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Tradition and Innovation in the Education of the Mongolian State University of Education: Art and Cultural Education in Mongolia

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Abstract: Mongolia has outlined its long-term development vision through the "Vision-2050" strategy, and the medium-term development plan for the education sector (2021-2030), alongside government action programs. These strategies emphasize the goal of ensuring equitable access to quality education for all citizens, and strengthening the system of inclusive education. As we move forward in the era of social and digital technologies, the planning of future educational developments and reforms, including in the fields of arts, music education, and the development of citizens with social activism, continuous learning capabilities, and ethical integrity, becomes essential. The development of modern music education in Mongolia and the role of the Mongolian State University of Education's Faculty of Education in shaping music teacher training, as well as addressing issues such as the lack of outstanding talents emerging from the current educational system, are critical concerns. This study aims to analyze the shortcomings of music education and propose solutions for addressing these gaps.

Keywords: Music, Education, Teacher, Training, Development

Introduction:

It is vital to teach children from a young age the traditions and customs of Mongolia to help them understand, respect, and value their national arts and culture [1]. Today, while students may learn about the development of other countries and the history of musical arts through their education, it is the responsibility of educators, particularly those in arts education, to ensure that students grow up to embrace Mongolian identity through music [2]. Loyce Birkenhough-Fleming emphasized that while mathematics and natural sciences teach children how to live, music and the arts provide them with reasons to live [3]. The prestigious Teacher Training College, established in 1922, began training primary school teachers, including music education, following a specialized curriculum [4]. For over a century, this institution has continuously contributed to educating teachers with a foundation in artistic knowledge, music rhythms, and teaching methodologies, thus planting the seeds of cultural awareness in children across Mongolia's rural areas [5].

Since 1962, the institution has produced the first specialized secondary-level music teachers, but until the 1980s, primary school teachers were the primary educators of music in schools due to a shortage of specialized music teachers [6]. By the 1980s and 1990s, the Teacher Training College began training music teachers at a national level, aligning the educational system with the country's growing population and expanding school network [7]. Despite this, the supply of music teachers has not kept pace with the increased demand, leading to a shortage [8]. Consequently, there is a pressing need to increase the number of schools training music teachers or to establish independent schools dedicated to music teacher education [9]. Expanding enrollment quotas and enhancing collaboration between ministries, higher education institutions, educators, and researchers are essential steps in addressing this issue [10].

This research employs a historical and comparative approach, analyzing the evolution of music education in Mongolia while considering specific circumstances and applying various methods to evaluate and propose solutions for the current challenges in music teacher training.

Literature Review

The evolution of music education in Mongolia has been significantly influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors. Early efforts in integrating music into the educational curriculum can be traced back to the establishment of the Teacher Training College in 1922, which laid the foundation for formal music education in primary schools [11]. The initial curriculum focused on basic singing lessons, reflecting the nascent stage of structured music education in the country [12].

During the mid-20th century, Mongolia's education system underwent substantial changes influenced by Soviet educational models. The incorporation of Soviet methodologies into Mongolian music education emphasized technical

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proficiency and theoretical knowledge, which shaped the training programs for music teachers [13]. Studies by Dolgorsuren [14] highlight how Soviet influence led to a more rigorous and systematic approach to music education, which was pivotal in developing a cadre of qualified music educators in Mongolia.

However, the post-Soviet era brought challenges as Mongolia transitioned to a market economy and experienced political reforms. The withdrawal of state support for education resulted in the shift of music teacher training programs to be funded through student tuition fees, adversely affecting accessibility and quality [15]. Research by Sodnomvaanchig [16] indicates that this shift led to reduced lesson hours and a move towards group instruction, which compromised the depth of music education and the development of individual musical skills.

Comparative studies with neighboring Inner Mongolia (China) demonstrate a proactive approach in addressing music teacher shortages by expanding university programs dedicated to music education [17]. This contrast underscores the need for Mongolia to adopt similar strategies to meet the growing demand for qualified music teachers. The rapid increase in the number of universities training music teachers in Inner Mongolia serves as a potential model for Mongolia to emulate [18].

Furthermore, the historical resilience of the Teacher Training College in maintaining music education amidst political and economic upheavals underscores the importance of institutional stability and continuous curriculum development. Contemporary research emphasizes the necessity of revisiting and adapting historical curricula to align with modern educational needs and cultural preservation [19].

Historical Traditions in Art, Culture, and Music Education at the Teacher Training College

Teacher Training College – Primary School Teachers – Music Teachers

The Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE) Teacher Training College has not only trained primary school teachers but has also prepared professionals in 13 different fields. Music teachers were trained for 36 years (1962-1998), and cultural workers for 50 years. Over the past 100 years, the college has continuously integrated music education into the curriculum for primary school teachers, contributing to the development of professional educators necessary for the growth of national arts and cultural awareness.

- From 1922 to 1924, the Teacher Training College began offering "Singing Lessons" as part of the first-year curriculum under the guidance of teacher Lianhua. Over the years, the following developments occurred:
- In 1950, the curriculum included weekly singing lessons for 1st-3rd year students, and the mandolin was introduced.
- From 1956 to 1963, music education expanded to include "Teaching Singing Methods" for 1st-4th year students, with 1-hour weekly lessons taught by teachers Dorjsuren and Jürmed.
- In 1970, teachers Indree and Enhtuvshin taught music education, and in the 1975-1976 academic year, a comprehensive 4-year curriculum was implemented, aligning with the Irkutsk Teacher Training College program. The curriculum included the following:
 - 1st Year: Music Theory
 - 2nd Year: Solfège, Techniques for Playing Fixed-Pitch Instruments
 - 3rd Year: Teaching Singing Methods
 - 4th Year: Working with Choral Music

This curriculum remained in effect until 1984. In 1984, the first-year students were introduced to a new curriculum, which was further revised in 2008. National universities specializing in teacher education began implementing a new curriculum, requiring students to complete a 1-year elective course with 7 credits before graduation. From 2014, the program adopted a new system, with 3 credits in the first year and 6 credits in the fourth year. Despite these changes, the 100-year tradition of continuously teaching music didactics in primary school teacher training remains a point of pride. There is a clear need to revisit and adapt the curricula from the 1975-1976 academic year, possibly increasing the credit hours for the 1st-4th years to align with contemporary needs.

Cultural Department

In accordance with the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Mongolian People's Republic, dated May 12, 1965, the Teacher Training College established a "Cultural Department." The primary goal was to prepare professionals to serve in local and central cultural organizations. Core courses in the curriculum included content and methodology for cultural work, music theory, literature, history, choir singing, orchestral music, and music composition.

From 1965 to 1983, the Cultural Department was part of the Teacher Training College, after which music, culture, and library science departments became separate entities, leading to the establishment of the specialized Cultural Secondary School in 1983-1984.

Table 1: Number of Cultural Workers Trained by the Teacher Training College

| Year | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Cultural Workers | 24 | 40 | 45 | 39 | 25 | 28 | 23 | 26 | 46 | 27 | 49 |

| Year | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983-84 | Total |
|------------------|------|------|------|---------|-------|
| Cultural Workers | 40 | 32 | 49 | 32 | 525 |

Training of Music Teachers (1962-1998)

In the 1961-1962 academic year, the Teacher Training College in Ulaanbaatar, under the initiative of Teacher D. Janchiv, began training music teachers for general education secondary schools. By the 1970s, the training curriculum included 2,621 hours (54.3% of total hours) dedicated to theoretical education, which decreased to 1,488 hours (38.1%) in 1992, shifting the focus towards practical training.

In the 1970s, the state took responsibility for the cost of education, providing scholarships for each student. Training included 250 hours for traditional music, including the morin khuur, piano, and other instruments. By 1986, the hours increased to 415, and by 1992, they reached 462 hours. This expansion in professional training contributed significantly to the development of renowned musicians, composers, and scholars in Mongolia.

Some notable graduates include:

State Honored Artist, People's Artist, and Doctor of Arts N. Jantsannorov

- State Prize laureates, People's Artists B. Sharav, Ts. Natsagdorj, H. Bilegjaral, Ts. Chinzorig
- Honored Artists Z. Batsukh, Ch. Sangidorj, Y. Tserendolgor, B. Byambabayar, T. Ser-Od, N. Khatanbaatar, B. Magsarjav
- Honored Teachers J. Naidan, G. Badam, H. Baasantsren, S. Batbold, Dr. of Education Ch. Batsukh, H. Budkhüü, and N. Dolgorsuren

These talented individuals and their accomplishments have left a lasting legacy in Mongolia's arts and education history.

Music Teacher Training Over 36 Years: A Historical Overview

Over the course of 36 years of training music teachers, the Teacher Training College graduated 905 music teachers before the transition to the Cultural College in 1998. From 1999 onward, graduates began to receive bachelor's degrees.

Table 2: Number of Music Teachers Graduated from the Teacher Training College by Year

| Year | 1965 | 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Graduates | 14 | 16 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 29 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Year | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 |
| Graduates | 26 | 28 | 28 | 30 | 30 | 36 | 28 | 23 | 25 | 27 | 23 |
| Year | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
| Graduates | 22 | 36 | 42 | 43 | 40 | 30 | 62 | 19 | 14 | 13 | 37 |

Total Graduates: 905

Changes in Music Teacher Training Programs

Since the initiation of music teacher training, the music department has shifted locations eight times:

- 1962-1984: Teacher Training College (22 years)
- 1984-1987: Cultural School (3 years)
- 1987-1992: Teacher Training College (5 years)
- 1992-1997: Music Teacher College (Old and New Kindergarten Teacher Training Schools) (5 years)
- 1998-2014: Cultural College (16 years)
- 2014-Present: School of Arts and Culture, MSUE

Revival of the Music Teacher Program

In 2015, the music teacher training program was reinstated at the Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE), as per the orders of the Minister of Education and Science. The program follows the requirements of the "General Standards for Bachelor's Degree Programs" issued by the Ministry of Education and Science on April 28, 2014 (Order A/174). The revived program was later transferred to the Teacher Training College in 2017, expanding into the "Department of Music Education." Today, this department employs over 10 teachers and serves approximately 200 students, having graduated 138 music teachers across 4 cohorts. This marks the 60th anniversary of the successful continuation of music teacher education at MSUE.

Research Findings

To clarify the talents, abilities, and roles of primary school teachers, this study provides an overview of the historical development and changes in music education in general education schools (GES).

The second Congress of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) in 1923 supported the establishment of the "National Choir of Volunteer Artists" and endorsed its creative initiative. A resolution was passed stating:

"...Music is the key to human enlightenment and education... to aid the people's progress, the Party should oversee and promote this work." (Decisions on Art and Literature by the MPRP, 1921-1966, p. 9).

This resolution marked the first time that the national government included music as a component of cultural policy. Following this, in 1926, music was included as part of the 4-year curriculum for primary schools.

Table 3: Music Education Hours in the Curriculum (1926-1990)

| Year | Curriculum Details | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX |
|-----------|--|--------------------------------|----|-----|----|------------------------------|----|-----|------|----|
| 1926–1932 | 1926 Primary School Curriculum, 2nd Congress of Teachers in 1925 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| 1933–1962 | 1931 First National Congress of Mongolian Teachers, Government Order No. 57 (March 15, 1931) | | | | | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| | 1940 MPRP's 10th Congress: Goal to Ensure All School-aged Children Receive Primary Education | Not included in the curriculum | | | | | | | | |
| 1955 | 1955 Resolution No. 37 of the Council of Ministers of the Mongolian People's Republic | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | Included but not implemented | | | | |
| 1958 | Eight-Year Curriculum Introduced (MPRP's 13th Congress) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| 1963–1990 | Ministry of Enlightenment Order No. 385 (Dec. 2, 1963): 10-Year Curriculum for General Education Schools | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1971 Curriculum for 10-Year General Education Schools | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Ministerial Order No. 39 (Feb. 21, 1987): Revised Curriculum | | | | | | | | | |

Table 4: Music Education Hours in the Curriculum (1991-2022)

| Year | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX |
|----------------------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|------|----|
| 1992 Curriculum | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 1994-1998 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| 1998-2003 | 2/1 | 2 | 2/1 | 2 | 1/2 | | | | |
| 2005 Reform | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2006 Reform | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2007-2008 Curriculum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2012-Present | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

From 1926 to 1965, for a span of 39 years, primary school teachers were the sole instructors of music. In 1965, the first specialized music teachers were graduated, but due to a shortage of qualified instructors, primary school teachers continued to teach music until the 1980s. This period marked a beautiful tradition where primary school teachers taught music, and the inclusion of music in the curriculum began with the revolutionary songs created in the early years of the revolution.

The music curriculum from 1926, which included 7 lessons, and later expanded to 11 lessons in 1927, allocated 1 hour per week for music education. Based on the 1925-1926 time tables, schools prepared their weekly schedules with 4 hours of daily classes, and the music education hours were integrated into the national curriculum during this time.

During the period when primary school teachers were responsible for teaching, the music curriculum initially included songs composed during the first four years of the revolution. This can be considered the beginning of the interplay between traditional Mongolian songs and their modernization. The curriculum introduced in 1926 for primary schools included seven subjects, with music allocated one hour per week. By 1927, the curriculum expanded to 11 subjects, maintaining the same weekly allocation for music. The Ministry of Enlightenment provided a model timetable in 1925 and 1926, which guided schools in preparing their daily schedules, allocating four hours of classes per day. The distribution of hours among subjects in the 1926 curriculum is as follows:

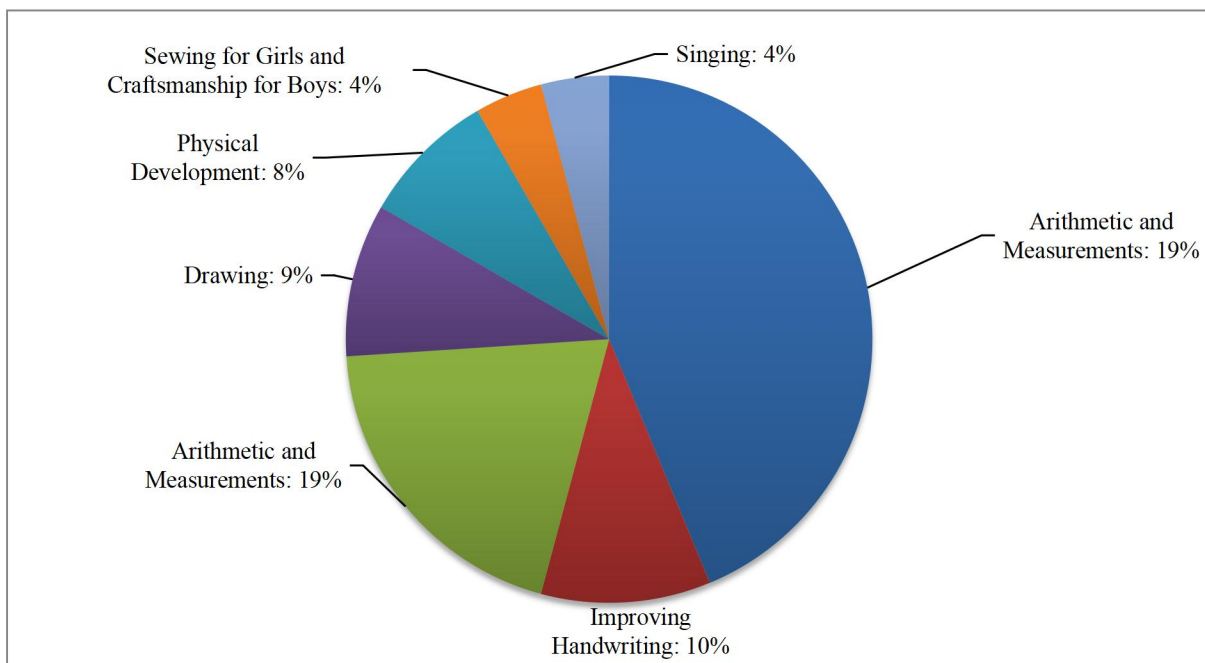


Diagram 1: Percentage of Hours Allocated in the 1926 Curriculum

The diagram shows that "Music and Singing" accounted for 4% of the 96 total hours allocated to seven subjects in the 1926 curriculum. This demonstrates the significance placed on music education even at the earliest stages of primary schooling.

In 1932, the curriculum at Ulaanbaatar’s First Primary School included one hour of music per week in Grade 2. Songs such as Shivee Khiagt, The Pioneer Song, and Red Flag were taught, highlighting the specific themes and content of singing lessons at the time (Shagdarsuren & Batsaihan, 2008, p. 237).

Table 4: Distribution of Subjects in Curricula (1926–1950s)

| Year | Language and Social Sciences | Mathematics and Natural Sciences | Practical Work | Music, Art, and Physical Education |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1926 | 53% | 19% | 4% | 24% |
| 1929 | 49% | 29% | 4% | 18% |
| 1933 | 41% | 37% | 9% | 13% |
| 1938 | 48% | 43% | 3% | 6% (Other) |
| 1940 | 47% | 44% | 3% | 6% (Other) |

From 1938 to 1940, the percentage allocated to music and other primary subjects decreased by up to 18% compared to 1926. This decline is attributed to the wartime context, during which male teachers were drafted into military service, and fewer subjects were included in the curriculum. Some contributors to the first and second curricula transitioned to artistic roles, while others fell victim to the political purges of the 1930s (Baljirgarmaa, B. 1967, *The General Education School During the Revolutionary Democratic Period*, p. 246).

Curricular Changes and Music Education (1924–2016)

The general education curriculum in Mongolia has undergone significant changes since its inception in 1924, with major reforms implemented in 1926, 1933, 1936, 1940, 1955, 1963, 1972, 1987, 1992, 1994, 1998 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2001, p. 182), 2004, 2008, and 2012. These changes reflected the country's social and educational development, affecting the content and approach to music education.

1926–1963: The music curriculum primarily had a national focus.

1963–1990: Soviet influences dominated, with Mongolia adapting the Soviet Union's primary and secondary music programs for local implementation.

Between 1926 and 1990, these two approaches provided a relatively stable framework for music education. However, starting in the 1990s, frequent changes occurred, with new curricula introduced in 1992, 1994, 1998, 2004, 2008, and 2012–2016. These revisions, implemented every 4–5 years, often renamed the programs (e.g., plans, curricula, standards, or core programs) and lacked continuity, causing a dilution of traditional elements. In this context, improving, stabilizing, and aligning music teacher training programs with national traditions is essential to developing knowledgeable and skilled music educators.

Current State of Music Education

As of the 2021–2022 academic year, Mongolia had 848 general education schools (285 urban, 563 rural), with a total of 609,828 students enrolled in music classes:

Primary school (Grades I–V): 371,480 students

Middle school (Grades VI–IX): 238,348 students

To support these students, there were 1,286 music teachers employed nationwide (Ministry of Education and Science, 2022). This equates to 474 students per music teacher, revealing a significant shortage of qualified music educators. This calculation also includes non-specialist teachers in the total, further underscoring the deficit in professional music teachers.

Table 5: Music Teacher Shortages in 2022

| Region | Number of Schools | Number of Current Teachers | Demand - Shortfall of Teachers Shortfall of Teachers |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Ulaanbaatar | 285 | 563 | Assumption: Each school requires an average of 4 music teachers. Total Schools: 285. Demand: $285 \times 4 = 1040$ Current Availability: 563 teachers. Shortfall: $1040 - 563 = 477$ teachers. |
| Province Centers | 459 | 561 | Provincial Schools (459 schools): If each school requires 2 music teachers, the total demand is: $459 \times 2 = 918$ teachers Rural Schools (Soums - 344 schools): Each rural (suum) school requires 1 music teacher, adding: $918 + 344 = 1262$ teachers needed Current Teachers Available in Provincial and Rural Areas: There are only 561 music teachers currently available. Shortfall of Teachers: The total shortage of music teachers is: $1262 - 561 = 701$ teachers needed |
| Rural Areas (Soum) | 344 | | |
| Bag-Level Schools | 45 | | |
| Total | 848 | 1,286 | $477 + 701 = 1178$ teachers needed |

Analysis of Table 5

The data indicates a national shortage of 1178 music teachers across general education schools (GES), which negatively impacts the quality of music education. Furthermore, this shortage violates the provision of the Education Law that mandates "teachers with a bachelor's degree in teaching" must conduct classes.

In neighboring Inner Mongolia (China), a 2015 study showed that 17 universities were training music teachers. By 2021, this number increased to 24 universities, demonstrating the rapid implementation of solutions to meet the critical need for music education in children's development. This proactive response is worth emulating in Mongolia.

Conclusion

The Teacher Training College has a history of 100 years and has been training music teachers for 60 years. Over this period, it has continuously evolved, offering music pedagogy courses for 100 years in primary education programs, training cultural workers for 18 years, and music teachers for 40 years. It has played a critical role in spreading cultural awareness and fostering children's development across Mongolia. This paper proposes expanding and improving current music teacher training programs to address the pressing shortage and enhance teacher competency.

Since the late 1990s, music teacher training programs have been financed through student tuition fees, as state support for tuition was withdrawn. Consequently, limitations on individual lessons in arts schools have significantly affected the quality of education. From 2005 to 2014, curricula reduced individual lesson hours, shifting to group instruction (2–5 students per group), negatively affecting both teaching quality and skill development.

To counter these challenges, this paper proposes several solutions aimed at addressing the current gaps in music teacher training and education. First, revising music teacher training programs is essential. The curriculum should be rebalanced with a 60:40 ratio, allocating 60% to professional music skills, such as piano and traditional Mongolian instruments, and 40% to pedagogy. Additionally, individual lessons for piano and traditional Mongolian music should be reinstated to ensure the preparation of highly skilled teachers capable of delivering quality music education.

Addressing the teacher shortage is another critical priority. This can be achieved by increasing the credit allocation for the "Music Didactics" course in primary teacher training programs and extending the duration of music education courses to four years. By integrating music education across all course levels, future teachers will be better equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet educational demands.

Expanding and stabilizing music education programs is also necessary to ensure sustainability. The "Department of Music Education" at the Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE) should be transformed into an independent "School of Music Teacher Training" to enhance its capacity. Additionally, student enrollment quotas should be increased to meet the national demand for music teachers. To maintain program quality and continuity, it is essential to avoid further structural changes that could disrupt stability.

Finally, professional development opportunities for existing music teachers should be prioritized. Advanced training programs should be implemented to enhance teachers' expertise and pedagogy. These programs should focus on developing teachers with strong academic and practical competencies, enabling them to deliver high-quality music education and contribute meaningfully to their schools and communities.

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