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Employability and Career Pathways of Bachelor of Elementary Education Graduates: A Tracer Study

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Abstract

This study examines the employability of Bachelor of Elementary Education graduates from 2018 to 2020 of Isabela State University Cauayan Campus, recognizing the essential role of higher education in preparing graduates for workforce integration. The primary objective is to trace the employment status and satisfaction levels of graduates from, providing insights for curriculum and policy development. Employing a cross-sectional-descriptive research design, data were collected from 98 graduates using a validated tracer study instrument, with participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The survey gathered information on demographic profiles, educational backgrounds, satisfaction with acquired knowledge and skills, and employment data. Findings indicate that the majority of respondents are employed, regard themselves as eligible for their current positions, and express high satisfaction with the curriculum implemented in the program. It is recommended that educational institutions utilize these insights to enhance curriculum relevance and provide targeted career counseling and support services to further improve graduate employability outcomes.

Keywords: Educational Outcomes, Employability, Tracer Study, Workforce Integration

1. Introduction

Higher education serves as a cornerstone for social mobility, economic advancement, and personal fulfillment, with its effectiveness increasingly measured by the employability and career stability of its graduates. In today's knowledge-driven and interconnected global economy, universities are expected not only to impart foundational knowledge and skills but also to prepare students for the dynamic demands of the labor market, ensuring their adaptability, critical thinking, and lifelong learning capabilities. This responsibility extends beyond the classroom, as institutions are now held accountable for tracking and evaluating the professional trajectories of their alumni—a process essential for demonstrating program effectiveness and institutional impact on both individual and societal levels.

The tracer study, conducted one to three years after graduation to assess alumni's employment status, career progression, and academic preparation, is essential to fulfilling this responsibility. Tracer studies assist schools and universities in improving their academic programs, establishing policies and curricula, and maintaining quality by assessing how effectively they meet employer needs. (Maharjan, 2019) [28]. Employability, which encompasses job placement rates, graduates' adaptability, and career advancement, is a key criterion for higher education quality (Aničić & Divjak, 2020; Posadas *et al*., 2021) [6, 32]. Philippine higher education policies emphasize graduate employability, as is evident in the studies of Liu & Wang (2023) [23], Rusok *et al*. (2021) [37], and Kintu (2019) [19], which emphasize the necessity for students to acquire specialized and transferable skills for global employment participation.

Tracer studies are significant globally because globalization increases employment competition and educational standards. Songer *et al*. (2019) [39] and Voronin & Iontseva (2021) [44] found that graduates must now exhibit academic excellence, digital literacy, cross-cultural competence, and the capacity to manage complicated, heterogeneous work situations. The importance of teacher education programs, such as the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), is heightened because teachers play a crucial role in shaping future generations, and their preparedness directly impacts educational quality and social growth (Dubash *et al*., 2020) [14].

A robust body of literature underscores the value of tracer studies in higher education (Rosa & Galang, 2021) [36]. The research of Brits & Steyn, 2019; Senekal & Munro, 2019 [38] highlights their role in identifying deficiencies in academic programs, guiding curriculum reforms, and enhancing institutional accountability. Studies have shown that graduate satisfaction and employment outcomes are closely linked to the relevance of the curriculum, the quality of instruction, and the availability of practical training opportunities (Cruz & Cruz, 2023) [12]. However, persistent challenges remain, most notably the phenomenon of skills mismatch—the gap between the competencies acquired in academic settings and those demanded by employers, as evident in the study conducted by Cabral & Dhar, 2019 [10]; Zineb, 2017 [45]. This mismatch can manifest as overqualification, underqualification, or employment in fields unrelated to one's degree, often resulting in underemployment or unemployment even among degree holders (Cvetkoska *et al*., 2025; Rohrbach-Schmidt & Tiemann, 2016) [13, 34].

The problem of skills mismatch is made worse by rapid changes in technology and what industries need, which can make some academic lessons outdated or not closely related to what jobs require. In teacher education, for example, graduates may find that their theoretical knowledge does not fully prepare them for the practical challenges of diverse and resource-constrained classroom environments. (Mensah *et al*., 2020) [29] Additional barriers such as certification requirements, regional disparities in job opportunities, and variations in institutional support further complicate the transition from education to employment (Lindstrom *et al*., 2020) [25]. For BEEd graduates, competition for teaching positions is particularly intense in urban areas, while rural regions may suffer from teacher shortages but face challenges in attracting qualified candidates due to personal or economic constraints (Liu & Zhang, 2022; Maranto, 2018) [24, 27].

In the study conducted by Napanoy *et al*. (2021) [30], graduate satisfaction with academic preparation emerged as a crucial factor, emphasizing the importance of curriculum relevance, instructional quality, practical training, and support services. The findings suggest that dissatisfaction among graduates may highlight underlying gaps in program design or misalignment with labor market expectations. Such evidence indicates a pressing need for targeted improvements to better align educational outcomes with the demands of the workforce, as noted by Iwara (2025) [21]. Tracer studies that systematically assess satisfaction provide actionable feedback, fostering institutional responsiveness and continuous improvement.

In the investigation conducted by Suguku (2023) [41], it was found that the global context of increasing labor mobility and digital transformation has added layers of complexity to the job market. The rise of online learning platforms has diversified career pathways, intensifying competition and elevating expectations for graduate competencies. For Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) graduates, this means that proficiency in digital technologies, innovative pedagogical approaches, and cross-cultural communication has become essential for success in their careers. Institutions must therefore ensure that their programs remain current, relevant, and forward-looking to prepare graduates for lifelong success in a rapidly changing world (Bikse *et al*., 2022; Thambusamy & Singh, 2021) [8, 42].

Despite the recognized importance of tracer studies and the growing emphasis on employability, there remains a significant gap in up-to-date, context-specific data on the employment outcomes of BEEd graduates, particularly in regional state universities in the Philippines. While existing research has highlighted the importance of curriculum relevance, practical training, and graduate satisfaction, less is known about the specific challenges and opportunities faced by teacher education graduates in diverse geographic and institutional settings.

This study aims to address this gap by conducting a tracer study of Bachelor of Elementary Education graduates from 2018 to 2020 at Isabela State University, Cauayan City. The objectives are to determine the demographic profiles and employment status of graduates, assess their satisfaction with academic preparation, and evaluate the alignment between educational experiences and current occupational requirements. By providing evidence-based insights, the research seeks to inform curriculum enhancement, institutional planning, and policy development, ultimately contributing to improved graduate employability and educational quality.

2. Methodology

This tracer study used Burke Johnson's cross-sectional-descriptive design, which is the best way to clearly understand the job prospects of BEEd graduates from 2018 to 2020. The study's approach seeks to identify the existing problems or situations encountered by graduates through a systematic data collection procedure that offers a thorough assessment of the current situation. Descriptive research collects data on current conditions or events to illustrate and examine them.

The alumni of the BEEd program from 2018 to 2020 were considered qualified to participate in the study. Respondents were mandated to have completed the BEEd program between 2018 and 2020. The exclusion criteria encompassed BEEd graduates who completed their studies outside the 2018-2020 timeframe or those who chose not to participate in the survey. Of the 114 graduates, 98 engaged in the study: 60 of 72 graduates from 2017 to 2018, 37 of 40 from 2018 to 2019, and 1 of 2 from 2019 to 2020. The team uses a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods, which is the most effective option.

The survey employed in the study was provided by the university's Research and Development Office. This tool for tracer studies has been designed and verified by the Commission on Higher Education. The survey includes the demographic profiles of graduates, their educational backgrounds, their satisfaction with the knowledge and skills acquired from the degree/program, the quality of education received, and pertinent employment data.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic profile

Demographic profile	Frequency (N=98)	% of Total
Age		
21-23	59	60%
24-26	27	28%
27-29	10	10%
30-32	2	2%
Gender		
Female	76	77.6%
Male	22	22.4%
Marital Status		
Single	80	81.6%
Married	18	18.4%
Residence		
Baguio City	1	1.0%
Batangas	1	1.0%
Cagayan	2	2.0%
Cavite	1	1.0%
Ifugao	1	1.0%
Isabela	90	91.8%
Rizal	2	2.0%

The majority of respondents are between 21 and 23 years old, indicating a predominantly young adult population. This is followed by 28% in the 24-26 age group, 10% in the 27-29 age group, and only 2% in the 30-32 age group. This suggests that the sample is largely composed of individuals in their early to mid-twenties, which may reflect the demographic characteristics of students, young professionals, or early-career individuals. There is a significant gender imbalance among the respondents, with females constituting 77.6% of the sample and males only 22.4%. This could be indicative of the population from which the sample was drawn, possibly a field or institution with higher female participation, or it may reflect broader societal trends in the area or sector under study. A large majority of the respondents are single, while only 18.4% are married. This aligns with the age profile, as most individuals in the 21-26 age range are typically unmarried, focusing on education or early career development. The overwhelming majority of respondents reside in Isabela, while the remaining 8.2% are distributed across Baguio City, Batangas, Cagayan, Cavite, Ifugao, and Rizal, each accounting for 1-2% of the sample. This suggests that the study is highly localized, with Isabela as the primary area of focus.

Table 2: Educational background

Educational background	Frequency (N = 98)	% of Total	Rank
Highest Educational Attainment			
Baccalaureate Degree	87	88.8%	
Master's Degree	11	11.2%	
Eligibility			
BLEPT	83	84.69%	1
Civil Service Professionals	4	4.08%	3
Civil Service Sub-professionals	1	1.02%	5
PD 907	2	2.04%	4
No Eligibility	13	13.27%	2

The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their educational background and the rank according to their eligibility are shown in Table 2. The table shows that some of the graduates are capable, engaged in ongoing professional development, and interested in pursuing a higher level of education to advance their careers, especially knowledge, skills, and competencies. It resulted in continued professional development, skill upgrading, and job advancement (Guray *et al*., 2016) [17]. This finding was supported in the study conducted by Abana *et al*. (2021) [1], which emphasizes that graduates pursue higher levels of education to expand their knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Furthermore, 84.69% of the respondents are eligible for the BLEPT. According to Albina and Sumagaysay (2020) [5], licensure examination results and employability measure the success of the curricular program. The graduates' strong achievement on the licensure exam and their employability demonstrate the abilities and competencies they gained during their teacher preparation program. As stated in Section 26 of Republic Act No. 7836, passing the LET is now a primary criterion for teaching. Most of the respondents passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers. Teacher education aims to produce high-quality future teachers and improve in-service educators' qualifications in postsecondary and primary education for their own academic and professional growth through advanced training and educational innovations. This result implies that the university produces high-quality graduates.

Table 3.1: Level of satisfaction in terms of knowledge and skills acquired from the degree/program

Knowledge and skills acquired	Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Interpretation
A. Basic and higher-level literacy, communication, numeracy, critical thinking, learning skills needed for higher learning	4.37	0.563	Very Satisfied
B. Deep and principled understanding of the learning processes and your role as the teacher in facilitating these processes in your students	4.32	0.602	Very Satisfied
C. Deep and principled understanding of how educational processes relate to large historical, social, cultural, and political processes	4.3	0.578	Very Satisfied
D. Meaningful and comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter you will teach	4.34	0.591	Very Satisfied
E. Well-versed in applying a wide range of teaching process skills (including curriculum development, lesson planning, materials development, educational assessment, and teaching approaches)	4.37	0.616	Very Satisfied
F. Professional and ethical requirements of the teaching professions	4.47	0.613	Very Satisfied
G. Facilitate diverse types of learners in diverse types of learning environments, using a wide range of teaching knowledge and skills	4.39	0.603	Very Satisfied
H. Reflect on the relationships among the teaching process skills, the learning processing in the students, the nature of the content/subject matter, and the broader social forces encumbering the school and educational processes to improve constantly your teaching knowledge, skills, and practices.	4.32	0.585	Very Satisfied
I. Creative and innovative in thinking of alternative teaching approaches, take informed risks in trying out these innovative approaches, and evaluate the effectiveness of such approaches in improving student learning	4.37	0.632	Very Satisfied
Overall	4.36	0.021	Very Satisfied

Graduates consistently expressed high satisfaction with the knowledge and skills they acquired, particularly in professional ethics and facilitating diverse learners. Foundational skills and innovative teaching approaches also received high ratings. While slightly lower, satisfaction remained strong regarding the broader contexts of education and reflective practice. These findings suggest that while graduates appreciate the integration of these complex dimensions, there may be opportunities to deepen their engagement with these areas, potentially through enhanced curricular focus or experiential learning opportunities. (Billett, 2015; Knewstubb & Ruth, 2014) [9, 18]

The results indicate that the program provides a comprehensive and balanced education that meets the expectations of its graduates. The uniformly high satisfaction levels affirm the program's alignment with current educational standards and the evolving needs of the teaching profession. Future program development might consider targeted enhancements in reflective practice and contextual understanding to further strengthen graduates' readiness for the multifaceted challenges of education today.

Table 3.2: Level of satisfaction in terms of quality of education

Quality of education	Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Interpretation
A. Curriculum/ Course Content	4.66	0.555	Excellent
B. Methods of Instruction	4.6	0.57	Excellent
C. Faculty	4.58	0.591	Excellent
D. Library	4.02	1.005	Very Good
E. Laboratory	3.86	0.942	Very Good
F. Physical Plant	4	0.897	Very Good
G. Career Guidance	4.14	0.799	Very Good
H. Housing/ Dormitories	3.48	1.114	Good
I. Job Placement	4.02	0.849	Very Good
J. Academic Counseling	4.09	0.851	Very Good
K. Research Services	4.43	0.609	Very Good
L. Extension Services	4.15	0.778	Very Good
M. General Administration	4.2	0.896	Very Good
Overall	4.18	0.177	Very Good

The results in Table 3.2 show that students are generally very satisfied with the quality of education they receive, with an overall mean score of 4.18, indicating a "Very Good" rating. The highest satisfaction was reported for the curriculum content (4.66), teaching methods (4.60), and faculty (4.58), all rated as "Excellent." This information suggests that students find the academic program well-designed and the instruction effective.

Support services such as the library, laboratories, career guidance, and research services received "Very Good" ratings, showing that these areas are well-supported but could still be improved. The physical facilities, including laboratories and the physical plant, also fall into this category, indicating some room for enhancement.

The lowest satisfaction was with housing or dormitory facilities, which received a "Good" rating (3.48) and showed the most variation in responses. This points to a need for improvement in student living conditions to better support their overall experience. Students' satisfaction appears to be significantly shaped by academic factors such as teaching quality, knowledge acquisition, and curriculum relevance, but non-academic factors such as a sense of belonging and institutional responsiveness also play a crucial role (Gibson, 2010) [16].

The institution performs strongly in academic quality and faculty support, while improvements in facilities, especially housing, would further enhance student satisfaction and educational quality.

Table 4.1: Employability of BEED graduates

Employability	Frequency (N=98)	% of Total
Employed	77	78.6%
Self-Employed	7	7.1%
Never Employed/Unemployed	14	14.3%

Table 4.1 presents the employability status of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) graduates, showing that a majority of the respondents (78.6%) are currently employed. This high employment rate indicates a positive outcome for the program in terms of preparing graduates for the job market, suggesting that the skills and knowledge acquired are relevant and valued by employers. Additionally, 7.1% of the graduates are self-employed, reflecting entrepreneurial initiative and the ability to create their own opportunities. This trend is an encouraging sign of graduates' adaptability and resourcefulness in diverse economic contexts. (Adu *et al*., 2020) [3]. However, 14.3% of the respondents reported being never employed or currently unemployed. While such a percentage represents a smaller portion of the sample, it highlights an area of concern that warrants attention. Factors contributing to unemployment among graduates may include limited job openings, geographic constraints, or gaps in certain skills. (Huang *et al*., 2020; Jamaludin *et al*., 2021) [20, 22] Addressing these issues through enhanced career services, skills training, or stronger industry linkages could improve employment outcomes further.

In summary, the data suggest that the BEED program effectively equips most graduates for employment, either as employees or entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, targeted support for the unemployed graduates could enhance the overall employability rate and ensure more inclusive success for all program completers.

Table 4.1.1: Present occupation of the employed graduates

Present occupation	Frequency (N=77)	% of Total
An official of government and special interest organization, corporate executive, manager, managing proprietor, supervisor	2	2.6%
Military, police force	2	2.6%
Professional	4	5.2%
Clerk	1	1.3%
Service worker in shop, market	2	2.6%
Sales worker	2	2.6%
Plant and machine operator, assembler	1	1.3%
Education	54	70.1%
Health and social worker	3	3.9%
Other community, social, and personal service activities	1	1.3%
Administrative assistant	1	1.3%
Agricultural	1	1.3%
DOLE-GIP	1	1.3%
Packout sampler	1	1.3%
Research	1	1.3%

The data on the present occupation of the 77 employed BEED graduates reveals a clear concentration of employment within the education sector, with 70.1% working as educators. This dominant percentage highlights

the program's success in preparing graduates for careers directly related to their field of study, demonstrating strong alignment between the degree and job placement. Other occupations are more diverse but represent relatively small proportions of the sample. For example, professional roles account for 5.2%, while employment in health and social work comprises 3.9%. Various other positions, such as government officials, military or police personnel, service workers, sales workers, and administrative assistants, each represent between 1.3% and 2.6% of the employed graduates. These figures suggest that some graduates have pursued alternative career paths beyond education, reflecting flexibility and the ability to apply their skills in different sectors. This demonstrates the adaptability of BEED graduates and the potential for their skills to be transferable to various professional environments. The presence of graduates in diverse fields indicates that the skills acquired through the BEED program are versatile and applicable beyond the classroom (Gaite *et al*., 2022) [15].

The presence of graduates in roles such as research, agricultural work, and participation in government programs (e.g., DOLE-GIP) further indicates the varied opportunities available to BEED graduates, although in smaller numbers. These diverse career paths may reflect individual interests, regional employment opportunities, or further education and training pursued by graduates. The distribution of graduates across these different occupations provides a comprehensive overview of the career outcomes for BEED graduates, underlining the program's role in preparing educators while also enabling graduates to find success in a range of other fields. Roman & Villanueva, 2023).

The occupational distribution underscores the program's primary role in producing qualified educators while also enabling graduates to diversify into other fields. This diversity may be beneficial for graduates' career resilience, but the strong concentration in education confirms the program's effectiveness in fulfilling its core mission. Future efforts might focus on supporting graduates who seek employment outside the traditional education sector, ensuring they have the skills and resources to succeed in a broader range of occupations.

Table 4.1.2: Present employment status of the employed graduates

Present employment status	Frequency (N=77)	% of Total
Regular or Permanent	22	28.6%
Temporary	4	5.2%
Casual	3	3.9%
Contractual	18	23.4%
Contract of Service	14	18.2%
Job Order	1	1.3%
Volunteer	13	16.9%
LSB	1	1.3%
Substitute	1	1.3%

The results show that only about 29% of the employed graduates have regular or permanent jobs, which usually offer more stability and benefits. This means that less than one-third of graduates enjoy steady employment.

Many graduates work under less secure arrangements: 23% are on contractual jobs, 18% have contracts of service, and about 5% are temporary workers. These types of jobs often have limited job security and fewer benefits. Interestingly, about 17% of graduates are working as volunteers, which might mean they are gaining experience or staying active in their field without pay. Other employment types like casual, job order, substitute, and LSB jobs make up a small part of the total. Overall, while some graduates have stable jobs, most are in temporary or contract positions. This shows that many face challenges in finding permanent work. It suggests a need for better career support and efforts to help graduates secure more stable employment in the future.

Table 4.1.3: Business Profile of self-employed graduates

Business Activity	Frequency (N=7)	% of Total
Retail	3	42.9%
Service	4	57.1%

Table 4.1.3 shows the distribution of the main business activities among the self-employed graduates. Among the seven self-employed respondents, the majority (57.1%) are engaged in service-related businesses, while the remaining 42.9% operate retail businesses. This distribution suggests that self-employed graduates tend to focus more on providing services than on selling goods. The preference for service businesses may reflect the skills and knowledge gained during their education, which could be more applicable to service-oriented ventures such as tutoring, consultancy, or other personal and professional services. Although the sample size is small, these findings indicate that self-employment among graduates is diversified but leans toward service industries. The result highlights the entrepreneurial potential of graduates to create their own opportunities, particularly in sectors where their expertise can be directly applied (Iwara, 2025) [21]. In conclusion, the data suggest that self-employed graduates are actively contributing to the economy through both retail and service businesses, with a stronger inclination toward service activities. Supporting these entrepreneurial efforts through training and resources could further enhance their success and sustainability.

Table 4.1.4: Reasons for not being eemployed of the graduates

Reasons for not being employed	Frequency (N=14)	% of Total	Rank
Licensure examination review	2	14.29%	5
Further studies	1	7.14%	7.5
Family responsibility	2	14.29%	5
The job offered was not suitable	3	21.43%	3
Lack of self-confidence in facing the working world	1	7.14%	7.5
Lack of work experience	5	35.71%	1.5
Chose not to work	2	14.29%	5
No job opportunity	5	35.71%	1.5

The data in Table 4.1.4 identifies the main reasons why 14 graduates remain unemployed. The two most frequently cited reasons are lack of work experience and no job opportunity, each accounting for 35.71% of responses and jointly ranked as the top barriers to employment. The present finding aligns with common challenges faced by new graduates worldwide, where limited practical experience and a competitive job market significantly hinder immediate employment (Akbar, 2024) [4]. Employers often prioritize candidates with relevant experience, creating a gap for fresh graduates entering the workforce. (Tia, 2025) [43]

The third most common reason, reported by 21.43% of respondents, is that the job offered was not suitable. This suggests that some graduates are selective about the

positions they accept, possibly waiting for roles that better match their qualifications or career goals. Such selectivity, while understandable, may prolong unemployment periods, especially in a tight labor market where flexibility is often required (Stojanová & Tomšík, 2014) [40]. Other reasons, each cited by 14.29% of respondents, include licensure examination review, family responsibility, and choosing not to work. These reflect personal circumstances and priorities that influence employment decisions. For example, some graduates may focus on passing professional exams before seeking employment or may have family obligations that limit their availability for work. Less frequently mentioned reasons, such as further studies and lack of self-confidence (each 7.14%), highlight additional individual factors that can delay employment. Pursuing advanced education can postpone job search efforts, and low confidence may reduce graduates' motivation or ability to compete effectively in the job market.

These findings underscore the complexities that surround graduate unemployment, involving both external labor market conditions—such as limited job openings and experience requirements—and personal factors, including education, family, and self-perception. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of strategies: enhancing practical training and internship opportunities to build experience, expanding job placement and career counseling services, and providing support for graduates balancing personal responsibilities or further studies (Magd & Thirumalaisamy, 2021) [26]. In conclusion, the results highlight critical areas for intervention to improve graduate employability, emphasizing the need for stronger linkages between education and industry, as well as tailored support to help graduates overcome personal and market-related barriers to employment.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program is successful in preparing most graduates for teaching and related jobs. Most graduates are young, female, and single, with the majority living in Isabela. They are generally very satisfied with their education, especially with the curriculum, teaching methods, and faculty.
2. Most BEED graduates pass the licensure exam and find jobs, mainly as teachers. However, only a small portion have permanent positions; many work in temporary or contract jobs. A few graduates start their businesses, mostly in the service sector.
3. Some graduates struggle to find work, mainly due to lack of experience or limited job opportunities. Others are unemployed because they are preparing for exams, have family responsibilities, or are waiting for better job matches.
4. The BEED program provides quality education and helps most graduates find employment, but there is a need for more support to help them secure stable, permanent jobs and address barriers to employment. Improving facilities and offering more career guidance could further benefit future graduates.

5. Recommendations

1. Provide more job placement services and career counseling to help graduates secure stable employment.
2. Build stronger partnerships with schools and employers to offer more internships and job opportunities.
3. Increase hands-on training and practical experiences in the curriculum to better prepare students for the workforce.
4. Improve student housing and support services to enhance the overall student experience.
5. Offer entrepreneurship training and resources for graduates interested in starting their own businesses.
6. Give extra support to graduates struggling to find work, such as workshops on job search skills and confidence building.
7. Regularly track graduate employment outcomes to identify areas for program improvement.

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