

# Anthropological Context of Professional Teacher Training

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## ABSTRACT

A typological profile of students mastering the teaching profession has been developed based on the results of the empirical research carried out by universities of Belarus that provide professional teacher training programmes. About 24% of students are classified as “undecided”. This type is characterized by a lack of orientation towards the teaching profession and dissatisfaction with the educational process at university. We assumed that the creation of an educational environment focused on the development of an individual style of professional activity and coordination of individual and generalized educational pathways of students at all stages of their professionalization in high school can change the situation. Such an educational environment can manifest itself in a multi-style educational space which meets needs of students in professionalization in the context of individual educational requirements and generates factors of effective development and self-development of learners. Testing of the model of the multi-style educational space proved that it expands the possibilities of creative self-realization of future teachers, achievement of high level of educational standards, and significantly reduces the percentage of graduates who are not satisfied with the educational process at the university.

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## 1 Introduction

In this article the anthropological context of professional teacher education is considered from the standpoint of the possibilities of professionalization provided in the educational process with a view to anthropological features of students enrolled in pedagogical specialties. If these opportunities are fully realized the educational process becomes a means of self-cognition, self-development and creative self-realization of students in their acquisition of professional skills. Students in this case develop a personally significant, subjectively convenient and objectively productive model of professional behaviour which allows them to achieve high results of professional activity with the least labour and energy costs. The urgency of providing such

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professional training resides in, firstly, the increasing social requirements for the teacher as a guarantor of the sustainable development of society; secondly, the need to increase would-be teachers' success and satisfaction.

The anthropological predisposition of future teachers to the most successful assimilation of certain professional functions was revealed through the study of students' individual educational pathways. We proceeded from the fact that the characteristics of students' individual educational pathways correlate with their type of centration (Orlov, 2002) in the educational space of the university. The types of centration can be identified by what a particular student considers to focus his self-analysis on while speculating on their motives, values and achievements in the educational process. Hence, by asking students to answer three questions focused on their sets of motivations, values and scope of achievements, one can determine their typological affiliation.

## **2 Body**

The study was carried out in the universities of the Republic of Belarus which provide professional teacher training programs. The overall number of students participated in research amounted 948, they were students of the fourth year of study in pedagogical specialties. Students were asked to briefly answer the following questions:

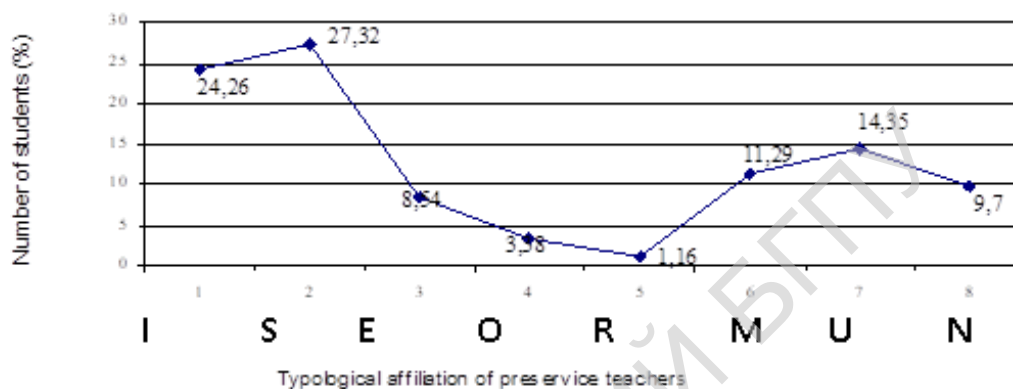
1. What do you see as the value of education?
2. Why did you decide to get a pedagogical education?
3. In what way was the higher education helpful to you?

A preliminary analysis of the answers allowed us to develop a matrix of verbal paradigms for students with different types of centration, which became the basis for content analysis of the students' answers in the entire sample. As a result of data processing a profile of the typological affiliation of students of pedagogical specialties was created.

Analysis of the reflective self-assessment activity of students allowed us to categorize students into the following groups:

1. I-centered (self-creators).
2. Centered on relationships with others (educators, organizers).
3. Centered on the subject results (subjects-oriented teachers).
4. Centered on the extraction of new knowledge (researchers).
5. Mixed type.
6. Undecided.

The study showed that typological affiliation is evident for  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the total number of students. These data correlate with N.A. Aminov's results (Aminov, 1997) and N.A. Labunskaya's research (Labunskaya, 1999). 11,29% of the surveyed demonstrated no clearly expressed signs of the type. Some students are classified as undecided (14.35%). 9.7% of the messages were not amenable to interpretation. The last two subgroups make up about a quarter of the total number of students participating in the study, and are the most problematic in terms of their professionalization (Fig. 1).



I – I-centered (self-creators)

R – researchers

S – subjects-oriented teachers

M – mixed type

E – educators

U – undecided

O – organizers

N – not amenable to interpretation

**Fig. 1.** Typological profile of individual educational pathways of students of pedagogical specialties

The graph shows that “self-creators” and “subject-oriented teachers” are the most quantitatively represented, “educators” and “organizers” are not so numerous. “Researchers”, however, make up only 1.16% of the entire sample. A brief description of the educational pathways of each type is given here.

The essence of the educational pathway of “self-creators” (I-centered) consists in a strong personal self-orientation: self-cognition, self-development, self-realization, self-assertion in life. The educational pathway of “self-creators” runs mainly along the line of personal growth and is characterized by an intensive process of self-knowledge, development and self-assertion in the educational environment. The efforts of these students are aimed at self-cognition and self-assertion. The strength of self-creators’ educational pathway is that they use the potential of the

educational space to build their personality. Their weakness is their risk of a limited development due to exposure to a particular educational environment. This fact explains their scarce orientation towards purposeful preparation for pedagogical activity.

The essence of the educational pathway of the “subject-oriented teachers” is their focus on the acquisition of subject knowledge and skills that will be useful in their teaching practice. An analysis of students’ motivations, values and achievements suggests that their track as opposed to “self-creators” is to a less extent connected with self-cognition, self-development and self-assertion but the emphasis is made on theoretical and practical preparation for the teaching profession. Students of this type tend to find pedagogical tools that would allow them to effectively teach children.

The strengths of the educational pathway of “subject-oriented teachers” are their conscious orientation to the profession of a teacher and the desire to master professional knowledge and skills. A weak point is their lagging behind others in self-cognition and self-understanding. Students of this type don’t set the goal of self-cognition but they are confident of themselves. Their educational track starts with a focus on knowledge, and the task of self-knowledge can sometimes be tackled later during their final years of study, and sometimes even later. However, they can run the risk of “discovering” missed opportunities for themselves and experiencing side-effects of professionalization in the educational process of the university when they model their teaching style by a “trial and error” method.

“Educators” are characterized by an orientation to spirituality and high human qualities. The interest in knowledge among the “educators” is not visible, but there is a clear desire for mastering professional competence. The evidence indicates that most “educators” identify themselves in the sphere of their relationship. The word “knowledge” is practically absent from the vocabulary of “educators”. On the other hand, one can clearly see their conscious attitude towards children (love, the desire to help them, be constantly surrounded by them), motivation to understand the relationship between the teacher and the student, the desire to cultivate children’s awareness in their relationship to themselves and the world. It is noteworthy that the “educators” quite clearly realize and experience a sense of professional responsibility towards themselves and their children.

The strengths of the educational track of “educators” are as follows. Firstly, a steady orientation towards mastering the teaching profession among students of this type is supported by inner motives such as love for children, the desire to put it into practice, to “give and share” spiritual values. Secondly, the educational space of the university is used by them as an instrument of knowledge, construction, development, transformation of the system of relations. The weakness of the educational pathway of the “educators” is that with a general underestimation of knowledge as such, their mastering of professional competencies is inadequate.

The educational pathway of the “organizers” moves not along the line of knowledge or self-knowledge, but along the line of interest in social activities, in collective cooperation and is

characterized by the intensity of contacts, communication, interactions. The “organizers” as well as the “educators” are centred on relationships with other people. Their lexical paradigms used to describe their achievements in the educational process are fairly general (‘it expanded my knowledge, etc.). The educational process of students of this type is motivating for them in terms of the possibility of interesting communication and contacts with fellow students, friends and teachers, as well as in terms of acquiring “useful” skills.

The data obtained indicate that “organizers” do not demonstrate a specific area of application of their efforts but name a certain “sphere” (education, pedagogical, public activity, etc.) instead. The words “children”, “students”, “schoolchildren” which are characteristic of the messages of students’ messages in previously considered types are replaced by “organizers” into expressions “younger generation”, “young generation”, “youth”, etc.

The strengths of the educational track of the “organizers” are that they are aware of social significance of education and believe in its high purpose and their educational pathway is characterised by an optimistic attitude. Ability to communicate greatly facilitates their progression in the educational process. At the same time, they most successfully realize themselves in teamwork. The weakness of their pathway is that cognition, self-knowledge and self-development do not occupy a significant place in the hierarchy of their educational values.

“Researchers” are characterized by an orientation toward scientific activity, the discovery of the previously unknown, toward the transformation of pedagogical reality. In the educational pathway of “researchers” there is an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, in-depth theoretical training in special subjects. “Researchers” tend to analyse their ability to think and to creatively transform reality and their relevance in the field of scientific activity.

The strength of the educational pathway of “researchers” is their desire to carry out educational and cognitive activity at the creative level, to build it around research methodology. Their weak point is the lack of organizational and communication skills necessary for pedagogical activity.

Characteristic features of the “undecided” are, firstly, their lack of orientation towards the teaching profession, and secondly, dissatisfaction with professional pedagogical education. The analysis of sets of values and motives allows us to conclude that their professional choice is random and is not associated with motivation emerging from pedagogical activity.

The educational pathway of the “undecided” is followed mostly with a negative emotional attitude and is characterized by frustration and anger. Students of this type accentuate failures instead of their achievements. At the same time, for the most part, they do not associate the reasons for their failures with themselves but attribute them to outside factors such as “inefficient teachers”, “poor organization of the educational process”, an unfair social structure, etc.

Successful personal and professional development of future teachers is provided by coordination of individual and generalized educational tracks. The generalized educational track is dictated by

educational standards and is determined by the objectives that all students mastering the teaching profession must meet. In accordance with the stages of professionalization of students (adaptation, individuation, integration) such generalized objectives are:

1. The conscious entry into the profession through the comprehension of the value of pedagogical activity, the possibilities of the educational space, self-knowledge and unveiling self-creation abilities in oneself. The outcome of meeting this objective is the formation of the future teacher's position as an educator in relation to himself or herself, motivational readiness for mastering the theory and methodology of pedagogical activity in accordance with their personal profile.
2. Assimilation of pedagogical knowledge and skills, development of personal and professional qualities through self-expression and self-realization in various types of teaching and research activities. The outcome of meeting this objective is a future teacher's knowledge and skills in theory and technology and awareness of their selective attitude to professional functions, methods of their acquisition and implementation.
3. Synthesis of knowledge about oneself and the profession and cultivating an orientation towards the mastery of professional functions with a view to one's own characteristics and capabilities. The outcome of meeting this objective is mastery of professional competencies that ensure the future teacher's complete self-realization in the profession.

In order to study students' genesis within the generalized educational track a questionnaire was developed with nine statements relating to the objectives mentioned above. Respondents needed to express their agreement or disagreement with these statements in accordance with their personal experience in mastering a profession at a university.

The received data made it possible to conclude that the educational environment in universities does not make a big contribution to the consistent growth of the future teacher's subjectivity. At the stages of adaptation, individuation and integration there are significant problems that exacerbate the crises of professional development of the teacher.

First year students adapt to the educational environment of the university spontaneously and do not receive pedagogical support in self-knowledge, awareness of themselves and their capabilities in the pedagogical process, they are not used to considering themselves as an effective cause of their development. This significantly affects their further professionalization and emotional perception of the university educational environment in general.

At the stage of individuation which coincides with studying core disciplines students have little idea of the connection of their knowledge with future professional activities and orient themselves to the "brain" form of studying pedagogical disciplines rather than enriching their reflexive experience based on strongest aspects of their personality.

As a result, at the integration stage, when they need to create a holistic view of themselves as a professional and prepare for teaching activities based on their potential, students begin to realize missed opportunities, experience stress, apathy, dissatisfaction, and sometimes change the profile of learning.

The study confirmed that the future teachers did not have enough experience for autonomous creative behaviour in the field of professional activity. As a result, teacher education does not fully fulfil its anthropological mission. By graduation time some students experience a decrease in motivation, dissatisfaction, and frustration with professional choice. This explains the relatively high ratio (24%) of students assigned to the group of "undecided".

We assumed that the educational environment focused on the development of the individual style of the future teacher's professional activity can make a difference. Such an environment can manifest itself in the multi-style educational space.

The multi-style educational space is a structured pedagogical reality that arises from combination of the creative position of managerial bodies and the autonomous position of self-management and which is characterized by personal orientation, synergy, variability, openness and dynamism and meets the needs of students for professionalization as related to their individual educational request.

The foundation component of the multi-style educational space is a purposefully organized educational process which generates factors for the development of the individual style of the future teacher's professional activities. The outcomes of style development are naturally due to the increasing self-perception of the learner in his or her personally initiated activities which are based on their understanding of personal aptitudes, specifics of the environment and requirements to the activity initiated. Therefore an integral indicator of the effective development of future teachers' individual style of professional activity in a higher educational institution is their readiness for self-organization of various types of educational and professional activities based on self-evaluation.

The educational process will provide such an outcome in case some requirements are fulfilled. These requirements can be presented at orientation, content, process, organizational and criteria levels and are reflected in the model of the multi-disciplinary educational space that we have developed. Let us dwell on them in more detail.

*Orientation level.* A multi-style educational space is created when the educational process at a university becomes a factor of the development of future teachers' individual style and is based on naturally determined sets of principles and norms.

The principle of purpose-value personification orients the transformation of professional training goals into students' personal meanings as the driving force of their self-development. The principle of contextual style determination involves moulding the design of the pedagogical process towards

the functional structure and typology of the individual style of future teachers' professional activity. The principle of individual preference necessitates us to create a variable educational environment that meets the individual preferences of students. The principle of autocreative cumulation requires enrichment of students' experience of self-creation viewed as affective, practical and cognitive self-development in various dialogue-based activities.

The pedagogical norms for building such an educational process are: ensuring that activities and interactions allow room for uncertainty; dialogization of the pedagogical process; continuous enrichment of the reflexive and self-evaluation experience of future teachers; encouraging practice of open expression of feelings, attitudes, beliefs; pedagogical interaction as a condition for the dynamics of students' independence in their organization of various types of teaching and research activities based on their knowledge of themselves and their capabilities.

*Content level.* When designing learning resources for the course one should ensure that educational objectives relate to the main types of pedagogical activity and their respective functions and orient students to master their professional competencies necessary for the teacher's work. The latter are formed by the coordination of the normative and individually optional components of students' educational and cognitive activity. This is facilitated by two factors: the ability to choose the ways of mastering educational standards and reflexive self-development of future teachers in activities at affective, performance and cognitive levels. Therefore, in the content of learning resources it is advisable to provide choices of ways to study.

It is also necessary to include assignments for students aimed at self-evaluation of their emotional state and its causes, self-analysis and self-assessment of their feelings, sensations, personal comfort or discomfort in activities and interaction. It is advisable to develop tasks encouraging students to assess their competence on the topic, to evaluate the extent to which they enriched their knowledge, to state personal significance of the information received, to explain their individual preferences in the ways of learning new things, to analyse and characterize strengths and weaknesses of the activity they participate in, to offer reasonable adjustments to the ways of planning, implementation and evaluation of a particular activity. All learning resources students are exposed to can be structured into information-discussion, practice-transformative and self-evaluation units, thereby ensuring the holistic development of the individual style of activity as a unity of affective, performance and cognitive components.

*Process level.* The stages of organization of the educational process were based on Petrovsky's (Petrovsky, 1987) idea about the three phases of the formation of the personality in the social environment: adaptation, individuation and integration. In terms of these stages the construction of a normative (generated by educational standards) component of students' educational and cognitive activity determines the generalized educational pathway in the professional development of all students. Individual educational tracks differ in their dominant orientation in the development of professional competencies, in the degree of students' initiative and independence, in peculiarities of their cognitive activity which has its strengths and weaknesses. This determines

differentiated pedagogical strategies that allow teachers to provide targeted support to students in their self-knowledge and self-education, in shaping their educational pathway.

Thus, “self-creators” have not got soundly expressed orientation towards preparation for pedagogical activity. Therefore, when working with students of this type special attention should be paid to the cultivation of a positive attitude to pedagogical activity as a means of self-realization in creativity. “Researchers” are not strong at organizational and communication skills necessary for educational activities. Therefore self-development of these abilities should be a special concern of students belonging to this type. The “undecided” are characterized by dissatisfaction with professional and pedagogical education as a whole. Students belonging to the category of undecided need help in comprehension of the correctness of their professional choice, its causes and consequences, and development of a certain life strategy.

No matter how diverse the individual educational pathways of students are in their qualitative characteristics it is imperative to harmonize them with the generalized one, which determines the development of professional style as the unity of the professionally irreplaceable and individually unique. This development can be represented as a sequence of phases: students’ awareness of themselves in a new educational environment – the desire to know their capabilities while mastering the teaching theory and technology – a stable orientation towards mastering professional functions based on strengths of their personality, self-realization and self-affirmation in teaching in personally significant ways.

*Organizational level.* The system of organizational and pedagogical conditions presented in the model determines the scope of a student’s personal activity in the multi-style educational space: self-cognition and self-development, self-realization in the process of mastering functions of a teacher’s work, reflexive activity of correlating norms with one’s own individual aptitudes and capabilities. According to its functional structure this system is fixed throughout the entire process of professionalization. What really changes is the content of personal activity, the dominant areas of activity and the degree of student autonomy. In this regard, the model proposes a system of organizational and pedagogical conditions that provides the scope of students’ personal activity at the stages of adaptation, individuation and integration. At the same time each stage is related to major periods of study at a higher education institution: adaptation is the first year of study, individuation is the second and third years, integration is the fourth year.

The result of the adaptation stage is students’ propaedeutic readiness for self-organizing activities based on their self-analysis of personal behaviour. Its indicator is a student’s attitude of oneself as an educator which is being formed during the initial stage of study. At the heart of this attitude is the student’s idea of oneself as the reason for the achieved results of professional and personal development. The main pedagogical conditions at this stage are reliance on personal experience, stimulation of the motives of self-cognition and self-education, exposure to methods and technologies of self-creation.

The result of the individuation stage is a basic readiness of students for self-organization in the context of their stylistic features. An indicator of this stage is the fact that students have conscious ideas about themselves as subjects of learning and cognition which determine their individual attitude towards opportunities for professionalization. The formation of these ideas depends on the extent to which a student reflectively correlates the normative and individual components of his educational and cognitive activity while mastering competences and professional and personal roles, and on whether or not their activity is close to professional standards. The main pedagogical conditions at this stage are contextual learning, providing a choice of ways, levels and means of mastering educational standards, a self-analysis of personal professional behaviour in class on the regular basis.

The result of the integration stage is students' initiative to demonstrate professional competencies. This is evidenced by their ability to independently plan and carry out activities with regard to normative requirements for these activities and their individual capabilities. The main pedagogical conditions at this stage are: learning simulations with all professional functions of a teacher covered; stimulating the autonomous creative behaviour of students; consultations on their preferences in the educational process.

To implement the organizational and pedagogical conditions appropriate methods and pedagogical tools are used targeted at strengthening the axiological, epistemological, and acmeological components of learning that are directly related to students' readiness for self-organization based on personal self-analysis. In our experience, a specially developed set of new methods and forms was used (a method of retrospective analysis of the experience of an apprenticeship, self-cognition training of an individual educational pathway, courses aimed at enriching students' ideas about oneself as an effective cause of self-development, educational self-programming algorithms "Student's pedagogical portfolio", etc.).

*Criterion level.* Criteria of students' readiness for self-organizing activities on the basis of personal self-analysis are: focus on professional and personal self-development; sound ideas about oneself as a subject of activity; ability to organize activities with regard to one's individual strengths and imperfections. This readiness declares itself at professionally undirected, pre-normative, normative, normative-creative and creative levels. The creative level is characterized by: vivid emotional experiences associated with the chosen profession, the desire for self-realization in various activities, a great interest in studying the prerequisites of the individual style of pedagogical activity and the desire to master them; reflexive mastery of pedagogical competences; adequate or high self-esteem; preference for activities with a wide area of uncertainty; originality in professional products; the ability to design educational, cognitive and research activities with regard to requirements for this activity and one's individual capabilities; the ability to rely on evident strong aspects of their individuality.

The pilot project aimed at dissemination of the model of the multi-style education space was carried out for 10 years (1996–2006), and is currently being implemented on a national scale. The

pilot project was implemented in the Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank within the framework of pedagogical disciplines, in the process of continuous practice learning, and while organizing and stimulating independent educational, cognitive and research activities of students.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of experimental work was based on the following factors: the influence of the model of multi-style educational space on the development of generalized and individual educational pathways of future teachers and the dynamics of students' readiness for self-organizing activities based on personal self-analysis. The methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis and statistical data processing were used.

It is revealed that the proposed model increases the normative level of mastering teacher profession. The pronounced dynamics is observed in self-knowledge and design of self-education programs, mastering the theory and technology of pedagogical activity as reliant on the strengths of the personality, interest in research activities and preparation for it.

Analysis of the dynamics of development of individual educational pathways of future teachers allowed to conclude that in the conditions of the multi-style educational space the possibility of successful self-realization of the personality increases, the percentage of students who are not satisfied with the educational process at the university is significantly reduced.

The dynamics of students' readiness for self-organization with regard to requirements for the activity to be implemented and one's individual capabilities was monitored while students studied a single topic or unit, within the framework of the whole training course, and from course to course. Parameters of assessment included personal increase in the motivational (M), cognitive (C) and behavioural (B) components of readiness on a 5-point scale (Table 1). The individual and cumulative index (I) was used as a quantitative tool of assessment.

Table 1. The dynamics of students' readiness for self-organization based on self-analysis of one's personality and behavior

Dynamics at three stages of the pilot project	<i>Meanings</i>			
	M	C	B	I
Initial state	1.05	1.03	0.87	0.98
Propedeutic readiness	2.75	1.99	1.81	2.20
Basic readiness	2.78	3.08	2.51	2.79
Authorship	3.26	3.35	3.52	3.39

The data obtained indicate that the model of the multi-style educational space has a positive effect on the dynamics of students' readiness for self-organizing activities based on self-analysis of one's personality and behaviour, and contributes to their transfer to higher levels.

Analysis of the research results revealed the levels of students' readiness for self-organizing activities based on self-analysis of one's personality and behaviour. The level distribution at three stages of the pilot project is presented in the histogram (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Levels of students' readiness to self-organization of their activity based on personal self-analysis at 3 stages of pilot project

The data obtained give grounds to assert that the proposed model of the multi-style educational space is effective, it ensures coordination of individual and generalized educational pathways of students of pedagogical specialties at all stages of professionalization at the university, increases the productivity of pedagogical education, expands the possibilities of creative self-realization of future teachers, significantly reduces the percentage of dissatisfaction with educational process for graduates.

At present the model of the multi-style educational space is being implemented in the Republic of Belarus thanks to the author's scientific and methodological findings and learning resources that were developed and implemented into the educational process of professional teacher training (monographs, textbooks and manuals "The basics of teaching profession"; "Organizing and stimulating students' individual study in pedagogy"; "System-style diagnostic complex" and others).

### 3 Conclusion

The anthropological context of professional education of future teachers resides in the fact that the educational process at all stages of students' professionalization at the university is a means of self-cognition, personal and professional self-development and self-realization. Students who have

chosen the pedagogical profession are diverse: each of them has his or her own hierarchy of motives and values, abilities, experience, typological features of the nervous system, different priorities and centrations in the educational process. But everyone considers pedagogical activity as the best way for them to achieve professional self-realization. Since the need and ability for the biological and social creation of a person is inherent in every person, everyone can engage in teaching activities. However, the ways and means of implementing this specific ability are different for everyone. Hence, the purpose of teacher education is seen as creating conditions for actualization of this ability in a student with respect to his or her individual personal potential, needs and possibilities. The optimal environment for solving this problem is a multi-style educational space. The plurality of meanings, roles, activities which embody a person's creative individuality is a key characteristic of such a space.

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