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ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERS: A NEWLY CREATED POST IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, introduced a new post for supervision of primary schools in 2022, called 'school leaders.' This research is about the assessment of the role of these 'school leaders' in enhancing the performance of schools. The main objective was to seek the perceptions of head teachers and teachers about the role of school leaders in improving academics, administrative activities and assessments practices in schools along with determining their entire professional competence. The design of the study was quantitative and the population was comprised of all primary schools including both male (56) and female (43) of circle Dargai, district Malakand. The tool of the study was a questionnaire. The findings revealed that school leaders were unable to guide teachers in pedagogy, lesson planning, micro teaching, activity-based learning etc. similarly, the school leaders were also ineffective in delivering their role in assessments, providing feedbacks, keeping record and sharing their findings and developing a proper mechanism of regular assessment and observations of teachers and students. In administrative affairs, they failed to follow a particular schedule, observing punctuality, organizing co-curricular activities, raising the enrollment ration and communication with the community. In term of professional competence, it was found that school leader do not have ample knowledge of pedagogy, monitoring, counselling, classroom management, assessment and child psychology etc. However, they showed good behaviour with teachers and proficiency in IT skills. On the basis of conclusions, it was recommended that the entire activities of school leaders may be streamlined through a proper schedule of duties to get valid outcomes. School leaders may be provided with trainings, seminar, workshops etc. to enhance their skills in pedagogy, assessment practices, administrative affairs etc.

Keywords: *school leaders' role, Students' performance, Quantitative study, District Malakand*

INTRODUCTION

Every nation is constantly improving its education system by adapting diverse plans, schemes, policies, initiatives etc. the prime level of education is primary level and it needs due attention to be uplifted. Primary education provides awareness about basic learning skills,

social norms and ethics and personal development. Pakistan is also continuously struggling to improve the education at primary level by implementing various plans and projects. Pakistan being a developing country requires to invest heavy budget on primary education to strengthen the capacity and talents of its human capital (Economic survey of Pakistan, 2006-2007). Supervision is a professional approach to develop and enhance the overall academic process and improve the quality of education through mutual relationship. It includes reporting, observation, assessment, feedback and support. Tesema (2014) argued that the school-oriented supervision is specifically aim to enhance the teaching learning process and the condition that affects this process. It is a multifunction function process that develop education by mutual working and later involving students.

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took various intuitive to strengthen primary education. In 2022, they introduced a new genre of school supervisors called 'school leaders' to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. For this purpose, fresh graduates were appointed. Many of these school leaders lacked professional experience and pedagogical knowledge, which led to concerns about their performance. The school leaders have already spent two years in the field. This research was undertaken to identify whether the school leader have played any vital role in enhancing the school performance. The role of school leaders was researched in three domains i.e. administrative procedures, academic activities and assessment practices (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary & Secondary Education Department, 2022)

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the perceptions of respondents about the academic role of school leaders
2. To find the role of school leaders in administrative affairs
3. To highlight the role of school leaders in enhancing assessment practices
4. To determine their overall professional competence

1. Review of Literature

Educational Supervision

Supervision is derived from two Latin words super means over and vision means to see. It is also a process in which the supervisor identifies faults and solves them. Supervision is a professional technique in which knowledge and competencies aimed at increasing practice or guidance through a mutual interpersonal process. It is composed of observation, assessment and feedback. The main purpose of the supervisee is to gain self-assessment and also gaining knowledge and skills (Ahmad, 2013). Likewise, Tesema (2014) described that the Supervision of school-oriented generally is the improvement of the teaching process and the situation that affects this process. It is a multifunction function process that improves education by mutual working and later involving students. Supervision is taken as the procedure in which supervisors inspected schools for the purpose to improve the quality of teaching and administration. Hence, effective guidance and facilitation are necessary to improve teaching as well as administration.

Further, Creaner (2013) explained that supervision serves some related functions. The first and foremost is the existence of the professional competencies of the supervisor. Supervision is a source of developing the relationship in which the supervisor guides and leads the teachers to achieve the targets. If we focus on quality education, students' learning can be highly improved. So, supervision should be our preference to raise the quality of education.

Similarly, Bhelol (2011) narrated that supervision is the act of improving the administration as well as educational activities. The major purpose of supervision is to facilitate and guide the teachers to increase professional skills. Al Nazer (2013) narrated that educational supervision is an important component to improve education overall and enhancement in the teaching technique made this component very effective. Changing in Behavior is possible through instil teaching knowledge, ethics and skills.

In addition, Ahmed (2013) narrated supervision is a successful tool that we use to get better the education system. It provides us with information

that to what level we achieved the determined standard. It also gives us the strengths and weaknesses of some of the education systems. Memduhoglu (2007)) narrated that in the past the function of supervision is authority but in the present time it is measured as development in professional skills. In the present time visits are done by the supervisor to apply the government rules as per its spirit. So, this process develops management behavior in teachers. Vazir (2008) narrated that supervision is also the process of examining and evaluating to collect information and improving the teaching and educational environment. The main and important objectives of this activity are to carry improvement and development in teaching as well as the administration process. The supervisor also guides the teachers and facilitates them in administrative issues. The most professional and qualified administrators not only attain the educational goals but also guide the teachers positively.

Further, Ahmad (2013) narrated that the process of supervision in Pakistan is a connection with examination and not supportive as it demands. The supervisors act commandingly and depress teachers. As a result, professional skills and teaching efficiency remain poor. As a result, mistrust and discouragement develop and teacher performance diminishes with time. Supervision demands to improvement the knowledge, values, and skills of teaching and also develops a supportive teaching-learning atmosphere in the schools.

Responsibilities of school leaders

The main responsibilities of school leaders are to plan, coordinate, evaluate, and report on the academic and educational resources and activities in the local education region. They also have to supervise the academic performance of the designated schools and make sure that all legal educational requirements are fulfilled. The low level of education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is mostly caused by the lack of possibilities for professional development. Ineffective leadership at the school, circle, and district levels is another problem that can lower educational quality. Given the small number of ASDEOs and SDEOs and the high number of schools, particularly in remote areas, it is difficult for them to visit all of the schools on a regular basis to mentor and facilitate teachers at the classroom and school level and to immediately fill in the gaps that have been identified. (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project, 2023) https://kphcip.gkp.pk/sl.php)

The responsibilities of school leader involve conducting classroom observations, providing feedback and support to teachers, ensuring activity-based teaching and learning, promoting enrolment, attendance, and community participation in education, and organizing co-curricular activities. They also involve collaborating with school head teachers to achieve quality education standards and track progress, implementing a continuous assessment system, and developing Student Learning Outcome (SLO)-based test items and assessment tools. (KPESED, 2023)

The school leader also involves identifying teacher training needs and coordinating with trainers and the Directorate of Professional Development (DPD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The school leader also involves acting as a master trainer for Primary School Teacher (PST) training, maintaining records of professional development activities, and providing academic support to head teachers and teachers within their jurisdiction. Reporting on the implementation of training activities at the school level is crucial, including managing the quality of teaching and learning activities, reporting any areas of improvement required in the tools, and identifying areas requiring professional support. Key knowledge required includes proficiency in IT skills, knowledge of various teaching methods and strategies, strong mentoring, counselling, support, and feedback skills, understanding of national, provincial, and local government education policies and guidelines, basic knowledge of curriculum design and classroom management, familiarity with child psychology and learning theories, and knowledge of student assessment processes and different types of tests. Additional responsibilities include performing tasks assigned by the Competent Authority or higher officials, such as

the Secretary to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Elementary & Secondary Education Department. (KPESED, 20223)

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive design of research includes a structure to understand and explain the characteristics and qualities of a phenomenon (Will et al., 2002). Therefore, for this study, descriptive research was used to accumulate data based on the perceptions of participants to Hence, this study was carried under the descriptive research design to highlight the opinions of the participants to explain the variables of the study. The population of this investigation included all the public schools for boys and girls of circle Dargai, District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The circle includes 56 schools for boy and 43 schools for girls. (Education Management Information System, 2024). Due to time constraints and limitation of sources the study was delimited to 10 primary schools for boys and 10 girls' primary schools. The process of stratified sampling was employed and each school was treated as cluster. Simple random procedure was carried to select schools. In addition, the head teachers as well as four teachers from each school was selected.

Instrumentation

The tool for this research investigation was a close-ended questionnaire. It was consisted of 40 questions. The questions were based on Likert scale. The questions were followed by four options where 1 stood for 'not at all,' 2 for 'very little,' 3 for 'to some extent' and 4 for 'to a greater extent.' The statements address the role of school leaders in term of academic, administration, assessment along with considering their professional competence.

In this investigation, reliability was calculated through by finding the value Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The scores of the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha were 0.898 which declares that the instrument was highly reliable. Furthermore, the face validity of the research tool was determined through subjecting the tool to experts and participants.

3. Results and Discussion

Mean distribution of data

The mean distribution of data was carried to get a comprehensive picture of the respondents' views. It addressed the various aspect of the role of school leaders to enhance school performance.

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Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of academic role in gender perspective

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Help in achievement of goals	Male	50	2.14	1.088	.154
	Female	50	2.12	1.189	.168
Work in proper schedule	Male	50	2.46	1.265	.179
	Female	50	2.28	1.230	.174
Ensures activity based teaching learning process	Male	50	1.96	1.160	.164
	Female	50	2.06	1.114	.158
facilitate teachers in use of lesson planning	Male	50	1.60	.881	.125
	Female	50	1.98	1.116	.158
Ensure that teacher follow scheme of studies	Male	50	1.64	.964	.136
	Female	50	2.32	1.133	.160
guide about micro teaching strategies	Male	50	1.74	.986	.139
	Female	50	1.76	1.098	.155
Provide academic support to teachers & head teachers	Male	50	2.00	.990	.140
	Female	50	1.94	1.132	.160
guide about teaching methods	Male	50	1.84	1.037	.147
	Female	50	2.00	1.178	.167
have improved the overall academic performance	Male	50	1.74	.922	.130
	Female	50	2.10	1.199	.170

It is evident from Table 1 that the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' views in gender perspectives. On overall basis the mean values are quite smaller with substantial standard deviation for both male and female teachers and head teachers. The male respondents have highest mean values (M = 2.46, SD = 1.265) for work in proper schedule. Similarly, the smallest value (M = 1.60, SD = 0.881) is carried by 'facilitating teachers in use of lesson planning' for male respondents. On other hand the female respondents showed highest means score (M = 2.32, SD = 1.133) for the role leaders in ensuring teachers to follow scheme of studies; while smallest value (M = 1.74, SD = 0.986) is provided by guidance about the use of micro teaching strategies.

On most of the items the mean values for both male and female respondents are nearly equal. The major difference (Male = 1.46 and Female = 2.32) is for the statement about school leader's role to ensure that teachers follow scheme of studies. Similarly, for overall academic performance there is also substantial difference in mean values in terms of gender (Male = 1.74 and Female = 2.10). It can be concluded that level of dissatisfaction from the overall academic role of school leader is higher for male that female.

Table 2. Role of school leaders In terms of assessments in gender perspectives

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Promote regular assessment system	Male	50	2.02	1.000	.141
	Female	50	2.30	1.165	.165
regularly observe teachers in the class	Male	50	2.38	1.193	.169
	Female	50	2.34	1.255	.178
identify weaknesses in the teaching	Male	50	2.16	1.149	.163
	Female	50	2.38	1.159	.164
discuss his observations with teachers and head teacher	Male	50	2.08	1.175	.166
	Female	50	2.24	1.080	.153
regular assess students" performance	Male	50	2.36	1.120	.158
	Female	50	2.08	1.209	.171
plan and develop SLO based assessments	Male	50	1.76	.981	.139
	Female	50	2.00	1.069	.151
make a record of students deficiencies	Male	50	1.90	.953	.135
	Female	50	1.88	1.172	.166
work to overcome students' deficiencies	Male	50	2.02	1.237	.175
	Female	50	1.86	1.050	.148
provide guidance of the basis of students' assessments	Male	50	1.82	1.004	.142
	Female	50	1.98	1.116	.158
has improved the entire assessment practices	Male	50	2.14	.990	.140
	Female	50	1.66	.961	.136

The outcomes from Table 2 indicate the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' views in gender perspectives. On overall basis the mean values are quite smaller with substantial standard deviation for both male and female teachers and head teachers. The male respondents have highest mean values (M = 2.38, SD = 1.193) for 'regularly observe teachers in the classroom. Similarly, the smallest value (M = 1.76, SD = 0.981) is carried by 'plan and develop SLO based assessments.

On other hand the female respondents showed highest means score (M = 2.38, SD = 1.159) for the role leaders in identifying weaknesses in teaching while smallest value (M = 1.74, SD = 0.986) is provided by "has improvement the entire assessment practices.

On most of the items the mean values for both male and female respondents are nearly equal. The major difference (Male = 2.14 and Female = 1.66) is for the statement about school leader's role to improve the entire assessment practices. Similarly, for overall academic performance there is also substantial difference in mean values in terms of gender (Male = 2.14 and Female = 1.66). it can be concluded that level of dissatisfaction from the overall assessment practices of school leader is higher for male that female respondents. Regular observation for teachers in the classroom carried highest mean score for male (M = 2.38) and (female (M = 2.34).

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of the role of school leaders in terms of administrative practice in gender perspective

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
follow a particular schedule of activities	Male	50	2.04	1.009	.143
	Female	50	2.04	1.142	.162
regular and punctual in timing	Male	50	2.30	1.074	.152
	Female	50	2.24	1.255	.177
spend more than 2 hours in each visit	Male	50	2.40	1.010	.143
	Female	50	2.14	1.212	.171
give almost equal time to every class	Male	50	2.40	1.069	.151
	Female	50	2.24	1.222	.173
play active role in organizing co-curricular activities	Male	50	1.80	.926	.131
	Female	50	2.28	1.213	.172
help in enrollment campaign	Male	50	1.68	.957	.135
	Female	50	1.94	1.096	.155
communicate with community to improve enrollment	Male	50	1.66	.895	.127
	Female	50	2.26	1.192	.169
discuss students' problems with parents	Male	50	1.48	.789	.112
	Female	50	1.90	1.147	.162
work to enhance students' attendance	Male	50	1.96	1.009	.143
	Female	50	2.10	1.055	.149
ensures community participation	Male	50	1.50	.909	.129
	Female	50	1.76	1.021	.144
has improved the overall administrative practices	Male	50	1.62	.901	.127
	Female	50	2.02	1.097	.155

The data in Table 3 indicate that on all aspects the mean value is smaller with substantial standard deviations. Nearly on all items the mean value of male and female respondents is closer. However, there is substantial differences in means score of male (M = 1.80) and female (M = 2.28) about the role of school leaders in organizing co-curricular activities. Similarly, there is difference in the views of male (M = 1.66) and female (M=2.26) respondents regarding their role in communicating with community to improve students' enrollment. Similarly, on community participation both male and female have quite low mean values (Male = 1.50, and Female = 1.76).

Table 4. Comparing male and female teachers' views about the professional competence of school leaders

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
have sound professional knowledge	Male	50	2.22	1.036	.146
	Female	50	1.92	1.209	.171
ample knowledge about teaching methods & techniques	Male	50	1.98	.937	.132
	Female	50	2.06	.978	.138
good behaiour with teachers	Male	50	2.68	1.269	.179
	Female	50	2.54	1.147	.162
proficiency in IT skills	Male	50	2.30	.995	.141
	Female	50	2.40	1.125	.159
have monitoring and counselling skills	Male	50	2.24	1.041	.147
	Female	50	2.20	.990	.140
have basic knowledge about curriculum	Male	50	2.10	.953	.135
	Female	50	2.06	1.114	.158
have basic skills of classroom management	Male	50	1.88	1.062	.150
	Female	50	1.76	1.098	.155
familiarity with assessment practices	Male	50	2.18	1.155	.163
	Female	50	2.06	1.038	.147
have familiarity with child psychology & learning theories	Male	50	1.94	1.018	.144
	Female	50	1.84	1.076	.152

It is evident from the Table 4 that the mean values of the responses of male and female teachers about the professional competence of school leaders are nearly equal on all items. Both male and female respondents have highest means (Male, M = 2.68, Female, F = 2.54) value on the item about the 'good behaviour with teachers.' Similarly, both male and female teachers have smallest mean values (Male, M = 1.88; Female, F = 1.76) on the 'skills of classroom management.

Overall mean distribution

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the data, overall mean data analysis were presented in the Table 5

Table 5. Overall means values across gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
role in academics	Male	50	1.90	.869	.123
	Female	50	2.06	1.012	.143
role in assessment	Male	50	2.06	.895	.127
	Female	50	2.05	.882	.125
role in administration	Male	50	1.94	.764	.108
	Female	50	2.17	.994	.141
Professional Competence	Male	50	2.17	.878	.124
	Female	50	2.09	.875	.124

It is evident from the Table 5 that almost there is little differences in views of the teachers regarding various role of school leaders. In term of 'role in academics' the mean value for Male is M = 1.90 and for female respondents is 2.06. Hence, there is slight differences. Similarly, role in assessment there is negligible difference for male (M = 2.06) and female (M = 2.05) respondents. Again, for role in administration, there is relatively larger differences between the scores of males (M = 1.94) and female (M = 2.17) respondents. Finally, in professional competence, the slight is difference is evident in the mean value of male (M = 2.17) and female (M = 2.09) respondents. Hence, it could be drawn that almost on all facets the mean values are smaller. Besides, there is little differences in views of male and female respondents except on the role of administration.

Inferential Statistics

In order to determine significant differences, t test was conducted in terms of gender and level of respondents i.e. head teachers and teachers.

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Table 6. t-test distribution of scores in terms of gender

			t-test for Equality of Means			
		Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
role in academics	Male	1.90	.869	-.848	98	.398
	Female	2.06	1.012	-.848	95.803	.398
role in assessment	Male	2.06	.895	.056	98	.955
	Female	2.05	.882	.056	97.981	.955
role in administration	Male	1.94	.764	-1.292	98	.199
	Female	2.17	.994	-1.292	91.898	.200
Professional Competence	Male	2.17	.878	.431	98	.668
	Female	2.09	.875	.431	97.999	.668

The outcomes of Table 6 indicate a multitude of t-test which were carried for establishing variations of views regarding various roles of schools leaders. The t-test were conducted for role in academics, role in assessments, role in administration and professional competence.

In role of academics the mean scores of both male (M = 1.90) and female (M = 2.06) are different. But the findings of t-test (t (98) = -0.848, p = .0.398 > .05) indicate that the differences are a non-significant. Hence, there are no considerable differences in views of teachers regarding the academic role of school leaders.

Similarly, in role of assessment the means values of both male (M = 2.06) and female (M = 2.05) are almost equal. The outcomes of t-test (t (98) = 0.056, p = .0.955 > .05) reveals a non-significant result. Hence, there are no worthwhile

differences in the views of respondents about the role of school leaders in assessments.

In administrative affairs, the means score of both male teachers (M = 1.94) and female teaches (M = 2.17) are different. But the results from t-test (t (98) = -1.292, p = 0.199 > .05) indicate that the differences are non-significant. Hence, there are no considerable variations in perception of male and female teachers regarding the administrative role of school leaders.

The means scores of both male teachers (M = 2.17) and female teachers (M = 2.09) about the professional competence of school leaders are different. But the results from t-test (t (98) = 0.431, p = 0.688 > .05) shows that the differences are worthwhile. Hence, there are no considerable variations in views of male and female teachers regarding the professional competence of school leaders.

Responses to open ended questions:

An open-ended question was aspect at end of the questionnaire aiming to collect any information not covered through liker items. The head teachers and teachers provided the following details:

1. Majority of them have no professional training and experience of teaching, so how they can assess the pedagogy of trained teaches? The school leaders should be given proper professional trainings before initiating their field work. The school leaders should be trained according the advance teaching learning process, assessments, classroom management, methods of teachings. They should have knowledge about school management.
2. The role of school leaders was quite disappointing. They lack professional skills. They may be merged in teaching cadre and management cadre.
3. The job description and duty tasks of school leaders may be reconsidered.
4. Majority of school leaders have no clear idea of their job and duties. There is role confusion.
5. The work and progress of school leaders should also be monitored.

Discussion

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced a new category of school supervisor at elementary level in 2022. They were given the name of school leaders. Their utmost responsibility was to raise the quality of teaching and learning process. Although, these are purely professional but the appoint criteria did not involve any particular professional qualification or prior experience. They have to discharge their duty in certain academic, assessment and administrative capacity. For this purpose, they were just provided with a brief job description.

In order to evaluate their role in enhancing school performance, their roles in various categories were assessed. These categories were academic, assessment and feedback and administrative along with their professional competence.

This investigation identified that the school leaders were ineffective in discharging their academic role. They did not assist the head teachers in achievement the anticipated academic goals. Besides, they not follow any proper schedule of activities. They failed to provide guidance about instructional methods, particularly micro teaching, lesson planning and activity-based learning etc. They remained ineffective in developing the entire academic performance of the school

In assessments and feedback, the school leader did not play significant role. They did not develop a proper system of assessments. There were no regular observations of teaches and assessment of students' performance. They failed to document the deficiencies of students and sharing it with teachers, head teachers or parents. They made no efforts to overcome these deficiencies. Similarly, they did not provide guidance on the basis of their assessments. Besides, they did not make any efforts to prepare students for SLO based examination. In a nutshell, the failed to effectively assess the teaching and learning activities.

In their job descriptions, school leaders have been assigned various administrative roles. Majority of them were did not observe punctuality, regularity and proper schedule. Similarly, their role in organizing co-curricular

activities was not considerable. They did not participate in enhancing school enrollment or communicate with the local community in this regard. Further, they did not discuss the problems of the students with their parents. Besides, they did not have any contribution in enhancing students' assessments.

The researcher also collected views of the respondents regarding the professional competence of the school leaders. The respondents held that school leaders have no basic knowledge of pedagogy, curriculum, classroom management, measurement and assessments, mentoring and counselling and child psychology. On the contrary, they were declared to be proficient in use of some basic IT skills. It was drawn on overall basis that they have poor professional competencies in terms of delivering in the teaching-learning process.

The views of participant were almost similar. The views were assessed across gender and level of respondents i.e. head teachers and teachers. There were no significant variations in the views of these respondents regarding the various roles of school leaders.

To conclude, the school leader failed to enhance the performance of schools. There is a need of certain administrative and professional measures to reconsider and improve the role of these school leaders.

Recommendation

On the basis of conclusion, the following recommendations are drawn:

- The entire activities of school leaders may be streamlined through a proper schedule of duties to get valid outcomes from the role of school leaders.
- School leaders may be provided with trainings, seminars, workshops etc. to enhance their skills in pedagogy, assessment practices, administrative affairs etc.
- School leaders may be given a comprehensive induction to enhance their professional competence before sending them to the field.
- School leaders may work under a proper authority in order to monitor their schedule, duties and other official affairs.
- The school leaders may also be directed to follow the basic professional principles like punctuality, working in sequence, team work, sharing their findings, monitoring the progress of their work, discussing students' issues with teachers and parents, contacts with local community etc.
- School leaders may be merged with teaching or administrative cadres in order to fulfil deficiencies of staff in these cadres.
- The confusion of the role of school leaders may be removed by providing them with clear, practical and feasible job descriptions matching to their qualifications and experience.
- Research may be conducted on school leaders to analyze their problems, issues and demands.

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