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# Mapping the Landscape of Rubric-Based Assessment Studies: A Bibliometric Review

**Loso Judijanto**
IPOSS Jakarta

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to map the intellectual structure and research trends of rubric-based assessment through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. Using data retrieved from the Scopus database, this study examines publications from 2000 to 2025 to identify the evolution, key contributors, and thematic development of research in this field. Bibliometric techniques were employed using VOSviewer to analyze co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic clustering. The results reveal that rubric-based assessment research has developed into three major domains: pedagogical application, applied professional education, and psychometric validation. Early studies focused on establishing validity, reliability, and measurement rigor, while subsequent research emphasized instructional integration, formative assessment, and competency-based learning. More recent trends indicate a growing interest in the integration of artificial intelligence, large language models, and digital learning systems in rubric-based assessment practices. The findings also show that while traditional themes such as teaching and educational measurement remain dominant, emerging technology-driven approaches are shaping future research directions. This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic overview of the knowledge structure and evolution of rubric-based assessment research, offering insights for researchers and educators in developing more effective, adaptive, and technology-enhanced assessment frameworks.



***Corresponding Author:***

Name: Loso Judijanto
Institution: IPOSS Jakarta
Email: losojudijantobumn@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a central role in the educational process because it provides evidence of student learning and informs instructional decision-making [1]. Over the past few decades, educators and researchers have increasingly emphasized the need for assessment methods that are transparent, reliable, and capable of capturing complex learning outcomes [2], [3]. Traditional assessment methods, such as multiple-choice tests, often fail to measure higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. As education systems shift toward competency-based and outcomes-based learning models, there has been a growing demand for assessment approaches that provide clearer criteria for evaluating student performance. Within this context, rubric-based assessment has emerged as a

widely used tool that helps instructors articulate expectations, standardize grading, and provide meaningful feedback to learners [4], [5].

Rubrics are structured scoring guides that outline specific criteria and performance levels used to evaluate student work [6]. They are commonly applied in a variety of educational settings, including writing assessment, project-based learning, performance tasks, and professional training. By explicitly describing the characteristics of different levels of performance, rubrics help both teachers and students understand what constitutes quality work. Previous studies have shown that rubric-based assessment can enhance the reliability of grading, reduce subjectivity in evaluation, and support formative learning processes by making assessment expectations transparent [7], [8]. Furthermore, rubrics can promote self-regulated learning, as students are able to use them to guide their own work and monitor their progress during the learning process.

With the increasing adoption of rubrics across educational levels, scholarly interest in rubric-based assessment has grown significantly. Researchers have explored various aspects of rubric use, including rubric design, validity and reliability, the role of rubrics in formative assessment, and their impact on student learning outcomes. Studies have also examined how rubrics support peer assessment, collaborative learning, and digital assessment environments. As a result, the body of literature on rubric-based assessment has expanded across multiple disciplines such as education, language learning, engineering, and health sciences. This rapid growth of research reflects the importance of rubrics as a practical and theoretical tool for improving assessment practices in modern education systems [4].

Despite the increasing number of publications on rubric-based assessment, the existing research remains fragmented across different journals, disciplines, and geographical contexts. Individual studies often focus on specific educational settings or pedagogical interventions, making it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of the overall development of the field. In addition, variations in terminology, research methods, and theoretical perspectives have contributed to a complex and diverse body of literature. Consequently, educators and researchers may find it challenging to identify major research trends, influential publications, key contributors, and emerging topics within rubric-based assessment studies. To address this challenge, systematic approaches for mapping and analyzing the research landscape are needed.

Bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly valuable method for examining the structure and evolution of scientific research fields. By quantitatively analyzing publication data, citations, collaboration networks, and keyword patterns, bibliometric studies can reveal how knowledge develops over time and identify major themes and research clusters within a discipline. In the field of education, bibliometric reviews have been used to explore research trends in topics such as digital learning, assessment practices, and educational technology. Applying a bibliometric approach to rubric-based assessment research can provide a comprehensive overview of publication trends, influential authors, institutional collaborations, and thematic developments. Such insights can help scholars better understand how rubric-based assessment research has evolved and where future research opportunities may lie.

Although rubric-based assessment has been widely implemented and extensively studied in various educational contexts, there remains limited understanding of the overall structure and evolution of research in this field. Existing studies primarily focus on empirical investigations of rubric implementation, leaving a gap in the literature regarding large-scale analyses of publication trends, collaboration networks, and thematic developments. Without a systematic mapping of the research landscape, it is difficult to identify influential contributions, emerging research themes, and potential gaps that require further investigation. Therefore, a comprehensive bibliometric review is needed

to synthesize existing scholarship and provide a clearer picture of how rubric-based assessment research has developed over time.

The objective of this study is to map the landscape of rubric-based assessment studies through a bibliometric review of scholarly publications. Specifically, the study aims to analyze publication trends, identify the most influential authors, institutions, and journals, examine patterns of collaboration among researchers, and explore the thematic structure of research topics related to rubric-based assessment. By providing a systematic overview of the field, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the development of rubric-based assessment research and to highlight potential directions for future studies.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a bibliometric review approach to systematically analyze the development and structure of research related to rubric-based assessment. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to evaluate patterns in scholarly publications, including trends in research output, citation relationships, and thematic development within a specific field. By examining bibliographic data from a large collection of academic publications, this approach enables researchers to identify influential works, key contributors, and emerging research themes. In this study, bibliometric techniques were used to map the intellectual landscape of rubric-based assessment studies and to reveal how research in this area has evolved over time. The data for this study were collected from a major academic database that indexes peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and review articles in the field of education and related disciplines. Relevant publications were identified using a set of keywords related to rubric-based assessment, such as "rubric assessment," "scoring rubric," and "rubric-based evaluation." The search was limited to publications written in English and focused on educational contexts. After retrieving the initial dataset, a screening process was conducted to remove duplicate records and publications that were not directly related to rubric-based assessment. The final dataset consisted of publications that explicitly addressed the development, implementation, or evaluation of rubrics in educational assessment.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *3.1 Result*

#### a. Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

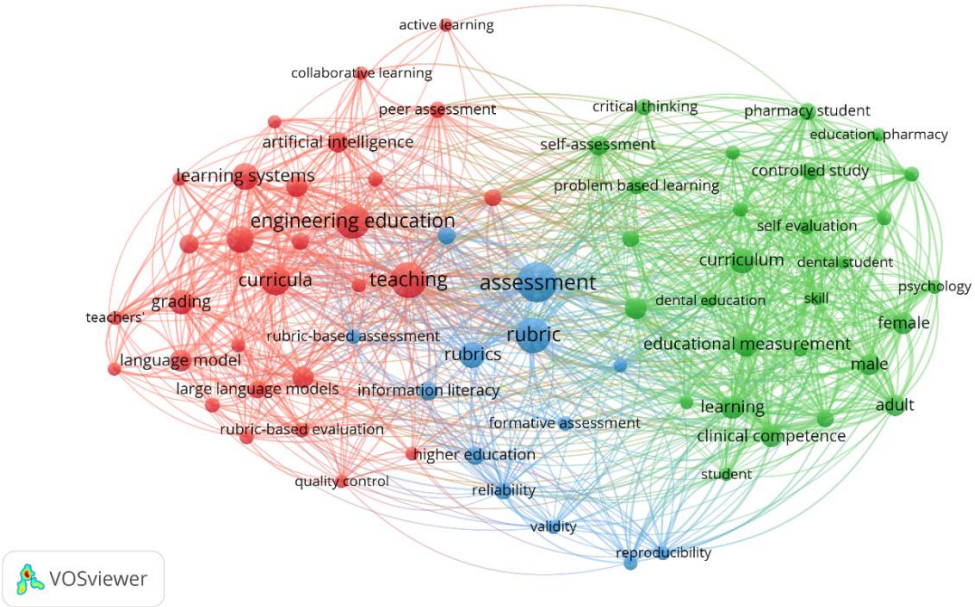


Figure 1. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 reveals a well-structured intellectual landscape of rubric-based assessment research, organized into three major thematic clusters. The central node, "rubric", appears prominently and connects strongly with "assessment," "rubrics," and "educational measurement," indicating that rubric-based assessment is fundamentally embedded within broader assessment theory and measurement practices. This central positioning highlights that rubrics are not treated as isolated tools but as integral components of systematic evaluation frameworks in education. The red cluster represents a pedagogical and technological orientation of rubric-based assessment. This cluster includes keywords such as "teaching," "curricula," "engineering education," "learning systems," and "artificial intelligence." The presence of emerging terms like "large language models" and "language model" suggests a growing intersection between rubric-based assessment and AI-driven educational technologies. Additionally, terms such as "peer assessment" and "collaborative learning" indicate that rubrics are increasingly used to support interactive and student-centered learning environments, particularly in applied and technical disciplines.

The green cluster reflects a strong focus on applied educational contexts, especially in professional and clinical education. Keywords such as "clinical competence," "pharmacy student," "dental education," "psychology," and "controlled study" demonstrate that rubric-based assessment is widely utilized in health and behavioral science education. This cluster also emphasizes "self-evaluation," "skill," and "learning," suggesting that rubrics are essential tools for developing competencies and reflective learning practices. The inclusion of demographic-related terms such as "male," "female," and "adult" further indicates the use of rubrics in empirical studies involving diverse learner populations. Meanwhile, the blue cluster represents the methodological and psychometric foundation of rubric-based assessment research. It includes key terms such as "validity," "reliability," "reproducibility," and "formative assessment." These keywords highlight the importance of ensuring that rubrics meet rigorous measurement standards and are capable of producing consistent and accurate evaluation results. The presence of "information literacy" and "higher education" suggests that this cluster also connects measurement quality with specific educational outcomes and contexts, reinforcing the role of rubrics in evidence-based assessment practices.

Network demonstrates that rubric-based assessment research is highly interdisciplinary, bridging pedagogy, applied professional education, and measurement theory. The strong interconnections among clusters indicate a mature and integrated research field, where instructional design, technological innovation, and psychometric validation coexist. Notably, the emergence of AI-related keywords signals a shifting research frontier, suggesting that future studies are likely to explore automated rubric generation, intelligent grading systems, and enhanced feedback mechanisms.

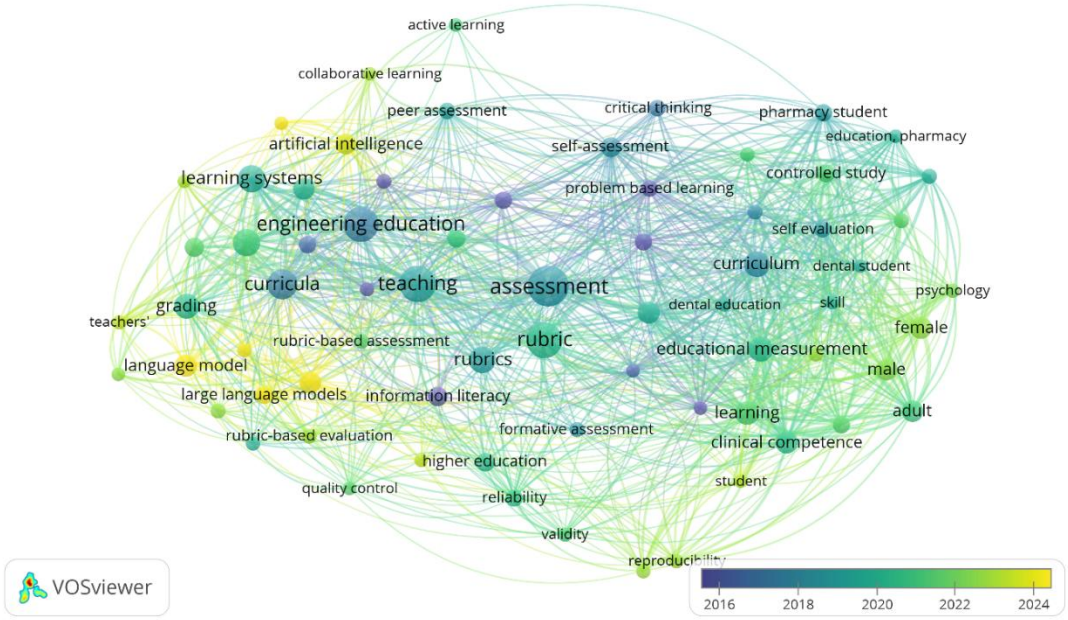


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 provides a temporal perspective on the evolution of rubric-based assessment research, where colors represent the average publication year of keywords. Earlier studies, indicated by darker blue tones (around 2016–2018), are concentrated around foundational concepts such as "assessment," "validity," "reliability," and "educational measurement." This suggests that initial research efforts were primarily focused on establishing the psychometric robustness and methodological credibility of rubrics. During this phase, scholars emphasized ensuring that rubric-based evaluations were reliable, valid, and reproducible within formal educational settings.

As the field progressed into the intermediate phase (green tones, approximately 2019–2021), the research focus shifted toward pedagogical applications and learning processes. Keywords such as "teaching," "curriculum," "learning," "self-assessment," and "problem-based learning" became more prominent, indicating a transition from purely measurement-oriented studies to more practice-oriented approaches. This phase reflects the integration of rubrics into instructional design and classroom practice, particularly in higher education and professional training contexts. The increasing presence of terms like "clinical competence" and "student" further highlights the expansion of rubric use in applied and competency-based learning environments. In the most recent phase (yellow tones, around 2022–2024), emerging themes such as "artificial intelligence," "large language models," "language model," and "learning systems" become highly visible. This indicates a significant shift toward the digital transformation of assessment practices, where rubric-based evaluation is increasingly supported or enhanced by AI technologies. The emergence of these terms suggests that current research is exploring automated grading, intelligent

feedback systems, and scalable assessment solutions.

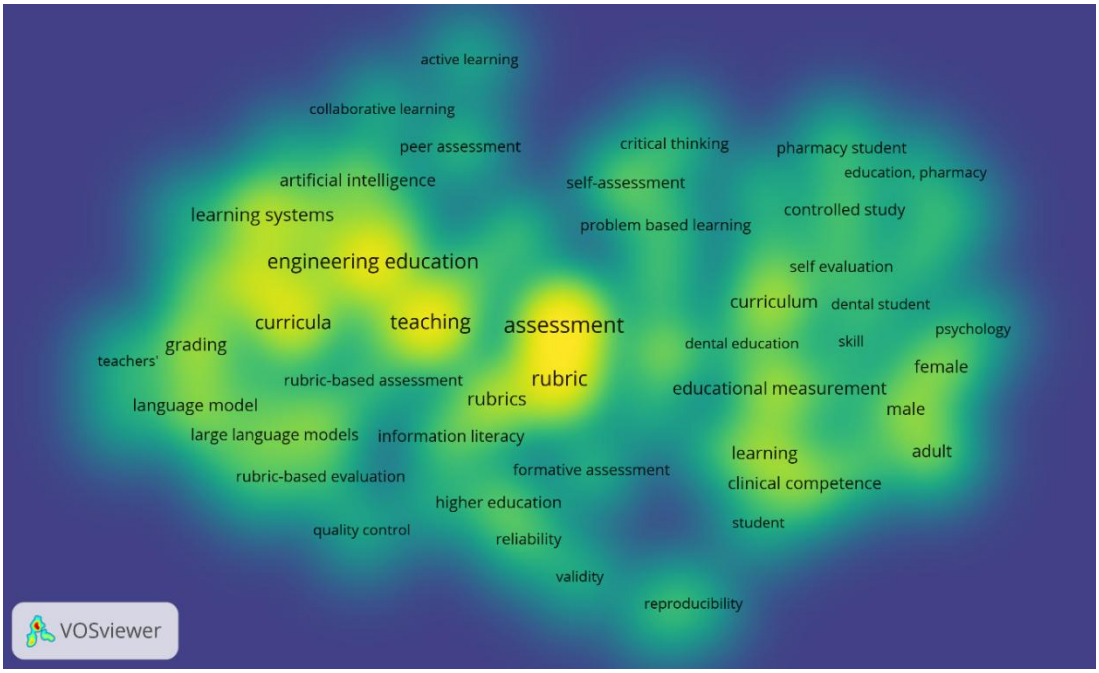


Figure 3. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 highlights the most intensively studied and interconnected themes within rubric-based assessment research, where brighter yellow areas indicate higher research concentration. The core of the map is dominated by "assessment," "rubric," and "teaching," confirming that rubric-based assessment is deeply embedded in instructional and evaluative practices. Surrounding this central zone are highly dense topics such as "engineering education," "curricula," and "educational measurement," suggesting that these areas have received substantial scholarly attention and serve as key application domains. This concentration reflects the maturity of research linking rubrics with curriculum design, instructional strategies, and formal assessment systems. Beyond the central cluster, moderately dense regions (green tones) reveal important but slightly less saturated themes such as "learning," "clinical competence," "self-assessment," and "problem-based learning," indicating the expansion of rubric use into competency-based and student-centered learning contexts. Meanwhile, emerging yet still developing topics—such as "artificial intelligence," "large language models," and "learning systems"—appear on the periphery with lower density, suggesting they are gaining attention but have not yet reached the same level of consolidation.

**b. Citation Analysis**

Table 1. Most Cited Article

| Citations | Author and Year | Title |
|---|---|---|
| 158 | [9] | Assessing systems thinking: A tool to measure complex reasoning through ill-structured problems |
| 139 | [10] | What's the evidence on evidence-based management? |
| 105 | [11] | Rubrics to assess information literacy: An examination of methodology and interrater reliability |
| 96 | [12] | Gradescope: A fast, flexible, and fair system for scalable assessment of handwritten work |
| 89 | [13] | Using rubrics to assess information literacy |
| 66 | [14] | Evaluating dissection in the gross anatomy course: Correlation between quality of laboratory dissection and students outcomes |
| 63 | [15] | Nursing students' self-assessment of their simulation experiences |
| 62 | [16] | Assessing mental health first aid skills using simulated patients |
| 56 | [17] | Integrating chatbots in education: insights from the Chatbot-Human Interaction Satisfaction Model (CHISM) |
| 54 | [18] | An Adaptive e-learning system for enhancing learning performance: Based on dynamic scaffolding theory |

Source: Scopus, 2026

### *3.2 Discussion*

The findings of this bibliometric study reveal that rubric-based assessment research has evolved into a well-established and multidimensional field, characterized by the integration of pedagogical practice, measurement theory, and emerging technological innovations. The keyword co-occurrence analysis demonstrates that "rubric" is strongly embedded within the broader domain of assessment and educational measurement, confirming its role as a central instrument in evaluating student performance. This centrality indicates that rubrics are not merely supportive tools but function as structured frameworks that enhance transparency, consistency, and accountability in educational evaluation. The strong linkage with terms such as validity and reliability further emphasizes that rubric-based assessment has been grounded in rigorous psychometric principles.

From a thematic perspective, the clustering structure highlights three dominant research orientations: pedagogical application, applied professional education, and methodological validation. The pedagogical cluster underscores the role of rubrics in facilitating teaching, curriculum design, and collaborative learning, reflecting a shift toward student-centered and active learning environments. Meanwhile, the applied cluster, particularly prominent in fields such as engineering education and health sciences, demonstrates the adaptability of rubrics in assessing complex competencies such as clinical skills and professional judgment. This suggests that rubric-based assessment has become a critical tool in competency-based education, where performance evaluation requires clear, multidimensional criteria.

The temporal evolution of the field further illustrates a significant transformation in research focus.

Early studies concentrated on establishing the validity, reliability, and reproducibility of rubric-based assessment, ensuring its legitimacy as a measurement tool. However, as the field matured, attention shifted toward instructional integration and formative assessment practices, highlighting the role of rubrics in enhancing learning processes rather than merely evaluating outcomes. More recently, the emergence of keywords related to artificial intelligence, large language models, and learning systems signals a new phase of digital transformation, where rubric-based assessment is increasingly supported by automated and intelligent technologies.

The density visualization complements these findings by identifying core and emerging areas of research concentration. Highly dense topics such as assessment, teaching, and engineering education indicate that these areas have reached a level of conceptual maturity and scholarly saturation. In contrast, emerging themes related to AI-driven assessment and advanced learning systems remain less dense, suggesting that they represent promising yet underexplored research frontiers. This imbalance highlights an opportunity for future research to further investigate how technological advancements can enhance the scalability, efficiency, and personalization of rubric-based assessment.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study demonstrates that rubric-based assessment research has evolved into a mature and interdisciplinary field, integrating pedagogical practices, psychometric foundations, and emerging technological innovations. The findings reveal a clear developmental trajectory, beginning with a focus on validity and reliability, progressing toward instructional integration and competency-based learning, and more recently expanding into AI-driven assessment approaches. The coexistence of well-established themes such as teaching and educational measurement with emerging topics like artificial intelligence highlights both the stability and dynamism of the field. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure and research trends in rubric-based assessment, while also identifying future opportunities for advancing digital, scalable, and adaptive assessment practices in modern education.

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