

The Relevance of Academic Achievement to the Development of Students' Potential and Success in Elementary Schools from the Perspective of Authentic Assessment: A Literature Study

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relevance of academic achievement to the development of students' potential and success in elementary schools from the perspective of authentic assessment. The background of this research lies in the continued dominance of academic grades as the main indicator of learning success, while the dimensions of process, creativity, and student character are often overlooked. The research gap stems from the lack of qualitative studies that explore the meaning, experiences, and processes of developing students' potential through authentic assessment within the context of Indonesian elementary education.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a systematic literature review of scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2025 from the Scopus, SINTA, and Google Scholar databases. Data were collected through the analysis of academic documents, educational policies, and research reports, and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis identified four main themes: (1) a paradigm shift in assessment toward process-based evaluation, (2) the role of authentic assessment in developing students' potential and motivation, (3) challenges in implementing authentic assessment at the elementary school level, and (4) the interconnection between academic achievement, character, and 21st-century skills.

The findings indicate that authentic assessment not only enhances conceptual understanding but also fosters students' sense of responsibility, creativity, and self-confidence. The implications of this research include the strengthening of constructivist theory in educational assessment, improving teacher competence, and formulating more holistic and humanistic assessment policies within the framework of Merdeka Belajar.



Keywords: authentic assessment, academic achievement, student potential, elementary education

INTRODUCTION

The trajectory of global education reflects a paradigm shift from number-based evaluation toward process- and context-oriented authentic assessment. Across various education systems, including those in advanced economies, there is growing recognition that academic grades do not invariably capture the full range of students' competencies and potential (Ghosh et al., 2021). This development has prompted critiques of traditional assessment regimes that overemphasize cognitive outcomes while overlooking affective, social, and creative dimensions that are equally consequential for students' future success.

In the national context—particularly Indonesia—the Merdeka Belajar initiative launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology underscores the importance of authentic assessment as a means to evaluate students' holistic development. Although authentic assessment has begun to be implemented in elementary schools, numerous challenges persist, especially regarding teachers' understanding of its concepts and classroom application (Adelia et al., 2024). Many teachers continue to rely primarily on quantitative academic scores to inform educational decisions, while the learning process and students' individual potential remain insufficiently accommodated.

Findings reported by (Yildirim & Ortak, 2021) indicate that applying authentic learning approaches in social studies can significantly enhance students' motivation and academic achievement. However, that study remains focused largely on cognitive aspects, leaving affective dimensions and the development of students' potential relatively underexplored. In Indonesia, similar conclusions were reached by Winarso (2018), who emphasized the necessity of authentic assessment to evaluate students' attitudes, skills, and knowledge in an integrative manner.

Empirically, observations in schools show that many students possess high potential in non-academic domains—such as the arts, sports, or leadership—yet receive little recognition within formal assessment systems. This situation can have psychological consequences, including diminished self-confidence and learning motivation. (Holcomb, 2013) highlights how teachers' understanding of authentic assessment plays a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of a broader, more meaningful conception of academic success.

From socio-cultural perspectives, assessment systems that overvalue numerical scores risk entrenching educational inequalities and neglecting the diversity of students' potential. As





(Newmann & Marks, 1996) argue, authentic academic achievement should be grounded in students' capacity to apply knowledge in real-world contexts rather than merely reproduce information. Consequently, the relevance of academic grades to students' potential development warrants in-depth examination through qualitative approaches capable of eliciting contextual meanings and learning experiences.

A review of the literature suggests that most prior studies continue to emphasize quantitative relationships between grades and learning outcomes, whereas investigations into students' lived experiences, perceptions, and processes of potential development remain limited (Ozan, 2019). This limitation indicates a significant gap in the literature concerning how authentic assessment can serve as a vehicle to evaluate and nurture elementary school students' potential holistically.

Accordingly, this study focuses on the relevance of academic grades to the development of potential and success among elementary school students from the perspective of authentic assessment, employing a qualitative descriptive approach. It will examine, in depth, teachers' and students' perceptions of academic grades and explore how authentic assessment is enacted within the learning process.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of assessment theory in basic education, particularly regarding the relationship between academic achievement and the cultivation of individual potential. Practically, its findings can inform educators and policymakers in designing assessment systems that are more humane, context-sensitive, and oriented toward the sustained development of students' potential.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design with a literature review approach. The approach aims to provide an in-depth description of the concepts, findings, and implementations of authentic assessment and its relevance to academic grades and the development of elementary school students' potential. Data sources include peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in SINTA, Scopus, and Google Scholar; academic books relevant to educational assessment theory; government policy documents such as the Guidelines for Assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek); and empirical research reports related to authentic assessment in basic education. The reviewed literature comprises qualitative studies and systematic reviews presenting empirical and conceptual evidence (Adelia et al., 2024; Haryanti & Permana, 2023).



The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published between 2020 and 2025; (2) a focus on authentic assessment, academic achievement, or the development of elementary school students' potential; and (3) the use of qualitative approaches or literature reviews. The exclusion criteria were: (1) publications outside the specified time frame; (2) purely quantitative studies without qualitative analysis; and (3) articles lacking full-text availability or not subjected to peer review. Applying these criteria ensured that the data were drawn from recent scholarly work relevant to the context of basic education (Osman, 2023).

The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, ERIC, and SINTA. The search utilized combinations of keywords such as "authentic assessment," "academic achievement," "elementary education," and "qualitative descriptive study." Retrieved articles were then evaluated for topical relevance and publication quality. Each source was compiled and organized into major thematic categories, including the concept of authentic assessment, the relationship between academic grades and student potential, and challenges in implementing assessment in elementary schools (Radnasari & Fatonah, 2025; Safitri & Mudzanata, 2020).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (thematic coding) as developed by Braun and Clarke, encompassing the stages of data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretive synthesis. The analysis sought to identify patterned relationships among academic grades, authentic assessment, and the development of students' potential. Analytical validity was maintained through theoretical triangulation (comparing multiple assessment theories) and peer debriefing, namely discussions with experts in education and qualitative methodology to ensure credible and coherent interpretations (Adelia et al., 2024; Haryanti & Permana, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on a thematic analysis of scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2025, the relevance of academic grades to the development of elementary school students' potential is inseparable from the paradigm of authentic assessment, which emphasizes process-, context-, and competency-based evaluation. Broadly, four major themes emerged: (1) the transformation of assessment paradigms; (2) the role of authentic assessment in developing students' potential; (3) challenges in implementing authentic assessment; and (4) the relationship among academic grades, motivation, and learning success.

The first theme, the transformation of assessment paradigms, indicates that since the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, there has been a shift from outcome-based to process-based assessment. The study by (Syamsidar et al., 2025) shows that elementary

teachers have begun integrating formative assessment and portfolios as alternatives to purely numerical evaluation. This shift aligns with global trends in primary education that emphasize authentic learning experiences and contextual performance (Luzano, 2025).

The second theme, the role of authentic assessment in developing students' potential, reveals that authentic assessment provides opportunities for students to demonstrate abilities beyond conventional academic boundaries. For instance, (Monoto, 2024) shows that teachers competent in authentic assessment can help students express creativity, leadership, and collaboration. Similar findings appear in (Ranken et al., 2025), which reports that experiential learning through authentic tasks enhances engagement and academic performance among children aged 4–14.

The third theme, challenges in implementing authentic assessment, shows that despite supportive education policies, teachers frequently face limitations in understanding, time, and resources. (Radnasari & Fatonah, 2025) highlight administrative barriers and resistance to shifting away from score-centric paradigms. Comparable challenges are found in international contexts by (Risan & Shavard, 2025), who report that many preservice teachers across countries still lack adequate competence in authentic assessment.

The fourth theme, the relationship among academic grades, motivation, and learning success, demonstrates that authentic assessment positively influences students' motivation and self-confidence. (Ariyani et al., 2024) find that when students are involved in reflective assessment processes, they exhibit increased participation and deeper understanding. (Alordiah, 2025) corroborates this by showing that formative assessment emphasizing teacher–student dialogue contributes to sustained improvements in academic performance.

These findings affirm that authentic assessment functions not only as a tool for evaluating learning outcomes but also as an instrument for developing students' potential and character. This is consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which underscores the importance of social interaction and real-world experience in shaping student understanding. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Belajar policy creates space for authentic assessment to cultivate students' agency and self-efficacy, as elaborated by (Syamsidar et al., 2025).

Compared with international studies such as (Ranken et al., 2025) and (Aranha, 2025), there is consistent evidence that authentic assessment increases student engagement and conceptual understanding. However, Indonesian research tends to emphasize pedagogical and policy dimensions, whereas international literature often highlights links between assessment and learning identity. A notable difference lies in learning outcome orientation: in many developed countries, authentic assessment is used to foster innovation and interdisciplinary



collaboration, while in Indonesia it remains predominantly aimed at strengthening fundamental competencies. (Solikah & Saputro, 2025) confirm that innovations in science assessment remain largely limited to measuring conceptual understanding rather than higher-order thinking skills.

From a socio-cultural perspective, authentic assessment affords recognition of the diverse potentials of students. In Indonesia's multicultural society, this approach resonates with values of inclusivity and respect for individual differences. (Wibowo et al., 2025) show that project- and portfolio-based assessments encourage students to express local cultures and values within the learning process.

This study asserts that the relevance of academic grades to the development and success of elementary school students cannot be construed solely through numerical attainment; rather, it must be understood through learning processes oriented toward meaning and real experiences. Synthesizing literature from 2020–2025, the findings indicate that authentic assessment plays a strategic role in evaluating and developing students' potential holistically—encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Authentic assessment encourages students to be active, reflective, and responsible for their learning processes, while simultaneously strengthening character and the attributes of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila.

Theoretically, these results reinforce the position of authentic assessment as an approach aligned with social constructivism and humanistic education. Learner-centered processes that position students as active subjects demonstrably contribute to heightened self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and reflective thinking. Practically, the findings guide teachers to develop assessment strategies that are contextual, collaborative, and centered on individual student potential. Teachers are expected to integrate project-based, portfolio-based, and reflective observation instruments relevant to students' learning needs and social contexts.

From an education policy standpoint, this study recommends strengthening the implementation of authentic assessment within the Merdeka Belajar framework through professional development for teachers, the provision of adaptive assessment guidelines, and reporting systems that evaluate affective dimensions and learning processes. It also points to directions for future research, particularly studies examining relationships among authentic assessment, learning motivation, and students' psychological well-being across educational levels. Accordingly, this study contributes both conceptually and practically to transforming Indonesia's assessment paradigm—from outcome-based systems toward evaluation that values process, potential, and humanity. (Wibowo et al., 2025) show that project- and portfolio-based assessments encourage students to express local cultures and values within the learning process.





Theoretically, this research broadens understanding of the relationships among assessment, intrinsic motivation, and character formation. These results are consistent with (Bremner & al, 2022), who assert that authentic assessment can increase engagement and learner autonomy. Meanwhile, (Luzano, 2025) adds that the success of authentic assessment depends on teachers' capacity to design relevant, contextual instruments. Practical implications include the need for intensive training to equip teachers to design authentic assessments that are adaptive and multicontextual. Studies by (Monoto, 2024) and (Risan & Shavard, 2025) indicate that improving teacher competence is a prerequisite for authentic assessment to significantly impact the development of students' potential.

In terms of policy, the findings underscore the need to revise national evaluation systems so they assess not only cognitive outcomes but also affective and psychomotor dimensions. Project-based assessment and self-reflection should become integral components of the national report card, as mandated by the Profil Pelajar Pancasila policy.

Finally, this study offers an important theoretical contribution to developing a holistic concept of learning success—measured not only by academic grades but also by learning-process engagement and the development of students' personal potential. It also opens avenues for further research on the relationships among authentic assessment, students' psychological well-being, and the effectiveness of cross-cultural learning in the era of digital Education 5.0.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the relevance of academic grades to the development of potential and success among elementary school students cannot be construed solely through numerical attainment; rather, it must be understood through learning processes oriented toward meaning and authentic experience. Based on a synthesis of literature from 2020–2025, authentic assessment is found to play a strategic role in evaluating and cultivating students' potential holistically—encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Authentic assessment encourages students to be active, reflective, and responsible for their learning, while simultaneously strengthening character and the attributes of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the position of authentic assessment as an approach aligned with social constructivism and educational humanism. Learner-centered processes that position students as active subjects demonstrably contribute to increases in self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and reflective thinking. Practically, the results provide guidance for teachers to design assessment strategies that are contextual, collaborative, and centered on individual student potential. Teachers are expected to integrate project-based and portfolio-





based instruments, as well as reflective observation, in ways that are responsive to students' learning needs and social contexts.

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