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THE ROLES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN SUPPORTING NOVICE TEACHERS AT THE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

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Abstract:

This article informs about the administrative support of schools heads to the novice teachers at the Public secondary schools in Zanzibar, particularly Pemba. The study draws an urgent need of effective school heads who can provide suitable administrative support to the novice teachers. The study employed a phenomenological research design embedded within a qualitative research approach to generate data from thirty six (36) novice teachers. Data were generated through FGDs with nine school heads and semi - structured interview with twenty seven novice teachers. The study unveiled that, major roles played by heads of schools in supporting novice teachers were the use of advisory committee in advising the novice teachers, provision of work facilities, assisting teacher to address their work related problems and attaching novice teachers to the panel leaders. Despite of the role played by heads of schools in supporting novice teachers, novice teachers faced several challenges such coping with educational reforms, teaching methodology, classroom management, workload, commitment, relationship with colleagues at work, relationship with students' parents, students poor background, insufficient resources, students low motivation, the gap between theory and the actual practice, low salary and work under the pressure from the Ministry of Education. Following these findings, the study concludes that the novice teachers in Zanzibar do not get enough administrative support to address the myriad challenges they face in their transition from teacher colleges and universities to the teaching job. It follows from this conclusion that deliberate efforts are needed to help the novice teachers to bring effective teaching.

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1. Introduction

Access and quality education have been the global concern today and there have been considerable efforts all over the world to ensure effective teaching and learning. In this, there are apparent efforts seen in building more schools and facilities as well as increasing the number of teachers through universities and training colleges. The evidence available shows that these efforts are still to continue in the near future as we consider the Sustainable Millennium Development Goals targeted by 2025 (Edholm, 2009; UNICEF, 2010; Okuwa, 2012; Common Wealth of Learning (2015). This is to say that there would be a continuous increase of the novice teachers in the secondary schools in the near future and this can be apparently seen in Tanzania and Zanzibar in particular. This increase of novice teachers suggests for more expertise support to the teachers considering that they are just in transition from colleges and universities and they are required to handle and address a number of issues related to education while they have limited experience to deal them. There is considerable emphasis put to this by scholars (for example see Darling-Hammond, Wei & Andree, 2010; Leigh, 2010 cited in Jensen et al., 2012; Clark, & Byrnes, 2012) who elaborated this requirement by arguing that improving the quality of novice teachers and their effective teaching in schools is the most effective method to improve students' outcomes.

In fact, several researches report that the novice teachers go through a period of transition from being a student in their colleges into being a competent teacher (Mudzingwa & Magudu, 2013; Rotonya, 2017). During this period, novice teachers need a very close supervision and effective support to adjust to their new roles (Dumler, 2010, Yusoff, 2013; Confeit, 2014). Substantial evidence (Waters, 2009 & Pamer, 2010; Khan, 2006; Ali, 2013; Dickson, Riddlerber, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014; Barkaskaute & Meskaskuiene, 2017) shows that before employment, most of the new teachers seem to be filled with enthusiasm, well prepared and eager to create an effective community of learners in their classroom but the reality they encounter in schools does not live up to their expectations. Some novice teachers dare to communicate their problems to their colleagues and the school management for help while others tend to hide their problems since they are either unable to seek help or think that asking for help is just a sign of mediocrity (Keengwe & Adjei-Boateng, 2012). In this case, they continue teaching the students poorly; hence, impacting the quality of education.

Therefore, with the same number of responsibilities, similar to those of the experienced teachers, it is claimed that the novice teachers need support in their early years of teaching (Darlin–Harmond, 2010; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). Denying this support to the novice teachers will make them "sink or swim" as they struggle to deal with their challenges, hence, putting them at risk of early departure from the profession to feel far better (Howe, 2006; Anderson, 2014). It is, therefore, important to conduct frequent research to understand their challenges at length and establish proper administrative support to accommodate all of these issues without disruptions.

Although the study conducted by Hudson (2012) pointed out that beginning teachers require more support in the domains such as school culture and infrastructure with stronger consideration to develop teaching practices, research is still required to understand other challenges to provide good support. It believed that a good support system by the head of the school can help a new teacher feel welcome and accepted as a part of the new teaching team and; hence, facilitate meaningful learning for students (Epling, 2016; (Dube, 2008). To do this, the school heads need to get a deep understanding of the challenges that face the novice teachers (Mfenqe, 2005). It is an obvious fact that good solutions to problems start with a deep understanding of the problem and research is the best method to understand the problems.

Research has been done elsewhere to identify the problems of novice teachers and considerable support if provided in accordance with the findings obtained through the studies (Kearney, 2010; Pearson, Goe & Berkeley; Darling Hammond, Wei & Andress, 2010; Ayodo, Simatwa & Ajowi, 2011). In Scotland, England and Wales, for example, beginning teachers serve two years' probation period during which, beginning teachers are integrated to the learning community and its culture (Darling Hammond, Wei & Andress, 2010). There are induction courses for novice teachers in a number of developed and less developed countries, including New Zealand, the United State of America, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan Singapore, Republic of Korea, Chinese and Taipei to mention few (Ayodo, Simatwa & Ajowi, 2011). In some African countries, including Namibia, the practice shows that, novice teachers are highly supported to discharge their instructional roles effectively. For example, in Namibian context, both school heads and experienced teachers orient, induct, and support beginning teachers upon their arrival in schools into understanding the way school works, their roles and responsibilities (Wong, 2004 & Nantanga, 2014).

This kind of support to novice teachers is highly required in Zanzibar where there have been some efforts to prepare enough and effective teachers but there is a lack of information about the support provided to novice teachers. In the literature reviewed, it was learned that the Zanzibar Government in its Educational Policy documents stipulates that *teacher development must be viewed as a continuous process that should always include an in–service training* (MoEVT, 2006), yet the Policy is silent on roles that the school heads can play in supporting the novice teachers. Put it in other words, the Policy is ignorant of the challenges that these teachers face in their first years of teaching. It is this reason that this study was proposed to identify the roles played by the school heads in supporting the novice teachers and the challenges novice teachers face during their transition period.

2. Methodology

The current study was held in Zanzibar, in Pemba Island, covering four Districts from both South and Northern Regions. Zanzibar, particularly Pemba was chosen due to its record of getting relatively poor form four as well as Advanced level National Examination Results, thus lagging far behind in this respect. The study was conducted at the Public Secondary schools in the said regions whereby nine schools were purposively chosen. Willingness of the school administration to take part in this study was the main criteria used by the researcher to come up with a list of nine schools.

This study adopted a phenomenological research design embedded within a qualitative research approach to accomplish its goal. The choice of phenomenological research design was determined by the researcher's interest to understand the phenomenon under study from the participants own perspectives as the truth of the matter is perceived. The use of this approach in a study like this is supported by Kvale and Brinkman (2008) who explained that phenomenology is useful in understanding a social phenomenon from the participants own perspectives. In this, semi–structured interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were the two major qualitative methods used to discover the participants experience on the subject under study. The semi–structured interviews were preferred as they provided a probing plate to generate reliable information from the participants' experience (Koskei & Simiyu, 2015).

The FGD was mainly used to get novice teachers experience on the challenges they face in the first years of teaching. On the other hand, semi–structured interviews were conducted with school heads to get their thoughts on both the challenges faced by novice teachers and the role that the school heads play in supporting them. Thus, a total of nine FGDs each composed of three novice teachers in each school were conducted. Besides, in each school, one interview with a school heads was conducted. The heads of schools were selected by virtue of their position. It is claimed that in qualitative research, participants who can best help the research to understand the research question should be purposively selected (Creswell, 2003). The same criterion was employed to get the novice teachers who participated in the FGD. In this case, Novice teachers with one up to three work experiences were requested to participate in the study.

It has been written at length that the main intention of qualitative research is to describe and understand rather generalize as a result there is no specific number of participants that must be studied (Lichtman, 2006). On the basis of this, a sample of thirty six participants (twenty seven novice teachers and nine school heads) was found suitable for the present study. The qualitative data were analyzed by using thematic analysis procedures. In this, the researcher, carefully, read the reflective notes and field notes to get a real feel of the data base, after reading, memos were written and initial categories were established. The initial categories were expanded as the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data and classified each piece accordingly. Having classified the data, the researcher combined similar codes to develop the major themes and sub-themes which were later illustrated by using participants' quotes.

3. Results

3.1 Challenges Facing the Novice Teachers

The findings of this study regarding the challenges facing novice teachers in their early years of working together with the role of the school heads in supporting novice teachers are presented under the two major themes, namely the challenges facing the novice teachers and the role of the school head in supporting the novice teachers. The main themes, sub-themes and the unveiled phenomena from the sub themes are highlighted in terms of percentages by considering the sub-themes with the highest percentages. See Table 1 below.

Sub-themes	Unveiled	Freq.	
	Phenomena	9	6
Coping with educational	Inclusive classroom	3	10%
reforms	• Lack of clear cut scope in the syllabus		
Teaching methodology	Poor teaching methods	2	7%
Classroom management	Fear to punish students	3	10%
	Coping with discipline		
Workload	• Working as per timer in other schools	6	21%
	Many periods		
Commitment	Spending less time for students	1	3%
	Unethical behavior		

Table 1: Challenges Facing Novice Teachers (N=29)

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Relationship with	Lack of parental support		3%
students' parents			
Relationship with	Poor relationship with experienced teachers		3%
colleagues			
Student's poor	Dealing with slow learners	1	3%
background			
Insufficient	• Internet	5	17%
resources	Lab technician		
	Text books		
	Chemicals		
Students low motivation	Less motivated learners	1	3%
The gap between	• Lack of uniformity in preparing instructional	2	7%
theory and	materials		
actual practice	Less relevant curriculum		
Teachers' salary	• Low salary	2	7%
Pressure from the	Focus on finishing the topic		3%
Ministry of Education			

It can be felt from Table 1 above that, the major challenges facing novice teachers are coping with educational reforms (10%) teaching methodology (7%), classroom management (10%) workload (21%), commitment (3%), relationship with colleagues (3%), relationship with students parental (3%), weak students (3%), insufficient resources (17%), students low motivation (3%), theory – practical mismatch (7%), teacher's salary (7%) and the pressure from the Ministry of Education (3%).

3.2 Coping with Educational Reforms

One of the reported challenges that face novice teachers is coping with educational reforms. The novice teachers who participated in this study informed the researcher that they do get challenges in the implementations of new reforms in the education system, especially those related to the curriculum. The participants cited an introduction of inclusive education as an example. In participants' thoughts, this reform calls for all teachers to have skills in dealing with normal students and abnormal students in the same class. To new teachers, this was reported to be difficult to practice. Along the same line, it was mentioned that the current syllabus does not show a clear scope in terms of its coverage. Thus, it is difficult to identify the boundaries as to where a teacher should end in his/her lesson. In this regard, one of the novice teachers asserted:

"To me, I just have two years experience at work in this school but I think the major obstacle I have been facing is aligning my teaching with the current educational reforms requirements. Teaching normal students and abnormal students in the same classroom does not sound easy to me. Besides, the lack of a clear cut scope in the syllabus is another trouble. Sometimes, we have to teach according to where the exam questions appear instead of what is indicated in the syllabus. I think the syllabus shows less than what the students should know"

(FGD, August 2017)

3.3 Teaching Methodologies

Another problem facing beginning teachers is a methodological problem. In this, it was reported that most of the new teachers find it difficult to use the participatory methods of teaching in a highly populated classroom. Most of the new teachers resort to the lecture methods used in their university, to them this sounds far easy to implement. One of the novice teachers had to this to say:

"We are facing a serious challenge of applying what we were taught in the real classroom setting. In fact, we are insisted to use participatory teaching methods in the classrooms but the truth is that when I arrived in this school for the first time, I realized that I better opt for lecture method though it is not appropriate for them but there are no other options."

(FGD, August 2017)

Similarly, one of the school heads added by describing:

"I think content wise, the new teachers are good but when it comes to the delivery in their classroom, they are very light. Sometimes, I dare to conclude that may be the major emphasis of the university studies is on the content, not the methodology"

(Interview, August 2017)

3.4 Classroom Management

Classroom management is another challenge facing the novice teachers. The novice teachers who participated in this study informed the researcher that the management of students' disruptive behaviors is the greatest concern for them. They went further explaining that many students in secondary schools demonstrate unusual behaviours including not being serious in their schooling. In such a situation, even if they happen to misbehave, every so often we fear to punish them. In highlighting this, one of the novice teachers commented:

"Indeed, classroom management is a major issue for us. As you know that we are youth and the students also are very young. Some students are disrespectful to the new teachers. For example, it is a common practice in my class that, some students go out of the classroom while I am teaching without any permission."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.5 Workloads

As can be read in Table 1 above excessive responsibilities is another challenge facing novice teachers. It was stated that the novice teachers have many classes to attend in a single day, just like the experienced teachers do. Moreover, some of them mentioned that they are supposed to go to other schools to do part-time jobs following the shortage teachers, particularly in science subjects. In this context, the following was explained by one novice teacher:

"We have just two years in this school but if you see us, you may think that we have long time experience of working as the teachers. Sometimes, our periods exceed those of the experienced teachers. Again, some of us are teaching in other schools as biology teachers since there is a shortage of science teachers in many schools."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.6 Commitment

The novice teachers' commitment was also exposed as a challenge facing beginning teachers. The heads of schools complained that some new teachers enter into the profession with no eagerness to work as teachers. It was explained that sometimes, the novice teachers behave as if they are forced to join this profession. The novice teachers were said to behave unethically and perform their duties poorly. They are also said, by the heads of schools, to lack readiness to volunteer extra hours for remedial classes which are important to improve students' understanding of the subject contents and other related skills.

One of the head teachers had this to comment:

"I think commitment for these new teachers is low. May be these teachers did not decide to choose this field but they were forced. I have seen some teachers refusing to spare more time for students."

(Interview: August 2017)

3.7 Relationship with Students' Parents

During FGDs with the novice teachers on the challenges they face in their first years of teaching, they cited the lack of parental cooperation to be one of the big challenges they face in their teaching job. It was unveiled that, when the teachers face some problems, including miss behaviours of their kids, the parents become reluctant to give a full support to address the matter. Subsequently, the novice teachers end up leaving the students; hence, creating an atmosphere of having a very poor classroom which cannot be easily managed. In this matter, one of beginning teachers illustrated:

"We don't receive the required support from the parents. We fail to understand why this happens. May be they think that we are also kids, so they don't have to waste their times coming to discuss the problems of their kids."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.8 Relationship with Colleagues

Novice teachers underscored poor relationship with colleagues as a quandary for their teaching. It was stated that some experienced teachers were not cooperative enough to the new teachers. When the researcher went further inquiring to know why there is a poor relationship, it was realized that the experienced teachers become jealous of the new teachers since the majority of them are employed with the higher qualifications than the experienced teachers. It was illustrated that, if the novice teachers are in need of some help related to teaching, the experienced teachers are not ready to give their support. One of the novice teachers elaborated this problem during the discussions with them.

"We don't enjoy the support from experienced colleagues. I remember, when I was in need of a certain geography textbook, my colleague who taught the same subject, openly told me that, I am a degree holder, how comes that I don't have such a textbook"

(FGD, August 2017)

3.9 Students' Poor Background

In the focus group discussions with the novice teachers, it was revealed that the schools receive students with the poor education background and, thus, they have limited competence to carry on learning the secondary school subjects. This requires teachers to provide some compensatory teaching along with the teaching of the secondary school subjects. The teachers added that, this is real difficult for them and they spend much time to address this problem and, in most cases, they are labeled as weak teachers

where they fail to transform such students because of the many responsibilities they hold. Regarding this problem, one of the beginning teachers had this to explain:

"In my class, I receive students with limited competence, but I think they come with this weakness from the lower levels. I don't think that there is enough seriousness in the lower level, particularly the Form One students. I am scared that, sometimes, they continue with the upper classes with limited competence, we cannot just change them quickly in one year."

(FGD August 2017)

3.10 Insufficient Resources

Other novice teachers explained that the lack of resources was another big issue for the novice teachers. First of all, they explained that there is a shortage of chemicals for science students; thus, making it difficult in conducting good teaching. They also exposed that, in many schools, there are lab technicians and, hence, making the science teachers use too much time preparing for the practical. Besides, shortage of text books was mentioned to be a present in some schools. Further, they elaborated that the number of text books is less than the number of students hence crippling their effective teaching endeavors. Moreover, when the teachers need to use the internet services to access materials for his/her students; it becomes difficult as many schools are not connected to the internet service. One among the novice teachers' views in this context are quoted underneath:

"While we were at the university, we were told that we shall find lab technicians in schools. However, this is not the case in the schools. For example, citing my case, it became very difficult in the first place when I was given science students teaching them Chemistry. I had to be a lab technician and a Chemistry teacher at the same time. In fact, I was not even familiar with the roles of lab technician but I had to learn from other schools."

(FGD, August 2017)

Similarly, another novice teacher added that:

"To me, I think the problem we face is internet connectivity. At the university, we depended on the internet for everything, but here things are different. Besides, the textbooks are also not sufficient particularly for science subjects."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.11 Students' Low Motivation

Encouraging the less motivated students to learn is another problem facing the novice teachers. In the focus group discussion, the novice teachers claimed that there are certain students who have no interest to learn. These students finally become the most disturbing and difficult to handle in the classrooms. It was reported that when the beginning teachers tried to help them they ended up getting no success. The following quote from the focus group discussion with novice teachers illustrates this finding:

"I have been facing meeting many less motivated students. The majority of the students have very low internal motivation. For example, when we give them some tasks to do, they do them carelessly and some of them do not attempt them."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.12 The Gap between the Theory and the Actual Practice

Another challenge that the novice teachers face is the gap between what they learned at university and colleges and what is the actual situation at work. For example, the novice teachers highlighted the lack of uniformity in preparing the instructional materials, particularly the lesson plan to be a major issue to date. Each college and university in Tanzania has its own format of lesson plan preparation which confuses them when they are posted in work stations. Besides, it was stated that when the new teachers enter into the teaching field, they are told to use another format different from what they are taught at university and colleges. They consider this to be a source of confusion. The following quote was made from the focus group discussion to reinforce this finding:

"For me, I have observed a lack of a universal format of lesson plan in this country. Each university follows its own format. Besides, when we get posted in schools, we try to use the skills we were taught at the university in preparing the lesson plan but the school administration gives us its own format, insisting that we have to obey with the Ministry of Education guidelines."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.13 Teacher's Salary

The salary was also pointed out by the participants as one of the prime issues facing the novice teachers in executing their roles effectively. The novice teachers explained that the salary they get is not sufficient to enable them to afford their needs. Moreover, they added that, some beginning teachers compare the salary they get and the one their

fellow graduates get are quite different besides the fact that they all work in the same country. They argued that the low salary they get weakens their morale to work. One of the novice teachers made the following remark during the focus group discussion:

"I think the salary we get is not sufficient for us to be mentally stable to execute our new roles effectively. To my surprise in this country, I and someone else can be both degree holders, but because someone is employed somewhere else, he earns more than I get, this disheartens me."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.14 Pressure from the Ministry

The analysis of the qualitative data further revealed that the pressure from the Ministry of Education is a serious challenge for the novice teachers in implementing the curriculum effectively. The novice teachers mentioned that, the Ministry of Education requires all teachers to provide sixty activities per a topic. It was elaborated that big class size with many periods and classes to teach, provision of sixty activities per a topic undermines their efforts towards effective teaching. It was reported that, following this burden, some novice teachers keep regretting their choice of the teaching career. One of the novice teachers had this to say regarding the teaching load they have:

"... sometimes we are told that we should provide sixty activities in each topic. This is a directive from the Ministry of Education. For us, as the novice teachers in this career, this is not realistic at all. Imagine, we are given many periods, many classes to teach and we the science teachers also teach in other schools. How would this be possible, I think this new innovation is impracticable."

(FGD, August 2017)

3.15 The Roles of School Heads towards Beginning Teachers

In this sub–section, the schools were asked how they supported the novice teachers to date. The data regarding this are summarized in percentages and presented starting with highest percentages. See Table 2 below:

s/n	The Roles of School Heads	Frequency (N 9)	Percentage (%)
1.	Provision of an orientation	4	44
2.	Attaching new teachers to panel leaders as their mentors	2	22
3.	Provision of resources	1	11
4.	Addressing new teachers working problems	1	11
5.	Forming an advisory committee	1	11

Table 2: The Roles of School Heads towards Beginning Teachers

It can be felt from Table 2 above that the major roles played by the school heads in supporting the beginning teachers in their first years of work includes provision of the orientation programmes (44%), attaching novice teachers to the panel leaders (22%), provision of facilities to work (11%), addressing the novice teachers' work problems (11%) and forming an advisory committee for new teachers (11%). With regard to this orientation, one head teacher commented that:

"When I receive the novice teachers to work in my school, I engage them in an orientation sessions that are designed to help them understand the school policy and procedures. The orientation also focuses on the syllabus analysis, reminding them to behave ethically as teachers and calling them to have a good relationship with students, parents, and colleagues.

(Interview, August 2017)

As for the role of attaching novice teachers to the panel leaders (subject leaders), another head of the school had this to say:

"My practice, I attach the new teachers with panel leaders to mentor them on the best way of teaching their subjects in a way that students can appreciate the lesson."

(Interview, August 2017)

The study unveiled that making of follow-up of the novice teachers' issues is another role that the school head play in supporting the novice teachers. Some school head teachers explained that, if the novice teachers are employed in their schools, they make sure that they work with a relaxed state of mind by making follow up of their rights to the government authorities. It was explained by one of the school heads that:

"I support the new teachers through a follow up of their issues. For example, if my novice teachers' allowances get delayed, I make follow up to make sure that they get them. I do this because I know that a mentally stable teacher is the one who can work effectively."

(Interview, August 2017)

Furthermore, the study revealed that some school heads form an advisory committee in their schools. They explained that the major role of the advisory committee is to council and support both the experienced and the novice teachers in many aspects about their profession such as ethical issues, good relationship with colleagues and parents, and teaching methodology. In this context, the following was explained by one of the school head:

"In my school, I have an advisory committee. So if a teacher behaves badly, he/she is called in the committee and gets advised accordingly. Besides, we advise them on ethical issues as well as the teaching methodology in case he/she was using irrelevant teaching methods."

(Interview, August, 2017)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has revealed a number of challenges that the novice teachers face in the first days of their teaching career. The most cited challenges are problems in coping with the educational reforms, teaching methodology, classroom management, workload, commitment, relationship with students' parents, relationship with colleagues, poor students background, insufficient resources, students low motivation, the gap between the theory and actual practice, salary problems and the pressure from the Ministry of Education. These problems have an effect on teachers' effectiveness, and poor students' learning outcomes. However, these challenges seem to be common everywhere as they are cited in a number of studies that existed before this (for example, see Ali, 2013; Dickson, Riddlerber, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014; Barkaskaute & Meskaskuiene, and 2017). These problems can be overcome through trainings, workshops and how the colleges and universities prepare the teachers in advance. Similar initiatives are used in other parts of the world like Brazil in attempt to overcome the problems faced by novice teachers (Andre, 2012).

With regards to the roles that the school heads play in supporting novice teachers, the present study found that provision of an orientation, the use of advisory committee in advising the novice teachers, provision of work facilities, assisting teachers to address their work related problems and attaching new teachers to the panel leaders are the major support system that the heads of public secondary schools in Pemba use to support novice teachers. These results are synonymous to other studies (Wilson, 2012; The University of Florida, 2010) which also discovered a similar support system used by the head teachers in helping beginning teachers.

From these arrays of research findings, it suffices to conclude that beginning teachers face a number of challenges in the few early years of their working and these may impact the efforts of the country towards having quality of education for all. Again, from these findings, it is logical to conclude that the school administration provides less support to the beginning teachers. Therefore, the school heads should increase more innovative ways of supporting beginning teachers in their first years of teaching career. Besides, the state training institutions should re-professionalize mentors and trainers for beginning teachers.

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