

Analysis of Institutional Requirements for Affiliation of Private Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the institutional requirements of affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public universities and chartered institutions in Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative case study design. The data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews and document study. The data was analysed by thematic analysis. The study found that the University for Development Studies has Administrative and a Technical Committee that assesses the suitability of private tertiary institutions for purposes of affiliation. While the Administrative Committee assesses the physical infrastructure and equipment as well as legal and administrative documents of the prospective institution requesting for affiliation, the Technical Committee on its part is responsible for validating the curriculum of programme(s) and academic qualifications of staff who have been appointed to lecture in the mentee institution. The study further revealed that there were rigorous requirements by the University for Development Studies for affiliation of private tertiary institutions. The study concludes that affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public and chartered institutions will perpetuate as long as quality assurance is of concern to stakeholders at the tertiary level. Prospective affiliate tertiary institutions should therefore prepare adequately before making a request to public and chartered institutions for affiliation.

Keywords: Affiliation, Mentoring, Private tertiary institutions, University for Development Studies

1. Introduction

The rise of private higher education institutions in Africa is the antecedent of the colonial legacy. Among other things, the institutions were established by the Christian missionaries to perpetuate religious and educational agenda. The establishment of these institutions was to further deepen the Christian faith as well as enlightenment of the colonies through higher education. The past two decades have also witnessed pragmatic efforts to increase accessibility to higher education in order to meet the growing demand for tertiary education. On this account, private tertiary institutions proliferation has become common in the educational landscape of every country (Amposah and Onuoha, 2013).

In Ghana, the participation of the private sector in tertiary education delivery is relatively new as against basic education. Indeed, the early formal basic education institutions were established by individuals or religious bodies such as churches. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of private tertiary institutions. This has been attributed to demand for tertiary education in the country which emanated from high population growth and increased enrollment in basic and secondary education level. This has outweighed the capacity of existing public tertiary institutions to absorb the teeming Ghanaians who quest for tertiary education (Effah, 2006).

The advent of private tertiary institutions' participation in the educational delivery in Ghana has been phenomenal. It is on record that within a period of ten years, private tertiary institutions accredited in Ghana increased from three (3) in 1999 to 52 by December 2009 (www.nab.gov.gh cited in Amposah and Onuoha, 2013). As of December 2013, the number of private tertiary institutions accredited by National Accreditation Board (NAB) had increased to 93 which comprised seven (7) Private Colleges of Education, three (3) Chartered Private Tertiary Institutions, 50 Private Tertiary Institutions, 13 Tutorial Colleges, five (5) Private Nurses' Training Colleges and 15 Foreign Registered Private Tertiary Institutions (Daily Graphic, 13th March, 2014). This monumental increase in the number of private tertiary institutions has brought in its wake a high demand for affiliation from public universities/professional institutions and chartered institutions in the country.

According to Manuh et al (2007), examples of collaboration through affiliation among tertiary institutions abound in Ghana. This relationship takes the form of newer and smaller institutions being affiliated with established older and bigger institutions. The authors contend that the proliferation of more private tertiary institutions into the tertiary landscape has been monumental and that the older universities have been processing applications from the private tertiary institutions for affiliation. The study merely acknowledged that chartered institutions were processing applications for affiliation but did not specify the requirements private tertiary institutions were required to meet before affiliation.

The studies conducted by Utuka (2011) also suggest that the requirement by NAB for institutional and programme accreditation were too stringent, bureaucratic, expensive, time consuming, and involves too much paper work. In addition to meeting the requirements of NAB, the author contends that private tertiary institutions had to budget for affiliation fees and meet the other requirements of the mentoring institution. Similarly, Baryeh (2009) and Tetteh (2014) posit that apart from satisfying the NAB requirements for institutional and programme

accreditation by private tertiary institutions, they are equally required to meet the affiliation fee and other requirements from their mentor institutions.

While all the above studies have recognised that public and chartered institutions are in affiliation relationship with private tertiary institutions, these studies have failed to indicate the institutional requirements besides the affiliation fees paid by the mentored institutions. Therefore, the “other requirements” which private tertiary institutions must satisfy to be affiliated with chartered institutions for purposes of mentoring remained unknown. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to unravel the “other requirements” private tertiary institutions are required to meet before they are affiliated with chartered institutions in Ghana.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Affiliation

Affiliation is a relationship agreement between a newly founded private tertiary institution and a nationally recognised chartered tertiary institution. In this relationship, the newly established private tertiary institution seeking affiliation is referred to as a mentored institution whereas the nationally recognised chartered tertiary institution is known as the mentoring institution (NAB, August 2010).

Tertiary institutions in Ghana are normally classified as either public or private. Based on this classification of tertiary institutions, there are chartered public and chartered private tertiary institutions in the country. A chartered public tertiary institution is a tertiary institution established by an Act of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana to run both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes while a private university college with the grant of a presidential charter is a chartered institution. The grant of charter to a private tertiary institution is the prerogative of the President of the Republic of Ghana upon the recommendation of NAB (Tertiary Institutions {Establishment and Accreditation} Regulations, 2002).

2.2 The History of Affiliation

The History of affiliation of tertiary institutions is intertwined with the history of quality assurance in African higher education. The first established higher education institutions were affiliated to universities in the colonising countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Portugal. Hayward (2006) catalogue the affiliation status of the premier founding universities in Africa. While the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone which was established in 1827 was affiliated with Durham University in England from 1876, the following Universities and Colleges were affiliated with the University of London: the Liberia College, established in 1852; the University of Cape Town in South Africa, established in 1829; Makerere University, established in 1922; and University of Ghana, established in 1948. At the time, it was only the University College of Addis Ababa which was established in 1951 that was unaffiliated while the University of Dakar which was established in 1957 was affiliated with the University of Bordeaux. The University of Dakar which is now the Cheikh Anta Diop University was generally considered as part of the French higher education system up to the 1960s. By affiliating these institutions, they became part of the education systems and quality assurance measures of the colonising countries through the affiliate universities. The universities in the colonies were subject to the kinds of quality control mechanisms of the British or other European universities with external examiners and other aspects of these systems.

Indeed, there were several other Universities in Africa that were affiliated with external institutions as they were established. As time went on, some of the earlier established institutions in Africa weaned themselves off from the institutions of the colonising countries and awarded its own degrees and certificates to graduates. The autonomy conferred on the earlier institutions to award qualifications to graduates repositioned them to mentor other new institutions that were established. The University of Cape Town, South Africa is well known to have mentored South African new institutions, and that of the case of Fort Hare University which was affiliated with Rhodes University in UK (Materu, 2007). The University of Education, Winneba (formerly known as University College of Education, Winneba) started as an affiliate institution of the University of Cape Coast before it was chartered in 2004 while both the Ghana Institute of Journalism and the National Film and Television Institute have been affiliated with the University of Ghana (Manuh et al, 2007).

There were also a few African Universities that had accreditation from foreign accreditors to run programmes of study. A classic example is the University of Asmara in Eritrea in 1960 which was accredited by the Supreme Council of the Institute of Italian Universities. In 1992, the University of South Africa (UNISA) was accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council, a United States of America distance education accreditor (Hayward, 2006).

The affiliation of tertiary institutions in Ghana dates back to the establishment of the University College of the Gold Coast now the University of Ghana in 1948. As the premier tertiary institution in Ghana under the British colonial government, it was affiliated with the University of London (Materu, 2007). According to Baryeh (2009), the University College of the Gold Coast was in a “special relationship” with the University of London to run a limited number of programmes of study. This lasted until 1961 when the University College

became an autonomous tertiary institution with sovereign powers to award its certificates, diplomas and degrees. The affiliation of private tertiary institutions to chartered institutions in Ghana is a recent phenomenon following the establishment of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) in 1993. Prior to the establishment of NAB, there was gradual proliferation of private higher institutions that provided postsecondary education. The recognition that the private tertiary institutions are business oriented gave rise to the quality concern among stakeholders such as the government, student and parents. It was therefore necessary for the government to guard against the proliferation of freestanding private tertiary institutions that do not have the capacity to assure quality education in Ghana. Hence, the concept of affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public tertiary institutions and chartered tertiary institutions was instituted by government through the NAB to assure quality in the tertiary landscape. This was to further boost the confidence of students and the general public that programmes offered by the private tertiary institutions meet acceptable standards through mentoring (Tsevi, 2014).

2.3 The Importance of Affiliation

The concept of the affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public and chartered institutions is very useful practice in the midst of the increased private sector participation in the tertiary education service delivery. The affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public and chartered institutions has transformed the institutions from their profit motive orientation to quality education at the tertiary level. Without affiliation, many of the private tertiary institutions would have compromise their profit motive for quality of graduates (African Quality Assurance Network and Commission for Higher Education, 2012).

The affiliation of private tertiary institutions with public and chartered institutions is a way of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of NAB as a quality assurance agency. By requiring private tertiary institutions to affiliate with charter institutions, NAB is able to relinquish some of its roles to the mentoring institutions. In the mentoring institution, experienced faculty members are usually assigned as mentors to supervise the activities of the private tertiary institution as a result of the affiliation relationship. In effect, NAB is able to maintain a skeletal staff for its operations (African Quality Assurance Network and Commission for Higher Education, 2012). In the absence of affiliation of private tertiary institutions with chartered institutions, the role of NAB would have been intractable considering the number of private tertiary institutions in Ghana.

The affiliation of private tertiary institutions creates an avenue for the recognition of achievement of students from private tertiary institutions as they are awarded certificates, diploma and degrees of mentoring institutions. Since most of the chartered institutions have international reputation, qualifications awarded by the mentoring institutions to graduates of mentored institutions are highly recognised and graduates competitive urge in the global job market (Varghese, 2006).

Another importance of affiliation of private tertiary institutions with chartered institutions is to safeguard the mushrooming of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions are expected to be well equipped in terms of physical infrastructure and a sound financial base with adequate structures in place. Through the process of affiliation, mentoring institutions are able to assess the capacity of private tertiary institutions to run tertiary programmes (Varghese, 2006).

2.4 The Requirements of Mentoring Private Tertiary Institutions

The NAB has set a bench mark against which it measures chartered institutions qualification for mentoring private tertiary institutions. According to NAB guidelines on mentoring, a tertiary institution shall qualify for mentoring on the basis of the following conditions: i) it is chartered ii) it has graduated the first batch of students it admitted in the programme area it intends to mentor the private tertiary institution iii) It has adequate and qualified academic Senior Members to supervise the programme(s) it intends to mentor iv) it has active accreditation of the programme it is to supervised in the mentored institution v) proven ability of mentoring more than one institution in the same programme as the case may be vi) submission of report on the programme affiliation to NAB and track record of research output in the programme area for which the prospective institutions requires affiliation (NAB, August 2010).

2.5 The Process of Affiliation of Private Tertiary Institutions

In furtherance of its mandate of ensuring and maintaining high standards of academic quality in the country, the NAB requires private tertiary institution as a matter of necessity to affiliate with chartered tertiary institutions. Chartered institutions are tertiary institutions that are legally authorised in its home country to award its own degrees, diplomas and certificates to its graduates (NAB, August 2010). In the estimation of NAB, the chartered institutions have the capacity to provide academic leadership to the young upcoming private tertiary institutions in their quest to participate in the tertiary education service delivery.

The affiliation of a private tertiary institution to a chartered institution is not a straightforward process. It begins with an application to NAB of the intention of the private tertiary institution to affiliate with a chartered

institution. This request must be approved by NAB. The need for NAB's approval is to ensure that the proposed mentoring institution has the minimum qualification and resources to supervise the programme(s) for which affiliation is being sought. The approval by NAB is to pave way for the commencement of the affiliation process with the proposed mentoring institution. After the completion of this process, the private tertiary institution can then proceed with its application to the chartered institution it wish to be mentored (NAB, August 2010).

The NAB further requires that a formal affiliation agreement between mentored and mentoring institution is made available to the Board. This will inform the Board on the modalities of the affiliation so that it can intervene or mediate should any misunderstanding arise from the affiliation relationship. In this regard, the NAB acts as referee in the affiliation relationship.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative descriptive research design. Bhattacharjee (2012:6) asserts that descriptive research is aimed at careful observation and comprehensive documentation of a phenomenon of interest. A case study method was adopted within the qualitative research approach. It is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth on a phenomenon of interest be it a program, an event, an activity, a process, or individual(s) using different data collection procedures (Stake, 1995, cited in Creswell, 2003).

3.2 Sampling Technique and Data Collection

The researcher also used a non-probability purposive sampling approach in order to elicit the needed data. It is a sampling technique that is based on the researcher's use of his or her special knowledge or expertise in the selection of participants for inclusion in a research. This is to ensure that individuals with certain attributes are included in the study. Purposive samples are often used when the goal of the research is for description of a situation rather than generalisation (Glassner et al., 1983, cited in Berg, 2001).

Document study of quality assurance agencies such as National Accreditation Board (NAB) and National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE) was reviewed as well as the guidelines and reports of these agencies. The researcher browsed the official websites of these quality assurance agencies that have valuable and detailed information. The contents of these documents were reviewed and those pertaining to procedures for affiliation of private institutions were selected for inclusion in the study. The Acts of Parliament of the Republic Ghana establishing these agencies were also examined. The researcher also consulted books, journal articles and reports relevant to the study.

The researcher employed interviewing as the main method of primary data collection. Specifically, unstructured interviews were conducted in which the researcher engaged participants of the study in a face-to-face interaction. The flexibility of the interviews ensured that the researcher was able to probe respondents for further explanation and make clarifications when the need arose. The researcher used an interview schedule for the data collection.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study used a qualitative data analysis. It involves analysing non-numeric (qualitative) data from interviews and transcripts. In qualitative data analysis, much emphasis is placed on understanding the phenomena of interest in the social setting of the study (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Bearing this in mind, the researcher therefore, employed thematic analysis. It was carried out by data cleaning in the first instance. At this stage, the data collected was edited to deal with all errors and uncompleted statements in the course of filling the interview schedule. The researcher then read through the descriptive statements of the respondents in order to identify patterns of responses. This formed the basis for coding and categorisation of responses. The analysis was then carried out based on the themes that emerged from the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Process of Affiliation of Private Tertiary Institutions with UDS

The affiliation process begins when an interested private tertiary institution submits an application letter to the Vice Chancellor or Registrar requesting for affiliation. The request is then pass on to the Directorate of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA) as part of its functions. The Directorate then examines the application in detail and writes to the institution concerned to acknowledge receipt of application for affiliation. Where DAQA is satisfied that there is merit to proceed with the affiliation process, a request is made to the prospective mentored institution to submit administrative and academic documents covering the programmes to be mentored by UDS. The institution is also asked to pay an Affiliation Processing Fee into a UDS bank account. Upon receipt of the prescribed documents including the Bank's pay-in-slip as evidence of payment of the Affiliation Processing Fee, the stage is set for assessing the private tertiary institution's qualification and suitability for affiliation.

4.2 The Evaluation of Request of Private Tertiary Institutions for Affiliation with UDS

The University for Development Studies has two committees that assess the suitability or otherwise of private tertiary institutions for mentoring. These are Administrative and Technical Committees. The mandate of the Administrative Committee is to assess the physical infrastructure and equipment, as well as its adequacy. Apart from the physical infrastructure and equipment, the Committee also request for the submission of legal and administrative documents that are necessary for the effective functioning of the prospective mentored institution. These documents are studied by the Committee to ascertain their veracity and content adequacy. The membership of the Administrative Committee includes the Pro-Vice Chancellor, as chairman; Director of Academic Quality Assurance, as member; and an Assistant Registrar, as secretary.

The Technical Committee on the other hand is a committee which is constituted based on the programme request for affiliation from a prospective affiliate private tertiary institution. The Committee has the prime responsibility to validate the curriculum of programmes and academic qualifications of staff who have been appointed to lecture in the mentored institution. The membership of the Committee is made up of a secretary to the Administrative Committee and Academic Senior Members who have specialised in subject areas of which the programme request for affiliation is being sought from a prospective affiliate institution.

4.3 University for Development Studies Requirements for Affiliation

4.3.1 Physical Infrastructure and Equipment

It is generally agreed that quality teaching and learning cannot take place under poor learning environment. Therefore, the quality of physical infrastructure is the foundation for teaching and learning in an educational institution. In this regard, prospective affiliate institutions lecture halls/rooms are assessed in terms of number, capacity (average number of students lecture halls/rooms can contain) and furnishing (that is furniture and other decorative items that are in the lecture halls/rooms). The lighting system in the lecture halls/rooms are also taken into account and graded as poor, good or very good depending on the observation by the assessment team. The place of convenience for both prospective students and staff are inspected. The requirement for the availability of this facility is to ensure that prospective students and staff are able to response to nature's call when the need arises. As a precautionary measure, the assessment team also verifies the availability of firefighting equipment such as fire extinguishers and hydrants. Where it is not available, a recommendation is made for provision.

An equally important factor is the availability of offices and office equipment for administrative and academic work of the prospective mentored institution. In similar fashion, the assessment team looks at the number of rooms designated as offices, its furnishing and the lighting system. Again, the place of convenience especially washrooms for administrative staff are inspected. The availability of it will ensure that prospective members of staff are able to respond to nature. The assessment team also checks to see if firefighting equipment such as fire extinguishers and hydrants are installed to deal with emergency fire outbreaks. The assessment team also verifies the availability and the number of office equipment such desktop computers, official laptops, printers, scanner(s), cabinets and photocopier(s). This equipment is meant to ensure the smooth administrative work of the institution.

The assessment team further inspects practical skills laboratories of prospective mentored institutions for programme(s) that require hands on training. The inspection also incorporates the stock of equipment in the laboratories and the number of students the laboratories can accommodate at a time. The availability of practical skills laboratories will enhance the training of the students and make them competent in the job market after graduation.

Another important factor is the availability of library facilities. Where it is available, the team probes to know the total holdings of the library and the relevance of the books in terms of the programme(s) for mentoring. The team makes observation on spaciousness of the facility. If there is any virtual library, the prospective mentored institution is expected to provide evidence to the assessment team.

4.3.2 Computer Laboratory and Internet Connectivity

The world has become a global village where people in remote areas can access valuable information for their personal growth and development. Therefore, it is incumbent on a tertiary institution to align its vision with the current trail of technology innovation as an indispensable aspect of students training. Students' training in computer literacy and the use of modern technologies of communication should not be a choice but a necessity if a tertiary institution is to produce graduates who can fit well into the globalised job market. In connection with this philosophy, the assessment team also looks out for the availability of computer laboratories. Where a prospective mentored institution has a computer laboratory, its capacity is assessed in terms of the number of students it can contain at a time and the number of computers.

The internet connectivity of the computer laboratory of the prospective affiliate institution is assessed. This is to ensure that graduates from the institutions are capable of using modern modes of communication. The team probes to ascertain the kind of internet connectivity of the institution. This may be a Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN). The inspection team may also want to know about the availability of

wireless connectivity. It is envisaged that the availability of computer laboratory and internet connectivity will greatly position students to learn better as they will have access to learning materials available online in other jurisdictions. Students will also be able to do independent learning without necessarily relying on lecture notes and handouts from lecturers of the institution.

4.3.3 Water Supply

Water is one of the basic necessities of life. Water has both domestic and industrial use. Water is generally used for drinking, washing and cleaning. Therefore, the assessment team also seeks to know the water situation in the prospective mentored institution. In respect of this, the team checks for the availability of water supply as well as the form of water supply of the institution. This may be pipe borne or borehole. In any case, the water should be portable for usage. This is because the importance of water cannot be glossed over as it is needed for hand washing after visiting wash rooms.

4.3.4 Students and Staff Accommodation

Apart from water and food, shelter is another most important aspect of human life. It protects man against the vagaries of the weather. In respect of this, the assessment team also seeks to know the availability of accommodation for prospective students and staff of the institution. The availability of staff bungalows and halls/hostels for members of staff and students respectively is important especially for staff and students outside the region who may find themselves in an unfamiliar environment. In a situation where the accommodation facilities are not available, the team probes to ascertain the kind of arrangement for accommodation for prospective members of staff and students.

4.3.5 Certificate of Incorporation and Certificate to Commence Business

In Ghana, the establishment of private entities or businesses is governed by rules and regulations. All entities or businesses either for profit or non-profit must be recognised by registration in compliance with the standards set out by the Registrar's General Department under the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. In conformity with this requirement of registration, prospective mentored institutions are required to have Certificate of Incorporation and Certificate to Commence Business from the Registrar Generals' Department. This is to ensure that prospective institutions are duly registered in Ghana in accordance with Companies Registration Act, Act 179 of 1963.

4.3.6 Staff Qualification and Programme Curriculum

Another important factor that determines affiliation of private tertiary institutions to the University is the qualification of staff. The list of teaching staff is critically scrutinised to determine their backgrounds in terms of areas of specialisation to see if they can teach courses in the curriculum. It is also expected that teaching staff of a prospective affiliate institution should hold at least research-based master's degree in accordance with National Council for Tertiary Education's requirement for teaching at the tertiary level. This research-based master's degree should be in the relevant field of specialty. In this regard, the competency levels of staff can be established and appropriate recommendations made by the Technical Committee as to whether the prospective institution should run diploma or degree programmes.

Also, the curriculum of programme(s) for affiliation is assessed to ensure that the content is sufficient in training students for the job market. This includes but not limited to the course content, the number of courses and the number of contact hours the students will have for lectures. The curriculum is also revised should it be found to be insufficient by a specialist in the area who is a member of the Technical Committee.

4.3.7 Other Documents

Other documents that are considered in the assessment of private tertiary institutions for affiliation include the submission of Statutes of the prospective mentored institution, students' handbook and manuals such as Procurement Manual, Administrative Manual, Accounting and Financial Manual, and Audit Manual of the prospective affiliate institution. The copies of these documents are presented to the Administrative Committee. These documents are then kept in the Directorate of Academic Quality Assurance as reference materials. The purpose of these documents cannot be overemphasised as far as affiliation is concerned. For instance, the statutes set out bylaws and regulations governing the establishment of the institution and ensure consistency with relevant legislations in Ghana. The student handbook on the other hand spells out rules and regulations governing the conduct of students on campus. This is to ensure that arbitrary decisions are not meted out to students who engage in any form of misconduct. The manuals such as Procurement Manual, Administrative Manual, Accounting and Financial Manual, and Audit Manual are all meant to ensure uniformity in administering the affairs of the prospective mentored institution rather than following individual intuitive thinking or personal discretion and opinions by officers.

4.3.8 Evidence of Institutional Authorisation from NAB

The Administrative Committee also requires that prospective affiliate institution has evidence of institutional authorisation from the NAB on the establishment of the said institution. The institutional authorisation from the NAB is an indication that the governing board or the trustees of the institution concerned has satisfied the requirements for the institution's establishment as outlined in Regulation 12(1) of the Tertiary Institutions

(Establishment and Accreditation) Regulations, 2002. In respect of this, the NAB would have given such an institution a Certificate of Institutional authorisation and Certificate of Programme Accreditation.

5. Conclusion

From the study, the affiliation of private tertiary institutions to chartered institutions involves rigorous process. Apart from the physical infrastructure, institutional registration with the Registrar's General Department, documentation and staff requirements, prospective affiliate institutions should also meet NAB requirements in order to ensure successful affiliation. Prospective mentored institutions must prepare well in advance before requesting for affiliation from chartered institutions to run tertiary programmes.

It is also clear that affiliation of private tertiary institutions to chartered tertiary institutions will continue to exist as far as quality assurance is of paramount importance in the tertiary education landscape in Ghana. In recent times, the Council of Private Universities in Ghana has called on NAB to scrap off affiliation of private tertiary institutions with chartered institutions. This request is not likely to be heeded to in the foreseeable future because of quality assurance concerns in most of the private tertiary institutions. It is therefore necessary that private tertiary institutions seeking affiliation with chartered institution strategised to meet the external and internal requirements for mentoring.

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