

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TRADE/ENTREPRENEURIAL SUBJECTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A PANACEA FOR PERVASIVE MEDIOCRITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine how to improve the quality of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools to address the pervasive mediocrity and unemployment among Nigerian youths. To achieve this, the study adopted descriptive survey research design. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was 147 made up of 63 administrators from the Federal and the State Ministries of Education and 84 trade/entrepreneurial subjects' teachers in secondary schools in the South-west, South-east and South-south geo-political zones of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire based on five-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by three experts and Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the internal consistency which yielded a coefficient of 0.79. The data collected were analysed using mean values. A mean of 3.5 and above were accepted while any mean less than 3.5 was rejected. The findings of the study revealed that to improve the quality of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools; there is the need for enhancement in the implementation. This will foster steady economic growth and drastically reduce unemployment such that every graduating student would have a trade to do even if the individual could not further in educational career engagement. It was recommended that government should increase funding of the programme, provide basic facilities, provide incentives to encourage entrepreneurs and ensure regular evaluation and improvement of trade/entrepreneurship programme.

Keywords: Secondary school, Mediocrity, Unemployment, Trade/Entrepreneurship, Implementation, Nigerian Youths

Introduction

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Secondary education is the type of education received after primary and before tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education are as succinctly spelt out in the National Policy on Education; to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education (FRN, 2004). This aim could be seen to embrace both self-employment or gainfully employed. Nigeria, in 1982 had adjusted her secondary educational system to encompass diversified curriculum that integrated academic with technical and vocational subjects intended to empower the individual for self-employment by producing graduates who would be able to make use of their hands, heads and heart –the 3Hs of education (Ofoha, 2011; Edeku, 2018). Little success was achieved regarding this practical-based education. Most of the machines and equipment provided then are rusting where they are kept because of lack of manpower to put them to use. Only a few number of secondary school graduates could engage themselves in this manipulative skill as designed in this laudable programme. A larger majority are in the labour market looking for jobs

which are not there. Egboh and Chukwuemeka (2012) noted with regret that less than 1% of secondary education in Nigeria is oriented technical and vocational skills. One of the major curriculum concerns in the recent years is the inclusion of trade/entrepreneurship education in the schools curricula.

Trade/entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. According to Junaidu in Obe (2018), trade/entrepreneurship subjects are meant to empower the youths upon completing their education. He further reiterated that "the whole structure of the senior secondary school was changed - English, Mathematics, Civic Education and one trade subject (vocational education) that is, either hair plaiting, or GSM repairs or fishing is compulsory. This was all done so as to make Nigerians to be job creators rather than job seekers. The main objectives of vocational education according to the FRN (2013) are: to prepare the learner for entry to employment and advancement in his chosen career; meet the

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manpower needs of the society; increase the options available to each student; serve as a motivating force of learning; and, enable the learner to wisely select a career. In order to achieve these objectives, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and the United National Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) have launched entrepreneurship curriculum project aimed at ensuring that senior secondary school students acquire functional trade and entrepreneurship skills through entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them. Entrepreneurial education could also be viewed broadly in terms of the skills that can be taught and the characteristics that can be engendered in individuals which will enable them to develop new innovative plan. Anekwe and Abraham (2009) stated that entrepreneurial education is exposing or teaching learners how to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and how to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities. Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2006) see the benefits of entrepreneurship education to include fostering economic growth, increase productivity, creation of new technologies, products and services apart from changing and rejuvenating market completion. Nwangwu (2009) presents the benefits of entrepreneurship education to include providing young graduates with enough training and support that will help them establish a career in small and medium size business apart from offering graduates adequate training in acquisition of skills and providing both small and medium scale enterprises the opportunity of recruiting graduates who will be trained and tutored in the skills relevant to the operation of the business - the implementation which has commenced nationwide.

Implementation, according to Nixon (1999), is described as the process of putting planned programme into action. It involves the actual practical application of plan, model, design and specifications. The new Senior Secondary School Curriculum which was developed by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was proposed by the National Council on Education (NCE), to be implemented from September 2011. Going by this plan, the old curriculum was to be phased out gradually until it was completely discarded by June, 2014 (Musa & Ekah, 2016). The set of 34 trade/entrepreneurship subjects are as listed below:

1. *Auto Body repair and spray painting,*
2. *Auto Electrical work,*
3. *Auto Mechanical work*
4. *Auto Parts merchandising,*
5. *Air Conditioning Refrigerator,*
6. *Welding and fabrication Engineering Craft Practice,*
7. *Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work,*
8. *Radio, TV and electrical work,*

9. *Block laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work,*
10. *Painting and Decoration*
11. *Plumbing and pipe fitting,*
12. *Machine woodworking,*
13. *Carpentry and Joinery,*
14. *Furniture Making,*
15. *Upholstery,*
16. *Catering and Craft Practice,*
17. *Garment Making,*
18. *18. Textile Trade*
19. *Dying and Bleaching,*
20. *Printing Craft Practice,*
21. *Cosmetology,*
22. *22. Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair,*
23. *23. Keyboarding,*
24. *24. Data Processing,*
25. *25. Store Keeping,*
26. *26. Book Keeping,*
27. *27. GSM maintenance,*
28. *28. Photography,*
29. *29. Tourism,*
30. *30. Mining,*
31. *31. Animal Husbandry*
32. *32. Fisheries,*
33. *33. Marketing and*
34. *34. Salesmanship. (FGN, 2013: 14).*

Despite the introduction of the trade/entrepreneurship subjects in secondary schools and the efforts by successive government at giving it a sound footing, the effect is yet to be significantly felt among Nigerian youths. Youths is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. The National Population Commission (NPC) (2013) stated that about half of the population is made of youth which is defined as individuals between 18 and 35 years of age who are supposed to be the greatest assets to nation.

According to Statistica (2018), Nigeria youth unemployment rate increases from 9.77 percent in 2012 to 13.06 percent in 2016 and as at 2017 it increased to 13.41 percent. Unemployed youth numbered about 11.1 million in 2012 and as the youth population grows so does the unemployment rises (Akande, 2014).

Unemployment is a phenomenon that occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. Unemployment could also be seen as a situation where people who fall within the working population age, capable and willing to work but are unable to obtain befitting work. In Nigeria, NBS describes an unemployed person as someone between age 15 – 64 years, capable and

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willing to work but unable to obtain any work or work for less than 40 hours within a (reference) period of 7 days. Uka in Obe (2018) stated unequivocally that unemployment remains the most critical problem facing every nation today, including Nigeria. She further stated that Nigeria occupied a prime position as the second largest economy in Africa with a population of more than 150 million people and blessed with enormous natural resources. But the spate of unemployment which is estimated to be over 38 per cent, according to World Bank statistics, with secondary school graduates mostly found among the unemployed rural inhabitants does not justify the human and material strength of the most populous black nation in the world. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2014), the consequences of youth unemployment are numerous in Nigeria. These include: insecurity, armed robbery and kidnapping, breakage of the pipelines, prostitution and other social vices. This statistics necessitates the need for introspection to ascertain the cause of mediocrity among Nigerian youth.

Mediocrity is a situation when someone is not good at something or lacks adequate skills. Microsoft (2009) describes a mediocre person as someone who lacks any special skill or flair. The nation is confronted with supply driven graduates rather than demand driven; this is a situation where graduates of institutions are turned into the market without possessing adequate skills to perform in the industries. This results in production of army of unemployed youths roaming the streets and seeking for paid jobs that are not really there (Anaele, Shobowale, Adelakun, 2015). This situation of lack of adequate skills pre-disposes the youths to mass unemployment.

Considering the benefits of trade/ entrepreneurship subjects in secondary schools; juxtaposed with the subsisting problems of implementation which had rubbished other similar laudable programmes in the past, it is on the above premise that the problem of this paper focuses on improving quality through effective implementation of trade/entrepreneurial implementation in secondary schools: The panacea for pervasive mediocrity and unemployment among Nigerian youths.

Statement of the Problem

A well-meaning nation thinks about sustainable development that is, a development that meets the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is done through meaningful empowerment of its youth so as to contribute considerably to its national development.

The rate of unemployment among school leavers and graduates is alarming, as part of measures to ameliorate this ugly situation, government at all levels (federal, state and local) are making frantic efforts to encourage self-employment through entrepreneurship development. The introduction of

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thirty-four (34) trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school is one of the noble innovations in the curriculum which will make secondary school graduates specialize in at least a trade even if they cannot proceed further for other professional courses at the tertiary institutions. A similar programme 6-3-34 system of education was introduced in 1982 which had little or negligible impact on the lives of people. All the machines and equipment imported for the programme are still rusting away in schools where they are dumped due to inadequate manpower and other logistics to implement the laudable programme. The problem is not in government policies, but the problems are experienced mainly in the implementation processes.

The newly introduced trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools need to be nursed and carefully implemented so as not to die premature death like the earlier programmes. Hence, this study focuses on improving quality through effective implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools: A panacea to pervasive mediocrity and unemployment among Nigerian youths.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to determine how to improve the quality of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools: A panacea for pervasive mediocrity and unemployment among Nigerian youths. Specifically the study sought to determine:

1. Strategies for improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools
2. Benefits of improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary school
3. Challenges to implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the strategies for improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools?
2. What are the benefits of improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools?
3. What are the challenges to implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools?

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. A survey research design according to Anyakoha (2009) uses questionnaires, interviews observation etc. in order to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons. The study was carried out in South-west, South-east and South-south geo-political zones of Nigeria. The population for the study was 147 made up of 63 administrators from the Federal and the State Ministries of Education and 84 trade/entrepreneurial

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subjects' teachers in secondary schools in the Southwest, South-east and South-south geo-political zones of Nigeria. No sampling was carried out since the population is of manageable size. The instrument used to collect data for this study was a structured questionnaire. It was developed by the researchers after review of available literature on trade/entrepreneurial programme implementation. The instrument is divided into three sections A, B and

C. Section A contains 28 items designed to find out strategies for improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools, Section B contains 25 items designed to find out benefits of improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school and Section C contains 25 items designed to find out challenges to implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools. The instrument is based on five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with nominal values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts from Federal and the State Ministries of Education and was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.79. The data were collected by the researchers and research assistants in the zones covered by the study. The researchers and the research assistants administered the instrument on the respondents. All the instruments administered were correctly completed and used for data analysis.

Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions. Based on the five-point Likert scale, any item with mean 3.50 and above is regarded as agree while any item with mean less than 3.50 is regarded as disagree. All computations were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

Table 1: Mean Responses of Respondents on Strategies for improving the Implementation of Trade/ Entrepreneurial Subjects in Secondary Schools.

N=147

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	-	SD	Remark
1.	Trade/entrepreneurial subjects offered in schools should be varied from zone to zone based on the available raw materials and natural resources.	5.00	0.00	Agree
2.	More commitment by the government to the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools.	4.96	0.89	Agree
3.	Employment of qualified and competent trade/entrepreneurship teachers	4.68	0.65	Agree
4.	Training and re-training of teachers in trade/entrepreneurship education	4.23	0.82	Agree
	Introduction of an exchange programme to train people in the trade which might not be available in their locality,	4.7	0.67	Agree
6.	Regular field trips of students to the industries/entrepreneurs in the communities	4.71	0.53	Agree
7.	Regular entrepreneurship counseling for the students.	4.56	0.74	Agree
8.	Adoption of appropriate teaching method and strategies	4.45	0.54	Agree
9.	Advocacy for public/private partnership.	4.93	0.87	Agree
10.	Provision of adequate infrastructural and training facilities,	4.95	0.63	Agree
11.	Inviting entrepreneurs for seminars and workshop	4.34	0.89	Agree
12.	Creating an economic friendly environment	4.56	0.64	Agree
13.	Adequate provision of fund for the programme	4.81	0.59	Agree
14.	Establishment/setting up of school-enterprise cooperation	4.32	0.58	Agree
15.	Establishment of entrepreneurship development centres	4.44	0.82	Agree
16.	Creating an economic friendly political environment	4.87	0.51	Agree
17.	Reduction of government taxation on small scale businesses	4.63	0.55	Agree
18.	Adequate provision of consumable materials for practical	4.72	0.91	Agree
19.	Making students gain experience through internships or summer/part-time jobs.	4.38	0.66	Agree
20.	Encouraging students to set up of business clubs in schools and students taking leadership roles	4.51	0.78	Agree up
21.	Encouraging students to learn to work well on a team and develop strong communication skill.	4.38	0.76	Agree
22.	Encouraging students with stipend to support their practical projects and start-fund to set up business after completion	4.89	0.74	Agree off
23.	Encouraging students to take courses in a secondary specialty such as marketing information systems to increase job opportunities.	3.67	0.63	Agree or
24.	Provision of textbooks and well equipped library	4.64	0.55	Agree
25.	Ensure practical/hands-on experience	4.58	0.67	Agree
26.	Proper monitoring of entrepreneurship education programme	4.73	0.56	Agree
27.	Regular evaluation and improvement of trade/entrepreneurship programme	4.89	0.77	Agree
28.	Publicity of trade/entrepreneurship programmes through the mass media and social networks	4.73	0.48	Agree

Data presented in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed on all the strategies for improving the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools based on the means which range from

4.23 to 5.00. The standard deviation values range from 0.00 to 0.91 showing that the respondents are not far from each other in their responses on the items.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Respondents on Benefits of improving the Implementation of Trade/Entrepreneurial Subjects in Secondary Schools.

N=147

S/N	Item Statement								
				SD	Remark				
1	Provides skills that lead to self-employment and self-reliance.	4.86	0.87		Agree				
2	Reduces unemployment in the society	4.95	0.53		Agree				
3	Provides opportunities for the youths to be self-employed or gainfully employed	4.03	0.82		Agree				
4	Reduces high rate of poverty	4.25	0.75		Agree				
5	Helps students/youths to foster an entrepreneurial culture	4.59	0.67		Agree				
6	Serves as a catalyst for economic growth and development.	4.01	0.77		Agree				
7	Helps students identify viable business ideas.	4.61	0.67		Agree				
8	Helps students to write business plans.	3.96	0.49		Agree				
9	Creates smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.	3.52	0.84		Agree				
10	Reduces rural-urban migration	3.87	0.83		Agree				
11	Encourages the development of creative and innovative minds	4.76	0.77		Agree				
12	Provides graduates/youth with adequate training in risk management	4.67	0.52		Agree				
13	Provides training on how to establish a small and medium sized business.	4.75	0.94		Agree				
14	Boosts productivity in organizations and societies	4.11	0.57		Agree				
15	Boosts market competition in the society	3.98	0.85		Agree				
16	It develops accounting and financial skills in students	4.13	0.55		Agree				
17	It develops managerial skills and marketing skills	4.15	0.92		Agree				
18	Enhances diversification in the economy	3.88	0.64		Agree				
19	It develops interpersonal and human relation skills among students	3.76	0.83		Agree				
20	Develops strong communication skills as many positions require interaction	4.02	0.73		Agree				
21	Prepares students to work independently and be self-motivated.	4.43	0.83		Agree				
22	Develops capacity to make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.	3.93	0.67		Agree				
23	Helps students to develop strong persuasive skills and how to build relationships	4.47	0.67		Agree				

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|----|---|------|------|--------------------|
| 24 | Inculcates in students/youths the spirit of perseverance and persistence in venture. | 4.18 | 0.51 | Agree any business |
| 25 | Re-awakens the spirit of having another trade outside one's profession such as having a garden in the backyard. | 4.42 | 0.71 | Agree as |
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Data presented in Table 2 show that the respondents agreed on all items on the benefits of improving the implementation of trade/ entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools based on the means which range from

3.52 to 4.95. The standard deviation shows that the respondents are close in their responses with SD values range from 0.51 to 0.94.

Table 3: Mean Responses of Respondents on the Challenges to Implementation of Trade/Entrepreneurial Subjects in Secondary Schools .

N = 147

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SD	Remark
1	Students' poor entrepreneurial culture.	4.43 0.99	
2	Dearth of qualified and competent trade/entrepreneurial subject teachers	4.78 0.67	Agree
3	Dearth of relevant support materials for teachers	4.53 0.78	Agree
4	Use of obsolete technology	4.71 0.97	Agree
5	Poor state of infrastructural facilities	4.89 0.73	Agree
6	Lack of well-equipped workshops and libraries	4.69 0.58	Agree
7	Lack of adequate incentives for entrepreneurs	4.78 0.85	Agree
8	Lack of relevant text books	3.75 0.67	Agree
9	Lack of necessary support from stakeholders, on the part of government.	4.67 0.71	Agree 10
		4.88 0.94	Agree
11	Poor remuneration of teachers	4.78 0.73	Agree
12	Lack of adequate training for the teachers	4.60 0.68	Agree
13	Poor attitude of teachers to develop themselves in entrepreneurship education	4.55 0.55	Agree
14	Inadequate supervision and mentoring of teachers	4.44 0.75	Agree
15	Poor funding of the programmes	4.85 0.83	Agree
16	Poor management of the fund	4.04 0.78	Agree
17	Poor management competency to execute the programme	3.95 0.78	Agree
18	Political and economic instability	3.58 0.69	Agree
19	Poor societal attitude to trade/entrepreneurship development	4.77 0.74	Agree
20	Poor societal attitude towards locally made goods	4.49 0.84	Agree
21	Multiple taxation of entrepreneurs	4.32 0.52	Agree
22	Lack of synergy between the industries and institutions	4.67 0.73	Agree 23
	sector participation in the implementation of the programme	4.53 0.63	Agree
24	Problem of confusing entrepreneurship education with TVET programme	4.34 0.93	Agree

25	Inconsistency of government policies	4.41	Agree	0.59
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Data presented in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed on all the items on the challenges to implementation of trade/entrepreneurial programme in secondary schools. The mean values range from 3.58 - 4.89 and standard deviation 0.52 – 0.99.

Discussion of results

The findings presented in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed on all the items as means of enhancing the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school. This is in

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agreement with Saliu (2011) that inviting entrepreneurs for seminars and workshop, internship training, practical entrepreneurship counseling, regular field trips to the entrepreneurs in their communities, employment of qualified and competent trade/entrepreneurship teachers and adoption of appropriate teaching strategies. This is also in consonance with Uwaifo, V. O. & Uddin, P.S.O. (2009) that Trade/entrepreneurial subjects offered in schools should be varied from zone to zone based on the available raw materials and natural resources.

The findings in Table 2 indicated that the respondent agreed with items on benefits of enhancing the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school. This is in line with Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2006) that it fosters economic growth, increases productivity, it also helps in creation of new technologies, products and services apart from changing and rejuvenating market completion. Also in agreement with Nwangwu (2009) that young graduates with enough training and support that will help them establish a career in small and medium size business apart from offering graduates adequate training in acquisition of skills and providing both small and medium scale enterprises the opportunity of recruiting graduates who will be trained and tutored in the skills relevant to the operation of the business. This also agreed with Paul (2005).

Table 3 revealed that the respondent agreed with the items on challenges of enhancing the implementation of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school. These include lack of commitment on the part of the government, lack of qualified manpower, lack of basic facilities low societal recognition, low student enrolment, inadequate skilled workforce, obsolete instructional facility, inadequate funding, poor staffing, poor linkages with industry and general deficiency in quality. This is in agreement with Nwangwu (2007), Uwaifo and Uwaifo (2009), and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (2011).

Conclusion

Funding was identified as a major constraint to improving the quality of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools. Government should as a matter of urgency muscle the political will to increase the budgetary allocation for education which should be invested in the establishment of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school on a yearly basis. More so, government should enforce the payment of educational tax fund in which a certain percentage should also be invested in trade/entrepreneurial subjects' development. The relentless investment and commitment on the part of government will boost the entrenchment and establishment of trade/entrepreneurial subjects which will consequently reduce the ravaging unemployment and its attendant social vices like kidnapping, human trafficking, prostitution among the youths and will also improve per capital income in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study: the following recommendations are made:

1. Trade/entrepreneurial subjects offered in schools should be varied from zone to zone based on the available raw materials and natural resources.
2. Government should show serious commitment and provide a clear road map to enhance the implementation of entrepreneurship programme in secondary schools in Nigeria;
3. The identified strategies for enhancing trade/entrepreneurial subjects in this study should be employed by the stakeholders for implementation of entrepreneurship education in secondary schools;
4. Students should be encouraged with stipend to support their practical projects and start-off fund to set up business after completion in secondary schools if they cannot proceed to tertiary institutions;
5. Government should increase its fund on the programme. It should also increase funding for financial institutions that provide soft loan to entrepreneurs. Institutions like the National Directorate of Employment should be strengthened to provide training, capital and technical assistance to potential and practicing entrepreneurs;
6. Regular evaluation and improvement of trade/entrepreneurship programme; and
7. Adequate infrastructural facilities, enabling environment that support and encourage entrepreneurship development should be provided by the government to encourage people to go into self-employment.

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