



Analysis of Teacher Candidates' Attitudes Towards the School Experience Course

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the attitudes of the preservice teachers who have taken the school experience course. The participants consist of 3rd and 4th-grade students who studied at the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Sport Sciences during the 2017-2018 academic year at Sivas Cumhuriyet University. A total of 303 (60.6%) female and 197 (39.4%) male preservice teachers participated in the study. "Attitude Scale Towards School Experience Courses" developed by Kılınç and Salman (2007) was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were used to analyze the data. According to the findings, the total scores of the preservice teachers' attitudes towards the school experience scale were high, and the preservice teachers reported positive attitudes towards the school experience course. As a result, preservice teachers showed a positive attitude towards the school experience course, and the learning outcomes of the school experience course have been reached. In line with the findings obtained as a result of the study, suggestions were made to teachers and researchers.

INTRODUCTION

Learning occurs through lived experiences. The more a student spends rich lives by doing and living, the more s/he becomes ready for life and learns to discover effective and productive learning ways. In today's World of the information age, the challenge of being among the developed countries continues at full speed. The developed countries see the basic condition of being ahead in this struggle as increasing the quality of education with the support and investment provided in education (Tekeli, 2004). Education is primarily a process of raising good, moral, virtuous people; the main actors are teachers. First, decreasing humanitarian, cultural, and moral crises and problems faced by the world and our country will be possible with teachers and educators who are role models in these issues (High Education Council [HEC], 2018).

The basic institutions that meet the educational needs of societies are schools. The definition of the teaching profession, which is the most crucial element fulfilling this function, is "a set of activities whose rules are determined by the society based on systematic knowledge and skills gained through a certain education to produce useful goods and services and earn money in return" (Kuzgun, 2000). The definition of National Education in the Fundamental Law of National Education; is expressed as a specialization profession that takes the state's education, training, and related administrative duties (Ministry of National Education [MNE], 2006). The teacher should create the desired behavioural change in the students in line with the programs by organizing planned educational activities within the framework of a certain program against the people they will serve (Erden, 2005). The most crucial element of an education system is the teacher. No matter how well the goals are determined in education and training and how functionally the content of the course is selected and organized, it is impossible to achieve the expected result from education unless it is conducted in the hands of teachers with those goals and understanding (Sünbül, 2001).

The main purpose of teacher training institutions is to make preservice teachers have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to fulfill the professional requirements of their age. Preservice teachers acquire this knowledge and skills based on two primary sources. The first is the education they receive at the faculty, and the second is the education they receive in practice schools. Teacher training; is a systematic program designed to increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes about education and classroom activities (Rıza, 1996). It is of great importance for social development that teachers are trained to meet the needs of the age. This importance necessitates teachers to undertake various roles in the development and

socialization of the individual. The most important of these roles is the role of guiding the acquisition of knowledge by the student. With this role, the teacher creates the desired behavioural changes in the student, gives him good relations, and makes him competent (Gürses et al., 2005). In this context, teacher training is a multidimensional and comprehensive subject. Almost every country has education-related problems, and teacher training is one of the issues at the centre of discussions about education. Issues include integrating theory and practice in the teacher training process, establishing strong inter-institutional cooperation, and providing expert/guidance teacher support in the implementation process. Research and practice-based teacher education and training more qualified and well-equipped teachers are at the centre of discussions worldwide. A critical issue in teacher education is ensuring the balance between theory and practice and integrating them. The definition of the work done in institutions that train preservice teachers is to prepare them for the profession. However, the training and development of teachers in practice are as important as preparatory education or even more (HEC, 2018). Subjects include the selection of preservice teachers, pre-service training, application (internship) period, monitoring and evaluation studies, and in-service training, all included in the teacher training concept. Qualified teachers can provide a good and qualified education because teachers have the most significant role in raising qualified human resources in society (Yıldız, 2006). Therefore, "A school is only as good as its teachers" (Kavcar, 2002). It is possible to train individuals at all levels and institutions that will direct society if teachers have the competencies to raise these individuals (Arı & Kiraz, 1999). Pre-service education is very important in determining, training, and developing qualified teachers (Yeşilyurt, 2010). Increasing the qualifications of the teaching profession is possible by first knowing the competencies teachers should have and then gaining these competencies for teachers and preservice teachers through pre-service and in-service training programs. The fact that education and training have a dynamic structure in all their dimensions makes it necessary to constantly question and develop the teacher's duty, who has a key role in this process, and the qualifications required by this task (HEC, 1998; 2006; MNE, 2006).

School experience course is an important course that improves teacher qualifications, especially general and special field competencies required by profession, and contributes to their becoming experienced and equipped (Şaşmaz Ören et al., 2009). According to Gökçe (2005), the most important function of school practices in teacher training programs is to introduce the teaching profession and to contribute to the professional development of preservice teachers by practising teachers working in schools in cooperation with participants.

Pre-service education is critical in terms of gaining professional knowledge, skills, and behaviour for teachers to be qualified to meet their needs.

Pre-service teachers can make their theoretical knowledge meaningful with application activities thanks to pre-service education and put it into practice with applications (Yeşilyurt, 2010). While preparing the preservice teachers for the teaching profession, it is essential to do practical work with the teachers and students in the classroom environment. Prepare preservice teachers for the teaching profession better, to enable them to gain the competence to use the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits related to the general culture, special field education, and the teaching profession in a real educational environment. The National Education in our country in 1998 was based on the relevant provisions of the Basic Law, the Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of National Education (MNE), and the Law on Higher Education (HEC) to gain the teaching profession culture. school experience courses have been introduced in teacher training institutions. The school experience course, one of the practical studies to be carried out in schools, consists of planned observations and activities that introduce many tasks that make up the teaching profession for pre-service teachers. Although the aim here is effective for preservice teachers to gain new knowledge and skills. Preservice teachers need to use their knowledge of the faculty effectively in their professional lives. This is possible if preservice teachers do these practices in pre-service education sufficiently (Demir, 2012). The school experience course is an important course that contributes to developing preservice teachers' teacher qualifications and becoming experienced and equipped, especially in the general and special field competencies required by profession. In the context of this course, the activities and tasks performed by preservice teachers in practice schools enable them to observe experienced teachers on duty, to work individually and with small groups, and to gain teaching experience for short periods (Ergüneş, 2005). However, with the Council of Higher Education updated in the teacher training undergraduate programs in 2018, the school experience courses were removed from the 2018-2019 academic year and the teaching practice course was spread over two terms, and the school experience course was included in this course. For this reason, it is thought that the opinions of preservice teachers about how effective practice courses are on preservice teachers, what the problems they encounter in practice courses, and what can be suggested for solutions can be beneficial.

The school experience course is based on observation and interviews so preservice teachers can get to know the school, students, program, and teachers. Based on all this information, this study aims to determine the opinions of preservice teachers about the school

experience course. In this direction, it is aimed to determine the opinions of preservice teachers about the school experience course according to their gender, the program they are studying, and the questions on the scale.

METHODS

The research is a descriptive field study. Field research includes people's views and evaluations on any topic. The scientific nature of field research stems from its inclusion of variables related to society and the individual (Karasar, 2018).

Study Group

This research is about determining the views of students who have taken the school experience course. The research group consists of 3rd and 4th-grade students studying in Sivas province Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Education and Faculty of Sports. 4th-grade students with pedagogical formation and students from 12 different branches in total who graduated with the same qualifications participated in this study. This study was applied to 500 randomly selected students who took school experience courses in 66 schools in Sivas city. Three hundred three (303) (60.6%) of the preservice teachers participating in the study were female and 197 (39.4%) were male. Table 1 shows the number of participants according to their departments.

Table 1
Distribution of the Sample Group by Gender and Departments

Gender	f	%
Female	303	60.6
Male	197	39.4
Department	f	%
Pre-school Teaching	84	16.8
Physical Education and Sports Teaching	83	16.6
Classroom Teaching	81	16.2
Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teaching	55	11.0
Maths Teaching	51	10.2
Arts Teaching	40	8.0
Turkish Teaching	37	7.4
Science Teaching	20	4.0
Music Teaching	18	3.6
Religious Culture and Ethics Teaching	12	2.4
Social Studies Teaching	11	2.2
History Teaching	8	1.6
Total	500	100.0

Data Collection Tools

The research data were collected using the "Attitude Scale Towards School Experience Courses" developed by Kılınç and Salman (2007). The scale was designed in two parts including demographic information and determining attitudes towards school experience course. Demographic information is in the form of multiple choice and filling the gap and the items in the scale to determine the attitudes towards the school experience course are 5-point Likert type. Fourteen of which are positive and six are negative. Positive item expressions in the scale are rated as Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1) and negative items are scored opposite. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 20 and the highest score is 100. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.94.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency (n), percentage (%), mean (X), and standard deviation (Ss) were used in the analysis of the data. An Independent Sample T-Test was used to determine whether there was a difference between two independent variables, and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was applied to determine whether there were differences between the two or more independent variables.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the possible risks and benefits of the study, and written consent was obtained from them at the beginning of the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration which protocol conforms to the ethical guidelines of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki. In addition, written consent forms were obtained from all participants, who were completely informed about the study.

RESULTS

In this section, findings were presented according to students' attitudes toward school experience course.

In Table 2, the total attitude scores of the pre-service teachers obtained from the scale were compared according to gender variable and significant differences were found in favor of female preservice teachers ($p < 0.05$). According to this research, it can be stated that female preservice teachers developed more positive attitudes towards the school experience course than male preservice teachers'.

Table 2
Comparison of Pre-Service Teachers' Scale Total Attitude Scores by Gender

Gender	n	Mean	Sd	Min.	Max.	Result
Female	303	65.01	6.78	32.00	83.00	t= 0.962 p= 0.029*
Male	197	64.35	8.58	32.00	92.00	
Total	500	64.75	7.54	32.00	92.00	

* $p < 0.05$

In Table 3, the total attitude scores of the preservice teachers obtained from the scale were compared according to the variable of the department and significant differences were found among them ($p < 0.05$). When the groups are compared by two; a significant difference was found between the Mathematics Teaching and Classroom Teaching departments in favor of preservice teachers of the Mathematics Teaching department. Between Art Teaching and Classroom Teaching departments, significant differences were found in favor of preservice teachers of the Classroom Teaching Department. According to this, it is seen that preservice teachers of the Mathematics Teaching department have a higher level of positive attitudes towards the school experience course than preservice teachers in Classroom Teaching and preservice teachers in Classroom Teaching than preservice teachers at the Art Teaching department.

Table 3
Comparison of Pre-Service Teachers' Scale Total Attitude Scores According to Their Departments (ANOVA)

Department	N	Mean	SS	Min.	Max.	p
Physical Education and Sports Teaching	83	65.44	8.67	40.00	92.00	F= 2.518 p=0.004*
Turkish Teaching	37	63.83	6.46	43.00	76.00	
Maths Teaching	51	62.07	10.27	32.00	78.00	
Arts Teaching	40	62.12	9.58	34.00	77.00	
Science Teaching	20	63.95	8.25	37.00	76.00	
Music Teaching	18	61.44	7.39	36.00	69.00	
Social Studies Teaching	11	65.00	6.78	52.00	73.00	
Classroom Teaching	81	66.97	7.16	44.00	83.00	
Religious Culture and Ethics Teaching	12	66.58	6.24	57.00	77.00	
Pre-school Teaching	84	65.45	4.24	56.00	76.00	
Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teaching	55	65.76	5.08	54.00	76.00	
History Teaching	8	61.87	5.89	50.00	70.00	
Total	500	64.75	7.54	32.00	92.00	

* $p < 0.05$

In the Table 4, the distribution of the participants according to the answers given to the questions in the scale is examined with frequencies and percentages.

Table 4
Distribution of the Participants According to Their Answers to the Questions in the Scale

EXPRESSIONS	Strongly Not Agree		Not Agree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. I think school experience courses are necessary	50	10	32	6.4	32	6.4	140	28	246	49.2
2. I think there are breaks in the faculty-school cooperation	44	8.8	89	17.8	104	20.8	152	30.4	111	22.2
3. I liked the teaching profession thanks to the school experience courses	34	6.8	45	9	87	17.4	181	36.2	151	30.2
4. The negative attitudes of students in internship schools reduced my interest in these courses	146	29.2	187	37.4	86	17.2	56	11.2	25	5
5. I believe lecture, teacher and student observations are useful	26	5.2	45	9	54	10.8	176	35.2	195	39
6. I'm looking for ways to escape from class in internship schools	213	42.6	129	25.8	60	12	52	10.4	43	8.6
7. I think internship teachers do not know the content and purpose of the courses	82	16.4	101	20.2	135	27	111	22.2	67	13.4
8. I find the time set for the school experience course long	95	19	133	26.6	102	20.4	95	19	73	14.6
9. I believe I have gained teaching experience	36	7.2	32	6.4	85	17	194	38.8	147	29.4
10. I'm bored with the observations in the school experience courses	116	23.2	149	29.8	93	18.6	75	15	64	12.8
11. I think I have improved in assessment and evaluation	33	6.6	59	11.8	122	24.4	196	39.2	87	17.4
12. I encountered good examples in school experience courses	25	5	49	9.8	89	17.8	218	43.6	118	23.6
13. I think that some of my skills that I did not notice in undergraduate education improved with the school experience	25	5	46	9.2	81	16.2	225	45	123	24.6
14. Thanks to my school experience, I have turned away from the teaching profession	217	43.4	153	30.6	56	11.2	33	6.6	37	7.4
15. I believe I beat my excitement in the classroom thanks to the school experience	41	8.2	69	13.8	77	15.4	198	39.6	110	22.2
16. I think school teachers are supportive and encouraging	41	8.2	53	10.6	96	19.2	186	37.2	122	24.4
17. I am happy to transfer what I have learned to daily life	20	4	39	7.8	92	18.4	210	42	135	27
18. I learned that field knowledge alone will not be enough to be a teacher	25	5	45	9	50	10	190	38	189	37.8
19. I think the school experience course is unnecessary	241	48.2	117	23.4	52	10.4	38	7.6	50	10
20. I benefited from the constructive suggestions and criticisms of the school, administration and teachers about the activities	46	9.2	74	14.8	93	18.6	206	41.2	80	16

As seen in Table 4, in the first question 246 (49.2%) students answered “strongly agree”; in the second question 152 (30.4%) students indicated that they “agree”; in the third question answered 181 (36.4%) students were “agree”; in the fourth question 187 (37.4%) students marked “not agree”; in fifth question 195 (39.0%) students answered “strongly agree”; in the sixth question 213 (42.6%) students answered “strongly disagree”; in the seventh question 135 (27.0%) students were “undecided”; in the eighth question 133 (26.6%) students answered “not agree”; in the ninth question 194 (38.8%) students answered “agree”; in the tenth question 149 (29.8%) students answered “not agree”; in the eleventh question 122 (24.4%) students were undecided; in the twelfth question 218 (43.6%) students answered “agree”; in the thirteenth question 225 (45%) students answered “agree”; in the fourteenth question 217 (43.4%) students answered strongly not agree”; in the fifteenth question 198 (39.6%) students answered “agree”; in the sixteenth question 186 (37.2%) students answered “agree”; in the seventeenth question 210 (42%) students answered “agree”; in the eighteenth question 190 (38%) students answered “agree”; in the nineteenth question 241 (48.2%) students answered “strongly not agree”; in the twentieth question 206 (41.2%) students answered “agree”.

DISCUSSION

In this research, the attitudes of preservice teachers who are studying in different departments towards school experience courses were examined. According to the research findings, female preservice teachers' attitude scores towards school experience were high in terms of gender variable and the difference in favor of female preservice teachers was significant ($p < 0.05$). When the literature was examined, similar and different studies were found with the research results. In their study, Şaşmaz-Ören et al. (2009) determined preservice teachers' attitudes towards School Experience Course I and School Experience Course II. The results of their study revealed that the attitudes of the preservice teachers towards the school experience courses were positive, there was no significant difference in terms of attitude between the male and female preservice teachers. It was observed that their attitudes towards the department did not differ according to the variables of education type (primary and secondary education), age, the type of high school graduated from, and the source of the problem encountered in the practice school. According to Demir et al. (2015),

classroom preservice teachers' attitudes towards school experience courses do not differ significantly according to gender ($p > 0.05$). Although the attitudes of male classroom preservice teachers towards school experience courses are higher than female classroom preservice teachers' attitudes towards school experience courses, this difference between them is not significant. In the studies of Şaşmaz-Ören et al. (2009), preservice teachers' attitudes towards school experience courses do not differ significantly according to gender ($p > 0.05$). Although the attitudes of female preservice teachers ($X = 70.815$) are more positive than male preservice teachers ($X = 69.479$), this result is not at a level that would make a significant difference. Sarıtaş (2007), evaluated the school experience course in terms of teacher and student dimensions in his study. According to this; the School Experience Course I application is more beneficial for male preservice teachers than female preservice teachers in terms of gender. According to the evaluations of pre-service teachers in terms of gender, female pre-service teachers find the School Experience course I application more beneficial for pre-service teachers than male pre-service teachers.

According to our research findings, the total attitude scores of the preservice teachers obtained from the scale were compared according to the department variable and significant differences were found between them ($p < 0.05$). When the research is examined; Şaşmaz-Ören et al. (2009), found that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of preservice teachers towards school experience courses and the department variable ($p > 0.05$). In other words, students' attitudes do not change significantly according to their departments. Saraç (2004), examined the interests and expectations of the students of the Fine Arts Education Department for the School Experience Course I. When the researcher compared the interest and expectation levels of the students in the Art and Music Teaching programs, no significant difference was found ($p > 0.05$) between them. Sarıtaş (2007), investigated the school experience course in terms of teachers and students and the faculty they graduated from. According to this, the teachers who graduated from the faculty of science and literature, took the School Experience Course I application more useful for preservice teachers than teachers working in the field of social sciences than the teachers who graduated from the education faculty; In terms of two basic sciences, teachers who work in the field of science. According to the preservice teachers who graduated from the field of social

sciences found the School Experience I course application more useful for them than preservice teachers who graduated from the field of science.

In our study, when the distribution of the participants' answers to the questions in the scale is examined with frequencies and percentages; it is seen that the attitude rates towards the School Experience course are generally high and positive. When similar studies are examined; In the study of Güven (2004), which she applied to preservice teachers, it was revealed that all of the preservice teachers found school practices very useful and would positively affect their professional development. Bilgin Aksu & Demirtaş (2006) state that preservice teachers found the course useful and that practice and cooperation should be developed in order for the course to be more effective. According to Aydın et al. (2007), it can be said that the School Experience application is significantly useful for preservice teachers. These practices caused preservice teachers to feel like teachers and positively change their opinions towards the teaching profession. However, some preservice teachers realized that the teaching profession was more difficult than anticipated. However, their interest in the teaching profession increased significantly with the practice courses. Many preservice teachers gained experience with the application work and had the opportunity to see their shortcomings before the service. However, the coordination between the Faculty - Practice School, the communication with the school administrators, and the counseling skills of some application teachers were insufficient compared to the preservice teachers. According to Saracaloğlu et al.'s (2011) study, preservice teachers generally had a positive opinion about the school experience course and this opinion did not differ according to gender and socio-economic level of the school they attended for school experience. According to the study of Oğuz (2004), it is seen that the School Experience I course positively affects the pre-service teachers' views towards the profession. Participants think that the School Experience course I is particularly important in terms of giving the opportunity to get to know the teaching profession, which requires responsibility, patience, and dedication. Baştürk (2009), aimed to reveal the views of mentor teachers about School Experience / Teaching Practice courses and preservice teachers in their study. The scanning model was used in the study conducted with six application teachers working in three different provinces

and having intern students. According to the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, it was concluded that the mentor teachers wanted to receive training in mentoring and found this job beneficial in terms of professional development. But the activities of the preservice teachers within the scope of the School Experience were not fully known by the mentor teachers. Yapıcı & Yapıcı (2004), tried to determine the opinions of the preservice teachers about the School Experience course I in their study. The study, in which descriptive analysis was used was conducted with preservice teachers who were studying in the Department of Classroom Teaching and taking the School Experience Course I. In the light of the data obtained from the activity reports and activity evaluation and analysis reports; It was concluded that the School Experience course I is a useful and functional course. But there are serious problems that need to be solved in practice.

It is very important for preservice teachers to be educated especially in terms of professional knowledge. That is to have sufficiently developed motor, cognitive and affective characteristics related to the field they will teach. It has been found that especially teachers who are new to the profession have basic problems such as not being able to provide classroom discipline, not being able to evaluate student work, not being able to use appropriate materials, not knowing questioning techniques, not being able to motivate their students and perceive individual differences (Azar, 2003). In addition, in the study conducted by Şaşmaz-Ören et al. (2009); preservice teachers state that the mentor teachers do not know the aims of this course sufficiently. According to the study of Akkoç (2003), approximately 12% of the sample group had adaptation problems with the mentor teachers. In another study, it is seen that preservice teachers generally think negatively about mentor teachers and are not satisfied with mentor teachers (Yıldız, 2006). According to the research findings of Kocatürk (2006), the preservice teachers think the mentor teachers and application instructors do not adequately guide them. According to our research results, 27% of the participants stated that they were undecided.

Considering the number of courses and the time dimension, it is seen that the preservice teachers generally think that the hour and number of this course should be increased. Almost half of the participants in the research of Kudu et al. (2006), similarly

state that the duration of the school experience program is insufficient to understand the school and students. Preservice teachers see school experience courses as both useful and necessary. Students describe these courses as; "very important, useful, must be an indispensable part of the profession in terms of gaining experience". According to Demir et al. (2015), the first three items that classroom preservice teachers have the highest positive attitude are "I think school experience courses are necessary", "I think courses, school. teacher and student observations are useful" and "I believe that I overcome my excitement in front of the classroom thanks to the school experience". The first three items on which they had the lowest positive attitude were "I got away from the teaching profession thanks to my school experience", "I realized that the teaching practice courses were not for me thanks to my teaching experience" and "The negative attitudes of students in internship schools reduced my interest in these courses". According to the studies of Oğuz (2004) and Köse (2014), it is seen that the School Experience course I positively affects the attitude of preservice teachers towards the profession.

Participants think that the School Experience course I is particularly important in providing an opportunity to get to know the teaching profession and teaching that the profession requires responsibility, patience, and dedication. Kara & Altuntaş (2013), concluded in their study that preservice teachers liked the teaching profession more thanks to the School Experience course. Similarly, almost all of the participants (96.5%) in the research of Kudu et al. (2006), stated that the school experience course was a useful study and most of them (about 90%) gained teaching experience with these practices. In our study, almost half of them (49.2%) stated that the school experience course was necessary and thanks to this course, they liked the teaching profession, gained teaching experience, and developed their skills that they did not notice during undergraduate education. Similar results were found with the statement; "I think the school experience course is unnecessary" (48%). As a result, it is seen that the School Experience Course I and School Experience Course II; which are currently removed from the curriculum have achieved their purpose as long as they remain in practice. On the other hand, there should be strong communication between the practice school, the teacher candidate, and the instructor triangle for the future

regarding this course that has spread throughout the teaching practice. In this way, many problems faced by students in the practice school can be solved easily and in a short time. According to the recent study of Kırçıçek & Yüksel (2019), when we look at the theme of the place of the school experience course in the program, the majority of the academicians stated that the course should not be cancelled, and this course is necessary to get to know the school environment.

CONCLUSION

As a result, although different results have been obtained in different studies about the school experience course, it is of great importance when a teacher starts the profession, and it can be said that this course gives students many experiences before starting the profession and makes them ready for the profession.

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Authors' contributions

All authors carried out the research design together. The first and second author was involved in the data collection process. The third and fourth authors took responsibility for data analysis and interpretation of the data. All authors contributed to the discussion of the results and the manuscript's preparation.

Conflict of interest declaration

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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