

IMPLEMENTATION OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING EVALUATION TOOL AT RA ZAHROTUL HAYAH, BINJAI CITY SHEIKH ABDUL HALIM BINJAI INSTITUTE, BINJAI CITY

Achsania Khesa¹, Hasanah², Irma Yunita³, Siti Aminah⁴, Yuki Syafira⁵, Ampun Bantali⁶

Institut Syekh Abdul Halim Binjai, Kota Binjai^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

¹⁾ achsaniakhesa01@gmail.com, ²⁾ hasanahazima8@gmail.com, ³⁾ Irmayunita101922@gmail.com, ⁴⁾ sitiaminah52937@gmail.com, ⁵⁾ yukisyafirasyafira@gmail.com, ⁶⁾ Ampun.bantali@gmail.com

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Abstract

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in supporting optimal child development, particularly at the age of 5–6, a period of rapid development in various aspects. The learning process in early childhood education needs to be accompanied by evaluations that are in line with the characteristics of child development, one of which is through authentic assessment. This study aims to describe the implementation of authentic assessment as a learning evaluation tool for early childhood aged 5–6 at RA Zahrotul Hayah, Binjai City, and to examine the benefits and constraints in its implementation. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The research subjects are teachers who teach children aged 5–6, while the research object is the implementation of authentic assessment in learning activities. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation and interviews, then analyzed descriptively qualitatively with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that authentic assessment has been implemented in an integrated manner in the learning process through play activities and daily thematic activities. The forms of authentic assessment used include observation, anecdotal notes, portfolios, and assessment of children's work. Authentic assessment provides a holistic picture of child development and assists teachers in planning learning tailored to their needs. Despite challenges related to time and administrative constraints, teachers make various adjustments to ensure the assessment remains effective. Thus, authentic assessment has proven to be a crucial learning evaluation tool in supporting optimal early childhood development.

Keywords : *authentic assessment, learning evaluation, early childhood education*

INTRODUCTION

At an early age, which is the most important period in a child's development, the child's brain absorbs information quickly. This is because early childhood memories are very strong for what they see, hear, and feel (Busahdiar et al., 2023). At the age of 5–6, children experience very rapid development in various aspects, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and motor skills. Development at this age does not occur in isolation but is interconnected. Therefore, the learning process implemented in early childhood education needs to be designed comprehensively and accompanied by evaluations that are appropriate to the characteristics of child development. Learning evaluation is a crucial part of ensuring that the learning process provided truly supports optimal child development.

Learning evaluation in early childhood education differs from evaluation at the elementary and secondary levels. Early childhood children are not yet ready to be assessed through written tests or formal academic assessments. Learning evaluation in early childhood education emphasizes the child's developmental process rather than the final outcome. Assessment is conducted continuously and integrated into daily learning activities so that teachers can understand children's development in a concrete and objective manner. Through learning evaluations, teachers can obtain information about children's development across various aspects. This information is crucial for designing and adapting learning activities to suit the needs, abilities, and characteristics of each child. Research findings from journals and articles demonstrate that teacher creativity has significant influence on early childhood learning. (Hidayat et al., 2021)

One form of learning evaluation that is relevant and appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood is authentic assessment. This stage is intended to determine the extent to which participants understand the results of the training that has been carried out (Febriani et al., 2022). Authentic assessment is an assessment conducted through observation of children's abilities in real activities that take place during learning activities. This assessment is carried out in situations that are natural and meaningful for children, so that children can demonstrate their true abilities without feeling pressured. Authentic assessment allows teachers to assess not only what children know, but also how children use their knowledge and skills in everyday life. This research is in line with the results of research by Yohana et al. in 2023 at the Khalifah Kindergarten Driving School, which has carried out assessments or evaluations of learning implementation of the independent curriculum, including conducting initial diagnostic assessments, implementing and processing cognitive and non-cognitive assessments, and reporting learning outcomes to parents through 4 types of report cards, namely the independent curriculum report card, the Khalifah curriculum report card, a printed version of the child's portfolio, and a digital version (mp4) via barcode scanning (budiman et al., 2023). However, the study did not find a specific discussion regarding authentic assessment as an evaluation tool, the researcher will conduct further research to complement the limitations found with a focus on implementing authentic assessment as a learning evaluation tool at RA Zahratul Hayah, Binjai City. Based on this description, it can be concluded that authentic assessment plays a crucial role as a learning evaluation tool in early childhood education. Therefore, this study aims to describe the implementation of authentic assessment as a learning evaluation tool for early childhood students aged 5–6 years, as well as its benefits for teachers in monitoring child development and planning more effective and meaningful learning.

METHOD STUDY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of authentic assessment as a learning evaluation tool in early childhood education, specifically for children aged 5–6 years. This study did not aim to test a hypothesis, but rather to obtain a concrete picture of the learning evaluation practices carried out by teachers in the field. The research subjects were early childhood education teachers teaching children aged 5–6 years, while the object of the research was the implementation of authentic assessment in learning activities. The research was conducted in an early childhood education (PAUD) unit. The selection of subjects and research location was based on suitability with the research focus and ease of obtaining the required data. Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews. Observations were carried out by Directly observing the classroom learning process, particularly when teachers assess students. Observations focused on authentic assessment methods used by teachers, such as observing students' activities, their work, and their interactions during learning activities. Observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner, with the researcher not directly involved in the learning activities. In addition to observations, interviews were conducted with early childhood education (PAUD) teachers to obtain more in-depth information regarding the implementation of authentic assessment. The interviews were semi-structured using a pre-developed questionnaire. Through the interviews, researchers obtained information regarding teachers' understanding of authentic assessment, the purposes of its use, and the benefits and challenges encountered in implementing learning evaluations. Data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data relevant to the research focus were selected and systematically organized in narrative form for ease of understanding. To maintain data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques by comparing observational and interview data, resulting in more accurate and reliable research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research conducted at **RA Zahratul Hayah Binjai City** show that the application of authentic assessment has become an integrated part of the early childhood learning process, especially in the 5-6 year age group. Teachers do not separate assessment activities from learning activities, but rather carry them out simultaneously through play activities, simple discussions, and thematic activities carried out every day. This pattern is in line with the views of early childhood education experts who state that the assessment process in children should be carried out in a natural context so that children can show their true abilities without pressure. This is in line with the statement of Irdina and Hasyim (Hasibuan, 2021). The learning process is adjusted to the conditions of the students concerned, both basic abilities, interests and talents, learning motivation, and the learning style of the students themselves. The authentic assessment approach implemented at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City is relevant to the developmental characteristics of early childhood, who are still in the concrete thinking stage and are strongly influenced by a pleasant learning environment. Children tend to be more active, expressive, and confident when

learning in a comfortable atmosphere. Therefore, natural assessments allow teachers to obtain more objective, comprehensive, and relevant information about children's development in the classroom. Authentic assessments at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City are also implemented continuously. Teachers consistently observe children's behavior, attitudes, and engagement throughout the learning process. Assessments are conducted not only at the end of an activity, but also from the time a child begins the activity until it is completed. This approach aligns with the principles of assessment in early childhood education, which are continuous and focused on the developmental process, not solely on the final outcome. This creative and interactive learning approach is expected to increase student engagement in the teaching and learning process (Silalahi et al., 2024). Furthermore, authentic assessment provides teachers with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a child's learning process. Teachers not only assess whether a child is able to complete a task but also observe how the child tries, interacts with peers, faces difficulties, and expresses ideas and feelings. This allows teachers at RA Zahratul Hayah, Binjai City, to view a child's development holistically, encompassing cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skills in an integrated manner. This approach aligns with the principles of early childhood development, which emphasize integration across developmental aspects.

Discussion

Based on the research results, the most dominant forms of authentic assessment used by teachers at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City are observation, anecdotal notes, portfolios, and assessment of children's work. Observations are conducted directly during the learning process, whether during role-playing, working in small groups, or participating in individual activities. Through these observations, teachers can assess children's development in a concrete and contextual manner, in accordance with Morrison's (2015) opinion, which states that observation is the primary assessment technique in early childhood education. Its main goal is to observe and understand the behavior of an individual or group of people in certain situations. (Hasan et al., 2022) Anecdotal notes are used to record important events that indicate certain behaviors or developments in children. At RA Zahratul Hayah, Binjai City, anecdotal notes help teachers record children's development, which is not always visible every day, but has important meaning in the child's growth and development process. These notes serve as authentic evidence that can be used to observe changes in children's behavior and abilities over time. The use of participant notes in the form of diaries and anecdotal notes to complement The validity of the research lies in the data collection and analysis techniques. (Mamik, 2014)

Portfolios and children's work are also an important part of authentic assessment. Teachers collect children's work, such as drawings, collages, and simple writings, as documentation of children's development. Portfolios allow teachers to see children's progress gradually and systematically. This finding aligns with practices at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City, where portfolios are used as a basis for continuous evaluation of children's development. Portfolios are a data collection technique commonly used in qualitative research, with the aim of discovering the meaning of a theme according to a group's understanding. (Mamik, 2014) The use of various forms of authentic assessment demonstrates that teachers at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City have endeavored to conduct comprehensive learning evaluations. The combination of several assessment techniques helps teachers reduce subjectivity in assessments and obtain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of children's development. This aligns with the principles of fair and objective assessment in early childhood education. Authentic assessment focuses on a comprehensive approach, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and skills. (Martatiyana et al., 2023) Authentic assessment plays a highly strategic role as a learning evaluation tool. At RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City, assessment results are used not only to determine children's developmental achievements but also as a basis for designing subsequent learning. Teachers adjust methods, strategies, and learning activities based on the assessment results, making learning more relevant to children's needs. This approach aligns with the concept of child *-centered learning*.

Furthermore, authentic assessments help teachers understand the differences in abilities and characteristics of each child. Teachers recognize that each child has unique characteristics, learning speeds, and learning styles. Therefore, assessment results are used to provide stimulation tailored to the child's individual needs, rather than to compare one child with another. This principle aligns with the goals of early childhood education, which emphasize the optimal development of children's potential. However, the implementation of authentic assessment at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City also faced several obstacles, primarily related to time constraints and administrative record-keeping. Teachers had to juggle between teaching and recording assessment results. This situation aligns with the findings of several studies that indicate that administrative burdens are often a challenge in implementing authentic assessment in early childhood education (PAUD). To overcome these obstacles, teachers have taken various measures, such as using simple and practical assessment formats and utilizing documentation in the form of photographs and students' work. These efforts have helped teachers maintain optimal authentic assessments without

disrupting the learning process. With these adjustments, authentic assessments can still be implemented effectively, reflecting real-world conditions. Overall, the implementation of authentic assessment at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City has had a positive impact on the quality of learning. Authentic assessment serves not only as an evaluation tool but also as a means of reflection for teachers to improve the learning process and support the holistic development of early childhood, particularly in the 5–6 year age group.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at RA Zahratul Hayah, Binjai City, it can be concluded that **authentic assessment has a very important role as a learning evaluation tool for early childhood aged 5–6 years**. The implementation of authentic assessment is carried out in an integrated manner in the learning process, so that evaluation activities are not separated from children's learning activities. Teachers carry out authentic assessment through various techniques, such as observation, anecdotal notes, portfolios, and assessment of children's work, which allows the assessment to take place naturally, comprehensively, and in accordance with the child's developmental stage. The use of authentic assessments provides **a holistic picture of a child's development**, encompassing cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and motor aspects. This allows teachers to understand each child's individual abilities, uniqueness, and needs. Information obtained from authentic assessments serves as a basis for teachers in planning subsequent learning activities to better align with the child's characteristics and potential, resulting in more effective, meaningful, and child-oriented learning (Wortham, 2011; Morrison, 2015).

While providing benefits in understanding child development, authentic assessment also faces several challenges, primarily related to time constraints, administrative record-keeping, and teacher workload. Nevertheless, teachers at RA Zahratul Hayah in Binjai City have made various adjustments, such as using a simple assessment format, documenting children's work, and maintaining consistent observation, to ensure optimal assessment implementation and a lack of disruption to the learning process. Overall, the implementation of authentic assessment serves not only as an evaluation tool but also as a **means of reflection for teachers to improve the quality of learning**. This assessment helps teachers understand children's learning processes in depth, supports the optimal development of children's potential, and emphasizes the principles of child-centered learning. Thus, authentic assessment has proven effective in supporting the holistic growth and development of early childhood, particularly in the 5–6 year age group.

Suggestion

This study has research limitations. Recommendations for further research include discussing the relationship between the role of parents in evaluating early childhood development.

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