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ABSTRACT

Giftedness is a neurodiversity still poorly known and recognized. Thus, students with high potential often do not live appropriate learning experience at school and feel a situation of estrangement, boredom, and demotivation (Lucangeli, 2019, Zanetti, 2017). To improve the quality of their participation to school activities, it is important to adopt different teaching strategies, aimed to increase the creativity and the social skills (Buccolo, Pilotti & Travaglini, 2021).

La plusdotazione rappresenta una neurodiversità ancora poco conosciuta. Spesso gli studenti ad alto vivono nei contesti scolastici una situazione di estraniamento e demotivazione, con conseguente rischio di abbandono scolastico (Lucangeli, 2019, Zanetti, 2017). Per migliorare la qualità della loro partecipazione alle attività scolastiche, è importante adottare diverse strategie didattiche, volte ad aumentare la creatività e le abilità sociali (Buccolo, Pilotti & Travaglini, 2021).

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Inglese giftedness, inclusion, emotions,
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Introduction

Talent development education is one of the main challenges for a school that aspires to be fully inclusive. Despite this, the idea often persists, even among teachers, that this represents an exceptional gift available to a few individuals and that, for this reason, its enhancement does not require the activation of targeted interventions (Brazzolotto, 2020). This aspect does not take sufficient account of the role of the environment in the individual training process. Indeed, while it is true that «Talent designates the exceptional mastery of skills developed systematically, called skills (knowledge and skills) in at least one domain, at a higher level than the peers who have practiced in that specific field of activity» (Gagnè, 2009, p. 1), it is undeniable that «endowment can become talent through a development process to which formal, informal learning and practical exercise contribute» (Vinci & Sgambelluri, 2020).

This premise seems essential to outline the path of our contribution: after describing some functional profiles attributable to gifted students, we will identify some strategies/methodologies that can be applied to promote inclusive contexts. Our intention, in fact, is not so much to describe teaching strategies targeted exclusively on gifted students, rather than offering some reflections to consider that the school can be configured as an environment in which all students can be authentically welcomed and valued.

1. The giftedness: some definitions

Giftedness has received over time different conceptualizations and definitions, which have polarized along two dimensions. On the one hand, this concept links directly to the wider one of intelligence and IQ. According to the psychometric criterion, recognition of a surplus profile requires an IQ of 130, although some scholars use a cutoff of 120 (CNOP, 2018).

On the other hand, limits linked to the adoption of an exclusively quantitative criterion are generally recognised. According to Pfeiffer (2015), the IQ can only be a probable indicator of surplus endowment, but not its constituent element.

Another position, which is receiving more credit among scholars, is that which sees giftedness as a much larger set of features such as, for example:

- exceptional or uncommon ability of a student, compared to his peers, at a given time (Keating, 2009);
- «complex constellation of personal and behavioural characteristics that express themselves in different ways» (Scientific Technical Table Regione Veneto, 2015, p. 10);

- «a constellation of the individual's own abilities and abilities, which allow to show an exceptional level of performance in one or more domains» (Zanetti, 2020, p. 891);
- «[...] people who show, or have the potential to show, an exceptional level of performance, when compared with their peers, in one or more of the following areas: general intellectual ability, specific scholastic attitude, creative thinking, leadership, visual and performing arts» (National Association for Gifted Children, nagc.org).

It follows that the giftedness is not a fixed and constant feature (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Ceci & Williams, 1997), as it derives from a constellation of other factors. For this reason, it is necessary to go beyond the purely quantitative criterion, referring to the IQ.

Of particular interest is the perspective of Reis and Renzulli, who identify in creativity one of the elements characterizing the giftedness. Scholars, through the model of the three rings (2010), stress that it takes place at the junction point of three elements: a) general and/or specific abilities above average; b) an elevated level of commitment or motivation; c) elevated level of creativity (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). This implies that the exclusive presence of high skills and competences in the individual is not a factor automatically attributable to giftedness. In fact, talent must have the opportunity to be experienced in different contexts. In other words, according to Renzulli, the dimension of *doing* is a prerequisite for the recognition – and, consequently, for the promotion – of talent.

As regards the profile of giftedness, despite the great variability of human functioning, scholars recognize that gifted students may have the following characteristics, in relation to different areas (Ad. Scientific Technical Table Veneto Region, 2015):

Learning	Creative thinking
• They show logical and analytical thinking; • They are able to readily identify patterns and relationships; • They are committed to identifying valid, alternative and creative solutions to problems; • They try to redefine problems, to represent ideas and to formulate hypotheses; • They love intellectual challenges;	• They produce original ideas; • They show intellectual playfulness, imagination and fantasy; • They create original texts or invent things; • They show a keen and unusual sense of humor; • They have unusual insights; • They love to speculate and think about the future;

• They can learn to read before others and their understanding is better; • They grasp the meaning of the text very quickly; • They can store and process large amounts of information;	• They demonstrate awareness of aesthetic qualities; • They are not afraid to be different; • They seek unusual ways rather than conventional relationships.
Motivation	Leadership
• They strive to achieve high standards of personal achievement; • They are self-directed and prefer to work independently; • They are strongly self-motivated and set personal goals to achieve; • They are persistent in completing tasks; • They engage and are absorbed by tasks and activities; • They tend to be self-critical and evaluative.	• They take the initiative in social situations; • They are confident and popular with peers; • They show high level of empathy; • They actively seek leadership in social situations; • They can convince a group to adopt ideas or methods; • They are adaptable and flexible in new situations; • They can synthesize ideas developed by group members to formulate an action plan.
Self-determination	Psychological characteristics
• They are skeptical of authoritarian statements; • They insist with teachers and adults to get clarification; • They show an early interest in adult problems; • They are reluctant to practice in skills already mastered; • They are easily bored in routine tasks; • They express very frankly ideas, preferences and opinions; • They relate better to older children and adults, and often prefer their company.	• They show considerable sensitivity about how others perceive them; • They show a high level of resilience; • They manifest a high awareness of their actions; • They can modify their behavior to adapt to a situation; • They can manifest depressive attitudes because “nobody understands them”; • They may manifest a certain tendency to isolation; • They may show low self-esteem and guilt.

Tab. 1 Characteristics of giftedness (ad. Scientific Technical Table Veneto Region, 2015, pp. 10-11)

This perspective highlights the innumerable difficulties faced by gifted students in school contexts; on the one hand, in fact, these ones present an attitude to creative and divergent thinking, on the other hand, precisely because of their “atypical”, their observations can be inappropriate, or “disturbing” compared

to a context aimed at maintaining the routine. In other words, the student who is looking for original solutions, who conducts activities with different times from those thought for the mainstream, could be disturbing compared to a predetermined order. It follows that those same factors which, in themselves, should represent an individual resource, risk becoming an obstacle for the student to full social integration and full participation in the activities proposed in the school contexts. Such critical issues can lead, in some cases, to situations of demotivation and early school leaving (Lucangeli, 2019). It is no coincidence, Note Miur n. 562 of 03/04/2019 recognized giftedness a special educational need that, as such, requires the preparation by teachers of an appropriate educational environment, which aims to strengthen cognitive skills, without neglecting the emotional aspects. To this end, the teacher assumes a strategic role in shaping himself as the facilitator of both learning and relationships, contributing to the construction of a positive class atmosphere, in which each student can feel authentically listened and valued. These two aspects will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

2. Differentiated instruction and inclusion

The teaching strategies for gifted students cannot disregard the principles of differentiated instruction. Our goal here, therefore, is not to define strategies/techniques aimed exclusively at gifted students, rather that of specifying some guiding elements that can orient teachers to structure teaching paths online – also – with the needs of students with such a cognitive profile. We will therefore proceed with the definition of what teaching differentiation means, to identify, in the next paragraph, some strategies and techniques that can be applied even in the presence of students with a high cognitive profile.

According to Tomlinson, «differentiation can be accurately described as classroom practice with a balanced emphasis on individual students and course content» (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 14). Specifically, «differentiation involves five factors:

- content: what we teach and how we give students access to the information and ideas that matter;
- process: how students come to understand and “own” the knowledge, understanding, and skills essential to a topic;
- products: how a student demonstrates what he or she has to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of a segment of study;
- affect: how students link thought and feeling in the classroom;

- learning environment: the way the class feel and functions» (Tomlison & Strickland, 2005, p.6).

The first three elements configure differently in relation to three variables, which refer to the student's profile: a) readiness; b) interest; c) learning profile (Ad. Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014, p. 18).

In other words, the more the teacher makes use of different teaching strategies and approaches (group activity, individual study, use of different languages, etc.), paying attention to the cognitive profile of each student, the more he manages to build a context that enhances individual potential, reducing the phenomena of demotivation and disinterest.

Understood in this way, differentiated instruction is an essential element for the construction of an inclusive context, which requires the availability of teachers to «take care to understand all the differences of their pupils and to plan coherently a didactic proposal for each of them able to take them into account» (Demo, 2015, p. 22). Differentiating the didactic proposals means, in other words, making sure that the widest possible number of students, considered in their heterogeneity and uniqueness, can enjoyed them.

Promoting a “teaching of differences” also means providing a multiplicity of ways to organize several variables that regulate school life such as, for example, space, time, the curriculum, and the role of the teacher.

The following table offers a few indications to highlight the differences, in the way of structuring these variables, between an inclusive context with one deemed, on the contrary, not inclusive (ad. Travaglini, 2021, p. 48):

VARIABLES	NON-INCLUSIVE CONTEXT	INCLUSIVE CONTEXT
Space and working times	Fixed	Flexible, fitted into students' interests and cognitive profiles
Teaching strategies	Prevalence of transmission teaching strategies	Plurality of teaching strategies adopted (metacognitive and cooperative learning, open teaching, mastery learning, etc...);

Curriculum	Predefined: • teachers establish learning content; • emphasis on content rather than skills; • prevalence of linguistic and/or logical-mathematical intelligence; • teaching-learning differentiation linked to the presence of certifications that require the adoption of compensatory/dispensatory strategies (PEI/PDP).	Open and flexible: • students can choose to to deepen paths and thematic areas that are more in line with their own interests; • attention to metacognitive processes; • strengthening of all intelligences; • diversification as a real possibility for all students to take advantage from paths aimed at valorizing individual differences.
Teacher's role	• teacher perceived as information dispenser, evaluator, exclusive manager of teaching-learning processes;	• teacher perceived as a learning and relationship facilitator; • attention to the class climate.

Tab. 2 Educational differentiation and inclusive processes (ad. Travaglini, 2021, p. 48)

Within a not very inclusive context, activities, times, and spaces are fixed in a rigid way, according to predetermined scans, rather than being conceived according to the teaching processes, strengths, and attitudes of the student.

It follows that the differentiation is not solely attributable to the need to prepare diversified paths in relation to the presence in the classroom of pupils with special educational needs, as it is an opportunity to manage the class in such a way as to fully exploit the resources of all students (Bocci, 2015; 2021).

In addition to the above elements, differentiated instruction can also concern the definition of learning objectives: to this end, in reference to the taxonomy of Bloom et al. (1956), it is possible to structure learning tasks that recall different cognitive functions. In the face of simpler demands, which concern the sphere of knowledge, it is possible to foresee the structuring of more complex tasks, which recall the last levels of the taxonomic scale, such as synthesis and evaluation: in this regard, students can be involved in making comparisons between different elements, in designing alternative solutions to established schemes, etc. This can be very functional to allow students with different characteristics to collaborate, albeit pursuing individualized objectives, in the realization of a common project, built according to criteria of different complexity.

In summary, promoting differentiated instruction means acting virtuously on the following variables: content; process; product; space and working times; teaching strategies; curriculum; teacher's role, tasks.

This statement is in line with a broad research perspective (D'Alessio, 2011; Bocci, 2015; Cottini, 2014), which describes inclusion not so much as the act of including someone within a mainstream, rather as a process aimed at structuring the school context so that all pupils can participate in the proposed activities, removing obstacles that may affect their path, in the field of learning and socialization.

3. Teaching strategies for gifted students (and not only)

Research stresses the evidence of some inclusive learning strategies, particularly functional to support the learning of gifted students (Pinnelli, 2019):

- the cubing strategy: it involves the creation of six-sided cardboard cubes, each of which proposes a series of activities, which require the activation of diversified cognitive processes. The students have the task of throwing the die, doing what indicated. To be truly effective, it is necessary that what required is in line with the objectives defined by the teacher, also encouraging the student's recourse to divergent thinking.
- the tic tac toe: this is an activity that recalls three of a kind. In analogy with the well-known game, students must move freely within a given grid, choosing three tasks of different complexity, which correspond to their interests and abilities.

Here is an example, addressed to a third class of primary school (Pinnelli, 2019, p. 232):

1. Complete some sentences by correctly entering cu, qu, ccu or qqu.	2. Color the correctly written words green and the wrong ones red (given a list of sentences).	3. Read the text and circle the capricious words (words that are exception).
4. Read the text, circle the wrong words, and rewrite them correctly.	5. Write four sentences with verbs that want cqu.	6. Rewrite the phrase by replacing the word/s in bold with a synonym that contains cu, qu, ccu or qqu.
7. Write three meaningful sentences that contain at least four	8. Create a nursery rhyme with words that contain the	9. Make up a crossword puzzle with words that come from water.

of the groups cu, qu, cqu, ccu, qqu.	consonant group cqu.	
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Tab. 3 Tic-Tac-Toe Tic-Tac-Toe for grammatical reinforcement and improvement
(Pinnelli, 2019, p. 232)

- the learning menu: It allows students to make decisions about their own learning, considering the path of the class.

The menu is composed as follows:

1. aperitif: a series of activities negotiable with the teacher;
2. main course: activities carried out by all;
3. dessert: optional additional activities.

This composition is particularly functional as it ensures the achievement of common goals (main course), without neglecting the inclinations of the student. This latter strategy directly refers to two additional teaching processes that are particularly useful for students with giftedness:

- acceleration: this is a way of managing curricular proposals that involves «a very fast didactic advancement for the gifted student, based on the student's learning rhythms and motivation to learn, or the planning of activities intended for more advanced classes than the one the student is enrolled in» (Vinci & Sgambelluri, 2020, p. 253). Acceleration activities may also involve some forms of shortening the school path, such as skipping a grade, early entry, or, more frequently, acceleration in a single subject. In the latter case, the gifted student may attend classes in a higher grade for the subject in which they have the most interest and skills. The first two solutions present quite a few problems as they reinforce the idea that gifted students require separate education from others.
- compacting: this involves condensing learning into shorter times than those intended for the mainstream of the class. In other words, it allows the gifted student to achieve new goals by eliminating topics that are already known – whose study can therefore be demotivating – to let the student tackle, even independently, topics that better meet their educational needs (Brazzolotto, 2019). Meanwhile, the class or part of it works towards achieving common goals (Novello, 2018, 2021).

Here are some useful indications for effectively compacting the curriculum:

- «1. identify the learning objectives or standards that all students must learn;
2. give students time to examine the content to be tested;
3. offer a pretest opportunity to volunteers after explaining of achievement needed to pass the pretest [...];

4. have extension and activities available for those who can “compact out” of specific learning activities because they have demonstrated their existing competence with that particular content on a pretest;
5. eliminate all standardized test drill, practice and review for students who have already demonstrated advanced level of mastery;
6. decide how to keep accurate records of the students’ compacting experiences [...];
7. devise a method for storing compacting documents. [...] all students should have occasional time to work on extension activities, so it is helpful to keep them accessible to your whole class» (Winebrenner, 2012, p. 39).

Finally, another opportunity for differentiated instruction is enrichment, which consists of integrating into the curriculum training paths that are targeted to the interests and attitudes of the students. This intention is central in The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), by Reis, Renzulli, & Milan (2021): it is an approach – inspired by Renzulli’s three-ring model – aimed at promoting the talents of all students, focusing primarily on the strengths of the students. The underlying principle is that “a rising tide lifts all boats” (semitaly.com): therefore, rather than promoting forms of separate education, this model seeks to offer all students – after careful initial assessment involving collaboration among students, teachers, and families – a real opportunity to develop their potential through targeted paths.

4. The role of the e-motive and in-clusive teacher

As seen previously, according to the model developed by Tomlinson (2014), differentiated instruction also concerns the development of emotions and the care of the context – understood as the combination of the physical environment and the relationships between students and between teachers and students – that characterize the classroom context. School should primarily be a place for well-being education, a concept universally understood as a condition that allows all those involved to fully express themselves within a collective context. Indeed, schooling is an emotional process, where «emotions vehicle learning processes and they have the power to influence cognitive or motivation processes» (Albisetti, 2017, p. 224). Collaborative relationships can significantly contribute to building a positive classroom climate. With this expression – classroom climate – we refer to a construct that can be defined in different ways, such as: «the network of affective relationships, the various motivations to be together, collaboration towards common goals, mutual appreciation, norms, and group operating methods» (Polito,

2000, p. 50), or «the collective perception that students have of their presence in by pupils of what it feels like to be a pupil in any particular teacher's classroom, where those perceptions influence every student's motivation to learn and perform to the best of his or her ability» (McBer, 2000, p. 27).

According to McBer (2000), the indicators of the classroom climate are:

«1. Clarity around the purpose of each lesson; 2. Order in the classroom, where discipline, order and civilized behaviour are maintained; 3. Clear set of standards as to how pupils should behave and what each pupil should do and try to achieve [...]; 4. Fairness: absence of favoritism and a consistent link between rewards in the classroom and actual performance. 5. Participation: the opportunity for pupils to participate actively in the class by discussion, questions, giving out materials, and other similar activities; 6. Support: feeling emotionally supported in the classroom, so that pupils are willing to try new things and learn from mistakes; 7. Safety: the degree to which the classroom is a safe place, where pupils are not at risk from emotional or physical bullying [...]; 8. Interest: the feeling that the classroom is an interesting and exciting place to be, where pupils feel stimulated to learn; 9. Environment: the feeling that the classroom is a comfortable, well organised, clean and attractive physical environment» (McBer, 2000, p. 28).

To build an authentically inclusive classroom climate, the educational relationship between teacher and student plays a significant role. Specifically, this describes a type of bond between educator and learner that is built within an educational context (Postic, 1986). An encounter occurs between them, which takes on a personal and political dimension – understood in an extensive sense as caring for the community – which coexists dialectically. The educator does not educate the other but operates “with” and “for” the other. It is precisely for this reason that we are dealing with a complex process that is not spontaneous and, above all, requires commitment and preparation. To ensure that the educational relationship can be established, two are the privileged tools available to the educator:

- dialogic communication, as it is through dialogue, as seen previously, that an authentic encounter with the other can be fostered (Elia, 2017);
- emotional listening, understood as a means of access to allow each person to be recognized and valued.

The last aspect directly involves the management of emotions and the emotional skills of the teacher, which are indispensable. The teacher, in fact, represents a point of reference for students to improve class management and dynamics and promote the development of relational well-being. Specifically, the teacher is configured as «the educational growth professional who deals with the 'other in formation' and must seriously consider the weight and impact of relational aspects

in educational processes. He should be supported in processing their own fear, anxiety, need for dependency, uncertainty, which are constitutive of human nature» (Buccolo, 2019, p. 49). To be able to do their job well, the teacher must therefore not only manage a wide range of relationships but also ensure that these relationships become opportunities for growth and learning. He should, in other words, «think (before acting), be patient, be in touch with feelings, tolerate frustration, be tolerant of oneself, contain anxiety, collaborate, reason causally, learn from experience, change, take responsibility in work and towards others» (Blandino & Granieri, 1995, p. 197).

This is a challenging task, not free from tiredness and frustration, which can be addressed by assigning a new meaning to the educator-student encounter. The latter, in fact, should be «perceived and experienced by the educator:

- as if it were the first;
- as if it were the only one;
- as if it were the last» (Kanitsza, 2020, p. 44).

For this to be fully realized, it is necessary for the teacher to broaden their perspective to an ever-possible horizon because, as Freire affirmed (2017), education represents the privileged path for a transformative action of the individual and, in an extensive sense, of society. This aspect is central in considering the needs of gifted students. Giftedness, in fact, as highlighted by Neihart and Betts (2010), manifests itself in six profiles, some of which may present different criticalities. According to the researchers, for example, the profile defined as “at risk” may include a series of dysfunctional behaviors such as oppositional and aggressive actions, difficulty in emotional regulation and modulation, fluctuating academic performance with a consequent elevated risk of dropping out of school. Similar criticalities can be found in the profile defined as “underground”: in this case, the student tends to hide and minimize their own skills, presents fluctuating educational progress, with academic results often not in line with their abilities. It is important, in these cases, for the teacher to be able to recognize the needs of gifted students, going beyond commonplaces and misconceptions that are often applied to them. In the common perception, indeed, having a high intelligence quotient is seen as a gift that does not require specific educational interventions (Becchi, 1962). On the contrary, as seen previously, gifted students often face a situation of underachievement, resulting from numerous factors such as low motivation, emotional difficulties, and poor mastery of metacognitive strategies (Sandri & Brazzolotto, 2017). Therefore, to build a truly inclusive climate, interventions must be calibrated, depending on the needs, for the entire class, small groups, or individual students. Further attention must be paid to teaching strategies that should equally enhance students' cognitive and social skills

(Comoglio, 1999). We refer, specifically, to the potential inherent in some approaches such as:

- circle time, based on a circular sharing of experiences, emotions, thoughts;
- the autobiographical method (Demetrio, 2003), which allows the student to access and reprocess their own memories in a context of authentic listening;
- dramatization activities, which allow the activation and training of emotions (Buccolo, Mongili & Tonon, 2012);
- socio-emotional education (Morganti & Roche, 2017), which integrates the perspectives of socio-emotional education and prosociality.

In summary, to build an authentically inclusive environment, the teacher must position himself as a professional who possesses a wide range of skills, referring to different dimensions (Buccolo, Pilotti & Travaglini, 2021, p. 125):

DIMENSION	TEACHER'S COMPETENCIES
Emotional	Being able to recognize and manage one's own emotions, awareness and self-control of situations that generate negative emotions and stress.
Knowledge	Having a knowledge culture of disciplines, regulations [...] and being able to design activities for the development of students' skills.
Methodological	Facilitating the teaching process through the application of methodologies that promote the learner's "agency" in the teaching process.
Relational	Promote participation and relational processes. Enhance the responsibility of individuals and the group.
Creative	Educate to free expression and the development of divergent thinking.
Communicative	Being able to communicate and establish dialogue with students, families, colleagues, the school principal, and other figures present at school.

Table 4 Teacher's "e-motional and in-clusive" competencies

The complexity of this role underscores the centrality of teacher training: teachers, through appropriate pathways, should not only can learn strategies and methodologies as mere techniques and devices to apply in particular circumstances, but above all to reflect purposefully on their own educational history, reference models, and professional expectations. It is indeed essential for a teacher, within a school that aspires to be authentically inclusive, to possess a series of competencies that virtuously combine knowledge, being, and doing (Baldacci, 2014), where knowledge refers to theoretical competencies acquired

through initial and in-service training; being refers to the ability to interact with students as an affectionate yet authoritative presence, understanding yet firm when necessary, while doing relates to the ability to design and implement a meaningful path aimed at achieving predetermined objectives (Baldacci, 2023).

Conclusions

The path outlined here highlights the need to consider the educational needs of gifted students from an inclusive perspective: within an educational context that aims to enhance and valorize, in a pluralistic perspective as free as possible from conditioning and stereotyping, the inclinations of all students, it is possible to structure paths that, rejecting the logic of separation, respond specifically to the principles of differentiated instruction. Talent, indeed – as highlighted at the beginning of our contribution – represents a potential that requires the synergistic contribution of many factors, starting with the school (Buccolo, 2015). Reflecting on the school-creativity relationship, Ken Robinson emphasizes that “schools kill creativity” (2017), noting that the school organization does not contribute to promoting students’ creative attitudes. Margiotta (2018), in this regard, considers the restructuring of educational pathways to avoid dispersing individual potentials as a social emergency. To allow the human flourishing of all students (Nussbaum, 2012), it is necessary in our opinion to introduce new interpretative paradigms, moving «beyond the logic (typical of dominant culture) of considering what is wandering as wrong, that is, incorrect (both for deficiency and excess), placing wandering within diagnostic containers of various kinds [...] in order to correct it, harness it, redirect it...» (Bocci, 2019, p. 11).

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