

Reconceptualizing Assessment in Local Content Education: Developing a Qualitative Assessment Framework through Community-Based Cultural Learning

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to develop and conceptualize a qualitative assessment framework for local content education by examining how community-based cultural learning practices inform the construction and evaluation of assessment processes. It addresses the limitations of conventional assessment practices that emphasize surface recognition, product-based outcomes, and cognitive recall, while overlooking interpretative and reflective dimensions of learning. **Method:** This study employed a qualitative case study involving senior high school students, teachers, and cultural practitioners engaged in Cirebon mask learning. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of learning and emerging assessment practices. **Results:** The findings reveal that students' learning is characterized by engagement, interpretative dialogue, and reflective meaning-making. Assessment emerges through interaction and participation rather than functioning as a predefined measurement system, indicating a misalignment between experiential learning processes and established assessment practices. **Novelty:** This study proposes a qualitative assessment framework consisting of recognition, interpretation, and reflection. The framework reconceptualizes assessment as an emergent, interpretative, and context-sensitive process, while also providing a basis for evaluating existing assessment practices beyond surface-level and product-oriented approaches in culturally grounded learning environments.

INTRODUCTION

Education is increasingly expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to ensure that learning is meaningfully assessed. Contemporary educational discourse emphasizes that learning situated in socio-cultural contexts enables students to construct knowledge through participation and lived experience (Biesta, 2020; Esteban-Guitart, 2021; Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018). However, while learning approaches have evolved toward contextual and experiential engagement, assessment practices have not developed at the same pace. In local content learning related to Cirebon mask traditions, assessment is still commonly oriented toward conventional indicators, such as students' ability to recognize cultural facts, describe visual forms, reproduce artistic products, or complete craft-based tasks. These approaches tend to privilege observable outputs and surface-level recognition, while giving limited attention to students' interpretation of symbolic meanings, reflective responses, and dialogical engagement with cultural practitioners. As a result, there is a growing concern regarding the mismatch between how students learn in culturally grounded environments and how their learning is evaluated.

In the context of local content education, the integration of cultural learning has been widely promoted to strengthen students' identity and contextual understanding. Approaches such as culturally responsive and context-based learning enable meaningful

engagement with local knowledge systems (Banks, 2020; Gay, 2018; Esteban-Guitart, 2021). However, in the observed Cirebon mask learning context, assessment practices still tend to emphasize students' ability to identify mask names, recognize visual attributes, reproduce artistic forms, and complete product-based assignments. These conventional approaches may document students' surface recognition and technical outcomes, but they provide limited space for evaluating how students interpret symbolic characters, reflect on cultural values, and construct meaning through interaction with teachers and cultural practitioners.

In practice, cultural learning environments such as Cirebon mask activities provide opportunities for interpretative and reflective engagement. Students interact with cultural practitioners, explore symbolic meanings, and participate in dialogical learning processes that encourage experiential meaning-making and socially situated understanding. These forms of learning align not only with foundational experiential and situated learning theories (Kolb, 2015; Mezirow, 2018; Lave & Wenger, 2021), but also with recent perspectives emphasizing dialogical, reflective, and participatory learning processes in culturally grounded educational contexts (McArthur, 2023; Carless & Winstone, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024; Kushnier et al., 2023). Recent scholarship further highlights that students' learning in community-based environments often involves tacit understanding, interpretation, and evaluative dialogue that cannot be adequately represented through conventional product-oriented assessment systems (Nicol, 2021; Yan & Carless, 2022; Tai et al., 2018). However, the complexity of these processes raises a critical question: how can such learning be meaningfully assessed beyond surface-level evaluation?

Recent studies further emphasize that experiential and dialogical learning processes require assessment approaches that are capable of capturing meaning-making, interpretation, and reflective engagement rather than relying solely on observable outcomes. Contemporary perspectives highlight that learning in socially and culturally situated contexts involves complex interactions that generate tacit and interpretative forms of knowledge, which are often difficult to measure using conventional assessment tools (Carless & Winstone, 2023; McArthur, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024; Kushnier et al., 2023). In this regard, assessment is increasingly understood as a process embedded within learning, where feedback, dialogue, and reflection play a central role in shaping students' understanding and evaluative judgement (Nicol, 2021; Tai et al., 2018; Yan & Carless, 2022). However, despite these advances, the alignment between such learning processes and assessment practices remains limited, particularly in culturally grounded and community-based learning environments.

Despite the increasing emphasis on experiential and community-based learning, assessment practices remain dominated by standardized approaches that prioritize cognitive recall and measurable outputs. In many cases, evaluation is oriented toward observable products or technical performance – such as the completion of craft-based or visual tasks – rather than the processes of interpretation and reflection. Such approaches are insufficient to capture interpretative dialogue, reflective thinking, and meaning-making processes. This reflects a fundamental misalignment between learning and assessment, which has been widely recognized as a key challenge in contemporary education (William, 2018; Shepard et al., 2018; Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Carless, 2020; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024; McArthur, 2023; Villarroel et al., 2018; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Recent developments in assessment research emphasize the importance of formative, authentic, and reflective approaches that position assessment as an integral part of learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2019; Carless & Winstone, 2023; Nicol, 2021; Panadero et al., 2018; Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014). These perspectives highlight evaluative judgement, feedback processes, and self-regulation as central to meaningful assessment (Tai et al., 2018; Yan & Carless, 2022; Nicol, 2022; Carless & Boud, 2018; Chong, 2021; Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020). However, the application of these approaches in community-based cultural learning contexts remains underexplored.

Several scholars have explored the educational potential of Cirebon mask traditions. Previous studies have shown that mask dance and its associated cultural narratives contribute to character education and cultural identity formation among students (Wahyudi et al., 2022; Wibowo et al., 2021). Other studies have examined the integration of mask traditions into educational contexts such as history learning or cultural education in schools (Hapsoh et al., 2023; Cahyaningsih et al., 2024). However, these studies primarily focus on philosophical interpretation, artistic and performative aspects, or curriculum integration, with limited attention to how students' learning processes are assessed within such contexts.

Despite these contributions, there remains a lack of qualitative assessment frameworks that can systematically capture students' interpretative and reflective learning processes in community-based cultural contexts. Existing studies tend to emphasize learning activities, outcomes, or technical performance—often reflected in product-based evaluation such as crafting or visual outputs—as well as cultural values or instructional integration, without sufficiently addressing how such learning should be integrated into assessment and evaluation processes and translated into context-sensitive assessment frameworks (Kushnier et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2024; Blatt-Gross, 2023).

This limitation becomes particularly evident in local content education, such as Cirebon mask learning, where learning is deeply embedded in contextual cultural meanings and practices. As a result, the development of assessment approaches that align with experiential and culturally grounded learning remains limited, indicating a clear gap between pedagogical practice in local content education and the development of context-sensitive assessment frameworks.

Based on this identified gap, this study aims to examine how community-based cultural learning practices inform the development of a qualitative assessment framework for evaluating students' learning in local content education. While previous studies have primarily emphasized the pedagogical value of cultural learning, this study shifts the focus toward how assessment and evaluation can be aligned with students' interpretative and reflective learning processes. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: (1) How can assessment practices emerging from community-based cultural learning be conceptualized into a qualitative framework that captures students' interpretative and reflective learning processes?

Positioned within the domain of educational assessment and evaluation, this study seeks to reconceptualize assessment as an interpretative, context-sensitive, and experience-based process that is closely aligned with culturally grounded learning environments, thereby contributing to the development of more meaningful and process-oriented assessment practices in local content education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This section describes the research design, participants, data collection procedures, instruments, and data analysis employed in this study.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how assessment practices emerge from community-based cultural learning contexts. The qualitative approach was selected to capture the complexity of students' learning processes, particularly those involving interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making, which cannot be adequately represented through standardized or quantitative assessment methods.

Case study design was considered appropriate as the research focuses on a specific contextual setting—Cirebon mask cultural practices—where learning and assessment occur through interaction between students, teachers, and cultural practitioners. This design enables an in-depth understanding of how assessment is constructed within real learning environments rather than imposed as an external measurement system (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The selection of this method is grounded in the study's objective to examine how assessment is informed by practice. In line with contemporary assessment perspectives, assessment is understood not merely as a tool for measuring outcomes but as a process embedded in learning activities, involving interpretation, feedback, and reflection (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Shepard et al., 2019; Nicol, 2021). Therefore, a qualitative case study approach allows the researcher to investigate how such processes unfold naturally within cultural learning contexts. To strengthen contextual understanding and ensure the credibility of interpretative findings, the study also employed prolonged engagement through sustained interaction with participants and repeated observation of learning activities over an extended period. This approach enabled the researcher to capture the evolving dynamics of students' interpretative and reflective learning processes within community-based cultural contexts.

Research Context

The study was conducted in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia, where local cultural learning involving *Topeng Cirebon* takes place through both formal and community-based educational settings. The research focused on learning activities that involve interaction between schools and cultural communities, including visits to art studios (*sanggar*) and engagement with cultural practitioners.

These settings provide a unique context where learning is not limited to classroom instruction but extends to experiential engagement with cultural practices. Within this environment, assessment does not always follow formalized procedures but often emerges through observation, dialogue, and interpretative interaction between participants. Such contexts are particularly relevant for examining alternative forms of assessment aligned with experiential and culturally grounded learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2019; Tai et al., 2018).

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of senior high school students, teachers responsible for local content subjects, and cultural practitioners involved in Cirebon mask activities. Students participated as learners engaging in cultural experiences, teachers acted as facilitators and evaluators of learning, while cultural practitioners contributed as sources

of knowledge and meaning-making within the learning process. The inclusion of these three groups enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives on how assessment is understood and enacted in practice.

This multi-perspective approach is consistent with the view that assessment involves not only external judgement by teachers but also internal processes of interpretation and feedback constructed through interaction (Yan & Carless, 2022; Panadero et al., 2018).

Instrument

The study utilized a qualitative assessment framework in the form of a 3×3 rubric consisting of three dimensions: recognition, interpretation, and reflection. Unlike conventional rubrics that function primarily as scoring instruments, the 3×3 rubric in this study was designed as a reflective tool to externalize students' learning processes. It serves to make visible the internal processes of understanding, interpretation, and reflection that occur during cultural learning activities.

This approach aligns with recent perspectives on assessment that emphasize evaluative judgement, internal feedback, and self-regulated learning as key components of meaningful assessment (Tai et al., 2018; Nicol, 2021; Panadero et al., 2018). Therefore, the rubric is not used to assign numerical scores but to capture the qualitative dimensions of students' learning experiences.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to capture students' engagement during cultural learning activities, including their interaction with cultural artefacts, participation in discussions, and responses to symbolic meanings. In addition to observing learning processes, the researcher also focused on identifying a shift in learning orientation—from surface-level engagement (e.g., form, aesthetics, and product-based outcomes) toward deeper interpretative and reflective processes—and how this shift is associated with the emergence of assessment and evaluation practices within the learning context. This approach enabled the researcher to examine how learning unfolds in real time and how assessment is not externally imposed but arises through interaction, dialogue, and meaning-making processes.

In-depth interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and cultural practitioners to explore their perspectives on learning, meaning-making, and evaluation processes. Interviews focused on how participants interpret learning experiences and how they understand the role of assessment in such contexts.

Documentation included field notes, students' reflective responses, and artefacts related to cultural learning activities. These documents served as evidence of learning processes and provided insights into how students articulate their understanding and reflection. The combination of these methods enabled triangulation of data and supported a comprehensive understanding of assessment as an emergent and interpretative process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). This approach was selected to systematically identify patterns emerging from students' learning processes within community-based cultural contexts.

The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns related to learning engagement, interpretation of cultural meanings, reflective processes, and the emergence of assessment practices. Through iterative coding and categorization, themes were developed to represent how assessment is constructed through interaction, dialogue, and participation.

The analytical process involved multiple stages, including initial coding, theme development, and refinement through constant comparison across data sources. This iterative process enabled the researcher to move beyond descriptive accounts and generate conceptual insights into the relationship between learning processes and assessment practices.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall research procedure, including research focus identification, participant selection, data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation, followed by data grouping, theme identification, triangulation, and interpretation of findings. This structured procedure supports the identification of assessment as an emergent and interpretative process within community-based cultural learning contexts.

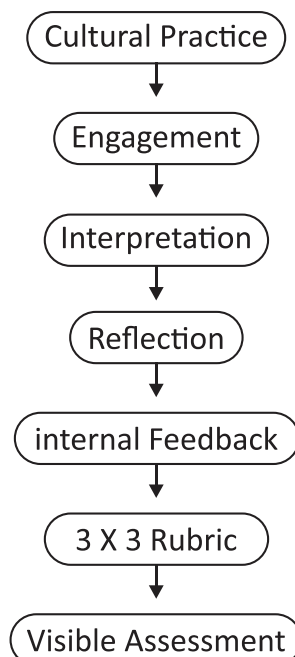


Figure 1. Research procedure of the study

Figure 1 illustrates the overall research procedure, starting from the identification of research focus and participant selection, followed by data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The analysis process involves data grouping, theme identification, and triangulation, leading to the interpretation of findings. This procedure supports the identification of emergent assessment practices within community-based cultural learning contexts.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed data triangulation involving multiple sources and perspectives, including students, teachers, and cultural practitioners. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of assessment practices across different roles within the learning process.

Member checking was conducted to validate the interpretation of interview data by confirming participants' perspectives. In addition, prolonged engagement was undertaken to deepen contextual understanding and to capture the dynamics of learning and assessment practices over time.

Prolonged engagement was conducted over a period of approximately two months, during which the researcher was actively involved in classroom and community-based cultural learning activities. This included sustained observation, interaction with participants, and participation in cultural practices, allowing for a more nuanced and contextually grounded interpretation of the data.

These strategies enhanced the credibility, consistency, and interpretative validity of the findings, ensuring that the analysis accurately reflects participants' experiences and the emergent nature of assessment practices within culturally grounded learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

This study has received ethical clearance from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Semarang (No. 241/KEPK/FK/KLE/2025). All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Cultural Learning as Experiential Engagement

The findings show that learning in community-based cultural contexts begins with direct engagement in cultural practices. Students participated actively by interacting with cultural artefacts, practitioners, and learning environments. In the observed settings, learning activities involving Cirebon mask practices were conducted through visits to cultural studios (*sanggar*) and guided interaction with cultural practitioners. Students engaged in observing visual and performative aspects of the masks while also asking questions and responding during interactions. Observations revealed that students moved from focusing on visual forms toward engaging with meanings, as reflected in their questions, responses, and participation during the learning activities. At this stage, assessment was not formally structured. Instead, it occurred implicitly within the learning process, as reflected in how students responded, participated, and engaged in the activities.

From Activity to Meaning

As learning progressed, students' engagement shifted from activity-oriented participation—such as focusing on form, production, and aesthetic outcomes—toward meaning-making processes observed during interaction. Students engaged in dialogical interaction in which they interpreted and questioned cultural artefacts. Their responses indicated attempts to explain symbolic meanings rather than merely identifying visual characteristics. During these interactions, assessment became visible through students' participation in dialogue, their ability to articulate interpretations, and their responses to questions posed by teachers and cultural practitioners.

Symbolic Interpretation as Learning Evidence

The findings show that students' interpretations of symbolic characters, particularly Panji and Kelana, were expressed during discussions and interactions. Students distinguished between character representations based on both visual attributes and associated meanings, describing Panji as calm and controlled, and Kelana as expressive or aggressive. Students' descriptive accounts further illustrate how symbolic interpretation emerged through their own language. One student described Panji as "calm, neat, and not frightening," while another stated that Panji "looks like someone who can control himself." In contrast, Kelana was described by a student as "angry and strong," and by another as "a character who wants to dominate." These responses indicate that students did not merely identify visual differences between the masks, but began to associate visual forms with moral qualities, emotional expressions, and social meanings. These interpretations were articulated using students' own language and were often connected to personal experiences and moral considerations shared during dialogue.

Reflection as Core Learning Process

Reflection was observed as part of the learning process through individual and group discussions. Students engaged in reflective dialogue by sharing perspectives, responding to peers, and explaining their understanding of cultural meanings. These reflective processes were evident in how students reconsidered their ideas, responded to feedback, and articulated their understanding during interactions.

Emergence of Assessment in Practice

The findings show that assessment in this context did not originate from predefined instruments or formal evaluation systems, but was observed through interactions among students, teachers, and cultural practitioners. Teachers observe students' engagement, responsiveness, and interpretative ability during learning activities, while cultural practitioners contribute to assessment through narrative explanation, questioning, and dialogical interaction.

The findings also indicate that the implementation of community-based cultural learning is not uniformly practiced across schools. While some institutions have begun to establish collaborative arrangements with cultural practitioners—such as informal partnerships or emerging MoU-like agreements—these practices remain limited and not yet systematically implemented. Field observations and interview data suggest that only a relatively small proportion of learning activities—approximately 20%—take place outside the classroom through direct engagement with cultural communities. In most cases, learning remains classroom-based, with limited integration of experiential and community-based approaches.

Furthermore, teachers' planning often remains oriented toward product-based outcomes, such as the completion of artistic forms, rather than facilitating interpretative and reflective engagement. In contrast, cultural practitioners emphasize meaning-making, narrative understanding, and dialogical interaction as central to learning. These differences highlight a gap between institutional instructional practices and community-based cultural learning, which has direct implications for how assessment is conceptualized and enacted. Students themselves also participate in the assessment process by reflecting on their understanding and responding to feedback from others. In this sense, assessment is distributed across participants and embedded within the learning process rather than imposed externally.

This emergent form of assessment challenges conventional views that position assessment as a separate stage following instruction. Instead, assessment is intertwined with learning, occurring continuously through observation, dialogue, and reflection.

Externalizing Learning through the 3×3 Qualitative Rubric

To make these internal learning processes visible, the study introduces a 3×3 qualitative rubric consisting of three dimensions: recognition, interpretation, and reflection. The rubric is not used to assign scores but to externalize students' learning processes. Recognition refers to students' ability to identify and describe cultural elements, interpretation involves understanding symbolic meanings, and reflection captures the ability to connect these meanings with personal or social values.

By structuring learning evidence within these dimensions, the rubric provides a way to represent qualitative aspects of learning that are otherwise difficult to capture. It serves as a bridge between internal processes—such as interpretation and reflection—and observable forms of assessment.

The rubric therefore functions not as an externally imposed instrument but as a conceptual articulation of assessment practices already occurring within the learning context. It enables teachers to document and interpret students' learning processes beyond surface-level outputs, aesthetics, or memorization. In this sense, assessment is understood as emerging from practice and subsequently structured through the rubric, rather than being predefined as a fixed measurement system. As illustrated in Table 1, the rubric operationalizes three interrelated dimensions—recognition, interpretation, and reflection—which together provide a structured representation of students' learning processes within culturally grounded contexts.

Table 1. The 3×3 Qualitative Assessment Rubric for Community-Based Cultural Learning

Dimension	Indicator	Description
Recognition	Identifying cultural elements	Students recognize and describe cultural forms and visual characteristics
Interpretation	Understanding symbolic meaning	Students interpret meanings, values, and character representations
Reflection	Connecting meaning to values	Students relate meanings to personal, social, or moral contexts

Discussion

Reframing Assessment: From Measurement to Meaning-Making

The findings of this study directly address the gap identified in the introduction, particularly the dominance of assessment practices that rely on surface recognition, product-based evaluation, and measurable outputs in local content education. These conventional approaches fail to capture students' interpretative and reflective engagement within culturally grounded learning environments.

In contrast, the findings demonstrate that students' learning in community-based cultural contexts is characterized by active engagement, dialogical interaction, and meaning-making processes. Assessment, therefore, cannot be adequately conceptualized as a mechanism for measuring predefined outcomes, but rather as a process that captures how students construct meaning through interpretation and reflection. This reconceptualization aligns with contemporary perspectives that position assessment as a meaning-making process rather than a measurement tool (Shepard et al., 2018; Wiliam,

2018; Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; McArthur, 2023; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024). However, this study extends these perspectives by demonstrating that such meaning-making processes are not only theoretical constructs but are empirically observable within community-based cultural learning contexts.

Thus, the proposed 3×3 qualitative rubric – comprising recognition, interpretation, and reflection functions as a response to this gap by providing a structured yet flexible framework that captures students' interpretative and reflective learning processes beyond surface-level and product-oriented evaluation.

From External Judgement to Internal Feedback

The study further highlights a shift from externally imposed judgement toward internally constructed feedback processes. In conventional assessment systems, evaluation is typically conducted by teachers based on predefined criteria, often emphasizing technical accuracy or aesthetic outcomes.

However, the findings indicate that students actively engage in evaluating their own understanding through reflection, dialogue, and interaction. This suggests that assessment is not solely dependent on external validation but is also shaped by learners' internal processes of interpretation and meaning-making.

In this context, feedback emerges not only from teachers' comments but also through dialogue with peers and cultural practitioners. Students continuously compare, reconsider, and refine their interpretations during interaction, allowing internal feedback processes to develop naturally within the learning experience.

Importantly, this reflective process functions as internal feedback, where students evaluate their own understanding through comparison, discussion, and reconsideration of their ideas. This internal feedback is a critical component of learning that is often overlooked in conventional assessment systems.

This process reflects the development of internal feedback, where learners continuously interpret and reassess their understanding in response to interaction with peers and cultural practitioners. Such processes align with contemporary perspectives on evaluative judgement and feedback literacy (Nicol, 2021; Tai et al., 2018; Yan & Carless, 2022; Carless & Boud, 2018; Chong, 2021; Nieminen et al., 2022).

Importantly, this study demonstrates that these processes are not confined to formal educational settings but also emerge within culturally grounded learning environments. Assessment, therefore, is distributed across learning interactions, enabling students to become active agents in evaluating their own learning rather than passive recipients of external judgement.

Assessment as an Emergent Practice

A key contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing assessment as an emergent practice. The findings demonstrate that assessment is not necessarily designed as a fixed system prior to instruction but can arise organically from the dynamics of learning activities.

In the observed cultural learning contexts, assessment emerges through observation, dialogue, and participation. Teachers, students, and cultural practitioners collectively contribute to evaluative processes without relying on formalized assessment structures. The findings also reveal that the implementation of community-based cultural learning remains uneven across schools. While some institutions have begun to establish

collaborative arrangements with cultural practitioners, these practices are not yet systematically implemented.

This uneven implementation highlights structural differences between institutional pedagogical practices and community-based cultural learning, particularly in how learning is designed and how assessment is understood. In many cases, school-based learning remains oriented toward product-based outcomes, while community-based practices emphasize interpretation, dialogue, and meaning-making. This gap has important implications for assessment, as it suggests that existing institutional frameworks may not adequately accommodate the evaluative processes emerging from culturally grounded learning contexts.

This challenges dominant paradigms that separate learning and assessment into distinct phases. Instead, the study supports the view that assessment is inherently situated and evolves alongside learning processes (Carless & Winstone, 2023; Boud & Falchikov, 2019). By framing assessment as emergent, this study emphasizes that meaningful evaluation is shaped by context and interaction rather than predefined measurement systems.

The Role of Cultural Practitioners as Co-Assessors

The involvement of cultural practitioners introduces an expanded understanding of assessment roles. Unlike conventional settings where teachers function as the sole evaluators, community-based cultural learning involves multiple actors who contribute to students' learning and evaluation.

Cultural practitioners facilitate interpretation and reflection through storytelling, questioning, and demonstration. These interactions function as evaluative processes that shape students' understanding and guide their learning. This positions cultural practitioners as co-assessors, highlighting the relational and dialogic nature of assessment in cultural contexts. Assessment is therefore distributed across participants, extending beyond institutional authority and incorporating multiple sources of evaluative input (Raaijmakers et al., 2021; Joy et al., 2021).

The 3×3 Rubric as a Conceptual Assessment Framework

While the 3×3 rubric is introduced in the results as a representation of learning processes, its significance extends beyond a descriptive tool. In this study, the rubric is conceptualized as a framework that articulates how assessment operates within community-based cultural learning contexts. The dimensions of recognition, interpretation, and reflection represent a progression of evaluative processes, moving from surface engagement toward deeper meaning-making. These dimensions are not imposed as external criteria but derived from patterns observed in students' interactions and responses during learning activities.

As a framework, the rubric translates internal learning processes such as interpretation and reflection—into structured forms that can be recognized and evaluated. This aligns with perspectives that emphasize the importance of making tacit learning processes visible in assessment practices (Nicol, 2021; Panadero et al., 2018; Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020; Kushnier et al., 2023; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024).

Compared to previous studies that primarily conceptualize assessment through formative or authentic approaches (Panadero et al., 2018; Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020; Nicol, 2021), this study highlights a distinct contribution by grounding the assessment framework in empirically observed cultural learning practices. While earlier research

emphasizes evaluative judgement and feedback processes, the present study demonstrates how these processes emerge organically within community-based contexts and can be systematically articulated into a context-sensitive framework.

Importantly, the framework demonstrates that assessment can be developed from existing practices rather than imposed externally. It provides a bridge between experiential learning and evaluative processes, offering a context-sensitive approach that captures the complexity of students' learning in cultural settings.

Thus, the 3×3 rubric functions as a conceptual model that redefines assessment as an emergent, interpretative, and context-sensitive process. It provides a structured way to capture learning that is grounded in experience, dialogue, and reflection, thereby bridging the gap between experiential learning and formal evaluation practices.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: This study demonstrates that assessment in local content education can emerge organically from community-based cultural learning practices rather than being imposed as an external measurement system. The findings highlight that students' learning is characterized by engagement, interpretation, and reflection—dimensions that are not adequately captured by conventional assessment approaches focused on surface recognition, product-based outcomes, or cognitive recall. Through interaction with cultural practitioners, students construct meaning, engage in reflective dialogue, and develop interpretative understanding of cultural symbols. These processes indicate that meaningful learning evidence lies in how students interpret and reflect, rather than in standardized outputs or technical performance. The study further reveals that assessment is distributed across participants and emerges through interaction, observation, and reflection. The proposed 3×3 qualitative rubric—comprising recognition, interpretation, and reflection—functions as a conceptual framework that externalizes internal learning processes without reducing them to numerical measurement. Overall, this study repositions assessment as an interpretative and emergent process that is embedded within learning, offering an alternative perspective to conventional evaluation systems and emphasizing the importance of meaning-making in educational assessment. Therefore, this study firmly establishes that assessment in culturally grounded learning contexts must be understood not as a system of measurement, but as an emergent, interpretative process that captures how students construct meaning through engagement, dialogue, and reflection. **Implications:** The findings of this study offer important implications for both theory and practice in educational assessment and evaluation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discourse that reconceptualizes assessment as an emergent, interpretative, and context-sensitive process embedded within learning. It extends existing perspectives on formative assessment, evaluative judgement, and feedback processes by demonstrating how these processes operate within culturally grounded and community-based learning environments. Practically, the proposed qualitative assessment framework provides educators with a structured yet flexible approach to evaluating students' learning in local content education. It enables teachers to move beyond product-oriented evaluation and to recognize interpretative and reflective engagement as meaningful learning evidence. The findings also highlight the role of cultural practitioners as co-assessors, suggesting that collaborative assessment practices between schools and community-based cultural

actors can enrich learning evaluation. In terms of future research, further studies are needed to examine the application of this qualitative assessment framework across different cultural and educational contexts to test its adaptability and scalability. Comparative studies may explore how assessment emerges in diverse learning environments and how context influences evaluative processes. Additionally, future research should investigate how qualitative assessment approaches can be integrated with formal institutional assessment systems without losing their contextual sensitivity. In particular, future studies should examine how the proposed framework can be translated into formal school reporting practices, including descriptive report-card systems that document students' recognition, interpretation, and reflection. Such integration is important for helping teachers communicate culturally grounded learning outcomes to students, parents, and schools without reducing them to numerical scores. Further exploration of students' evaluative judgement, internal feedback processes, and reflective practices would also deepen the understanding of assessment as an embedded learning process. **Limitations:** This study is limited to a specific cultural context, namely Cirebon mask practices, and focuses on selected schools and community-based learning environments. Therefore, the findings may not be directly generalizable to all local content or cultural learning contexts. In addition, the study emphasizes qualitative exploration of assessment practices, which may not fully represent the diversity of assessment approaches used across educational settings. The findings are context-dependent and shaped by participants' experiences and interpretations. Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust conceptual foundation for understanding assessment as an emergent process within authentic learning environments.

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