

สมรรถนะครูอนุบาล: ศึกษาจากการสัมภาษณ์เหตุการณ์เชิงพฤติกรรม เพื่อการจัดการสู่ความเป็นเลิศ

**COMPETENCIES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS:
A STUDY BASED ON BEHAVIORAL EVENT INTERVIEWS**

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บทคัดย่อ

สมรรถนะของครูอนุบาลเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการพัฒนาคุณภาพการศึกษาปฐมวัย การศึกษานี้มีเป้าหมายเพื่อสำรวจองค์ประกอบสมรรถนะของครูอนุบาล โดยการสัมภาษณ์ครู 20 คนในมณฑล G ของประเทศจีน ด้วยวิธีการสัมภาษณ์เหตุการณ์เชิงพฤติกรรม (Behavioral Event Interview) การวิเคราะห์หัวข้อและเนื้อหาช่วยในการระบุและเข้ารหัสสมรรถนะของครูอนุบาล จากการวิเคราะห์เชิงสถิติพบว่าครูอนุบาลมีสมรรถนะที่ประกอบด้วย 54 องค์ประกอบ เช่น ความซื่อสัตย์ ความรัก การยอมรับวัฒนธรรม ทักษะการสอน การเข้าใจผู้อื่น การใช้ความสามารถให้เกิดประโยชน์สูงสุด การควบคุมตนเอง และการใฝ่รู้ การวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์เชิงลำดับชั้นทำให้สามารถจำแนกสมรรถนะออกเป็น 8 คุณลักษณะ ได้แก่ ลักษณะส่วนบุคคล จรรยาบรรณวิชาชีพ ความรอบรู้ทางวัฒนธรรม ความรู้และทักษะวิชาชีพ การสื่อสารและปฏิสัมพันธ์ ความสามารถในการสร้างผลสำเร็จ ภาพลักษณ์ของตนเอง และการมุ่งสู่ความเป็นเลิศ ซึ่งแสดงให้เห็นว่าครูอนุบาลมีสมรรถนะเป็นโครงสร้างเชิงมิติที่ประกอบด้วยหลายด้าน ทั้งในด้านส่วนบุคคล จรรยาบรรณวิชาชีพ ความรอบรู้ทางวัฒนธรรม และทักษะทางวิชาชีพ

คำสำคัญ: ครูระดับอนุบาล, คุณภาพสมรรถนะ, วิธีการสัมภาษณ์เหตุการณ์เชิงพฤติกรรม

ABSTRACT

The qualifications of kindergarten educators are essential for ensuring the excellence of preschool education. This research aims to investigate the elements of kindergarten teacher competencies through interviews with 20 kindergarten teachers in G province, China, employing the behavioral event interview technique. To determine and categorize kindergarten teachers' competencies, subject and content analysis were employed. Statistical study indicated that the competences comprise 54 elements, including integrity, compassion, cultural acceptance, pedagogical skills, empathy, effective utilization of abilities, self-regulation, and a thirst for knowledge. The hierarchical relationship analysis categorized these competences into eight dimensions: personal qualities, professional ethics, cultural literacy, professional knowledge and skills, communication and interaction, achievement capability, self-perception, and the pursuit of excellence. The abilities of kindergarten teachers provide a multi-dimensional framework encompassing personal attributes, professional ethics, cultural literacy, professional

knowledge and skills, communication and interaction, achievement capability, self-perception, and the pursuit of excellence.

Keywords: Kindergarten Teachers, Competent Quality, Behavioral Event Interview Method

Background and importance of the problem

Preschool education is a vital component of the education system, serving as the foundation before children enter primary school. Its goal is to promote the physical and mental health, cognitive abilities, communication skills, and emotional development of young children. This stage is essential for fostering comprehensive educational development. Preschool education plays an irreplaceable role in an individual's life and contributes significantly to the development of a nation. Preschool children are in a phase of rapid growth, with highly adaptable psychological functions that are sensitive to external stimuli. This is the period when neural connections are easily formed, and individual life experiences are accumulated. Neuroscience research has found that early childhood is a critical period, highlighting the importance of not letting children "fall behind at the starting line" in education. This strengthens the recognition of the value of preschool education. Modern brain science further emphasizes the necessity of learning during this stage.

However, the transition from family education to school education often presents challenges, with weaknesses in mental and emotional aspects. As such, it is essential for kindergarten teachers to possess professional skills and a nurturing disposition. At the same time, the presence of extreme behaviors, such as sarcasm, abusive actions, and even physical and drug-related abuse among some kindergarten teachers, exposes concerns regarding the quality of the profession. These issues underline the need to examine and understand the competencies required by kindergarten teachers. This study focuses on identifying and exploring these competencies to contribute to the improvement and development of high-quality preschool education.

In the context of Thailand, there are growing concerns about the quality of preschool education. The gap in teacher competencies, particularly in early childhood education, has led to the necessity of further research in this area. To better understand how these competencies impact the quality of preschool education, this study will also address the specific challenges faced in Thailand's educational system. By identifying the key competencies required for kindergarten teachers in this region, this research aims to provide insights that will guide the improvement of teacher development programs and promote the overall effectiveness of preschool education in Thailand.

Purpose of the research

1. To identify and extract key elements of kindergarten teachers' competencies using the key event interview method.
2. To explore the relationships between these competency elements.

Literature review of the research

Teacher competency

David McClelland (1973) published "Testing for Competence rather than for 'Intelligence'", and proposed the concept of competency for the first time, which triggered a wave of competency research, and triggered "Competencies Movement" (Sylvia Horton, 2000). In the field of education, the study of competency began with the study of the competence of educational managers, and with a focus on teachers after the end of the 20th century.

As the study of competence in teachers, scholars at home and abroad have made diversified exploration of teachers' competence, and have gone through the "behavioral stage of focusing on teachers' basic professional teaching skills and classroom behavior performance, and the humanism stage of" focusing on teachers' identity, emotional attitude, social cognition and personality" (Palardy & Eisele, 1972; Field, 1979) (Palardy, et al., 1972; Field, 1979). The three phases, namely, integration of knowledge, skills, motivation, social roles and personality traits (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Martin Mulder, 2001; spenser, 2008). At present, the definition of "key competence" provides reference and inspiration for the definition of the concept of teacher competency based on the key abilities necessary for different professions (Bi Hualin & Ye Jianqiang, 2019).

Skinkfied A.T and Stufflebeam D (1995) believe that professional knowledge, professional skills or abilities, professional attitude or values constitute teacher competence. Danielson and Charlotte (1996) proposed four dimensions: planning and preparation, teacher environmental monitoring, teaching and professional responsibility to constitute teacher competence. Bisschoff and Grobler (1998) believe that teacher competence is composed of eight levels: learning environment, teachers' professional commitment, discipline, teachers' teaching foundation, teacher reflection, teachers' cooperation ability, effectiveness and leadership. Malathi Srinivasan et al. (2011) based on the ACE of ACGME framework, determine the teachers from the points like "knowledge, learners centered, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, practice reflection, system-based practice"; six core abilities and four educators of professional ability for additional project role like "project design and implementation, evaluation, leadership and guidance". Ramli Bakar (2018) divides teacher competence into professional competence and personal competence, in which professional competence includes mastering knowledge, curriculum and school syllabus, learning special learning methods, ethical insight and professional development; personal competence

includes personal stability and noble character, maturity and wisdom, exemplary behavior, and is recognized as the source of authority. The definition of the concept of competency by Chinese scholars mostly refers to the relevant studies of foreign scholars, believing that competency refers to knowledge, skills, motivation, personality, values and other characteristics (Wang Chongming, Chen Minke, 2002; Zhong Lifeng, Shi Kan, 2003; Li Ling, 2020).

Conceptual framework of the research

In reality, the differences among subgroups within the teacher community and the complexity of the teaching profession, as well as the different requirements for teachers to respond to various educational situations in terms of behavior, potential, and abilities, make teachers competence a multi-dimensional, comprehensive concept. It requires scholars to study from different disciplines, different dimensions, different perspectives on teacher competence. The academic community has also paid attention to this difference and conducted detailed research on the connotation of teacher competence from the perspectives of education level, discipline, etc.

As a component of the teacher community, the competence of kindergarten teachers refers to the comprehensive characteristics of their ability to perform well and efficiently in educational and teaching work, which can be measured by individual performance (Han Rong, 2021). It is the sum of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, motivations, and traits that kindergarten teachers must possess to adapt to the specific position of kindergarten education and teaching, including children's concepts, teaching knowledge, teaching skills, class management ability, professional ethics, self-efficacy, achievement motivation, and other corresponding personality traits such as social and self-discipline. It is a necessary condition for kindergarten teachers to engage in successful teaching and an important basis for teacher post service training (Zhang Cuiyun, 2020). In the daily life of kindergarten, competence is a potential trait that can distinguish outstanding kindergarten teachers from ordinary kindergarten teachers, mainly including educational and teaching ability, educational motivation, self-awareness level, and other personality traits. It can accurately grasp the psychological characteristics of young children and effectively improve their physical and mental development level (Lou Xiaoyun, 2012). Therefore, inspired by scholars, the competency of kindergarten teachers in this study is a comprehensive collection of measurable personality traits, social roles, professional knowledge and skills, motivation and needs, self-concept, values, and other factors that are closely related to the requirements of kindergarten work tasks.

Research methodology

The study adopts the Behavioral Event Interview method, which involves detailed interviews with kindergarten teachers to gather information on key behavioral events that define competency in the profession. A sample of 20 kindergarten teachers from G province in China was selected for this study. The sample included both high-performing teachers and those with average performance, allowing for a comparative analysis. The data analysis involved thematic coding and content analysis using SPSS software to identify the most frequently mentioned competencies and their relationships.

Sampling criteria were based on the teachers' performance, which was assessed through their participation in national and provincial teaching awards and their involvement in curriculum development. The data analysis included frequency analysis of competency features and the classification of competencies into categories such as personal traits, professional ethics, cultural literacy, and communication skills. Validation processes included a review of the data by participants to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

1. Research design

In order to more effectively collect the information of the events that have occurred, this study will follow the implementation steps of "interview outline design → interview content introduction → combining job responsibilities → conducting behavioral event interviews → refining and describing the quality characteristics required for work → interview data collation and analysis".

(1) Interview outline design

To ensure the acquisition of relatively complete information, a "Kindergarten Teacher Work Behavior Event Interview Outline" was designed based on STAR, emphasizing the detailed description of three successful and three failed cases in kindergarten work, including the basic elements of the event's cause, process, feelings, thoughts, actions, emotions, difficulties encountered, and results, laying the foundation for the smooth progress of the interview in the future.

(2) Introduction and description

The researcher scheduled an interview time with the interviewee in advance. Before the interview, the researcher proactively introduced herself to the interviewed teachers, explained the purpose and content of the interview, the duration required for the entire interview process. The teachers interviewed fully understood the content of the "Agreement for Interview on Work Behavior Events of Kindergarten Teachers". The researcher reiterated the confidentiality principle in the interview, created a relaxed and harmonious interview atmosphere, eliminated the doubts and vigilance of the interviewed teachers, and gained their trust and support.

(3) Job responsibilities sorting out

Because it is impossible to observe the workplace of the interviewed teachers, the interviewed teachers are asked to talk about their workplace characteristics. Collect the basic information of the interviewed teachers (age, working years, professional title and other basic information), and invite the interviewed teachers to talk about their responsibilities in kindergarten work. The purpose is to collect the cognition of the interviewed teachers on the responsibilities of kindergarten work, and capture the breakthrough point for the description of behavioral events from the materials provided by the interviewed teachers.

(4) Description of behavioral events

This section requires full access to the complete event of the kindergarten work talked about by the interviewed teacher, including the situation of the event, tasks, specific actions and measures taken, and the final result. Sound recordings and written records should be made. When interviewed teachers described each event in language, they were asked to recall relatively accurate conversations, actions, and feelings as much as possible. Exploratory questions can be asked, such as "What was the situation at the time, your role in it, who were involved, what was your relationship with these people in the event, and what was the outcome of the event."

(5) Extracting, describing, and identifying the quality characteristics required for work

After the interviewed teachers describe the event, please ask them to summarize the knowledge, skills, motivation, personality traits, beliefs/values that kindergarten teachers should possess, collect information on their understanding of the competency characteristics of kindergarten teachers, and make them feel that their professional opinions are respected by the researchers.

(6) Interview data organization and analysis

Complete the transcription of the recording, and compare the recording data and interview text to test the transcription effect.

Each detail that may imply competency is marked, analyzed, independently coded, and verified. The identified and extracted elements of kindergarten teachers' competency are returned to the interviewed teachers for review.

2. Sample

The study used criterion sampling and selected S, C, and J cities in G province, China as the sample areas. High impact kindergartens with publicly published research results were selected as the research field, and 14 high-performance teachers and 6 ordinary performance teachers were selected as the research subjects.

Teachers who meet one of the following conditions are kindergarten teachers with high performance standards:

(1) He/she has won the titles of national, provincial and municipal excellent teachers, model teachers, and exemplary individual in the education system.

(2) He/she is selected as a national "Millions of Project" teacher.

(3) Teachers who have won awards in competitions such as teaching, lecturing, demonstration classes, and lesson examples at or above the prefecture level (including prefecture level).

(4) He/she hosted or participated in the development of kindergarten curriculum, and has published papers in domestic and foreign journals or newspapers, or served as the main lecturer in meetings or public class activities organized by external units (not the kindergarten).

The teachers in the ordinary performance group are composed of kindergarten teachers who do not meet any of the above conditions.

3. Data collection

In qualitative research, to avoid redundancy, the optimal sample size is between 20-30 (Fassinger, R. E, 2005). The sample size of this study is 20, which meets Fassinger's (2005) requirement for a sample size interval. The 20 interviewees selected for this study were all women. According to the implementation steps of the research ethics and behavioral event interview method, interviews were conducted, and after transcription and organization, 210000 words were obtained. The specific information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - basic information of the interview sample

Excellent performance group	Interview duration	Interview words	General performance group	Interview duration	Interview words
Y1001	1 : 30	5426	P1001	1 : 10	9430
Y1002	2 : 50	24995	P1002	1 : 50	6732
Y1003	2 : 40	17000	P1003	1 : 20	5286
Y1004	2 : 40	14662	P1004	2 : 00	18019
Y1005	1 : 30	10630	P1005	1 : 30	8071
Y1006	1 : 50	8399	P1006	1 : 10	9392
Y1007	1 : 30	9597			
Y1008	1 : 40	10658			
Y1009	1 : 40	8477			

Table 1 - basic information of the interview sample

Excellent performance group	Interview duration	Interview words	General performance group	Interview duration	Interview words
Y1010	2 : 00	9186			
Y1011	1 : 30	7550			
Y1012	2 : 00	10982			
Y1013	1 : 30	7739			
Y1014	1 : 30	9043			
14 persons	26 : 20	154344	6 persons	9 : 00	56930
amount to	number of persons		Interview duration	Interview words	
	20 persons		35 : 20	211,272	

The research results

Encoding and analysis are important steps in exploring the competency characteristics of kindergarten teachers in their work from the content of interview texts. This study used theme analysis and content analysis methods to identify themes and codes (Riehard E. Boyatzis, 1998), read all interview texts, independently analyzed key events in the texts, analyzed main concepts and ideas, and extracted basic themes. SPSS 23.0 software was used for data processing of interview text content.

According to the suggestion of Spencer (1993), the statistics of the coding results can be made according to both the frequency of competency characteristics and the average score and the highest score. In this study, the frequency of competency characteristics was used as the index of data coding analysis. The frequency of occurrence in competency feature coding was summarized, and 63 competency features are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Frequency results of competency feature coding for kindergarten teachers

essential factor	frequency	essential factor	frequency	essential factor	frequency
benevolence	13	emotional awareness	8	understand others	59
help others	4	enthusiasm	12	flexibility	45
strategy	14	making g good use of talent	3	patience	30
decision-making ability	6	motivation to improve	16	usual mind	4
creativeness	72	challenge and support	9	migration ability	6
independent insights	5	teamwork	17	diligent in study	5
reflection ability	82	stable mood	3	local cultural knowledge	28
analytical thinking	38	careful	13	cultural understanding ability	23
critical thinking	5	efficiency	56	cultural mining ability	12
daring to admit mistakes	4	keep learning	12	ability to integrate the culture	23
move	7	strain capacity	6	teach according to law	16
fair	3	conscientiousness	50	persist in	6
communication skill	56	positive attitude	5	self-command	10
encourage others	2	integrity and honesty	12	appraisal	18
relationship coordination ability	3	professional ethics	3	self-confidence	7

Table 2 - Frequency results of competency feature coding for kindergarten teachers

essential factor	frequency	essential factor	frequency	essential factor	frequency
observation ability	16	guidance ability	3	organizational management ability	13
planning	3	education wisdom	1	respecting others	18
education and teaching skills	17	professional knowledge	38	cultural belief	14
experience summary	9	self-adjustment	3	cognition of the cultural value	12
Tolerance	17	autoexcitation	2	cultural sensitivity	12
Career enthusiasm	22	respecting children	22	cultural identity	21

Delete, merge, or replace the 63 similar competency items mentioned above: Professional ethics as a superior factor, deleted.

A positive attitude is combined with motivation for improvement, experience summary is combined with reflective ability, courage to admit mistakes and fairness is combined with integrity and honesty, stable emotions are combined with emotional awareness ability, respect for young children is combined with respect for others, and educational wisdom is combined with adaptability ability.

Replace emotions with self-esteem, help and encourage others with a sense of service, replace a calm heart with humility, and constantly learn with lifelong learning.

By deleting, merging, and replacing, the competency characteristics of 54 kindergarten teachers were retained, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Summary table of the competency characteristics of kindergarten teachers

Kindergarten teacher competence characteristics elements					
benevolence	self-respect	emotional awareness	lifelong learning	understanding others	teaching according to law
service awareness	communication skill	enthusiasm	strain capacity	flexibility	persist in
strategy	relationship coordination ability	making good use of talent	conscientiousness	patience	self-command
decision-making ability	observation ability	motivation to improve	integrity and honesty	modest	appraisal
creativeness	planning	challenge and support	guidance ability	migration ability	self-confidence
independent insights	education and teaching skills	teamwork	professional knowledge	Diligent in study	organizational management ability
reflection ability	tolerance	carefulness	self-adjustment	local cultural knowledge	respecting others
analytical thinking	Career enthusiasm	efficiency	autoexcitation	cultural understanding ability	cultural belief
critical thinking	cultural mining ability	ability to integrate the culture	cultural sensitivity	cultural identity	cognition of the cultural value

Summarize the frequency of competency feature codes, refer to the results of cluster analysis and competency feature frequency analysis, and divide the 54 kindergarten teachers retained in Table 3 into eight dimensions: personal traits, professional ethics, cultural literacy, professional knowledge and skills, communication and communication, achievement ability, self-image, and pursuit of excellence. The specific 54 competency features are classified, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 - Results of the analysis of competency characteristics of kindergarten teachers

Level 1 competent characteristics	individual trait	professional ethics	artistic appreciation	Professional knowledge and skills	Communication and communication	Achievement ability	self-image	pursuit of excellence
Secondary competent characteristics	enthusiasm	benevolence	local cultural knowledge	education and teaching skills	relationship coordination ability	decision- making ability	autoexcitation	challenge and support
	tolerance	conscientiousness	cultural understanding ability	strain capacity	understand others	making good use of talent	self- command	diligent in study
	integrity and honesty	careful	cultural mining ability	reflection ability	emotional awareness	strategy	self- adjustment	motivation to improve
	modest	patience	cultural integration ability	planning	independent insights	migration ability	appraisal	lifelong learning
	persist in	Career enthusiasm	cultural sensitivity	professional knowledge	service awareness	critical thinking	self- confidence	teamwork
		respecting others	cultural identity	guidance ability	communication skill		self-respect	efficiency
		teaching according to law	cultural belief	creativity				
			cognition of the cultural value	flexibility				
				analytical thinking				
				observational ability				
				organizational management ability				

Discussion

The key competency of kindergarten teachers includes 54 competency elements, such as persistence, teaching according to law, cultural value cognition, organizational management ability, communication skills, critical thinking, self-esteem and sense of efficiency. These 54 competency elements belong to 8 dimensions such as personal characteristics.

1. Personal traits are the personal characteristics exhibited by kindergarten teachers in their work, study, and life. They are innate and distinct from others, closely related to their own personalities. Composed of five secondary competency elements: enthusiasm, tolerance, integrity, humility, and perseverance.

2. Professional ethics, also known as teacher professional ethics standards or teacher professional ethics standards, are the behavioral norms that kindergarten teachers should follow when engaging in kindergarten work. They are an important basis for guiding and evaluating the work behavior of kindergarten teachers. Composed of seven secondary competency

elements: love, sense of responsibility, attention to detail, patience, love for early childhood education, respect, and teaching in accordance with the law.

3. Cultural literacy is a relatively stable and profound quality with broad mindedness and value orientation formed by kindergarten teachers through learning literature, history, philosophy, art, and other knowledge, and understanding the ultimate value of these knowledge. It consists of eight secondary competency elements: knowledge of local culture, cultural understanding ability, cultural excavation ability, cultural integration ability, cultural sensitivity, cultural identity, cultural belief, and cultural value cognition.

4. Professional knowledge and skills reflect the main content of the professional competence of kindergarten teachers, and are the basic conditions for ensuring the effectiveness of kindergarten work, highlighting the professional characteristics of kindergarten teachers. It consists of 11 secondary competency elements: educational and teaching skills, adaptability, reflective ability, planning, professional knowledge, guidance ability, creativity, flexibility, analytical thinking, observation ability, and organizational management ability.

5. Communication and interaction are the interactions between kindergarten teachers and others with speech and behavioral abilities (children, colleagues, parents, leaders, etc.), conveying certain information, concepts, and emotions through dialogue, and establishing interpersonal relationships based on mutual understanding. It consists of six secondary competency elements: ability to coordinate relationships, understanding others, emotional awareness, independent insights, service awareness, and communication skills.

6. Achievement ability is the ability that kindergarten teachers need to achieve personal success and goals. Composed of five secondary competency elements: decision-making ability, talent utilization, strategic thinking, transfer ability, and critical thinking.

7. Self image is a hazy self portrait gradually formed by kindergarten teachers in their minds based on their past experiences and evaluations of themselves by others. Consisting of six secondary competency elements: self motivation, self-control, self-regulation, self-evaluation, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

8. Pursuing excellence is the behavior of kindergarten teachers who continuously pursue their professional development, continuously improve their work methods, surpass themselves, form their own educational ideas or beliefs, and pursue a higher professional reputation. Composed of six secondary competency elements: challenge and support, diligence in research, motivation for improvement, lifelong learning, teamwork, and a sense of efficiency.

Conclusion

The analysis of interview data revealed 54 key competency elements for kindergarten teachers. These competencies were grouped into eight dimensions: personal traits, professional ethics, cultural literacy, professional knowledge and skills, communication and interaction, achievement ability, self-image, and pursuit of excellence. The discussion of these competencies should be linked back to the existing literature, comparing the findings with prior studies on teacher competencies. For example, emotional intelligence, patience, and creativity, which are crucial for kindergarten teachers, are consistent with previous research on the importance of social-emotional competencies in early childhood education.

However, there are some limitations to the study. The sample size is relatively small, and the study is limited to one province in China. Future research should expand the sample size and include teachers from various regions to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, while the Behavioral Event Interview method provides rich qualitative data, it may be biased by the interviewees' recollection of events. Future studies could incorporate other data collection methods, such as classroom observations, to triangulate the findings.

Recommendation

1. This study contributes to the understanding of kindergarten teacher competencies by identifying and classifying 54 key competencies. These findings can be used to inform teacher training programs and professional development initiatives aimed at improving the quality of early childhood education. Further research is needed to refine the competency framework and validate its applicability across different contexts and regions. Additionally, exploring the relationship between these competencies and student outcomes could provide valuable insights into the impact of teacher competencies on children's development.

2. Recommendation for Future Research

Methodological Enhancement: Future studies should consider incorporating a mixed-methods approach to triangulate data and improve the validity of the findings.

Broader Sample: Expanding the sample size and including kindergarten teachers from various provinces and countries will help establish a more generalized competency framework.

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies to track the development of kindergarten teachers' competencies over time would provide deeper insights into the impact of professional development initiatives.

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