(Research Articles)

Community-Based Multiliteracy Assessment as a Strategy for Strengthening Inclusive Education

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Abstract: This research aims to explain how multiliteracy and community participation principles can be integrated into the assessment process to create a more inclusive learning space. Through a literature review approach, this article describes the conceptual framework and practical implications to be adopted in the context of induction education in higher education. The study's results, the first of which show that the multiliteracy approach opens up opportunities for learners to express their knowledge and understanding through various modalities. Second, community involvement in the assessment process through a community-based assessment model emphasizes the importance of the participation of multiple parties as partners in the observation and validation of learning outcomes. Third, the two can be integrated through participatory assessment strategies combining multiliteracy and democracy. This research recommends that learners and stakeholders design and implement assessments that value diversity, participation, and creativity.

Keywords: community-based assessments; evaluation; inclusive assessment; Inclusive pedagogy; multiliteracy

1. Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology has changed the way humans interact [1], access information [2], [3], and produce knowledge [4]. This ultimately also changes the orientation and understanding related to literacy in education. Literacy is no longer narrowly defined as the ability to read and write texts, but rather to develop into the ability to understand, interpret, and produce meaning through a variety of communication formats, including visual text, audiovisual, digital symbols, and interactive virtual spaces [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]. This understanding is known as *the term new literacy* or *multiliteracy*. It is a concept that recognizes the diversity of representation models and the importance of socio-cultural contexts in the literacy process, so they have a more comprehensive understanding.

Multiliteracy encompasses interdisciplinary digital, visual, media, and cultural literacy that enables learners to become consumers of information and producers of meaning in a globally interconnected world. [10], [11], [12]. This framework encourages learners to develop cross-media and multimodal competencies to participate actively in increasingly complex social and academic life. This paradigm shift requires education systems to design learning approaches and assessment processes that are more adaptive to the diversity of expressions, local contexts, and diverse needs of learners. [13], [14].

Along with the era of education that emphasizes inclusivity, many learners are faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of very diverse learners in terms of social background, cognitive abilities, and learning styles. Therefore, the *one-size-fits-all approach* in teaching and learning is no longer contextual, especially in heterogeneous classroom environments. [15], [16]. In this regard, an inclusive pedagogical approach is needed that emphasizes the aspects of flexibility, differentiation, and sensitivity to individual diversity as part of the principle of educational justice [17].

In addition to these problems, the assessment system used in the learning process today is still dominated by conventional models emphasizing uniformity, using text as the only medium of expression, and the primary focus on the final result. [18], [19], [20]. This assessment often does not provide space for learners with learning barriers, differences in understanding, or a tendency for multimodal expression to demonstrate their full potential. As a result, many learners are not fairly facilitated in the assessment process, ultimately hindering active participation and engagement in learning. [21], [22], [23], [24].

In dealing with the dynamics of the diversity of learners, an assessment approach is needed that not only focuses on cognitive learning outcomes but can also capture meaning, social interaction, and environmental involvement in the learning process. This approach emphasizes that the assessment process must represent the complex and contextual realities of learning so that it is not bogged down in rigid and uniform assessment standards.

One of the assessment models that can be applied in this situation is community-based multiliteracy assessment. [25], [26], [27], [28]. This assessment model incorporates an understanding of different forms of literacy in the assessment process by involving the community. Thus, this strategy can strengthen the inclusive education process because it provides a broader space for participation, supports the uniqueness of learners' expression, and can bridge with broader social life in a transformative way.

Several studies have examined the relationship between assessment and inclusive education, some of which include, Kearney & Kane [22] this highlights the incompatibility between inclusive policies and assessment practices, which are still dominated by standardized approaches. Florian & Black-Hawkins [17] propose an inclusive pedagogical approach that demands flexibility in assessment methods to respond to student diversity. Waterfield & West [29] serta Thompson & O'Neill [30] asserts that traditional assessments in higher education often fail to accommodate the individual needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. Last, White [31] It shows that the multimodal assessment approach provides an alternative expression space for learners, making the process more inclusive and fair. The study's overall results show an increasing awareness of the importance of inclusive and adaptive assessment design. The research also indicates that the assessment practices carried out are often an obstacle to active participation in learning.

Although much research has examined the importance of inclusive and adaptive assessments, there is still a gap in conceptual and practical studies of community-based multiliteracy assessment models. Not many studies have explored how communities, ranging from families, school environments, and local communities, can be actively involved as part of the assessment process within the framework of multiliteracy.

If associated with the role of higher education in society, this community-based multiliteracy assessment model is expected to have an explicit, close, and direct relationship with the broader community. McArthur [32] expresses this concept, which states that higher education, as an ivory tower, is expected to recognize the initial foundation in the world of work. Positively, authentic-based multiliteracy assessments are assumed to be able to re-embrace the concept of community in learning [32]. Through this assessment approach, it is hoped that it can allow learners to apply what has been learned in higher education to professional and social roles, including being a member of society.

Thus, substantially, this article focuses on a community-based multiliteracy assessment approach as a strategy to strengthen inclusive educational practices in the context of learning in higher education. This approach focuses on the diversity of learners' forms of expression and integrates participatory, collaborative, and contextual values from the social environment. The problem formulation is how multiliteracy and community participation principles can be incorporated in the assessment process to create a more inclusive learning space. Through a literature review approach, this article describes the conceptual framework and practical implications to be adopted in the context of induction education in higher education.

2. Literature Review
Multiliteracy Assessment

Multiliteracy assessment refers to an individual's ability to understand and interact with various texts and media, whether verbal, visual, digital, or audio. [8], [9]. This assessment measures traditional literacy skills, such as reading and writing, and the ability to analyze and communicate through various modes and technologies. [33], [34].

According to Neina [32]Multiliteracy involves understanding that literacy is a skill that can evolve along with technological advances and changes in how we access information. Thus, multiliteracy assessments are more holistic and accommodate various sources of information and diverse communication methods.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an approach that emphasizes the importance of accommodating all learners, without exception, in a meaningful and equitable learning process. [17], [29]. UNESCO adopted this concept through the Salamanca Declaration, which states that education is the right of every individual, including learners with special educational needs. Inclusive education ensures that all learners, including those with disabilities or other special needs, have equal opportunities to thrive and participate in learning activities. [30], [35], [36].

The importance of inclusive education is not only related to physical accessibility aspects, but also accessibility in terms of curriculum, learning materials, and assessments. [37], [38]. Therefore, inclusive education requires adjustments and innovations in teaching and assessment approaches to accommodate the diversity of students.

The Role of Community in Inclusive Education

Community plays a vital role in supporting inclusive education, be it the school community, the family, or the wider community. [39]. In his social theory, constructivism emphasizes that learning occurs in social contexts and interactions between individuals and their social environment. [40]. Therefore, more inclusive learning can be achieved if there is strong support from the community in the form of collaboration between teachers, students, families, and the community.

A community-based approach to inclusive education includes efforts to engage diverse stakeholders in supporting diversity and designing learning experiences that accommodate the needs of each individual.[28], [41]. In the context of multiliteracy assessments, communities can provide diverse and in-depth feedback, which in turn helps create a more equitable and holistic evaluation.

Strategies to strengthen inclusive education can be pursued by introducing community-based multiliteracy assessments. This assessment not only measures academic outcomes, but also looks at the potential and development of students from different dimensions (cognitive, social, and emotional) [42], [43]. Community-based assessments will draw on the broader perspectives of various parties involved, such as peers, teachers, and family, who provide a more comprehensive picture of student achievement together.

According to Campbell & Daley [9], this approach creates space for diverse forms of learning. It provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities through various media and in more flexible ways. The assessment also pays attention to the differences in each student's background, abilities, and learning style, which reinforces the inclusion principle in education.

3. Method

This article was prepared using a conceptual analysis approach based on a critical literature review to explore and synthesize various relevant literature on multiliteracy, community-based assessment, and inclusive education. This approach was chosen because it can build coherent theoretical and practical arguments from multiple existing sources of knowledge. [44], [45].

This conceptual study is carried out through four main steps. *First*, conduct an inventory and literature review from credible sources and research results discussing related topics. Second, thematic analysis will identify and group key ideas based on major themes: multiliteracy, inclusive education, and assessment models. *Third*, the findings are compiled as a conceptual synthesis, which connects concepts into a conceptual model of community-based multiliteracy assessment as a strategy to strengthen inclusive education. Fourth, conducting critical reflection to evaluate potential applications and challenges in the context of learning in Indonesia. This approach aims to develop an integrative conceptual framework, provide a theoretical foundation for assessment practice, and strategically contribute to educators, policymakers, and educational researchers. The description of the research process carried out can be seen in the following chart 1.

Chart 1. Conceptual study flow based on critical literature review

The data sources in this study are secondary, obtained through an inventory of scientific literature and policy documents related to multiliteracy, community-based assessment, and inclusive education. The selection of literature data sources is carried out by referring to specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the validity of the source and its relevance to the focus of the research. This process involves searching academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar using the keywords: *multiliteracy*, *inclusive assessment*, *community-based assessment*, and *inclusive pedagogy*. The results were then analyzed and classified based on their relationship to the central concept studied. The limitations of inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Aspects	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Source Type	Peer-reviewed scientific journals, academic books, official policy documents, and research reports from educational or research institutions.	Blogs, popular articles, non-academic opinions, and unverified sources.
Main Topics	Multiliteracy, digital/multimodal literacy, alternative/inclusive assessment, inclusive pedagogy, community-based education.	Conventional assessments without an inclusive or multiliteracy perspective.
Conceptual Relevance	Contribute to the conceptual framework of community-based inclusive assessment.	Not directly related to the reinforcement of inclusive learning or assessment.
Credibility and Access	Published in reputable journals, books from academic publishers, and official documents of governments or international institutions.	Not publicly available or fully accessible for full review.
Publication Year Range	Years 2004–2024 (last two decades) to capture the latest developments.	Published before 2004, or the information is out-dated and irrelevant to the current context of new literacy education.

Based on the criteria presented, the literature studied was selected based on thematic relevance, contemporaneity, and credibility of the source, including indexed international journals, academic books, and education policy reports from official institutions. Some journals used as references in the data collection process are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. List of literature data sources

No	Writer	Heading	Publication Type	Study Focus	Relevance

1.	Cope & Kalantzis (2009)	*Multiliteracies: New Literacies, New Learning*	Scientific journals	Multiliteracy and the new literacy	The theoretical foundation of multiliteracy
2.	Mills (2010)	*A Review of the "Digital Turn" in the New Literacy Studies*	Scientific journals	Digital & multi-modal literacy	Development of a digital literacy approach
3.	Florian & Black-Hawkins (2011)	*Exploring Inclusive Pedagogy*	Scientific journals	Pedagogy inclusive	Education strategies for diversity
4.	Kalantzis & Cope (2012)	*New Learning*	Academic books	New literacy-based education	Transformative learning concepts
5.	Waterfield & West (2021)	*Inclusive Assessment in Higher Education*	Scientific journals	Inclusive assessment	Principles of alternative assessment
6.	Thompson & O'Neill (2023)	*Assessment Barriers for Disabled Students*	Scientific journals	Assessment of inclusion in college	Inequities in assessment
7.	White (2024)	*Multimodal Assessment for Neurodivergent Students*	Scientific journals	Multimodal assessment	The relevance of multimodality for learners

4. Results and Discussion

Principles of Multiliteracy in Assessment

Multiliteracy emerged as a response to changes in communication and the delivery of meaning, which now transcend the boundaries of the written text. This reflects developments in how we interact with information that is not only text, but also involves various other forms of media. Kalantzis and Cope [13] introduced multiliteracy as an approach that shows that literacy not only focuses on linguistic aspects, but also includes various other modalities of meaning, such as visual, audio, gestural, and spatial.

Thus, multiliteracy teaches that learners must have the ability to understand and communicate meaning not only through words, but also through other symbols that exist in social and cultural contexts. Students are expected to be able to navigate different forms of representation and media and understand the various ways of conveying and receiving information. This expands the scope of literacy, which is no longer limited to reading and writing skills, but also to the skills of interacting with a world that is increasingly diverse in its forms.

In the realm of learning assessment, the principle of multiliteracy requires that evaluations be designed to accommodate a diversity of ways of learning and self-expression, especially for learners with multimodal tendencies. Mills [10] Emphasizes that multiliteracy-based assessments should "allow for the active participation of learners in producing and communicating meaning through varied media," so that learners have a broader opportunity to demonstrate understanding and creativity authentically. Cope and Kalantzis [13] This approach "values not only the result, but also a dynamic and contextual learning process."

Furthermore, White (2024) shows that a multimodal approach can increase inclusivity by allowing learners to demonstrate potential that suits their competencies. This reinforces the argument that assessments that adopt the principle of multiliteracy are fairer and adaptive to the diversity of learners. Waterfield and West [29] also emphasize the importance of universal design in the assessment process, which is an approach that is designed from the

beginning to be accessible and interpreted by all learners without having to make special adaptations that are reactive.

In the context of inclusive pedagogy, Florian and Black-Hawkins [17] affirm that "learning and assessment strategies should not be exclusive to one specific type of modality or norm of students, but rather open to all differences." Therefore, applying multiliteracy in the assessment process is a form of innovation and a commitment to fairness and impartiality in education. In addition, Kearney and Kane [22] also revealed that assessment policies not responsive to differences in expression modalities will tend to fail to create justice in the context of inclusive education. Therefore, applying multiliteracy in learning assessment activities is a strategic step that can connect the principle of inclusivity and literacy needs in the 21st century.

The Role and Participation of the Community in the Assessment Process

In inclusive education, assessment is not only the learner's or educational institution's responsibility but also involves collaboration with various communities that are directly related to the lives of learners. This approach is known as community-based assessment, prioritizing the active participation of multiple parties supporting the learning process. This kind of assessment aims to strengthen cooperation between different groups that play a role in the life of learners.

Community-based assessments prioritize the principle of democratization in evaluation, which means that the assessment process is carried out jointly by various parties. This includes actively designing, implementing, and reflecting on the assessment results. Thus, assessment is not only seen as an activity carried out by teachers or institutions, but also involves the contribution of the broader community in creating an inclusive learning environment. [13].

This assessment approach involves teachers, parents, companions, and even local community leaders who observe and validate the learner's learning process, especially in the inherent social and cultural context. White [31] emphasizes that assessment with an inclusive model cannot be separated from the "social context in which learners live and learn," because effective learning processes occur not only in the classroom, but also in daily interactions in the community environment.

Community involvement in this assessment process provides space for strengthening relevance. This is because the indicators of learning success are not only measured academically, but also based on the ability of learners to interact, collaborate, and solve problems in a real context. Waterfield and West [29] state that community involvement is a form of application of universal design principles because it "opens up a space for recognition of different perspectives on learning success."

Florian and Black-Hawkins [17] add that this approach allows for a redistribution of power in the assessment process, from a *top-down* system to a more participatory system that respects all parties' voices. In this context, assessment is a means to understand diversity and strengthen a sense of belonging to the ongoing learning process.

Mills [10] also emphasizes the importance of social context in the multiliteracy assessment process. His research shows that "the success of learning cannot be separated from the recognition of the cultural context and community in which learners grow and belong." Therefore, community involvement is complementary and key to realizing a relevant, inclusive, and meaningful assessment process.

Kearney and Kane [22] in their evaluation of inclusion policies in New Zealand, highlight the failure of assessment systems that do not involve communities. Her research revealed that "inclusive policies will be meaningless if assessment practices are still exclusive and separate learners from their social contexts."

Meanwhile, Cope and Kalantzis [5] community involvement supports the principle of multiliteracy because it enriches the assessment process with various cultural practices and forms of local expression that are valid and meaningful for learners. The assessment process becomes more adaptive to cultural diversity and strengthens learners' identities in the learning process.

Integration of Multiliteracy and Community Participation in the Assessment Process

In inclusive education, assessment strategies should be designed to assess academic outcomes, appreciate the diverse means of communication used by learners, and strengthen the community's role in supporting the learning ecosystem. Therefore, it is essential to develop an approach that focuses not only on cognitive knowledge but also on the diversity of ways of learning and communicating in each individual.

As a solution, incorporating multiliteracy approaches and community-based assessments is essential in creating a more responsive, participatory, and contextual assessment model. This approach allows assessments to better describe each learner's needs and characteristics and encourages closer collaboration between individuals, groups, and communities in the learning process.

The multiliteracy approach recognizes that learners communicate through written language and visual, gestural, audio, and spatial forms. [5], [46]. When this principle is combined with community-based assessment, the assessment process will be more adaptive to the diversity of learners' learning and interaction in and out of the classroom.

According to Kalantzis and Cope [13], the integration of multiliteracy and community participation can be carried out through participatory assessment strategies that are contextual, collaborative, and creative. This strategy invites all parties, such as learners (lecturers), learners (students), parents, and community members, to design and reflect on the assessment process so that it is not singular and normative, but more democratic and humanizes the learning process.

This participatory assessment model, as described by Florian and Black-Hawkins [17], respects the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive differences of learners. In this model, success is not measured by a single standard, but by the learner's ability to express knowledge and values authentically and in a context of life.

As an example of an integration scenario, in an inclusive classroom in a coastal area, learners can develop a community-based assessment project that instructs learners to create digital short stories about life around the port. These stories can be written as narrative text, accompanied by visual illustrations, voice narration, or short documentary videos. Local parents and fishermen were involved as resource persons and content validators. This activity shows the synergy between multimodal literacy and community involvement in creating an inclusive and meaningful learning experience. [10], [47].

According to Kearney and Kane [22], scenarios like this provide real opportunities for learners with different learning backgrounds and needs to participate equally in the learning process, as well as strengthen a sense of identity, autonomy, and social connection to the surrounding environment.

Waterfield and West [29] added that this model also strengthens the sustainability of inclusive education by opening up space for reflection and dialogue between communities and educational institutions. Thus, integrating multiliteracy and community participation is a technical strategy and an ethical approach to building a more equitable and humane assessment system.

6. Conclusion

Integrating the principles of multiliteracy and community participation in assessment is a strategic approach that supports the realization of inclusive, contextual, and democratic learning spaces. First, the multiliteracy approach allows learners to express their knowledge and understanding through various modalities. Second, community involvement in the assessment process through a community-based assessment model emphasizes the importance of the participation of multiple parties as partners in the observation and validation of learning outcomes. Third, the two can be integrated through participatory assessment strategies combining multiliteracy and democracy. In the context of inclusive education, this integration is an essential foundation for building an equitable, adaptive, and transformative assessment system that can accommodate diversity and foster the potential of every learner.

As a strategic step to realize an inclusive and transformative assessment process, it is essential to encourage policies that accommodate multiliteracy-based approaches to assessment in educational curricula and practices. In addition, active community involvement needs to be strengthened in the planning process and implementation of evaluations. In addition, capacity building for learners and stakeholders is also a priority, especially in developing competencies to design and implement assessments that value diversity, participation, and creativity. Thus, these three strategies complement each other in forming a fairer and humane assessment ecosystem.

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