

## The Service Learning to Cultivate Soft Skills for the Management of Darul Qur'an

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### Abstract (English)

Developing the potential of educational institution administrators with a focus on improving the quality of learning and administrative management is essential in nurturing the Holy Qur'an School. This community service aims to guide the administrators of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School to empower their soft skills to enhance the quality of education and management. This mentoring employs the service learning method, strongly emphasizing developing soft skills, particularly focusing on empathetic abilities and emotional regulation in unlocking potential. The outcomes of this service learning initiative include enriching student worship practices, enhancing the capacity of educators through mentoring in recitation methods, and supporting operational permit management. From these results, it has been observed that administrators were able to develop soft skills, including social awareness, problem-solving, communication, self-discovery, and leadership skills.

**Kata Kunci; Holy Qur'an School, Service Learning, Soft Skills**

### Abstrak (Bahasa Indonesia)

Pengembangan potensi pengelola institusi pendidikan yang berfokus pada perbaikan kualitas pembelajaran dalam pengelolaan administrasi sangat diperlukan dalam pembinaan Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an. Pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pendampingan pengelola Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an Darul Qur'an agar dapat memberdayakan *soft skill* dalam upaya meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran dan manajemen. Pendampingan ini menggunakan metode *service learning* yang menitikberatkan pada pengembangan aspek *soft skill*, terutama menekankan pada kemampuan berempati dan pengaturan emosi dalam mengembangkan potensi. Hasil *service learning* adalah pelatihan pengayaan praktik ibadah siswa, peningkatan kapasitas tenaga pendidik melalui pembinaan metode tilawati dan pendampingan pengurusan izin operasional. Dari hasil ini ditemukan para pengelola dapat mengembangkan *soft skill*, yakni *social awareness*, *problem solving*, keterampilan komunikasi, keterampilan penemuan jati diri dan keterampilan kepemimpinan.

**Kata Kunci; Service Learning, Soft Skills, TPQ Darul Qur'an**



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## **PRELIMINARY**

The development of the Holy Qur'an School in Indonesia cannot be separated from the concept of Islamic educational reform that emerged within the Muslim community. In the current context, the development of the Holy Qur'an School has become a part of Islamic religious education as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 55 of the year 2007 (Kemenkumham RI, 2007). Article 24, paragraph (1) states that Holy Qur'an School aims to enhance students' abilities to read, write, comprehend, and practice the contents of the Quran. Article 24, paragraph (2) explains that Quranic Education includes Quranic Kindergarten (TKQ), Holy Qur'an School (TPQ), *Ta'limu al Qur'an li al Aulad* (TQA), and similar forms. As time changes and the currents of the era evolve, the Holy Qur'an School plays a similar role to formal education in shaping a morally upright national generation.

In the teaching and learning process, Holy Qur'an School not only implements Quranic literacy but also offers a range of subjects, including Quran and Hadith studies, Creed and Ethics (*Aqidah-Akhlāq*), Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Islamic Cultural History, Arabic Language, and practical worship (Korcab Qiroati Kebumen, 2000). Typically, classes are held in the afternoon, from after afternoon prayer (*Asr*) to west prayer (*Maghreb*) or from after west prayer to evening prayer (*Isba*). While not overly formal, these Islamic educational institutions prioritize education's essence or core principles (Malik, 2013).

Implementing educational management in the Holy Qur'an School is fundamentally similar to formal education (Yasin, 2008). However, the Holy Qur'an School has unique characteristics not found in formal education. One of the main distinctive features of Holy Qur'an School is its community-based education approach. The strong connection between the community and the Holy Qur'an School is reflected in the profound emotional attachment to religion. For this reason, Holy Qur'an Schools are often recognized as institutions that apply a deep understanding of religion (*Tamaqua fi al-din*). Holy Qur'an School also emphasizes its role as a place for nurturing community leaders (Sutar & Churrahman, 2021). Many prominent Islamic figures, such as *Kiai* (Islamic scholars), *Ajengan*, *Syaiikh* (religious leaders), and even individuals who hold significant positions in bureaucracy, politics, or leadership, have emerged from these Islamic religious education institutions (Khoiriyah, 2012).

Management is an aspect that poses its challenges in the context of the Holy Qur'an School, especially when operated by individuals or family-based foundations. At times, founders assume a dominant role as owners who control all activities under their authority. This often results in imperfections in the management system implemented within the Holy Qur'an School. However, management plays a crucial role in maintaining the existence of an Islamic educational institution, including the Holy Qur'an School. It is difficult for a Holy Qur'an school to become a center of excellence and compete with other educational institutions if it lacks effective management (Suwito, 2012). Similarly, leadership requires an individual's participation and initiative to willingly dedicate themselves and their time to the growth of people and the institution's environment.

The management system of Holy Qur'an School sometimes tends to be static, especially regarding finances. Income and expenses are often limited to specific needs. Holy Qur'an School typically manages its income through monthly tuition fees, known as *syahriyyah*. Although the learning process in Holy Qur'an School shares similarities with regular schools, both inside and outside the classroom, the methods still retain traditional characteristics such as *sorogan* (recitation and explanation), *bandongan* (group recitation), *musyawarah* (discussion), and *mubafazah* (memorization) (PD Pontren, 2020).

The management issues in the Holy Qur'an School described above are one of the main focuses for empowerment efforts (Nashikhah, 2016). The management development in Holy Qur'an School can be integrated into the Community Engagement program of higher education institutions. This program is designed to enhance the quality of community service by the academic community. Therefore, in implementing Community Engagement, various concepts related to community mentoring, methods, and relevant social analysis theories must be applied to meet the community's needs.

Developing the Holy Qur'an School through empowerment activities within community engagement can serve as a pattern for creating a social laboratory. First, due to suboptimal interactions among stakeholders and a developmental partner mindset, there is a need for improved stakeholder collaboration. Second, designing an objective understanding of social realities requires studying institutional settings and comprehending the fundamental structure of interactions through conversational analysis among social actors. Third, with the knowledge of

social facts and interaction structures, a social laboratory aims to develop intervention strategies/models and enhance the capacities of stakeholders (Mustofa, 2020).

The self-development of management skills by researchers, particularly university faculty members, plays a crucial role in providing a platform to address various challenges Holy Qur'an School faces. In doing so, faculty members can evolve into individuals who are beneficial to society, going beyond theoretical instruction within specific academic courses. By embedding and actively practicing the management of Holy Qur'an School daily during the mentoring period, it is anticipated that the soft skills of Holy Qur'an School's administrators will be enhanced.

In terms of definition, soft skills encompass competencies beyond technical and academic aspects, emphasizing interpersonal skills and inter-individual relationships (Barmawi, 2012). Several approaches can be incorporated into mentoring activities to enhance soft skills, including service learning, team learning, and skill-sharing. This holistic approach contributes to the overall development of the faculty members and the Holy Qur'an School, fostering a well-rounded educational and administrative environment.

In this community engagement, activities are carried out to guide the Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School Krajan II Tanjungsari Jenangan Ponorogo's managers towards experiencing usefulness, namely through service learning. This service learning is necessary based on the concern for this institution, as the number of its students has declined over the two years leading up to the commencement of the engagement. After conducting an assessment, it was discovered that the managers have not been implementing specific Al-Qur'an teaching methods, resulting in instruction being conducted without a clear curriculum structure. The consequence is that the student's reading proficiency in the Al-Qur'an cannot be measured. The Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School has not yet obtained operational permits.

To address this, the Academic Service Faculty members aim to foster the local managers' soft skills by granting them access to knowledge, skills, or resources that can potentially be utilized to stimulate community interest. Developing these soft skills instills intrinsic awareness among the managers to enhance management, particularly in Al-Qur'an instruction, thereby enabling the assessment of students' abilities. Furthermore, enhancing Al-Qur'an instruction management is also directed towards increasing community enthusiasm.

Based on the description in the background above, this service learning aims to (1) guide the administrators of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School to empower soft skills in the effort to enhance the quality of learning and (2) guide the administrators of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School to empower soft skills in the effort to improve management.

## **METHOD**

This community engagement utilizes the service learning method. The choice of service learning is based on including the service element, which is essential for individual development. Beneficial service refers to interactions with real-life daily situations. Service learning is an educational approach combining positive and meaningful community actions with academic learning, personal growth, and responsibility as community members. This implies that learning is used to address personal issues and assist others in resolving their problems.

Service learning in this context involves actively engaging the administrators of the Holy Qur'an School in practical experiences and collaborative activities. The goal is to cultivate a sense of service and improve the administrators' soft skills, which are crucial for effective management and foster a positive learning environment. By incorporating service learning, the initiative seeks to create a mutually beneficial relationship where the academic team and the administrators of the Holy Qur'an School can learn from each other while addressing real-world challenges.

Through service learning, the Faculty Outreach Team strives to undergo a tangible transformation from merely acquiring knowledge for oneself to knowledge that assists others. The service learning approach to mentoring the management of the Holy Qur'an School is a community engagement activity conducted by faculty members involving students. The proposing faculty members simultaneously serve as Field Supervisors and Community Engagers.

Based on social mapping and community expectations, an interesting fact is discovered about the religious awareness of the Tanjungsari Village community, which is good but not balanced with the effective management of religious education institutions. The lack of community knowledge and supportive facilities influences this. Some segments of the educated community members have a strong aspiration to change the existing social paradigm by establishing a Holy Qur'an School to fulfill the religious knowledge needs of the younger generation. However, this is challenging due to the significant funds required and the numerous tasks that must be undertaken.

Based on the assets and potential at the community engagement site mentioned above, the service learning activities focused on mentoring Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School are directed towards several continuous programs. The practice of service learning for mentoring the management of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School is conducted and implemented over multiple years in collaboration with the community partners, starting from the academic year 2020/2021 and concluding in the academic year 2022/2023. The target of these activities is the administrators of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School, who are being prepared to follow up on the outcomes of the partnership-based service learning.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Problem Mapping and Need Assessment***

**Table 1.** The Problem Mapping and Need Assessment for Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School

<b>No.</b>	<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Identified Issues and Potential Problems</b>
1	Qualifications and Competence of Teachers	Not all teachers possess sufficient qualifications and competencies, affecting teaching quality and student understanding.
2	Availability of Materials and Learning Resources	Limited access to quality teaching materials hampers curriculum development and effective teaching methods.
3	Poorly Structured Curriculum	Unclear learning objectives and material sequence due to a poorly structured curriculum confuse.
4	Lack of Teaching Method Variations	Monotonous teaching methods lead to student disinterest and lack of concentration in Quranic education.
5	Evaluation and Monitoring	Irregular and ineffective progress measurement impedes student development in understanding and practicing the Quran.

Source: Compiled from various sources.

Based on the data above, several deficiencies in soft skills can be observed from the inadequacies of teachers in terms of qualifications and competencies as Quran educators. Teachers who cannot communicate clearly and effectively to students can lead to poor understanding of Quranic materials. Similarly, regarding the availability of materials and learning resources, teachers might face challenges finding alternative solutions when limited access to resources is limited. Teachers also appear to lack the ability to design a clear, sequential curriculum that aligns with learning objectives. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of variation in teaching methods, indicating a scarcity of creativity and innovation in teaching approaches. The shortfall in soft skills among teachers is possibly due to inadequate evaluation and monitoring processes.

### ***Service Learning Program***

After conducting problem mapping and need assessment, several concrete steps have been taken to address the challenges in Quranic education, which indirectly contribute to developing teachers' soft skills, as depicted in the table below.

**Table 2.** The Actions Taken to Address the Challenges at Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	Training and Competence Development for Teachers	We are implementing training programs to enhance teachers' qualifications and competencies in Quranic education.
<b>2</b>	Curriculum Design	Development of a curriculum design program to ensure clear learning objectives and effective teaching materials sequence.
<b>3</b>	Collaboration with Parents and Relevant Parties	Establishment of cooperation with parents and stakeholders to optimize student enthusiasm and engagement.

Source: Compiled from various sources.

The Training and Competence Development for Teachers aims to enhance teachers' qualifications and academic competencies and contribute to developing their soft skills. This training may encompass improving effective communication, adapting to change, and fostering collaboration and innovation within the learning environment.

The Curriculum Design program goes beyond creating clear lesson plans; it also aids teachers in developing planning, analysis, and organizational skills. It assists them in designing diverse teaching strategies, enriching teaching methods, and enhancing creativity in delivering content. On the other hand, Collaboration with Parents and Relevant Parties focuses on working with parents and relevant stakeholders. This undoubtedly requires strong communication skills and the ability to build relationships. Through this collaboration, teachers can develop negotiation skills, conflict management, and essential interpersonal skills in an educational setting.

The ultimate goal of developing these soft skills is to create a more effective, collaborative, and innovative learning environment, which, in turn, will provide positive benefits to students' learning experiences.

### ***Service Learning Process***

#### **Enrichment of Worship Practices for Students**

The enrichment of worship practice materials is manifested through training activities involving various skills, including a call to prayer (*aḥzan*), pre-Iqamah praises, calligraphy, Quranic recitation (*qirā'at*), and memorization (*dibā'iyah*). Under the guidance of the Faculty Outreach Team,

students act as speakers. These activities are conducted every afternoon during class hours from July 2021 to June 2022 in one of the classrooms. Involved parties include Saiful Amin as the responsible person, the Faculty Outreach Team as organizers and program facilitators, and students as participants. The enrichment program conducted by the Faculty Outreach Team has been well-received, as evident from the participants' active engagement. Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School's management supports participants by mobilizing necessary equipment and facilities.

### **Enhancement of Educator Capacity through Tilawati Method Development**

The main component of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School is its educators. However, these educators lack standardized Quranic teaching qualifications, contributing to the primary challenges faced by this institution. On average, teachers are graduates of public schools, not Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and lack expertise in this field. They are neither alumni of intensive Quranic education nor graduates of specific Quranic recitation training programs.

Their Quranic instruction is primarily self-taught, without any specific teaching methods from trained educators. Instruction is delivered traditionally and lacks a structured approach. This is compounded by the autonomy granted by the management regarding teaching methods and content delivery. Methods and content delivery are entirely left to their discretion.

The activity occurred from November to December 2022 at the Miftahul Ulum Tanjungsari Madrasa hall. The head and teachers acted as committee chairs, patrons, and participants. Under the guidance of the Faculty Outreach Team, students served as event organizers. The driving force behind this program is the head of Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School. He prepared the venue and encouraged the teachers to attend the event. He also played a significant role in the program, assisting the Faculty Outreach Team prepare refreshments. He arranged the refreshments by collaborating with his wife and utilizing the budget provided by the Faculty Outreach Team.

### **Operational Permit Assistance**

The prayer hall (*muşalah*) and Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School have long been central to the religious activities of the surrounding community. However, the institution has not obtained an Operational Permit from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). Assistance is needed for the formal legal process of obtaining this permit. This effort aims to support the management in obtaining the operational permit until Kemenag issues an Official Operational Permit Decree. This



will boost the motivation of the management and teachers, as their long-held aspirations for government regulation will be realized.

The Faculty Outreach Team conducted an assistance program by collaborating with relevant parties, including educators, village officials, the sub-district PPAI (Department of Islamic Education Development), and PD Pontren (Islamic Boarding School Development of The Branch Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Ponorogo). The estimated duration for the process, from application to issuance, is two months. One of the key contributors is Lilik Indrawati, a teacher who played a crucial role in supporting this endeavor. Essential assets in the form of documents from teachers and students were easily obtained, facilitating the smooth progress of the assistance program.

**Table 3.** The Service Learning Process at Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School

No.	Service Learning Process	Description
1	Enrichment of Worship Practices for Students	Training activities in call to prayer (azan), pre-Iqamah praises, calligraphy, Quranic recitation (qirā'at), and memorization (dibā'iyah). Students act as speakers. They are conducted during class hours from July 2021 to June 2022 led by Faculty Outreach Team. Saiful Amin is responsible.
2	Enhancement of Educator Capacity through Tilawati Method Development	Capacity-building for teachers in Quranic teaching methods. Activity held from November to December 2022 at Miftahul Ulum Tanjungsari Madrasa Hall. Head, teachers, and students involved, guided by the Faculty Outreach Team.
3	Operational Permit Assistance	Assistance obtaining an Operational Permit from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). Collaboration with educators, village officials, sub-district PPAI, and PD Pontren. Estimated process duration: two months.

Source: Compiled from various sources.

### ***Output and Outcome***

After one year of implementing the mentoring service learning at Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School during the academic year 2021/2022, the faculty outreach team conducted an evaluation. The evaluation results highlighted the readiness of administrators and educators to improve the institution's management. However, the issue of low student enthusiasm remained a challenge. As a follow-up to community engagement, efforts were directed toward enhancing the new student management system, as outlined in the table below.

**Table 4.** The Output and Outcome  
of the Darul Qur'an Holy Qur'an School Service Learning Process

No.	Output and Outcome	Description
1	Evaluation Results	After a year of service learning, the evaluation showed the readiness of administrators and educators for improvement, but low student enthusiasm remained a challenge.
2	Student Affairs Planning	Planning involving all teachers for activities like semester exams, pilgrimages, Quran recitation completion, and gatherings. You are assigning teachers to handle various activities with designated responsible persons. Control and oversight by the Head and regular biannual consensus meetings for evaluation and improvement.
3	New Student Admission Planning	Coordination between the Head and new student admission committee for preparations. Tasks included handling registration, payments, entrance tests, and student placement.
4	New Student Admission Process	Annual admissions and official registration start from Shawwal, with ongoing registrations throughout the year. Spread through word of mouth and classroom announcements. Registration, payment, and assessment based on age and abilities. Flexible and needs-based process, allowing all applicants as new students.
5	Student Placement	They are placing students based on capacity and classroom space planning. Classroom assignments involve testing and selection based on test results and abilities.

*Source: Compiled from various sources.*

### **Discussion**

The service learning process carried out by the Academic Service Faculty Team, along with its accompanying outputs and outcomes, has involved several skills that can enhance the soft skills of the managers of Darul Qur'an Quranic Learning Center (TPQ). Furthermore, students played a role as speakers under the guidance of the Academic Service Faculty Team. This can support them in expanding their communication and presentation skills, which are key elements of soft skills crucial for TPQ Darul Qur'an managers. Additionally, the program also engaged students as participants. Through active involvement in this event, students can hone their collaboration, teamwork, and leadership skills, which are also aspects of the soft skills that educators require in an educational context.

The service learning that provides support to TPQ Darul Qur'an managers in developing soft skills can be identified as follows: (1) enhancing communication skills, utilizing qira'at and

azan training to assist teachers in improving strong communication skills when interacting with students, colleagues, and parents; (2) Leadership skills development, through tilawati method training, teachers can develop leadership skills that are useful in managing classrooms, motivating students, and making informed decisions; (3) Enhancing teamwork skills, using opportunities such as operational permit management to help managers sharpen teamwork skills. These skills are crucial for managers to collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders to achieve shared goals; (4) Improving management skills following up on service learning with improvements in student management can aid managers in developing institutional management skills. These skills are highly valuable for managers to organize schedules, complete tasks, and meet deadlines.

The community engagement results showed that practicing service learning through training programs can enhance social awareness (Elok et al., 2021), problem-solving skills, communication skills, self-discovery skills, and leadership training (Yuni, 2017). Therefore, soft skills are highly crucial for professional individuals (Wahyuni et al., 2022). Soft skills are also closely related to emotional intelligence issues, which involve a person's ability to self-motivate (Yunartiyun, 2016), persevere in the face of frustration, manage impulses, avoid exaggerating pleasures, regulate mood, and handle stress effectively (Yuni, 2017). The practice of service learning in the management of the Holy Qur'an School also proves the achievement of skills that have been carried out continuously since the administrators of the Holy Qur'an School studied the concept and developed programs within their respective educational environments (Mustofa, 2019).

Soft skill juga involves leadership abilities (Haryu, 2009), time management, and problem-solving (Aprianti, 2019). Soft skills are also crucial for teachers in enhancing performance and the teaching-learning process (Harjono et al., 2021). Teachers with good communication, leadership, time management, and public speaking soft skills can contribute more to the learning process (Mufti, 2016) and enhance students' learning outcomes (Mohamad Agung Rokhimawan, 2012).

From the practice of service learning, it is understood that in every era, every individual needs education to develop their potential and become a high-quality resource (Halean, 2021). Education in this context is a process through which learners acquire knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (affective), and skills (psychomotor) as preparation for life within society (Sudrajat, 2006).

Furthermore, in this industrial era, production activities that humans once handled are now replaced by machinery, and even the machinery is being replaced by robots. However, one component remains irreplaceable by technological advancements in human beings: emotions, enthusiasm, empathy, ambition, and others that cannot be substituted by any measuring tools (awaluddin, fariz rahmadan, 2021). In such conditions, the ability to manage human relationships becomes increasingly relevant.

The performance of systems and the components supporting human life is not solely based on the presence of existing equipment but also the drive within humans to actualize their abilities (Agustian & Salsabila, 2021). This inner drive within humans is also referred to as soft skills. Soft skills are not just managerial abilities focused solely on efficiency and effectiveness but also on managing it so that humans, who are positioned as supporters of the system, experience psychological satisfaction (Elfindri, 2011). Humans still possess emotions, ambitions, ethics, and enthusiasm that robots cannot replace with a mechanistic measurable foundation (T.A.R., 2012). Based on the findings and analysis above, the following points can be noted as lessons learned for further development:

Firstly, social awareness. Service learning provided to service partners can enhance their skills in analyzing existing social issues around them. Additionally, service learning encourages service partners to become more caring and sensitive in identifying social problems. Several values can be learned from achieving social awareness, including solidarity and responsibility, where service partners are expected to develop these values in their individual lives. Consequently, service partners are expected to act based on their values when the time comes.

Secondly, problem-solving. Service partners often encounter difficulties when faced with problems, which can hinder them from optimally performing their tasks or routine activities. Through service learning activities, it's as if service partners are undergoing problem-solving training. This process allows service partners to learn how to solve problems using their reasoning. Additionally, service partners are trained to make effective decisions according to their situations.

Thirdly, communication skills. The practice of service-learning can address communication issues faced by service partners. Through service learning, service partners learn to develop effective communication skills in their social relations within their service settings, internally, and in the community. By possessing good communication skills, service partners are

expected to be able to express their opinions and be open to input and criticism for their character development.

Fourthly, self-discovery skills. During the development of a service partner, they undergo a process of self-discovery to find their true identity. This process is essential for them to realize their existence and feel comfortable with themselves. Many confusing situations arise for teenagers as they start building themselves into more mature individuals. The demands from both their internal environment and the surrounding environment influence the self-discovery process of a service partner. Through service learning, it's hoped that service partners can discover their true selves and be prepared to mature into adulthood. Ultimately, service partners can become mature adults capable of contributing within their respective environments.

Fifthly, leadership training. Shaping the character of a true leader through service learning is not easy. Being a leader means being a responsible individual who fulfills their duties and roles in everyday life. Leadership training is not intended to create leaders in politics or social fields, especially for those interested and qualified in the selection process. In service learning, service partners gain leadership knowledge and are guided to develop their affective side to become leaders who possess high levels of social care and sensitivity. Service partners gain emotional and social maturity through service learning, enabling them to assume roles in their respective contexts.

## **CLOSING**

Based on the findings and discussions above, several important points can be noted: (1) Service learning in the form of training can provide a platform for service partners to enhance the quality of learning, and (2) Service learning in the form of assisting in operational permit management ensures quality management. Service-learning results showed that administrators could develop soft skills, including social awareness, problem-solving, communication, self-discovery, and leadership skills.

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