

ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS IN UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA THROUGH THE CAPITALIZATION OF CREATIVE POTENTIAL

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Abstract: *This paper analyses the opportunity of enhancing the competitiveness of universities from the Republic of Moldova through the capitalization of the creative potential of academics and students. The actuality of the topic is based on the need to ensure the competitiveness of universities, which represent those places where creation, innovation, culture and values are capitalized within an environment absorbed by creativity and built by capitalization of the potential. This work investigates the situation of the Republic of Moldova concerning students' enrolment at the universities and analyses higher education institutions' graduates. The research methodology was focused on the methods of empirical research, qualitative analysis, analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, each of which contributed to the crystallization of the research results. In conclusion, it is mentioned that the academic environment of the Republic of Moldova needs academic staff's strengthened efforts in creating and enhancing the competitiveness of universities and creating opportunities for graduate students towards an easier insertion into the labour market.*

Key-words: *competitiveness, creative potential, human potential, university framework.*

JEL Classification: M10.

1. The capitalization of the potential in the University framework of the Republic of Moldova

The University as the edifice of creation and capitalization of the creative potential

Currently, in the contemporary society, characterized by dynamism and acceleration, essential changes occur in many domains, at high speeds that capture even the most proficient ones in these particular areas and determine true crises while adapting to changes and future. Therefore, human capital development and increasing the quality of education represent not only a matter of judgement, but also a continuous improvement. Consequently, there appeared so many occupations, professions that are valid for a certain stage of social and technical progress, but the intensification of its pace determines continuous changes in the occupational structure, as well. Thus, today we are witnessing situations where traditional trades and professions disappear or involve a radical change of knowledge, necessary for practicing them. Reflection and prospective actions, based on forecasting knowledge, are needed today in all walks of life, especially in educational processes.

General training and an individual's education are appreciated by different criteria than in the past. A huge amount of diverse knowledge, that would cover a large proportion of significant information from several areas, would be impossible to accomplish today, when all domains are experiencing a continuous deepening and diversification. An erudite, nowadays, is particularly characterized by a guiding spirit, forecasting thinking, based on training, experience, and especially the ability to effectively capitalize these skills. This kind of erudition is more characterized by knowing how to do or how to act know -how and knowing where to find know -where. This is what you need to effectively substantiate strategies, tactics and social utility and personal projects.

The quality assurance of human capital in higher education, in terms of professional training and skills certification, aims at two categories of human resources:

a Graduates - by providing competences, skills and abilities that allow them an easy insertion in the labour market, in agreement with its requirements;

b) Academic staff - by its training in the spirit of development and modernization of initial and continuous training.

Therefore, the activity in the universities, its purpose must be correlated with the society requirements, with other levels of education organization and the realities of the economy. An important function of the university represents it as the main vector of positive change of the human condition, while developing the spiritual and material values of the society. This does not happen by itself. Students' training and education are designed, organized and carried out based on a specific regulatory framework, outlined action patterns that are verified by means of academic practice and proper methodical guidance.

Next, we will outline the components of human capital, formed within universities.

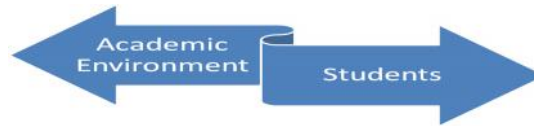


Figure no.1. The individuals that form the human capital within the universities

Next, we will analyse the gross enrolment ratio and the net enrolment ratio in the education of the Republic of Moldova for the following years:

Table no. 1 The analysis of gross and net enrolment ratios per years

	2009/10	2010/11	Deviation 10/11	2011/12	+ Deviation 12/11	2012/13	+ Deviation 13/12	2013/14	+ Deviation 14/13	2014/15	+ Deviation 15/14
Gross											
Preschool education	75,5	77,1	-1,6	79,6	2,5	82,1	2,5	83,8	1,7	83,9	0,1
Primary education	93,6	93,5	-0,1	93,6	0,1	93,8	0,2	93,1	0,7	92,4	-0,7
Secondary education	88,8	88,1	-0,7	87,5	-0,6	86,7	-0,8	87,0	0,3	86,8	-0,2
Net											
Preschool education	74,0	75,8	1,8	78,3	2,5	80,6	2,3	81,6	1,0	82,3	0,7
Primary education	87,6	87,8	0,2	87,9	0,1	87,9	0	87,1	-0,8	86,9	-0,2
Secondary education	84,0	83,3	-0,7	82,9	-0,4	82,3	-0,6	82,6	0,3	82,3	-0,3

Source: developed based on National Bureau of Statistics, 2016

Thus, we can see that the highest gross rate was recorded in 2014/2015 with the amount of 83.9 for preschool education. Primary education was distinguished in 2012/2013 with the highest value of 93.8; while the net ration registered the highest rate in 2014/2015, having the value of 82.3.

Education is one of the phenomena that occurred at the same time with human society, suffering, during its development, significant modifications. "A man cannot become a man but through education," states E. Kant, in the imperative mode. Everything related to mankind: language, rationality, feelings, art, morality is achieved only through education (Marinescu, 2003).

Modern society, the responsibilities, the individual himself move faster, profounder than the end of the last century. The issue of the contemporary world, its

challenges and consequences of education led to the imposition and operationalization in theoretic-explanatory plan, and also in practical-applicative of some expressions, such as: learning throughout life (lifelong learning), education throughout life (lifelong education), lifelong learning, adult education, parent education, self-learning (self-learning), self-training, self-education (self-education), self-information and educational self-training, educational autonomy, global education.

The wave of changes and innovations that overwhelm the life of the humanity and of every human community made necessary the extension of the educational act throughout their lives. The education provided by the university is no longer sufficient for the whole life of an individual. In an attempt to meet the challenges of the contemporary world, one of the directions of restructuring the educational reality is expanding educational act throughout the life of the individual.

Learning to learn and continuous self-improvement are the conditions of the unceasing education. The idea of a lifelong learning is not new, the need for continuing education in individual and historic plan being perceived long time ago, primarily from the classics of traditional pedagogy. Since the eighteenth century, Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) stated in his works that „tota vita schola est” – a theoretical reflection, which the objective reality, practice, science and specialists, would validate later. It was stated that “for every human being, life is a school, from cradle to the grave” (Videanu, 1988).

The contemporary reality of the Republic of Moldova confirms, every time, that we need permanent education. No society is completely immobile, so that some training continues in adulthood. In today’s society, characterized by economic, political, and cultural mobility, new educational order cannot be conceived without the vanguard of the theoretical pedagogical movement and the educational praxis.

At the basis of the educational reform of our country there is the need for a more pronounced application of the principle of lifelong learning and a greater openness of school to the world, to its great global issues. The research from the educational psychology, the psychology of ages and learning have scientifically proven: individuals’ ability to learn and educate themselves at any age, through different forms, methods, techniques, etc., following appropriate rhythms and intensities, nuanced depending on their psychosocial and individual peculiarities.

The characteristics of lifelong learning are presented in Figure no. 2.



Figure no.2. The characteristics of lifelong learning

Source: Marinescu, M., 2003. Educația pentru noua tehnologie și progres, Oradea, Editura Universității din Oradea, p. 21.

In modern times, the characteristics of permanent education are:

- a. Continuous, permanent nature – as a social activity learning is analysed in:
 - Social-historical plan, representing the premise of human personality development and the humanization of the individual;
 - Individual plan (ontogenetic) of the society members, meaning that education is continuous, the chronological limit of learning disappearing. Education does not cease at the end of school instruction, but it is an on-going process. Education permanently covers a person’s entire existence;

b. Formative nature– formation, developing and shaping of the human personality and self-improvement are achieved throughout life, because of its formative nature, due to systematic and integrative formative influences exerted on the human being during the whole existence of a person;

c. Generalized nature – lifelong learning is a social, generalized, omnipresent and widespread activity that penetrated in all spheres of contemporary society;

d. Dynamic, progressive and integrative nature - lifelong learning undertakes a series of activities and evolutionary processes that integrate and articulate all forms and types of education with which one comes into contact, all stages and forms of education, all the acts and education experiences lived by the individual, all the educational influences and impacts exerted on the human being, along with self-education, in an integrated, unitary and coherent functional assembly, which contributes to the shaping of human personality;

e. Flexible nature – the educational offer of the society is highly diversified and flexible, being modelled for the purposes of fostering human development in the direction of its educational needs, aspirations, interests, desires, skills, personal talents, his/her own intelligence profile (Ionescu, 2009).

Universities are today those edifices of science and culture where we find, in essential form, the entire treasury of humanity values, explicitly the horizons of knowledge, values and human action systems in their essential profile.

Functioning in a world of rapid changes, often generated by it, the university changes its old contemplative orientation, with the action one. Thus, a rotation of 180 degrees occurs, by turning its point of view, which has been preoccupied with the past for many centuries, towards viewpoints targeted to future.

As such, universities essentially play a vital role, the role of a compass in the instruction and education of the young generation, in directing our required orientation of actions, in the professional orientation. History reveals that the development of a community is possible, actually, only by preserving and developing its own national identity and not by destroying its own values, resulting in full acceptance of other, foreign traditions, customs and own way of living.

The Universities the Republic of Moldova play a major role in appreciating the culture, in increasing the universal values and, furthermore, they constitute powerful shields against the loss of ancient human communities, as the Moldovan one. Universities make up a solid bridge between different cultures and civilizations, ways of living via which, for thousands of years, human communities have lived, thought, produced and created particular values.

In contemporary Moldovan society, the universities are living moments of extensive transformations, passing a series of conversions and adaptations to new positions and situations from our civilization. These are strongly influenced by profound changes in the domain of science, engineering, technology, harbouring the treasure of knowledge and human action.

Technology-based civilization tends to make a more comprehensible human relationship with the new human demand, creating new accomplishing conditions for it. The moral progress is the one that gives the technical and scientific progress not only a criterion of human value “but also an unlimited converting field to the man” (Ionescu, 2009).

Today the moral progress advances towards human knowledge and the establishment of human command in the universe can be confirmed by everyday activities.

Techno-science concept is still under elaboration, although this subject was extensively written on. Its meaning is diversely nuanced, sometimes even in a totally

different way, due to the criteria in connection with which definitions are developed. Whatever the name, this concept illustrates current trends in explaining the new phenomenon of science and technology.

Universities cannot stay outside the techno-science development: the immense increase of the information volume that characterizes our epoch would lead to blocking the instructive-educational process, if an amount of operations regarding the storage, processing and dissemination of this information to students would not be taken by the computer. The technical and scientific construction of the computer enables it to store, process and transmit an abundant amount of information.

The world of tomorrow will not be standardized, totally aligned to certain centres of power. Pretty the same things can be assumed concerning the evolution of universities. And regarding the evolution of universities (as well as in the living world) we can apply the law of maximum diversification, meaning that each university has developed and is developing under its own conditions, the adaptations and inventions produced and transmitted to new generations of students have many unique features, without which higher university education cannot be understood. Science and technology have not in themselves a moral rationality. It remains that human rationality, transposed into teaching rationality, underlines what can be developed and what cannot from this knowledge and technology. Thus, we can say that human rationality is largely identified with the rationality that leads the world, comprised of educational-instructive processes (Marinescu, 2003).

Similarly, the university is the centre where the training of community members is carried out at the highest level. If by education we mean the assimilation of information at the highest level, the assimilation of new values and modes of action, the adaptation of our own behaviour to the new horizon of knowledge, then the university is the basic reforming institution in a human community.

The man sought by the European civilization is a permanent traveller (*Homo viator*), a man often dominated by economy (*Homo economicus*) and also a man of continuous exploration for Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

In conclusion, the university has the virtue of reconstructing the human personality from inside but not homogeneously, nevertheless it guarantees many particular issues. If we believe that Romanian civilization is a civilization of action, of putting into motion the forces locked in things, phenomena, and events by the human.

The European mission of Moldovans is given by our own civilization values: humanity, tolerance, diligence, respect due to traditions, nurturing the creativity, the spirit of continual quest for happiness, the communion with the nature, the universe, God, etc. The European integration cannot be understood as what we could be offered by other nations of the continent, but as what we can offer to ourselves, to them and to us.

If we consider that one of the main objectives of our universities is the education, then the European integration is a priority line of action. Therefore, we mean the integration of our universities in the system of the European ones. We mean the necessary and compatible curriculum, computerization and interconnection, based on appropriate programs which will ensure easy access through information lines to all existing segments in any of the European universities.

The integration of the universities of the Republic of Moldova in the European system requires all teachers and students a high and continuous training, teamwork and cooperation, intelligence in action, competitiveness and ambition to show that University from the Republic of Moldova is ready to face and prove why it is necessary to think prospectively in terms of education, to have a rich human capital. Education involves a

system of transformations in knowledge, values and actions, taking into consideration certain outcomes and objectives.

Not least higher education means socialization, in fact its characteristic feature can be outlined, namely the one that forms people's components necessary for living together with others and assisting the welfare of the given group. For those included in the system, higher education should develop necessary competences concerning the belonging to humanity, to the nation or to the family in which they develop.

Europeanism is not what comes naturally, spontaneously, but it is what we consciously offer and fulfil together. European education means the formation and development of needs of other Europeans towards us, and ours towards them, the assimilation and practice of general and human common values. In this regard, Professor Nicolae Vinanu stresses that "showing correct information about every nation from Europe, about every major event, emphasizing the critical thinking and constructive cultural syntheses, higher education can lead to the proximity and friendship between peoples and nations more than dozens of claptrap political speeches" (Marcu, 2006).

The universities of the Republic of Moldova offer Bachelor, Master, Doctorate studies, according to three cycles and the Bologna Process. Thus, the analysis of the enrolled students and the total number of students, per years and form of study is shown in the below table.

The analysis of Table 2 highlights that the total number of students in educational institutions is decreasing for the entire analysed period, from 2009 to 2014. Thus, if in 2009 the total number of students was 109892, then in 2011/2012 it was 103956 and in 2014 it was 89529 decreasing by 20363 compared to 2009/2010. Consequently, we can mention that for this period of time the number of human capital at the country-level was reduced, because the number of students in higher education institutions was reduced. Correspondingly, if we analyse this data regarding the form of study, we can mention that full-time students with studies have registered, for the entire analysed period 2009-2014, a descending trend, accordingly if the number of students in 2009 was 78231 students, then in 2014 there were 57940 students, descending with 20291.

If we make an analysis of part-time students, we can mention that their number for the analysed period 2009-2014, has registered an oscillated trend, with a tendency to easily grow, this was observed by increasing from 30071 in 2009 to 31589 in 2014. This fact is explained by the migration of young people abroad; in order to continue their studies they choose part-time education, as an opportunity to develop the human capital.

Table no. 2 The analysis of students from higher education institutions by years, form of study

	09/10	10/11	Deviation (+)	11/12	Deviation (+)	12/13	Deviation (+)	13/14	Deviation (+)	14/15	Deviation (+)
Total	109892	107813	-2079	103956	-3857	102458	-1498	97285	-5173	89529	-7736
Full-time education	78231	77742	-489	73840	-3902	70253	-3587	64352	-5901	57940	-6412
Part-time education	31661	30071	-1590	30116	45	32205	2089	32933	728	31589	-1344

Source: developed based on National Bureau of Statistics, 2016

According to Sorin Cristea, lifelong learning represents an evolving direction of personality's training and development activity towards the structural and functional integration of all general contents (the five types of education: moral-aesthetic-technological-intellectual- physical) and all general forms of education (formal-non-formal-informal) throughout and in each moment of human existence, on the horizontal and vertical coordinate of the education system and process.

Lifelong learning is directly related to individual development and social progress. R. H. Dave condenses the essence of lifelong learning by characterizing it as "a process of personal, social and professional development training, throughout the entire life of individuals, in order to improve not only the quality of life of individuals, but also of their community". Ideas such as "learning to be" and "a society of learning", "a society of knowledge" or "an educative society" are associated with this concept (V ideanu, 1988).

The analysis of the number of higher education graduates per cycles and years is shown in Table 3.

The analysis of Table 3, shows that the total number of graduates from higher education institutions of the country has decreased in the reviewed period, 2009-2014, from 26611 in 2014 to 24274 in 2009, with 2337 students compared to 2009. This fact negatively affects the economy of the country, the generation's education of the future of our society

If we analyse the graduates according to cycles, for the period 2009-2014, then we can mention that Bachelor students recorded a pronounced downward trend for the period under review, consequently, beginning with 2009 their number had fallen from 20049 to 17062 in 2014, decreasing by 8987 graduate students. If we look at the second cycle, Master, we can mention that the number of students is increasing throughout the analysed period, thus, beginning with 2010, when the number of master students was 4536 until 2014 when the number of master students was 6409; their number increased by 1873 master students.

Table no. 3 The analysis of the number of graduates of higher education institutions per cycles and years, 2009-2014

Years	2009	2010	Deviation (+)	2011	Deviation (+)	2012	Deviation (+)	2013	Deviation (+)	2014	Deviation (+)
Total	26611	28408	1797	27788	-620	26730	-1058	24848	-1872	24274	-574
Bachelor higher education (I)	26049	23264	-2785	22049	-1215	20132	-1917	17744	-2388	17062	-682
Master higher education (II)	...	4536	...	5100	564	5904	804	6338	434	6409	71

Source: developed based on National Bureau of Statistics, 2016

A change, within the university framework, was made, lacked by the Europe - the classification of universities of Shanghai. China is the superpower in science and economy. We must say with all the responsibility: we are witnessing a decline of professional deformation in Europe.

The university remains the institution where the best ideas are provided. It is clear that we need renewal. All the universities also deal with issues that are not resolved, for example the scientific division. This representation is confused. The university always

gave an integrating vision upon society. Do the universities offer visions today? These decreased. Very few manage to articulate the vision. They live with surrogates of visions.

In this context, new solutions of organizing the universities are sought. There are three essential and imperial proposals:

1. The New University – a champion, it is a university that is open at its basis and ultra selective at the top.

2. University with public responsibility under public control entrepreneurial.

3. The Global University – is a safe solution with students across the globe. The new mission is to create leaders. The focus is on the innovation (Videanu, 1988).

In conclusion, we can characterize the university as the space where the ideas are born, where we create, where we investigate and explain, where students distinguish foreign things, where the cult and knowledge create primordial values, where the creativity and innovation are present in order to create value and offer prominence about the academic world and to excel on the way of achieving sustainable university competitiveness. The human capital emerges within a school, it grows and flourishes within the university, being abounded by the academic culture and the wave of knowledge, and furthermore, the crop is gathered in the workplace, where people use that stock of knowledge and develop it in favour of the flourishing of the enterprise.

2. The Phenomenon of „human capital erosion”

In order to determine the dimension of the human capital, the monetary approach is used along with the natural one. The simplest method, namely the one which uses natural (temporary) prices is the measurement of the human capital in years of study. The longer is the study period, the greater is the human capital which it possesses. Regarding this method, adjustments are made, when a year of secondary education in school varies from the academic year of study, but the most widespread method for measuring the human capital is the assessment of its monetary value.

We observe that from this point of view we can achieve a measurement of the human capital either quantitatively or qualitatively, but the qualitative research in this area is still under the sign of contradiction.

The assessment of the human capital is shown in Figure no. 3.

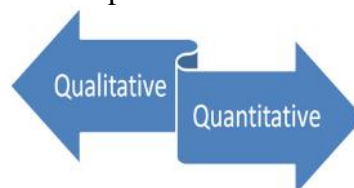


Figure no. 3 Ways of evaluating the human capital

The human capital is capitalized on the labour market, being reflected in employment characteristics. The employment rate, respectively the participation in the labour force, on educational and gender levels, reflects the differences on the labour market, caused by the degree of training. Therefore, both indicators reached the maximum levels for people who have higher education, the values of the indicator increasing in relation to the raising of the level of the graduated studies.

Women register lower levels of activity and employment rates than men, while at the same age category and the same level of education attained. For example, the rate of participation in the labour force of the women with higher education is 84.4% in OECD countries from Europe, and men's is 91.5 % (Marcu, 2006).

The employment rate of people with tertiary and secondary education is higher than the lower secondary level in OECD countries, which reflects an appropriate degree of

human capital capitalization. Education is therefore a prerequisite for employment and the most important asset of the human being. Although it does not offer an infallible guarantee against a possible future unemployment, it generally improves the chance of finding a job.

Analyzing the structure of employment by level of education in Moldova during the period of 2012-2014, we can reveal the way of human capital valorisation with superior qualities. Thus, the share of population with a higher level of training, in the total amount of population, grew mostly in 2012-2014, compared with the rates corresponding to other levels of education, which have a modest increase complementarily with a sharp decline, from 14.8 % to 9.7 % of the unqualified or poorly trained population.

The numerical increase of the total population in recent decades, which showed a positive balance in all groups of countries, including Moldova, was a factor of employment increase.

The deteriorating of the situation on the labour market is illustrated by the following phenomena:

- The reduction of employment rate among working age population;
- The activity rate is declining, except for OECD countries;
- The employment rate of the working population experiences a general deterioration, which leads to absolute decline of employment by recording a higher number of unemployed persons.

A typical phenomenon for the Republic of Moldova and for world less developed countries is the phenomenon known as “human capital erosion” contributing to unemployment.

The underutilization of the human capital, its erosion through the phenomenon of unemployment, are manifestations of the current world crisis affecting the economy and society as a whole. Following the lack of integral capitalization of the human capital on the labour market, this is deteriorated and loses its qualities, wasting the invested resources in its training and development.

3. The analysis of unemployed persons of the Republic of Moldova

The size of unemployment and the unemployment rate are the result parameters of the labour market and expressions of health state and functionality of the economic organism as a whole. Unemployment notably varies, not only in terms of time but also in terms of the regions of the globe. While some countries are characterized by high labour participation, suffering only from the inevitable unemployment rate, others, most countries are facing major difficulties due to high unemployment rates, of structural nature. Each percentage point of the unemployment exceeding the minimum rate inevitably reflects the lack of performance of the economy under consideration.

From the analysis of Table 4, we can see that the last three years, the period of 2012-2014, in the Republic of Moldova, we can observe a high unemployment rate. If we analyse it from the point of view the training, in order to see which level is most vulnerable for this phenomenon, we can highlight that in 2012, the highest rate among men were unemployed in urban are, by level of higher education having the value of 8.1, followed by secondary vocational training level having the value of 6.3 and the high school education, with the value of 6.1.

If we analyse the women, then we can mention that in 2012 the number of unemployed women in urban areas were also women holding higher education, which proves the fact that even they had higher education diplomas, they were unemployed.

Table no. 4. The analysis of unemployed persons of the Republic of Moldova by level of education, average living standard, sex, years

	2012				2013				2014			
	Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Age groups - total												
Level of education - total	26,5	15,7	17,1	8,5	21,2	16,7	15,5	9,6	17,9	11,0	11,5	7,1
Higher Education	8,1	1,3	6,0	1,4	6,1	2,0	5,7	1,1	5,1	1,2	4,3	1,1
General specialized	3,4	1,2	3,4	1,2	4,3	1,1	2,3	0,9	3,0	1,1	1,6	0,8
Secondary vocational	6,3	5,6	2,3	1,6	5,0	5,5	2,2	1,9	4,5	2,9	1,0	1,6
High school, general	6,1	3,0	4,7	1,5	4,0	2,0	4,2	2,5	4,2	1,8	2,9	1,5
Secondary	2,5	4,3	0,7	2,7	1,6	5,7	1,3	2,9	1,2	3,9	1,7	2,1
Primary or no education	0,1	0,3	.	.	0,2	0,5	..	0,2	..	0,1

Source: elaborated by the author based on BNS, 2016

If we analyse the 2013 year, we can highlight that this tendency of unemployed highly educated persons is maintained, thus in 2013 the rate of unemployed men was 6.1, women 2.0, fact that accentuates the problem of highly educated people. In 2014 we can highlight that the number of unemployed persons was reduced substantially, but the tendency of unemployed highly educated persons was kept in such a way: men with higher education 5.1 in urban areas and women with higher education in urban areas have registered a value of 4.3.

4. Conclusions

This shows that in the Republic of Moldova the problem of employment in workforce still remains, because young people with higher education find a job more difficult because of low human capital and low training level that do not meet the requirements for work. Therefore, it is imperative to adapt employees' potential to labour market requirements, to enrich the human capital with universal values, required by the labour market. Students must have a vast human capital, be prepared to meet labour market requirements. Only in such a way we can highlight the value of their skills and we can get new values and competences.

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