

Educational Programmes for Children with Diverse Needs and Benefits of Inclusive Education

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Abstract

This paper presents educational programmes for children with diverse needs and benefits of inclusive education. The Education Commission of 1966 drew attention to the education of children with disabilities. In 1974, the necessity of integrated education was emphasized under the scheme for Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). In pursuit of the goal of providing basic education for all, the National Policy on Education (1986) and its follow-up actions have been major landmarks. The World Declaration on Education for All adopted in 1990 gave further boost to the various processes already set in motion in the country. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992 initiated a training programme for the development of professionals to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. The enactment of the People with Disability Act in 1996 provided legislative support. This act makes it mandatory to provide free education to children with disabilities in an appropriate environment until the age of 18 years. In 1999, the government passed the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act for the economic rehabilitation of people with disabilities. These acts have been instrumental in bringing about a perceptible change/ improvement in the attitude of government, NGOs and people with disabilities. In recent years, two major initiatives have been launched by the government for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education (UEE): The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002 (UNICEF, 2003). Indeed, a historic moment and a path-breaking achievement, Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 is a game changer for the estimated 70-100 million disabled citizens of India and which will benefit the discourse away from charity to one that is rights-based with provisions to enforce implementation (RPWD Act, 2016) in the field of inclusive education for children with diverse needs.

There have always been special needs children, but there have not always been educational programmes to meet their needs. It is, therefore, pertinent to give some thoughts to the historical perspectives of educational programmes for special needs children. Remedial education, compensatory education, special education, special classes, the whole school approach, integration—these and many more have had their brief heyday in the field and have, in due course, disappeared into history just as the term integration is now being overtaken by the term inclusion. Given this unstable past, one would imagine that some sort of historical perspective would be an integral part of our study. In reality, however, we are not very good at remembering our past, much less at connecting it with our present (Dyson, 2001). The history of educational programmes for Children with Diverse Needs presents both an optimistic and a pessimistic picture. The optimistic

picture indicates that the practice and policy in special needs education have improved over time; that the attitude of society towards the less fortunate children has changed over the centuries, though much slowly; and that in past things were done less well than they are now, or, indeed, entirely the wrong things were done. The pessimistic picture indicates how some groups of influential people, though small in number, conspired to subvert any progress towards more liberal practices; how the interests of these less fortunate children were damaged by those who claimed to serve them; and how the conservative forces worked to maintain the status quo. Thus, the pessimistic view has little to offer beyond a sorry tale of thwarted initiatives and shattered ideals. It is, therefore, pertinent to study how change has taken place—from superstitions to segregation, and later to integration, and what the direction of change is taking place at present (Dash & Dash, 2003). In the earliest primitive societies, particularly in Egypt, Greek and Rome, disabled babies were killed because they were considered to be imperfect. The guiding principle was “Nothing imperfect should be brought up.” During Middle Ages, the rise of deep religious convictions throughout the world produced some humanitarian care for the retarded, mentally ill, and physically handicapped. The threat to survival of disabled children decreased, but the mentally ill were considered to be possessed by evil spirits or demons. Mental and physical abnormalities were considered to be the result of anger of God or the divine punishment for a sin. The primary treatment consisted of driving the spirit from the possessed by pleasing God through prayer and rituals. Throughout history there have been people who viewed mental illness as a disease, and not the result of possession by demons. However, their voices were rarely heard by the majority (Dash & Dash, 2003).

The genesis of special needs education in India can be traced back to pre-independent India. There are examples in Indian history that show that people with disabilities had educational opportunities and that disability did not come in the way of learning. However, during the colonial period, India increasingly looked at educational models existing outside the country. Parents of children with disabilities, mainly from urban areas and with exposure to approaches prevalent in western countries, started schools for their children. Since the government had no policy on the education of children with disabilities, it extended grants to these private schools. This approach of setting up separate schools, mostly residential, spread across the country, although it was concentrated in urban areas. However, for a country the size of India, their numbers were small. For over a century, these special schools offered the only education available to children with disabilities because of the widespread belief that Children with Diverse Needs could not be educated alongside others. This allowed a small number of children to have access to education but did not help these children to enter the mainstream community after completing their education (UNICEF, 2003). After independence, the Indian Constitution directed the state to ensure provision of basic education to all children up to the age of 14 years. The education of people with disabilities was, however, not explicit in the early constitutional provisions except for guaranteeing similar rights for people with disabilities as other members of society. The Education Commission of 1966 (Kothari Commission) drew attention to the education of children with disabilities. In 1974, for the first time, the necessity of integrated education was explicitly emphasized under the scheme for Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC). In pursuit of the goal of providing basic education for all, the National Policy on Education (1986) and its follow-up actions have been major landmarks. The World

Declaration on Education for All adopted in 1990 gave further boost to the various processes already set in motion in the country. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992 initiated a training programme for the development of professionals to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. The enactment of the People with Disability Act in 1996 provided legislative support. This act makes it mandatory to provide free education to children with disabilities in an appropriate environment until the age of 18 years. In 1999, the government passed the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act for the economic rehabilitation of people with disabilities. These acts have been instrumental in bringing about a perceptible change/ improvement in the attitude of government, NGOs and people with disabilities. In recent years, two major initiatives have been launched by the government for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education (UEE): The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002 (UNICEF, 2003). Indeed, a historic moment and a path-breaking achievement, Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 is a game changer for the estimated 70-100 million disabled citizens of India and which will help move the discourse away from charity to one that is rights-based with provisions to enforce implementation (RPWD Act, 2016) in the field of inclusive education. Apart from covering 21 categories of disabilities from the previous 7 categories under the 1995 Act, this new Act lays complete emphasis on one's rights – right to equality and opportunity, right to inherit and own property, right to home and family and reproductive rights among others. Unlike the 1995 Act, the new Act talks about accessibility - setting a two-year deadline for the government to ensure that persons with disabilities get barrier-free access to physical infrastructure and transport systems. Additionally, it will also hold the private sector accountable. This also includes educational institutions 'recognized' by the government such as privately-owned universities and colleges. A path-breaking feature of the new Act is the increase in reservation in government jobs from 3% to 4%. With the new law, the Indian disability movement has been catapulted onto the next level. This has ushered us into the next stage of disability rights, "Disability 2.0" (RPWD Act, 2016). The percentage of Population State wise with disability as per census 2011, Government of India is presented as follows:

Percentage of Population with Disability by State as Per Census 2011, Government of India	
State	Total
Uttar Pradesh	4,157,514
Maharashtra	2,963,392
Bihar	2,331,009
Andhra Pradesh	2,266,607
West Bengal	2,017,406
Rajasthan	1,563,694
Madhya Pradesh	1,551,931
Karnataka	1,324,205
Orissa	1,244,402

Tamil Nadu	1,179,963
Gujarat	1,092,302
Jharkhand	769,980
Kerala	761,843
Punjab	654,063
Chhattisgarh	624,937
Haryana	546,374
Assam	480,065
Jammu And Kashmir	361,153
Delhi	234,882
Uttarakhand	185,272
Himachal Pradesh	155,316
Tripura	64,346
Manipur	58,547
Meghalaya	44,317
Goa	33,012
Puducherry	30,189
Nagaland	29,631
Arunachal Pradesh	26,734
Sikkim	18,187
Mizoram	15,160
Chandigarh	14,796
Andaman And Nicobar Islands	6,660
Dadra And Nagar Haveli	3,294
Daman and Diu	2,196
Lakshadweep	1,615

The percentage of population gender-wise with disability as per census 2011, Government of India is presented as follows:

Percentage of Population with Disability by Gender as Per Census 2011, Government of India		
State	Male	Female
Uttar Pradesh	2,364,171	1,793,343
Maharashtra	1,692,285	1,271,107
Bihar	1,343,100	987,909
Andhra Pradesh	1,224,459	1,042,148
West Bengal	1,127,181	890,225
Rajasthan	848,287	715,407
Madhya Pradesh	888,751	663,180
Karnataka	726,521	597,684
Orissa	674,775	569,627
Tamil Nadu	657,418	522,545
Gujarat	612,804	479,498

Jharkhand	426,876	343,104
Kerala	394,706	367,137
Punjab	379,551	274,512
Chhattisgarh	334,093	290,844
Haryana	315,533	230,841
Assam	257,385	222,680
Jammu And Kashmir	204,834	156,319
Delhi	138,379	96,503
Uttarakhand	102,787	82,485
Himachal Pradesh	86,321	68,995
Tripura	35,482	28,864
Manipur	31,174	27,373
Meghalaya	23,326	20,991
Goa	17,016	15,996
Puducherry	16,373	13,816
Nagaland	16,148	13,483
Arunachal Pradesh	14,245	12,489
Sikkim	9,779	8,408
Mizoram	8,198	6,962
Chandigarh	8,743	6,053
Andaman And Nicobar Islands	3,861	2,799
Dadra And Nagar Haveli	1,893	1,401
Daman and Diu	1,300	896
Lakshadweep	838	777

The percentage of population of visually challenged children as per census 2011, Government of India is presented as follows:

Percentage of Population with Visually Challenged Children as Per Census 2011, Government of India	
State	Seeing
Uttar Pradesh	763,988
Maharashtra	574,052
Bihar	549,080
Andhra Pradesh	398,144
West Bengal	424,473
Rajasthan	314,618
Madhya Pradesh	270,751
Karnataka	264,170
Orissa	263,799
Tamil Nadu	127,405
Gujarat	214,150
Jharkhand	180,721
Kerala	115,513
Punjab	82,199
Chhattisgarh	111,169

Haryana	82,702
Assam	80,553
Jammu And Kashmir	66,448
Delhi	30,124
Uttarakhand	29,107
Himachal Pradesh	26,076
Tripura	10,828
Manipur	19,194
Meghalaya	6,980
Goa	4,964
Puducherry	3,608
Nagaland	4,150
Arunachal Pradesh	5,652
Sikkim	2,772
Mizoram	2,035
Chandigarh	1,774
Andaman And Nicobar Islands	1,084
Dadra And Nagar Haveli	429
Daman and Diu	382
Lakshadweep	337

The percentage of population of hearing-challenged children as per census 2011, Government of India is presented as follows:

Percentage of Population with Hearing Challenged Children as Per Census 2011, Government of India	
State	Hearing
Uttar Pradesh	1,027,835
Maharashtra	473,271
Bihar	572,163
Andhra Pradesh	334,292
West Bengal	315,192
Rajasthan	218,873
Madhya Pradesh	267,361
Karnataka	235,691
Orissa	237,858
Tamil Nadu	220,241
Gujarat	190,675
Jharkhand	165,861
Kerala	105,366
Punjab	146,696
Chhattisgarh	92,315
Haryana	115,527
Assam	101,577
Jammu And Kashmir	74,096
Delhi	34,499
Uttarakhand	37,681

Himachal Pradesh	26,700
Tripura	11,695
Manipur	12,891
Meghalaya	12,353
Goa	5,347
Puducherry	6,152
Nagaland	8,940
Arunachal Pradesh	8,127
Sikkim	5,343
Mizoram	3,354
Chandigarh	2,475
Andaman And Nicobar Islands	1,219
Dadra And Nagar Haveli	715
Daman and Diu	309
Lakshadweep	224

To meet the diverse needs of such a large number of children we need inclusive education.

The concept of Inclusive Education: -

Inclusive education refers to the placement and education of children with disabilities (divyang children) in regular education classrooms with children of the same age who do not have disabilities. The underlying premise of inclusion is that all children can learn and belong to the mainstream of school and community life. Inclusion is a basic value that extends to all children (Dash, 2006). Prime Minister of Government of India (The Economics Times, 2015) suggested the term divyang for children with disabilities on 26.12.2015. In line with the Prime Minister’s call to call the disabled as divyang, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India (2016) has renamed to incorporate the word divyangin its Hindi as well as English nomenclature for persons with disability (The Economics Times, 2016).

The Benefits of Inclusive Classroom

The benefits of inclusive education (Dash & Dash, 2003) is indicated as follows:

The Benefits of Inclusive Classroom			
Children with Diverse Needs	General Education	Teachers	Society
Affords a sense of belonging to the diverse human family	Provides opportunities to experience diversity of society on a small scale in the classroom	Helps teachers appreciate the diversity of the human family	Promotes the civil rights of all individuals
Provides a diverse stimulating environment in which to grow and learn	Develops an appreciation that everyone has unique and beautiful characteristics and abilities	Helps teachers recognize that all students have strengths	Supports the social value of equality
Evolves a feeling of	Develops respect for	Creates an	Teachers

being a member of a diverse community	others with diverse characteristics	awareness of the importance of direct individualized instruction	socialization and collaborative skills
Enables development of friendship	Develops sensibility towards others' limitations	Increases ways of creatively addressing challenges	Builds supportiveness and independence
Provides opportunities to develop neighborhood friends	Develops feelings of empowerment and the ability to make a difference	Teachers collaborate problem-solving skills	Maximizes social peace
Enhances self-respect	Increases abilities to help and teach all classmates	Develops teamwork skills	Provides children a miniature model of the democratic process
Provides affirmations of individuality	Develops empathetic skills	Acquires different ways of perceiving challenges as a result of being on a multi-disciplinary team	
Provides peer models	Provides opportunities to vicariously put their feet in another child's shoes	Enhances accountability skills	
Provides opportunities to be educated with same age peers	Enhances appreciation for diversity of human family	Combats monotony	

The Concept of Children with Diverse Needs

The conceptualization of Children with Diverse Needs determines the policy, research, and practice in special needs education. The concept of Children with Diverse Needs is of British origin. The Government Commission chaired by Baroness Mary Warnock (1978) reported to the government on the findings of its inquiry into special education in Britain. It was wrong, said the report, to identify children by means of their handicap, and then send them to schools organized to deal with just such categories. Rather, the report went on, we should identify their educational difficulties and provide accordingly. And so, the term Special Educational Needs (SEN) entered UK legislation, its classrooms and importantly teachers' thinking. Prior to 1944, provision of education was made on the basis of a specific handicap, i.e., visual and hearing impairment, essentially through charitable initiatives. The emphasis was more on training than on education. In the period following World War II, an increasing amount of research was directed at children with special education needs, particularly in the USA. It was

recognized that this could not be achieved through the classification of children into handicap categories which had no direct educational implications. Parents became conscious and concerned that their children's educational needs should be met. Parents' organizations were started which then exerted pressure to improve educational provisions. In an effort to dispel the stigma associated with the negative labels of the past, the old language, which labeled disabled people as lame, defective, crippled, less fortunate, mentally retarded, spastic, deaf and dumb – all of which focused on their imperfections, was abandoned and replaced by the new language whereby children with disabilities were described in broader, more general terms such as Children with Special Educational Needs in the light of the recommendations of Warnock's committee. The old disability implied a mistaken model seeing difficulties within the individual child and disregarding the numerous facets in the external environment which disable the child. The old approach was regarded as a medical approach is a social one looking, instead, at all the barriers within the environment that can disable a person. Research on social deprivation also indicated that children's educational programme did not reflect factors within the child but within the child's environment. This led to the Head Start programme in USA and the educational priority area programme in Britain. There is no legal definition of this term in India. The PWD Act (1995) defines the term disability and different types of disabilities. There are checklists available to identify the various disabilities and currently used to identify special needs children. While use of the term Special Educational Needs or children with Special Educational Needs sounds very pleasant and affirmative there are certain conceptual and practical problems while making a decision as to whether a child has certain special educational needs (SEN). The conceptual issues are:

- (a) Nature of SEN
- (b) The rights of with SEN and their parents and
- (c) The effectiveness of identifying, and meeting SEN

The current conceptualization of SEN is widely considered to constitute a major change from the previous frame based on handicap or categorization. The concept of SEN is more positive as it is concerned with everything about the child's abilities and disabilities as well as resources and constraints in the environment which affect educational progress.

There are two interpretations of special needs education:

- (a) Special needs education is additional and different to ordinary provision and
- (b) Ordinary provision is not accommodating to the diversity of individual needs.

Both interpretations capture significant aspects of what is involved in the field of providing for pupil diversity. But neither is sufficient without the other. This can be understood by considering the concept of SEN as a way of resolving conceptually the dilemma of identifying and providing for diversity. The tension arises from the existence of the negative social values placed on impairments and difficulties, on the one hand, and the scarcity of provision and difficulties in managing provision, on the other. Stigma and devaluation can be avoided by including pupils into the mainstream, but that runs into scarcity and management limitations. Of course, this is to put the tension in a stark and simple way, and there are in practice more and less effective ways of finding a balance. At present no final resolution to this dilemma is in view. This has, therefore, to be faced, digested and lived with. It means that a complex concept like SEN, despite its usefulness,

is problematic. It also means that the interpretation of the concept as ordinary provision not accommodating individual needs is only a part of the matter. This interpretation looks forward to special educational needs no longer existing at some future time when full diversity can be accommodated. However, for as long as, and to the extent that ordinary provision cannot accommodate, there will be the need for additional and different provision- there will be educational needs in the other sense. Children with Diverse Needs are unique individuals. Their uniqueness may be noticed in one or more the following dimensions: vision, hearing, movement, communication, perceptual-motor, social-emotional, intelligence and adaptive behavior. These children were previously regarded as children with diverse abilities (both children with giftedness and disability, disturbances and disadvantages).

Types of Children with Diverse Needs

Special needs children deviate from the normal children either in the positive direction or in the negative direction. Consequently, there are various types of special needs children.

They are:

- Children with hearing impairment;
- Children with visual handicap;
- Children with mental retardation;
- Children with learning disability;
- Children with speech handicap;
- Children with multiple handicaps;
- Children with orthopedic handicap;
- Children with emotional disturbance;
- Children with superior intellectual ability or gifted children;
- Children with creative talents;
- Children with social disadvantages and
- Children with delinquent tendencies.

Children with Hearing Handicap

The hearing handicapped children are those children who have a damaged hearing mechanism and face difficulty in speech and language development. There is loss of hearing. The degree of hearing loss is less in some children while it is more severe in others. The hearing handicapped children may be hard-of-hearing or deaf. The hard-of-hearing children are those children who have hearing loss but who can hear if spoken too loudly without a hearing aid. A hearing aid will enable them to hear better. The deaf are those who cannot hear even if spoken to very loudly. They require preparation in basic skills through special techniques before they are admitted in general schools. Hearing aids help them to become more functional.

Children with Visual Handicap

The visually handicapped children are those who have problems with vision. Some visually handicapped children can read large print and are functional in their environment whereas some have severe vision loss and cannot be taught through visual methods. The visual loss is measured with the help of Snellen Chart. Depending upon the degree of loss they may be partially sighted or blind. The partially sighted are those who require large print or magnified print materials. Their visual acuity (sharpness of visual image) is very low (20/70 in the better eye). This means that the child can see at 20 ft.

distance what a normal child sees at 70 ft. distance. Their eye-sight may be weak due to short sightedness, long- sightedness, astigmatism, glaucoma or muscle detachment. The blind is those who need to be taught through Braille or through aural method. Their visual acuity (sharpness of visual image) may fall at 2/200.

Children with Mental Retardation

Mentally retarded children are those who have a lower level of intellectual functioning and have problems in social adaptability. There are various degrees of mental handicap. Consequently, there are various categories of mentally handicapped children- the Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR), the Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) and the Custodial Mentally Retarded (CMR). The educable mentally retarded are those who have minimum educational retardation in school subjects. Such children have problems of social adjustment but are usually not recognized as mentally retarded at the pre-school level. They need repetition of instruction. The adaptive behaviors of such children should be observed carefully by the teachers so that they can be identified in the early stages. The trainable mentally retarded can be trained in vocational areas. They are poor in adaptive behavior and may need training in daily living skills at the initial levels.

Children with Learning Disability

These children are like other children in intellectual functioning. They are not mentally retarded, nor do they have visual or hearing problems. But they have problems in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, listening, and comprehension. Their problems may be due to cerebral dysfunction/emotional/behavioral disturbance, but it is not due to mental retardation, sensory handicap or instructional practices. Depending upon the degree of disability such children may be categorized into mild learning disabled and severe learning disabilities. Such children have a severe discrepancy between their achievement and intellectual ability. Such children may have the following specific problems:

- Reading disability;
- Writing disability;
- Problems in comprehension and communication and
- Problems with numerical ability.

Children with Speech Handicap

Speech handicap refers to minor and major speech and language problems. There are children with mild language and speech disorders in our classrooms, and they often go unnoticed. While speaking and writing they tend to omit, distort, add or substitute words, phrases, letters of the alphabet, etc. They stammer and are quiet or have long gaps in speaking full sentences. Their major types of speech disorders are:

- Voice disorders,
- Articulation or pronunciation disorders and
- Fluency disorders

Children with Orthopedic Handicap

Some children have orthopedic handicap or locomotor handicap. Locomotor handicap refers to problems with the functioning of bones, joints, and muscles. In some cases, the problems are so severe that they require artificial limbs to compensate for their crippling conditions. In other cases, they need wheel-chair or crutches.

Children with Multiple Handicaps

Multiple handicaps refer to more than one handicap in the child. A child may be blind and deaf, blind and orthopedically handicapped, deaf and orthopedically handicapped, mentally retarded and orthopedically handicapped and so on. In case of multiple handicaps, one handicap may be primary handicap and the other secondary or one handicap may be more severe than the other handicaps. It is, therefore, important to identify the primary handicap and take measures accordingly.

Children with Emotional Disturbance

Children with emotional disturbance are very often considered as problem children in the school. An emotionally disturbed child has certain inner tension which create anxiety, frustration, fears and impulsive behavior. Such a child may find excuses for his inner tensions in some physical difficulty. An emotionally disturbed child may attempt to solve the anxiety by behaving in a premature or childish way, becoming aggressive towards other people, or withdrawing himself to the world of fantasy.

Gifted Children

Gifted children are in some way superior in intellectual ability to other children of the same age. Gifted children are those who have demonstrated high ability (including high intelligence), high creativity and the high task commitment-a high level of motivation and the ability to see a project through to its conclusion. A variety of terms have been used to describe individuals who are superior in some way such as talented, creative, genius, and precocious (remarkably early development in particular areas like language, music, mathematical ability).

Children with Creative Talents

In a school, teachers may come across a few students who have the ability to produce something new-a composition, a system of ideas or a material or a process which is essentially new or novel, and previously unknown to them. Such children behave differently. They are courageous in their convictions. They have independent thinking and adjustment. They become absorbed and preoccupied in what they are doing. They are curious. They take risks. They are flexible in their opinions. They are intellectually self-confident.

Socially Disadvantaged Children

Most teachers encounter a group of children in their classroom who appear lifeless, incurious, and deceptively unintelligent. They show lack of interest, involvement, and motivation for academic success. They show general academic underachievement. The cumulative deficiencies in learning ultimately lead to their wastage and stagnation. These children are socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged. School readiness programme in pre-school centers, enriched experiences, and remedial instruction are very useful for them.

Delinquent Children

In school teachers come across some children who violate school norms. They are defiant of social standards. They are involved in anti-social activities or criminal activities which are punishable under law. If such children are in the age-group of 12 to 18, their anti-social activities are serious in nature and occur very frequently they are considered as delinquents.

Conclusion

Concludingly, we can say that there are various types of children with diverse needs. From the historical perspective, it is evident that inclusive education is the only solution

to provide them equal opportunities with children without diverse needs. Government should take measures to improve the education of children with diverse needs by providing them instructional materials and aids and equipment's in the inclusive school. Administrator should visit schools regularly and should provide financial support for the education of special needs children. Lack of parental support is one of the main causes of failure of children with diverse needs in government schools. They should encourage, help and involve in the education their children. Teachers play an important role for the upbringing of children especially children with diverse needs. They should provide healthy environment, should take personal care of children with diverse needs, and should teach them according to their needs in the school to boost the academic success of children with diverse needs. Government should plan adequate strategies to promote the benefits of inclusive education in government schools.

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