

## Performing Arts and Culture Industry and Human Capacity Building in Africa

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#### Abstract

Evidently, there is a constant dire need for qualitative and updated human capacity infusion into various key sectors of the economy, the more so, with the intense race by developing countries of the world, particularly, the African countries, craving to establish themselves as significant players in the 21st Century global economy. The critical role of the various human capacity building agencies in this process at this time cannot be overemphasized. It is against this background that the roles and competencies of the performing arts and culture industry with regards to human capacity building in Africa is being examined in this research. The paper examines the nexus between the performing arts and culture industry and human capacity building. In-depth one-on-one interviews, syndicate group discussions, as well as library research of relevant authorities, were explored and data obtained subjected to qualitative analysis. The performing arts and culture is a discipline and vocation concerned essentially with society and the inter-relationships between the culture and the individuals within the society, whereas, human capacity building on the other hand is, to a large extent, related to the cultural industries in its nature and operations.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Human Capacity, Culture Industries, Resources, Capacity

#### 1. Introduction

Today, the world economy has become extremely globalised, and most countries in Africa now face the challenge of adjusting to the new environment in order to benefit from the opportunities created by the globalisation trends. Evidently, African countries are amongst the least prepared countries of the world for these global trends. This state of unpreparedness could be traced to the perennial economic malaise, including low levels of social economic development since the time of independence till date. These countries have been be-deviled with one form of socio-economic and political problems or the other: from maladministration by one military government after another, to the eventual exposure to anti-people, neo-colonial civil administration that left the generality of the African people even worsted than they were in the pre-independence era of colonial domination.

In spite of these crucial issues confronting the African nations over the years, the most fundamental problems facing them in this 21st century however, still happen to be the severe lack of adequately updated and fitted human capacity in the various institutions and establishments. Despite some improvement in growth performance in some few African countries, Nigeria for example, is still characterized by weak human capacity in formulating strategic projects and implementing strategic priorities and development programmes; in fact, the importance of capacity building for sustained economic development and transformation is now universally recognised as the missing link in Africa's development. (Ejedafiru, 2013,106). African Countries are continuously faced with problems of poor delivery strategies, poor practices and the problem of skills—gap. Their college graduates for example are not performing to expected capacity. These according to Oghuvbu (2013), could be evidenced in the constant and consistent increase in unemployment due to the production of unproductive, unemployable and unskilled manpower, leading to insecurity in academics, politics and health.

The National Policy on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education (2010) also corroborates this position in saying that for Nigeria to attain sustainable development and enhanced global competitiveness; it requires innovations, especially in the development of human capital. This is the same condition in majority of African countries. The development of human capital for realizing the national vision in these countries therefore needs to be furthered by a new set of knowledge, skills and attitude; and the individual citizen needs to be fully equipped to be competitive as well as meet the challenges of the emergent environment. This paper however reports on the critical role of the performing arts and culture industry in the human capacity building efforts of the African nations. The performing arts and culture industry contains huge capacity building potentials that can be tapped into, in the effort to measure up to the capacity requirement in Africa.

## 2.1 What is Capacity Building?

Capacity building, according to Sherlock and Webber-Lampa (2009, 12), originated with the United Nations in the early 1970's. It was then known as "institution building", which involved "increasing the ability of national organizations to be able to do their jobs well". It however became known as "capacity building" which was defined as "the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, institutional development, including community participation, human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems". Sherlock and Webber-Lampa reported further that "the UN recognized capacity building as a "long-term, continuing process" that required the involvement of all stakeholders" (2009, 12). Explaining further,



Sherlock and Webber-Lampa cited Ginsler as describing capacity as "the ability to perform or produce, often used in reference to the potential as ability of a person, group of persons, institution, or even a facility or equipment, to perform a task", and that "capacity is multidimensional". (2009, 14).

An organisation's, or individual's overall capacity to fulfill its mission and goals depends on a variety of specific capacities or competencies. In other words, different organisations or institutions can fulfill similar missions by drawing on the different capacities of the people that make up that organisation or society, as it were. For example, two performing arts organisations may be required to provide a repertory of theatre productions. While one relies on its ability to attract corporate sponsorships and funding to hire technical staff to provide services, the other may draw on its capacity and expertise to translate the scripts into stage-worthy productions.

## 2.2 Capacity Building and Time Elements:

The most effective capacity building process takes place over time. It could be in form of mentorship, coaching, on the job training, intensive long-term trainings and apprenticeships. This could sometimes last for months, preparing people to build their organisations by adding values. These efforts however, help to strengthen a particular skill, such as fund-raising, human resource management, consulting, man-power development, people management, team building, marketing and sales etc. It also helps new and existing staff, cast and crew, to better understand a subject that is critical to their leadership, relationship management, decision-making and problem solving. And sometimes it can help to solve a specific problem that is getting in the way of the individual employee, or the organisation's overall mission. (Sherlock and Webber-Lampa, 2009, 15).

## 3.0 The Role of the Performing Arts and Culture Industry in Human Capacity Building

The Performing Arts and Culture Industry is essentially a people-based, people-oriented and people-driven interconnected institution. It is an industry that functions based purely on people synergy. It is an organisation-based discipline and vocation. An organisation is a living body within which everything that happens within it affects everything else. The performing arts and culture discipline tend to adopt that holistic perspective in looking at all of the interconnections that make up the whole. Any attempt to understand or change an organisation (or a theatre production), has a far greater chance of succeeding if it involved people from many levels: staff, crew, cast, and board members. For example in a single performing arts production, each contributor cultivates a holistic perspective in the way they consider their roles in relation and in connection with that of other contributors within the production This is the synergy syndrome that exists in the performing arts. The various contributors in a single theatrical production at any time, may include actors, technicians, artistic directors, scriptwriters, costumiers and make-up artists, electricians, stage managers and of course the theatre managers. None of these contributors may be able to work independently of his or her understanding of, as well as in deliberate collaboration with the functionality and expertise of the others.

This is a rather rigorous process that however produces and matures a typical performing arts and culture practitioner in the course of rehearsals, training, or preparation for various capacity performance assignments both within and outside of the performing arts career. To that extent, a typical performing arts and culture graduate from any Theatre, or Performing Arts department of any University or college, would have been adequately equipped with various competencies and capacities such as team building and team working, people management, relationship management, customer relationship management, people and resource administration, fashion designing, masters of ceremony, leadership, public speaking, broadcasting, journalising, copywriting for advertising and marketing agencies, marketing and selling – both real time and on the world wide web, mind molders such as life-coaching, teaching and lecturing, entertainment, modeling, choreography and music producing, film television producing, comedy shows, script writing, sub-editing, hospitalities, theatres and in fact other facilities management, events management, dance therapy, beauty parlour management, and entrepreneurship.

Almost every performing arts and culture college graduate would have been well groomed in stage presence, people and team membership management, management of stage fright, audience control, ability to speak convincingly, confidently, clearly and succinctly, speech and voice articulation and script writing for various purposes. These few but critical skills and aptitude equip, as well as prepare the candidate ab initio, with the required basic capacities and competencies to function effectively in quite a vast area of vocations and careers in any economy in the world. To that extent, the performing arts industry contributes immensely to the human capacity building process for the society. Secondly, the performing arts and culture institution has a lot of latent and untapped human capacity building capabilities that require exploring. Investment of critical and adequate attention to the production of competent performing arts and culture graduates by African societies and indeed, African Universities and colleges therefore becomes a required inevitable effort if the continent is to cover reasonable mileage in the human capacity building project for their competitive economic advancement.



# 4.0 Capacity Building Features in the Performing Arts and Culture Institution 4.1 Team and Peer Learning

Peer learning essentially occurs whenever two colleagues engage one another in an exchange, often informally, while team learning is usually designed specifically for people who either work through, or with teams. These are equally quintessential pre-requisite for effective capacity building. These learning processes enable more people gain sufficient knowledge, skills and attitudes, to contribute meaningfully to improving the organisation in which they eventually engage in. Of course, the performing arts and culture education, career and vocation naturally exposes its people to these tools and skills set. The manifestation of any theatre production from the choice of the play script and the cast and crew members, through the series of rehearsals to the final performance before an audience is usually a product of a series of team and peer learning.

## 4.2 Versatility and Accommodation of Different Learning Styles:

People naturally have different styles of learning. Some learn by doing, others learn by experimenting, while a whole lot of others learn by observation. According to Ginsler, cited in Sherlock and Webber-Lampa (2009), a lot of people need to talk - communicate. Others prefer to think things over. Some are more visual while others are more verbal. Sometimes these differences reflect culture, class, or organisational culture. For instance, the well-educated individuals in a group tend to dominate conversation, while the less-educated tend not to speak up. Whatever the sources of these differences, an effective capacity building process capable of taking them all into account is again provided on the performing arts and culture platform.

## 4.3 History and Culture of the People:

To provide effective capacity-building, due advantage must be taken of the history and culture of the people and society as well as of the organisations for which the capacities are being built. The corporate vision, mission and organisational values and culture, and of course, of the environment that hosts the entire process are enmeshed in the history and culture of the people. The components of the performing arts and culture again provides a platform that is in itself equipped with the values of the history and culture of the people, that makes it an eligible contributor to the African human capacity building project. It furnishes its candidates with the ability to adapt to work, people and publics of divergent cultural and historical backgrounds. Performing artists are equipped with the use of different figures of speech depending on either background of the urban or rural communities in which they are working, or that of the play that they are producing. This, according to Ginsler, again as cited in Sherlock and Webber-Lampa (2009), is especially crucial in addressing social change, and community or work related issues, especially with multi-cultural constituencies. So, listening, communicating, improvisation, diplomacy and understanding a society, or an organisation's context, which are all inevitable factors for efficient and effective human capacity-building are, a priori, natural by-products of the performing arts and culture discipline and vocation

## 5.0 Trends in Capacity Building in the Performing Arts and Culture Industry

Indeed, there is a very intimate cybernetic relationship between the performing arts and culture industry and human capacity building. This is in terms of the arts' contributions in the actual human capacity molding processes by virtue of its curriculum and professional content. This is also in terms of the provision of a broad entrepreneurship and employability platform for the gainful engagement (either which way) of the said intellectually and professionally developed human capacities. And this has been shown over the years in diverse ways the world over.

Citing the Hope Azeda's Ubumuntu Arts Festival project in Rwanda as a first case in point, one finds the performing arts indeed a veritable human capacity building tool that is worthy of reference in this study. According to Azeda – the progenitor of the Ubumuntu festival project, (The New Times, 2015) "the festival is an exercise in human introspection –a chance for Rwandans in particular and the world at large "to re-question our humanity, to bridge the gap between being a human being, and being human because the two are totally different". Using "the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the US that claimed over 3,000 lives; the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, in which 1,500 people were killed and another 250,000 displaced from their homes; and the on-going civil wars and lawless insurgencies in Syria and Nigeria as background case studies", Azeda posits, according to The New Times report, that "the Ubumuntu Arts Festival comes in as a neutraliser to the myth that art is nothing more than entertainment; aiming to provide an avenue where people from different walks of life can come together and speak to each other in the language of art, and to act as a bridge over nations, and also provide an avenue where people from different countries can come together to learn from each other and be empowered to spearhead the healing process in their countries."

The festival, consisting of performances, workshops and forums, attracting a large number of participants and volunteers from different parts of the world, featured individual artists, artist groups, and journalists of diverse nationalities - the USA, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Serbia, Canada, Lebanon, Egypt, the DRC, Burundi,



Zimbabwe, and Sri Lanka. Hope Azeda further posits, that "though the participants at the festival came from different walks of life, they face the same social problems and that the festival provides "a forum for them to bring these issues to the table and come up with solutions through the arts...and to foster dialogue and peace building, promoting peace building and healing from violence, as well as providing space for public introspection and for the artists to network, grow, and share, further driving home a point to society that "the arts can be taken seriously as a career and not just as mere entertainment". Goes without saying that 'the arts can actually be taken seriously as a veritable human capacity building agency beyond just sheer entertainment.

According to a report - Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy (Conference Board, 2008), released by the Conference Board of Canada on its hosting of the "International Forum on the Creative Economy," in 2008, the Conference recognised "the culture sector as the foundation of the creative economy". According to the Conference Board estimates, "the economic footprint of the culture sector in Canada is valued at about \$84.6 billion in 2007, or 7.4 per cent of total real GDP; and that "countries around the world, as well as cities and regions, recognize the pervasive role that a dynamic culture sector plays in the overall economy—generating employment and wealth directly within the arts and culture industries, but also attracting people and spurring creativity and innovation across all sectors of the economy." (Conference Board, 2008).

The arts and culture is no doubt, a vehicle for economic development, for growth and for jobs in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). According to a UNESCO report (2010), "the arts and culture industries generate \$1.3 trillion in jobs and income annually, and account for 7% of global GDP. The report cites the Malian example in which "the culture sector accounted for 5.8% of employment in 2004 and 2.38% of Mali's GDP in 2006, including the informal component (accounting for 57% of the national economy)". It is a given therefore, that culture is clearly, in its many manifestations, a powerful engine for economic growth through capacity building and contributions, generating considerable income and employment, while at the same time serving as a strategic outlet for innovation, creativity, production and dissemination. This view is further strengthened by the recognition of the achievement of arts and culture by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as captured in the Outcome Document of the MDG Review Summit, adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in October 2010 in UN resolution A/RES/65/1. (UNESCO, 2010).

UNESCO goes to a large extent in taking advantage of the valuable capacity building potentials in the performing arts and culture industry by actually supporting, as well as promoting the mobility of artists and artistes, and cultural practitioners as well as their cultural goods and services. For example, in an effort to create partnerships between the private, public, and civil society to strengthen local creative and cultural industries for development in the Global South, UNESCO launched a Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity in 2002. Projects have ranged from broadening the access for African music, to regional and international markets such as the World Music Festival, (WOMEX) to a programme in Côte d'Ivoire to set up a creative enterprises incubator, to a West Africa incubators hub. These programmes address all dimensions of culture, and foster social inclusion and poverty reduction through the promotion and enhancement of cultural resources. They focus on local and national ownership through capacity-building. This is achieved by encouraging the inclusion of minorities and disadvantaged groups in social, political and cultural life, and by harnessing the tremendous potential of the cultural sectors for job creation, economic growth and poverty reduction. (UNESCO, 2010).

For Wakely, (DPUNEWS, 2015), "capacity building is the business of equipping all actors to perform effectively both in doing their own thing in their own field and level of operation, and in working in collaboration or partnership with others operating in other fields and at other levels". This is an essential component of both empowerment and enabling which again are ingredients inherent in both human capacity building as well as the performing arts and culture industries. Wakely further posits that 'enabling' (which is actually a register for 'capacity building'), is about ensuring that those who are empowered have the information, technology, skills and support to exercise their new authority (power) responsibly, and that it is about roles: who should do what and in partnership with whom". Therefore it is about relationships and interfacing between the different fields and the different levels of responsibility which again are typical ingredients of the cybernetic relationship between the performing arts and culture industry and human capacity building on one hand, and the relationship that exists between all the stakeholders in the capacity building processes.

Jennifer Edwards, a contributor to the Huffington Post, presents her impression of the potentials and capacity of the performing arts and culture to impact on the practitioners, humanity and the working community at large this way: "I have the opportunity to chat with many dance-focused folks—artists, administrators, presenters, and critics from around the world. The life of the artist is now focused on work—long, hard days of polymathic, multiple-facing, highly entrepreneurial hustling". (Huffington Post, 2012).

That the performing arts and culture industry has a natural connectivity and a dynamic involvement in human capacity building is self-evident. Whether in the learning process, or practicing stage, the artist is involved in capacity building of himself, his audience and his business community at large, for employability and employment-abilities. Quoting a respondent from an interview she had with a collaborating set of arts directors and executives, Jennifer Edwards reports that "we heard repeatedly about what keeps organisations from succeeding: fear of failure



and the unknown, lack of discipline or will to change, unclear priorities, ignoring facts that challenge a preferred view of the world, and inadequate cooperation with others internally and externally" (Edward, 2012). These behaviors and attitudes are the inverse of the qualities that are targeted at in building artistes and artists for their roles in the performing arts. This precisely, is the way collaboration, teammanship, people management, mentoring, coaching and capacity impartation work in the performing arts and culture industry. This again is not so much about the individuals but more about the integrating and synergetic nature of the arts itself. To that extent, the nexus between the arts and culture industry and the human capacity building processes is well knitted in an inseparable, near-indistinguishable symbiotic relationship.

#### 6.0 Recommendations

## 6.1 Universities' Role in the Human Capacity Building through the Performing Arts and Culture

Increasingly, there is pressure on the creative and performing arts schools in higher education institutions to further develop curriculum that addresses the employability and entrepreneurship potentials of graduates. This is in consonance with Pollard and Wilson (2014), in positing that "creative and performing arts schools are increasingly facing the challenge of developing curricula to address an employability agenda in higher education." Such curriculum must be seen to be contributing immensely to the further development of the competencies of the performing arts in its human capacity building potentialities. Also, the curriculum must better equip graduates for the particular types of employment commonly experienced by creative and performing arts graduates as well as for employability and/or entrepreneurship outside of their immediate learnings of the arts. Etta, cited in Ejedafiru (2013), posits that "University education must become more consciously informed by the orientations, virtues and intellectual dispositions nurtured at the foundation education levels". This of course, invariably impacts on the employability potentials of the graduands getting out of school.

The curriculum of the performing arts, dramatic arts, or theatre arts or even creative arts departments, as they are so named across various Universities in African countries, must, regardless of their peculiar nomenclature, become more robust and dynamic in the way they capture the moods of the times. This curriculum should prepare students for life after school, and help them to very easily determine what work or vocation to settle for, and where to work when they leave school. This will go a long way in easing off the usual state of terrorizing apprehension which most African University undergraduates, especially from the performing arts or creative arts departments, are subjected to, more so, due to the pervading unemployment and underemployment situation across the continent.

## 6.2 Government Roles through the National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education across African Countries should more than at any time else begin to channel their policy thrust towards the development of a more robust and hands-on entrepreneurship and employability skills proned to creative arts and culture curriculum. This will further enhance, as well as give expression to the already innate human capacity building potentials in the creative arts and culture discipline. According to Etta in Ejedafiru (2013), "every generation needs educational revolution different from what existed in the past, to meet the needs of the present, and the challenges of the future". This however is in sync with the goals of tertiary education as posited by the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (FRN, 2004). This of course, includes the development of "the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment, as well as making it possible for recipients to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society". (Ejedafiru, 2013). The crux of this recommendation however is, besides an appeal for an emphasis on implementation of the corresponding policies already in place in this direction, these educational policies should become more particularly favourable and accommodating to the human capacity building values inherent in the performing arts and culture.

## 6.3 Not-for-Profit Arts and Culture Infrastructure to be Enhanced and Strengthened

Nonprofit performing arts and culture organisations should be strengthened by public and private sector support initiatives to be able to better provide educational and outreach services that help to cultivate further demands for arts experiences, consequently, they can benefit the arts industries in general. The Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) is a case in point. The MUSON for example, runs an effective and elaborate School of Music that graduates students in diploma certification. The institute also organizes an international annual festival of arts and culture which showcases all aspects of the arts from still-art exhibition to talent hunting, drama, music, dance and poetry. Furthermore, the MUSON serves as an international event Centre which play host to various artistic programmes and events at a reasonably discounted support-fee for young artistes and artists, as well as smaller performing arts and culture establishments. (Ohenhen, 2013). Some nonprofits arts Centres like the MUSON actually serve as incubators, providing essential design, communications, training, education or planning services to artist entrepreneurs and even commercial creative businesses. Others are the direct producers of artistic goods and experiences without which no creative economy can thrive. Still, others serve as the "anchor" attractions in a community whose audiences provide essential business for nearby retail, restaurant and hospitality concerns.



Because of these complex relationship, federal, states and regional governments' efforts to foster economic growth in the arts must include the nonprofit as well as the for-profit sectors, ensuring that nonprofits in the state have the capacity to be productive economic contributors and connectors. Interestingly, the MUSON enjoys tremendous supports from the Lagos State Government as well as the Federal Government of Nigeria through tax and import duty waivers. (Awodiya, 2006). This kind of support is a great morale booster to the organisation and helps to encourage them to also reciprocate such gestures through some social responsibility give-back-to-society efforts. This can be extended to other smaller non-profit art organisations.

### **6.4 Nonprofit Capacity-Building Initiatives**

In the developed countries like the United States of America, some states have launched capacity-building initiatives that aim to strengthen the state's nonprofit arts infrastructure. A case in point is Oregon's recent Culture, Heritage, Art, Movies, and Preservation Initiative, (CHAMP), a state reinvestment package designed to revitalize cultural organisations whose missions keep culture thriving and also help to advance the state's creative arts and culture economy. The package includes funding for the Creative Oregon Initiative, which aims to strengthen nonprofit capacity to support artists, grow audiences, and add jobs and revenue to local economies. In addition, the initiative includes funding to support the Oregon Cultural Trust, the Oregon Historical Society, public broadcasting, rural communications infrastructure development, and the marketing of Oregon as a film site to major Hollywood studios. (Ginsler et al., 2005). This is an initiative that African Countries' Councils for Arts and Culture could take a cue from. It will go a long way in further boosting the human capacity building potentials of the creative arts and culture discipline and vocation.

## 6.5 Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate State Economic Development

Again borrowing a leaf from the United States of America, states and regional governments in African countries can set up arts commission's Arts Industry Programme like the **Mississippi** Arts Commission's Arts Industry Program, which provides grants to nonprofit arts and cultural organisations such as museums, orchestras, theatres, dance companies, and opera companies not only to improve their internal financial and operational systems but also to enhance their role in human capacity building ventures like arts education, cultural tourism and economic development. Grants awards are used to strengthen the planning practices of recipient organisations and to help them contribute to their communities' education, workforce, and economic development efforts. (Sherlock & Webber-Lampa, 2009).

## 6.6 Government and Private Sector Support Initiatives for SMEs in the Arts and Culture.

Government and Private sector initiatives in the African countries can begin to pay more than lip-service support and sponsorship attention to the thriving small medium scale business sector in the arts which are actually dynamic engine rooms to state economies, particularly in rural areas. States can support business development in the arts by utilizing existing state networks, tapping into state universities systems machineries, developing virtual networks, and supporting entrepreneurial collaborations. To foster the development of small businesses and microenterprises, most state governments and in fact the organised private sectors should establish networks of local, state, and federal programmes that are designed to assist art-based SMEs, and encourage entrepreneurship. These programmes would provide a helpful boost to the creative, as well as performing arts and culture industries actually dominated by self-employed individuals or small businesses with usually fewer than five employees. The central goal of this programme initiative would be to help young artistes and artist-entrepreneurs and small arts and culture enterprises become more economically viable as well as become more productive and contributory to the continent's human capacity building project.

## 7.0 Conclusion

Though the importance of human and institutional capacity building for sustained human and economic development is now universally recognized, the record of achievement in African countries in this regards still leaves much more to be desired. The framework for effective development of human and institutional capacity building is either very low in most countries or actually completely lacking in a host of others. Ironically, African countries do host a tremendous presence of the creative and performing arts and culture occupation which incidentally are potential value-adding human capacity building midwives. So, given the ironically, low levels of capacity development and utilization in these African countries, the need for a targeted strategic approach towards harnessing the latent capacity building potentials in the creative and performing arts and culture industries cannot be overemphasized. It is a question of in-focusing, taking advantage of what is already available to produce what is needed for immense economy boosting. This, if holistically embraced by the correspondent agencies in the various African states, will go a long way in putting Africa on the front burner of the world economy in this 21st Century.

Effort therefore should be geared towards effective policy formulation, enhancement and implementation, as



well as concerted efforts in creating an enabling environment in the educational systems especially in the arts and culture disciplines of African Universities and colleges. Africa must realize that if its goal to attain sustained human and economic development for the entire societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world economy must be achieved, it must take advantage of all available channels of human capacity building of which the performing arts and culture is key and a veritable competitive advantage for Africa as a continent. African countries must be in front burner of making, as well as implementing its own development choices.

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