

Capacity Building for Special Education Teachers in Developing Assessment Instruments for Students with Special Needs at Special School X

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Kata Kunci

Peningkatan kapasitas
Asesmen pendidikan khusus
Guru SLB
Anak berkebutuhan khusus
Bimbingan teknis

Keywords:

Capacity buliding
Special education assessment
Special school teacher
Students with special needs
Technical guidance

Received: April 2026

Accepted: May 2026

Published: August 2026

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan kesadaran guru Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) mengenai pentingnya pengembangan instrumen asesmen yang sesuai dengan karakteristik Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK). Berdasarkan analisis kebutuhan di SLB X, sebagian besar guru masih menggunakan asesmen umum yang belum mengakomodasi kebutuhan individual siswa. Permasalahan utama yang dihadapi guru di SLB X adalah keterbatasan pemahaman terhadap prinsip-prinsip asesmen individual dan teknik penyusunan instrumen yang adaptif terhadap berbagai jenis hambatan belajar. Melalui kegiatan bimbingan teknis (technical guidance), tim pengabdian memberikan penguatan konseptual tentang prinsip asesmen pendidikan khusus, jenis-jenis asesmen, serta langkah dasar penyusunan instrumen yang adaptif. Kegiatan difokuskan pada penyampaian materi, diskusi interaktif, dan refleksi bersama untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran guru akan urgensi asesmen yang inklusif dan berorientasi pada potensi siswa. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan meningkatnya pemahaman guru terhadap konsep asesmen yang berkeadilan bagi ABK dan komitmen mereka untuk mulai mengembangkan instrumen asesmen sederhana di kelas masing-masing.

Abstract

This community service program aims to enhance teachers' understanding and awareness at Special School X of the importance of developing assessment instruments tailored to the characteristics of students with special needs. Based on a needs analysis conducted at the school, most teachers still relied on generic assessments that failed to accommodate students' individual needs. The main challenges faced by teachers include limited comprehension of the principles of individualized assessment and insufficient skills in designing adaptive instruments that address diverse learning barriers. Through a series of technical guidance sessions, the community engagement team provided conceptual reinforcement of the principles of special education assessment, the types of assessments, and the fundamental steps in designing adaptive instruments. The program emphasized interactive delivery of materials, collaborative discussions, and reflective sessions to cultivate teachers' awareness of the urgency of inclusive, learner-centered assessment practices. The results indicate an improvement in teachers' conceptual understanding of fair and equitable assessment for students with special needs, alongside a strengthened commitment to developing simple, contextually relevant assessment instruments in their respective classrooms.



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INTRODUCTION

Masa Teachers in special schools are very important for helping students with special needs reach their full potential through a well-planned, meaningful, and personalized learning process. Assessment is one of the most important parts of this process because it helps teachers find out what students can really do, what is getting in the way of their learning, and what kind of help they need (UNESCO, 2020; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2022). Students with special needs need an adaptive

How to cite: Manar, M., Jaya, I., Winarsih, M., & Taboer, M. A. (2026). Capacity Building for Special Education Teachers in Developing Assessment Instruments for Students with Special Needs at Special School X. *PengabdianMu: Jurnal Ilmiah Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 11(8), 2621-2629. <https://doi.org/10.33084/pengabdianmu.v11i8.12700>

and learner-centered approach to education. However, many special education teachers still have trouble creating and giving tests that fit the needs of all of their students. This is mostly because they don't know enough and haven't had enough professional training. One of the biggest problems in special education is that teachers don't have the time or resources to make tests that work for students with different intellectual, sensory, and behavioral issues (Sari & Rahman, 2022). The tools used are often general and don't show how well students are really doing. A thorough evaluation for students with special needs is a complicated process that includes three main parts: pre-existing conditions, unique individual traits, and the results of the evaluation itself (Salvia et al., 2024).

Prior research (Haikal et al., 2022) identified various challenges encountered by special education teachers, especially concerning the development of lesson plans that fail to meet standards and the scarcity of instructional resources. Lesson planning that isn't accurate is often the result of bad assessment methods, which shows that we need to keep working on making assessments better. Assessment in special education evaluates learning outcomes and delineates students' functional and developmental competencies, encompassing communication, socio-emotional skills, and adaptive behavior (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2018). So, tests must be relevant to the situation, adaptable, and aware of how people are different (Friend & Bursuck, 2021). Using the wrong assessment tools can cause bias and make it harder for everyone to learn together (Budianto, 2023). Creating valid assessment tools is a big problem for teachers because valid assessments are necessary for making good choices about education. Assessment is the basis for creating individualized education programs (IEPs) and intervention plans for students with special needs (Nitko & Brookhart, 2011; Galevska et al., 2018). Assessment proficiency substantially enhances the efficacy of special education by enabling educators to formulate individualized learning plans and track students' advancement (Alhassan & Verma, 2024). Learning and intervention programs might not meet students' real needs if they don't have accurate assessments. The main goal of assessment in special education is to gather a lot of information about each student so that they can get the right educational services (Hartini et al., 2023).

At Special School X, many teachers still employ assessment instruments adapted from mainstream schools without proper modifications to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Consequently, the results often fail to portray students' real capabilities. Moreover, many teachers are unfamiliar with the fundamental principles of special education assessment, such as authentic assessment, portfolio-based assessment, and individualized need-based evaluation (Dimas et al., 2025). Designing accurate assessment tools is a demanding task, as assessment forms the cornerstone of optimizing the development of students with special needs (Maulana, 2024). A contributing factor to this challenge is the lack of professional training in assessment instrument development for special education teachers at the school.

Special Needs School (SLB) teachers need to ensure that the learning and evaluation processes are aligned with the needs of children with special needs (ABK). However, developing evaluation instruments that are appropriate to the characteristics, abilities, and learning barriers of children with special needs remains a challenge in special education practice. SLB teachers need to be more aware of the importance of creating adaptive, valid, and appropriate assessment instruments for children with special needs. This is because unadapted assessment instruments can lead to inaccurate evaluation results and negatively impact optimal learning planning for students. Therefore, technical guidance on developing assessment instruments for students with special needs at Special School X is crucial to help teachers conduct assessments more effectively. The program aims to enable teachers to design appropriate and contextually relevant assessment instruments. As an educational institution serving students with various types of disabilities, Special School X provides an ideal setting for this initiative. Although the teachers demonstrate high motivation, they still require professional support to design accurate and inclusive assessments.

Table I. Preliminary observations and interviews.

No	Preliminary observations and interviews revealed several underlying issues:
1	The suboptimal implementation of training programs on assessment for students with special needs, likely due to limited funding.
2	Comprehensive understanding of assessment among teachers, possibly caused by the lack of human resources capable of providing professional development in this area.
3	Insufficient training on developing assessment instruments for special needs education, likely due to the scarcity of qualified trainers.
4	Limited government attention in strengthening the assessment capacity of special education teachers, potentially caused by a lack of awareness regarding the importance of assessment for students with special needs.

These problems collectively contribute to a central issue—namely, the underdevelopment of assessment instruments for students with special needs at Special School X. Based on this analysis, the following issues were identified as priority concerns: The suboptimal implementation of assessments for students with special needs at Special School X. The lack of effective training on developing assessment instruments for special needs education. The poor implementation of assessment processes leads to wrong results, and the lack of relevant training makes it hard for teachers to do assessments that meet the needs of each student. In light of these difficulties, it is important to build capacity through technical guidance. Capacity building focuses on both improving teachers' technical skills and making them more aware of their role as agents of educational change (Hidayat, 2021). Through this program, teachers gain conceptual understanding, discuss their practical challenges, and work together to come up with initial steps for creating more flexible assessment tools.

Collaboratively crafted capacity-building initiatives can enhance teacher agency, enabling educators to take initiative, reflect on their methodologies, and implement significant transformations in inclusive classrooms. Professionalism in special education teaching is not solely defined by technical pedagogical skills; it also encompasses reflective awareness and a dedication to equity and educational access for all students (Friend & Bursuck, 2021; Sari & Nugroho, 2023). So, the technical guidance program is not only a place for teachers to learn how to make assessment tools, but it is also a way for teachers to become more aware of their role as change agents in promoting fair and inclusive education. This community service project is a way for students to help teachers learn more about the importance of adaptive and inclusive assessment in both academic and social ways. The main goal of the activity is not to test instruments but to help teachers build their basic knowledge and motivation to create assessments that are based on their students' needs. The goal of the program is to help special education teachers become more aware of how important assessment is for creating fair, humane, and relevant learning experiences. Teachers at Special School X should be better able to create appropriate assessment tools for students with special needs after taking part in this technical guidance. This will lead to more accurate assessment results and better planning for lessons, which will ultimately improve the learning process for students with disabilities

METHOD

Implementation Method

This community service project used a capacity-building approach to help teachers get better at making tests for students with special needs. The implementation method stressed that teachers should work together, get involved, and think about what they learn. There were several planned steps in the process, starting with a needs analysis and then moving on to training workshops, mentoring sessions, and reflective evaluations.

We chose the capacity-building approach because it not only teaches teachers technical skills but also helps them become more aware of their profession and believe in themselves. This method is based on the idea that real educational change can only happen when the people who work in schools learn, think about what they do, and feel empowered (Fullan & Bertani 2021). As a result, the implementation model was created to encourage teachers to get involved, practice in context, and work together to find answers.

This activity uses technical guidance to increase the understanding and awareness of special needs teachers about the importance of developing assessment tools for children with special needs (ABK). Part of this activity is providing information about the principles of special education evaluation, evaluation classifications, and procedures for creating evaluation instruments that can be adapted to student characteristics. Furthermore, the activity is carried out through interactive discussions and joint reflection to increase teachers' understanding of inclusive assessments that focus on student potential. To measure teachers' understanding of assessment concepts, their ability to create instruments, and their awareness of the importance of equitable assessments for children with special needs, an activity evaluation sheet is used.

Activity Location and Participants

The activity was conducted at Special School X, located in North Jakarta involving a total of 20 teachers who teach students with various types of disabilities—such as hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and

multiple disabilities. The participants consisted of both experienced and novice teachers, representing a diverse range of teaching backgrounds and professional experiences.

Stages of Implementation

The implementation process was carried out in three major stages: preparation, execution, and evaluation, as follows:

a. Preparation Stage

At this point, the team did some initial interviews and observations to figure out what the teachers needed in terms of assessment practices for students with special needs. The information we got was used to make training materials and figure out the best ways to learn. Also, coordination with the school management was set up to make sure that all teachers were actively involved and that the institution supported them.

b. Execution Stage

The main implementation phase consisted of three sub-activities:

1. Workshop on the Fundamentals of Assessment for Students with Special Needs.

This session provided theoretical reinforcement concerning the nature, functions, and principles of assessment in special education, including authentic assessment, diagnostic assessment, and developmental assessment. The objective was to strengthen teachers' conceptual understanding before engaging in practical instrument design.

2. Workshop on the Development of Assessment Instruments.

Teachers collaboratively designed prototype assessment instruments according to the needs of specific student groups. The facilitation process employed a learning by doing approach, enabling participants to directly practice designing items, rubrics, and scoring systems adapted to the characteristics of learners with disabilities.

3. Mentoring and Feedback Sessions.

After developing the initial drafts, participants received guidance and constructive feedback from facilitators and peers. These mentoring sessions emphasized reflective discussions to help teachers identify strengths, limitations, and improvement opportunities in their designed instruments.

c. Evaluation Stage

Evaluation was conducted to measure both the process and outcomes of the program. The evaluation focused on:

1. Teachers' participation and engagement level during the sessions.

2. Improvement in teachers' understanding of assessment principles and practices for students with special needs.

3. Quality and feasibility of the developed assessment instruments.

Data collection utilized a qualitative technique, including observation, questionnaires, and reflective discussions. The evaluation employed a descriptive qualitative analysis.

Table II. Implementation stages.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
PREPARATION STAGE	The team conducted preliminary observations and interviews to identify the teachers' needs related to assessment practices for students with special needs. The data obtained served as the foundation for designing training materials and determining suitable learning methods
EXECUTION STAGE	This session provided theoretical reinforcement concerning the nature, functions, and principles of assessment in special education, including authentic assessment, diagnostic assessment, and developmental assessment
EVALUATION STAGE	Evaluation was conducted to measure both the process and outcomes of the program

Tools and Instruments

The instruments used during the activity included observation sheets, participant questionnaires, and evaluation rubrics for assessing the quality of the designed assessment instruments. In addition, documentation in the form of photos, attendance lists, and reflective notes was collected to provide comprehensive evidence of the activity's implementation and outcomes.

Implementation Team

The implementation team consisted of lecturers specializing in special education, assisted by graduate students who acted as facilitators and note-takers. The lecturers provided theoretical input and mentoring, while the graduate students

supported documentation and logistical coordination. This collaborative model fostered a dynamic interaction between academic experts and practitioners in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Activity Implementation

Twenty teachers from different service areas, including hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, and visual impairment, came to Special School X for this technical guidance activity. The event took place over three days, from August 11 to 27, 2025. It focused on teaching the basics of special education assessment, the importance of adaptive tools, and the principles of assessment based on individual needs.

The technical guidance activity usually started with an opening session. This session included speeches from the principal of Special School X and members of the implementing lecturer team. Participants were asked to take a pre-test that was related to the material that would be presented. After that, the resource people gave presentations in two interactive panel sessions about how to assess children with special needs. PowerPoint was used to show the material so that everyone could learn in their own way.



Figure 1. Session 1.

There was also a simulation session where participants made assessment tools for different types of special needs and did peer assessments. The last session was a discussion and Q&A that talked about both the ideas and the practical parts of the material. Before the activity was over, the committee gave door prizes to people who were actively involved. At the end, participants were asked to take a post-test again to see how much they had learned after getting the technical help.

In the first phase, participants were allowed to think about the ways they had been assessing their students in their own classrooms. Most teachers said they still used general assessment tools from the national curriculum without making enough changes for the needs of students in special schools after the first discussion. As a result, the assessment results did not accurately reflect the students' true abilities.



Figure 2. Second Session.

The material was delivered through open discussions, Q&A, and case studies that involved everyone. This method made teachers more likely to share their experiences, talk about problems they had in the field, and work together to find solutions. During the discussion sessions, teachers began to understand that assessment is not just a way to measure how well students are doing, but also a key part of figuring out what they can do, what they like, and what kind of help they need (Gatlin-Nash et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2021).

Changes in Teachers' Understanding and Attitudes

The results of observations and reflective notes showed positive changes in teachers' understanding and attitudes toward special education assessment. Some indicators of these changes include:

1. Increased awareness of the importance of individual assessment.
Before the activity, teachers tended to view assessment as an administrative task. After participating in the technical guidance, they realized that assessment is an ongoing process and serves as the foundation for determining effective learning strategies.
2. Emergence of new understanding regarding the principles of validity and adaptivity in assessment.
Teachers began to understand that every child has unique needs and abilities, so assessment instruments must be adjusted in terms of content, presentation, and scoring methods (Friend & Bursuck, 2021).
3. Increased motivation to try developing simple instruments.
Several teachers expressed their commitment to begin creating more contextual assessment formats, such as social behavior observation rubrics, daily development journals, and activity-based assessments.

These findings indicate that the technical guidance activity successfully achieved its main objective—namely, fostering reflective awareness and initial motivation among special school teachers to improve assessment practices in their schools. Teachers who participated in formative assessment training began to apply more adaptive types of instruments (Yan et al., 2021; Oo et al., 2023).

Teacher Interaction and Collaboration

One of the most important things that came out of this activity was that teachers worked together and talked to each other more. Small group discussions led to different ideas for assessment forms that better fit students' needs, like learning portfolios, observation-based assessments, and simple performance assessments.

Teachers were also very excited to look at examples of assessment tools and try to make them work in their own classrooms. This participatory method reinforced the conviction that the evaluation process can function as an empowering mechanism for educators to acknowledge each student's potential in a more compassionate manner (Hidayat, 2021).

In addition, the reflective activities conducted at the end of each session provided teachers with space to share personal experiences and follow-up plans. Some teachers expressed the need for advanced training on developing indicators and simple validation of the instruments they had designed (Brookhart & Long, 2008; Rahmi & Wijayanti, 2025).

The technical guidance program demonstrated a successful implementation and received a positive response from the participating special needs (SLB) teachers. Prior to the program, some teachers had limited understanding of the concept of equitable assessment for children with special needs (ABK), particularly in adapting assessment instruments to the characteristics and needs of students. Following the program, teachers demonstrated a better understanding of the principles of special education assessment, types of assessments, and the steps for developing adaptive assessment instruments. This improvement was evident in the discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and participant reflections, which demonstrated teachers' increased awareness of the importance of inclusive and potential-oriented assessments. Furthermore, teachers began to understand that assessments are not only used to measure learning outcomes but also serve as a basis for designing learning services tailored to the needs of students with special needs. Therefore, this technical guidance program supported the improvement of special needs teachers' understanding and capacity in developing more appropriate and equitable assessment instruments for children with special needs.

Relevance to the Concept of Capacity Building

The qualitative results of this activity align with the concept of capacity building in education, namely a process of strengthening individual and organizational abilities through collaborative learning, the development of critical awareness, and relevant skill enhancement (UNESCO, 2020). The capacity-building approach emphasizes that changes in educational practice are not solely determined by technical training but also by shifts in teachers' perspectives, values, and professional commitment (Salleh, 2024; Putra et al., 2024). Thus, although this activity has not yet reached the stage of instrument implementation and testing, the qualitative findings show that this initial stage of capacity building has succeeded in establishing an important foundation—conceptual understanding and intrinsic motivation among teachers to innovate.

Implications and Follow-up Plans

This activity illustrates that strengthening the capacity of special school teachers needs to be carried out continuously. In the next stage, further mentoring is needed in the form of workshops on instrument development and simple validation so that teachers can apply the conceptual knowledge they have gained. The results also show that participatory and contextual approaches are effective in building teachers' sense of ownership over the assessment process in their own classrooms. This aligns with the findings of Dimas et al. (2025), who stated that teachers actively involved in designing assessments tend to have a deeper understanding and are better prepared to face future challenges. Teachers stated that this activity increased their confidence in designing assessments and helped them understand the importance of assessment as the foundation of learning planning. In addition, a learning community of special school teachers was formed, continuing reflective practices independently (Roig & Rivera, 2013; Kristiana, 2018). This is consistent with UNESCO's (2020) findings that teacher capacity building and professional collaboration are key to improving the quality of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The technical guidance activity on the development of assessment instruments for teachers at Special School X had a positive impact on building teachers' awareness and understanding of the importance of adaptive assessment for students with special needs. Although this activity has not yet reached the stage of implementation and quantitative testing of the instruments, the qualitative results show an increase in teachers' conceptual understanding and motivation to begin developing more contextual assessment instruments. Teachers began to realize that assessment is not merely a tool for measuring learning outcomes but a process for understanding students' needs, potential, and holistic development. Through a participatory and reflective approach, this activity succeeded in fostering teachers' professional attitudes and sense of responsibility as agents of change in providing more inclusive and equitable special education. In addition, this activity strengthened aspects of capacity building in the form of increased professional awareness, the strengthening of teacher networks, and the establishment of a commitment to continuous innovation. Therefore, the next stage should focus on follow-up mentoring in the form of workshops on the development and simple validation of assessment instruments so that the knowledge gained can be implemented effectively in classroom practice. Thus, this technical guidance activity serves as a strategic first step in strengthening the capacity of special school teachers to become adaptive, reflective educators who are oriented toward the individual needs of their students.

The results of putting the technical guidance into action show that teachers need to keep getting help to improve their ability to make assessment tools for students with special needs. Teachers need more time and help to use the ideas behind adaptive assessment in their classrooms. So, follow-up activities like coaching clinics or focused workshops that give teachers a chance to make and test simple tools are important steps to improve the results of the technical guidance that has already been given. Furthermore, the sustainability of the capacity-building program will be more effective if accompanied by the establishment of a professional learning community among special school teachers. Through this community, teachers can share experiences, discuss assessment challenges, and collaboratively develop best practices. Thus, the technical guidance activity conducted at Special School X not only served as a means of enhancing teachers' technical knowledge but also became an important foundation for building professional awareness, collaborative networks, and a long-term commitment to developing more inclusive assessment practices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express its deep gratitude to the community service team of “Technical Guidance on the Development of Assessment Instruments for Children with Special Needs at Special Schools (SLB)” funded by Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Jakarta and all parties for their valuable support in implementing this program. Your contributions and cooperation have been invaluable in advancing our community service.

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