

Assessment for Learning: Faculty of Education Practices

Lydia Aso Sherko¹ & Venera Ulker²

^{1,2} English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University, KRG, Iraq

Correspondence: Lydia Aso Sherko, English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University, KRG, Iraq

Email: lydia.aso@tiu.edu.iq

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Abstract: Universities, especially those in the Kurdish region, frequently struggle with student satisfaction with evaluation techniques. Problems that adversely affect students' learning and experience include subjective evaluation, a mismatch between the goals of the course and the way they are assessed, and the pressure associated with taking traditional exams. Additionally, the education system is more teacher-centered than student-centered since learners do not receive constructive criticism from teachers on a regular basis and do not have enough opportunities to express their opinions during lectures. The solution that stands out is formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning. The purpose of this study was to investigate formative assessment's advantages and students' discontent with Kurdish colleges' existing assessment practices. To collect data, a quantitative research approach was employed. Students at private and public universities were given access to an online survey. According to the study's findings, students prefer a range of assessment methods, such as projects, observations, questions, pop quizzes, and written exams. Students additionally indicated that they wished to receive feedback from their teachers. These findings have implications for academic institutions and other education-related stakeholders, as they point to the necessity of using a range of evaluation techniques and giving students insightful feedback.

Keywords: Assessment, Formative Assessment, Feedback, Evaluation, Measurement.

1. Introduction

An essential component of the educational process, assessment is used to gauge how well students are learning and developing. However, a thorough grasp of students' learning and individual needs is not possible with standard traditional evaluation methods that only consider grades and final exams (Stanja, Gritz, Krugel, Hoppe, & Dannemann, 2023). An alternate method called assessment for learning (AFL) seeks to enhance students' learning by giving them accurate and relevant feedback so they can evaluate their progress and modify their learning methods (Yan & Pastore, 2022). AFL has become widely recognized in recent years, and a lot of educational institutions have embraced it as a fundamental teaching approach, including faculties of education (Nhor, Pang, & Em, 2022). This paper aims to investigate the notion of Assessment for Learning, its advantages and disadvantages, and its implementation in the context of faculty of education practices.

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Assessment for learning is crucial for both educators and learners, as it provides the sole means of determining the effectiveness of instruction over a given period and identifies areas that require improvement (Yan, Chiu, & Cheng, 2022). Additionally, learners are furnished with constructive criticism regarding their progress and are assisted in formulating methods to improve. As stated by Cambridge Assessment International Education (2014), assessment for learning is an instructional methodology that provides feedback to enhance students' academic progress. So, learners get more engaged in the educational process and feel more confident in the content and standards expected of them.

Green (2018) defines AFL as teacher-designed evaluations incorporated into routine classroom activities. According to Alsubai'ai (2021), formative assessment is a method of evaluation that enables students to obtain grades prior to the final exams. Thus, assessment for learning is a critical element in the educational process as it assists students in comprehending their strengths and areas requiring improvement. It assists in assessing students' performance, illuminates areas for development, and thus demonstrates methods for enhancing the teaching and learning process (Earl, 2013). In addition to inspiring and facilitating learning, it serves as a crucial component of motivation (Crandall, 2014). There is substantial evidence to suggest that formative assessment is an indispensable element of education that assists students in achieving their learning objectives; thus, it is crucial for students around the world to be involved in formative assessment.

1.1 Problem Statement

Although assessments may not find unanimous support among educators, many instructors consider them crucial, often the only way, in promoting student development (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2023). In the faculty of education, assessments of student performance are very often conducted through the utilization of tests, examinations, and assignments. Nevertheless, the promotion of transparency within the assessment system presents a significant obstacle. It is a common challenge for students to grasp the assessment methodologies and evaluation processes utilized by their instructors.

Moreover, the existing assessment system exhibits a shortage of variety in the methodologies employed to evaluate students in the classroom. This constraint prevents an in-depth understanding of the capabilities and potential of students. Furthermore, a deficiency exists in the provision of sufficient opportunities for students to receive constructive criticism, which limits their capacity to make improvements and finalize assignments (Winstone & Boud, 2022).

To optimize the educational experience, it is critical to confront these concerns through the promotion of transparency, the implementation of a variety of assessment methods, and the provision of sufficient support and feedback to enable students to succeed in their learning activities.

1.2 Research Questions

The present study is guided by the following research inquiries:

1. What are the primary justifications for learning assessment within the education faculty?
2. What are the students' assessment format preferences?

3. What modifications are required to evaluate students' learning performance prior to their final submissions?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research's main objective is to reveal the crucial significance of formative assessment within the Faculty of Education, with a focus on its potential to improve teaching and learning outcomes. By investigating the impact of formative assessment on the learning process, this study aims to illuminate its primary purpose of guiding students toward development. A comprehensive analysis of the underlying rationales for utilizing formative assessment deepens understanding of its pedagogical merit.

An integral element of this research involves assessing the effectiveness of formative assessment in monitoring students' progress. This inquiry is crucial for educators seeking insightful data regarding the effectiveness of integrating formative assessment methods into their teaching strategies. Concurrently, students must understand that formative assessment serves as a catalyst for motivation and as an evaluative instrument used by the Faculty of Education. Through the cultivation of an environment that values ongoing enhancement, formative assessment motivates learners to direct heightened initiatives to exceed their scholastic objectives and achieve their educational goals. Therefore, the research is of utmost significance in revealing the complex significance of formative assessment as it is related to the progression of education within the Faculty of Education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Assessment in Education

Fundamentally, the term "assessment" refers to the process of judging the capacity, character, or nature of an individual's knowledge and/or abilities to demonstrate them. The significance or value of something needs to be thoroughly evaluated and judged (Green, 2018). As referenced in Crandall (2014), assessment is defined by Linn & Gronlund (2000) as "an ongoing process of monitoring teaching and learning in which learning objectives are identified and students' progress towards achieving them is evaluated."(p.246). Teachers evaluate students on a routine basis, as assessment is a vital component of the learning process. Thus, in education, assessment relates to the various methodologies and resources employed by instructors to gauge, analyze, or ascertain the progress of their pupils throughout, during, and after the educational journey.

2.2 Types of Assessment

In education, an extensive variety of assessment types is implemented. The main difference between them is the intended application. While formative assessment, which is the primary focus of this study, is among the twelve categories of assessment in education, the following are included to illustrate the distinction (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2023):

- Summative assessment: An exam conducted at the completion of a unit, course, semester, or school year to evaluate student learning. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

- Interim assessment: Designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills in relation to a particular set of academic standards, it is administered at predictable and scheduled intervals throughout the academic year.
- Formative assessment: The process of evaluating students' learning throughout a course, unit, or academic career; it is a daily evaluation that enables instructors to determine the conceptual level and proficiency of their students.
- Diagnostic assessment is an in-class procedure used to determine the current level of student learning progress.
- Dynamic assessment relates to the evaluation of a child's cognitive abilities, learning progress, perception, and problem-solving capabilities through an active teaching process.
- Formal Assessment: This category of evaluation refers to paper exams students must complete.
- Informal Assessment: Students are evaluated using this form of assessment in the form of observations during oral examinations, among other things.
- Authentic Assessment: Unlike easy-to-score questions responses, it evaluates the student's capability in real-world scenarios.
- Performance assessment is the procedure by which students' ability to exhibit their acquired knowledge through their performance of simulated or real-life scenarios is evaluated.
- Norm-referenced assessment involves the ranking of each learner in relation to the entire group of individuals who underwent evaluation.
- Criteria-referenced assessment involves the comparison of a student's performance with a predetermined set of criteria, typically associated with a particular curriculum or course.
- Integrated Assessment evaluates the knowledge and abilities of students more comprehensively.

As stated in the preceding definitions, assessment consists of evaluating and measuring the learning requirements, level, and challenges that students encounter while acquiring knowledge, in addition to determining the extent to which they have achieved the learning objectives.

2.3 Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning, also known as formative assessment, is an instructional approach that utilizes constructive feedback to enhance students' performance and facilitate the development of their knowledge. Additionally, it can facilitate student self-monitoring of learning, enabling them to identify areas of strength and area requiring development, as well as comprehend concepts that require further emphasis (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2023).

Saad (2013) defines Assessment for Learning as the utilization of assessment by educators and students to enhance learning and instruction. It entails evaluating the progress of students, providing them with constructive criticism, and determining the subsequent course of action in the educational process. By fostering student-teacher, student-student and teacher-to-student feedback, facilitating discussions, and assessing learning together assessment for learning increases teacher and student participation in the classroom.

According to William (2011), formative assessment "provides teachers and students with information regarding the learning process that can be utilized to inform instructional decisions and enhance performance, respectively; this information serves to motivate students" (Paragraph 2). Therefore, in order to facilitate students' acquisition of the intended material, instructors are required to modify their teaching methodology in accordance with the assessment results.

In summary, formative assessment, assessment for learning, is the procedure by which instructors measure and evaluate their students throughout the unit, term, lesson, or course to ensure that they are meeting the course objectives.

2.4 Types of Assessment for Learning

Educators implement formative assessment to gauge the progress of their students and themselves throughout a lesson, term, or course, among other things. There are numerous learning assessment activities. Examples of common types of learning assessment include presentations, projects, pop-quizzes, inquiries, discussions, assignments or homework, and questioning.

A wide variety of formative assessment methods are available; however, each possess distinct strengths and weaknesses (Fukuda, Lander, & Pope, 2022). The subsequent table (Table 1) presents a summary of these assessment categories, defining their names, the rationales for their adoption, and the associated benefits and drawbacks linked to each.

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of formative assessment

Tasks of Formative assessment	The purpose	Pros	Cons
Observation	The purpose is to observe students' performance to what is performed well and what needs more practice, explanation, etc. Observations assist teachers in gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional planning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It helps to improve instruction 2. While the instructor observes the students, it boosts their confidence and reduces the number of errors they make because they are more motivated to study when they are aware that someone is watching and willing to assist. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The feedback might not be useful and/or constructive. 2. Students might think that there is something wrong and get stressed and demotivated. 3. Observation might not be valid for summative evaluation.
Questioning	Questioning facilitates learner engagement and contributes to a student-centered educational environment. It permits instructors to assess students'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It promotes increased student thought and the development of critical thinking. 2. It promotes student engagement with both their 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focusing solely on a single student during a question-and-answer segment can cause feelings of shyness and anxiety in the other students.

	comprehension, for instance by employing CCQs (Concept Checking Questions).	academic assignments and their peers. 3. It assists the student in showing their comprehension.	2. Instructors might not allocate sufficient time for students to reflect on their responses and inquiries.
Discussion	Discussions are intended to elicit the solutions and ideas of both instructors and learners regarding a particular subject. The objective is to comprehend the perspectives of others regarding a particular subject matter. Peers exchange previously acquired information among the students.	1. It fosters and broadens the comprehension of the entire class. 2. It inspires more students to engage in instructional activities.	1. Some students might feel ignored if they are unable to express their thoughts due to the lesson's time constraints, unbalanced grouping, etc. 2. During the instructor's explanation of the lesson, the discussion cannot be recorded. However, once the students begin discussing the topic, the teacher may record the conversation and provide level-appropriate assistance.
Assignments	The objective is to provide students with self-study so they can independently practice and review what they have learned.	1. Students can be involved in subject-specific practice. 2. Providing them the opportunity to review what they have studied 3. It gives the instructor insight into whether the student comprehends the material.	1. Students may experience a decrease in academic engagement if they are unable to allocate sufficient time to complete assignments or establish a healthy balance between their studies and personal, familial, and social responsibilities. 2 Assignments can cause a student's curiosity decrease.
Presentations	The objective underlying presentations is to provide an opportunity for students to express themselves in front of an audience, thereby reinforcing their understanding of the subject matter they have studied and enabling them to discover additional information relating to it.	1. It improves students' verbal communication abilities 2. The fear of speaking and expressing one's opinion in front of an audience is reduced. 3. Learners can achieve high grades without difficulty as they can prepare themselves before the presentation.	1. The process may be time-consuming, particularly in classes that accommodate more than 25 students. 2. if the presentation exceeds its allotted time, both the instructor and other learners may become uninterested. 3. Excessive information in the presentations might result in students' confusion.

Projects	It promotes students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter through independent investigation and strengthens their independence as learners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It enhances the students' collaborative experience with their peers. 2. It provides educators with insight into their learners' identities and abilities. 3. It enhances the creativity and positive attitudes of students toward learning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is time-consuming and demands considerable effort from the students. 2. The challenge that educators face when attempting to integrate Project-Based Science into district policies is further compounded by the length of time required to implement comprehensive methodologies like Project-Based Learning.
Pop-Quizzes	The purpose of pop quizzes is to stimulate students' awareness of the course material and to encourage them to engage in daily study.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By conducting pop quizzes, instructors can quickly assess students' comprehension of the lesson's material. 2. On the night of the exam, students may review what they have learned; therefore, pop quizzes serve as review for the course's final exam. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher must prepare and review exam questions; therefore, a substantial amount of time may be required to develop them in accordance with the curriculum. 2. A student may be unprepared for a test at that moment; this may have an impact on them. Additionally, they may develop a fear of the instructor and the lesson.

2.5 The Role of Feedback in Assessment for Learning

Informing learners of their performance constitutes feedback. Feedback, typically provided after an assessment, aids learners in enhancing their performance during the assessment and learning process. Importantly, the feedback procedure ensures that the students have a positive or neutral learning experience (Winstone & Boud, 2022). Negative feedback or comments have the potential to undermine learners' motivation and performance. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers provide constructive feedback to their students. As stated by Benjamin Bloom (1969) (as cited in OECD, 2010), assessment serves a dual purpose: it not only determines what has been learned but also offers feedback and corrective measures throughout the teaching and learning process.

Evaluation and feedback are interconnected in education. When educators provide students with feedback, the learners will subsequently improve and self-evaluate in response. While feedback has the potential to inspire and motivate students, it can also be extremely discouraging. For this reason, educators should be incredibly careful when providing feedback to their students. Hyland (2000), as cited in Zheng (2018), defends that feedback, when viewed through the lens of assessment for learning, can transform every assessed task into a tool that facilitates the ongoing improvement of each student's learning (p. 3).

Thus, following student assessment, teachers should provide feedback; for instance, if students perform well, it indicates that they performed well in the lessons; in such cases, the teacher may provide positive feedback. Conversely, in instances where students perform poorly, the instructor will offer constructive criticism.

3. Methodology

3.1 Setting and Respondents

The study employed a quantitative research method. Volunteers from private and public universities in Erbil city, who were studying English as a second language, participated in an online Google form survey that was specifically designed by the researcher. The researcher collected the opinions of students from various universities regarding assessment for learning through a survey; in total, 106 responses were collected. A total of 76.4% of the responses were from private universities, while 23.6% were from public universities. The respondents represented a wide range of academic disciplines, including Computer Science, English language teaching (ELT), Biology, Physics, Mathematics, and others. The inclusion of participants from various departments and points of view contributed diverse perspectives to the study and enabled the researcher to collect more objective data to increase interest in and awareness of assessment for learning.

3.2 Survey Description

The researcher constructed the survey in accordance with the literature review's outcomes. For piloting, the survey was distributed to five individuals: two students and three lecturers. The feedback was carefully considered and incorporated into the survey prior to its distribution to the participants. The researcher designed and distributed the questionnaire to participants via Google Form. The responses to the three sections of the questionnaire were as follows: demographic information was gathered in the first section, and assessment for learning was the subject of the second and third sections. Question types including multiple-choice, open-ended, checkbox, and Likert scale were selected for the survey. The responses ranged from completely disagree to completely agree. Additionally, towards the end of Section 3, there is a checkbox-grid query that elicits responses ranging from "I like it" to "I dislike it." Therefore, the present study employs a quantitative research method.

4. Result and Discussion

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the discussions and findings derived from a survey. The focus of this inquiry is the challenging subject of assessment for learning, represented in Section Two of the questionnaire of fifteen carefully crafted questions. The questions not only provided respondents with the chances to express their viewpoints but also enabled a methodical investigation into their attitudes and perceptions. The following research results and analysis reveal a vivid result that explains the complex aspects of assessment methods and their consequences for the educational setting.

Table 2: The Role of Assessment in the Education and Learning Process

Questions	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Q1/ assessment is an essential part of learning process	6.6%	3.8%	16%	34.9%	38.7%
Q2/assessment helps me to improve my knowledge and skills.	2.8%	5.7%	15.1%	32.1%	44.3%
Q3/ Written exams always show what I know and can do.	10.4%	14.2%	28.3%	29.2%	17.9%
Q4/ I learn better when lectures ask me questions about the material we have studied during the lectures.	0%	9.4%	22.6%	37.7%	30.2%
Q5/ Discussions between me, other students, and the teacher during the lectures help me to understand the material.	0.9%	15.7%	20.8%	36.8%	35.8%
Q6/ I feel more confident when the lecture guides me in performing the tasks	1.9%	7.5%	22.6%	32.1%	35.8%
Q7/Assignments (quizzes, posters, presentations, homework) show me what I have understood well.	1.9%	14.2%	25.5%	20.8%	37.7%
Q8/Assignments (quizzes, posters, presentations, homework) show me what I need to work on.	3.8%	8.5%	17.9%	36.8%	33%
Q9/ I prefer projects and presentations to written exams.	2.8%	13.2%	28.3%	25.5%	30.2%
Q10/ Working on projects and posters helps me to master my knowledge and skills.	2.8%	7.5%	22.6%	40.6%	26.4%
Q11/ Pop-quizzes (unexpected exams) make me feel stressed.	5.7%	6.6%	20.8%	20.8%	46.2%

Q12/ My lecturers always give me feedback for my assignments and quizzes.	6.6%	13.2%	29.2%	26.4%	24.5%
Q13/ I use my lecturers' feedback to improve my knowledge and skills.	3.8%	4.3%	20.8%	38.7%	33%
Q14/My lecturers' feedback makes me feel disappointed and demotivated.	15.1%	19.8%	25.5%	19.8%	19.8%
Q15/ I would love to receive feedback for each assignment.	0.9%	9.4%	24.5%	27.4%	37.7%

The information in Table 2 reveals a complex and multifaceted picture of how participants perceive assessment methods and their influence on the educational experience. Significantly, a considerable proportion of participants (73.6%) acknowledge the fundamental value of assessment in the process of learning, with 38.7% asserting its critical function. Moreover, a considerable 76.4% of the respondents state that assessment acts as a catalyst for the enhancement of knowledge and skills. Moreover, 44.3% of the respondents strongly agree with this notion. The divergence becomes obvious when considering written examinations, as only 17.9% of respondents believe the firm certainty that these exams faithfully represent their expertise and competencies. The preference towards interactive learning approaches is apparent as evidenced by the favorable perception of lectures that incorporate question-and-answer segments (67.9%), supervised tasks (68%), and discussions (72.6%) during the lectures. It is noteworthy that although traditional examinations cause anxiety in 46.2% of students, alternative assessment methods, including presentations and projects, are preferred by the majority (56.6%). The significance of feedback is emphasized by the fact that a considerable 71.7% of students actively employ lecturer feedback to improve their knowledge and skills, and 81.7% of students would like feedback for each assignment. Nevertheless, difficulties emerge, as 60.4% of respondents voice concerns regarding the demotivation and disappointment resulted from feedback. The complex interaction of these viewpoints emphasizes the necessity for a comprehensive analysis of evaluation methods that are in line with the varied preferences of students and promote a positive and inspiring atmosphere for learning.

In section 3 of the survey, the participants were asked which type of formative assessment they prefer. Seven assessment categories and five multiple-choice questions were included. As shown in Figure 1, the participants' preferences regarding formative assessment indicate that while most like being involved in discussions and completing projects, only half enjoy observation. Furthermore, pop quizzes are abhorrent to most participants due to the stress they experience when taking them.

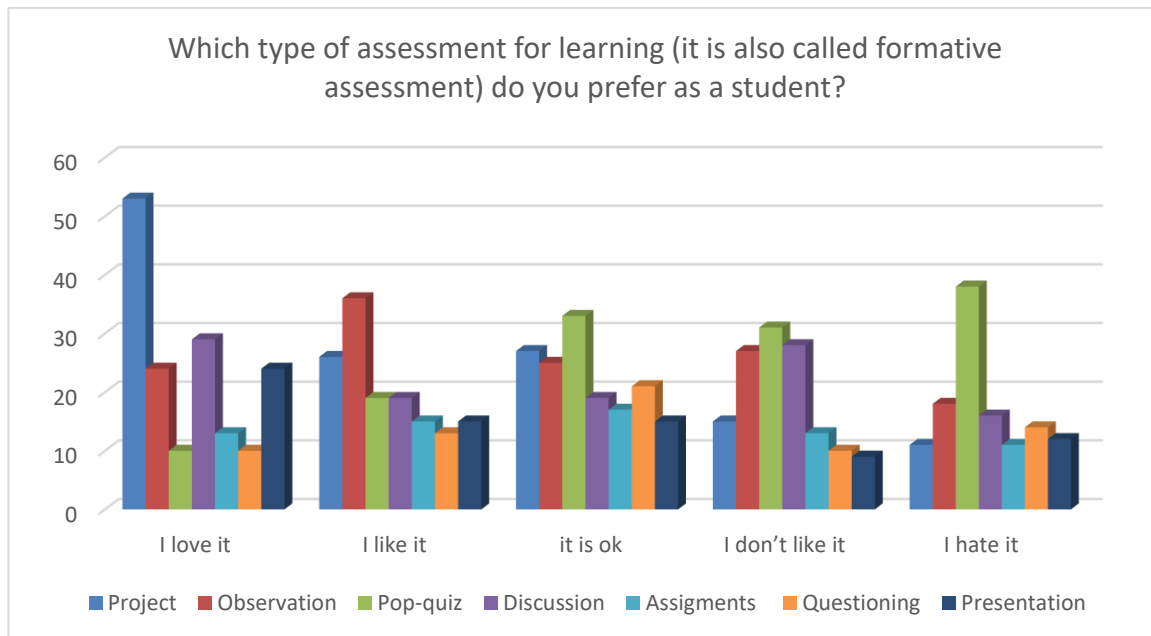


Figure1: types of assessment for learning

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The assessment procedure, which gathers information about the knowledge and abilities of students, is of the utmost significance in influencing the educational journey. Although this study acknowledged the wide range of assessment types, it primarily concentrated on formative assessment. The significance of formative assessment in delivering constructive feedback that enables continuous improvement throughout units, courses, or terms is highlighted. An in-depth investigation into student perspectives unveiled a common dislike for specific evaluation techniques, most notably pop-quizzes and assignments, in contrast with fondness for interactive questioning, projects, and observations. Despite the possible demotivating effects of feedback, it is critical that educators employ sensibleness when providing it and instead deliver constructive criticism that promotes a constructive learning atmosphere.

Further elaborating on the discoveries, several recommendations emerge with the objective of enhancing methodologies employed in Assessment for Learning. An effective approach for educators to reduce students' fears regarding pop-quizzes is to create a positive environment that promotes the acquisition of knowledge rather than leads to anxiety. A deeper understanding of novel concepts can be attained by students via increased participation and discussion in the classroom following their presentation. Moreover, an increased emphasis on assignment-oriented and project-based evaluations, as opposed to traditional paper-based examinations, is lined up with students' preferences and enhances their educational journeys. An alternative approach that offers a more comprehensive evaluation of student progress is the adoption of daily assessments instead of end-of-course evaluations. Additionally, the utilization of motivational feedback emerges as a critical strategy for cultivating motivation for learning. In summary, it is imperative that university administrators give utmost importance to and support Assessment for Learning principles, recognizing the countless benefits they provide to instructors and students. By

implementing these recommendations, the Faculty of Education can cultivate a pedagogical framework that is more effective and student-centered considering the dynamic nature of education.

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