

Primary Education System in Bihar (India)

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Abstract : In this paper we examine the primary education system in Bihar. Education has been one of the most fundamental and common mode of intervention aimed at promoting human development since ages. Primary Education is the most important stage in school education for being the most formative period of a child's life. Primary education is the foremost and basic right of every child. To ensure the accessibility to all children is not only the duty of government but also of parents. The main objective of the primary education is to bring awareness among the children, opens avenues of opportunities along with self-development and reduces inter-generational poverty. It is the first step in the making of welfare and society. Primary education is an out-and-out pre-requisite for continuous development.

Keywords— *Primary Education, Bihar, Basic right, Continuous development.*

1. Introduction

Primary education in Bihar is defined as the education from classes I to VIII and roughly covers children from the age of 5 to 14 years. Primary education is further divided into two stages: primary and upper primary education. Primary education lasts up to class V and covers children in the age group of 5-11 years. Upper primary covers the classes from standard VI to VIII and includes children in the age group of 11-14 years. While this is the national and Bihar picture, there are minor variations in some states. Some have primary schooling up to class IV only, while a few have upper primary up to class VII only. However in our study, we have taken primary education from class I to VIII covering children in the 6-14 age group. Primary education is taken from class I to V and upper primary from class VI to VIII covering children in the age-group 6-11 and 11-14 respectively. The present study is mainly confined to children, who are attending or not attending Primary school in the age-group of 5-14 years.

2. A Brief Profile of Bihar

According to Census 2011, Bihar has a population of 104 million, making it the third most populous state in India. Almost 88.7 percent of Bihar's population resides in rural areas. Bihar has a child population of 19.13 million in the 0-6 years age group, the second highest child population among all Indian states and accounting for 12 percent of the total child population of India in this age group. Almost 46 percent of Bihar's population is aged less than 18 years. Bihar is one of the poorest states in India with nearly 33.7 percent of the population living in poverty. The agricultural sector is the mainstay of the state's economy with 90 percent of the population dependent on it; however its contribution to the state's Gross State Domestic Product is only 20 percent. Poor infrastructure is a major bottleneck in terms of development. Challenges of equity are huge in the state due to a caste-ridden society, feudalistic societal structure and complex social stratification. According to UNDP data Bihar is amongst the lowest ranking states in terms of Human Development Indicators (HDI).

Bihar is one of the poorest states in India. It is third most populous state of the country and almost 46 percent of its population is less than 18 years. It is amongst the lowest ranking states in terms of Human Development Indicators (HDI). Despite its many challenges, there has been progress in development in Bihar in recent years. Bihar's performance in Net Enrolment Ratio has reached 93.77% at the primary level and 87.63% at upper primary level. Enrolment figure is still low at secondary and senior secondary levels. Common children living in villages and small towns who constitute nearly ninety percent of Bihar's population generally study in public schools (government run schools).

Despite its many challenges, there has been progress in development in Bihar in recent years. The percentage share of social services in total expenditure has grown from 33.44 percent to 35.31 percent, almost at par with national average of 35.62 percent. Improved governance over the past seven-eight years has led to better health care services, greater emphasis on education, better management of social sector programs and a reduction in crime and corruption (State Information/UNICEF)

3. School Management in Bihar Since 1990s

Since the early 1990s School Based Management (SBM) has gained increasing popularity as a strategy for improving responsiveness and accountability in the delivery of education services. As a form of decentralization, the School Based Management (SBM) approach involves the transfer of decision making authority over school operations. The involvement of community members in school functioning has been institutionalized under the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009. Under the RTE, School Management Committee (SMC) is required to be constituted in every government owned/run elementary school in the country. It is primarily consisted of parents/guardians of the children. SMC is empowered with the responsibility of monitoring school functioning and managing its finances.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts created a paradigm shift in governance paving the way for the participation of local communities and institutions in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of government programs including those in education. These amendments led to the statutory status to local self governments. These Amendment Acts identified 29 subjects to be transferred to local self governments which also included school education. The institutionalized statutory space provided by the 73rd and the 74th amendment acts make mechanisms like Community Based Monitoring (CBM) key factors in facilitating movement from “top-down” methods to participatory processes for local engagement in effective governance of government schools. A large number of non-governmental elementary and secondary schools were running in Bihar before 1970s. These schools were managed by their own management committees. In 1976 these primary schools were taken over by the government (retrospectively from 1971) and in 1981 these secondary schools were taken over by the government. After the take-over, they came under the management of the government. The Acts by which these schools were taken over also contained provisions for their management. Subsequently, various changes were made in these Acts, through notifications.

Bihar Primary Education Scenario as per DISE Data

During the year 2014-15 under the DISE, information from as many as 53,884 schools imparting elementary education across 38 districts, 101 subdivisions and 534 CD blocks of Bihar was collected. Out of these schools 850 schools (1.6%) were private recognized ones and the remaining 53,034 schools were government schools (98.4%). Regarding the location of the schools, it was seen that about 94.8% schools in Bihar are located in the rural areas. This means that the majority of schools imparting elementary education are operating in the rural areas.

Table 1.2
Distribution of Schools in Bihar by Location

	Government Schools	Private Schools	Total
All	53034	850	53884
Located in Rural Area	50464 (95.15%)	627 (73.7%)	51091 (94.8%)

Source : Analytical Report, DISE 2014-15, NUEPA

Category-wise distribution of schools reveals that majority of the schools (94.28 percent) are independent primary schools. The increase in the number of schools is also reflected in the ratio of primary to upper primary schools/sections, which clearly shows the impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan under which a large number of schools have been opened in the recent past. This ratio (for all India level) for the year 2016-17 is one upper primary school/section for every set of 2.45 primary schools/sections compared to 2.57 in 2015-16 and 2.68 schools/sections in 2004-05. However in Bihar the ratio is quite high i.e. 3.61 as a result it still needs to be improved.

The distribution of schools by types of building shows that 68.96 percent primary schools have pucca (permanent) buildings as compared to 4.68 percent having partially pucca and another 0.78 percent having Kuchcha (temporary) buildings. In fact small percentages are also unctioning in a tent (0.04%). Efforts should be made to provide all schools a pucca school building. The percentage of singe-classroom schools during 2016-17 was 8.61 percent. This number of single classroom schools in absolute terms is significant, which needs intervention without delay.

Facility Indicators

Availability of basic facilities in schools not only attracts more children to schools but also help in improving retention rate. More than 90 percent schools had drinking water facility available in 2016-17 compared to 87.7 percent in 2015-16. Like drinking water facility, more schools now have common toilets and separate toilets for girls. About 47 percent schools had common toilets in schools in 2016-17, compared to 35 percent schools in 2015-16 and 16 percent schools in 2016-17 had separate toilet for girls compared to only 12 percent in 2014-15.

During the period 2016-17, a small percentage of schools in Bihar were also having computers (2.62%). The percentage of primary schools with computers is 2.16 percentage compared to 2.86 percent in case of independent upper primary schools. The percentage of schools with ramps increased significantly from 12 percent in 2015-16 to 17 percent in 2016-17; this may help in attracting more physically challenged children to schools. Together with enrolment by nature of disability, DISE is perhaps the only source that provides comprehensive information about physically challenged children in schools. In 2016-17, about 1,04,319 disabled children were enrolled in elementary classes across the state of Bihar, of which 89,831 were in primary and 1,44,88 were in upper primary classes.

Providing nutritious food to all children under the mid-day meal scheme is one of the ambitious programmes of the government. For the first time, a variable on availability of kitchen-shed in school was added to DISE during 2016-17. It reveals that about 8 percent of schools managed by the government and aided schools have kitchen shed in the school. During the year 2015-16, about 83 percent schools received school development grants and out of them about 82 percent also utilized these grants. About 69 percent schools received Teaching Learning Material (TLM) grant durnig 2015-16. About 89 percent of them utilized the teaching learning material grant. The GER at primary level, for all India level is estimated to be 110.86 percent, corresponding to 92.75 percent NER. The GER at primary level for Bihar based on the DISE data is estimated to be 105.86 percent, corresponding to 99.5 percent NER. GER at upper primary level as per DISE data is estimated to be 36 percent, corresponding to about 33 percent NER at this level.

Table 1.2
Bihar Vis-a-Vis All India School Indicators

Sl.No.	Indicators	Primary Schools		All Schools	
		Bihar	India	Bihar	India
1.	% Single Classroom Schools	11.51	13.79	8.61	9.71
2.	% Single Teacher Schools	6.79	15.90	5.12	11.76
3.	% Schools with pre-primary sections	8.72	26.69	9.45	24.22

4.	%Schools with Common Toilet	38.88	53.75	46.73	58.13
5.	% Schools with Girl's Toilet	10.28	34.06	16.21	42.58
6.	% Student in schools having electricity connection	1.60	21.39	3.60	33.23
7.	% Govt. Management Schools having drinking water facility	88.35	82.19	90.13	83.93
8.	Pvt. Management Schools having drinking water facility	97.18	84.31	95.29	89.64
9.	% Schools with having ramps	15.52	25.82	17.74	26.61
10.	% Schools with PTR \geq 100	16.35	5.21	17.17	4.94
11.	% of Primary Schools Established since 1994	12.44	33.20	9.08	31.94
12.	% Enrolment in Government schools	99.33	87.43	98.66	78.56
13.	Student-Classroom Ratio (SCR)	92	40	91	36
14.	% Schools having playground	26.86	45.89	35.57	52.48
15.	% Girls Enrolment (Primary)	45.89	48.09	45.17	47.67
16.	% Girls Enrolment (Upper Primary)	41.66	46.51	45.17	47.67
17.	% SC enrolment	17.62	20.11	16.85	19.87
18.	% SC Girls to SC Enrolment	43.72	48.01	43.02	47.53
19.	% ST Enrolment	1.82	11.36	1.69	10.69
20.	% ST Girls to ST Enrolment	45.76	47.98	45.35	47.24
21.	% of enrolment in schools with SCR ratio \geq 60	77.99	36.42	81.37	31.33
22.	% Female Teachers	28.41	40.89	27.91	41.86
23.	Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	62	39	64	34
24.	Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.85	0.93	0.82	0.91

Source : Analytical Report, DISE, 2016-17, NUEPA

Gender Parity Index (GPI) and percentage of girls' enrolment in primary and upper primary classes reveal that there is consistent improvement both in GPI and girls' share in enrolment. The average of 609 districts in 2016-17 indicates a GPI of 0.93 in primary classes and 0.87 in case of upper primary classes. In 2014-15, GPI respectively in primary and upper primary enrolment was 0.91 and 0.83. GPI in primary enrolment indicates that the index is above 0.90 in 28 states. The overall gender parity index for India in the year 2016-17 is 0.93. In Bihar for the year 2016-17 the gender parity index is 0.82. The improvement in girls' enrolment is also reflected in girls share to total enrolment. In primary classes, the share of girls' enrolment in 2016-17 was 48.6 percent compared to 45 percent in the previous year. Girls share in total enrolment at upper primary level is 40.3 percent, it was 35 percent in 2015-16. At the primary level, the share of SC and ST enrolment with respect to total enrolment works out to 17.6 and 13.1 percent respectively. OBC enrolment in the primary and upper primary classes is 59.4 and 58.4 percent respectively.

As a result of concerted efforts over a period of time, the student-classroom ratio for all India level has shown improvement. On an average about 40 students are sitting in one classroom in primary schools. However, in case of primary schools, the student-classroom ratio in Bihar (91) is still very high. Increase in the number of teachers is also reflected in the pupil-teacher ratio which has shown consistent improvement PTR (for all India level) both at primary and upper primary levels, is quite comfortable (Primary, 39.1 and upper primary 29.1) and is below 10.1. At upper primary level, Bihar reported a high PTR of 62:1 at primary as well as upper primary Level.

With improvement in the number of schools, facilities in schools and enrolment, the dropout rate for cohort 2015-16 indicates an average drop-rate of 8.61 percent in primary grades against 9.96 percent during the previous cohort (for all India). However, Bihar with a dropout rate of 9.34 percent seems to be far away from the goal of universal retention at primary level. Preliminary analysis of data suggests that there are about 40 districts in the country which have 25 percent or more muslim students in primary classes. In Bihar 8.9% students at the primary level and 6.6% at the upper primary level are muslims.

Educational Development Index

Based on the DISE data, an effort has been made to compute Educational Development Index (EDI) separately for primary and upper primary levels of education as also the composite index for the entire elementary education. The EDIs can play a significant role in assessing progress towards UEE as well as in deciding the future course of investment on elementary education. About 23 indicators were used which were further re-grouped into four sub-groups, namely access, infrastructure, teachers and outcome indicators. The major findings of EDI showed that the Bihar ranked at 35 in case of composite primary and upper primary levels of education with an EDI as low as 0.321 which is much lower than the same compared to the top ranked states. Bihar had lower EDI values in 2016-17 than 2015-16 which is by and large (barring upper primary) true for both primary and composite primary and upper primary level.

Teachers

Number of teachers in Bihar 2013–2014	
Primary only	134,300
Primary with upper primary	256,857
Primary with upper primary and secondary and high secondary	6,973
Upper primary only	2,318
Upper primary with secondary and high secondary	1,214
Primary with upper primary and secondary	5,208
Upper primary with secondary	1,910
Secondary only	15,041
Secondary with higher secondary	20,395
Higher secondary	5,208
Total	460,275

Bihar is often referred to as a center of art and learning and hence Bihar has several famous schools which act as important seats of learning. The schools of Bihar are known for its patronage of art that has helped in discovering several artistes and thereby gifted several talented brains to the country. The students of these schools definitely have an edge over their counterparts in the other states of India. Government, Private, Government Aided, Anglo Indian Schools, Matriculation Schools, ICSE Board Schools, CBSE Schools, Play Schools, Bihar State Board Schools, Residential Schools, Boarding Schools, International Schools, Montessori Schools, Language Schools, Primary & Nursery, Kids Schools, Rural Schools, Urban Schools, Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools.

4. PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BIHAR

In this section, we discuss the political, Organizational, and Social Contexts of problems related to Primary Education Systems in Bihar.

Schools are systems and subsystems of individuals who collectively conduct the business of schooling. Classrooms are not entities separate of the school; they do not operate independent of the larger

school contexts as several factors, both inside and outside the school, can influence the dynamics of classroom teaching in a given school.

Political Context of Teachers' Work in Primary Education

For understanding the political context of primary school teachers' work, their employment policies and training programs operational in Bihar since the year 2002 were analyzed. For achieving this objective, data was obtained from several important documents related to the primary school teachers' employment policies and their training programs operational in the state. The analyses were done keeping in view the techniques of policy-analysis. The understanding developed about the intricacies of the teacher employment policies and teacher training programs operational in the state since last thirteen years is presented in the following sections.

Teachers' Employment Policies

Since the aim of the first objective was to analyze the primary school teachers' employment policies operational in Bihar since 2002, an analysis of the original documents related to the practices of teacher employment at elementary level before 2001 was not made. Information about past practices of teacher employment was obtained from an analysis of the official reports, such as the Report of the Common School System Commission of Bihar (2007), which have references about the past practices of such employments and the work of Manisha Priyam (2011) on the subject.

Past Practices of Teachers' Employment

Prior to 1976, all primary, middle and secondary schools of Bihar were run and managed by the local community. The State Government took over the control of all primary and middle schools in 1976 and that of the secondary schools in 1980 (GOB, 2007). Since then, elementary school teachers in Bihar have been recruited on regular government payrolls and service conditions comparable to the state employees of other departments. This practice remained in place for around 17 years, though recruitments were not done every year and the demand for teachers kept increasing. The recruitments were then made at the district level and the *panchayats* were not involved in the recruitment process. In the absence of a clear recruitment policy, candidate's academic qualifications (having 10 or 12 years of schooling) and professional training (a pre-service degree or diploma) was relied upon by the concerned district authorities and a district level-panel of eligible candidates was prepared in which priority was given to the year in which a prospective teacher candidate completed her professional training. Whenever a vacancy arose, teachers were simply absorbed from the respective district level panels (Priyam, 2011).

The criteria for selection was 'merit', that is, the percentage of marks obtained in the matriculation examination and the diploma or degree in pre-service teacher training. They were appointed as employees of the State Government at regular pay scales and service conditions as other state employees. Most of the teachers employed at elementary level in the late seventies and eighties were untrained. The government made arrangements to provide teacher training to such teachers 'on-the-job'.

A policy decision to do away with the requirement of pre-service training as a requirement for becoming a school teacher was taken by the Government of Bihar in July 1993 (GoB, 2007; GoI 2013), the following year of the revised formulation of NPE-1986 and its Program of Action. This policy decision marks a drastic shift in the teacher employment policies of the State Government.

In the subsequent years elementary school teachers were recruited three times—in 1994, 1998, and 1999. While 25, 000 untrained primary teachers were recruited in 1994; 1, 000 trained teachers were recruited in 1998; and 14,000 primary teachers were recruited in 1999 through a centralized competitive examination conducted by Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC). The teachers appointed from 1994-99 were also appointed at regular pay scales like their senior counterparts and were deemed as the employees of the State government.

The '*Shiksha-Mitra Yojana*'

The origin of para-teachers in Bihar can be traced back to the State government's initiation of employing *Shiksha Mitras* from the year 2002. In a clear departure from the past practices of recruiting teachers on a regular pay-scale through competitive examinations, the elementary teachers' employment policy of 2002, popularly known as the *Shiksha Mitra Yojana*, initiated the appointment of primary and middle school teachers by the *panchayats* or municipalities on a *anubandh* (contract) of 11 months. These teachers, called *Panchayat Shiksha Mitras* (when the placement was done by the *panchayat*) and *Nagar Shiksha Mitras* (when employed by the municipalities) were to be given a fixed honorarium of 1500/- per month.

The Initiation of Teacher Employment on *Niyojan*

According to an estimate, nearly 100,000 teacher positions were vacant in Bihar by the year 2005–06, of which 90 percent of the vacancies were in primary schools alone (Priyam, 2011). Following a change in the political leadership in 2005, the State Government of Bihar took the decision of employing around 2.6 lakh teachers to teach at both elementary and secondary levels on *Niyojan* basis and stopped the employment of *Shiksha Mitras* on *anubandh* or contract. Thus, several aspects of the *Shiksha Mitra* recruitment scheme (2002-03) underwent considerable revision in 2006 as a clear set of employment rules, referred to as the *Shishak Niyojan Niyamawali-2006*, was formulated to specify the criteria and procedure for employments.

Niyojit Shikshak, according to the government of Bihar, is "the teacher employed in elementary, secondary, and higher secondary schools of the State according to *Niyojan Niyamawali—2006* and under the successive employment rules after that". Using the new rule book on elementary school teachers' employment—the *Niyojan Niyamawali-2006*—the State initiated the first major drive for employment of school teachers on *Niyojan* basis and a major chunk of local unemployed youth were recruited at all levels of school education including the elementary level.

General Features of Teacher Employment on *Niyojan*

The *Niyojan Niyamawali-2006* abolished the contractual nature of the job of *Shiksha Mitra* (2002-03) and changed the nomenclature of elementary school level para- teachers. The generic name for them was now *Prarambhik Shishak*, who were kept under two major categories:

- i) '*Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshak*': This category included the '*Prakhand Shikshaks*' (recruited at Block level, including the physical education teachers) and '*Panchayat Shikshaks*' (recruited at Gram Panchayat level); and
- ii) '*Nagar Prarambhik Shikshak*': This category consisted of two sub-categories—'*Nagar Shikshak*' (trained) and '*Nagar Shikshak*' (untrained).

According to the *Niyojan Niyamawali-2006*, the scheme of recruiting *Prarambhik Shikshaks* has been initiated to: mainstream out of school children, achieve UEE, make PTR 40:1, and transfer the responsibilities of primary education to the Panchayati Raj Institutions keeping in view their importance in primary education. Under this revised scheme, preference in recruitment was to be given to the trained candidates possessing an Intermediate or Higher Secondary Certificate. The trained teachers were to be recruited first. Thereafter, on the availability of vacant posts, untrained teachers could also be recruited and the arrangements would be made for their training. There was a provision for reservation of 50% of the seats for the women candidates and 3% of seats for the physically handicapped candidates. The honorarium of the *Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshaks* was raised under this scheme and they were to be given a fixed salary of Rs. 5000/- per month (for trained PSs) and Rs. 4000/- per month (for untrained PSs). An increment of Rs.500/- in case of trained teachers and Rs. 300/- in case of untrained *teachers* after three years (of their recruitment) on evaluation of their work was also proposed. The minimum age for recruitment was 18 years and the maximum age limit was 37 years. This scheme abolished the contractual nature of the job and the *Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshaks* recruited under this scheme could remain in their positions until they attain the age of 60 years—the age of retirement.

The Process of Niyojan

The state government makes available the number of vacancies to the *Panchayat Samitis* for the recruitment of *Prakhand Shikshaks* and to the *Gram Panchayats* for the recruitment of *Panchayat Shikshaks*. The notice of category wise vacant seats of the *Prakhand Shikshaks* and *Panchayat Shikshaks* is published by the *Panchayat Samitis* / *Gram Panchayats* for at least up to 15 days. Applications in the prescribed format for the post of *Prakhand Shikshaks* and *Panchayat Shikshaks* are received at the office of the Block Education Expansion Officer (B.E.E.O.) and the Secretary of the *Gram Panchayat*, respectively. As per the requirement of teachers, category-wise separate panels of trained and untrained candidates are prepared at both levels. Trained candidates are to be employed first. Thereafter, on the vacant positions, untrained individuals (except for the post of PET) would be employed. But in the preparation of Merit-List of untrained candidates, relevant weightage is to be given to the former *Shiksha Mitras* teaching in the *Lok Shikshan Kendras* run by the state in the past; instructors of the Non-Formal Education; and the staff having an experience of teaching in Bihar Education Project sponsored/managed *Prayas Kendra, Angna / Apna Vidyalaya, Baal Varga, and Alternative Education Centers*.

As per the '*Bihar Prarambhik Shikshak Niyojan Niyamawali -2006*', the 'Merit-Marks' is calculated by dividing the aggregate of the total marks obtained in Matric/Higher Secondary and 2 years' Diploma in Education/B. El. Ed., by 2. In case of the former *Shiksha Mitras*, instructors of the Non-Formal Education, and the staff of *Prayas Kendra, Angna/Apna Vidyalaya, Baal Varga, and Alternative Education Centers*, possessing a 1 year's experience, 20 marks is added in the 'Merit-Marks'. The panel of applicants is displayed after its completion. A week's period was given for expressing any type of objection. After the removal of the objections, the panel is given a final shape. The panel prepared for the recruitment of '*Prakhand Shikshaks*' and '*Panchayat Shikshaks*' is endorsed by the *Panchayat Samiti* and the *Gram Panchayat* respectively. Selected candidates are recruited in the schools of their choice from the panel prepared on the basis of 'merit' through counseling. In the placement of '*Prakhand Shikshaks*', care is taken that the graduate degree holder teachers are placed in middle schools only, out of which a minimum of two teachers should be science teachers. In the absence of graduate degree holder candidates Intermediate qualification holder science teachers are to be placed on the basis of preference. Appointment letters are sent to the selected candidates. The selected candidates are posted on the basis of the consent letters given by them. The teachers recruited as such would remain in their position up to a maximum age of 60 years. The post of *Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshaks* is non transferable, but the *Prakhand Shikshaks* can avail a maximum of 2 transfers during their service period.

5. Conclusion

Before 1970s most of the primary schools in Bihar were run by the community. These schools were managed by their own management committees. By 1981 all these schools were turned into public institutions and put under the management of the government. As a result these schools were gradually alienated from the community. Primary school enrollment in Bihar increased over the years largely due to various government programs like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* etc. With Primary Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) reaching 100.1 per cent and girls making up 48.2 per cent of the GER it is clear that many problems of access to schooling have been addressed. Improvements to infrastructure have been a priority to achieve this and India now has 1.4 million schools and 7.7 million teachers so that 98 percent of habitations have a primary school (class I-V) within one kilometer (District Information System for Education [DISE], 2014-15c; 2014-15d). Having achieved near-universal enrolment at the lower primary level, it is critical to turn the focus on the levels of learning outcomes achieved by children who complete five years of primary schooling and the factors responsible thereof.

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