



Analysis of Learning Systems in Indonesia and Japan

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Abstract: This study compares the education systems in Indonesia and Japan, focusing on teacher quality enhancement. Teacher quality significantly influences educational outcomes, necessitating targeted efforts to improve their competence and performance. The government has implemented several initiatives in Indonesia, including teacher certification programs and professional development efforts. However, challenges such as unequal distribution of teacher quality and limited access to advanced training persist. Meanwhile, Japan exemplifies a robust teacher preparation and monitoring system with rigorous recruitment processes, periodic evaluations, and structured professional development. This research utilized a qualitative descriptive method and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), supplemented by surveys and interviews conducted with educators and students involved in a cultural exchange program. The findings highlight key differences in teacher training and evaluation frameworks between the two countries, with Japan's structured approach serving as a model for Indonesia. The study concludes that adopting comprehensive strategies, such as enhanced teacher preparation, continuous evaluation, and professional development, can elevate teacher quality in Indonesia. The research contributes to the discourse on education reform by emphasizing the critical role of teacher quality in shaping national educational success and recommending actionable strategies for policymakers.

Keywords: education, learning system, student exchange, teacher quality, teacher certification

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INTRODUCTION

A country's formal education standards are one way to measure its progress (Yudanti & Putri, 2023). The quality of education is influenced by many factors, one of the most significant being human resources. In this context, human resource refers to teachers' quality (Sinambela, 2017; Irwansyah, 2022; Safitri & Nugroho, 2023; Fatih, 2023; Astagini et al., 2022). Teacher quality encompasses a set of personal traits, skills, and knowledge that individuals bring to the teaching process (Susiani & Abadijah, 2021). Teacher creativity, for instance, has been shown to enhance learning quality (Arsal et al., 2023), foster student motivation (Saring, 2023), and positively impact teacher performance (Lindawati et al., 2022). Competent teachers support effective learning processes, directly influencing a country's education quality (Yunus, 2016). Improving teacher quality requires deliberate efforts, beginning with preparing prospective teachers through university education, teacher training programs, and regular performance evaluations (Park, 2019). However, teacher quality remains a critical challenge, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where it directly affects students' access to quality education (Mammadova, 2019). UNESCO's 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report revealed that Indonesia ranked 10th out of 14 developing countries in education quality and last in teacher quality (Utami, 2019).

The Teacher Competency Test (Uji Kompetensi Guru, UKG) is used in Indonesia to evaluate teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies. Studies indicate that UKG positively influences teacher performance (Muntasir & Yusuf, 2022; Hutasuhut, 2022; Barkah & Sarwandianto, 2023; Dwiati & Ardimin, 2022; Kartika & Saputrayasa, 2023; Septiwi et al., 2022; Aswanrahman et al., 2022). However, the average UKG results in Indonesia fall below the established minimum competency threshold, underscoring the need for continued teacher quality improvement efforts. The quality of education in Indonesia remains low, as evidenced by declining PISA scores in 2018 compared to 2015. Reading scores dropped from 397 to 371, mathematics scores fell from 386 to 379, and science scores decreased from 403 to 396 (Fauzie, 2018). These results highlight the urgent need to enhance teacher quality to improve overall education outcomes. Teacher quality improvement

begins with robust university teacher preparation programs, stringent recruitment systems, and regular evaluation processes aligned with competency models such as the one outlined in Perdirjen GTK No. 6565 of 2020.

The Indonesian government has initiated programs to enhance teacher quality, including the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's (MoECT) Priority Program for Teachers (Kemendikbud, 2023). Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Only a small fraction of 3.37 million teachers in Indonesia have participated in professional education and certification programs (Sadya, 2023). Addressing these gaps requires drawing lessons from other countries with advanced teacher quality improvement systems. Japan serves as a valuable model with its comprehensive education system and focus on teacher quality. Japanese teachers undergo rigorous preparation, certification, and periodic evaluation to ensure consistent quality across regions. Education in Japan emphasizes moral education and character building in the early years, complemented by structured academic instruction and robust teacher support systems (MEXT, 2023). This study compares the education systems in Indonesia and Japan, specifically focusing on strategies for improving teacher quality. The research aims to identify actionable recommendations for enhancing teacher preparation, professional development, and evaluation practices in Indonesia, drawing insights from Japan's successful education policies.

METHODS

This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring and understanding complex phenomena related to the education systems in Indonesia and Japan, especially in the context of developing teacher quality. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore experiences, views, and practices that cannot be measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2018). The research sites were selected based on relevance to the research objectives: schools involved in the Indonesia-Japan cultural exchange program. The selection of this location enabled the collection of data that reflected the perspectives of both countries. The research participants comprised three students, one teacher from Tokyo, who was part of the cultural exchange program, and several teachers from SMAN 51 and SMKN 57 Jakarta. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling method to ensure the relevance of the data obtained to the research focus. Japanese students provided a unique perspective on the Japanese education system, while Indonesian teachers provided insights into the challenges and opportunities in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. This sampling created a balanced comparison and obtained rich and diverse data.

The main instruments in this study included semi-structured interview guidelines, a survey questionnaire, and a literature selection list for the systematic literature review. Interviews were conducted using guidelines designed to elicit participants' views on teacher quality and education practices in both countries. The survey questionnaire was used to quantitatively collect perception data, while the literature review was used to complement the empirical data with previous research findings. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, in-person questionnaire distribution, and literature searches using specific keywords in academic databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach, which allows the researcher to identify patterns and major themes in the data collected (Shuma et al., 2024). The analysis process began with the transcription of the interviews, initial coding, and data grouping into thematic categories relevant to the research focus. The survey results were analyzed descriptively to support the interview findings, while the literature review was used to validate and extend the empirical analysis. A triangulation approach was applied to enhance the validity and reliability of the data, ensuring that the research results reflect the complex empirical reality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data shows significant differences between the education systems in Indonesia and Japan, particularly regarding teacher quality, curriculum, and education management. Here is a summary of the main differences:

Table 1. Differences between Education in Japan and Indonesia

Aspects	Japan	Indonesia
Teacher Quality	The high qualification, regular evaluation.	The high qualification, regular evaluation.
Curriculum	Moral and character-oriented.	Moral and character-oriented.
Facility	Complete and evenly distributed throughout	Complete and evenly distributed throughout
Availability	the region.	the region.

This visualization shows the two countries' key differences in teacher quality and teaching systems. It illustrates that Japan has a more structured system, while Indonesia faces challenges in equalizing teacher quality. The following graph shows participants' perceptions of teacher quality in Japan and Indonesia. It provides a comparative overview based on perception categories such as "Excellent," "Good," "Fair," and "Poor."

Participant survey data shows that the majority of respondents from Japan give high marks to the quality of teachers in their country. In contrast, respondents from Indonesia showed more mixed perceptions. The following graph clarifies this trend:

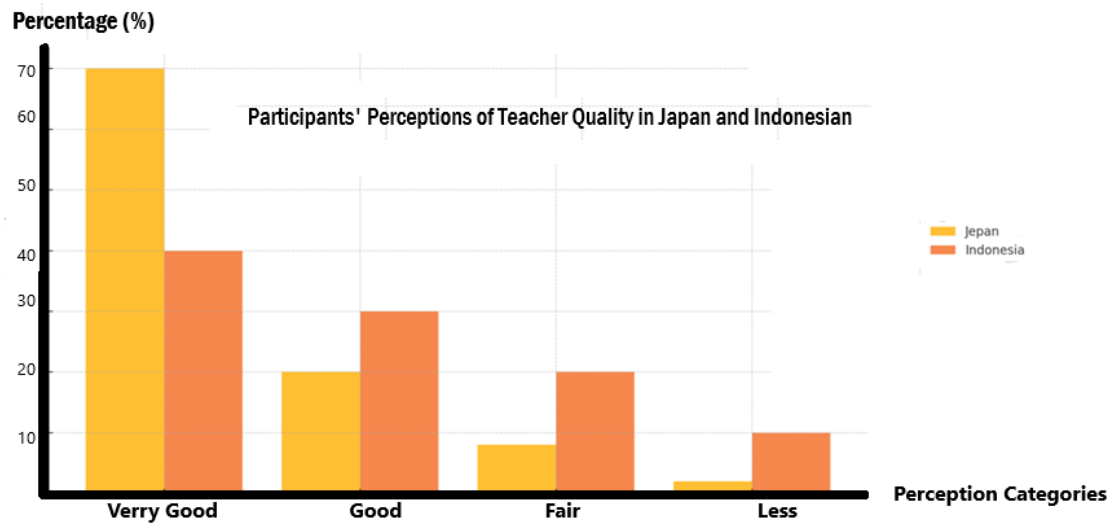


Figure 1. Perceptions of teacher quality in Japan and Indonesia

Becoming a teacher in a Japanese school is more complex than becoming a lecturer in a Japanese university. While becoming a lecturer only requires a certain number of scientific publications and sometimes no JLPT certification, becoming a teacher in a Japanese school is more complicated than that. The steps to becoming a teacher in Japan are divided into three categories: ordinary subject teachers and English teachers.

Table 2. Summary of participants' views on teacher quality

Category	Indonesia	Japan
Challenges	Lack of periodic evaluation.	High teacher workload.
Opportunities	Technology-based training.	Strengthening the STEAM-based curriculum.

This research shows that Indonesia can learn from Japan by implementing regular evaluations and professional training. Consistent policy implementation and increased access to training can help improve teacher quality evenly. Similar to Indonesia, students in the Faculty of Education also need a teaching certification that is tailored to the major they will teach. However, they are required to take the certification exam before graduating. The certification is one of the graduation requirements. Some of the certifications required can be seen in one example from Akita University. The certification will be different for each level of education. For example, if you already have a certification to teach science in high school, then one day you change jobs and want to teach junior high school, your certification is no longer valid, so you must take a certification exam to teach junior high school. Kindergarten teachers must get a separate license in addition to the licenses provided. One example of a requirement to become a kindergarten teacher is to take a test to play a musical instrument (usually a piano). One of my friend's (Japanese) experience when he was going to take a license to teach mathematics at the high school level, at the time of the exam, the test was not only about micro-teaching, mathematics, and personality, but he also had to undergo a physical exercise test and also play a musical instrument. He said it was a requirement that had to be fulfilled.

The above certifications are required for foreigners who want to become teachers in Japan, and the JLPT Japanese language certification of at least level N2 is required. Of course, because we will teach them in Japanese and communicate with the children in Japanese. In order to become an English teacher in Japan, Japanese people not only have to fulfill the requirements to get an English teaching certification but also have an English teaching certificate such as TESOL. However, on average, in Japan, it is only enough to have TOEIC. As for foreigners who want to become English teachers in Japan, there are three kinds: English teacher, ALT (Assistant Language Teacher), and tutor. Unfortunately, there is no English teaching certification for foreigners. So, if someone wants to become a permanent English teacher, they must take a special license or tokubetsu menkyojyou. One of the requirements to become an English teacher (not ALT) is to have at least a bachelor's degree, which can be in any major. In addition, English teachers must also have a JLPT Japanese language certification of at least N2. Of course, being an English teacher also requires sufficient Japanese language skills

to explain to Japanese-speaking students.

For ALT, one does not need JLPT certification but must have a native level. Therefore, it is rare for Indonesians to become ALTs; only those who have actually lived for a long time in an English-speaking country are usually able to become ALTs. The requirement for someone to be accepted as an ALT is not to have an accent from another country. The only accents accepted are British, American, Canadian, and Australian accents. Moreover, Malaysians, Indians, and Singaporeans with native-level skills are often rejected as ALTs because they are constrained by very strong national accents that are usually able to become ALTs. The requirement for someone to be accepted as an ALT is not to have an accent from another country. The only accents accepted are British, American, Canadian, and Australian accents. Moreover, Malaysians, Indians, and Singaporeans who have native-level skills are often rejected as ALTs because very strong national accents constrain them. Whereas becoming an English tutor is easier. However, it depends on the requirements of the tutoring center. For example, where I worked part-time when I was in college did not require me to have an original degree or other certifications. I just needed to be able to speak English, even at a basic level, and teach children. Whereas in my current workplace, I am required to take English teaching training before starting work. It could be because I also teach English at school (not a tutoring school).

Being a kindergarten teacher also requires a license. However, one is not required to have a bachelor's degree to become a kindergarten teacher. Some of the teachers at my school even only have a senmon gakkou or D3 education, and some even have a D2 education (teacher; "my colleague who teaches Eiken, the English test for Japanese students from 4th grade, only has a D2 English education. However, there are also teachers in my school who have master's and doctoral degrees". In addition to having a license, kindergarten teachers are also required to attend training held under the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT). If you have fulfilled all the requirements and have a teaching license, the next step is to apply at the school opening applications. In high school, the Japanese language course (Kokugo) is divided into two parts: Gendaibun (modern Japanese) and Koten (classical literature). Whereas in elementary and junior high school, there is only one Kokugo. Gendaibun deals with reading comprehension, word meanings, kanji reading and writing, and writing/criticizing literary or scientific writing, similar to Indonesian lessons here.

Students: *"According to one of my classmates, they also learned to write haiku (Japanese poetry) in junior high school.:*

Koten tends to be more about memorizing old Japanese vocabulary. Classic stories are presented, and students are expected to memorize the vocabulary and write sentences using the vocabulary. The vocabulary in question is no longer used in modern Japanese and sometimes uses hiragana and kanji characters that are no longer used. Koten also has Kanbun material, which is written entirely in kanji. In summary, Gendaibun emphasizes understanding and applying everyday language and characters, while Koten is more about memorization. In Japan, there is also something called Kanji Kentei, abbreviated as Kanken. This kanji exam ranges from level 10 (the easiest, at the level of a grade 1 elementary school student) to level 1 (not necessarily something adults can pass). Many of my friends at the time took the jun-ni-kyuu level (pre-2) or level 2 (the kanji equivalent of a 10th-grade high school student). The test covers how to read kanji, knowledge of kakijun or stroke order, and many others. According to the Education Personnel Certification Act of 1998, every prospective teacher must undergo teacher education at a university or college that MEXT has accredited.

Teacher: *"In 2003, 85% of Japanese universities were accredited to provide teacher education. In 2003, 60% of elementary school teachers graduated from teacher education centers run by universities, colleges, or universities, while 60% of junior high school teachers and 80% of high school teachers graduated from non-teaching universities."*

Specific courses for becoming an elementary teacher are Japanese Language, Social Education, Maths, Science, Life and Environmental Education, Music, Drawing and Skills, Homemaking, and Physical Education. The courses included in the Professional MK category are Philosophy of Education, Educational Theory, Curriculum and Teaching Methods, Student Development and Career Consultation, General Seminar, and Teaching Practice. Taking Japanese Constitution, Physical Education, Foreign Language, and IT courses is also compulsory. Preparation of prospective teachers in Indonesia begins with high school graduates or equivalent who are interested in becoming elementary school teachers by attending school or studying at a university or college with an educational program such as Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD). Prospective teachers will take a 4 years study period with courses that equip them to become teachers. The courses studied are related to teacher competencies such as pedagogical, professional, personality, and social. Also, prospective teachers are allowed to practice the knowledge they have learned through PPL and KKN courses. The average number of credits taken is 146 – 148, categorized into compulsory and elective courses. After these prospective teachers have finished studying, they are entitled to receive a diploma as a sign of graduation and are ready to enter the field as teachers. The Indonesian government has made improvements to improve the education

system in Indonesia, one of which is the quality of teachers. To improve the quality of teachers and lecturers in Indonesia. This is explained in Law Number 14 of 2005. Furthermore, the article states that every person who has obtained an educator certificate has the same opportunity to be appointed as a teacher in a certain educational unit. The Indonesian government collaborates with the community to organize professional education programs, culminating in the issuance of educator certification. These programs are authorized by universities and regulated by the government. Registration for professional education programs is limited to students with a previous Bachelor's or D-IV academic qualification. Preservice Teacher Professional Education (PPG) is a source of teacher certification for teaching staff in the classroom since 2016. The Professional Teacher Education Program (PPG), as outlined in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 87 of 2013, is a curriculum designed to train graduates of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Education 4/DIV 4 Non-Education programs who possess the aptitude and desire to teach in order to fully master the teacher competencies required by national education standards and earn a professional educator certificate in early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education.

Preservice PPG and in-service PPG are the two programs that use the PPG Program curriculum. PPG in Position for Participants: Teachers with prior experience working in schools or other educational settings. Preservice PPGs are students who have graduated from undergraduate programs and have not yet worked as teachers. Even though both programs are carried out to achieve the same competencies, the curriculum applied is different because of the introduction of recoupment experience for teachers who have taught for more than 5 years at school. Preservice PPG courses consist of 3 courses, namely core, selective, and elective, with a duration of 2 semesters and 39 credits. To complete the graduation requirements for the Preservice PPG program, prospective teachers must register for and pass the core courses. The courses prospective teachers choose are selected from various possibilities offered by the university overseeing the Preservice PPG program. The national list of preservice PPG elective courses is where elective courses are found. On the other hand, prospective teachers choose courses from various options offered by the university that organizes the Preservice PPG program. The list of elective courses in the national PPG Preservice program or courses created independently by the university can be used for elective courses.

The three groups of courses that form the curriculum structure of the PPG In-Service program are establishing peer teaching models and innovative learning tools, strengthening pedagogical material and study topics, and practical field experience. The five-credit online course is designed to deepen the pedagogy and subject matter. Through the use of information and communication technology, students can develop an understanding of professionalism, pedagogy, and subject content. To improve teacher professionalism, a comprehensive understanding of learning theory, educational psychology, socio-cultural, social construction, and diversity. Developing pedagogical content involves planning, implementing, and assessing educational learning. The "what", "why" and "how" components in everyday life can be explained with advanced study materials other than essential materials. Developing high-level thinking abilities (HOTS) is another goal of deepening the material in this field of study. This independent online learning begins one month before the learning tool development workshop and is carried out under the direction of the online lecturer/instructor. This continues naturally throughout the PPG program.

The course on developing learning tools and new peer teaching models has a study load of 3 credits. This course is designed to be implemented in two parts: creating learning materials (2 credits) and reviewing learning tools and reflection (1 credit). The results of deepening professional material, pedagogy, and scientific disciplines will be used as workshops. This course helps students create learning resources. Curriculum analysis, design of educational activities, and creation of learning assessments are part of the process of creating learning tools. This process utilizes the Industrial Revolution 4.0 platform and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) approach. Educational learning and evaluation activities can be created by incorporating critical thinking, creative thinking, reflective thinking, and decision-making skills into inquiry-based learning activities. Learning tools consisting of Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), teaching materials, media, Student Worksheets (LKPD), and learning assessment tools are the final results of this workshop. Newly created learning resources lead to reflection following instructions and are implemented as a new peer teaching methodology.

The study load in the Field Experience Practice course is four credits. This course combines two activities: review and reflection on PPL (1 credit) and practical field experience (3 credits). The teacher's primary responsibility is to educate, instruct, guide, direct, train, assess and evaluate students. This course helps students to build the professional skills necessary for these tasks as they apply teaching practice. Additionally, this course helps students complete non-teaching work such as managing a classroom or school, organizing extracurricular and co-curricular events, and taking part in other school-related activities. This training aims to form charismatic teachers who have authority, firmness, discipline, a spiritual calling, and a high sense of empathy. By incorporating the application of PTK into learning, this PPL aims to improve teachers' reflective abilities. Apart from growing teacher professionalism, PPL aims to foster leadership qualities. Each activity ends with reflection, carried out periodically in collaboration with field supervisors and tutors. Teacher education

standards determine the PPG program's study load of 36–40 credits. The study load required for PPG In-Service is 12 credits; the remaining 24 credits are experience.

Teacher quality must continue to be monitored by regular monitoring and evaluation so that teacher quality can improve from time to time. The government has created instruments to measure teacher competency through the Teacher Competency Test (UKG) and IPKG. Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews, it is stated that the quality of teachers in Indonesia is good and not inferior to that of teachers in Japan. There are differences between stricter teacher preparation, a series of requirements to be declared competent to teach, and more regular and strict monitoring and evaluation in Japan. There needs to be a policy in preparing teachers and the suitability of teachers in teaching so that the quality of teachers is even better.

Research conducted by [Pribudhiana et al. \(2021\)](#) shows that the quality of the teachers themselves strongly influences teacher preparation in implementing education policies. Implications for Practice and Research: This study suggests that educators should continue to improve their quality and prepare themselves to overcome future challenges. In addition, further research should be conducted to explore how teacher quality and preparation can be assessed based on specific attributes and policy formulation. One of the key elements that influence student development is the quality of teachers. Teacher education is very important because of teachers' strategic role in society. Therefore, a key issue in educational standards, as well as society's intellectual, ethical, and social well-being, is the successful training of teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies ([Loughran, 2016](#)). [Ferguson et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize integrating theory and practice in teacher education. Meanwhile, [Murtonen et al. \(2024\)](#) underline that pedagogical training, regulation skills, and teacher learning patterns play an important role in supporting the transition to student-centered teaching approaches. Effective regulation in teachers' pedagogical development contributes to meaning-oriented learning, which directly supports adopting this approach. In contrast, application-oriented learning showed no relationship with the student-centered teaching approach. In addition, [Guo \(2024\)](#) highlighted that in an open education system, the quality of teacher certification institutions and the quality of incoming students are the main determinants of educators' performance.

Thus, these studies collectively highlight the importance of teacher quality, integration of theory and practice, and regulation of pedagogical development to improve educational standards and support better teaching approaches. Based on the educational data above, researchers compared practices in Japan and Indonesia and concluded that teacher preparation is essential in education because it will influence student learning outcomes. Teacher quality is an important factor that needs to be considered. Improving the quality of teachers in a country may have a negative impact on educational outcomes in that country. In Indonesia, efforts to improve teacher quality include several initiatives such as the Teacher Training Program, Pre-Employment PPG, In-Service PPG, Merdeka Mengajar Platform, and various free online learning applications and resources on social media. Instructors can improve students' abilities or competencies in various areas, such as pedagogy, professionalism, social skills, and self-discipline, to achieve the goal of improving Indonesian education quality.

This study provides several important implications for developing the education system in Indonesia, especially in improving the quality of teaching staff. First, there is a need for policies that encourage prospective teachers to take part in professional programs after completing their S1/D4 education, such as the PPG Preservice program, to ensure that they have adequate pedagogical and professional competencies before entering the workforce. In addition, the quality of educational institutions (LPTK) and training programs must be improved through curriculum updates, practice-based training, and relevant internship programs to prepare prospective teachers holistically. Continuous monitoring is also crucial, with regular observation and evaluation of teachers after completing the PPG to ensure the sustainability of teaching quality and support teachers' long-term professional development. Regular mentoring and coaching can strengthen the "teacher's soul", increase motivation, and strengthen competence in carrying out professional duties. Furthermore, through initiatives such as free education programs, appreciation and support from the government can improve teachers' morale and welfare and show appreciation for their strategic role in education. Following the teacher competency model, the development of accurate teacher competency assessment instruments is also urgently needed to map teacher development needs and ensure effective teacher quality improvement efforts. Finally, strengthening teacher character based on Pancasila values is a strategic step to create educators who are academically competent and have high moral and social integrity.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comparative analysis of the education systems in Indonesia and Japan, with a particular emphasis on teacher quality. It highlights the challenges faced by Indonesia, such as the uneven distribution of teacher quality and limited access to advanced training, in contrast to Japan's rigorous teacher preparation and evaluation system. The research uses qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews with educators involved in cultural exchanges, to gather insights. The research recommends that Indonesia

improve teacher preparation, implement continuous evaluation, and promote professional development to improve educational outcomes. The research underscores the importance of teacher quality in shaping effective learning processes and the success of national education. By adopting a structured strategy similar to Japan's, Indonesia can significantly improve teacher competence and performance, contributing to education reform and broader national development.

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