

# Understanding the Difference between Authentic Assessment and Traditional Assessment

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki perbedaan antara penilaian tradisional dan otentik dalam pendidikan guna memperbaiki praktik pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Menggunakan metode studi literatur deskriptif, penelitian ini menganalisis berbagai sumber akademik yang relevan untuk mengidentifikasi kekuatan dan kelemahan kedua jenis penilaian tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penilaian otentik lebih efektif dalam mengukur keterampilan berpikir kritis dan pemecahan masalah, sedangkan penilaian tradisional lebih cocok untuk mengevaluasi hafalan dan keterampilan dasar. Kesimpulan penelitian merekomendasikan penggunaan kombinasi kedua jenis penilaian untuk mendukung pembelajaran yang lebih mendalam dan hasil pendidikan yang lebih baik.

**Kata kunci:** Penilaian Tradisional, Penilaian Autentik, Pengajaran, Pembelajaran, Hasil Pendidikan

**Abstract:** *This qualitative study aims to investigate the differences between traditional and authentic assessments in education in order to improve teaching and learning practices. Using a descriptive literature study method, this study analyses various relevant academic sources to identify the strengths and weaknesses of both types of assessments. The results show that authentic assessments are more effective in measuring critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while traditional assessments are more suitable for evaluating memorization and basic skills. The conclusion of the study recommends the use of a combination of both types of assessments to support deeper learning and better educational outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Traditional Assessment, Authentic Assessment, Teaching, Learning, Educational Outcomes*

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## INTRODUCTION

Authentic assessment is an evaluation method designed to assess students' ability to apply the knowledge they have acquired to real-world situations. In contrast, traditional assessments place more emphasis on the ability to recall information (Wiggins 1998). Many educators refer to the theories of experts to support the practices they apply in the classroom. They also justify the use of authentic assessment by basing their approach on the views of educational theorists. Some of the most frequently referenced figures include Burrhus Frederic Skinner, Albert Bandura, Jean Piaget, and Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. Skinner, known as a prominent behaviorist, defines learning as a change in behavior.

Skinner emphasized that learning is evident when students are able to demonstrate the behaviors learned. In contrast, Bandura argues that students can learn only through observation without having to exhibit such behaviors, unless there are certain conditions that encourage them. Piaget proposed that changes in student behavior occur over a

certain period of time through the process of knowledge construction, but these changes only appear after students develop a schema. Schema refers to the cognitive framework used to organize knowledge, described as a complex network of mental structures that reflect an individual's understanding of the world (Barry, Naus, & Rehm, 2002). Meanwhile, Vygotsky introduced the concept of "*Zones of Prospective Development*," in which students can achieve certain skills or behaviors with adult guidance before being able to do so independently (Bergen, 2002).

Authentic assessments that are designed effectively combine BF Skinner's theory with assessing behavior changes immediately after the learning process takes place. This assessment is also aligned with Bandura's theory, which encourages students to demonstrate behaviors that have been learned (Bergen, 2002). In addition, Piaget's theory is applied by taking into account the stages of student development and observing errors that arise as part of the knowledge formation process. Vygotsky's theory is also accommodated through the evaluation of students' ability to complete tasks, both with the help of adults and independently (Bergen, 2002). By setting flexible standards, providing multiple ways to demonstrate learning outcomes, encouraging learning from mistakes, and acknowledging the role of adult support, authentic assessment comprehensively integrates a variety of learning theories.

The term traditional valuation often refers to summative assessment. Summative assessment aims to measure students' understanding of a topic at the end of a chapter, unit, or series of lessons. Tests are one of the commonly used tools in traditional assessments, although they tend to receive more attention due to the ease of administration and assessment. The test also allows teachers to assess student progress quickly and efficiently. In practice, traditional assessments such as tests are usually graded and returned to students with the number or letter grades listed at the top. Unfortunately, these values are often considered more important than the learning objectives that the assessment actually wants to measure. Even when teachers provide additional comments and feedback in addition to grades, students tend to focus on the final score as a determinant of their success.

Previous studies have discussed various aspects of traditional and authentic assessment in education. Abeywickrama (2012) highlighted the validity and fairness of ESL exams in secondary schools, suggesting the need for more authentic assessments to measure students' practical skills. Bailey (1998) examined dilemmas and decisions in language assessment, arguing for the use of authentic assessment as a more reflective and formative tool. Dikli (2003) compared traditional and alternative assessment methods, emphasizing that authentic assessments better support 21st century skills. These findings are in line with Law and Eckes (1995), who stated that traditional assessments often only assess abilities at a single point in time, thus not reflecting ongoing learning growth. In addition, Black and Wiliam (1998) highlighted the potential of formative assessment to improve the quality of student learning, strengthening the argument for the importance of authentic assessment in supporting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These studies provide a theoretical foundation for this study to explore the differences between traditional and authentic assessments and their implications in education.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive literature research design that focuses on gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data from various library resources. This approach involves activities such as reading, taking notes, and organizing research materials, as described by Zed (2008). The process aims to provide a structured and comprehensive understanding of the topic by drawing insights from relevant literature.

The first step in this research involves collecting journal articles, books, and research reports related to traditional and authentic assessments. These resources are sourced from databases such as Google Scholar, ensuring access to scholarly materials that are pertinent to the study. This phase establishes the foundation for subsequent analysis by assembling diverse perspectives on assessment methods.

To ensure the relevance and quality of the materials, the selection process focuses on literature published within the last ten years. This criterion helps maintain the study's focus on recent developments and practices in educational assessment methods. The selected resources are then carefully examined to identify key information that aligns with the research objectives.

Once the data is collected, it is analyzed by categorizing the information based on the types of assessment and the strengths and weaknesses associated with each method. This step provides a clearer understanding of the comparative aspects of traditional and authentic assessments. The findings are synthesized into a comparison table to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, offering a structured format for further discussion.

Finally, the consistency of the findings is validated by cross-referencing them with existing theories and practices. This triangulation process ensures that the results are reliable and accurately reflect the state of knowledge in the field. Through this rigorous validation, the study provides a comprehensive and well-supported analysis of traditional and authentic assessment methods.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Aim of Assessment**

The assessment has two main objectives. Formative assessment is used to collect information that is then used to shape and improve the learning program in the classroom. In contrast, summative assessments are conducted at the end of a specific period and aim to assess the effectiveness of the program (McAfee & Leong, 2002). Authentic assessments not only measure what students know and can do, but they also provide insight into their attitudes, interests, and approaches to learning. This information is useful for guiding and supporting the growth, development, and learning process of students (McAfee & Leong, 2002). Overall, teachers use assessments to monitor student progress and learning, design lesson plans, and make instructional decisions. Additionally, assessments can help identify students who need additional support as well as facilitate reporting and communication with others (McAfee & Leong, 2002).

The main purpose of the assessment is to provide teachers with the information necessary to improve the quality of their teaching to meet the needs of all students in the

classroom. Assessments should accurately reflect students' abilities, not just reflect the school's demographics. Designed to support teaching improvement, authentic assessment is based on the principle that assessment should assess what students have actually learned, not just what they are expected to learn. Therefore, assessments need to be tailored to the specific needs of specific classes and groups of students (Christie, 2005). The study also emphasizes that the results of the assessment should not be used to compare specific individuals or populations (McAfee & Leong, 2002). Instead, assessment should have three main functions, namely aiding in making informed decisions regarding teaching and learning, identifying significant problems faced by each student, and supporting programs in improving educational interventions and student development (McAfee & Leong, 2002).

### **Content, Skills, and Attitudes Addressed in Traditional Assessments**

Traditional assessments, particularly tests and quizzes, are frequently constrained by limited class time and the necessity to cover a broad range of topics and concepts. As a result, they often focus on superficial, procedural questions that demand quick, unreflective answers. These assessments typically inquire about "how, when, and where" but rarely delve into the "why" behind concepts (Stiggins, 2002). This approach can lead to a narrow evaluation of student learning, emphasizing memorization over understanding and critical thinking.

Traditional assessments tend to replicate the types of questions found in homework and textbooks, which are designed to reinforce basic knowledge and skills rather than encourage deeper cognitive processes (Shepard, 2000). The questions are often straightforward and require students to recall facts or apply standard procedures, rather than engage in complex problem-solving or analytical thinking. For instance, a history quiz might ask for the date of a significant event (a "when" question) rather than exploring the causes and consequences of that event (a "why" question).

The design of traditional assessment items often receives minimal attention. Questions are typically crafted to elicit specific responses, with little consideration given to whether they offer multiple points of entry or diverse ways for students to demonstrate their understanding (Wiggins, 1998). This can limit the insights that instructors gain into student comprehension and learning processes. For example, multiple-choice questions are prevalent because they are easy to grade, but they may not reveal whether students truly understand the material or can apply it in new contexts (Brookhart, 2008).

Furthermore, traditional assessments may inadvertently promote rote learning. Students often focus on memorizing information to pass tests rather than developing a deep understanding of the subject matter. This emphasis on short-term recall can undermine the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for long-term academic and professional success (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

In addition to these cognitive limitations, traditional assessments can also affect students' attitudes towards learning. The high stakes associated with these assessments can create a stressful environment that may hinder performance and diminish motivation. When the primary goal is to achieve a high grade rather than to understand and engage

with the material, students may become more concerned with performance outcomes than with genuine learning (Guskey, 2007).

Moreover, traditional assessments often fail to address the diverse learning needs and styles of students. A one-size-fits-all approach can disadvantage students who may excel in non-traditional ways or require different types of assessment to fully demonstrate their capabilities (Tomlinson, 2001). This can perpetuate educational inequities and limit opportunities for all students to succeed.

In summary, while traditional assessments are efficient and easy to administer, they often fall short in fostering deep understanding, critical thinking, and meaningful learning experiences. They tend to prioritize procedural knowledge over conceptual understanding and do not adequately capture the complexities of student learning. For a more comprehensive evaluation, alternative or authentic assessments that address a broader range of skills and attitudes are necessary.

### **Content, Skills, and Attitudes Addressed in Authentic Assessments**

Authentic assessments are meticulously crafted to replicate real-world challenges, providing a comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They diverge from traditional assessments by prioritizing a broader range of competencies and fostering deeper learning experiences. These assessments require students to apply their knowledge to practical scenarios, promoting interdisciplinary understanding and the integration of multiple disciplines (Wiggins, 1998). Critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills are prominently featured, challenging students to analyze information critically, evaluate diverse perspectives, and devise innovative solutions to complex problems (Brookhart, 2010). Additionally, authentic assessments promote inquiry-based learning, encouraging students to engage in research, gather data, and reflect on their learning process, thereby cultivating a growth mindset and self-directed learning (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006).

Furthermore, authentic assessments are renowned to improve student motivation and engagement, as they are often designed to align with students' interests and aspirations, thereby making learning more relevant and meaningful (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Students are empowered to take ownership of their projects, fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability (Zimmerman, 2002). Ethical understanding is also a key component of authentic assessments, as students are prompted to consider ethical implications and the broader impact of their actions (Rest, 1986). Moreover, these assessments cultivate adaptability and resilience, as students navigate challenges and setbacks, developing perseverance and the ability to adjust strategies as needed (Dweck, 2006). In summary, authentic assessments offer a holistic approach to evaluation, addressing content knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for success in real-world contexts.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the developing environment of education, understanding the differences between authentic and traditional assessments is crucial for teachers. Traditional

assessments, characterized by the standard of tests and exams, are efficient and easy to administer and improve students' performance. However, the mainly of students' ability to remember facts doesn't always help the students to develop a deeper understanding of critical thinking skills. These tests may focus on what students can memorize rather than how they can use what they have learned in real life. Authentic assessments are designed to see how well students can apply their knowledge in real-world situations. These assessments test students' critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork skills. It also reflected different educational theories, considering behavior changes, learning through observation, developmental stages and guided help. Authentic assessments give a fuller picture of students' knowledge and skills, promoting deeper learning and real-world application. Assessments in education serve different purposes. Formative assessments help teachers gather information to improve their teaching, while summative assessments evaluate the all over effectiveness of educational programs. Authentic assessments provide insights into students' interests and learning approaches also guiding their growth and development. It also can help teachers make better decisions about teaching and learning, identify students who need extra help and improve educational programs. Both types of assessments have their strengths and weaknesses. Traditional assessments can lead to rote learning and stress about grades and may not address the different ways of how students learn. Authentic assessments are way more challenging to create and use, and also offer a more meaningful way to measure students' learning. In conclusion, a mix of both traditional and authentic assessments can improve student learning. By understanding the benefits and challenges of each type, teachers can use them more effectively to match the diverse needs of their students and create a better learning environment.

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