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Balancing Teacher Supply Quality in Public Primary Schools in the Southern States of Somalia

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Abstract

Somalia is rebuilding its public education workforce after decades of conflict and institutional disruption while also seeking to professionalize teaching through the Somalia National Teacher Policy (SNTP) 2021. This study examined how teacher recruitment and deployment provisions affect teacher quality in public primary schools in Somalia's Southern States. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were obtained from 341 public primary school teachers and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Analysis of Variance and multiple regression. Qualitative evidence from headteachers and education officials, along with classroom observations and document review, explained the statistical findings. Recruitment and deployment practices collectively had a statistically significant effect on teacher quality, $F(4,336) = 38.134$, $p < .001$, and explained 31.2% of the variation in teacher quality ($R^2 = .312$). Teacher shortages were the strongest predictor ($\beta = .292$, $p < .001$), followed by deployment to schools ($\beta = .146$, $p = .033$) and transfers and postings ($\beta = .120$, $p = .047$). Recruitment process alone did not make a statistically significant independent contribution ($\beta = .103$, $p = .103$). Qualitative findings showed that recruitment procedures were becoming more formal and transparent, but the urgent need to expand the government teaching workforce led to recruiting some university graduates without professional teaching qualifications, followed by later pedagogical preparation. Schools also reported subject mismatches, delayed postings and persistent shortages in rural and internally displaced persons' schools. The study concludes that expanding the workforce is vital in fragile education systems, but improving teacher quality requires proper training, accurate staffing, and fair deployment based on subject needs.

Keywords: *Teacher recruitment; teacher deployment; teacher quality; teacher policy; professional standards; fragile education system; Somalia*

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1. Introduction

Teacher quality is a key factor in an educational system's performance and includes professional knowledge, teaching skills, professional ethics, and professional development (UNESCO, 2024). This research focuses on four elements of teacher quality: qualifications, competence, motivation, and professional accountability. Therefore, teacher quality relates not only to academic qualifications but also to teachers' competencies, professionalism, and professional behavior. The Somalia National Teacher Policy (SNTP) covers these aspects of teacher quality through recruitment and placement, training, pay, certification, and professional behavior.

Recruitment and placement affect both who is recruited to teach and how teachers are allocated to schools. Recruitment may determine who enters the profession, but placement may determine where teachers work and whether teachers' capabilities match community needs (Darling-Hammond, 2017). UNESCO (2024) identifies insufficient numbers of teachers and poor allocation as persistent challenges to ensuring quality education. When sufficient professional teachers are available, recruitment can focus more on qualifications and subject specialties. Fragile systems may struggle to recruit more teachers when few professionals are available.

This is evident in Somalia. Conflict has disrupted education management and fragmented service delivery. However, re-establishing federal governance helped ensure that national education systems could be rebuilt (MoECHE, 2022). The Federal Government sets national policies and standards, while the Federal Member States manage schools and education staff (MoECHE, 2022).

With the restoration of national education institutions, MoECHE has initiated reforms to improve education management (MoECHE, 2022). The Somalia National Teacher Policy, passed in 2021, sets out guidelines on teacher preparation, recruitment, deployment, registration, payment, and conduct (MoECHE, 2021). This policy entails identifying staffing deficiencies at the school, district, and state levels while encouraging transparent recruitment and deployment based on enrolment and geographical considerations, among other aspects (MoECHE, 2021).

However, many labor market problems remain. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education's Annual Education Statistics Book 2024, the share of qualified primary school teachers rose from 34% in 2021–2022 to 62.5% in 2024, driven by the government's recruitment process. At the same time, the Joint Review of the Education Sector found that qualified pupil-to-teacher ratios varied across regions: 80 nationally, 154 in Southwest, and 106 in Jubaland (MoECHE, 2024). The problem is not only quantitative but also geographical.

Government recruitment has therefore become central to rebuilding the public education workforce. MoECHE (2024) documents ongoing efforts to increase the number of qualified teachers, while interviews in this study indicated that the government recruited approximately 6,000 teachers between 2023 and 2025. These efforts have increased the presence of government-supported teachers in schools, but they also expose a policy dilemma. To fill large numbers of vacancies, recruitment may include university graduates who do not yet hold professional teaching qualifications or whose academic specialization does not match the subjects they are later asked to teach. In such cases, pedagogical preparation may occur after recruitment.

However, the central question is not whether Somalia's teacher shortage calls for increasing its number, since it obviously does; rather, it is how to increase the number of teachers without compromising their professionalism and suitability for the areas where they are most needed. This research focuses on the impact of SNTP recruitment policies on teacher quality in public primary schools in Southern Somalia.

1.1 Problem Statement

An effective teacher-management system recruits qualified individuals and assigns them according to enrolment, subject needs, and location. Transparent, evidence-based recruitment and deployment, supported by professional training, help schools secure teachers with the skills needed for effective teaching and learning.

In Somalia, however, the proportion of qualified primary teachers increased to 62.5% in 2024; major differences remain in the distribution of qualified teachers, with qualified pupil-teacher ratios reported at 154 in Southwest and 106 in Jubaland compared with a national average of 80 (MoECHE, 2024). Schools also continue to face shortages, rural-urban disparities and difficulties matching teachers' professional and subject qualifications to actual school needs. Rapid government recruitment is therefore occurring in a context where the available pool of professionally trained teachers remains limited.

Without empirical evidence on how SNTP recruitment and deployment provisions affect teacher quality, policy-makers may continue to increase teacher numbers without knowing whether recruitment standards, shortage identification, and deployment and posting practices are producing the intended quality gains. Existing studies provide evidence from other education systems, but little is known about these relationships in Somalia's fragile and decentralized context. This study therefore examined the effect of the SNTP's teacher recruitment and deployment provisions on teacher quality in public primary schools in Somalia's Southern States.

1.2 Research Objective and Hypothesis

The objective was to establish the effect of the Somalia National Teacher Policy's teacher recruitment and deployment provisions on teacher quality in public primary schools in Somalia's Southern States.

H_{01}: Teacher recruitment and deployment practices have no significant effect on teacher quality in public primary schools in Somalia's Southern States.

1.3 Significance of the study

Teacher quality entails many aspects. This study considers qualifications, competence, motivation, and professional accountability. Teacher qualification refers to the academic and professional preparation required to become a teacher. Competence has been regarded as the process of delivering content, pedagogy, classroom management and responsiveness of learners. Teacher motivation has been defined as dedication, job satisfaction, and a desire to develop, and professional accountability as ethics and accountability for learners' outcomes.

This study provides information for the federal and state education authorities on the link between recruitment, workforce planning, deployment and teacher quality. The results can help increase the teaching workforce, provided there is a correlation between the number of teachers, professional preparation and specialization in particular subjects, and staffing requirements. They can also help development partners working on teacher education and

workforce reform, considering training investments and the characteristics of recruited and deployed teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Quality and Teacher Workforce Policy

Quality of teachers entails several attributes. This study defines it in terms of qualifications, competence, motivation, and professional accountability. Qualification, in this case, refers to the education and professional preparation that prepare teachers for their classroom roles. Competence, on the other hand, entails the capacity to communicate subject content effectively, use appropriate teaching methodologies, manage the class, and meet learners' needs. Motivation involves teachers' commitment to the profession and their readiness for professional development. Professional accountability, on the other hand, entails teachers' adherence to ethics and readiness to be accountable for learners' learning achievements. Teacher policies may influence these attributes through teacher recruitment and professional development.

Recruitment and deployment are important starting points in this policy-making process. While recruitment refers to selecting candidates to enter teaching, deployment refers to assigning teachers to specific places (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This means that even having enough teachers will not ensure quality education when some recruits are professionally unprepared or when good teachers are poorly deployed across schools and regions. On the other hand, proper recruitment and evidence-based deployment can help ensure professional standards and allocate teachers effectively according to curricular and learner needs.

2.2 Recruitment, Professional Entry Standards and Teacher Quality

Research shows that recruitment is important, but its impact depends heavily on the profession's overall context. Rusang, Valery, and Shalanyuy (2025), in their study of private secondary schools in Yaoundé II Municipality, found that recruitment deficiencies negatively affected teachers' productivity. These problems include political influence, corrupt practices, and a lack of resources. The results show that recruitment transparency should be ensured. Nevertheless, the current study approaches the issue differently by examining recruitment in the context of Somalia's national teacher policy and its connection to teacher quality in public primary schools.

Wamisho (2021) examined the recruitment, professional development, and retention of teacher educators in Ethiopia. The research showed that policy has focused heavily on recruitment, and that recruitment was also conducted in line with policy. Career progression issues and salary increments made retention difficult. This indicates that compliance with the recruitment process alone will not help to solve the broader issue of teacher workforce problems. This study follows the same line of thinking but examines public primary schools in a fragile context, where maintaining professional entry requirements is accompanied by severe teacher shortages.

According to Tan and Low (2023), Singapore takes a different approach, where teacher recruitment is treated as a national issue and linked to continuing professional development. The Singapore example shows how a sufficient supply of teachers, selective recruitment, and a link between entry and professional development could work. However, this approach cannot be directly transferred to Somalia because of differences in institutions and economic context.

Unlike Singapore, Somalia faces the challenge of both building its teaching staff and establishing professional standards for entry into the profession.

More extensive international research on teacher recruitment and retention suggests that effective recruitment approaches should be tied to working conditions, retention efforts, and career paths (See et al., 2020). Thus, in Somalia, recruitment cannot be separated from what happens once recruited candidates enter their careers. When recruits have not received their qualifications through teacher education, they need a clear path to become professional teachers.

2.3 Deployment, Staffing Needs and Geographic Equity

Teacher deployment plays an important role in allocating available teachers based on schools' staffing needs. According to Otieno (2024), a study of public junior secondary schools in Kenya found that delays in posting teachers and unequal posting in rural and urban areas hindered effective curriculum delivery. Somalia faces similar challenges, with posting delays and geographical differences in teacher placement. However, Somalia faces other challenges, including insecurity, internally displaced persons, poor infrastructure, and a lack of skilled teachers in remote areas.

Studies from Sierra Leone show that teacher allocation depends on teachers' preferences and on how attractive each location is deemed (McBurnie et al., 2022). This implies that simply increasing the number of teachers would not ensure sufficient personnel are available for each school.

SNTP addresses these issues through needs-based teacher placement. This means school, district, and state structures determine teacher shortages, and placement considers student numbers, geographic disparities, and specialized subjects. As such, the policy involves a connected process in which teacher needs are established, hiring aligns with those needs, and teachers are then assigned to schools with shortages. If any step in this process is weak, the system may have many teachers but still face school shortages.

This problem is an empirical void in Somalia. Previous research in well-structured educational systems provides valuable information on recruitment and deployment, but it may not fully capture the reality in a context with a developing governmental structure, decentralized teacher management, and community involvement in some schools to assist teachers. This study will analyze the connection between SNTP recruitment and deployment policies and teacher quality, while also using qualitative data to assess how these policies are implemented.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The research is grounded in Christopher Day's theory of Teacher Professionalism. In this research, Christopher Day's approach is viewed from the following perspectives: cognitive, affective, and ethical or social. The cognitive perspective focuses on teachers' subject-matter competence and teaching methodologies; the affective perspective links to professional identity, commitment, and well-being; and the ethical perspective stresses the moral aims of teaching and teachers' obligations to students and communities. These perspectives depend on the circumstances in which teachers work.

For recruitment and deployment, the cognitive aspect matters most. Recruitment refers to who qualifies to join the teaching profession, while deployment ensures that teachers' skills and knowledge match the needs of the subject, school, and learners. If recruitment criteria do not sufficiently account for professional preparation or subject-matter expertise, more teachers

would not automatically lead to better teacher quality. In addition, Day's model indicates that professionalism is achieved through supportive structures and environments, rather than individuals working alone toward it. This is particularly applicable to Somalia, where teachers work in difficult situations and education policies vary by region.

The theory thus provides a strong basis for analyzing recruitment and placement not only as bureaucratic processes, but also as processes that affect professional entry, preparedness, identity, and teachers' ability to apply acquired knowledge in practice. In this paper, the SNTP is regarded as a policy tool through which the education system seeks to influence the environment of teacher professionalism.

3. Methodology

The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design in a non-experimental context. Initially, the study collected and analyzed quantitative data to identify the connection between the recruitment and deployment process and teachers' effectiveness. Later, the study collected qualitative data to explain the findings from the previous phase and show how the recruitment and deployment process was implemented in schools. This sequential implementation allowed the study to examine the relationship and its formation process.

The study involved public primary schools in Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Southwest State and Banadir Regional Administration of Somalia. These regions are part of Somalia's federal education system and include schools in urban and rural areas, inaccessible areas, and IDP-serving locations. The study included 70 public primary schools randomly selected from 35 districts. The teacher sample consisted of 4,038 public primary school teachers. From the total teacher population, the study randomly sampled 364 teachers using proportionate stratified random sampling. Of the 364 sampled teachers, 341 responded to the survey questionnaires, for a 93.7% response rate. The study purposively sampled headteachers and education administrators because they directly manage teachers and implement education policies.

The researcher gathered quantitative data using a survey administered to teachers. The survey included twenty questions across four topics: recruitment, identification of teacher shortages, deployment to schools, and transfers and postings. Besides, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with head teachers and senior education officers. Interviewees discussed issues related to the recruitment process, needs identification, matching teachers to specific subjects, delays in posting, and discrepancies between policy requirements and reality. The study also included classroom observations and document analysis to describe the situation in schools.

Quantitative data were described using means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between each recruitment and deployment dimension and teacher quality. Multiple regression analysis assessed the effect of each dimension while controlling for other variables, and ANOVA evaluated the overall regression model. In addition, this study examined multicollinearity using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. Tolerance values ranged from 0.441 to 0.569, and VIF values ranged from 1.756 to 2.265. Thus, the results showed no problems with the predictor variables, and regression analysis could be conducted. The interview data and other qualitative data were analyzed thematically and combined with quantitative data in order to interpret the results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teacher Workforce Context

The demographics of the teaching staff also help explain observations on recruitment and deployment. Most respondents were young, with 64.5% aged 25 to 34 years, while 15.2% were younger than 25. Despite their relatively young age, many teachers had considerable experience, with an average of 13.94 years of teaching. Regarding their time in the current school, 51.9% had worked there for one to three years, while 24.1% had stayed for more than six years. The high proportion of teachers with relatively short tenure in their current schools may reflect recent government recruitment and posting activities and suggests significant changes in the teaching workforce's composition.

4.2 Descriptive Findings on Recruitment and Deployment

Teachers generally viewed the four recruitment and deployment areas positively, although agreement varied across dimensions. The teacher recruitment process received the highest mean score (M = 3.80, SD = 0.75), followed by deployment to schools (M = 3.61, SD = 0.74). Transfer and postings had a mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.79), while identifying teacher shortages also had a mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.70).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for teacher recruitment and deployment

Dimension	N	Mean	SD
Teacher recruitment process	341	3.80	0.751
Identification of teacher shortages	341	3.55	0.703
Deployment to schools	341	3.61	0.740
Transfer and postings	341	3.55	0.790

4.3 Formalization of Recruitment and the Professional Qualification Dilemma

The recruitment process had the highest descriptive rating among the four areas examined. Teachers and headteachers generally felt that government recruitment had become more organized and formal. Positions were advertised, interviews were conducted, and academic qualifications were reviewed prior to making an appointment. These actions indicate an emerging trend toward an open recruitment process for recruiting teachers.

However, the interviews revealed an issue not captured in the quantitative data. Some headteachers suggested that a university degree might sometimes matter more than a teaching certificate and the specialization needed at a certain school. According to one headteacher, any bachelor's degree holder could begin the recruitment process and later receive pedagogical training. This approach fits within the broader context of Somalia's education system, which is recovering from years of war and suffers from a teacher shortage.

The Director General (DG) for Basic Education in the Federal Government of Somalia's Ministry of Education also gave similar accounts. The DG said the country still faced the challenge of having very few professionally prepared teachers. He added that many graduates

were recruited before joining teachers' training colleges and in-service training courses. According to the DG, some 6,000 teachers were recruited from across the country from 2023 to 2025. This indicates one of the major challenges identified in this study: recruiting teachers promptly to fill vacant posts.

This does not, however, mean graduates without education degrees can be automatically excluded from recruitment, because they can form a significant pool of recruits given the lack of teachers. The concern is what to do once they have been recruited. A proper program must equip them with appropriate pedagogic training and induction.

4.4 Identification of Teacher Shortages and Workforce Planning

Teacher shortages – identification was scored an average of 3.55 (SD = 0.70). Most teachers felt that methods were in place to detect staff shortages, and responses were relatively uniform across all states involved in the survey. Interviews with Directors General from the State Ministries of Education showed that the process generally starts at the school level. Headteachers identify and report their staffing needs to District Education Officers, who compile the information and submit it to the state level. The Federal Ministry of Education then receives the consolidated staffing requirements.

The bigger challenge emerged once staffing needs were identified. The DGs explained that recent groups of recruited teachers were allocated partly according to state quotas rather than distributed entirely based on enrolment, subject needs, and the teacher shortages reported by schools. One Director General pointed out that giving states similar allocations could create difficulties when the states have very different numbers of schools and student enrolments.

This suggests discrepancies in how the need for teachers is assessed and how teachers are distributed. It makes no sense to collect shortage information if it is not used in the allocation process. The regression analysis supports this observation, since identifying teacher shortages is the most important independent variable related to teacher quality ($\beta = .0292$, $p < .001$). It implies that workforce planning is directly related to teacher quality.

4.5 Deployment, Subject Matching and Geographic Inequality

Identification of teacher shortages had an average score of 3.55 (SD = 0.70). Most teachers felt there were ways to identify staff shortages. The results were relatively similar across the different states considered in the study. Interviews with Directors General from the State Ministries of Education showed that the process generally starts at the school level. Headteachers identify and report their staffing needs to District Education Officers, who compile the information and submit it to the state level. The Federal Ministry of Education then receives the consolidated staffing requirements.

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This suggests a gap between determining workforce needs and allocating teachers accordingly. Gathering information on shortages will be futile if it is never used during the allocation process. The regression results support this assertion, as identifying teacher shortages was the strongest independent variable in predicting teacher quality ($\beta = .0292$, $p < .001$).

4.6 Transfer and Posting

Transfer and posting had a mean score of 3.55 (SD = 0.79). Most participants felt that a process existed for transferring teachers from one institution to another, although their views differed slightly from those on teacher shortage and deployment. In accordance with the SNTP, transfer and posting are meant to ensure a reasonable balance in staffing while also considering administrative needs, teacher welfare, and the continuation of learning processes. The regression findings showed that transfer and posting had a slightly positive independent effect on teacher quality ($\beta = 0.120$, $p = 0.047$). Therefore, how teachers are transferred and posted can affect teacher staffing.

4.7 Correlation and Regression Results

All four recruitment and deployment dimensions were positively related to teacher quality. Identification of teacher shortages had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.511$, $p < .001$), followed by deployment to schools ($r = 0.468$, $p < .001$), teacher recruitment process ($r = 0.438$, $p < .001$), and transfer and postings ($r = 0.416$, $p < .001$).

Table 2: Correlation matrix for recruitment and deployment dimensions

Dimension	Recruitment	Shortages	Deployment	Transfer/posting	Teacher quality
Teacher recruitment	1	.634**	.617**	.504**	.438**
Identification of shortages	.634**	1	.630**	.524**	.511**
Deployment to schools	.617**	.630**	1	.629**	.468**
Transfer and postings	.504**	.524**	.629**	1	.416**

*(** $p < .01$)*

The overall regression model was significant, $F(4,336) = 38.134$, $p < .001$, with $R^2 = 0.312$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.304$. Recruitment and deployment practices therefore accounted for 31.2% of the observed variation in teacher quality. On this basis, we rejected the null hypothesis that recruitment and deployment practices have no significant effect on teacher quality at the 5% level.

Table 3: Multiple regression of recruitment and deployment dimensions on teacher quality

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI Low	95% CI High
Teacher recruitment	.074	.046	.103	1.634	.103	-.015	.164
Identification of shortages	.224	.050	.292	4.533	<.001	.127	.322
Deployment to schools	.107	.050	.146	2.137	.033	.008	.205
Transfer and postings	.082	.041	.120	1.996	.047	.001	.163

Three of the four dimensions made statistically significant independent contributions. Identification of teacher shortages was the strongest predictor, followed by deployment and transfer/posting. The recruitment process was positively related to teacher quality at the bivariate level but did not make a statistically significant independent contribution once the other dimensions were considered ($p = 0.103$).

This pattern shows why formalizing recruitment, although important, cannot, by itself, guarantee teacher quality. A recruitment process may be open and competitive, but quality can still suffer when successful applicants lack professional teacher training, when their subject backgrounds do not fit schools' needs, or when deployment decisions are not guided by the staffing information schools and districts provide.

The interviews support this view. One Director General noted that recruitment was not always guided by subject-specific qualifications and that many recruits were recent graduates who would benefit from additional professional preparation before or during their teaching careers. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that the policy challenge goes beyond increasing the number of teachers. Recruitment must be linked to reliable assessments of staffing needs, clear pathways into professional teaching, and fair distribution of teachers across schools where they are most needed.

5. Conclusion

The study examined how the Somalia National Teacher Policy's teacher recruitment and deployment provisions affect teacher quality in public primary schools in Somalia's Southern States. The findings showed that recruitment and deployment provisions, taken together, had a statistically significant effect on teacher quality, $F(4,336) = 38.134$, $p < .001$, accounting for 31.2% of the variation in teacher quality. Accordingly, we rejected the null hypothesis at the 5% significance level.

Among the four dimensions, identifying teacher shortages contributed the most, followed by deployment and transfer/posting. The recruitment process itself did not have a statistically significant independent effect after accounting for the other dimensions. This finding suggests that teacher quality depends not only on having a formal recruitment system, but also on how well recruitment responds to staffing gaps and whether teachers are assigned in line with student enrolment, geographical needs, and subject requirements.

The qualitative findings provide further insight into Somalia's fragile-state context. The country needs to rapidly expand its public teaching workforce, yet relatively few teachers are professionally trained. Recruiting university graduates through flexible entry arrangements can help fill vacant positions, but such recruitment should be seen as the beginning of their professional development rather than the end. Without timely pedagogical training, proper induction, and deployment that considers subject specialization, increasing teacher numbers may not improve teacher quality.

Overall, the findings suggest that expanding the teacher workforce and maintaining professional standards do not have to be treated as separate priorities. For an education system undergoing reconstruction, the focus should be on increasing teacher supply while gradually strengthening the professional preparation of new recruits and making teacher deployment more accurate and equitable.

6. Recommendations

- **Recruitment and professional preparation:** MoECHE should continue expanding the government teaching workforce while giving greater priority to professionally trained teachers and relevant subject specialization. Where non-education graduates are recruited because of shortages, they should enter a mandatory pathway of pedagogical training, structured induction and eventual professional qualification.
- **Needs-based workforce planning:** Federal and State Ministries of Education should base recruitment allocations primarily on enrolment, pupil–teacher ratios, subject gaps and documented school-level shortages. Political or state-balancing considerations should not replace evidence on actual staffing demand.
- **Equitable and subject-sensitive deployment:** Deployment should match teachers not only to numerical vacancies but also to curriculum and subject needs. Rural, pastoralist and IDP-serving schools require targeted measures to attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers.
- **Recruitment-to-posting coordination:** Recruitment, payroll entry and posting should be better coordinated so that newly recruited teachers report promptly to schools where vacancies exist. Strengthen teacher tracking and verification systems to support accountability.
- **Female teacher workforce:** Federal and State Ministries should strengthen strategies for recruiting, deploying and retaining qualified female teachers, particularly in rural, pastoralist and conflict-affected areas where female representation remains limited.

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