

Pedagogical practices in the context of social, preventive and mandatory isolation from an intersectional perspective

Prácticas pedagógicas en contexto de aislamiento social, preventivo y obligatorio desde una mirada interseccional

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ABSTRACT

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The current global situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the Argentine national provisions of ASPO (Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation) have directly impacted education. In higher education, each institution made the relevant decisions for the development of its pedagogical practices, therefore, the objective of the research was to analyze the way in which pedagogical practices were developed in a Teacher Training Institute in Argentine Patagonia, and determine if the age, gender and/or social class of the students influenced these practices, analyzing these aspects through an intersectional perspective.

This research focused on a qualitative approach, the design was a case study, and the sample was made up of the management team, teachers and some students. To collect data, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews and a discussion group focused on the participating students. On this methodological basis, the analysis and elaboration procedure gave rise to the construction of four theoretical categories. Among the most relevant results, the modified aspects in pedagogical practices were identified, such as the modality, institutional organization, lack of regulations that frame teaching work. The development of capabilities such as flexibility, empathy and articulation with other organizations was identified. It was concluded that aspects such as gender, socioeconomic issues and age directly influenced pedagogical practices and the construction of effective learning by the students.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Prácticas pedagógicas,
Interseccionalidad, COVID-19,
Aprendizaje, Psicopedagogía

La situación actual mundial acerca de la pandemia por Covid-19 y las disposiciones nacionales argentinas de ASPO (Aislamiento Social Preventivo y Obligatorio) han impactado directamente sobre la educación. En educación superior, cada institución tomó las decisiones pertinentes para el desarrollo de sus prácticas pedagógicas; por lo tanto, el objetivo de la presente investigación fue analizar la manera en que se desarrollaron las prácticas pedagógicas en un Instituto de Formación Docente de la Patagonia argentina, y determinar si la edad, el género y/o

la clase social de los estudiantes, influyeron en dichas prácticas, analizando dichos aspectos a través de una mirada interseccional. Dicha investigación se centró en un enfoque cualitativo, siendo el diseño un estudio de casos, y estando la muestra constituida por el equipo directivo, profesores y algunos estudiantes. Para la recolección de datos se optó por utilizar entrevistas semiestructuradas y un grupo de discusión centrado en los estudiantes participantes. Sobre esta base metodológica, el procedimiento de análisis y elaboración dio lugar a la construcción de cuatro categorías teóricas. Dentro de los resultados más relevantes, se identificaron los aspectos modificados en las prácticas pedagógicas, tales como la modalidad, organización institucional y falta de normativa que encuadre el trabajo docente. Se identificó el desarrollo de capacidades tales como flexibilización, empatía y articulación con otros organismos. Se concluyó que, aspectos como el género, las cuestiones socioeconómicas y la edad influyeron directamente sobre las prácticas pedagógicas y sobre la construcción de aprendizajes eficaces por parte del estudiantado.

Introduction

In Argentina, in March 2020, the Social, Preventive and Obligatory Isolation (ASPO) was decreed due to the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus. Faced with this, educational institutions suspended their pedagogical practices for a while, and then developed new modalities related to virtuality.

The pedagogical practice, taking into account authors such as Forgiun and Santos (2017) can be defined as the existing relationship between subjects of knowledge, in which a subject with a more structured knowledge owner of a disciplinary knowledge, assumes as a clear and basic resource to favor teaching and learning from a position that demands a dialogical and critical disposition of knowledge, in order to pretend to materialize the formative purposes manifested in a pedagogical horizon in a given context. Pedagogical practice is a social practice, which is found within a context, within the educational system and crossed by axes such as power, knowledge, theory, practice, historical situationality and daily life.

Within this pedagogical practice are the subjects of education, theoretical and practical knowledge, a context within a socio-historical era that is progressively changing, and the teaching and learning processes that these subjects deploy.

According to Zabalza (1990), teaching practices can be defined as communication to the extent that they respond to a structured process in which information, messages or communications are exchanged between teachers and students. It is a socio-communicative and cognitive activity that promotes meaningful learning in rich and complex environments, in the classroom, virtual classroom or outside the classroom, in synchrony or asynchronously. On the other hand, learning is defined according to Pozo (2016) as "a relatively permanent and transferable change in a person's knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions, beliefs, etc., as a consequence of his or her social practices mediated by certain cultural devices" (p. 64). Also, taking into account some constructivist and sociocultural positions, it can be argued that learning is above all a process of construction of meanings whose defining attribute is its dialogic and social character, and is determined by the context in which the subjects live.

Regarding the approach to perform the analysis of pedagogical practices, starting from the contributions of Hill Collins and Bilge (2019) it is argued that:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity of the world, people and human experiences. The events and circumstances of social and political life and the individual can rarely be understood as determined by a single factor. In general, they are shaped by many factors and in a variety of ways that influence each other. (p. 13)

The different social, cultural, educational, political and economic inequalities that a subject may suffer are axes that intersect moments and situations in the student's life. The notion of intersectionality places the subject in interdependence and interaction, in those points of crossroads woven by the different dimensions, structures and dynamics that determine the difficulty of access or educational abandonment, and also places it in the devices that define and cause inequality, discrimination and exclusion, or, provoke experiences and situations of privilege (Vázquez, 2020).

From this intersection emanate different forms of domination under which students construct their gender, cultural, ethnic, social class, etc. identities, which may come into confrontation as a result of these forms of domination and the ASPO context that determines them.

In the educational context, research has been conducted under this approach, among which we can name the one conducted by Lopez in 2018 in Guatemala, called "*An intersectional reading of technological innovation as an educational resource in the university.*" The results of this exploratory study showed that despite the possibilities of access offered by ICTs, their application was limited by gaps. The one carried out by Hueso in 2020 in Colombia, about digital education and the right to education in times of the coronavirus, from which it is concluded that digital education is a lifesaver in a situation like the pandemic to ensure a minimum of the objectives guaranteed by the right to education. And also a research by Suárez et al., from the year 2021, in Colombia, called "*ICT-mediated education in higher education in the midst of the isolation period of the Covid-19 pandemic,*" from which it was found that after a year in the midst of the pandemic, ICT-mediated education has acquired greater understanding and relevance by the university academic community.

In this sense, the purpose of this article is to analyze the development of the pedagogical practice in ASPO in a Teacher Training Institute of the Argentinean Patagonia, under an intersectional view; that is, according to the existing social inequalities in this educational level and in the current society, taking the approach as an analytical tool, in order to make a complex reading of the educational reality.

Method

For this research, the development of a qualitative approach was considered, using a case study, specifically in a teacher training institute in the Argentinean Patagonia.

The population chosen for this research is the pedagogical practices developed at the tertiary educational level, its students, teachers, directors and their organization in the context of pandemic-quarantine.

The sample consisted of 12 teachers, including the management team and 6 students belonging to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th year and a graduate of the institute, who were invited to take part in the research on a voluntary basis, having to read and sign an informed consent form. This sample was defined as a matter of geographic convenience and accessibility. They are considered key informants for the research topic and the interest of giving an account of the pedagogical practices of which they were part.

First, a semi-structured interview with teachers and the management team was chosen as an instrument of inquiry, gathering information in first person. As a second instance, a discussion group of students was proposed, called "Forum of exchange on current practices", which was developed in a meeting of approximately one hour and a half, encouraging the exchange of educational experiences in pandemics.

Once the data were collected, categories of analysis were developed to allow interpretation in order to find the research results.

Results

From this study, the following categories were derived and analyzed: "Pedagogical practices in a new context", "Institutional conditions for development", "Conditions of permanence from intersectionality, when flexibility is not enough" and "Teaching and learning processes in times of COVID".

Pedagogical Practices in a New Context

In Argentina, Decree 297/2020 established the ASPO, which led the higher education institution to suspend its face-to-face activities. Later, seeing that the health situation did not change, the educational modality was modified.

Based on the above, modifications were found in the institutional organization, which, at this early stage, was characterized by decision-making along two lines imposed from other places:

(...) first of all, from the higher level management, there was a guideline that told us that classes had to continue in this virtual format, since no other means were possible (...) on the other hand, we also had the union or the guild that told us that we had to take into account all the possibilities so that no one would be left out of this Public Education (...) (E12).

In turn, one of the difficulties encountered was the lack of regulations, since, beyond these two general guidelines, the Decrees published by the Nation and the replies from the Provinces, there were no regulations regarding the duties and obligations of teachers:

We only received the resolution of the suspension for the two weeks (...) It did not specify anything in terms of actions or decision making (...) Resolutions that told us how the classes would continue, how they should be given or organized, there was nothing (...) (E1).

With these problems in mind, the virtualization process was deployed, which required contact with all the students, not only in the urban area, but also in nearby towns and rural areas. The most used resources for this were WhatsApp, Google Drive, Zoom and Google Meet:

(...) we organized the schedules, we started to contact the students and ask them for their e-mails, also with the teachers and we set up an institutional drive (...) We thought about this way of organization. The preceptor was the one who was able to contact the students, set up WhatsApp groups (...) (E1).

One of the main challenges was to create the necessary conditions, not only to achieve the development of teaching and learning processes in their students, but also to make these pedagogical practices accessible to all, within a territory with student diversity.

Institutional Conditions for Development

The conditions in the teaching and learning processes changed due to the social transformations that occurred as a result of the health situation. One of the main challenges for teachers in such conditions was to develop in them the ability to be flexible with students. This capacity had to be put to the test due to the multiple realities and the pressure for all students to have access to the classes taught:

(...) we took into account the pressure exerted on us by the union that no one should be left out and what we did was to transmit it to the teachers all the time (...). What that meant was that the requirements may not be the same because obviously the access modality and the possibilities for everyone were not the same. So this led to messages to teachers, receipt of documents, work and queries at any time and also by different means (...) (E12).

The processes triggered by the virtualization of classes have led teachers to develop logistical flexibility, which refers to the use of technological resources as the only possibility for communication and transmission of information, crossing space-time barriers so that students can access their classes. However, with respect to pedagogical

flexibility, it seems that very few teachers were able to develop it in this new modality. One of the interviewees explained:

(...) we noticed this resistance with technology, that is, to use only the basics, that I give you the work, the material and deliver it to me, and there was no other more innovative use of all the tools we had available (E12).

This shows that, despite this change of modality and use of technological resources, in many cases this new approach to the construction of learning was not achieved; the strategies remained intact, only the medium changed.

A third type of flexibility was also found, that of reducing transactional distance, referring to the demands and the challenge of deconstructing pedagogical practices in order to include. Such flexibility became necessary for pedagogical continuity. This was expressed by one of the interviewees: "So yes, there was a lot of flexibility, we had, let's say, that each student was able to make their journey as far as they could and how they could" (E7). The different realities and possibilities were considered, and the requirements alternated, taking into account different channels, times and resources.

Not only was flexibility developed, but also the management team, as well as the teachers, developed a certain empathy for the situation of the other, in the face of the multiple challenges that socially presented themselves. This was stated by one of the students participating in the discussion group:

(...) I think we had to be more empathetic, both teachers and ourselves, with what was happening to the other person because not all of us had the same difficulties or the same problems with the issue of resources (Focus group).

Therefore, we sought to generate institutional conditions that favored the construction of knowledge and also sought solutions that went beyond the institution itself, which included personal effort, and the construction of networks and alliances to reach minority sectors so that they could access and remain in education.

We had several students from Huecú (neighboring town) and they had worse connectivity than us, so I called the mayor of the town, after we had once sent copies, and asked him if he would provide a place with good internet so that they could connect during class hours (...) (E1).

Seen from this perspective, the learning possibilities of the subjects were defined not only by individual competencies and capabilities, but by the complex combinatorics expressed by the relationships between subject and situation.

Conditions of permanence from the perspective of intersectionality, when flexibility is not enough

The intersectional approach allowed for a complex reading of the educational reality by analyzing the categories that intersected in the student body and generated privileges or exclusion. The categories identified were gender, socioeconomic status and age.

With respect to gender, it was identified that more women than men attend higher education institutions; however, this does not guarantee that women have full access and opportunities as men do. Accordingly, one of the teachers interviewed explained: "(...) in general we have very few men in the IFD, most of them always, there are even some courses that are all women (...)" (E12).

It was shown that during the pandemic, female students were disadvantaged due to multiple circumstances, most of them linked to gender stereotypes that are reproduced in society. It was the women who generally had to take charge of cleaning the home, taking

care of their children, domestic activities, and accompanying them to school. And in the face of all this, to have the necessary time to carry out their academic activities. This was explained by a teacher interviewed:

I believe that gender had an influence on the development of the practices, unfortunately (...) male students did not have all the difficulties that women had, even more so when talking about children, taking care of the home and taking care of them (...) I could tell you that women mothers were the students who had the most difficulties (...) (E1).

Gender was generally found to intersect with another category, resulting in greater inequality. Categories such as low economic resources, being a mother, problematic social conditions, age, among others.

Socioeconomic level was one of the main aspects that influenced educational practices, in terms of the possibility or not of access to them. In the words of one interviewee:

(...) in terms of social conditions, it had a lot of influence on access and maintenance because there were many students who did not even have internet at home, so they bought data (...) Zoom was very expensive and complicated for them, they spent a lot of money to be able to attend a complete class and many times that money was not available (...) (E2).

In order to access education, students had to have different resources that determined their access and permanence. In other words, they had to have a certain economic level that allowed them to access the resources, thus exposing the idea that only a privileged sector was able to enjoy this online education.

The age category was related to the use of technological resources as mediators of pedagogical practices. Those who found it most difficult to use and access technological resources were older students and teachers, considered digital immigrants. This was expressed by some of the teachers interviewed:

(...) in terms of age I think it influenced the facilities, I feel that a younger student had other possibilities and perhaps a better understanding of technology and those who found it more difficult for me were the older students and those with families (...) (E2).

Therefore, age was a factor that directly influenced access to and permanence in pedagogical practices, since the use of technology was a condition that excluded them.

Taking into account the categories of gender, socioeconomic conditions and age, in relation to the existing minorities, it was concluded that when these categories intersected in a subject, he/she was excluded from higher education, thus violating the right of access to it. This was expressed by a teacher: (...) the state never took charge of what it could have done in relation to this access and the needs that the students also had (...). Of geographical issues, nor of connectivity, they did not take care of this gap and thus left aside the rights of students (E11).

Teaching and Learning processes in times of COVID

The subjects of education were affected by the social and health crisis, i.e. the one who teaches changed, as did the one who learns. As for the type of knowledge or content, it did not change drastically, but the way and means by which teaching is carried out did, having ICT as mediators, and, therefore, having to develop other types of teaching strategies.

It could be seen that while there were teachers who changed their strategies and oriented them to the new modality and needs of the students, innovating with technology, learning from multiple resources; there were those who could not change them, and only went from using a face-to-face medium to using a technological one. One of the interviewees, based on this, expressed "(...) there is a percentage of teachers who adapted easily, who worked with the platform, who looked for other alternatives, who played and even enjoyed these new options (...)" (E1). From another side, a student expounded: "(...) the teachers handled themselves with PDF. That for us was not a way of teaching us (...)" (Focus group).

Most of the teachers used ICTs as mediation, but it has not been easy to use them as a means to access, explore and elaborate contents in different ways and degrees, having to transform their own teaching practices and even less to use them for monitoring, evaluation and control of the process. This was stated by a teacher interviewed:

(...) we try to continue with some of the classroom-based activities, such as taking a midterm, asking for practical work, giving reading material and doing activities. (...) but we could not see, or at least I could not see when they understood or not, or when they managed to learn or not (E3).

In most cases, the aim was to "imitate" face-to-face teaching with virtual resources, which also explains the incorporation of synchronous instances as mandatory in the teaching process. This was explained by a teacher: "The development of synchronous classes was also requested, when possible (...) it was also requested as an obligation that when possible at least 80 minutes or 60 should be classes like that" (E1).

From this point of view, teachers expressed not having been able to visualize the learning results in their students, a matter that was made difficult by the very modality of the educational practices. And in turn, other teachers expressed that, compared to face-to-face teaching, the results were "poorer", as expressed by one interviewee: "...I noticed differences from face-to-face to virtuality, not only in the modality (...) but also in the learning results, in Creole I would say that it was half a hair's breadth" (E8).

Difficulties were encountered in building lasting or effective learning, since it was more relevant and focused more on contextual issues, leaving the learning processes as a last resort.

With respect to the pedagogical link, we went from "face-to-face" to having to relate through a screen, either synchronously or asynchronously. This generated in many actors the feeling that the other people were not present. A teacher interviewed, explained:

(...) I never saw the point of putting together a class where everyone has their cameras turned off and microphones turned off. I felt it was like being in a classroom and no one is watching you, no one is listening to me because there was no feedback (E3).

In many other actors, being through a screen affected the idea of "being able to reach" the students, and generate the link. In other words, in some cases this link was not even built, thus affecting the teaching and learning processes: "(...) I believe that if in general there is no link with the student, there is nothing"; "There is no application that can work if there is no link (...)" (E4).

Therefore, it can be argued that the pedagogical link was characterized at this stage by distance and a sense of uncertainty. In the words of the students, they maintain that "(...) we lost the contact we had before with the teachers, we did not know what was going to happen (...)" (Discussion group).

On the other hand, another characteristic of the pedagogical link was visualized. Several interviewees expressed that they thought that the measures taken to improve the conditions of many students, in order for them to access and continue with their classes, were so many and such that, to a certain extent, they generated a type of mothering towards them. This was stated by a teacher:

(...) the institute overprotects the students. The student does not have a computer, we give him/her a computer. She does not have a photocopy, she is given a photocopy and then this maternity that exists (...) this maternal thing that exists, it seems to me, made it even more difficult (E8).

It was possible to identify that many of the practices carried out in this context of pandemic affected the possibility for students to achieve autonomy in their learning and trajectories, not only that, with the flexibility, the educational level dropped, which had an impact on the trajectory of future professionals. This was expressed by some teachers: "There are very few independent children, I think that the higher level should be strengthened from another place..." (E8).

Discussion

The results obtained have shown that Covid-19's higher level teaching practices have been modified in multiple dimensions, starting with the virtual modality, the transformations in the organization of the institution, the lack of regulations to guide the actions of the educational actors and the deployment of resources that would allow access to education by the student body so as not to violate the right to public education.

The main modification was the incorporation of ICTs as mediators of the teaching and learning processes and of the pedagogical link, which was an emergency solution and constituted what Hueso (2020) calls "suspension without suspension".

Faced with this new scenario, the educational actors had to develop new skills, search for resources and solutions to face the challenges of teaching classes virtually. Hueso (2020) presented an analysis of measures taken in different countries to soften the impact of this new education, and tools they were able to provide. However, in this territory these measures and tools were not visualized, and the educational actors themselves expressed that the solutions were built autonomously, relying on accessible resources and skills such as flexibility, empathy and partnership with other local institutions.

Regarding the skills of the different educational actors, Suárez et al. (2021) argue that by this time many teachers were forced to make pedagogical adaptations, however, many of these educators lacked the necessary skills to assume the integration of ICT, this was evidenced in the creation of more complex virtual scenarios, for this reason the most used applications were WhatsApp and email, as visualized in the results of this research.

From the intersectional analysis of the pedagogical practices occurred in this period, the results obtained differ with what was exposed by López (2018), because, for the author, regarding the gender category, virtual training was perceived as an alternative that broadens access to higher education. It argues that, in the case of women, having access to virtual education has contributed to overcoming gender conditioning factors that have limited their mobilization and attendance at study centers. However, in this emergency educational modality, rather than increasing the possibilities of access, access was disadvantaged in the female gender, since the fulfillment of domestic and care-giving

roles increased during the ASPO period and did not allow women to have the time and space to devote to their academic activities.

Regarding the other categories, socioeconomic level and age, the results obtained confirm the findings of Hueso (2020) and Suárez et al. (2021), that in times of coronavirus access to the Internet became a right coupled with the right to education, especially when educational objectives are to be achieved through connectivity. Hueso (2020) argues that the dangers to equality in education are in relation to ensuring access and digital literacy.

Suarez et al. (2021), for their part, expressed that the greatest challenge of the ICT-mediated educational process was related to technical difficulties such as unstable Internet connection. Generally the students' videos and audios were turned off for greater connectivity, but contact and dialogue were lost. In addition, the authors add, many students did not have the technological resources necessary to log on to the online connections. In this sense, as in the present study, it was found that the socioeconomic level of the student body was one of the categories that most influenced access to and permanence in education. Limited time and access to necessary devices resulted in a fragmented and less affective educational experience for students.

Suarez et al. (2021), based on the above, argue that there were pedagogical-communicative difficulties, since teachers could not see the students' faces and moods, making the teaching process difficult. At the same time, another difficulty was that practical subjects such as laboratories or professional and pedagogical practices could not be carried out.

In agreement with Suarez et al. (2021), in addition to the pedagogical-communicative difficulties, psychosocial problems were identified, since many students had to share their electronic devices with the rest of the family, or had to connect in shared spaces with the other members, which made it difficult to connect to classes, on the other hand, those who were not from the village, returned to their native places, in many cases, rural environments without internet connectivity or broadband services and uninterrupted power supplies. All of this led many students to state that they did not have an environment conducive to learning, which affected their academic performance.

With respect to age, those who encountered the greatest difficulties in the use of ICTs, due to the digital divide, were older students and teachers. And according to what was surveyed in terms of teaching and learning processes during Covid-19, the results showed dissatisfaction on the part of the educational actors in terms of the level of learning and the lack of pedagogical link, which would be in line with what Hueso (2020) states, that digital teaching ended up being "inferior" to face-to-face teaching and showing how the perceptions of the protagonists of such educational modality were tinged with negativity. This limitation on personalized access to technology exacerbated inequalities among students.

Finally, in relation to the categories raised from the intersectional perspective, and how these can determine the right to education of the subjects, Hueso (2020) expresses that this right raises a series of concrete rights and consequent obligations mainly of the powers, and must be realized even in digital education and in particular in the pandemic. These are the rights to access to education at all levels and to receive affordable education, i.e., education with the three A's: accessible (right to choose), acceptable (quality education) and adaptable. However, in the present research it was visualized that when these categories intersected in a subject belonging to minorities, there was a great possibility that he/she would be excluded from higher education, thus violating the right of access to it.

Conclusions

According to the results obtained through the testimonies collected from teachers and students who went through the pedagogical practices in the context of ASPO, it is concluded that the objectives proposed for this research were achieved as the modifications in the development of the pedagogical practice were analyzed and the intersectional approach was used to determine the inequalities produced in the student body in the categories of gender, socioeconomic level and age.

Regarding pedagogical practice, the transformations in the institutional organization were visualized, characterized by impositions from higher organisms, the development of the virtual modality and the lack of regulations that frame the actions of teachers.

On the other hand, as regards institutional conditions for development, skills such as pedagogical flexibility, empathy and linkage with other organizations to face contextual challenges were visualized. In turn, based on the intersectional analysis, it was concluded that the student categories of gender, socioeconomic level and age had a broad influence on access to and permanence in higher education, and that when these categories intersected in a particular subject, they produced school exclusion.

The teaching and learning processes were mediated by ICTs. Difficulties were encountered in transforming practices by adapting methodology and strategies to the new environment. The consequence was dissatisfaction with the level of learning compared to face-to-face. And, in reference to the pedagogical link, problems were found in the construction of this link, and one of the characteristics identified was the "mothering" of students, which undermines the autonomy of the learner.

As for the limitations of the research process, one could mention the focus of the problem to be investigated, since it required work to frame it, due to the breadth of the topics and the chosen approach. It is considered that the search for focus group participants could have been more exhaustive, in order to achieve a greater number of students, which could have generated more diversified and enriching contributions. Therefore, it is suggested that for future research, the number of participants be increased and that it be carried out in other locations. Another line of research could be oriented to analyze pedagogical practices in the post-pandemic context, inquiring about what this period of crisis left in the institutions.

This work is considered relevant because it contributes to reflect on pedagogical practices in the context of crisis, on the influence of socioeconomic aspects, gender and age issues in subjects belonging to higher education institutions, on the role of the teacher as facilitator of the knowledge construction process and on the role of ICT in current educational processes. This generates a starting point to rethink today's pedagogical practices and consider whether modifications are necessary in accordance with current social changes, to accommodate these new subjects.

It also contributes to the training process and the professional practice of the psychopedagogue, as the one who must intervene in these educational spaces, nowadays crossed by multiple challenges, which requires a positioning as professionals that allows a complex reading of the learning subject.

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