One of the most influential concepts in constructivist theory is Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can accomplish with guidance. Authentic assessment tasks such as collaborative writing, peer editing, or oral storytelling are ideal for operating within the ZPD because they allow students to stretch their cognitive and linguistic capacities while receiving support from teachers and peers. For example, when students collaboratively produce a thematic anthology of short stories, they engage in scaffolded learning that develops both individual expression and collective meaning-making.

Bruner (1966) also emphasized the importance of discovery learning, where students actively explore concepts and construct their own understanding through inquiry and problem-solving. Authentic assessments, such as investigative journalism tasks or community-based oral history projects, provide precisely such opportunities. Students are not merely answering questions; they are asking questions, collecting data, interpreting texts, and presenting findings in authentic formats.

The constructivist view also values multiple representations of knowledge, which aligns well with the multimodal nature of literacy in the 21st century. In a digital age where literacy extends beyond print to include video, audio, graphics, and online interaction, authentic assessment allows students to express understanding in varied and creative forms. This flexibility not only supports differentiated learning but also reflects the complex nature of communication in the real world.



Furthermore, constructivism situates assessment as an integral part of the learning process, not a separate event. Assessment should inform instruction, stimulate reflection, and guide future learning paths. This conception is embodied in assessment for learning (AfL), a formative approach that aligns closely with authentic assessment practices. Research by Sadler (1989) and later by Black & Wiliam (2009) shows that when students are engaged in co-constructing success criteria, evaluating peers' work, and revising their own work based on feedback, they develop metacognitive awareness and self-regulatory skills critical components of literacy development.

In sum, constructivist learning theory not only underpins the design of authentic assessments but also supports the broader goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. It justifies the shift from standardized, one-dimensional evaluation to holistic, interactive, and contextualized assessments that foster critical and reflective literacy.

### **Strategic Recommendations for Implementation**

To fully realize the potential of authentic assessment in fostering literacy within the Merdeka Curriculum, strategic and systemic interventions are required. Based on the review of literature and challenges identified earlier, this section outlines a series of actionable recommendations for educators, school leaders, and policymakers.

#### **Strengthen Teacher Capacity through Continuous Professional Development**

The successful implementation of authentic assessment depends largely on teacher competence and confidence. Therefore, ongoing training programs are necessary to equip educators with the knowledge and skills to design, implement, and evaluate authentic tasks. Training should cover:

- Principles of authentic assessment
- Designing performance tasks aligned with literacy goals
- Developing and using rubrics effectively
- Providing qualitative feedback
- Managing assessment in large and diverse classrooms

Professional development should be practice-based and include collaborative learning models such as Lesson Study, peer mentoring, and action research. These methods encourage teachers to learn from one another, test new strategies, and reflect on outcomes.

#### **Embed Authentic Assessment in Curriculum Planning and Teaching Practice**

Authentic assessment should not be an add-on but integrated into daily instruction. This requires alignment between learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment tasks. Schools can adopt backward design models (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), which begin with the identification of desired learning outcomes and design assessments that directly measure those outcomes.

Teachers should be encouraged to plan units that culminate in real world projects, such as:

- Publishing a class magazine
- Organizing a community literacy event
- Creating digital storytelling portfolios
- Designing literacy-based campaigns for social issues

These tasks naturally incorporate multiple literacy skills and provide authentic audiences, increasing student engagement and accountability.

### **Leverage Technology for Efficiency and Innovation**

Digital platforms can support the scalability and sustainability of authentic assessment. Tools such as Google Classroom, Padlet, Flipgrid, Canva, and e-portfolio systems allow students to document, reflect on, and share their learning. These platforms also facilitate teacher feedback, peer assessment, and even parental involvement. Moreover, technology enables differentiation by allowing students to choose media formats that suit their learning preferences. A student who struggles with essay writing might excel in producing a podcast or digital infographic that demonstrates the same literacy understanding.

### **Promote a Culture of Reflective Assessment**

Students must be taught to engage with assessment as a learning process. This involves building their capacity to:

- Understand criteria for success
- Assess their own and peers' work
- Revise work based on feedback
- Set goals for improvement

Schools should institutionalize reflective practices through:

- Regular student-led conferences
- Reflection journals
- Self-assessment checklists
- Portfolio presentations

These practices cultivate metacognition, ownership of learning, and literacy self-efficacy all essential for lifelong literacy development.

### **Align Education Policy with Assessment Reform**

At the policy level, there must be a paradigm shift in how student success and teacher effectiveness are evaluated. Standardized tests should not be the sole measure of academic achievement. Education authorities should:

- Revise national exams to include open-ended and project-based components
- Incorporate authentic assessment criteria into school accreditation and teacher appraisal systems
- Provide funding for teacher training and resource development
- Encourage school innovation through grants or competitions centered on assessment practices

By embedding authentic assessment into the educational accountability framework, the government can legitimize and incentivize its use, ensuring that literacy development is not compromised by outdated testing models.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the critical role of authentic assessment in fostering literacy competence within the framework of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. Through a comprehensive literature review grounded in constructivist learning theory, the study has demonstrated that authentic assessment characterized by meaningful, performance-based tasks offers a powerful alternative to conventional evaluation methods. By engaging students in real-world literacy activities such as portfolios, multimedia projects, reflective writing, and collaborative discussions, authentic assessment supports the development of higher-order thinking, creativity, and communication skills.



The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a student-centered, differentiated, and inquiry-based approach to learning. Authentic assessment aligns naturally with these principles, providing flexible and inclusive pathways for diverse learners to demonstrate their competencies. In literacy education, this means creating opportunities for students to engage with texts critically, construct original narratives, and communicate across multiple modalities essential skills for participation in the 21st-century knowledge society.

However, the implementation of authentic assessment in Indonesian classrooms is not without challenges. These include limited teacher preparation, time constraints, institutional rigidity, and resource shortages. To address these issues, the study has outlined several strategic recommendations, including continuous teacher training, integration of assessment into curriculum planning, use of digital tools, promotion of reflective assessment cultures, and policy-level reforms that support innovation in evaluation practices.

In conclusion, authentic assessment is not merely a tool for measuring literacy it is a transformative pedagogical strategy that nurtures deeper learning and lifelong literacy habits. When supported by coherent policies and professional development, it can play a pivotal role in realizing the Merdeka Curriculum's vision of producing independent, literate, and reflective learners prepared to contribute meaningfully to society.

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