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NURTURING LIFE SKILL EDUCATION IN AN ENVIRONMENT-BASED **PESANTREN**

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ABSTRACT

The success of educational institutions can be seen from their ability to develop their students' life skills including self-potential, skills, and independence development. This study aims to investigate the implementation of environmental-based life skills education at PPBU (Pondok Pesantren Agroecology Biharul Ulum) Cisarua, Bogor. This study uses a qualitative method. Data were collected by using observation, interview, documentation, and triangulation techniques. Data analysis includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that life skills education at PPBU was implemented by using an integrative curriculum based on the theological teachings of the Quran with the spirit of local wisdom values. The curriculum was implemented in a number of programs for students' development in terms of their personal, social, academic, and vocational skills.

Keywords: Environment, Islamic Boarding School, Kyai, Life Skill Education, Quran Learning

ABSTRAK

Keberhasilan lembaga pendidikan dapat dilihat dari kemampuannya mengembangkan kecakapan hidup para peserta didik meliputi pengembangan potensi diri, keterampilan dan kemandiriannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan menginvestigasi pelaksanaan pendidikan kecakapan bidup berbasis lingkungan di PPBU (Pondok Pesantren Agroekologi Bibarul Ulum) Cisarua, Bogor. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan triangulasi. Analisis data mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, pendidikan kecakapan hidup di PPBU dilaksanakan dengan menerapkan kurikulum integratif yang didasarkan pada ajaran teologis Al-Qur'an dengan spirit nilai-nilai kearifan lokal. Pendidikan kecakapan hidup diimplementasikan dalam sejumlah program untuk pengembangan keterampilan pribadi, sosial, akademik, dan vokasional santri.

Keywords: Kecakapan Hidup, Kyai, Lingkungan, Pembelajaran Al-Our'an, Pesantren

INTRODUCTION

Education is geared toward the effort to transform the process of human development that is able to achieve a mature quality of life. In a broader sense, it can be viewed as a suggestion to lead humans to successfully carry out their duties as servants of God ('abdullâ'), as well as the leader on earth (khalifa fi al-ard). In Indonesia, education is regulated by Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional/the National Education System Law No. 20 year 2003. The law emphasizes that education is designed and implemented to develop superior human resources with several indicators to take into consideration. Education should develop students to achieve the following indicators: having faith and piety to God Almighty, showing noble

character, being healthy, being knowledgeable, being capable, creative, independent, and being a democratic and responsible citizen.

The government has spent its budget and work to prepare students to be able to comply with the world of work or industry after they graduate from school. This educational objective has not been achieved successfully due to the higher rate of unemployment. In August 2020, the open unemployment rate (OUR) was 7.07 percent. Compared to August 2019, there was an increase of 1.84 percentage points. Vocational high school graduates had the greatest unemployment rate, at 11.45%. This fact shows that education in Indonesia has not achieved the goals of national education.

Education should be designed to respond to the problem of unemployment. It is expected to be able to develop students' self-potential and skills to work and be entrepreneurs. It should be tailored to develop students' life skills. Life skills education is an educational model that provides practical skills that are used by the graduate when they deal with the needs of the labor market, business opportunities, and economic or industrial potential in the community (Prajapati et al., 2017; Smith, et al., 2006).

Life Skills include general and specific life skills. The first skill has something to do with a general life skill that refers to personal and social skills. Personal skills include self-awareness as a servant of God (spiritual skills). It also deals with thinking skills that emphasize the ability to explore and find information, the ability to process information and make decisions as well as creative problem-solving skills. Meanwhile, social skills include the competence to work together in groups, demonstrate social responsibility, control emotions and interact in local and global communities and cultures. The second skill deals with specific life skills that include academic skills and vocational skills (Yankey & Biswas, 2012). Academic and vocational factors play a significant role to develop students' life skills that they need when they join the world of work. Life skills are considered the inner engine that can be used as a solution to overcoming the problem of unemployment. This solution is open to exploration (Josephine et al., 2019; Iqbal, 2009). One of them is to develop environment-based life skills education which can be developed in any educational institution including *pesantren*.

Unlike other educational institutions, pesantren has a distinctive feature. It has been associated with *kyai* (leader in a pesantren) and *kitah kuning* (Islamic traditional books) which are the two prominent features of pesantren. In the context of pesantren, *kyai* plays a significant role. Kyai usually has charisma which is the capital in the development of the pesantren. Meanwhile, *kitah kuning* has become a sacred reference for conservatives (Cornelissen, 2008; Ellen et al., 2014).

A number of pesantren have carried out learning transformations. They introduce not only kitab kuning but also other program relevant to life skills education. The programs were organized to support students' life skills in the field of entrepreneurship, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and others. One of the pesantren institutions that implement these life skills is Pondok Pesantren Agrikultural Biharul Ulum (PPABU), Bogor. This pesantren has an interesting program related to life skills education. In addition to kitab kuning, students are taught life skills based on an environment. This transformation effort synergizes pesantren with the community in environmental recovery due to the exploitation of gold mines that damage the community environment.

A number of researchers have investigated the issues of life skills education in educational institutions particularly *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). One of the topics of their research deals with the theme of eco-pesantren (Herdiansyah, 2018; Tholchah 2016; Nisa, 2017; Mahzumi, 2017). In the same vein, Mukholisah (2018), specifically investigated students' life skills at pesantren Agricultural Darul Falah. Those studies have not addressed the topic of life skills education in an environment-based *pesantren*. This is the gap that the present

study tries to fill. This study investigated the implementation of life skills education at PPABU Bogor.

METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative. It used the natural environment as a direct data source. PPABU was chosen for this study. The presence of the researchers is valuable in qualitative research. They deal with a number of subjects. That is the reason why researchers become the key instrument that directly observes objects at the research site and interacts with the audience (Neuman, 1997; Creswell, 2004).

The data of the present study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the results of participant observation in the form of the researchers' direct involvement in the life of the people who were observed. It was done to know and see the reality of educational activities at PPABU. Other sources of data were obtained from interviews with *kyai* and the local community. Meanwhile, secondary data were taken from a number of research results that are related to life skills education in pesantren. Furthermore, the data from the observations were rechecked through the data from interviews (triangulation). When it comes to data analysis, there were several stages taken: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification steps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the implementation of life skills education at PPABU. Based on the data collected, there are several findings to describe: the profile of pesantren PPABU, integration of education system and curriculum, environment-based life skills education, and implementation of life skills education. Each finding will be described below and it will be discussed with the relevant literature.

Pesantren Profile of PPABU

PPABU was established on September 30, 2014. The ultimate aim of this pesantren was to introduce and educate the public about the issue of agrarian and ecological reform. At that time, the pesantren collaborated with local village communities aspiring to build a sovereign and empowered community (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020). PPABU conducted several activities that were based on agroecology and the synergy of agricultural activities by preserving the sustainability of the ecosystem. Those activities were the primary programs to serve and meet the need of the community surrounding pesantren.

PPABU is located in Legok Kiara Village, Cisarua, Bogor. It is close to Halimun village. This pesantren is led by Muallim Atim, who since 2007 has been an environmental activist. He joined the Transformative Nanggung Community Alliance to fight for farmers' rights against the Hevindo company. The company abandoned the land which has been managed and taken over by a number of Nanggung people (Rinoza, 2016). *Kyai* of PPABU had a historical background to fight for the environment and the farmers' rights.

Given the circumstance of environmental damage and social dispute, PPABU existed and its struggle was motivated by social and ecological conditions. The society and environment had experienced a crisis due to gold mining activities since the New Order regime. The gold mining activities were concentrated in conservation areas, and control of production was under the authority of PT Antam, a Tbk that is owned by BUMN (Badan Usaha Milik Negara/state-owned enterprise). In addition, private sector PT. Hevindo played to control the production land on a large scale. This gold mining activity caused the people around the area to switch their professions from farmers to illegal gold miners (locally known as gurandil). All gold mining activities had an impact on the environment because the

processing waste contained hazardous chemicals, such as mercury (Hg), cyanide (CN⁻), and Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide/NaOH).

Responding to the environment and ecological problem, kyai Mua'alim Atim was moved to carry out social transformation and environmental transformation in the area by establishing a pesantren. He established PPABU and designed pesantren activities in an effort to transform the environment by synergizing critical Qur'an learning activities and participatory land empowerment. He promoted planting trees, and other conservation activities. In addition to the social and environmental movement, PPABU managed to serve educational services. In 2020, it has opened elementary school, junior high school, and high school level education. Some graduates from PPABU studied at Universitas Terbuka (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020).

Integration of Education System and Curriculum

PPABU develops a curriculum that implements an integrative education system. This integration of the education system can be seen in the integration of (1) religious education with technological skills (agribusiness), (2) formal education (schools) with non-formal (pesantren), and informal with the society around pesantren, (3) intellectual education (theory) with the practice of entrepreneurship, and (4) individual achievement education with the spirit of service to the community (PPABU Document, 2020). Given the design of the curriculum, PPABU in this context has adopted an integrative education system by combining the curriculum of the ministry of religion, the ministry of national education, Islamic boarding school, and life skills.

Samsi (personal communication, July 2020) in the interview explained that the curriculum at PPABU, offers religious knowledge, basics of agriculture, land management, organic farming, nurseries, cultivation, and harvesting. It also offers the knowledge of identification of potential non-mining villages, village observations, and customs in farming. At PPABU, students and community members are given an understanding of agrarian-related knowledge, especially with regard to land use, populist ecology and environmentalism, and the knowledge of the production and consumption system. Based on these data, pesantren has integrated participatory education and curriculum between theoretical and practical knowledge in the field as an embodiment of interactive dialogue between science and reality as in integrative science (Abdullah, 2014).

Environment-Based Life Skill Education Concept

PPABU has its vision that is to introduce and educate students and the community about agrarian and ecological reform. Its role is to synergize with the community to make the community sovereign and empowered. It has declared itself as an agro-ecological-based pesantren that synergizes agricultural activities by preserving the sustainability of the ecosystem. In the context of environmental transformation, the educational institution has carried out life skills education for students and the community of Halimun, Cisarua, Bogor. Furthermore, it is a vehicle for society to connect with the people in a bid to solve community problems, especially in the aspect of the environment.

At PPABU, the concept of life skills education is based on two pillars: the Quran and the local wisdom of the community. The Quran serves as a guide for the life of Muslims. It taught Muslims to struggle to be successful in this world and in the hereafter (QS. al-Qaṣaṣ/28:78). Based on this verse, students and the community are required to learn the Quran. They are expected to not only read the texts but also read natural phenomena (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020). The general purpose of studying the Quran is to strengthen their faith (theology). At PPABU, as explained by Alim (personal communication,

July 2020), students are taught Quran to have a respectful attitude towards the environment as part of their place of life.

Regarding the implementation of life skills education, there are a number of religious texts that are used as references. For example, some verses tell people to think critically in responding to the realities of life (QS. al-Muddaśir/74:1-2 and ar-Rum/30:41). The verses emphasizes that Islam is *raḥmatan li al-'âlamîn*, so that Muslims are required to have the attitude and soul of a sense of humanity and ecology (Atim, personal communication, September, 2018). Islam has designed the system of life in such a way (QS. ar-Raḥmân/95:10), so that humans have no right to exploit the environment, but to empower it for the welfare of human life. Environmental empowerment is a form of embodiment of human devotion to God. God emphasizes that humans are not authorized to exploit the environment because they are not the true owners. The attitude of exploitation towards the environment is opposed according to Samsi (personal communication, July 2020) by God as an excessive attitude in land use (QS. al-Gâṣyiyah/88:22 and QS. al-Isrâ'/17:37-38).

At PPABU, santri and the community who recite the Quran are invited to sincerely contribute to planting trees that aim to preserve the life of future generations. Kyai emphasizes santri and the community so that they can expand the transcendent relationship between humans and humans, humans and God, and humans and nature. In his view, the proper relationship among those parties secures the role of the human as the leader on earth. Humans are responsible to protect the environment and to avoid to commit damage to the environment. He promotes a mutualistic and interdependence relationship between humans and the environment. The proper relationship is important to maintain the survival of both (kyai, personal communication, July, 2020). In other words, environmental conditions to some extent describe the condition of one's faith. Samsi in the interview stated that the practice of environmental preservation reflects the condition and portrait of human theology as God's creatures (Samsi, personal communication, July, 2020).

Kyai at PPABU plays a significant role to educate santri and society on environmental issues. On many occasions, kyai explained and carried out 'planting' ideas (internalization) to santri and the community. He explained the idea to teach the essence of the ecological care movement built by pesantren. Kyai's effort to teach students and society about environmental issues has a positive cognitive and affective impact on students and the community. They started to bring the activity of reading the Quran to the next level. They not only perform to read textually (text pronunciation) but also practice verses in real life. The role of the *kyai* in this context is very strong since he is the one who influences the santri and the community.

At PPABU, learning Quran is strengthened by the program of learning Environmental Fiqh (Fiqh al-Bi'ah). The subject refers to the work of Muhammad (2006). Kyai through the study of Environmental Jurisprudence teaches and emphasizes, that Fiqh does not merely mean ritualistic knowledge, but a more universal transcendent meaning. Prayer, fasting, and others that are deemed obligatory in the study of Fiqh, must also apply to the environment, so that it is "obligatory" to be maintained and preserved as a religious obligation (Atim, personal communication, July 2020) As a Muslim, according to Samsi (personal communication, July 2020) the term "ecology" must be interpreted and contextualized through theological binoculars. In the realization of the theology, students and the community are obliged to maintain the immediate environment starting from maintaining the home environment, the surrounding environment, and the wider natural environment.

In addition to Quran sources, PPABU applies local wisdom to develop environmental transformation. *Kyai* who serves not only community leaders but also religious leaders teach the community to adhere to the principles of local wisdom, especially regarding the conservation of forest resources. According to local wisdom in Bogor, it is known that the

conservation of forest resources as a valuable environment takes into consideration three values namely: (1) *leuweung titipan* (protecting the forest), (2) *leuweung tutupan* (preserving the area), and (3) *leuweung garapan* (using the environment for commercial purposes). The traditional leaders and the community maintain a commitment to take care of local wisdom as the basis for environmental conservation for the welfare of the community. They initiated the efforts to maintain the local wisdom by considering its futuristic content so that the balance of nature is maintained (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020).

Based on local wisdom that has become the backbone of people's lives, kyai emphasizes the importance of maintaining local wisdom as a reinforcement of theological teachings. There is no conflict between the two. The Quran and local wisdom have one thing in common when it comes to environmental preservation. They have been the power source for kyai to educate students and society on environmental issues.

Implementation of Life Skill Education at PPABU

Based on the results of observations, this study found that the life skill education at PPBU was in accordance with the concept of life skills proposed by Yankey & Biswas (2012). Life skills include general skills and specific skills. The former refers to life skills that a person needs to be able to live and mingle well with society. It consists of personal skills and social skills. While personal skills include self-awareness skills and thinking skills, social skills include communication skills and collaboration skills. The second skill is specific skills. They are skills that are needed specifically to deal with certain jobs and circumstances. These skills consist of academic skills, and vocational skills as can be seen in Table 1.

No	Type of Life Skill	Programs implemented
1.	Personal Skill	Public lecture
		Bahts al-Kutub (reading and discussing kitab)
2.	Social Skill	Muhadatsah (conversation)
		Community service
		Synergy society
3.	Academic Skill	Agricultural Project
4.	Vocational Skill	Apprenticeship
		Student Work

Table 1. Life Skills Education Program at PPBU

At PPABU, students are not only invited to recite the Quran by reading Quranic texts but also by observing environmental transformation. Pesantren has mapped the development of its educational institution and its environmental conservation. It has identified social strategic issues in the Halimun area. The issues include: (1) the mindset of the people who originally worked as farmers and switched to gold mining workers; (2) the community control over land which is very minimal. This leads to difficulties in farming and gardening; (3) the limitation of social knowledge in farming and their young people who are not very interested in conserving the environment; (4) the condition of the Cisarua people who have always been farming and prospering have become poor because they are gold miners.

Referring to table 1 above, there are several stages to take into consideration. The stages ensure the appropriate implementation of life skills education at PPABU. The stages include planning, implementing the process, and evaluation.

At PPABU, kyai prepared a grand plan as a model for realizing the PPABU vision and mission. After preparing the grand plan, PPBU leaders and administrators review the program related to the life skills education grand plan. Planning steps include setting goals for life skills education carefully, identifying needs ranging from personnel to facilities and infrastructure, and compiling a syllabus for life skills education (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020). This planning step is common in other educational activities.

Implementing Life Skill Education Process

Based on observations, this study found that PPABU referred to the curriculum and integrative education system to deliver life skills education implementation. This integrative curriculum is a combination of the curriculum set by the ministry of religion, the ministry of national education, and the pesantren curriculum. In accordance with the name and vision of pesantren agroecology, PPABU implements an integrated curriculum (integration) between religious sciences, general sciences, and environment-based pesantren science (agroecology). The integrated curriculum that is prepared is oriented to the functional curriculum because the institution implements applied education. The application of integrative curricula in schools aims to hone and develop students' skills and the community in terms of their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020). The curriculum is in accordance with the educational objectives in Bloom's theory.

At PPABU, the learning activities were conducted using a contextual learning model. This contextual learning synergizes theoretical learning with practical learning so that the material presented is connected to concrete experiences and situations. This learning model can build a realistic and meaningful learning experience on the part of the students. This learning model can help students achieve significantly between formal learning and skills needed in society. However, the application of the curriculum and life skills learning model at PPABU varies according to the level of education. At the junior high school level, the introduction of life skills is limited to basic recognition only. Meanwhile, at the high school level, advanced life skills were introduced (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020).

At PPABU, life skills education was implemented by applying integrative learning. The learning process can be conducted either in the classroom or outside the classroom and is participatory in an agricultural and plantation environment.

Designing Integrative Curriculum at PPABU

In an effort to implement an integrative curriculum, life skills education at PPABU is implemented not only in school but also out of school. Students are taught several programs to develop their life skills. The life skills program includes personal, social, academic, and vocational skills.

Personal skills are the skills needed to fully recognize one's self and the ability to appreciate oneself as a creature of God (Abdullâ), community members and citizens (khalīfatullâ), to be aware of and be grateful for their strengths and weaknesses. This skill includes self-awareness and thinking skills (Movallali, et. al., 2015). This program is generally carried out in the form of worship activities for the students, such as congregational prayers, obligatory and sunnah fasting, tadarrus Al-Quran, wearing polite and neat clothes, commitment to the schedule of activities, and sunnah prayers.

Other programs that can support the development of students' personal skills include general stadium activities, and literature studies (*bahs al-kutub*). The general stadium is held in the large meeting room where kyai is scheduled to deliver Islamic teaching in a weekly program. The program contains *tausiyah* concerning kyai's general view of life and how to obtain it. The purpose of the general stadium is to motivate students to have a patriotic spirit and optimism (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020). Meanwhile, *baḥs al-kutub*, like Quran exegesis kitab aims to broaden students' horizons by understanding the Muslim scholar masterpiece.

a. Life skill program for social skill aspect

Social skills refer to interpersonal skills like communication skills and collaboration skills (Movallali, et al., 2015; Yankey & Biswas, 2012; Puspakumara, 2011; Vranda, & Rao, 2011). Based on the observation, this study found that students' social skills were seen through training programs for preaching (muhâdarah), foreign language dialogue, and community

service. The *muhâdarah* or public speaking training is a weekly program that is held to train the students' mentality and competencies in communicating their ideas in public spaces. The messages conveyed are extracted from the message of the Quran, hadith, and the views of Muslim scholars. Students who have been considered credible in preaching are empowered to deliver sermons in places around the pesantren. *Muḥâdaṣah* training was administered to develop students' communication skills in using foreign languages. Meanwhile, community service is carried out every Friday in order to socialize with the community and stay in touch with them. The community service agenda includes the cleanliness of community residential areas and the pesantren environment (Samsi, personal communication, July 2020).

b. Life skill program for academic skills

Academic skills refer to scientific thinking skills which benefit students' academic gain. They are closely associated with learning, writing reports and presentation (Movallali, et. al., 2015; Yankey & Biswas, 2012; Tuttle, et al., 2006). Based on the observations, this study found that PPBU administered several programs in developing students' academic skills. Students are taught to be able to conduct critical studies on important themes which are the subject of discussion in kitab turas such as Fiqh or Tawhid written by Muslim scholars. In addition, bahśl masâil is related to Fiqh studies with environmental themes, especially about agribusiness/agriculture. The reference books used for this event include Ecological Jurisprudence (Fiqh al-Bi'ah) by Muhammad. The Study of Environmental Jurisprudence teaches Fiqh which does not merely mean ritualistic knowledge, but also an emphasis on universal transcendent meaning. The subject teaches students and the community to build and translate their care for the environment from the perspective of religious matters.

Vocational skills are usually associated with certain work fields in society which are usually technical and practical to deal with the certain profession (Movallali et al., 2015). Based on the observation, this study found that PPBU developed agroecology to achieve students' vocational skills. There are two concrete steps implemented by pesantren in an effort to transform the environment. First, pesantren developed human mentality through the critical awareness of community students. This aspect of vocational skills has been designed through critical learning about environmental realities. Second, pesantren empowered students and society by their involvement as core cadres to protect nature and mountains. Pesantren and the community in this context form a core cadre to preserve nature and the environment. The cadres were taken from former illegal miners who became students at pesantren.

This study also found that PPABU applied two other programs for strengthening the vocational skill of students. They are involved in making *ulu-ulu* (clean water and sanitation) secure and maintaining public health when dealing with clean water for the need of the community. Students were invited to be involved in utilizing agricultural land with the community by utilizing abandoned land belonging to PT. Perhutani whose contract period has expired for farming. PPABU and the community develop an agricultural system based on "*kebun talun*", (agroforestry). This program allows students to use and manage land for several plants both the type of farm and forest. The agricultural system is carried out *tumpangsari* (polyculture system). This system allows students to use the land and grow more than one species at the same time in the forest around the pesantren and the surrounding community.

To strengthen life skills education activities, PPABU builds relationships with other institutions that involve the community in environmental transformation efforts to restore damaged environments. Pesantren collaborated with other parties from a higher education institution like ITB (Institut Teknologi Bandung), the non-governmental organization like JATAM (organization for Mining Advocacy Network), and other organizations to restore lost generations and maintain environmental sustainability in the Halimun area, Cisarua, Bogor

(Samsi, personal communication, December 2020). Santri were given the opportunity to work and study at these funding institutions in developing their life skills.

Evaluation in learning is one of the important components to measure the achievement of particular learning programs. It assesses both from the aspect of educators and students concerning a particular learning material and its relationship with learning objectives (Jaedun, et al., 2014). This study found that pesantren applied an evaluation to measure students' achievement and life skills program effectiveness at PPABU. The evaluation is carried out through meetings with the *kyai* and the teachers. The joint meeting is held to find out not only the level of achievement of the life skill program but also the reflection event for further program improvement. The joint meeting is held once a month and reported periodically. The evaluation to measure the student's level of ability is carried out through written exams and non-test exams such as portfolios. This portfolio exam aims to find out the track record of students in implementing life skills at pesantren.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the implementation of life skills education at an environment-based pesantren PPABU in Bogor. The Life skills education at PPABU is carried out based on an integrated education system and synergy curriculum. Its basic concept refers to theological teachings in the Quran and the values of local wisdom of the community. These two foundations emphasize the necessity of preserving the environment as an obedience to God and as the leaders and managers on earth. Based on this concept, life skills education is implemented in several aspects. The aspects to develop include (1) personal skills by training students in public lectures, and *baḥṣ al-kutub*; (2) social skills, by administering *muḥadaṣah* program, community service, and community work, academic skills, and (3) vocational skills by implementing agricultural projects and internships. PPABU enriches students' life skills with environmental transformation.

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