Language and Culture as Social Capital in Local Leadership

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Abstract

Globalization has affected many aspects of life, including local languages and cultures, which are often threatened by the dominance of global culture. In this context, local languages and cultures are key in strengthening local leadership and maintaining community identity. This challenge requires a deep understanding of how cultural elements influence leadership and how strategies can be implemented to preserve it. This study aims to explore the influence of language and culture on local leadership, as well as the challenges and opportunities in preserving it in the era of globalization. A qualitative approach was used to collect data from various sources such as previous studies, which were then analyzed to identify relevant themes and patterns. The results showed that social ties built through language and culture strengthen the relationship between leaders and communities, increasing trust and support. Leader strategies that combine innovation with traditional values can create sustainable development without sacrificing cultural heritage. Education and media play a crucial role in promoting and preserving local languages and cultures. This study recommends a holistic approach that integrates technology with tradition to ensure cultural preservation amidst globalization. The use of social capital based on local culture can also strengthen community participation and empowerment in the leadership process.

Keywords: *Language and Culture, Social Capital, Local Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of local leadership, language and culture often play an inseparable role. Both form the foundation of effective social interaction and communication between leaders and communities. Language is not only a means of communication, but also a medium for conveying cultural values, norms, and community identity (Sancino, 2021). Culture, on the other hand, reflects the history, traditions, and values passed down from generation to generation. When local leaders understand and appreciate the local language and culture, they can build closer relationships and stronger trust with the community (Scheyvens et al., 2020).

The local language often serves as an emotional bridge that strengthens the relationship between leaders and communities. Leaders who are fluent in the local language can more easily communicate with their communities, understand their needs, and convey messages in a more acceptable manner (Raza et al., 2021). This not only facilitates effective communication but also shows respect and recognition of the community's cultural identity. For example, in various indigenous communities in Indonesia, local leaders who use the local language in their daily interactions tend to gain greater trust than those who only use the national or foreign language (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

In addition to language, culture also plays an important role in shaping social and political dynamics at the local level. Culture encompasses various aspects of life such as customs, rituals, arts, and moral values held by a society. Leaders who understand and integrate these cultural elements into their leadership can create stronger bonds with the community. For example, in a community that values cooperation, leaders who encourage collective participation and work together with the community will be more easily accepted and respected (Causadias, 2020).

Cultural context also influences the way decisions are made and conflicts are resolved in a society. In many areas, the decision-making process is often carried out through deliberation and consensus, which are part of local cultural values. Leaders who value and apply this method in their leadership tend to be more successful in creating policies that are accepted and supported by the community. Conversely, leaders who ignore these cultural values may face resistance and difficulty in gaining community support (Or & Berkovich, 2023).

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In addition, globalization and modernization have brought significant changes to the lives of local communities. However, amidst these changes, language and culture remain important elements that maintain the integrity and identity of the community (Li et al., 2023). Local leaders who can combine innovation with respect for local traditions and culture have great potential to lead the community toward progress without losing their identity. Thus, effective leaders not only need to understand the dynamics of the economy and politics but must also be sensitive to the nuances of culture and language that exist in their community (Nordberg et al., 2020).

The linguistic and cultural diversity in Indonesia, as one of the countries with the greatest cultural richness in the world, demands inclusive and adaptive leadership. Each region has its unique language and culture that require different leadership approaches. For example, leaders in Java may need to better understand Javanese culture which is rich in life philosophy, while leaders in Papua need to understand the different values of Melanesian culture. This diversity requires leaders to continue to learn and adapt to the local context (Latif & Hafid, 2021).

This research will explore how language and culture function as social capital in local leadership, and how leaders can leverage this capital to improve their leadership effectiveness. By understanding the role of language and culture, leaders can build stronger relationships with communities, create more targeted policies, and lead in a way that is more inclusive and responsive to local needs. This is essential to ensuring the sustainability and well-being of local communities in an ever-changing global era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language and Culture

Widjono highlighted that language limitation refers to a system of speech sound symbols employed for communication within a community of users. This system is utilized across various contexts, levels, and diverse interests, including scientific communication, business, work, social, and cultural interactions (Amery et al., 2022). Aligning with this definition, Kridalaksana described language as an arbitrary system of sound symbols used by social groups to collaborate, communicate, and identify themselves. Being systematic, the language is organized according to specific patterns rather than random arrangements, consisting of subsystems like phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Kawahara, 2020).

"Arbitrary" here indicates that there is no inherent connection between language symbols (sounds) and the concepts or meanings they represent. Generally, the function of language is to facilitate communication among members of society. Nababan noted that when studied in relation to society, the function of language can be categorized into four groups: (1) culture, (2) society, (3) individual, and (4) education. These functions are interconnected because 'individuals' are 'members of society' who live within a societal structure that follows a cultural pattern, which is passed down and developed through 'education' (Kim, 2020). As social beings, humans cannot exist in isolation. To meet their needs, individuals must collaborate with others, as human needs are numerous and varied. Therefore, they need to communicate in various environments where they are present.

The nature of culture is highly intricate, leading experts to provide various interpretations, understandings, and limitations. Wilson described culture as knowledge that is socially transmitted and shared, whether existential, normative, or symbolic, and is reflected in human behavior and the objects humans create (Aririguzoh, 2022). Koentjoroningrat, on the other hand, outlined the framework of culture as comprising two aspects: (1) the form of culture, which includes ideas, behavior, and tangible physical culture, and (2) the content of culture, which encompasses language, technology systems, livelihood or economic systems, social organizations, knowledge systems, religious systems, and art systems. Despite the different definitions of culture, a common foundation emerges: humans and their unique qualities compared to other beings. Culture is consistently viewed as something unique to humans and is thus always associated with beauty, freedom, and nobility (Qin & Ng, 2020).

Language and culture share a coordinative relationship, meaning they hold equal importance and are highly significant. Masinambouw stated that culture and language are systems inherent to humans. Essentially, culture

is a system that governs human interaction in society, while language serves as the means for this interaction to occur (Benítez-Burraco & Nikolsky, 2023).

The connection between language and culture has also been explored by D. Bloomfield, Harris, and Voegelin. They asserted that language, viewed externally, is both a tool and a vessel for culture, encompassing language activities in both written and spoken forms. The relationship between language and culture is so close that it is often challenging to distinguish between the two, as they influence, complement, and coexist with each other (Demuro & Gurney, 2021).

According to Nababan, the relationship between language and culture can be classified into two types: (1) language is a part of culture (phylogenetic), and (2) individuals learn culture through their language (ontogenetic). Siberani further elaborates on the role of language in culture, identifying three functions: (1) a means of cultural development, (2) a pathway for cultural continuity, and (3) an inventory of cultural characteristics (Prieur et al., 2020).

As a cultural tool, language facilitates the enrichment of Indonesian culture across different regions through the use of the Indonesian language. It is well recognized that the acceptance of culture is only possible if the culture is understood, appreciated, and upheld by the language-using community. It is often said that culture can only exist if there is language, as language enables the formation of culture (Samsudin et al., 2021).

Conversely, lifestyle, behavior, customs, ways of dressing, and other cultural elements can also be communicated and transmitted through language. Even the culture of our ancestors can be understood and passed down to future generations through language (Fan & Zhou, 2020). The ancestral culture found in ancient manuscripts, written centuries ago, can be appreciated today solely because it is recorded in language. Knowledge, as a cultural element, can be communicated to our students and descendants only because it is articulated in language (Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, 2021).

Additionally, a new culture can be conveyed and understood if its elements have names or terms. Naming or terminology is an aspect of language. Every cultural element, from the smallest to the largest, is assigned a name or term. In the process of learning and teaching culture, these names or terms are crucial (Lomakina, 2021). Naming an element of culture also helps in cataloging the culture. The results of cultural cataloging can be beneficial for cultural development, particularly in the areas of dissemination, teaching, and learning (Lee, 2020).

Social Capital

Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as the sum of resources, both actual and virtual, accumulated by an individual or group through a durable network of institutionalized reciprocal relationships of recognition and introduction (Ceci et al., 2020). James Coleman describes social capital as the ability of people to collaborate to achieve common goals within various groups and organizations. Robert D. Putnam views social capital as aspects of social life, including networks, norms, and trust, which encourage participants to work together more effectively toward shared objectives (Igalla et al., 2020).

Francis Fukuyama defines social capital as a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that facilitates cooperation. If group members expect others to behave honestly and reliably, they will trust one another. In a company, if employees trust each other and adhere to shared ethical norms, conducting business incurs minimal costs (Wulandhari et al., 2022).

Michael Woolcock distinguishes three types of social capital:

    a. Social Bonding: This includes cultural values, perceptions, and traditions or customs. Social capital with strong bonding characteristics exists in social systems where kinship and clan systems are prevalent. This fosters a sense of sympathy, obligation, trust in reciprocity, and mutual recognition of cultural values. Traditions act as enduring codes of conduct, deeply integrated into societal behavior patterns and carrying binding power with sanctions for violators (Das, 2023).

    b. Social Bridging: This involves institutions or mechanisms that form social bonds in response to various group characteristics. It includes general civic engagement, associations, and networks (Fulton, 2021).

c. Social Linking: This comprises social relationships or networks that connect different levels of social power or status within society (Toth et al., 2021).

Abdullah identified three forms of social capital that exist in society, namely:

a. Local ideology and traditions that refer to certain beliefs in responding to life and determining social order. This can be in the form of local beliefs that are the basis for the legitimacy of social action; teachings that become a reference system in manifested behavior; social ethics that regulate relationships between humans and humans or the environment; work ethic; traditional values; and norms that are a set of behavioral rules (Aytac & Rossi, 2023).
b. Social relationships and networks are patterns of relationships between people and social ties in a society such as kinship or neighborhood ties (Luo et al., 2022).
c. Networks exist in society, reaching local institutions that function for the interests of groups and communities. This can be in the form of customary institutions or social institutions that play a direct or indirect role. From the three forms of social capital that exist, it can be concluded that all forms of social capital work together and complement each other. The concept of social capital refers to social relationships, institutions, social norms, and mutual trust between people or other groups and has a positive impact on improving life in the community (Friedman et al., 2020).

Hasbullah explained that social capital refers to the capacity of a community within an entity or group to collaborate in building a network to achieve a common goal. This cooperation is characterized by patterns of reciprocal and mutually beneficial interrelationships, built on trust and supported by positive and strong social norms and values. This strength is maximized when supported by a proactive spirit of forming relationships based on the principles of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and trust (Saz-Gil et al., 2021).

Local Leadership

Local leadership is the process of influencing a community or group within a specific area to take steps or actions toward a common goal that focuses on local needs and characteristics. Local leadership is not only about influencing others to work toward a desired goal but also about understanding the local context and adapting the approach to suit the needs and aspirations of the local community (Bichler, 2021).

Ordway Tead defines leadership as the activity of influencing others to work toward a desired goal. Howard H. Hoyt defines leadership as the art of influencing human behavior, including the ability to guide. Meanwhile, Kimbali Yeung describes leadership as a form of domination based on personal ability that can encourage or invite others to do something based on acceptance by the group and has special skills that are right for a particular situation (Rogerson et al., 2022).

Leadership and leaders are closely related. In addition to the word leadership being a word formation from the prefix ke-an and the basic leader, a leader is a person who carries out leadership. However, there is a clear difference between leadership and a leader that refers to a person's personality (Lina & Jianghua, 2024).

If we examine the meaning and definition of leadership and leaders above, there will be several concepts that need more attention. First, in leadership, some leaders can influence and there are followers (subordinates) who obey the leader (Frémeaux & Pavageau, 2022). Second, leaders can influence and create obedience in their subordinates when the leader has authority, ability, and power. Third, the authority of the leader and the ability to influence are determinant factors that generate spontaneous obedience from subordinates/followers to the leader (Sitohang, 2022).

In the context of local leadership, it is important to consider that local leaders must have a deep understanding of the culture, values, and social dynamics in the areas they lead. Effective local leadership is leadership that can listen to the aspirations of the community, adapt to local conditions, and utilize local resources to achieve common goals (Brondizio et al., 2021). Local leaders must also be able to build good relationships with various stakeholders in their area, including the government, community organizations, and the private sector, to create synergies that support regional development (Roxas et al., 2020).

METHOD

This research method chapter will be conducted using a qualitative approach, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the influence of language and culture on local leadership in the era of globalization. This approach was chosen because of its ability to capture the nuances and complexities of social phenomena that cannot be measured by quantitative methods. Research data will be obtained from various sources, including research results and previous studies that are relevant to the research topic. Through an in-depth literature review, this study will collect data that focuses on how language and culture influence local leadership and the challenges and opportunities that exist in preserving it. After the data is collected, an analysis process will be carried out to process the information obtained. By using qualitative analysis techniques, the results of this study are expected to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of language and culture in the context of local leadership, as well as provide useful recommendations for strategies for preserving and developing culture amid globalization (Nartin et al., 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Language on the Relationship between Leaders and Society

Local language has a huge impact on building relationships between leaders and communities. When leaders use local language in their daily interactions, they not only demonstrate effective communication skills but also show respect and appreciation for the cultural identity of the community. The use of local language by leaders allows for more intimate and personal communication. In daily interactions, local language helps overcome communication barriers that may arise due to differences in cultural background or language. Leaders who speak the local language are more easily accepted by the community because they are seen as part of the community and not as outsiders. This strengthens the sense of trust and engagement between leaders and communities, which are important foundations of effective leadership relationships.

In addition, local language serves as a very effective means of conveying messages. When leaders use language that is familiar to the community, the message conveyed becomes clearer and easier to understand. In the context of policies and programs, the ability to convey messages in the local language helps reduce miscommunication and misunderstandings. The community can better understand the intent and purpose of the policies or programs introduced by the leader. This not only increases the effectiveness of policy implementation but also increases community support for the policy. Leaders who can communicate clearly in the local language can explain policy details in a way that is relevant and accessible to the community, which in turn increases community participation and engagement in the development process.

Language also plays a vital role in building collective identity and a sense of community. The use of the local language by leaders helps strengthen the cultural identity and traditions held by the community. Language is a reflection of the history, values, and way of life that have been passed down from generation to generation. When leaders use the local language, they indirectly acknowledge and respect that cultural heritage. This creates a sense of pride and togetherness among community members. A strong collective identity is one of the essential elements in building a cohesive and harmonious community. Leaders who can use the local language to strengthen collective identity can create stronger bonds among community members and motivate them to work together towards common goals.

However, ignoring the local language can have significant negative impacts. Leaders who do not use the local language in their interactions may be perceived as ignorant or disrespectful of the cultural identity of the community. This can alienate the leader from the community, reduce trust, and damage the relationships that are built. The community may feel that the leader does not understand or care about their needs and values, which in turn can reduce their support and participation in the leadership process. In addition, ignoring the local language can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings that can negatively impact the implementation of policies and programs. Ineffective communication can hinder the delivery of important information and reduce the effectiveness of policies. Therefore, it is important for leaders to always consider the use of the local language in their interactions with the community.

Thus, the influence of language on the relationship between leaders and the community is significant. The local language is not only a means of communication but also a bridge that connects leaders with the community. The use of the local language by leaders can strengthen trust, clarify the delivery of messages, strengthen collective identity, and prevent alienation. In an era of globalization that is constantly changing, leaders need to continue to value and use the local language as a valuable social capital. This not only helps in building strong relationships with the community but also in creating inclusive, responsive, and effective leadership. By understanding and leveraging the influence of language, leaders can create an environment conducive to sustainable development and community well-being.

Integration of Cultural Elements in Leadership

Integrating cultural elements into local leadership is a very important aspect of creating effective and sustainable leadership. A deep understanding of local culture by leaders is the main foundation for building strong relationships with the community. Culture includes customs, values, and traditions that apply in the community, all of which influence the way people think, behave, and interact. When leaders have a good understanding of these cultural elements, they can adjust their leadership approach to better suit the local context. For example, leaders who understand local customs can more easily build harmonious relationships with community leaders and gain their support in various development programs.

The role of rituals and traditions in leadership cannot be ignored either. Including elements of rituals and traditions in the leadership process can provide additional legitimacy for leaders in the eyes of the community. Rituals and traditions often have deep symbolic meanings and reflect the values upheld by the community. When leaders respect and involve themselves in these rituals and traditions, they show respect for these values and strengthen their bonds with the community. For example, participating in traditional ceremonies or celebrations can be a means for leaders to demonstrate their commitment to the community and gain wider support. Thus, the integration of these cultural elements can increase legitimacy and strengthen community support for leadership.

Culture also plays an important role in the decision-making and conflict-resolution processes within a community. Each society has its unique way of making decisions and resolving disputes, which are often influenced by the values of its culture. Leaders who understand and respect these processes can be more effective in carrying out their leadership duties. For example, in some cultures, decision-making through deliberation and consensus is considered very important. Leaders who adopt this approach in their leadership are more likely to be accepted and respected by the community. In addition, leaders who understand traditional ways of resolving conflicts can more easily navigate complex situations and find solutions that are acceptable to all parties. This is important for maintaining harmony and stability in the community.

The influence of culture on leadership strategies is also very significant. Effective leadership strategies must take into account the cultural values that exist in a society. For example, in a society that emphasizes the value of cooperation, leaders who encourage cooperation and collective participation are more likely to be successful. On the other hand, in a society that highly values hierarchy and authority, leaders who demonstrate decisiveness and clarity in decision-making may be more respected. By adapting leadership strategies according to the cultural context, leaders can create more relevant and effective leadership. In addition, this adaptation also shows that leaders respect and honor existing cultural values, which can increase support and loyalty from the community.

In an era of rapid globalization, local leaders need to adhere to cultural values while also adopting innovations and changes as needed. Combining cultural elements with modern leadership approaches can help leaders stay relevant and responsive to the challenges of the times. For example, leaders can use modern technology to facilitate community communication and participation, while still respecting and promoting local customs and traditions. In this way, leaders can not only lead more effectively but also maintain and preserve valuable cultural heritage. Integrating cultural elements into leadership is not just about preserving tradition, but also about creating a balance between innovation and respect for existing values.

Integrating cultural elements into leadership is key to creating a strong and harmonious relationship between leaders and communities. Understanding local culture, participating in rituals and traditions, respecting

culturally based decision-making processes, and adapting leadership strategies to suit cultural values all contribute to leadership effectiveness. By integrating these elements, leaders can build stronger trust, legitimacy, and support from communities, and create an environment conducive to sustainable development. In the context of ever-changing globalization, leaders need to continue to respect and promote cultural values, while also adopting an innovative and responsive approach to change.

Social Capital as a Tool to Enhance Local Leadership

Social capital plays a critical role in enhancing local leadership by building social bonds through language and culture. When leaders actively engage in using the local language and understanding the culture of the community, they create a strong communication bridge that connects them to the community. This social bond not only strengthens the personal relationship between leaders and the community but also creates a deeper sense of trust and connectedness. The local language allows leaders to communicate in a more relevant and intimate way, while cultural understanding demonstrates respect for the values and traditions that are respected by the community. This social bond supports stronger leadership because the community feels respected and involved in the decision-making process, which in turn strengthens their support for the leader.

The social networks built through language and culture-based interactions play a crucial role in strengthening community trust and support for leaders. When leaders engage in social and cultural activities, they not only build stronger personal relationships but also expand their social networks within the community. These networks serve as important channels of information and support. For example, in the context of a close-knit community, leaders who actively participate in local cultural or community events can gain support from various community leaders and social groups. This support is crucial to the success of policies and programs implemented by leaders. By building strong social networks, leaders can leverage the resources and support available within the community to achieve common goals.

Social capital also plays a key role in increasing community participation in development and decision-making. When leaders build strong social capital based on language and culture, they create an environment conducive to community participation. This participation is essential to ensure that policies and programs developed are in line with community needs and expectations. Cultural-based social capital allows leaders to engage communities in decision-making processes in a more inclusive manner. For example, by holding discussion forums that use local languages and involve local cultural elements, leaders can invite communities to provide input and contribute to policy planning and implementation. This not only improves the quality of decisions made but also ensures that the policies receive support and commitment from the community.

Community empowerment is a key aspect of leveraging social capital to improve community well-being. Leaders who effectively use social capital to empower communities can have a significant impact on improving the quality of life in communities. Social capital enables leaders to build community capacity by providing access to the resources, training, and opportunities needed to improve well-being. For example, leaders can use existing social networks to introduce skills training programs or economic empowerment initiatives that directly engage communities. By empowering communities through social capital, leaders can help create better conditions for local economic growth, improve social well-being, and build community resilience.

Social capital built through language, culture, and social networks serves as a highly effective tool for enhancing local leadership. Strong social ties, support from social networks, greater community participation, and community empowerment all contribute to more effective and sustainable leadership. By leveraging social capital, leaders can build stronger relationships with communities, gain greater support, and create more relevant and effective policies and programs. Social capital is not just about building relationships; it is also about creating an environment that supports community growth, participation, and well-being. In the context of globalization and rapid change, local leaders who can make good use of social capital will have an advantage in building cohesive, dynamic communities that can face future challenges.

Challenges and Opportunities in Preserving Language and Culture in the Era of Globalization

Globalization has had a profound impact on local languages and cultures, posing significant challenges to efforts to maintain existing cultural heritage. In an era where information and culture from around the world are easily accessible, local languages and cultures are often at risk of being eroded by the strong currents of globalization. Global languages such as English often replace local languages in education, business, and the media, leading to a decline in the use of local languages. Likewise, local cultures are often impacted by the more dominant global culture, threatening the continuity of long-standing traditions and values. This raises concerns about the loss of unique cultural identities, which are an important part of the richness and diversity of societies.

In facing these challenges, local leaders have an important role to play in preserving and developing local languages and cultures. Strategies that leaders can take include strengthening policies that support the use of local languages in various aspects of daily life, such as education, government, and the media. In addition, leaders can encourage local language training and education programs for the younger generation so that they maintain their skills in local languages. By encouraging the implementation of cultural events, local festivals, and traditional rituals, leaders can also keep traditions and cultural values alive in the lives of their communities. Active participation in local cultural and language activities demonstrates a leader's commitment to preserving cultural heritage and can serve as an example for the community to follow suit.

Combining innovation with traditional values is an important approach to creating sustainable development while preserving cultural heritage. Leaders can leverage modern technology to promote local languages and cultures in innovative ways. For example, using social media and digital platforms to disseminate information about local languages and cultural events can help attract a younger generation who are more connected to technology. Creating language apps, e-books about local culture, or documentary videos about local traditions and customs can increase community engagement with their cultural heritage. In this way, innovation and technology can support cultural preservation without sacrificing existing traditional values.

The role of education and media in preserving local languages and cultures is also crucial. Curriculum-based education that promotes local languages and cultures can play a key role in teaching young people about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Integrating local language and cultural history lessons into the education system can help children understand and appreciate their rich culture from an early age. The media also has a strategic role in preserving and promoting local cultures. Through television, radio, and digital content programs that focus on local languages and cultures, the media can introduce and document cultural traditions and values to a wider audience. Social media, blogs, and other online platforms can be effective tools for sharing knowledge and raising awareness about local cultures, reaching a larger and more diverse audience.

The challenges of preserving local languages and cultures amidst globalization require a holistic and integrated approach. By utilizing strategies that involve policy, education, innovation, and media, leaders can create an environment that supports the preservation of cultural heritage while adapting to changing times. Combining traditional approaches with modern technology can help maintain the relevance of local cultures in an era of globalization, ensuring that unique cultural identities are maintained. In facing the challenges of globalization, it is important to remain committed to the preservation of local languages and cultures as part of a larger effort to celebrate and appreciate existing cultural diversity.

CONCLUSION

Language and culture play a crucial role in strengthening local leadership and maintaining community identity in the era of globalization. Local languages and cultural elements build deep social bonds between leaders and communities, enhance communication, and strengthen trust and support. By understanding and integrating cultural values into leadership strategies, leaders can create stronger and more effective relationships with communities, and encourage greater community participation and empowerment. However, globalization presents significant challenges to the preservation of local languages and cultures. To address these challenges, leaders need to adopt strategies that combine innovation with tradition and leverage education and media as tools to preserve cultural heritage. With a holistic and integrated approach, such as the use of modern

technology for cultural promotion and the integration of cultural lessons in education, leaders can ensure that local languages and cultures remain preserved and relevant, while also adapting to changing times.

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