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## INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL LANDMARKS, TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCES AND AUTHENTIC LEARNING CONTEXTS

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Within the framework of the competence-based curricular paradigm, school assessment is expected to move beyond the traditional model primarily focused on fragmented verification of knowledge and to promote forms of evaluation that reflect the actual complexity of learning. In this regard, integrated assessment emerges as a particularly relevant approach for primary education, as it allows teachers to observe how pupils mobilize and transfer knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in authentic and meaningful contexts. The article analyses integrated assessment from the perspective of competence-based education, highlighting its relationship with the development of transferable competences and twenty-first century skills. Conceptual landmarks, pedagogical dimensions and stages of designing integrated assessment are presented, as well as the role of cross-curricular themes, real-life learning contexts and transdisciplinary learning products in shaping relevant assessment approaches for primary school pupils.

**Keywords:** *integrated assessment, primary education, transferable competences, competence-based education, cross-curricular themes, authentic learning contexts, formative assessment.*

### **EVALUAREA INTEGRATĂ ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR: REPERE CONCEPTUALE, COMPETENȚE TRANSFERABILE ȘI CONTEXTE DE ÎNVĂȚARE AUTENTICĂ**

În cadrul paradigmei curriculare bazate pe competențe, evaluarea școlară este așteptată să depășească modelul tradițional axat în principal pe verificarea fragmentată a cunoștințelor și să promoveze forme de evaluare care reflectă complexitatea reală a învățării. În acest sens, evaluarea integrată apare ca o abordare deosebit de relevantă pentru învățământul primar, deoarece permite profesorilor să observe modul în care elevii mobilizează și transferă cunoștințe, abilități, atitudini și valori în contexte autentice și semnificative. Articolul analizează evaluarea integrată din perspectiva educației bazate pe competențe, subliniind relația acesteia cu dezvoltarea competențelor transferabile și a abilităților secolului XXI. Sunt prezentate repere conceptuale, dimensiuni pedagogice și etape de proiectare a evaluării integrate, precum și rolul temelor intercurriculare, al contextelor de învățare din viața reală și al produselor de învățare transdisciplinară în conturarea abordărilor relevante de evaluare pentru elevii din școala primară.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *evaluare integrată, învățământ primar, competențe transferabile, educație bazată pe competențe, teme intercurriculare, contexte de învățare autentice, evaluare formativă.*

#### **Introduction**

Contemporary transformations in education require a profound reconsideration of the ways in which school assessment is conceptualised and implemented. Within the traditional paradigm, the emphasis was primarily placed on verifying the amount of information retained and reproduced by pupils. In contrast, current curricular orientations promote a different perspective, centred on the formation and development of competences [3; 4]. Within this framework, assessment can no longer remain a simple final stage of instruction intended solely to determine results; instead, it must become an integral part of the learning process, fulfilling regulatory, supportive and motivational functions in relation to pupils' progress [2].

In primary education, this paradigm shift is particularly significant, as young pupils' learning tends to be global, contextualised and experiential. Children do not learn authentically through the artificial isolation of

content, but rather by connecting learning to situations close to their everyday lives, to concrete experiences, practical activities, interactions and meaningful products [3]. Consequently, assessment should follow the same logic, moving beyond excessive disciplinary fragmentation and focusing instead on integrative, meaningful and accessible tasks.

From this perspective, integrated assessment represents a particularly valuable approach. It allows teachers not only to evaluate specific learning outcomes but also to observe pupils' ability to mobilise a variety of resources – knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – in order to solve meaningful tasks. Furthermore, integrated assessment creates favourable conditions for observing transferable competences such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, reflection, autonomy and adaptability, which are considered essential for the development of the contemporary learner [5; 6].

The relevance of this topic is also supported by international frameworks concerning twenty-first century competences, which highlight the need for the integrated development of cognitive, metacognitive, social, emotional, practical and digital dimensions of learning [5]. Within a competence-based educational ecosystem, assessment must be able to capture the complexity of these learning outcomes and provide meaningful insights into how pupils learn, apply, transfer knowledge, collaborate and reflect. In this sense, integrated assessment is not merely a methodological solution, but rather the expression of a pedagogical vision consistent with the goals of contemporary education [1; 2].

The present article aims to analyse integrated assessment in primary education from the perspective of transferable competences and authentic learning contexts. The study seeks to clarify the conceptual foundations of integrated assessment, highlight its relationship with competence-based education, examine the role of cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts, and identify several guidelines for designing and implementing integrated assessment in educational practice. In addition, the article discusses the advantages, challenges and conditions that may support the effective implementation of integrated assessment in school practice.

Therefore, the central idea of this paper is that integrated assessment represents a pedagogical necessity in contemporary primary education, as it responds more effectively than fragmented assessment to the need to develop and value transferable competences in authentic learning contexts that are meaningful and closely connected to pupils' real-life experiences.

### **Integrated Assessment within the Competence-Based Education Paradigm**

The evolution of the school curriculum toward a competence-based approach has generated significant transformations not only in terms of educational goals but also in the ways teaching, learning, and assessment are organized [3; 4]. Within such a framework, the emphasis is no longer placed exclusively on the assimilation and reproduction of information, but rather on the pupil's ability to functionally mobilize diverse resources in order to cope with various, relevant, and often complex situations. This shift in focus requires a reconsideration of assessment practices, which must become consistent with the logic of competence development [1; 6].

Competence-based education involves the integrated use of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in concrete life and learning contexts [3]. From this perspective, pupil performance cannot be reduced to providing the correct answer to an item or faithfully reproducing a taught content, but must instead be understood as an expression of the learner's capacity to select, combine, and use what they know and what they are able to do in response to the demands of a given situation. Naturally, such forms of performance require more complex, flexible assessment approaches that are closer to the real contexts in which competences are manifested [2; 6].

Integrated assessment responds to this need by overcoming fragmented approaches focused strictly on disciplines and isolated content sequences. It proposes assessment tasks that create connections between different learning domains, capitalize on authentic contexts, and provide pupils with opportunities to demonstrate what they know and what they are capable of doing in a comprehensive and meaningful manner. Thus, assessment no longer aims merely at measuring separate learning outcomes but at capturing the learner's ability to establish connections, transfer knowledge, and act competently within a given context [1; 2].

In primary education, this perspective has particular relevance. The developmental characteristics of young learners require educational approaches that emphasize the unity of learning experiences and the concrete, intuitive, and contextualized ways in which children relate to the world [3]. Young pupils learn more effectively when learning content is associated with themes close to their everyday lives, practical activities, meaningful tasks, and visible learning products. Consequently, integrated assessment becomes not only appropriate but necessary, as it allows learning to be evaluated in ways that correspond to how it actually takes place.

Another important argument supporting integrated assessment concerns its formative character. Within a competence-based educational ecosystem, assessment should not be understood solely as an instrument for classification or certification, but rather as a mechanism that supports learning [2]. Integrated assessment facilitates observation of the learning process, providing teachers with relevant information about how pupils think, collaborate, solve problems, and organize their work. At the same time, it offers pupils opportunities to become aware of the meaning of their activities, the criteria for success, and the directions for improvement. In this way, it supports self-regulation, reflection, and individual progress [2; 6].

However, integrated assessment should not be confused with the simple juxtaposition of several subjects within the same activity. Its pedagogical value does not lie in the formal act of “integration”, but in the coherence of the proposed task and in the extent to which it requires pupils to mobilize their resources functionally in order to solve a meaningful situation. An activity is truly integrated when the connections between contents, competences, and contexts are authentic, pedagogically justified, and accessible to pupils [1].

Consequently, integrated assessment may be considered one of the most appropriate expressions of the competence-based education paradigm. It provides the necessary framework for assessing complex learning outcomes, valuing contextualized learning, and developing an assessment culture centred on progress, meaning, and transfer. In primary education, such an approach contributes to building a coherent educational experience in which assessment becomes a natural component of learning and of pupils’ development.

### **Transferable Competences – Purpose and Reference Point of Integrated Assessment**

In contemporary education, the development of transferable competences represents one of the essential goals of the educational process. Rapid social changes, the expansion of digital technologies, professional mobility, and cultural diversity require preparing pupils not only to accumulate knowledge but also to use it in diverse contexts and new situations [5]. Within this framework, transferable competences become key reference points both for organizing learning and for designing and implementing assessment.

Transferable competences can be understood as sets of resources – knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values – that can be mobilized flexibly in contexts different from those in which they were initially developed. They do not belong exclusively to a single school subject but emerge through diverse learning experiences and through the correlation of contents from multiple fields of study [3; 4]. In this respect, integrated assessment becomes an appropriate instrument for observing and evaluating such competences, as it creates situations in which pupils are encouraged to combine and apply resources from different learning domains.

International organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development emphasize the importance of developing twenty-first century competences, considered essential for individuals’ adaptation and success in a complex and dynamic society [5]. These include cognitive and metacognitive competences, social and emotional competences, practical and digital competences, as well as the ability to adapt and engage in lifelong learning.

Cognitive competences include abilities such as logical thinking, information analysis, problem solving, and the use of language or numerical representations. These abilities are fundamental for understanding and interpreting reality and for applying knowledge in concrete situations. At the same time, metacognitive competences involve the learner’s ability to reflect on their own learning process, monitor their progress, and adjust their learning strategies according to the requirements of a task [5].

Equally important are social and emotional competences, which include empathy, communication, cooperation, responsibility, and emotional regulation. In the school environment, these competences contribute to building positive relationships, active participation in group activities, and the development of constructive attitudes toward learning. In addition, practical and digital competences have become increasingly relevant in the current context, where the use of technologies, the manipulation of tools, and the application of knowledge in concrete activities represent important components of pupils' development [3; 5].

The complex and interdependent nature of these competences highlights the need for assessment approaches that go beyond the verification of isolated knowledge or procedures. Integrated assessment makes it possible to observe how pupils combine cognitive, social, and practical resources in order to solve authentic tasks, collaborate with others, and produce meaningful outcomes. Through activities such as projects, case studies, investigations, or problem-solving tasks, pupils can demonstrate not only what they know but also how they apply, interpret, and use their knowledge [2; 6].

In primary education, the development of transferable competences is particularly important, as it forms the foundation for pupils' later development. Integrated activities and contextualized tasks contribute to the development of critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and learning autonomy. Integrated assessment enables these dimensions to be observed in an authentic way, providing teachers with a more comprehensive picture of pupils' progress.

Therefore, transferable competences can be regarded both as a major goal of contemporary education and as a fundamental reference point for the design of integrated assessment. When assessment is designed in such a way that it captures the mobilization of these competences in diverse contexts, it becomes a valuable tool for supporting meaningful, functional, and life-oriented learning.

### **Pedagogical Landmarks and Stages in Designing Integrated Assessment**

Designing integrated assessment requires a rigorous pedagogical approach that ensures coherence between educational goals, learning activities, and the ways in which pupils' outcomes are evaluated. Within a competence-based approach, assessment cannot be conceived independently of the learning process; rather, it must be organically integrated into it, providing relevant information about pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used [1; 2].

A first essential reference point in the design of integrated assessment is the clarification of the intended learning outcomes. The teacher must identify the targeted competences and formulate assessment objectives that reflect the integrated mobilization of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this respect, assessment is not limited to verifying isolated learning outcomes, but focuses on pupils' capacity to use what they have learned in relevant and meaningful situations [3; 4].

Another important element is the selection of the integrating context. Assessment tasks should be anchored in themes or situations close to pupils' experiences and should enable connections between several areas of learning. In primary education, such contexts may include everyday activities, thematic projects, school events, or situations inspired by community life. Through these contexts, pupils are invited to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired in a functional and creative way.

An essential step in the design process is the formulation of the assessment task and the identification of the final product. In integrated assessment, the product created by the pupil – whether it is a project, a presentation, a poster, an experiment, or a solved problem situation – becomes the main basis for evaluation. This product should be relevant to the targeted competences and should provide pupils with opportunities to demonstrate how they mobilize diverse resources in order to accomplish the task [2; 6].

To ensure objectivity and transparency in the assessment process, it is necessary to establish clear assessment criteria and indicators. These criteria should be clearly formulated and communicated to pupils before the activity takes place, so that they understand what is expected from them and which elements define successful performance. In this way, assessment becomes an instrument that guides learning, while pupils can actively participate in the process through self-assessment and peer assessment [2].

Another important aspect concerns the analysis and interpretation of assessment results. Teachers should use the information obtained not only to evaluate pupils' performance but also to identify the difficulties encountered and to adjust subsequent teaching strategies. In this sense, integrated assessment has a strong formative character, contributing to the regulation of the learning process and supporting individual progress [2].

Furthermore, communicating results and providing constructive feedback represent essential components of integrated assessment. Feedback should highlight both successful aspects and directions for improvement, helping pupils develop the ability to reflect on their own learning processes. Through clear, progress-oriented feedback, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and to strengthen their autonomy in learning [2; 6].

Overall, the design of integrated assessment can be structured into several main stages: identifying the targeted competences, selecting the integrating context, formulating the assessment task and its evaluable product, defining assessment criteria, and using the results through feedback and reflection. Following these stages ensures the coherence and relevance of the assessment process, transforming assessment into an authentic instrument for supporting learning.

Thus, integrated assessment becomes not only a way of evaluating pupils' outcomes but also a pedagogical mechanism that facilitates the development of transferable competences, supports pupils' active engagement, and strengthens the connection between learning and real-life contexts.

### **Cross-Curricular Themes and Real-Life Learning Contexts as a Basis for Integrated Assessment**

One of the elements that provide relevance and authenticity to integrated assessment is the use of cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts in the organization of learning and assessment activities. These create meaningful situations in which pupils can mobilize knowledge and skills from several fields of study, develop transferable competences, and strengthen the connection between learning and life experiences [3; 4].

Cross-curricular themes represent topics of general interest that can be approached from the perspective of several school disciplines. They facilitate the integration of curricular contents and contribute to the development of holistic learning, in which pupils perceive the relationships between different domains of knowledge. In primary education, such themes may be organized around topics close to the child's world, such as health, the environment, the local community, friendship, nutrition, cultural traditions, or space exploration [3].

Through these themes, teachers can create learning situations in which pupils investigate, discuss, experiment, and produce outcomes that reflect an integrated understanding of the studied content. For example, a theme such as *“The Environment”* may involve observation and experimentation activities in science, the writing of descriptive or informative texts in language classes, the creation of posters or artistic objects in visual arts, and the analysis of data or graphs in mathematics. Assessing the results of these activities allows teachers to evaluate how pupils use knowledge and skills from multiple domains in order to understand and explain complex situations.

Complementing cross-curricular themes, real-life learning contexts represent situations inspired by pupils' real experiences. These contexts are built around everyday activities, community events, or simple problems that may be encountered in daily life. Through these contexts, pupils are encouraged to apply previously acquired knowledge and skills in order to solve concrete tasks, while also developing responsibility, collaboration, and decision-making skills.

In primary education, such contexts can be diverse and adapted to pupils' developmental level. For example, organizing a school event, planning a trip, managing a shopping budget, creating a guide to the local community, or designing a school garden are contexts that allow the integration of content from several disciplines and enable the authentic assessment of pupils' competences. Within these activities, pupils may calculate costs, write texts, create presentations, collect and analyze information, collaborate in teams, and reflect on the results achieved.

These learning contexts may also extend into family or community environments. Activities such as

organizing a picnic, participating in a recycling campaign, developing a volunteer project, or preparing a thematic exhibition provide learning opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single school discipline and contribute to the development of important social and civic competences.

Integrating such contexts into school assessment allows teachers to observe how pupils use their knowledge in real situations and how they develop the ability to transfer learning. Instead of answering isolated questions or reproducing memorized information, pupils are engaged in activities that require critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and responsibility. In this way, assessment becomes more relevant to pupils' personal and social development and more accurately reflects their level of competence [5; 6].

By capitalizing on cross-curricular themes and real-life learning contexts, integrated assessment contributes to the creation of a dynamic and motivating educational framework in which learning gains meaning and practical value. Pupils perceive school activities as connected to their life experiences, while teachers can evaluate more comprehensively how pupils understand, apply, and transfer the knowledge they acquire.

### **Products and Instruments Used in Integrated Assessment**

An essential component of integrated assessment is the use of assessment products and tools that enable pupils to demonstrate authentically how they mobilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes in carrying out meaningful tasks. Unlike traditional assessment, which is mainly focused on short answers or the reproductive verification of information, integrated assessment makes use of complex products resulting from activities of exploration, collaboration, and creation [2; 6].

In primary education, these products may take various forms and should be adapted to pupils' age-related characteristics, interests, and educational contexts. An important role is played by products aimed at synthesizing and organizing information, such as thematic portfolios, graphic organizers, data systematization tables, or lapbooks. These allow pupils to collect, structure, and present information in a visual and coherent way, thereby facilitating the understanding of relationships between concepts and reinforcing learning.

Another important category consists of communication and presentation products. Oral or digital presentations, interviews, newsletters, posters, or infographics provide pupils with opportunities to capitalize on the outcomes of the activities carried out and to develop their communication and argumentation skills. Through such activities, pupils learn to select relevant information, organize it logically, and communicate it in an accessible and convincing manner.

Products related to action and problem solving also occupy an important place in integrated assessment. Projects, case studies, experiments, or problem-based tasks offer pupils the opportunity to apply what they have learned in practice and to identify solutions to complex tasks. For example, organizing a school fair, carrying out an ecological experiment, or developing a guide to the local community may become assessment contexts in which mathematical, linguistic, social, and civic competences are mobilized simultaneously.

In addition, creative and artistic activities may constitute relevant forms of integrated assessment. Illustrated books produced by pupils, dramatizations, exhibitions of creative work, or the making of objects from recycled materials enable pupils to express ideas and knowledge in an original and personal way. Such products not only reflect pupils' level of understanding but also contribute to the development of creativity and emotional engagement in the learning process.

For these products to become effective assessment instruments, they must be accompanied by clear assessment criteria and appropriate evaluation tools. These include assessment rubrics, checklists, observation grids, and self-assessment or peer-assessment sheets. Such tools contribute to ensuring transparency in the assessment process and provide pupils with concrete reference points for understanding expectations and reflecting on their own performance [2].

Digital technologies may also play an important role in integrated assessment. Online platforms, multimedia presentations, interactive resources, or data visualization tools offer new possibilities for collecting,

analysing, and presenting learning outcomes. At the same time, the use of such tools contributes to the development of pupils' digital competences and to the diversification of assessment methods [5].

Overall, the diversity of products and instruments used in integrated assessment reflects the complexity of the learning process and enables the assessment of a wide range of competences. Their selection should be made carefully, depending on the targeted competences, the context of the activity, and pupils' developmental level. In this way, integrated assessment becomes a flexible and relevant process, capable of highlighting pupils' progress and supporting the development of active and meaningful learning.

### **Advantages, Challenges, and Conditions for the Effectiveness of Integrated Assessment**

Integrated assessment offers numerous opportunities for developing an educational process that is more relevant and more closely connected to the reality in which pupils live and learn. Through its contextualized and interdisciplinary nature, it enables the assessment of complex competences and contributes to overcoming the limits of traditional assessment centred exclusively on the reproduction of information [2; 6].

One of the main advantages of integrated assessment lies in its ability to capture learning in a holistic manner. Pupils are not assessed only in terms of what they know, but also in terms of how they use knowledge, collaborate with others, solve problems, and organize their work. In this way, assessment reflects pupils' real competences more accurately and provides teachers with a more comprehensive picture of their progress.

Another important advantage is the stimulation of motivation for learning. When assessment tasks are placed in authentic contexts that are close to pupils' experiences, they become more interesting and more meaningful. Pupils perceive assessment activities not as a formal verification process, but as an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do and to participate actively in the learning process.

Integrated assessment also supports the development of collaboration and communication competences. Many integrated activities involve teamwork, exchange of ideas, and the presentation of results in front of peers. In this way, pupils learn to express their opinions, negotiate solutions, and contribute to the creation of a common product, thus developing their social and emotional competences.

At the same time, integrated assessment contributes to the transfer of learning. Through contextualized tasks, pupils are encouraged to use the knowledge they have acquired in situations different from those in which it was initially learned. This process supports the development of critical thinking and adaptability, competences that are essential for lifelong learning [5].

However, the implementation of integrated assessment may also encounter certain difficulties. One of the main challenges is related to the complexity of designing assessment tasks. Developing activities that authentically integrate several fields of learning and that allow the assessment of a variety of competences requires time, experience, and a solid understanding of curricular aims.

In addition, the assessment of complex products may raise issues related to objectivity and coherence. In the absence of clear criteria and appropriate evaluation tools, there is a risk that assessment may become overly general or difficult to compare. For this reason, the use of assessment rubrics and other criterion-referenced tools becomes essential in ensuring the transparency and fairness of the assessment process [2].

Another difficulty may concern the management of instructional time. Integrated activities, especially those involving projects or elaborate products, may require longer working periods and careful planning of the stages of implementation. Teachers must find a balance between curricular requirements, the available time, and the complexity of the proposed tasks.

For integrated assessment to be effective, several essential pedagogical conditions need to be respected. First, assessment tasks should be relevant and accessible to pupils, being correlated with their life experiences and their developmental level. Second, assessment criteria should be clearly formulated and communicated to pupils before the activities are carried out, so that they understand what is expected of them.

In addition, integrated assessment should maintain a balance between the disciplinary and the integrative dimensions. Integration should not lead to the dilution of subject-specific content, but rather facilitate

connections between disciplines and capitalize on their complementarity. At the same time, the feedback provided to pupils should be constant, constructive, and oriented toward progress, thereby supporting reflection and self-regulated learning [2].

Last but not least, the effective implementation of integrated assessment requires the continuous professional development of teachers. They must be familiar with the principles of competence-based education, with methods for designing integrated activities, and with modern assessment tools. Professional training and the exchange of good practices may significantly contribute to consolidating an assessment culture oriented toward learning.

Under these conditions, integrated assessment can become a valuable instrument for the development of a learner-centred education, in which assessment does not represent merely a moment of verification, but a continuous process of supporting learning and personal development.

### Conclusions

Integrated assessment represents an important direction in the development of assessment practices within the context of competence-based education. In an educational system oriented toward the formation of transferable competences and toward the development of learning that is relevant to real-life situations, assessment can no longer be limited to the fragmented verification of isolated knowledge. Instead, it must capture how pupils mobilize diverse resources in order to solve meaningful tasks.

The analysis carried out highlights that integrated assessment allows learning to be evaluated in a more complex manner and in closer connection with the reality of the educational process. Through the use of authentic contexts, cross-curricular themes, and real-life learning situations, pupils have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in concrete activities while simultaneously developing cognitive, social, emotional, and practical competences. In this way, assessment becomes an instrument that supports the transfer of learning and contributes to the development of competences essential for adaptation and active participation in society.

Integrated assessment also offers teachers the opportunity to observe pupils' progress in a more nuanced way, to identify the difficulties they encounter, and to adapt teaching strategies according to their needs. The use of diverse products – such as projects, portfolios, presentations, experiments, or problem-solving tasks – makes it possible to capitalize on the diversity of learning styles and creates favourable conditions for pupils' active engagement in the assessment process.

At the same time, the implementation of integrated assessment requires careful planning and solid methodological preparation on the part of teachers. The design of assessment tasks, the establishment of evaluation criteria, and the management of integrated activities involve a reflective approach and continuous adaptation to pupils' characteristics and to the educational context. In this respect, continuous professional development for teachers and the promotion of examples of good practice become essential conditions for consolidating an assessment culture centred on competences.

In conclusion, integrated assessment can be regarded not merely as a methodological alternative to traditional assessment, but as an essential component of modern education oriented toward functional, reflective, and contextualized learning. By capitalizing on authentic learning contexts and by assessing transferable competences, it contributes to the development of a coherent educational experience in which assessment becomes a process that supports learning and pupils' development.

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