

REDEFINING POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Policy formulation and implementation are integral to effective educational management, shaping the direction, organization, resource allocation, decision making, and outcomes of educational institutions. This paper underscores the paramount importance of well-crafted policies in shaping educational institutions and offers a structured framework for scrutinizing the fundamental elements of policy formulation and implementation within educational management. It elucidates the concept and components of educational policy, and delineates its impact on decision-making and resource allocation. It further discusses strategies for proficient policy development and execution, and addresses challenges such as resource constraints and resistance to change. By addressing these challenges and providing strategies, the article aims to guide policymakers and educational leaders in translating policy objectives into impactful initiatives to improve student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The paper concludes by emphasizing the pivotal role of policy in facilitating positive transformations and enhancing educational outcomes. It further suggests comprehensive strategies for policy implementation such as capacity development, streamlining administrative processes, and ensuring sustained funding align with national development priorities.

Key Words: Policy, Educational Management, Formulation, Implementation, Decision-making, Resource Allocation

Introduction

A critical role of effective policy development and implementation is fostering institutional growth and achieving learning objectives within educational management in Nigeria. In the domain of educational management, the development and implementation of effective policies play a crucial role in fostering institutional growth and achieving learning objectives. Despite this recognition, significant challenges persist in crafting and executing policies that adequately address the diverse concerns of stakeholders and yield tangible improvements in Nigeria's educational outcomes. The paper emphasizes importance of effective policy development and implementation in Nigerian educational system.

The Concept of Educational Policy Formulation and Implementation

A policy can be defined as a formal statement or document that outlines principles, rules, guidelines, or directives established by an organization or government to guide decision-making, actions, and procedures. Policies are developed to address specific issues, achieve goals, regulate behaviors, allocate resources, and provide a framework for consistent and coherent actions within an entity. (Dunn, 2019; Anderson, 2014). They provide a basis for consistent and coherent actions within an organization or across a jurisdiction.

Uchendu (2000) described policy as a fundamental process through which an institution attains stability and undertakes other changes as part of its ultimate goals. Policies are written or unwritten statement that guides the present and future thinking initiatives. They direct the decision of management (Babalola, 2003). They are written when there are documents for reference purposes and are unwritten when made in form of pronouncements, that is, policy statement by people in power and authority. In other words, policies are guides that usually provide latitude for operations. (Besong, Fan, Ada & Adalikwu, 2009).

To govern and guide diverse aspects of educational systems, institutions, and activities, the education sector formulates and implements specific policies known as educational policies. These policies are developed by educational authorities, governmental entities, or educational institutions to achieve educational objectives, ensure quality and equity in education, and respond to societal demands and priorities. Educational policies refer to a set of principles, guidelines, laws, and regulations formulated by governments or educational institutions to guide decision-making, planning, and implementation in the field of education.

These policies are designed to achieve specific objectives and outcomes related to educational practices, resource allocation, curriculum development, student assessment, teacher training, and other aspects of the education system. According to Anderson (2016), educational policies are dynamic and evolve in response to shifting social, political, and economic contexts. Educational policy of Nigeria is a general statement containing principles, regulations and rules that govern many of the decision, on how to educate the citizens. It seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that it is designed of attain the methods for attaining them and the tools for measuring their success or failure.

Policy formulation involves the development of strategic guidelines and objectives to address educational challenges and promote desired outcomes. Policy formulation sets the stage for implementation which according to Ukeje (2003) is the most important aspect of planning. Policy formulation, within a governmental or organizational context, refers to the comprehensive process of developing, drafting, and preparing policy

proposals or recommendations to address specific issues or achieve desired goals (Dunn, 2019). This process entails analyzing problems, defining objectives, exploring various alternative courses of action, and ultimately formulating concrete policy options for consideration and adoption by decision-makers.

Policy implementation in education is a conspicuous national problem that has taken center stage in Nigeria. Okoroma (2006) observed that there is a gap between educational policies and goal attainment due to inadequate implementation of policies. Policy implementation is the crucial stage in the policy process where a formulated policy is transformed into action or practice (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016). This process involves executing specific activities and measures intended to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the policy document.

Policy implementation encompasses the deployment of resources, coordination of stakeholders, and ongoing monitoring of progress towards desired outcomes. According to Bardach and Patashnik, policy implementation also includes the enactment of final rules or regulations and the enforcement activities associated with putting the policy into effect. It is the critical phase in the policy process that bridges the gap between policy formulation and its resulting outcomes. It involves the practical execution and operationalization of a policy, encompassing the actions and activities necessary to carry out or execute the policy directives (Weible & Sabatier, 2017).

In policy programmes there are basic requirements stated for each level of education. These requirements include infrastructures, equipment and instructional/teaching material resources for learning, personnel to implement education programmes, teachers support Staff. According to Amadi in Joel., Ogi., and Ikpe (2019), The concept of educational policy formulation and implementation is essential for shaping and improving educational systems. Effective policy implementation ensures that these objectives are translated into action, with clear procedures for resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring of outcomes. Together, policy formulation and implementation play a critical role in driving positive changes, fostering equitable education, and enhancing overall educational quality.

Scope and Components of Educational Policy

Reflecting the intricate nature of educational governance and decision-making, the scope of educational policy encompasses a diverse array of topics and challenges within the education sector. Key aspects within the purview of educational policy include:

1. Curriculum Development and Standards: In order to ensure alignment with educational objectives and societal needs, educational policies encompass areas such as setting standards, selecting materials, and designing curricula (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

2. **Teacher Recruitment and Training:** Policies control professional development, recruitment tactics, and teacher certification in order to improve the caliber and efficacy of teachers (DarlingHammond, 2000).
3. **School Governance and Administration:** In fostering effective school operations and accountability, educational policies play a pivotal role in governing governance models, leadership structures, and school management practices (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).
4. **Equity and Inclusion:** Policies that address gaps in educational opportunity, encourage inclusive behaviors, and guarantee educational opportunities for all children all contribute to equity (OECD, 2019).
5. **Assessment and Accountability:** Policies provide guidance for conducting performance reviews, implementing accountability measures, and establishing assessment procedures aimed at monitoring student progress and improving the efficiency of educational systems (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).
6. **Funding and Resource Allocation:** To bolster educational institutions and initiatives, financial mechanisms, budget allocations, and resource distribution are structured in accordance with educational policies (Brimley et al., 2015).

Collectively, these components significantly shape the management, governance, and operation of educational systems, encapsulating policy priorities and strategies aimed at enhancing learning outcomes and student achievements.

The Roles of Policy Formulation and Implementation in Education

Policy formulation and implementation are fundamental components of educational management, serving as essential frameworks for guiding decision-making, resource allocation, and organizational development within educational institutions. The pivotal roles played by policy formulation and implementation in shaping the educational landscape and advancing institutional goals are paramount and cannot be underestimated.

The following are significant roles of policy formulation and implementation:

1. **Setting Direction and Priorities:**
The direction and priorities of educational institutions are significantly influenced by educational policies. Within the education sector, policies establish overarching aims and objectives that guide resource allocation and decision-making processes (Mok, 2016). National education policies often emphasize broader societal aspirations, such as promoting lifelong learning, enhancing equity, and improving student outcomes, aligning educational objectives with broader social goals.
2. **Resource Allocation and Management:**
The administration and distribution of resources in educational institutions are influenced by policy frameworks. Policy guidelines dictate the allocation of resources,

budget priorities, and funding systems (Levin & Fullan, 2008). Equality in resource access and program implementation are guaranteed by efficient resource management.

3. Curriculum Development and Implementation:

Educational policies define the standards and criteria for curriculum development and implementation (Spillane, 2015). These policies ensure alignment with academic standards and societal expectations by specifying learning objectives, subject matter content, and instructional methodologies. Furthermore, educational policies promote innovation and encourage the integration of new teaching approaches within the curriculum.

4. Quality Assurance and Accountability:

Policies establish frameworks for accountability and quality control in education (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). These frameworks include defining assessment standards, performance indicators, and standardized testing to measure educational outcomes and monitor school effectiveness. By holding educational institutions accountable for achieving desired results, policies promote a culture of accountability within the education system.

5. Equity and Inclusion:

Educational policies play a pivotal role in fostering equity and inclusion within the realm of education by strategically confronting disparities in educational access (Fullan, 2007). These policies are designed to enact specific measures aimed at mitigating barriers stemming from socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender, or disability status. For instance, affirmative action policies are crafted with the objective of offering tailored assistance to underprivileged students, thus safeguarding equitable educational opportunities for all learners.

6. Regulation and Compliance:

Policies provide regulations and guidelines to ensure adherence to moral and legal requirements in educational administration (Brunner, 2016). They establish standards for student conduct, instructor qualifications, administrative procedures, and school governance. Compliance with these policies ensures transparency, equity, and ethical conduct within educational institutions.

7. Adaptation to Changing Needs and Trends:

To remain abreast of dynamic educational trends and societal exigencies, educational policy necessitates adaptability (Anderson, 2016). These policies are instrumental in fostering responsiveness to emerging educational challenges and opportunities, thereby fostering innovation and continuous advancement. Educational policies assume a pivotal role in guiding educational management practices, instilling accountability, nurturing equity and inclusivity, and accommodating the perpetual evolution of educational demands. They serve as indispensable tools enabling educational leaders to navigate complexity and facilitate constructive transformation within the educational domain.

Factors Influencing Policy Formulation in Education

1. Political Context and Stakeholder Involvement:

Political Priorities-Government agendas, political philosophies, and priorities have a substantial impact on educational policies. Ekpiken and Ifere (2015) emphasized the importance of a strong policy framework and effective administrative strategies driven by proactive decision-making for achieving development goals. They highlight that challenges within the education sector often arise from issues in policy formulation and program implementation. Educational policies are shaped by political leaders and policymakers, responding to public opinion, governance approaches, and electoral mandates.

Stakeholder Engagement- In policy development, it is crucial to engage stakeholders, including parents, community members, educators, and advocacy groups (Smyth, Dow, & Hattam, 2000). Stakeholders play a pivotal role in shaping policy decisions and enhancing the effectiveness of policy implementation by contributing diverse perspectives, expertise, and input.

2. Social and Cultural Considerations:

- Cultural Diversity: Educational practices must consider cultural diversity and societal values to ensure relevance and inclusivity (UNESCO, 2006). Policies should respect the identities, languages, and cultural traditions of diverse populations.

- Social Equity: Policies aimed at addressing disparities in educational opportunities and access based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status promote social equity (Fullan, 2007). Socially equitable policies facilitate fair and inclusive learning opportunities for all students.

3. Economic and Resource Allocation Factors:

-Budgetary Constraints: Decisions on education policy are influenced by resource availability and economic conditions (Baker, 2016). Budget constraints impact the allocation of staff, facilities, supplies, and technology within the education system.

-Resource Allocation Priorities: Policy formulation involves balancing resource allocation with educational objectives (Ogunsaju & Oyewole, 2014). Effective resource management ensures that available funds are utilized optimally to achieve educational goals.

4. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:

- Legal Compliance: Educational policies are molded by legal frameworks and regulations that govern the education sector (Brunner, 2016). Adherence to these laws ensures accountability, transparency, and adherence to educational standards.

- Regulatory Oversight: Regulatory bodies play a crucial role in shaping policy formulation by establishing guidelines for curriculum, assessment practices, teacher certification, and school governance (Levin & Fullan, 2008). Regulatory frameworks uphold standards of quality and accountability in education.

5. Technological Advancements:

-Digital Transformation: Educational policies are influenced by emerging technologies that impact teaching methods and educational priorities (Voogt & Knezek, 2008). Policies may focus on enhancing education effectiveness through provisions for digital literacy, online learning, and technology integration.

-Data-driven Decision-making: Policy modifications and evidence-based practices are informed by data analytics and educational research (Biesta & Priestley, 2013). Data-driven policies promote innovation and continuous improvement in education by leveraging empirical evidence and insights.

6. Globalization and International Trends:

-Global Education Agendas: Educational policies are influenced by global trends and agreements that shape curriculum standards, teacher preparation, and educational collaborations (Hansen, 2017). Globalization impacts education policies to align with the objectives of global education initiatives.

Cross-border Collaboration: Policies promote international collaboration and exchange initiatives to advance best practices and educational opportunities (Marginson, 2010). Incorporating global perspectives enhances educational methods and policy development.

Strategies for Effective Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria

Effective implementation of educational policies requires educational leaders to possess the requisite knowledge and skills to manage complex educational environments and address stakeholder needs. Educational leadership must be well-versed in the processes of policy development and execution to foster positive change and effectively respond to the evolving educational landscape. There should be a check in frequent changes in the system because policy inconsistency affects standards.

Policies that followed the due process of law and public acceptability should not be thrown to the wind, by succeeding administration, instead areas of amendment could be identified and addressed for the purpose of continuity. Hence, the following are recommended strategies for effective policy implementation:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Inclusive and effective policy creation necessitates engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities.
2. **Evidence-Based Policy Making:** Emphasizing the utilization of research findings and empirical data to inform policy decisions and enhance their impact.
3. **Capacity Building:** Supporting initiatives that enhance the policymaking skills of government officials and legislators, enabling them to formulate and analyze policies effectively.
4. **Public Consultation and Involvement:** Utilizing town hall meetings, surveys, and feedback mechanisms to gather opinions and viewpoints from the general public, fostering public consultation and involvement in policy development.

5. Policy Alignment with National Development Goals: Ensuring that policies are developed in alignment with national development priorities and objectives to maximize their impact and relevance.

Challenges of Policy Implementation in Nigeria

According to Odukoya., Bowale.,and Okunlola(2018), Nigeria has been unable to successfully implement the National Policy on Education [NPE]. This is because there are apparent intense challenges in the area of implementation. Some of them are highlighted below:

1. Nigeria's Philosophy of Education:

- a. Implementation Gap: Nigeria's philosophy of education emphasizes holistic development and moral values (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). However, there is often a significant gap between this philosophy and its practical implementation. The curriculum tends to prioritize rote memorization over critical thinking and practical skills, resulting in graduates who may lack problem-solving abilities needed for the workforce (Salami, 2016).
- b. Alignment with Economic Needs: Nigeria's education system faces challenges in aligning with the country's economic needs (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The emphasis on theoretical knowledge over practical skills often results in mismatches between graduates' skills and industry demands, contributing to high youth unemployment rates (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).
- c. Quality of Education: Despite the philosophical emphasis on holistic development, the quality of education remains a significant challenge (World Bank, 2018). Inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient resources hinder the delivery of quality education (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2015).

2. Policy on Language:

- a. Language Diversity and Instruction: Nigeria's language policy prioritizes English as the official language alongside indigenous languages (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Despite efforts to implement multilingual education, students often face difficulties comprehending English-taught concepts (Bamgbose, 2000). Bamgbose noted that there is limited support for preserving and utilizing indigenous languages in educational contexts, despite policy directives. English, the language of instruction, encounters challenges in teaching and learning quality, impacting students' academic performance (Adedimeji & Ayodele, 2017). This language barrier hampers cultural preservation and identity among younger generations. It perpetuates educational disparities and negatively influences learning outcomes.
- b. Preservation of Indigenous Languages: Despite efforts to promote indigenous languages in education, challenges persist in their preservation and promotion

(Adeyanju, 2012). Schools often lack resources and qualified teachers proficient in local languages, leading to the decline of these languages among younger generations.

c. **Impact on Learning Outcomes:** Language policy significantly impacts learning outcomes, particularly for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Oyetunde, 2018). The inability to comprehend instruction in English limits educational opportunities and contributes to low academic performance among certain demographic groups.

3. Policy on Teachers' Registration Council:

a. **Teacher Quality and Registration:** Nigeria's Teachers' Registration Council policy aims to ensure professionalism and competence among teachers. However, challenges persist in registering and monitoring teachers effectively. Many teachers remain unqualified or underqualified, compromising the quality of education (Ugwuanyi & Omeje, 2015).

b. **Inadequate Training and Development:** The effectiveness of teacher registration policy is hindered by insufficient training and professional development programs (Achimugu & Aboho, 2016). Without continuous training, teachers may struggle to meet educational standards and address diverse learning needs effectively.

c. **Regulatory Compliance and Oversight:** Enforcement of registration requirements and oversight of registered teachers pose challenges (Ajayi, 2013). Inconsistent regulatory compliance may lead to lapses in educational quality and teacher accountability within the system.

d. **Teacher Shortage and Distribution:** Nigeria faces challenges with teacher shortages, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Many qualified teachers prefer urban postings due to better working conditions and facilities, exacerbating educational disparities (Oginni, 2017).

4. Policy on Access and Inclusivity

Achieving inclusive and high-quality education for all is significantly hindered by enduring disparities in educational access based on socioeconomic status, gender, and geographical location (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2015). Various factors contribute to these inequalities, including cultural traditions that prioritize boys' education over girls', limited access to transportation, and the financial burden of school fees, which pose significant obstacles for children from low-income families, rural areas, and marginalized communities.

- **Insufficient Needs Analysis:** An obstacle in the process of formulating policies is the inadequate evaluation of the various educational requirements that exist among various geographic and demographic groupings. Policies might not sufficiently address the unique obstacles that marginalized populations confront, which would result in generalized solutions that don't really advance inclusivity (Ogunsaju & Oyewole, 2014).

- Lack of Stakeholder Engagement: Policies that are developed without genuinely involving stakeholders, including marginalized groups, civil society organizations, and local communities, run the risk of omitting important viewpoints and failing to address the underlying causes of disparities in educational access (UNESCO, 2019).
- Insufficient Allocation of Resources: Insufficient financial support and distribution of Resources impede the successful execution of regulations targeted at enhancing accessibility and inclusiveness. Schools in underprivileged areas struggle to adopt inclusive policies and accommodate unique students' needs without adequate financial support. (Okolie & Igwe, 2018).
- Impact on Equity: The challenge of creating inclusive policies and ensuring access widens educational disparities between affluent and disadvantaged students. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2015) argue that policies that do not place a high priority on inclusivity are unable to remove structural obstacles and maintain social inequality.
- Bureaucratic Procedures: The development of policies may be impeded by bureaucratic procedures, conflicting interests, and a dearth of political will to confront ingrained disparities in educational outcomes. This makes it difficult to turn inclusive policy objectives into observable results (Ogunleye, 2019).

5. Financial-Related challenges:

Financial limitations affect the distribution of resources and overall efficacy of the Nigerian educational system, posing serious issues. Financial obstacles that impede the advancement of education include the following:

- Limited Budget Allocation: In comparison to the suggested benchmarks, Nigeria's education sector frequently obtains inadequate budget allocations (World Bank, 2018). This results in insufficient financing for necessary expenses like teacher pay, educational supplies, and school upkeep.
- Dependency on External Aid: To augment domestic budgets, Nigeria's education sector is mostly dependent on donor money and external aid (UNESCO, 2019). Reliance on outside resources affects sustainability and long-term planning by introducing uncertainty and possibly resulting in uneven funding levels.
- Fiscal limits and Economic Instability: The government's ability to provide enough funding for education is impacted by fiscal limits and economic issues (Okolie & Igwe, 2018). Budgets for education may be further strained by changes in revenue, inflation rates, and currency devaluation, which would restrict spending in vital sectors.

-Infrastructure Deficit: The inadequacy of essential educational facilities such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories present obstacles to effective teaching and learning. It is imperative to rectify this deficit to enhance educational outcomes (Okolie & Igwe, 2018). Many schools lack essential facilities like classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and modern technology resources.

6. Implementation Gap: Nigeria's educational system faces significant challenges translating policy intentions into practical realities, emphasizing the need for strategic planning, sufficient funding, and ongoing monitoring aligned with national development objectives. (Ogunsaju & Oyewole, 2014).

7. Frequent Changes in Educational Policies and Programs: Nigeria has undergone numerous reviews, reforms, and innovations in educational policies and programs, leading to inconsistencies and diminished standards within the educational system (BSUJEM, 2019). Obukoya (2015) noted that between 2000 and 2016, Nigeria experienced transitions across five different regimes, resulting in discontinuities and hindrances to national development in education.

8. Capacity Building and Enlightenment: Implementation challenges stem from insufficient capacity among education stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and policymakers, to effectively translate policy objectives into actionable strategies that promote inclusivity (Adedimeji & Ayodele, 2017).

Comprehensive Strategies for Policy Implementation in Nigeria

To address the challenges of policy implementation in Nigeria's educational system, it is essential to adopt comprehensive strategies that target specific areas of concern. The following are proposed strategies to overcome these challenges:

1. **Capacity Development:** To bridge the implementation gap, policymakers should prioritize capacity development, streamline administrative processes, and ensure sustained funding aligned with national development priorities.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluating:** Educational Managers should establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the progress of policy implementation and identify areas for enhancement.
3. **Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:** This involves promoting collaboration and communication among stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, communities, and international partners.
4. **Tackling Infrastructure Deficiencies and boosting Funding Allocation:** There is a need to prioritize budget allocations for developing educational infrastructure encompassing school construction, renovation, and equipping with modern amenities and technology.
5. **Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Public-private partnerships and international collaborations can also play a crucial role in closing the infrastructure gap and enhancing educational outcomes.

6. **Harnessing Technology:** Digital technologies should be utilized to bridge infrastructure gaps, such as by providing e-learning platforms and digital libraries.
7. **Encouraging Equitable Access:** In order to solve unequal access, policymakers need to give priority to focused interventions including neighborhood outreach campaigns, school feeding programs, and scholarship programs.
8. **Targeted Interventions:** Government should develop and implement specific interventions aimed at overcoming barriers to education access, such as providing scholarships, school feeding programs, and transportation subsidies for marginalized communities.
9. **Community Engagement:** Government needs to empower local communities through awareness campaigns and mobilization efforts involving community leaders, parents, and civil society organizations to promote inclusive education and challenge social norms hindering access.
10. **Equality Programs:** Enact policies and initiatives to promote gender equality in education, including efforts to eliminate discrimination and empower girls to pursue education.
11. **Capacity Building for Local Governance:** There is a need to establish tailored training programs for local government officials and community leaders involved in education governance to enhance their understanding of policy frameworks, resource allocation, and community engagement strategies.
12. **Holistic School Improvement Plans:** Encourage schools to develop comprehensive improvement plans addressing academic outcomes, infrastructure, student well-being, and community involvement through collaborative efforts with teachers, parents, students, and community members.
13. **Strengthening Community Partnerships and Parental Involvement:** There is a need to foster strong partnerships between schools and local communities to enhance support for education initiatives.
14. **Encouraging Equitable Access:** In order to solve unequal access, policymakers need to give priority to focused interventions including neighborhood outreach campaigns, school feeding programs, and scholarship programs.
15. **Stakeholder participation and community engagement:** These play pivotal roles in establishing inclusive and sustainable educational systems. In Nigeria, overcoming challenges and fostering positive change in education requires leveraging local expertise, resources, and support networks throughout the policy design, implementation, and monitoring phases.

Conclusion

To redefine Nigerian educational policy effectively, policymakers must adopt a comprehensive strategy that integrates academic insights with practical tactics. Understanding the complex interplay of political, social, economic, and legal factors enables policymakers to navigate obstacles and seize opportunities successfully. Key

elements of successful educational policy design and implementation include active engagement of stakeholders, promotion of evidencebased decision-making, and prioritization of monitoring and assessment processes. Embracing adaptability and flexibility in implementation ensures responsiveness to evolving needs and circumstances. Ultimately, a robust framework for educational policy not only reflects the country's objectives but also fosters tangible improvements in educational outcomes and societal development.

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