



INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING BUSINESS EDUCATION COURSES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA IN THE NEW NORMAL

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Abstract

The study focused on Innovative strategies for teaching business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria in the new normal. The area of the study was South East Nigeria. The population for the study consist of 75 Business Educators from Federal and State universities in South East Nigeria. Due to the manageable size of the population, there was no sampling. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was researchers self-structured questionnaire titled Innovative strategies for teaching business education courses in the new normal (ISTBECNN). The instrument was validated by three experts. Reliability of the instrument was done through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and a coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. Mean and standard deviations were used to analyze the research questions while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Generally, it was found out from the research that utilization of innovative strategies for teaching Business Education courses in public universities in South East Nigeria is to a Great Extent. However, there are some lapses. Based on the findings, recommendations include: ICT hub should be established in all departments of business education in public universities in South East Nigeria, there should be compulsory workshops, seminars and in-service training to update Business Educators on current innovative teaching strategies.

Key words: Innovative strategies, Business Education, New Normal



Introduction

Business education concerns the teaching of necessary business skills and knowledge that will enable a student to stand out in the business world and the society. Impartation of such business skills and knowledge will make the individual to be an employer of labour or employable. Akpomi (2011) viewed Business Education as “the sum total of information, skills and attitude that are required for effective stimulation and running of business enterprises. The author further stressed that, business education means education for and about business. It is for when the educative processes prepares one for career in business. It is about business when it involves the offering of business related courses to all students irrespective of their career aspirations. Business Education according to Ezeabii (2017) is an aspect of vocational education which equips individuals with the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performing in the business world either for job occupations or self employment. Business education content is an all-encompassing programme in which the course content is derived from business management, business administration, secretarial administration information and communication technology or information management system, secretarial education, purchase/supply education, accountancy education, communication skills, English language, distributive education, management/marketing education, Psychology, philosophy, sociology of education, business law among others. It is an education that theoretically and practically prepares the learner with the required skills needed at global workplaces.

Business education is studied as a programme in public universities in the South East, Nigeria. One of the major thrust for classification of Universities in the country is by ownership. There are federal owned universities, state owned universities and other universities owned by individuals, corporate bodies and faith based organizations. All federal and state owned universities are entirely run by the government and are classified as public universities. There are public universities in the South East, Nigeria. South East is one of the six geopolitical zones in the country and consists of five states – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Each of these states has one federal and one state university. The South East zone is predominantly Igbo speaking zone and their vocation permeates virtually all human endeavors ranging from trading, farming, education etc. Business education programme in these universities need to be done well in this era of ICT for the students to master the course well, be productive, self-reliant and employable. For the above to take place, we need the utilization of innovative strategies especially in the new normal.

When a society adapts to changes occurring as a result of some uncontrollable factors in it in which she has no curative measures at the moment but devices strategies to contain it, the situation is referred to as ‘new normal’. YLM (2020) defined ‘new normal’ as a new way of living and going about our lives, work and interactions with other people. Before the covid-19 pandemic, our lives were normal. People were going to mall with family members, eating in restaurants, going for burials in groups, travelling to places, and pupils/students going to school. However, when the covid-19 pandemic struck the world, our lives had to change, even our educational system.

Covid-19 is an acronym. ‘Co’ stands for Corona. ‘Vi’ stands for virus and ‘D’ for disease. Covid-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). WHO (2020) observed that the symptoms of the disease include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause Pneumonia or breathing difficulties. The symptoms are similar to flu and common cold. This disease originated from Wuhan China in the year 2019 and from there spread to the whole world. As at date it has no cure but very infectious.

The covid-19 virus according to World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through



coughing and sneezing, individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their faces (e.g eyes, nose, mouth). The covid-19 may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectant can kill it. Sequel to the above WHO (2020) outlined some precautionary measures known as covid-19 protocols to contain the virus and for people to adapt to the new situation (New normal). These include: Physical distancing, wearing of nose mask, keeping room well ventilated, avoiding crowds, cleaning your hands and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue. Due to the high infections nature of the disease and the underlying consequences, there was a total lockdown of many countries of the world in the year 2020. Nigeria was forced to lockdown from March, 2020 till November, 2020. This affected all facets of Nigerian system including the educational system. Nevertheless, the educational community made concerted efforts to maintain learning continuity during the lockdown and subsequently, students had to rely more on their own resources to continue learning remotely through internet, television or radio. Teachers on their own part had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of instructional delivery taking note of the covid-19 protocols. All these led to innovative strategies in teaching and learning.

Innovative strategies are the techniques or methods that a teacher adopt to meet various learning objectives. These innovative strategies help students to walk on the path of independent learning and become strategic learners. They equip teachers to make learning fun and help students to awaken their desire to learn. Innovative strategies focus on not only the educational content but also on the methods and environment of the teaching and learning process. Students` developmental level, interests and experience are considered while choosing a particular teaching strategy so that they can self-accomplish their goals (Richa, 2014). Innovative strategies enable students to focus their attention, organize their learning material for better understanding and help teachers to provide a suitable platform for strategic learning. The innovative strategies are needed more in the new normal considering the covid-19 menace. Some innovative strategies could be a combination of Inquiry based learning, Quick response codes, Project based learning, Jigsaws and Wisely managed classroom technology.

Inquiry based learning: This is an innovative strategy where students on their own develop questions or inquires on the topic being taught and discover the answers or solutions. The teachers act as resource persons and guides. This mode of teaching makes the students active participants, encourage independent development of solutions to problems. It helps them to be analytic and critical thinkers. According to Avsec, Rihtarasic, and Kocijancic, (2014) Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a student-centered instructional approach that makes use of meaningful tasks such as cases, projects, and research to situate learning. Students are expected to work collaboratively to identify how to solve a problem, gain research skills, and trade-off capacity. This strategy makes sure students are well equipped with the necessary tools to face the demands and expectations of the future. Davis (2020) observed that the basic characteristics of Inquiry-based teaching are: students generating or thinking out questions of their own, trying to get evidences to answer the question(s), having the ability to explain the evidence collected, linking the explanation to the knowledge obtained from the investigative process and creating an argument and justification for the explanation.

Quick response codes: QR (Quick Response) codes are mobile technologies used in teaching. The square codes are embedded with cryptic codes for teaching and learning. According to Pons, (2011), QR Codes consist of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. They are designed to decode the data quickly. It is quite easy to create and use these codes. Using QR Codes for education is another way of using the Internet. Quick Response (QR) codes are versatile. QR Codes can connect users to the information quickly and easily. It is easy to create and have multiple uses in classrooms. QR codes can lead students to information just by



scanning the code on a student's digital device (Davis, 2020). Students can use the QR code in various ways like to check for results or answers, retrieve information on lecture materials or textbook, participate in survey information, Link students directly to Google maps and get video tutorials for lectures. A QR code facilitates access and extension of information and lecture material anywhere they are.

Project-Based Learning: This involves the use of different scenarios and challenges in the teaching and learning. Davis (2020) opined that Project-Based learning engage the students in critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and self-management. Once students solve the problem or challenge, they present their solutions. The necessary skills required or needed to be developed are collaboration, digital tools, and problem solving skills to come up with a solution to the problem presented. This strategy is relevant in that it is more engaging for students, improves learning, provides opportunities for students to use technology, makes teaching more enjoyable and rewarding and connects students and schools with communities and the real world.

Jigsaws: Cooperative learning strategy is the jigsaw technique. It helps students create their own learning. Students are usually put in groups and assigned a different topic. In each group, students learn the topic well enough to be able to teach it to another group of students. This technique enable students become experts on the learning as they teach their colleagues. When one session is done, students are reassigned to different groups and the new topics. The students share knowledge gained in their group. This technique brings lessons to life and challenges students to create their own learning. Garcia, Abrego and Robert (2017) affirmed that the outcomes of Jigsaw method are: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotion of peer interaction and development of social skills.

There is every need for the use of innovative strategies in the teaching of business education courses in universities. Innovative teaching method involves also the use of digital and ICT based tools in teaching. Krishna (2013) and Noor (2014) identified the following innovative teaching technologies that are used in education delivery (business education inclusive) to include: technology-driven classroom, cross-curricular connections, smart interactive boards, computer-based assisted instruction, collaborative learning, activity-based learning and learning labs, digitalization in teaching, e-learning, flipped classroom, computer managed instruction (CMI), modeling and simulation and teleconferencing. All these innovative strategies encourage critical thinking in the students, improve problem solving abilities, encourage team work and self management. Nevertheless, this study was delimited to determining the extent inquiry based learning, quick response codes, Project based learning and Jigsaws are utilized in teaching business education courses.

These innovative teaching strategies promote learning and meaningful social interactions with peers and their instructors. The strategies also help in the educational system to contain Covid-19 and avoid viral infections due to crowded classrooms. Despite all these lendable benefits of innovative strategies, students still miss lessons in the universities due to fear of getting infected of the virus and some perform below expectations in examinations. Also, some business education graduates roam the streets of the country seeking for employment due to lack of employability skills. Ezeabii (2017) observed that some business education graduates join other graduates in roaming about the streets looking for paid employment. Does it mean that innovative strategies are not being utilized? The situation needs to be addressed in order to bring about positive turn hence, the study.

This study is anchored on Experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984) which sees learning as a process of knowledge creation through the transformation of experience (innovative strategies). It is a theory in which educators purposefully engage students in direct experience and focus reflection in order to increase students 'knowledge, develop their skills and clarify their



values. Experiential learning is also referred to as learning through discovery and exploration. The key element of this theory is the student, and that learning takes place (the knowledge gained) as a result of being personally involved in the pedagogical approach. Unlike the traditional classroom situations where students compete with one another or remain uninvolved or unmotivated, and where the instruction is highly structured, students in experiential learning classrooms cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach. Instruction is designed to engage students in direct experiences tied to real world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs students' progress (Davis, 2011). This implies innovative strategies in instructional delivery.

Statement of the Problem

Business education focuses on teaching the students skills, knowledge and competencies required for performance in the business world and the society at large. However, with Covid-19 menace, the conventional teaching method is not acceptable by World Health Organization in order to contain the virus. Covid-19 protocols are to be observed in the educational system in the new normal. Hence, the need for innovative teaching strategies. Also, despite all the benefits of innovative strategies, student seems to be failing their courses and graduates still roam about the streets in search of paid employment due to lack of required skills. Does it mean that innovative strategies are not utilized in this era of ICT, globalization and the new normal? Therefore this study sought to determine the innovative strategies utilized in teaching of Business Education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria in the new normal.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the extent innovative strategies are utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in the South East Nigeria in the new normal. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent:

1. Inquiry based learning is utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in the South East, Nigeria.
2. Quick response codes are utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria.
3. Project based learning is utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria.
4. Jigsaws are utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. To what extent is Inquiry based learning utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria?
2. To what extent are Quick response codes utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria?
3. To what extent is Project based learning utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria.
4. To what extent are Jigsaws utilized in teaching of business education courses in public universities in South East, Nigeria?



Research Null Hypothesis:

The following hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities in South East, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Inquiry based learning in teaching of business education courses.
2. A significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities in South East, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Quick response codes in teaching of business education courses.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities in South East, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Project based learning in teaching of business education courses.
4. A significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Jigsaws in teaching of business education courses.

Method

The research design for the study was descriptive survey research. The population of the study consists of 75 Business educators from the federal and state universities in South East Nigeria. Due to the manageable size of the population, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was researcher's self-structured questionnaire titled Innovative Strategies for teaching business education courses in the new normal (ISTBECNN). It has two parts (1 and 2). Part 1 dealt with biodata while Part 2 has three sections with a total of 20 items. Each of the sections addressed a research question. A four point response scale was adopted: Very Great Extent, Great Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent. The instrument was validated by three experts from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. To determine the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of it was administered to Business Educators in Universities in South South, Nigeria. The data was analyzed using test re-test method. The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient used it gave an overall value of 0.79. Two research assistants helped in the data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions. Decision rule with respect to research questions was based on the principle of upper and lower limits of the mean. Thus:

3.50 – 4.00 = Very Great Extent

2.50 – 3.49 = Great Extent

1.50 – 2.49 = Low Extent

1.00– 1.49 = Very low Extent

A mean value of 2.50 and above was regarded as great extent. Any mean below 2.50 was regarded as Low extent. For decision rule on null hypotheses, t-test of no significant difference was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and at appropriate degree of freedom. The null hypothesis was significant where the probability value was less than the .05 significant level at appropriate degree of freedom, otherwise the null hypothesis was not significant.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is Inquiry based learning utilized in teaching of business education courses in Public universities in the South East, Nigeria?



Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on extent of utilization of inquiry based learning strategy in teaching business education courses.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
	Business educators utilize inquiry based teaching strategy in teaching of business education courses in the following ways:			
1	Students are allowed to generate or think out questions of their own in business education classes.	3.29	0.83	GE
2	Students are allowed to explain observations and the evidence collected	3.24	0.86	GE
3	Students are allowed justifications for the explanations	3.29	0.83	GE
4	Students are given opportunities to proffer solution to problems	2.44	0.87	LE
5	Business educators act only as resources and guide in such a class	1.99	0.87	LE
Grand/ cluster Mean & SD =		2.85	0.85	GE

From Table 1, it is deduced with a cluster mean of 2.85 that the extent of utilization of Inquiry based learning strategy is to a great extent. All the items were to a great extent except items 4 and 5 with were to a low extent. The cluster standard deviation of 0.85 indicate consensus in their opinions.

Hypothesis 1

Table 2: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities on extent of utilization of Inquiry based learning in teaching of business education courses.

Paired Samples Test

Pair	N	Mean	Sd	Df	t cal	t crit	Decision
Federal	33	3.2475	0.49865	98	1.218	1.654	Not significant
State	42	2.9413					

From table 2.1, the t calculated value (1.218) < t critical value (1.654), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Inquiry based learning in teaching of business education courses.

Research Question 2: To what extent are Quick response codes utilized in teaching of business education courses in Public universities in the south east, Nigeria?



Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on extent of utilization of Quick response codes in teaching of business education courses.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
	Business educators utilize Quick Response Code strategy in teaching of business education courses in the following ways:			
6	Students are taught how to generate answers using QR codes for specific problems in business education classes	3.24	0.86	GE
7	Students are taught how to use QR codes to link users to the information quickly in business education classes	2.29	0.83	LE
8	Students are taught how to vote on answers during class discussion	3.24	0.86	GE
9	Students are given opportunities to use QR code to locate Google maps etc.	2.96	1.01	GE
10	Business educators use QR code for information extension in business education.	3.29	0.83	GE
Gland/Cluster Mean & SD =		3.16	0.90	GE

From table 3, it is clear with a cluster mean of 3.16 that the extent of utilization of Quick Response code strategy is to a great extent. All the items were to a great extent. The cluster standard deviation of 0.90 indicates homogeneity in their responses.

Null Hypotheses 2

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in South East, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Quick response codes in teaching of business education courses.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of business educators in federal and state universities on utilization of Quick Response Code in teaching of business education courses.

Paired Samples Test

Pair	N	Mean	Sd	Df	t cal	t crit	Decision
Federal	33	3.0975	0.91865	118	1.041	1.654	Not significant
State	42	2.1362					

From table 4, the t calculated value (1.041) < t critical value (1.654), the null hypotheses is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Quick response codes in teaching of business education courses.

Research Question 3: To what extent is Project based learning utilized in teaching of business education courses in Public universities in the south east, Nigeria.



Table 5: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on extent of utilization of project based learning in teaching of business education courses.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
	Business educators utilize Project based learning strategy in teaching of business education courses in the following ways:			
11	Project using several real world scenarios are given to the students in business education classes.	3.29	0.83	GE
12	Team projects are used periodically for specific problems in business education classes	2.01	0.88	LE
13	Application of digital tools in problem solving are taught in business education classes	2.99	0.88	GE
14	Timed projects are always applied in business education class etc	3.24	0.86	GE
15	Projects on digital navigation for problem solving are taught in business education.	3.29	0.83	GE
Gland/ cluster Mean & SD =		2.79	0.86	GE

From table 3, it is clear with a cluster mean of 2.79 that the extent of utilization of Project Based Learning strategy is to a great extent. All the items were to a great extent except item 12 showing a low extent. The cluster standard deviation of 0.86 indicates that their opinions are the same.

Null Hypotheses 3:

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Project based learning in teaching of business education courses.

Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities on utilization of Project based learning in teaching of business education courses.

Paired Samples Test

Pair	N	Mean	Sd	Df	t cal	t crit	Decision
Federal	33	3.7512	0.9985	118	1.311	1.654	Not significant
State	42	3.6932					

From table 6, the t calculated value (1.311) < t critical value (1.654), the null hypothesis is not rejected indicating that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Project based learning in teaching of business education courses.

Research Question 4: To what extent are Jigsaws utilized in teaching of business education courses in Public universities in the South East Nigeria?



Table 7: Mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on extent of utilization of Jigsaws in teaching of business education courses.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
	Business educators utilize Jigsaws teaching strategy in teaching of business education courses in the following ways:			
16	Students are put in groups and topic assigned to them in business education classes.	2.01	0.88	LE
17	Students are allowed to learn and teach topics assigned to their group in business education classes	3.29	0.83	GE
18	For new topics/sessions, the students are reassigned to another new group comprising of new members in business education classes	3.24	0.86	GE
19	Students are given opportunities to develop their teaching methods with each group freely.	3.29	0.83	GE
20	Business educators monitor and supervise the progress of the students in each of the sessions in business education.	2.96	1.01	GE
Gland/ cluster Mean & SD =		2.96	0.88	GE

From table 7, it is clear with a cluster mean of 2.96 that the extent of utilization of Jigsaws strategy is to a great extent. All the items were to a great extent except item 16 indicating low extent. The standard deviation of 0.88 indicates consensus of opinions.

Null Hypotheses 4:

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in South East, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Jigsaws in teaching of business education courses.

Table 8: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of business educators in federal and state universities on utilization of Jigsaws in teaching of business education courses.

Paired Samples Test

Pair	N	Mean	Sd	Df	t cal	t crit	Decision
Federal	33	3.5291	0.81297	98	1.094	1.654	Not significant
State	42	3.9215					

From the result on table 8, the t calculated value (1.094) < t critical value (1.654), the null hypotheses is not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities in south east, Nigeria with respect to utilization of Jigsaws in teaching of business education courses.

Discussion of Findings

From the study, it was found out that the respondents agreed to a great extent with three out of five items on utilization of inquiring based strategy in teaching. These include: Students are



allowed to generate or think out questions on their own in business education classes; students are allowed to explain observations and evidence collected; students are allowed justifications for their explanations. The other two items are to a low extent and they are: students are given opportunity to proffer solution to problem; business educators act only as resource and guide in the class. However, the overall responses were to a great extent indicating that business educators utilize inquiring based learning to a great extent. This is in agreement with Avsec, Rihtaristic and Kocijanic (2014) who noted that inquiry based learning is a student-centred approach that makes use of meaningful tasks such as projects and research to situate learning.

Further, the findings of the study indicate that the respondents agreed to a great extent with the five items on utilization of quick response (QR) codes strategy in teaching. These include: students are taught how to generate answers using QR codes; students are taught how to use QR codes to link users to the information quickly, students are taught how to vote on answers during class discussions etc.

This is in agreement with Davis (2020) who opined that student can use QR codes in various ways like to check for results or answers, retrieve information on lecture materials or textbooks, participate in survey information, link students directly to Google map and get video tutorials for lecture.

In addition, the findings of the study indicated that four out of the five items on utilization of project learning in teaching were to a great extent. Generally, the responses were to a great extent. These include: using project to depict real world scenarios; application of digital tools in problem solving; timed projects are always applied in business education class etc. This is in line with Davis (2020) who observed that in project based strategy, the necessary skills required or needed to be developed are collaboration, digital tools and problem solving skills to come up with a solution to the problem presented.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that four out of five items on extent of utilization of Jigsaws in teaching are to a great extent. These include: Students are allowed to teach topics assigned to their group; students are giving opportunity to develop their own teaching method etc. This is in agreement with Gracia, Abrego and Robert (2017) who affirmed that the outcomes of Jigsaw method are: positive independence, individual accountability, promotion of peer interaction and development of social skills.

On hypotheses testing, the findings revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business educators in federal and state universities with respect to utilization of inquiry based, QR codes, project based and Jigsaws strategies in teaching. Therefore, the hypotheses were not rejected.

Conclusion

From the findings, it is seen generally that extent of utilization of innovative strategies in the teaching of business Education courses in Public universities in the South East, Nigeria is to a Great extent. However, there are some lapses due to some items that are to a low extent. This indicates gap in the use of innovative strategies in the teaching of Business Education courses. There is need for remedial actions to be taking in order to give qualitative training to Business Education students in the Public universities in the South East, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. ICT hub should be established in all departments of business education in public universities in South East, Nigeria.



2. There should be regular and compulsory workshops, seminars and in-service training to update business educators on current innovative teaching strategies in public universities in South East, Nigeria.
3. Business education departments should adopt compulsory use of ICT facilities in the teaching and learning of business education for professionalism in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

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