

# Guru Penggerak and Transforming Schools Withing the Framework of Appreciative Inquiry

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## Abstract

The “Guru Penggerak” program is one of the most important parts of the “merdeka belajar” policy. Mobilizing teachers are designated as agents of transformation to reform the education system from the smallest unit, namely schools. This study aims to find and examine important discourses about the role of agents in the process of organizational transformation by focusing on the role of the guru penggerak in driving school transformation process by appreciative inquiry framework. The method used is a qualitative method with a constructivist approach by referring to theoretical analysis and document study. The results of this study indicate that the guru penggerak program shifted the management of change in education from a centralized pattern towards decentralization with activating teachers as agents and schools as centers of transformation. Guru penggerak plays a role in bringing the new vision of learning and spreading this vision to all stakeholders. The process of transformation that is driven by the guru penggerak is carried out using an appreciative inquiry approach to explore the potential and strength of change from within the school through a dialogue process so as to minimize the occurrence of counterproductive resistance.

**Keywords:** Transformation, Transformation Leader, Appreciative Inquiry

## 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Culture has established the Merdeka Belajar Program as a package of government initiatives in reforming the quality of education. Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim revealed that education reform in Indonesia cannot be carried out solely using an administrative approach, but must carry out cultural transformation. Each educational unit must have the capacity to change its school culture to be oriented towards a culture of learning and innovation instead of focusing on administrative areas (Nadiem, 2020).

Nadiem (2020) also explained that the "Merdeka Belajar Program" is basically an effort by the government to streamline the administrative burden that shackles the flexibility of schools and teachers in innovating. Through Merdeka Belajar, teachers are expected to have a "growth mindset", so as to be able to carry out various effective learning innovations for students. In addition, from the perspective of students, Merdeka Belajar is expected to create "psychological safety" in the learning process so that students can cultivate the habit of asking a lot, trying a lot, and a lot of work without having to worry about experiencing failure.

Some studies link "Freedom of Learning" with schools in educational philosophy. The Merdeka Belajar program is stated to have parallels with the philosophy of progressivism education which both emphasizes the independence and flexibility of educational institutions in exploring optimally the abilities, intelligence, and potential of students in a flexible, natural, fun and democratic way (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Merdeka Belajar is also considered to have essential similarities with the concept of Critical Pedagogy, especially in realizing the autonomy of educational institutions, the freedom of teachers from the shackles of bureaucracy, and the freedom of students in learning according to their preferences (Prahani et al., 2020). According to Hendri's research (2020) 'Merdeka Belajar' is even considered relevant to the humanistic theory, constructivistics and the concept of learning 'Taman Siswa' which was initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara.

One of the programs contained in the independent learning policy package is the mobilizing teacher program. This program aims to boost the potential of teachers and increase students' independence in learning. Mobilizing teachers are part of the process of reforming education towards better change, and have a fundamental role in the implementation of independent learning. The Minister of Education and Culture at the launch of independent learning episode 5 about mobilizing teachers explained that "mobilizing teachers is a program of identification and training of future educational leaders. Driving teachers are agents who in the future will be candidates for principals, school superintendents and coaches of training programs". The driving teacher program has basically completely changed the approach to education reform that has been running centrally or centralized to be more decentralized by transferring autonomy and zones of change to the smallest component of the education system, namely teachers. Through the mobilizing teacher program, teachers are placed as reforming agents who play an important role in transforming school culture to be superior and innovative (Nadiem, 2020).

Based on some literature it can be known that there is a conceptual difference between the terms change and transformation. According to Tosey and Robinson (2002), transformation can be distinguished from the term change based on several perspectives. First, transformation is part of the change. However, the term transformation is used for the essential process of change, namely changing the shape, structure, and nature of something. Second, transformation is the highest form of organizational change that mediates the phase between ordinary change and evolution. According to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), the term transformation is also distinguished by the term change in the number of stakeholders involved and its impact on the core values embraced by the organization. Scharmer (2018) explains that transformation means changing the paradigm/mental model and not just changing behavior. Based on this perspective, it can be seen that transformation is greater, broader, and deeper than the term organizational change because it involves not only the material aspect, but also the spiritual aspect (Scharmer, 2018).

Based on the explanation above, there is a clear signal that the driving teacher will take a strategic role in transforming the education system. Mobilizing teachers are expected to play an important role in building a positive vision and culture in the school. Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel, Iwan Syahril (2020) explained that driving teachers will play a role in advancing Indonesian education by creating student-centered learning and driving a better educational ecosystem through changing the learning mindset. According to Iwan (2020), all of this can be done from a strong sincerity and enthusiasm to continue to learn and share among prospective Mobilizing Teachers and this is the key to continuing to undergo the educational process and carry out educational transformation.

We seek to find and examine important discourses about the role of change agents in the process of organizational change by focusing on the role of driving teachers in driving the process of change in schools, especially in starting to launch a vision of change, practicing changes in the learning process, to become a learning leader in developing schools.

## **2. Research Methods**

This research uses qualitative conceptual research methods using a constructivistic approach. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as an approach tracing to explore and understand a central symptom (Raco, 2010:7). Qualitative research is a multi-method that focuses, involves interpretation, a natural approach to the subject matter (Pradoko, 2017).

This research tries to construct knowledge on the basis of an in-depth study of the literature related to the role of agents of change in the process of school transformation. Chandra and Sang (2017:90) describe constructivism in qualitative research as subjective knowledge consisting of interpretive textual analysis, discourse analysis, theorization processes, and complex theorizations constructed based on reality. The role of the driving teacher in this article will be explained and contextualized based on an appreciative inquiry perspective. The appreciative inquiry perspective is used as a theoretical lens in defining, analyzing, explaining and understanding the phenomenon of the driving teacher as the agent driving the transformation process in schools.

Such appreciative inquiry perspectives are integrated with data collection from an in-depth review of the document. The study of this document allows researchers to obtain information and images from sources in the form of text, symbols, images and graphs about the situation and research background, especially about the profile and role of the driving teacher in the transformation process as stated in the Driving Teacher Training Module Document. The document talking about each of the roles and design of the driving teacher training as launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture consists of four types of modules. However, due to limited accessibility and research focus, the study of documents in the form of modules is limited to module 1, which is related to the vision and paradigm of the driving teacher. The module is considered relevant to the research considering that the content of the module illustrates the application of an appreciative inquiry approach in transforming the vision, paradigm, and culture of the school.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Change is a phenomenon that is undoubtedly and prevalent within organizations. According to Kotter and Rathgeber (2006:21), the changes experienced by organizations can include changes in structure, processes, even changes and cultural transformations. The process of change becomes more complex as the interactions and interrelated relationships between the components in the organization become more and more complex. The explanation suggests that to map and construct a complete knowledge about the role of driving teachers as agents of change in the transformation of school culture, it is necessary to first highlight the study and discourse on the concepts and characteristics of changes that occur in schools.

#### 3.1 *The Reality of Change and Transformation*

School as a place for building the character of students is always undergoing dynamic changes. In creating superior human resources, schools have a very strategic role, where schools are places where educators or teachers transfer knowledge, cultural cultivation, and also a place for character building to students.

Changes and transformations in educational institutions actually depart from two factors, namely external and internal factors. In order to maintain its relevance, contemporary educational institutions are required to follow the direction of the times, so they must have even adhered to the principle of openness that is not reactive, but always prioritize a proactive attitude in facing the dynamics of the environment so that the process of change and transformation will be a must inherent in school organizations (Joesoef, 2011). Internal factors that drive change in schools include (1) relationship problems between school components, (2) problems related to work mechanisms, and (3) financial problems (Herita Dewi, 2020).

According to Utari (2020: 452-455) the dynamics that occur from internal and external aspects of the school that cause school pressure to change are as follows: 1) the encouragement to become more accountable, 2) the occurrence of population changes, 3) the lack of human resources both in terms of quality and quantity, 4) the processes carried out by members of the organization and the circumstances of the members of the organization itself that affect the course of the process.

School transformation as stated above can then be classified into several fundamental changes as stated by Utari (2020: 452-455) and Kasali (2007: 66) namely: structural changes, program changes, and changes related to human resources (HR). According to Lunenburg and Ornstein(2004:52-61) successful school transformation and change requires at least five stages of change. The stages are:

- a. Diagnose/explore the current state of the school and identify the desired state of affairs.
- b. Creation of a school's strategic vision Strategic planning school change
- c. Development of commitment, participation, cooperation, and support from the management (principal, foundation owner) for the changes made.
- d. Stabitation, integration and consolidation of changes.

The stages of school transformation as described above are the criteria that determine whether the transformation process that occurs leads to better forms and characteristics or not. School transformation also needs to be prepared on an ongoing and continuous basis so that the contribution of change to improving performance competencies and all educational staff is really felt so that it can have a good impact on improving the quality of education.

The process of change in schools requires a "reformer" or agent of change and an agent of transformation, namely certain subjects in the school that are able to bring about change and total renewal (Widodo, 2017: 287-306). According to Shaked and Schechter (Shaked & Schechter, 2016: 7) agents involved in the transformation process have a great responsibility in bringing about and connecting the aspirations of change from all stakeholders.

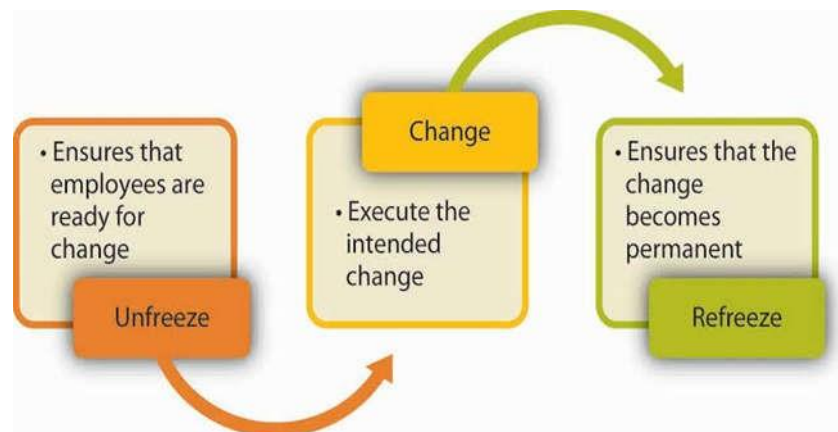
When referring to the concept of organizational transformation, the existence and role of renewal agents is very important, especially in guiding renewal and change into a new type of culture in the organization (Rogers, 1983). An agent of change is any individual who has sufficient knowledge and power in guiding and facilitating organizational transformation efforts (Kasali, 2007:276). Organizational transformation acts as a link between the source of change and the system of members of the organization that is the target of transformation. In addition, agents of change also play a role in building awareness of the need for change, developing information exchange relationships, identifying fundamental problems, transforming intentions and visions into action, adopting transformation and innovation, caring for adoption of transformation, and developing relationships with members who are targeted for transformation, so that they can adopt changes into new paradigms and habits in a sustainable manner (Anwar, 2008). The existence, role, and activity of change agents are essential in change strategies especially to strengthen propulsion and at the same time weaken and even eliminate the resisting power of change (McShane & Glinow, 2008: 492).

The transformation process in schools requires the development of creative plans, the support of the resources that make them happen, accompanied by institutionalization (Andriani, 2008: 52-61). A change agent needs to understand and analyze the circumstances that exist in the school when it comes to carrying out change steps in the school so that the changes carried

out achieve success effectively and efficiently. According to Fullan (2020:15), the assumptions of organizational change that need to be understood are as follows: (1) change is the continuous transformation and development of new ideas; (2) change relates to ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty for the perpetrators; (3) conflict and insecurity are fundamental aspects needed for successful change; (4) requires motivating efforts for individuals to change; (5) takes time; (6) dealing with various reasons for refusal of change; (7) not all individuals or groups are acceptable to change; (8) requires evolutionary planning and problem-solving models based on an understanding of the process of change; (9) requires a combination of decisions on the spot and intuition; and (10) it requires cultural change.

### 3.2 Guru Penggerak & School Transformation Process

According to Lewin (1951:54), the process of change generally consists of three stages, namely unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. The process explains how the current situation is changed and moved towards the desired condition and then makes the new system a culture that is sustainably maintained. Here's an illustration:



Sumber:

McShane dan Von Glinow, *Organizational Behavior: Emerging Realities for The Workplace Revolution*

McShane and Glinow (2008:492) explain the above flow that with reference to the process of "unfreezing" the current situation can be carried out when the driving force of change is greater than the force that resists change. The explanation suggests that organizational change can be pursued when change leaders can choose between three approaches, namely engulfing the driving force of change more than the force that resists change, weakening or eliminating the forces that resist change, or combining two things at once.

If the choice falls on the first approach, then the change leader must increase the driving force to motivate change. However, change is very rare to occur simply by increasing the driving force because the force that resists the change will always compensate for the driving force of the change. This condition corresponds to the law of system dynamics that the greater the thrust exerted on a system the stronger the holding force to push back. The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back (Senge, 2004:43). This kind of antagonism will actually threaten efforts for change because it will generate tension and conflict within the organization. According to McShane, the best option is to combine efforts to strengthen the driving force and at the same time weaken and even eliminate the resisting power of change. Strengthening the driving force of change can be done by creating an urgency / urgency to change. According to McShane and Glinow (2008), change leaders need to explain the external dynamics of their organizations either by explaining the development of competitors or changing customer tendencies and connecting them all with the opportunities and threats faced by the organization. Such an explanation can encourage members of the organization to feel the significance and urgency of its organizational change.

Based on the perspective of organizational change above, the decision of the Minister of Education and Culture to run the mobilizing teacher program as a support for the realization of independent learning is a systemic effort when referring to the perspective of organizational change theory. Nadiem (2020) in the launch of independent learning episode 5 about mobilizing teachers on July 3, 2020 explained that "mobilizing teachers is a program for the identification and training of future educational leaders. Mobilizing teachers are agents who in the future will be candidates for principals, school

superintendents and coaches of training programs". Based on this context, the mobilizing teacher program can be said to be an initial initiation in realizing independent learning. The presence of driving teachers in schools from the beginning was aimed at changing the school culture by involving the power of resources from within the school itself and not from external forces. According to Kotter and Rathgeber (2006) any transformation process taken from within the organization such as through this driving teacher program can strengthen the driving force of change and at the same time minimize resistance or resistance to change.

The Minister of Education and Culture also said that teachers as drivers of the transformation of Indonesian education are expected to support holistic student growth and development so that they develop into pancasila students, become trainers or other teacher mentors for student-centered learning, and become role models and transformation agents for the education ecosystem" (Kholisdinuka, 2020). The driving teacher becomes a change agent who can transform the educational ecosystem, and have another impact on other teachers and their educational institutions. In addition, mobilizing teachers are prioritized and prepared to become the seeds of superior principals so that in the future there will be a generation of mobilizers who are able to lead the school transformation process towards a more comprehensive scale of improving the quality of education.

Mobilizing teachers will experience education and training conducted through an andragogy approach and based on their experiences during teaching. The procedure for implementing mobilizing teachers programmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture begins with recruiting teachers, then after that the education of prospective mobilizing teachers is held, and then it is expected to be able to produce a new generation of teachers who will later become principals, school supervisors, and teacher training instructors. During the training and education period this prospective mobilizing teacher will be trained on how his leadership is, trained about his mentorship and their ability to make changes in the school, after graduation it will become a driving teacher.

The Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel (GTK) stated that "the education process and assessment of driving teachers based on the andragogy approach, we must focus on on the job learning so that it means learning that is relevant, contextual, so that it has the best impact so that the educational process and assessment of this driving teacher are based on impact and evidence" (Syahril, 2020). So we can understand that the education of driving teachers really creates teachers who are not only good at educating but in the long run, this driving teacher program is an effort to prepare future leaders who certainly bring changes to the education ecosystem towards a better direction.

The debriefing given during the mobilizing teacher education is that the teacher is given an understanding of the paradigm of the driving teacher, and the vision of the driving teacher which includes a reflection of The Indonesian educational philosophy, the values, roles, and vision of the driving teacher, as well as an understanding of building a positive culture in schools. In addition, the driving teacher program also aims to provide an understanding of learning practices in favor of students, and an understanding of learning leaders in school development.

### ***3.3 Guru Penggerak and Apesiative Inquiry Framework***

According to Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008:49), appreciative inquiry is a philosophy that integrates an approach and process that involves many people at different levels to produce positive and effective change. As a philosophy and framework, appreciative inquiry can be adapted and combined with various other organizational processes such as leadership, redesign of structures and systems, and even cultural transformations (values and beliefs) of the organization. Appreciative inquiry can also be defined as a coevolutionary search for what is best of what the individual, his organization, and the relevant reality around them has. In its broadest focus, the appreciative inquiry framework involves the systematic search and discovery of what can give life to biological systems in the form of everything that is most economically, ecologically, and humanitarianly most effective and constructive(Cooperrider & Suresh, 1987:132). According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010:1) appreciative inquiry is a study of everything that can give life to a human system when it functions at its best.

When referring to based on module 1.3 of the driving teacher, the school transformation process driven by the driving teacher is carried out through an appreciative inquiry approach. Although it differs in terminology, the appreciative inquiry approach has actually become an essential part of organizational change. Scharmer (2018: 177) explains that this appreciative inquiry approach is part of action research that can be used to create a new culture within the organization. Through an appreciative inquiry approach, the driving teachers manage the process of transforming education at the school level by exploring the common desires of each school citizen, gathering the driving forces and forces, appreciating every effort to improve at the slightest and aligning different interests within the school to avoid counterproductive resistance to the progress of the school.

The appreciative inquiry framework on the other hand also has the relevance of assumptions and methodologies to the principles of nature contained in the educational concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara. This principle explains that education is carried out to guide all the forces of nature that exist in children, so that they as human beings and members of society can achieve the highest safety and happiness (Dewantara, 1994:133). The conformity of the principle to the appreciative inquiry framework lies in the similarity of its assumptions, that each individual and organization has good and positive aspects, something that is inherent as a highly lived part, is effective, and manages to create healthy relationships in various dimensions of the community and stakeholders. Appreciative inquiry begins with identifying these positive aspects and

relating them to the highest potential for transformation, namely the energy, vision, and action of the individual or organization to change (Cooperrider et al., 2008). According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010), appreciative inquiry assumes that personal and organizational change will be effective if it is based on questions and dialogues about transformational strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams. This assumption is equivalent and relevant to Ki Hajar Dewantara's vision and conception of the principle of nature and systems in education. The similarity of assumptions is the basis for the use of appreciative inquiry in driving the transformation process in schools (Dharma, 2020).

According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010: 6) the appreciative inquiry process consists of several stages that are incorporated in a cycle or commonly called the 4D cycle, namely Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The 4D cycle in the appreciative inquiry was modified to be more relevant to the needs of transformation in schools into the 5D Model Cycle (Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver), a gradual change ladder model that resembles a spiral circular motion, starting from the stages of determination, search/discovery, dream building, design and implementation/execution. In Module 1.3 of the Driving Teacher, the 5D model is titled BAGJA (Make Questions, Take Lessons, Dig Dreams, Outline Plans, Arrange Executions) which in the Sundanese sense means happy.

Based on the study of the text of Module 1.3 Mobilizing Teacher Training, bagja's appreciative inquiry model can be illustrated as follows: (1) Create questions (define), at this stage the teacher sees and defines a problem by looking for existing solutions, (2) Take learning (discover), the teacher sees and identifies a process that has been and is going well, strengthens the work, focuses on the positive things that make it alive and the best, (3) Dig a dream at this stage the teacher sees a picture into the future, from the process a dream / picture is chosen that may work well in the future, because past success is used as a moving point in describing an ideal condition that is desired to occur in the future, (4) Outline a plan (design) means that the teacher plans and prioritizes processes that may work well for the future that is designed impressively, (5) Organize the execution (deliver) of the proposed design, implemented by the teacher into concrete actions that refer to competencies and experiences that have been carried out. The logical view suggests that if something goes from the 'existing' experience it has, it can evoke the confidence of that community. Then dreams become something that is very likely to happen (destiny), (Dharma, 2020).

Apabila mengacu modul 1 tentang visi guru penggerak di atas, gerakan transformasi di sekolah dimulai dengan merumuskan pertanyaan utama untuk menentukan arah penelusuran terkait transformasi yang diinginkan. Pada tahap ini guru penggerak menjelajahi alam pikiran dan persepsi warga sekolah dalam menilai apa yang selama ini menghambat kemajuan sekolah. Guru penggerak berupaya mendengar dan memperhatikan setiap aspirasi pemangku kepentingan dan membentuk satu inisiatif bersama untuk berubah ke arah yang lebih baik dalam perspektif pemangku kepentingan itu sendiri. Guru penggerak sebagai pemimpin proses transformasi di sekolah memperbesar dampak dari inisiatif bersama ini pada skala sistem yang lebih luas lagi. Pada tahapan ini, guru penggerak mengapresiasi setiap inisiatif perubahan yang disepakati dan mengubah inisiatif tersebut menjadi inspirasi yang menggerakkan segenap sumber daya sekolah. Tahap berikutnya adalah dengan mengidentifikasi berbagai unsur positif yang teramati dalam berbagai kegiatan di sekolah.

This process involves the teacher's efforts in recording and documenting the various positive experiences that students have had with activities at school and interviewing several important figures in the school in order to forge the fundamental strengths possessed by the school. The findings produced by the mobilizing teacher are discussed and integrated into the vision of change about the possibilities of forming an ideal school. This vision of an ideal school was formed to direct the attention of all school residents to give teachers and principals the opportunity to jointly design their own school change scenarios. Through a participatory inquiry approach in the school transformation process, it can reduce resistance to change because the approach brings personal thoughts owned by school residents into the group through a process of dialogue. In the context of the mobilizing teacher, the dialogue process is carried out by the driving teacher since initiating the vision and paradigm of learning in favor of the students. The dialogue process carried out between mobilizing teachers, colleagues, and school leaders is finally completed by setting various specific goals and directions of change along with measures of success from the achievement of the agreed goals and directions.

The presentation of module 1.3 The Mobilizing Teacher emphasizes several skills in leading and driving change such as visioning. Through visioning skills, the driving teacher can have a strong mental picture and image of his role as a transformation leader in the school so as to be able to align the driving forces possessed by the school so that the weaknesses of the school system become irrelevant. The vision of the driving teacher that is the basis for starting change in schools is a vision that is able to guide students to become superior and innovative students with clear many questions, many tries, and a lot of work (Dharma, 2020). Based on module 1.3, mobilizing teachers are trained to sharpen their vision through research to research and analyze the nature of their students through various research techniques and instruments. The results of this research will later be used as a road map for driving teachers in recognizing and exploring the potential, tendencies, and learning styles brought by students as their natural nature. Through the mapping process, teachers can formulate a learning service that is in accordance with their vision of change, which is oriented towards the advantages and natural needs brought by each student.

At this stage, teachers are also equipped with the skills to disseminate their vision to their colleagues and principals through various techniques such as articles, infographics, positive communication, and provide various proposals that can be

used as a basis for the Principal to make various policies at the school level that are able to condition the occurrence of a student-centered learning process so that it will slowly change the teacher's culture in carrying out the process of change in the process of change. Learning. Not only that, in module 1.3, mobilizing teachers are asked to explore various potentials of local culture around the school to be used as models, methods, and learning media.

#### 4. Conclusion

Systemic changes in schools can basically occur with both external and internal causes. External changes are more reactive because their initiative and process control tend to be centralized or centralized. Curriculum and regulatory changes are one form of change that is centralized. The discourse of the mobilizing teacher program initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture changed the mindset of change that was previously centralized to be decentralized by transferring the role, initiative, and control of the change process to the smallest educational unit, namely the school where the teacher acts as the driving force.

Transformation in schools must combine two ways at once, namely strengthening the driving force of change while minimizing and even eliminating the anchoring power that may arise during the transformation process. This change management perspective is adopted into the mobilizing teacher program through an appreciative inquiry tool where the driving teacher explores the potential and driving force from within the school through a dialogue process so as to minimize the occurrence of resistance that can withstand the transformation process so that it is counterproductive.

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