

The Relationship between Teacher Graduate Employment and Labour Market Trends

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Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between teacher graduate employment and labour market trends in Namibia, with a focus on the Khomas region. The findings reveal a significant mismatch between teacher qualifications and labour market demands, particularly due to an oversupply of graduates in lower primary education and a shortage of teachers in Science, Technology, Mathematics, and Vocational Education. The study highlights how labour market shifts, influenced by global trends and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, prioritize technical and specialized teaching fields, while many graduates remain unqualified for these high-demand positions.

Key factors contributing to teacher unemployment include misalignment in training curricula, inadequate workforce planning, budget constraints limiting teacher recruitment and the proliferation of private institutions offering low-quality training. The study recommends strategic interventions such as regulating teacher training intake, revising curricula to match labour market needs, improving teacher distribution across regions and streamlining the hiring process. Additionally, policy reforms, increased government funding and enhanced practical training programs are proposed to improve employment outcomes for teacher graduates. Strengthening collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers and labor market analysts is crucial for addressing the persistent employment challenges in Namibia's education sector.

Key words: Labour Market Trends, Relationships, Teacher Graduate Employment

Introduction:

Teacher recruitment in Namibia is primarily managed by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) in collaboration with regional education offices. The recruitment process, regulated by the Public Service Commission (PSC), ensures that teachers meet specific qualifications, including diplomas and degrees in

education. Over the years, Namibia has shifted from a centralized to a decentralized recruitment system, allowing regional offices to address local school needs more effectively.

Literature revealed that Namibia faces a rising teacher unemployment rate, with statistics from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) showing an increase from 31% in 2019

to 34% in 2020. This issue is further compounded by an oversupply of teacher graduates, which is disproportionate to the labor market demand. Additionally, concerns such as corruption, lack of transparency and inequitable teacher distribution impact educational outcomes.

This study examines the relationship between teacher graduate employment and labor market trends in Khomas region of Namibia. By analyzing recruitment patterns, labor market demands and employment rates, the research aims to provide insights into the factors influencing teacher unemployment and offer recommendations for improving teacher workforce planning.

Objectives of The Study:

- To examine the relationship between teacher graduate employment and labor market trends in Namibia.
- To evaluate the impact of the supply of teacher graduates on labor market demand.
- To propose policy recommendations aimed at reducing teacher graduate unemployment and improving workforce alignment in the education sector.

Problem Statement:

Namibia's current unemployment rate stands at 36.9%, with unemployed qualified teachers accounting for about 9% of this figure (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2024). This growing number of unemployed teacher graduates presents a critical challenge to the education system, as it directly affects the quality of education and the achievement of national development goals. Education is a key pillar of Namibia's national development agenda and ineffective teacher recruitment threatens both educational equity and long-term socio-economic progress.

Strategic teacher recruitment is essential for ensuring that all learners, regardless of location or socio-economic status, have access to qualified educators (Damaseb, 2015). According to Helmut

and Gerhard (2019), aligning teacher expertise with subject and grade-level requirements improves instructional quality and job satisfaction, reducing turnover rates. However, ineffective recruitment policies contribute to disparities in teacher distribution, unbalanced workloads and a lack of motivation among educators, ultimately destabilizing the education system (Judith, 2020).

It is against this background that this study aims to investigate the relationship between teacher graduate employment and labor market trends in Khomas region of Namibia. By analyzing recruitment patterns, employment rates, and policy challenges, the research seeks to provide data-driven insights to inform policymakers. Addressing inefficiencies in teacher recruitment is crucial to improving workforce planning, ensuring optimal resource allocation and enhancing the overall quality of education. Failure to do so may result in increased job dissatisfaction, delayed curriculum reforms and broader societal issues, including social unrest and rising crime rates.

Theoretical Framework:

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding key concepts and guiding research arguments (McLaughlin & Oberman, 2017). This study is grounded in the labor supply and demand theory, originally developed by James Denham-Steuart Adam in 1767. According to Smith (1790), this theory explains the interaction between the supply of labor (teacher graduates) and the demand for their services in the education sector. It posits that when the demand for teachers exceeds supply due to factors such as population growth or education policy changes wages and employment opportunities should increase to attract more candidates. Conversely, an oversupply of teachers leads to stagnant wages, reduced job availability and increased unemployment.

The labor supply and demand theory are particularly relevant to this study as it provides a framework for understanding how teacher employment aligns with labor market trends. It highlights the economic forces that influence

teacher recruitment, job availability and employment rates. By applying this theory, the study will explore how imbalances in teacher supply and demand affect employment outcomes, offering insights into potential policy interventions to improve teacher workforce planning.

Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using a phenomenological design to explore the perspectives of teacher graduates and employers regarding employment opportunities and labor market trends. The phenomenological approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of teacher graduates as they navigate the labor market.

Population:

The population for this research is made up of graduates from universities and key stakeholders in the education labor market. The population of the study is made up of 4500 teacher graduates both employed and unemployed, 132 school administrators and recruiters from public and private schools and 500 policy makers and labour market analysts.

Sample and Sampling Method:

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on their experience with teacher employment and knowledge of labour market dynamics. A sample of 10 teacher graduates both employed and unemployed, 6 school administrators and recruiters from public and private schools as well as 5 policy makers and labour market analysts were recruited in this study to ensure a diverse range of insights.

Data Collection Instrument:

The primary data collection instruments for this study were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with teacher graduates to understand their employment experiences and perceptions of labor market trends. Furthermore, the researcher engaged with small groups of school

administrators and policymakers to discuss hiring trends and labor market needs. Finally, the researcher reviewed policy reports, labor market surveys and employment statistics to contextualize qualitative findings.

Data Analysis:

The data analysis procedure for this study involved a systematic approach to interpreting and making sense of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The primary method used for analysing the data in this study was thematic analysis, which is a widely accepted technique in qualitative research for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

Ethical Issues:

This study adhered to stringent ethical considerations to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants. Before data collection began, participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures and potential risks, in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects (Smith et al., 2020). The research participants were fully informed about their rights to voluntary participation, including the option to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences. Informed consents were obtained from the research participants. These steps were taken to ensure that participants were fully aware of their involvement in the study and had the opportunity to make an informed decision about their participation.

Research Findings and Discussion:

Data constructed through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis are presented in this section. The section begins by presenting the demographic information for the research participants. The section continues presenting data constructed through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis under the themes emerged during data analysis.

Demographic Data:

Figure 1: Respondents' gender

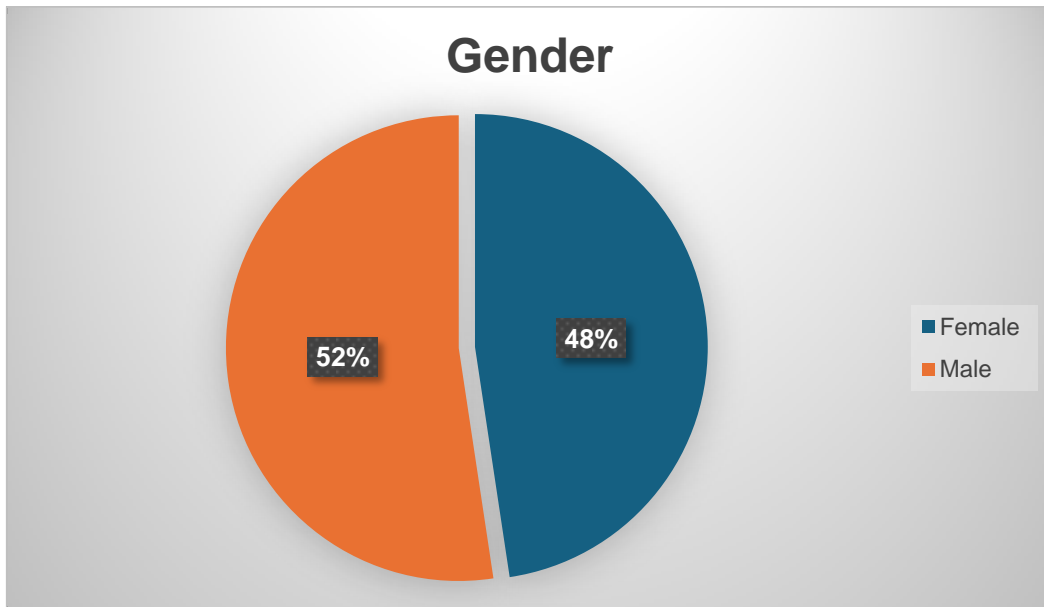


Figure 1 above illustrates the gender distribution of participants in the study, with 11 males and 10 females. This indicates a nearly equal representation of both genders, with males comprising a slightly higher proportion around 52% and females making up about 48% of the

total participants. The balanced participation suggests that the findings of the study reflect perspectives from both male and female respondents, reducing potential gender bias in the results.

Figure 2: Age category of respondents

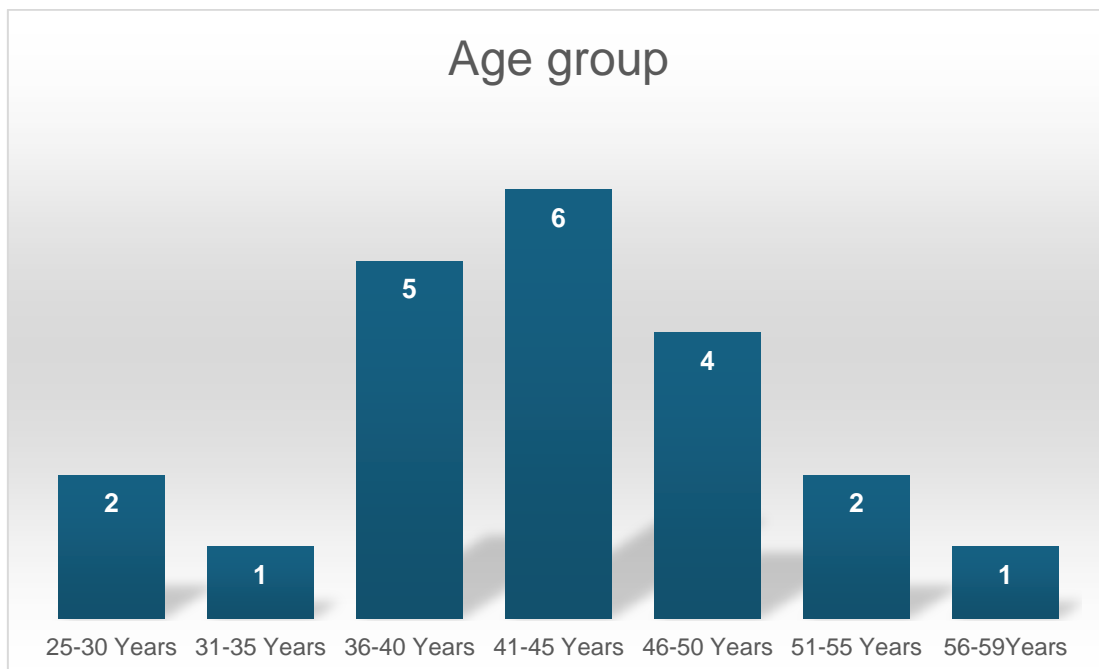


Figure 2 above shows the age distribution of participants in the study. The highest number of participants (6) falls within the 41–45 age group, followed by 5 participants in the 36–40 age group. This suggests that most respondents are in their

late 30s and early 40s, indicating that mid-career professionals formed the largest portion of the study sample. The younger age groups (25–30 and 31–35 years) had the lowest representation, with only 2 and 1 participant(s), respectively.

Figure 3: Professional roles of the participants

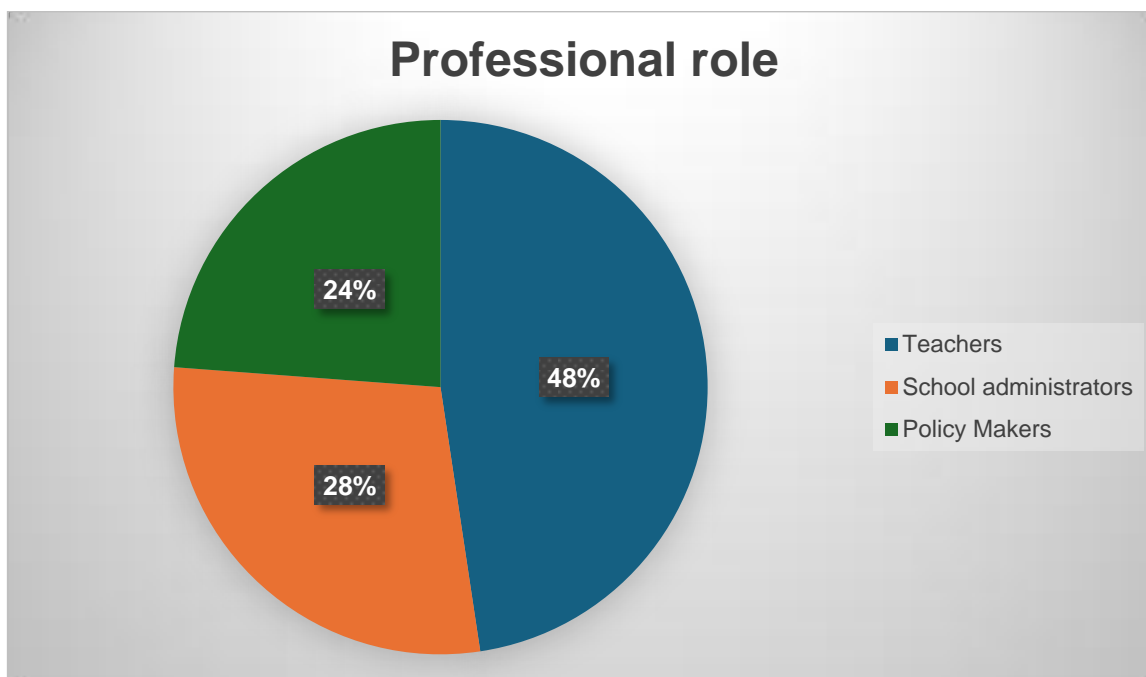


Figure 3 above illustrates the distribution of participants by professional role in the research study. The largest group consists of teachers (10 participants), making up most respondents. This suggests that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of educators who have direct experience with employment challenges and labor market trends. School administrators (6 participants) represent the second-largest group. Their inclusion provides insights into how hiring processes, workforce planning, and school-level and policymakers offering insights into systemic and policy-related factors affecting teacher employment.

policies affect teacher employment. Policy makers (5 participants) form the smallest group, yet their input is crucial, as they influence regulations, funding, and education policies that shape labor market trends.

The distribution ensures a balanced perspective from different stakeholders in the education sector, with teachers contributing firsthand experiences, administrators providing institutional viewpoints,

Figure 4: Participants' working experience



Data on figure 4 above reveals that the majority of research participants have extensive work experience, with 11 out of 21 individuals (52%) possessing over 10 years in their respective fields. This suggests that the study is largely informed by seasoned professionals who bring deep industry knowledge and long-term insights. Meanwhile, 7 participants (33%) have 6-10 years of experience, representing mid-career professionals who balance theoretical understanding with practical expertise. The smallest group, consisting of 3 participants (14%), has 1-5 years of experience, indicating a limited perspective from early-career professionals. Overall, the distribution highlights the dominance of experienced individuals, which may influence the findings toward a more expert-driven viewpoint.

Teacher Graduate Employment and Labor Market Trends:

The findings of this study revealed that the issue of teacher qualification mismatch significantly affects the employability of teacher graduates in Khomas region of Namibia. Respondents highlighted a disconnect between the skills and qualifications possessed by graduates and the teaching specializations in demand by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The research findings revealed that while the labor market shows a growing need for teachers in Mathematics, Science, Languages, and Vocational Education, a large proportion of graduates specializing in lower primary education are produced every year, leading to an oversupply in that sector and increased unemployment among teacher graduates.

Participants noted a shift in the demand for teaching positions towards Science, Technology and Mathematics fields, as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). These areas are increasingly prioritized due to global labor market trends and the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Respondents emphasized that limited job opportunities in the education sector are largely influenced by skills mismatch, as many graduates lack the competencies required in high-demand fields.

The research findings are aligned with the study conducted by Tchinazie (2021), which underscores the importance of curriculum alignment with labor market needs to mitigate unemployment. According to the research findings, the critical issue contributing to skills mismatch is the limited capacity of training institutions, including lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. To effectively respond to labor market trends, both educational institutions and their human resource capacities require reform.

Based on the research findings, it is evident that labor market trends must be closely monitored to ensure that teacher training institutions align their programmes with employment opportunities. A more strategic approach incorporating labour market forecasting, curriculum revision and policy adjustments is crucial in addressing the mismatch between teacher graduate employment and labor market needs. Strengthening collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers and labour market analysts will be key to improving employment outcomes and reducing teacher unemployment in Namibia.

Teacher Supply on Labor Market Trends:

The research findings indicate a significant misalignment between teacher supply and labor market demand in Namibia, particularly in the Khomas region. When respondents were asked to assess the balance between teacher supply and demand, the majority expressed that there is poor alignment or no balance at all. One of the primary reasons cited for this mismatch is the low admission requirements for teaching programs in Namibia, which have contributed to high enrollment rates and an oversupply of teacher graduates. The oversupply is particularly pronounced in Lower Primary Education, while critical shortages exist in Science, Technology, Mathematics and Technical subjects.

The research findings pointed out regional disparities in teacher demand, where certain regions face high demand for teachers, while others experience oversupply, leading to

employment imbalances. This discrepancy highlights the need for targeted workforce planning and regional labour market assessments to distribute teaching professionals more effectively across Namibia.

Research findings revealed that budget allocation plays a crucial role in teacher employment rates. The research findings revealed that insufficient budget allocations for salaries and operational costs force the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture to reduce recruitment rates, exacerbating teacher unemployment. When government spending prioritizes educational infrastructure and capital projects, fewer resources are allocated toward hiring new teachers, despite an increasing number of graduates entering the labour market. This misalignment in financial planning further contributes to job scarcity among teacher graduates.

The research findings revealed that regulatory policies significantly shape the dynamics of teacher employment, particularly in terms of training institutions and qualification standards. Respondents expressed concern over the proliferation of private institutions offering teacher training programs, often driven by profit motives rather than quality education. The ease of certification and licensing has resulted in an excessive number of training centers, leading to an influx of graduates and intensified competition for limited job openings.

To address this issue, respondents advocated for the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) to implement stricter certification and licensing standards to regulate the multiplication of teaching qualifications and mitigate the oversupply of teacher graduates. Additionally, the National Planning Commission (NPC) should actively collaborate with the NQA to ensure that training institutions align their programs with actual labor market demands, thereby reducing unemployment and skills mismatch.

Strategies to Reduce Teacher Unemployment in Namibia:

To address the growing challenge of teacher graduate unemployment in Khomas region, respondents emphasized the need for strategic

interventions to align teacher training with labour market demands. One of the key recommendations is to regulate teacher training intake by implementing a teacher demand and supply model. This approach would ensure that the number of students admitted to teacher training programmes is in line with projected job market needs.

Regular reviews and adjustments based on labour market trends were also suggested to improve employment prospects for graduates. A greater focus on high demand teaching areas, such as Science, Technology and Mathematics programmes are identified as essential. Respondents noted that many job openings exist in these specialized fields, yet most training institutions continue to overproduce graduates in lower primary education, leading to an oversupply of teachers in that field.

Another strategy highlighted was improving teacher distribution models to address regional imbalances in teacher demand. The research findings revealed that some regions experience teacher shortages, while others have an oversupply of educators, contributing to unemployment in certain regions. Respondents suggested targeted recruitment approaches, such as subject-specific hiring and regional placement prioritization, to ensure that teacher graduates are placed where they are most needed. Additionally, increasing financial incentives, such as remote allowances, is recommended to attract teachers to understaffed rural and remote areas. Another proposed strategy is flexible deployment models, including rotational assignments, where teachers would serve in under-resourced regions for a set period before moving to urban locations. Respondents also highlighted the potential benefits of part-time and temporary teaching positions, which could help accommodate fluctuations in demand while increasing employment opportunities.

The streamlining of the hiring process is also identified as a critical factor in reducing teacher unemployment. Many respondents argued that complicated and delayed recruitment processes

contribute to graduates struggling to secure teaching positions. To address this, recommendations included the digitization of the application process through online portals, which would allow graduates to apply for multiple positions at low cost. Additionally, a unified teacher recruitment platform was suggested to create a centralized database for job applications, improving efficiency in hiring.

Respondents further recommend simplifying documentation requirements by ensuring that only essential paperwork is needed for employment. For instance, it was suggested that secondary teaching positions should be reserved for graduates with a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate diploma, to maintain high educational standards and eliminate unnecessary competition from lower-level qualifications. Collaborative recruitment efforts between the Ministry of Education, universities, and private institutions were also proposed to help identify top-performing teacher candidates early and facilitate a smoother transition into the workforce.

Policy support and government intervention were considered crucial in addressing teacher graduate unemployment. Respondents emphasized that increased government funding for education could help create more teaching positions and improve school facilities, making the teaching profession more attractive. Additionally, transparent and merit-based hiring practices were recommended to ensure fair selection processes and prioritize highly qualified candidates. Enhancing practical experience in teacher training programs was also suggested as a way to better prepare graduates for real classroom settings. By incorporating internships, school-based training and mentorship programs, institutions could bridge the gap between theory and practice, increasing graduate employability. Finally, respondents stressed the importance of job placement services in assisting graduates with employment opportunities. Establishing career counseling services within training institutions, developing alumni networks and implementing mentorship programs were

identified as key solutions to help graduates transition into teaching roles more effectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The findings of this study highlight a significant misalignment between teacher graduate employment rates and labor market trends in Namibia. The study concludes that the demand for teachers in the labour market does not match the supply of teacher graduates, leading to high levels of unemployment among newly qualified teachers. Despite the growing number of teacher graduates, the available job opportunities in the education sector remain limited, with demand shifting toward specialized fields such as Science, Technology, Mathematics and vocational education and technical training.

One of the key factors contributing to teacher graduate unemployment is the lack of systematic labor market reviews to guide educational institutions in their program offerings. The study further concludes that low admission requirements to teacher training programs and the proliferation of teacher training institutions have resulted in an oversupply of educators, particularly in lower primary education. Additionally, cheap accreditation and licensing processes have enabled the mass production of teacher graduates, further exacerbating unemployment rates.

Economic conditions such as budget cuts and economic downturns were also identified as factors affecting teacher employment rates. Reduced government spending on education often results in fewer teaching positions, leaving many graduates unemployed. Moreover, the inconsistent policies and regulations surrounding teacher certification and hiring practices create barriers that delay the placement of qualified candidates into teaching positions.

To address these challenges, the study proposes several policy interventions aimed at reducing teacher graduate unemployment and aligning teacher training programmes with labour market needs. Implementing a teacher demand and supply model would ensure that the number of students admitted into teacher training programs aligns

with projected labor market needs, thus reducing oversupply. Furthermore, the National Planning Commission should provide annual reports on labour market demands, guiding training institutions in developing programs that cater to high-demand fields. This would enable better job absorption rates for graduates.

The study also suggests raising entry standards for teacher education programmes to ensure that only highly qualified students pursue teaching careers, improving overall teacher quality. Additionally, encouraging students to explore alternative fields of study with higher demand would reduce pressure on the teaching job market and diversify employment opportunities for young professionals. The research findings revealed that addressing teacher graduate unemployment in Namibia requires a multi-pronged approach that includes policy reforms, improved labour market analysis and strategic workforce planning. By ensuring that teacher training programs align with national workforce demands, the country can enhance employment opportunities for graduates, improve the quality of education and create a more sustainable and balanced teacher workforce.

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