

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM TO ENHANCE CAREER COMPETENCY FOR SPA THERAPISTS

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**Abstract:** The purposes of the research were: (1) to develop a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for Spa therapists (2) to study the results of using the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for Spa therapists (3) to analyze factors, conditions, and problems of the application of a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for Spa therapists. Research methodology can be divided into three steps: (1) the development of a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for Spa therapists, (2) study results of using the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for Spa therapists, (3) analyze factors and conditions with a group discussion of the experimental group and the interviews with the facilitator of the group. The results of the research: 1. The non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists consists of objective, learners, instructors, content, learning activities, learning period, learning resources and media, environment, assessment and evaluation. 2. The experiment results of the non-formal education program were (1) The score of the knowledge in communication Chinese language for spa therapists and ten trigger – point therapy after the experimentation increased higher than the prior experimentation with statistical significant at level of .05. (2) The score of the Chinese language communication skill for spa therapists' skill between experimental group and control group. The experimental group have score increased higher than the control group with statistical significant at level of .05 (3) The score of ten trigger – point therapy skill between experimental group and control group. The experimental group have score not difference from the control group with statistical significant at level of .05 (4) The score of communication Chinese language attitude for spa therapists and Spa therapists career attitude after the experimentation increased higher than the prior experimentation with statistical significant at level of .05. 3. The factors and conditions of the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists. In this research factors compose of learners, instructors, learning activities, content, learning period, and environment. Conditions compose of learners, instructors, learning activities, learning period, learning resources and media and environment.

**Keywords:** Non-Formal Education Program, Career Competency, Spa Therapists

### Background of the study

In recent years, health problems have become one of the most important of issues for the Thai people especially stress as it is one of the major factors as being harmful to life. In fact, these problems cannot be cured by modern medicine alone, but also by traditional medicine or alternative medicine as well. Nowadays, traditional medicine or alternative medicine is widely used for treating stress problems. As a result, more attention is being paid to spa therapist as it is more accepted as professional health care leading to further development in this field.

Health care professional in spas is one of the careers that require continuing professional development due to changes in operating the business and the development of tourism sector in Thailand. Since there is a large number of tourists especially Chinese from China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan that favor health care in Thai spas when traveling, it is very essential for health care professionals to learn and broaden their knowledge to correctly provide services to Chinese customers. In order to achieve this, communication skills in speaking Mandarin should be adopted together with ten Trigger point massage skill for curing stress related sickness such as headache, neck pain, and shoulder pain or other sickness such as arm pain, elbow - wrist pain, back pain, knee pain, hip pain, leg pain, and ankle pain. These skills are vital for health care professionals to learn and review for a more effective service and more income. This should be done through non-formal education to give opportunity for employed people to enhance their knowledge. In fact, to enhance career competency for spa therapists, the government should continually provide learning skills outside the school system for Spa therapists.

The Non-Formal and Informal Education center objectives are to promote and develop education for each individual and groups in general by providing lifelong learning and education to develop professional skills. Professional education short courses are formed to meet the needs of learners, including a training course for Traditional Thai massage. A lot of Traditional Thai massage therapists who finish to the course in Non-Formal and Informal Education center mostly worked in health spa. According to a survey of a research concerning the study of Thai massage, after interviewing with the owner of the spa, spa therapist, and teacher of Traditional Thai massage, it can be observed that spa therapists lack communication skills in Mandarin as well as skills to cure various health problems. Hence, it is important for health care professionals to learn continually to work effectively and thus, reduce risks for Chinese customers. In particular, this can lead to career stability while promoting tourism in the country.

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To effectively develop professional competencies of health care in spas by promoting Mandarin Chinese communication skill and other symptom-relieving skills, educational programs outside the school system must be provided for Non-Formal and Informal Education district center graduates that took short courses in Thai massage. In fact, Adult Education (Andragogy) by Knowles is adopted as it is suitable for graduates outside the school system from Non-Formal and Informal Education center who is mature and wish to fulfill current market demands and strengthen their career. Also, Scaffolding concept will also be used to develop this program to enhance individual potentials.

The Adult Education (Andragogy) by Knowles (1978) is a process that allows adults to experience learning while making what is learnt the most effective self-development. By creating an enhancing learning environment and understanding the needs of adult learners, they will develop self-guidance, make plans, set objectives, and arrange group learning activities. Through these events, learners will exchange experiences and learn from each other, hence, brings about more knowledge to learners.

Potential enhancement or Scaffolding is a concept in which teachers interact with students. Teachers will support students in various ways according to the problems faced at that time so that students can solve their own problems and work successfully. The instructors will provide supports and recommendations to students and will also promote their interests while continually encouraging and understanding students in every way to achieve their goals. The purpose of learning will allow learners to form knowledge into new understandings within themselves. This will lead to learners' adoption of the learnt knowledge while applying and integrating what they have learnt into practice. After the students understand what is taught and are able to achieve the work themselves, instructors will gradually reduce their supports until students are successful and not in need of supports.

Therefore, to enhance career competency for spa therapists with Mandarin Chinese communication skills and other symptom-relieving massage skill by ten Trigger point therapy, it is necessary to organize non-formal educational program with appropriate learning activities. Particularly, a learner-centered education system should be adopted which is, in fact, the concept of adult education and potential enhancement. Thus, both concepts must be adopted as a guideline to organize learning activities for Non-Formal and Informal Education district center graduates that took short courses in Thai traditional massage.

### Objectives

1. To develop a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists.
2. To study the results of using the non-formal

education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists.

3. To analyze factors, conditions, and problems of the application of a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists

### Literature Review

For the research on "The Development of a non – formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists", the researcher had studied the documents, concepts, theories, and relevant research, as follow:

Non-formal education program, according to Houle (1972) model. The Components and the process of this model are identified into 7 steps:

1. A possible educational activity is identified. The impulse to learn or to teach may arise from almost any source within or without the life pattern of an individual, a group, or an institution, and it may be created either by a sense of need or deprivation or by a sense of desire or opportunity.

2. A decision is made to proceed. This decision may be taken for granted, it may be rapidly reached, or it may emerge slowly as judgment is brought to bear on the relevant factor in the situation.

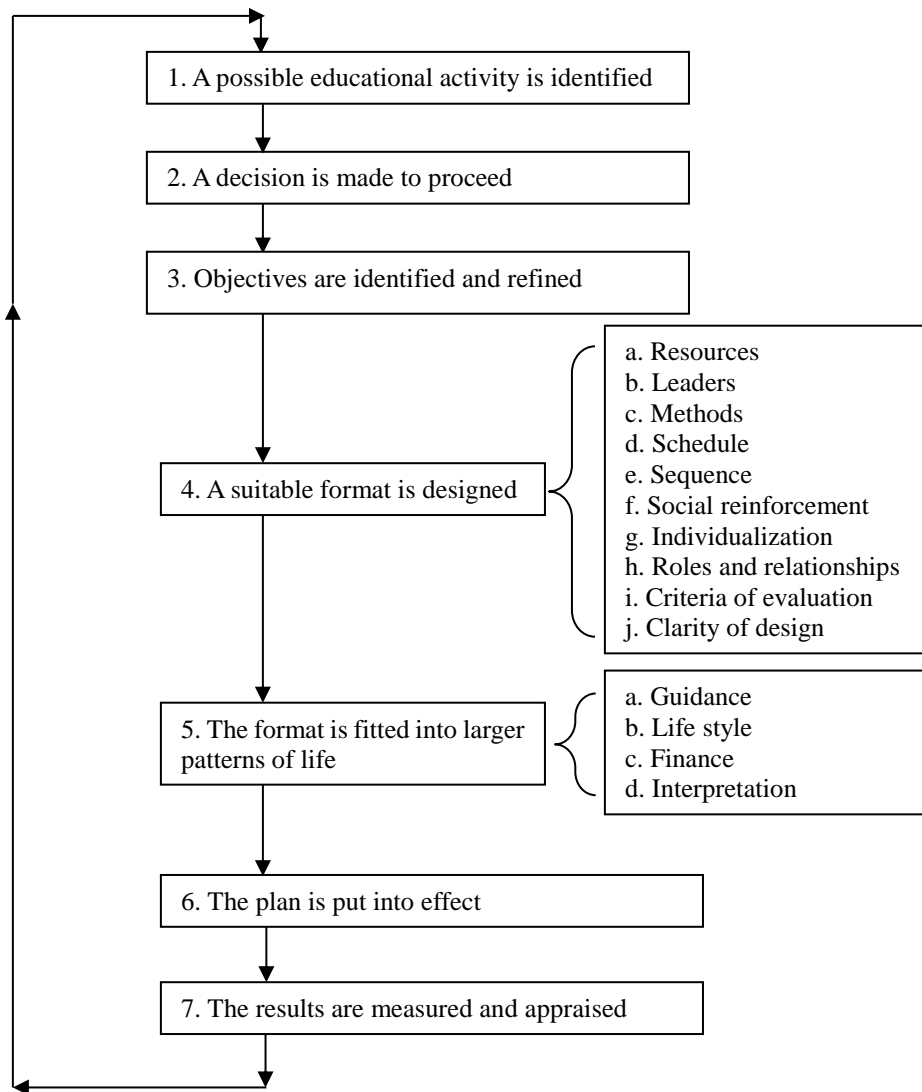
3. Objectives are identified and refined. Every educational activity is based on some conception of the ends it should achieve. Out of the complex array of complementary or conflicting possibilities present in the situation.

4. A suitable format is designed. Any educational activity, however brief or extended, has a distinctive shape or pattern which gives unity to its various elements. Each of them may be considered or planned separately and in any order, but a successful program requires a fusion of all such elements in terms of the situation in which the education occurs. In this step learning resources are selected, a leader or group of leaders is chosen, methods are selected and used, a time schedule is made, a sequence of events is devised, social reinforcement of learning is provided, the nature of each individual learner is taken into account, role and relationships are made clear, criteria for evaluation progress are identified, the design is made clear to all concerned.

5. The format is fitted into larger patterns of life. The learning activates of men and women must ordinarily be introduced with some care into a complex milieu which includes work, home, civic, and other responsibilities. At least four kinds of adjustments must usually be considered such as life styles are modified to allow time and resources for the new activity, financing is arranged, the activity is interpreted to related publics.

6. The program is carried out.

7. The results of the activity are measured and appraised.



**Figure 1: Decision Points and Components of An Adult Educational Framework  
Houle' Model (1972)**

Source: Houles (1972)

Andragogy is the process of engaging adult learners in the structure of the learning experience. The term was originally used by Alexander Kapp (a German educator) in 1833, was developed into a theory of adult education by American educator, Malcolm Knowles, (April 24, 1913-November 27, 1997). Knowles design the process of learning activities into 7 phases:

1. Setting a climate for learning
2. Establishing a structure for mutual planning
3. Diagnosing needs for learning
4. Formulating directions (objectives) for learning
5. Designing a pattern of learning experiences
6. Managing the execution of the learning experiences.
7. Evaluating results and rediagnosing learning need.

Scaffolding Theory is based on the Social Development Theory of Learning by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's theory is that

"social interaction plays a functional role in the process of cognitive development" (Encyclopedia of Educational Technology). The term "scaffolding" comes from the works of Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) and is meant to represent the support and assistance provided by the teacher or mentor in the learning process. "Scaffolding" is a metaphor that describes the way a teacher provides assistance to the students during the learning process in much the same way that construction scaffolding serves as a temporary support until the building can stand on its own. Lots of educationers have developed and interpreted their theories, thus the researcher has synthesis scaffolding of Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), Rosenshine and Guenther (1992), McKenzie (2000) into 6 steps as follow:

1. Recruitment and provide activities to be used
2. Reduction in degrees of freedom
3. Provide clear direction and reduces learner' confusion

4. Keep learner on task
5. Evaluating results by learner
6. Apply knowledge into new situations

### Methodology

For the study's methodology, the researcher uses the Research and Development research and can be divided into three steps:

*Step 1:* To develop a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists, the researcher uses Houle's Model to create a program and learning activities based on Andragogy theory and Scaffolding. The program consists of objective, learners, instructors, content, learning activities, time duration, learning resources, learning media, environment, assessment and evaluation. The content validity of the instruments was also obtained from five judges that are considered to be experts in the field. This program was revised with the suggestions of the experts. The researcher conducted an experiment to test the appropriateness of this program.

*Step 2:* To study the results of using the non-formal education program to increase career competency for Spa therapists. The process involved the following characteristics:

*Population:* The population were vocational traditional Thai massage adult learners from Non-formal and Informal education center in the northern region of Thailand and the sample of this study were 44 vocational traditional Thai massage adult learners for non-formal and Informal education center in Chiang Mai province age between 18-65 years old.

*Instruments:* Instruments in this study consisted of the Chinese language knowledge test, Ten Trigger point therapy knowledge test, Chinese language communication skill evaluation, and Ten Trigger point therapy skill evaluation which were developed by the researcher. Content validity of these instruments was also obtained from three judges who are considered to be experts in the field.

*Experimental stage:* The researcher used Equivalent group, pretest-posttest designed by matching score. The experimental group consists of 22 people and the control group consists of 22 people. The experimental group is to be trained based on the researcher's developed programs while the control group is to be trained based on the normal activities of Non-formal and Informal education center.

*Data analysis:* The data was analyzed to evaluate the level of knowledge gained, the Chinese language communication skill, and the ten Trigger point therapy skill before and after the training within the experimental group by the use of dependent t-test. Attitude about learning communication Chinese language and the spa therapist careers were analyzed to find out different

of level before and after the training within the experimental group by using Dependent t-test

*Step 3:* To analyze factors and conditions of the application of a non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists by evaluating the discussion of the information from the Step 2. The information will be used to improve the approaches of a program.

### Results

The research results are divided into three sections.

#### Section 1: Results of the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists

Results of the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists consists of objective, learners, instructors, content, learning activities, learning period, learning resources and media, environment, assessment and evaluation. The present author developed the program according to the theories of Andragogy by Knowles (1978) and Scaffolding by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), Rosenshine and Guenther(1992), Mckenzie (2000).The results are illustrated in the following figure.

(see figure 2 in next page)

#### Section 2: Results from comparison of the knowledge in communication Chinese language for spa therapists and ten trigger – point therapy.

2.1 Results from comparison of the knowledge in communication Chinese language for spa therapists and ten trigger – point therapy after the experimentation increased higher than the prior experimentation with statistical significant at level of .05, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2

**Table 1: Comparison of the Knowledge in Communication Chinese Language**

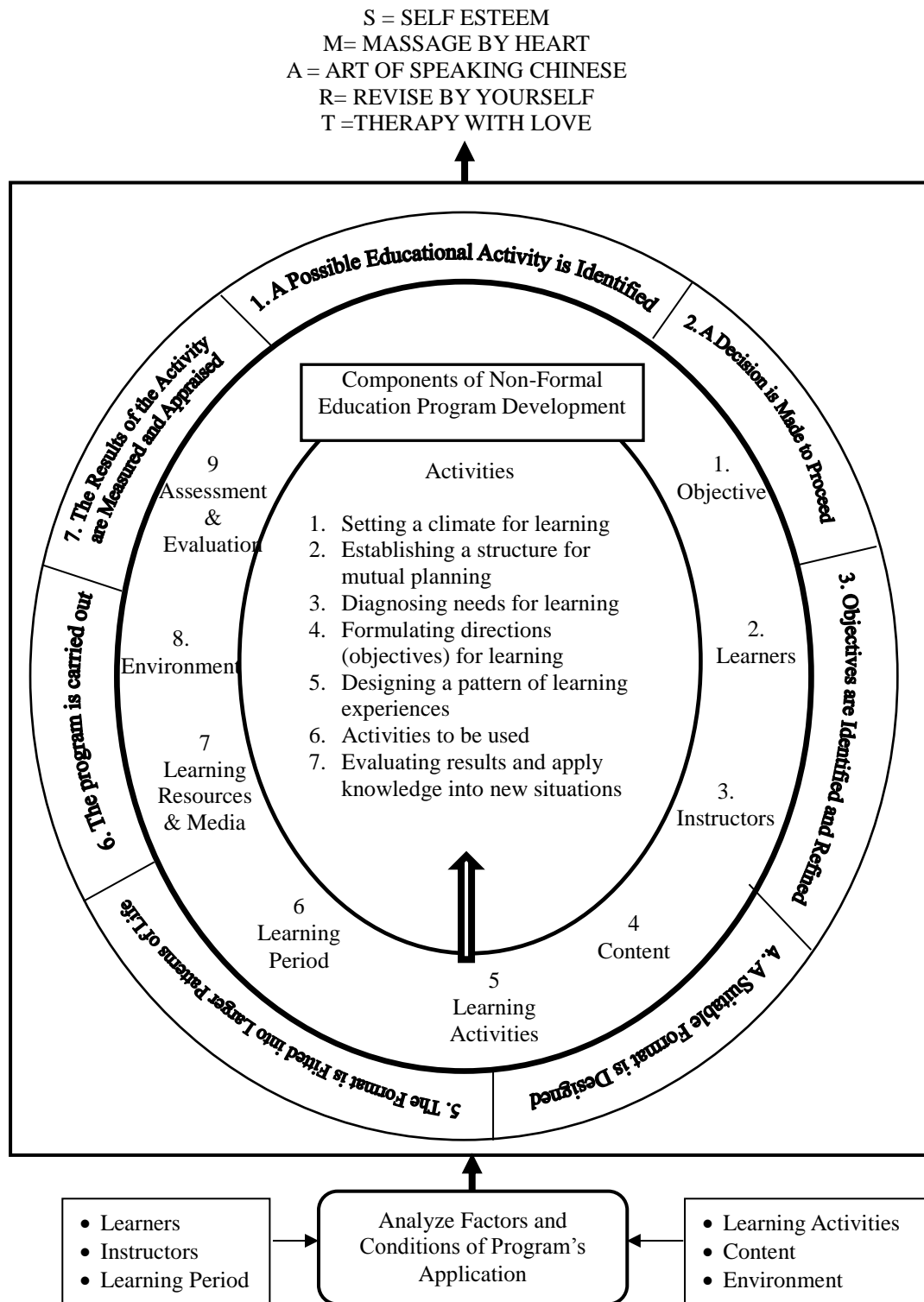
Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Prior experiment	22	17.27	5.69	16.33	.00*
After experiment	22	40.36	3.40		

\*p<0.05

**Table 2: Comparison of the Knowledge in Ten Trigger – Point Therapy**

Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Prior experiment	22	26.41	9.05	4.28	.00*
After experiment	22	35.41	3.88		

\*p<0.05



**Figure 2: The Development of Non-Formal Education Program to Enhance Career Competency for Spa Therapists**

2.2 Results from comparison of the Chinese language communication skill for spa therapists between experimental group and control group. The results shown that the experimental group have score increased higher than the control group with statistical significant at level of .05 as shown in Table 3

**Table 3: Comparison of the Chinese Language Communication Skill**

Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Experimental group	22	3.69	.38	3.18	.00*
Control group	22	3.36	.29		

\*p<0.05

2.3 Results from comparison of the ten trigger – point therapy skill between experimental group and control group. The results shown that the experimental group and the control group were not difference with statistical significant at level of .05 as shown in Table 4

**Table 4: Comparison of the Ten Trigger – Point Skill Therapy**

Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Experimental group	22	53.86	6.167	1.17	.24
Control group	22	52.00	4.175		

\*p<0.05

2.4 The score of communication Chinese language attitude for spa therapists and Spa therapists career attitude after the experimentation increased higher than the prior experimentation with statistical significant at level of .05 as shown in Table 5 and Table 6

**Table 5: Comparison of the Communication Chinese Language Attitude for Spa Therapists**

Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Prior experiment	22	30.59	3.52	13.37	.00*
After experiment	22	43.51	2.78		

\*p<0.05

**Table 6: Comparison of the Spa Therapists' Career Attitude**

Experiment group	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t-test	P-value
Prior experiment	22	36.05	3.18	6.05	.00*
After experiment	22	42.59	3.94		

\*p<0.05

**Section 3:** Results of the factors and conditions of the non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists. In this research factors compose of learners, instructors, learning activities, content, learning period, and environment. Conditions compose of learners, instructors, learning activities, learning period, learning resources and media and environment.

## Discussion

As per discussion, research findings from the development of non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapists has led to the following suggestions.

### 1. Learners

1.1 The age of Chinese language learners should not exceed 60 years, because of their slow memorization ability. Since learning would require longer study and practice hours than younger learners, facilitators need to provide special attention and encouragement to such learners. Furthermore, the usage of education materials such as C.Ds that allows self-learning and revision will increase their learning efficiency.

1.2 Elderly spa therapists possess higher healing messaging skill and techniques and are ideal candidates to teach and exchange experience with younger learners. Thus, the study groups' arrangement should consist of both elder and younger learners to promote supportive and dynamic learning atmosphere.

1.3 Learners need to commit to consistent self-revision of materials taught or else they will forget and will be able to employ them at work.

### 2. Chinese language skill training

There should be opportunities to communicate Chinese language with Chinese customers and consistently attend Chinese language training sessions.

### 3. The ten trigger – point therapy training

Learner needs to be practicing ten trigger – point therapy have at least 1 year employment to truly benefit from the program and become competent practitioner of ten trigger – point therapy.

### 4. Education materials

Education tool kits for Chinese language learners should be of compact size for ease of portability.

## Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research that expands on this research, the development of non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapist, should be aimed at specific regional groups and target audiences to increase suitability for those attending training sessions. For example, spa therapists who will be working abroad that require knowledge of Mandarin.

2. There should be consistent extension studies from this research, the development of non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapist, on the enrichment of other skills and competencies.

3. There should be research that studies the adoption of Information Technology (I.T.) and its effectiveness as a media for training for the development of non-formal education program to enhance career competency for spa therapist. The media will allow for non-motion picture, motion picture, narration, games, and tests to assist learners with different knowledge base, self-revision, and improve general knowledge beyond training sessions.

4. There should be further studies on the development of non-formal education program to enhance career competency for adults for other skills and competencies emphasizing at suitability for specific age and target groups.

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