Leadership Styles and How they Affect Quality in Dual-Mode Institutions of Higher Learning in Zambia.

(Conference ID: CFP/419/2017)

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Abstract:

Faced with a slow but steady increase of colleges of education transforming from conventional into dual-mode institutions in Zambia, there is need to undertake profound changes in terms of governance, organizational structure and modes of operation. The study has established that effective leaders draw on a repertoire of styles, and the effectiveness of particular styles is dependent on both the leadership task and the context.

Keywords:

conventional institution, leadership theories, dual-mode institution, transactional leadership, situational leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, dictatorial leadership, laissez-faire leadership.

Background

Since Independence, ODL has been embraced in Zambia. Currently, the Zambian Government through the Ministry of General Education as well as Higher Education offer open learning at school level in regular schools and ODL schools where learners attend school in the afternoon and evening at various grade level and age groups. In the same vein, Open and Distance Learning at this level is done in organised centres and by individuals who enrol with the Zambia College of Distance Education(ZACODE) which produces self-study educational materials in print and electronic format [released as Open Education Resources]with financial and technical assistance from Commonwealth Of Learning (COL). At teacher training level, nearly all public colleges of education and a few private Colleges are providing ODL programmes with guidance from the Ministry through the Directorate of Open and Distance Education (DODE) which provides training in instructional design, policy and guidelines.

Problem:

The same administrators, who lead face-to-face (conventional) institutions, also manage open and distance learning units. It is worth noting that the face-to-face and distance education students are not exactly the same in terms of learning needs, age range, responsibilities, motivation and study environment. As Rumble and Latchem (2004:117) noted; "dual-mode institutions in theory offer courses of exactly the same standards on - and off campus, but in practice have to overcome many difficulties to do this". The nature of the emerging distance education landscape in Zambia requires Principals and other education Managers to possess knowledge of the multiple characteristics as well as the requirements of an effective leader.

 What leadership styles are predominant in dual-mode Colleges of Education in Zambia?

Theoretical framework

Early literature attempting to identify and classify leadership theories focused on personality aspects that defined leaders and followers. It was not until 1939, when Kurt Lewin offered well-documented leadership theories based on thorough research, that the frameworks and references of leadership theories and styles were established (Bowman, 2000). Bolden (2001) points out that a review of the

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leadership literature reveals an evolving series of 'schools of thought' from "Great Man" and "Trait" theories to "Transformational" leadership.

Like the great man theories, trait perspective assumes that great leaders are born with distinguished traits/characteristics that make them different from other people. Sashkin and Sashkin (in Oyetunji 2006:28) state that, "researchers like Ralph Stogdill, in his quest for the secret of great leaders, review many research reports on leadership, based on the assumption that great leaders are born". Ralph Stogdill, according to Sashkin and Sashkin (2003:19), found that "leaders were a bit more intelligent, outgoing, creative, assertive, responsible, taller and heavier than average people". However, these differences in traits could not provide a solution to the search, as the list was found to be statistically insignificant. Thus, Ralph Stogdill (in Sashkin and Sashkin 2003:19) concluded that "a person does not become a leader because of a combination of traits since the impact of traits differs according to situation". Therefore, the characteristics of the situation should be considered before ascribing greatness to an individual as a leader. In the past, hundreds of trait studies were conducted in an effort to identify the traits that marked people for greatness.

At the heart of the contingency theory is a proposition that the best leadership behaviour (style) to adopt depends on the context. According to Fiedler, it was difficult if not impossible for people to change their leadership style. He believed that the effectiveness of a leader should be measured by how the team, group, or organisation under the leader performed. The first contingency is leader-member relations, which refers to how well followers respect, trust, and like their leaders, while the second is task structure, which refers to the degree to which the jobs of subordinates are highly structured with clear work responsibilities, explicit goals and specific procedures. The assumption is that certain leadership behaviours result in greater commitment on the part of subordinates and hence higher performance in pursuit of organisation goals (Hill-Mcshane, 2009).

Path-goal as one of the leadership theories is rooted in motivation theories of goal setting and expectancy. According to Mullins (2007:378-379), "the fundamental principle of this model is that leadership behaviour should be motivating and satisfying to the extent that it increases goal attainment by subordinates and clarifies the behaviour that will lead to these goals/rewards. Unlike some contingency leadership models, this model does not have a leader trait and behaviour variable.

Therefore, it allows for the possibility of adapting leadership to the situation". Mullin's proposition is that a leader should choose a leadership style that considers the characteristics of followers and the demand of the task. The leader's major task is to increase subordinates' motivation for the achievement of personal and organisational goals. Motivation is said to increase by clarifying the subordinates' path to the rewards that are available or increasing the rewards that the subordinates value and desire, that is, the leader assists the subordinates to identify and learn behaviour that will lead to successful task accomplishment and organisational rewards.

The complexity and evolutionary nature of dual- mode environment will benefit from an examination of the above leadership theories that could support dual- mode leadership. Knowledge of leadership theories will be of value to dual-mode leaders as they seek to establish viable and sustainable education programmes. It is essential to consider multiple leadership theories as personal traits and characteristics differ and also as one theory may not be sufficient to explain the complexities of leading people in an environment characterized by change (Tierney, Farmer & Graen, 1999).

The personal qualities of a dual-mode leader could lead to the identification and adoption of a choice of theory or the combination of theories. There are numerous leadership theories that could have been selected for this research, however, only the three were deemed of more importance to dual-mode. The examination of these selected leadership theories and their application to dual-mode provides the framework and credence needed to offer insights to dual-mode leaders who operate in multiple and ever-changing learning environments.

The three major types of leadership theories common to college Principals are discussed in the section that follows.

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leaders, as originally described by Burns (1978), identify the expectations of their followers and respond to them by establishing a close link between effort and reward. Power is given to the leader to evaluate, correct and train subordinates when performance needs to be improved and to reward effectiveness when the required outcomes are achieved. Transactional leaders are concerned with the everyday transactions involved in the running of an organisation. This leadership style frequently involves *'a quid proquo* between the leader and the follower' (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993).

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That is, the role of the leader is seen primarily as 'motivating followers to bring about intended out-comes, and to reward them appropriately' (Tuohy, 1999). Sergiovanni & Starratt maintained that, such transactions are 'governed by instrumental values or moral values such as fairness, honesty, loyalty, integrity'. Punishment and reward motivate people and this underpins transactional leadership theories. Bass (1998:121) states that "each enters the transaction because of the expectation to fulfil self-interests and their leader is supposed to maintain the status quo by satisfying the needs of the subordinates. This leadership emphasises a process in which the leader defines needs, assigns task, gives rewards to followers for good performance, or punishment for mistakes". There must be a well-defined hierarchy where everyone knows who the leader is and who is following.

Transactional leadership focuses on people seeking their own, individual objectives and entails 'a bargaining over the individual interests of people going about their own separate ways' (Sergiovanni 2005). Transactional leadership theories are among the most controversial in that they hone hierarchical boundaries and are inherently undemocratic. According to Mullins, (2007:258), Abraham Maslow, among others have found that, "people have hierarchies of needs(physiological, safety, love, esteem and self- actualization) and the transactional leader takes advantage of these in presenting them as rewards to a following that does the leader's bidding. Maslow stated that self-actualisation was the highest value and that this would make a transactionally-based leader's job even easier".

The strength of the transactional model of leadership is that clear managerial structures are detailed whereby people know exactly their roles and what is expected of them. Leaders using this theory aim at ensuring total cooperation by holding followers accountable. The leader helps an organisation achieve its current objectives. "*Power is given to the leader to evaluate, correct and train subordinates when performance needs to be improved and to reward effectiveness when the required outcomes are achieved* (Armstrong 2010:32)".

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leaders, as defined by Armstrong (2010:32), aims to "*empower their followers and encourage them to 'do more than they originally expected to do"*. Transformational leadership theory is premised on the assumption that the actions of leaders are based on moral, ethical, and equitable

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consideration of everyone within an organisation (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Northouse, 2007). Bass (1994) suggested that, Transformational leadership is closer to the prototype of leadership that people have in mind when they describe their ideal leader, and it is more likely to provide a role model with which subordinates want to identify. Transformational leaders are charismatic, motivational, intellectual, and considerate and often display the qualities of self-confidence, honesty, and integrity (Bass & Steidelmeier, 1998; Dixon, 1998). Transformational leaders are able to probe the current state of affairs, take a new approach to problem-solving and decision-making, encourage the advancement of ideas and philosophies that differ from the norm, and place emphasis on professional development. According to Burns, (1978: 20) "*transformational leaders inspire followers to be a source of inspiration to each other and enable them attain advanced stages of morality and motivation including justice and equality").*

Studies of transformational leadership have sought to understand how leaders develop and sustain vision, empower instead of manipulate followers, perceive the importance of organizational contexts, and create a cultural environment in which transformational leadership will thrive (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1997; Schein, 1992).

Portugal (2006) asserts that DE leaders must be transformational leaders and innovative visionaries with the ability to motivate, energize, inspire, and encourage followers "while fully articulating a shared and competitive distance learning agenda. Organisational structures that go beyond traditional education boundaries require transformational leadership.

An effective situational leader will be conversant with these styles and be able to utilize the appropriate style by correctly determining a follower's level of readiness and choosing a leadership style that informs how you behave when you are trying to influence the performance of someone else and is a combination of directive and supportive behaviours. Blanchard et al. (1996:46) describe directive behaviour "*as clearly telling people what to do, how to do it, where to do it, and when to do it, and then loosely supervising their performance" and supportive behaviour, which "involves listening to people, providing support and encouragement for their efforts, and then facilitating their involvement in problem-solving and decision making".*

Situational Leadership Theory

The situational leadership theory proposes that effective leaders play the roles of leadership and management. It relates to a condition in which leaders assess situations to determine how they can be effective in contexts that present a wide array of organizational tasks (Northouse, 2001). Based on the level of each of the acts that is required, the leader can apply four different styles of leadership: delegating, coaching, directing, and supporting. An effective situational leader will be conversant with these styles and be able to utilize the appropriate style by correctly determining a follower's level of readiness and choosing a leadership style that informs how you behave when you are trying to influence the performance of someone else and is a combination of directive and supportive behaviours. Blanchard et al. (1996:46) describe directive behaviour "as *clearly telling people what to do, how to do it, where to do it, and when to do it, and then loosely supervising their performance" and supportive behaviour, which "involves listening to people, providing support and encouragement for their efforts, and then facilitating their involvement in problem-solving and decision making".*

Leaders apply this theory to analyse the needs of the situation in which they are involved, then select the most appropriate leadership style. The leadership style will vary contingent on the competencies of followers or staff members. The development of situational leadership theory is credited to Hersey and Blanchard (1996). The central features of situational leadership theory (SLT) include the interaction between task behaviour and relationship behaviour, the readiness or maturity of followers to perform certain tasks, and how different leadership styles relate to the followers' confidence or abilities to perform a task.

Key strengths of situational leadership are that it is directive and flexible in nature, as it informs the leader how to respond in different situations. Having knowledge of the expectations of the leader and followers under different conditions and circumstances is crucial to leadership. Leadership involves change, and situational leadership is based on how leaders adapt to change in different contexts. Situational leaders respond promptly with appropriate interventions when different conditions that are either external or internal changes in an organisation resulting in changes in the workplace and in people, the situational leader responds promptly with appropriate interventions. Situational leaders help

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to structure the development and continuous refinement of followers or staff members to help them acquire the skills needed to meet the objectives of the organization.

Situational leadership attributes are relevant to management of rapid environmental change that involves varied cadre of staff members, such as the one that obtains in a DE environment where effective integration of the skills of followers with institutional processes and systems is required to meet the needs of higher education (Beaudoin, 2002). This leadership theory is more ideal in dual-mode institutions.

Leadership Styles

Every leader in every organisation performs certain roles/tasks for the smooth running of the organisation and improvement of organisational performance. The manner the leader performs these roles and directs the affairs of the organisation is referred to as his/her leadership style. Leadership style therefore is the way a leader leads. Some leaders are more interested in the work to be done than in the people they work with while others pay more attention to their relationship with subordinates than the job. Whether a leader emphasises the task or human relations is usually considered central to leadership style.

Authoritative Style.

As the name suggests, the authoritative style of leadership refers to an approach in which a manager maintains and runs an organization with a tight leash on the apparatus of power. The manager who favours this style of leadership expects his or her word to be law; employees do not have room to present their suggestions for consideration (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973) (in Senior and Swailes, 2010:236-237). In the context of the dual-mode college of education setting, a college principal makes decisions about how the institution is run without consulting with lecturers or students on policies that directly affect them. In the authoritarian style of leadership, motivation of employees is minimal or non-existent and the techniques used to provide motivation are typically a combination of threats and promises such as benefits and retributions (Senior and Swailes, 2010).

Democratic style.

The democratic style is also referred to as participative style because it strives to involve employees in organisational management and decision-making. The focus of power is more with the group as a whole and there is greater interaction within the group. The group members have a greater say in decision making (Mullins, 2007). The manager who applies this style of leadership understands that employees are more informed in some instances than their leaders and can therefore provide valuable insight that can contribute to informed decisions at the management level. This awareness of the contributions made by employees makes them feel important and appreciated in the workplace. Feeling important and appreciated is a motivating method of this type of organisational leadership.

Laissez-faire style.

The final leadership style is the laissez-faire style, a term based on the French phrase describing a leader's lack of interest, or a manager's detachment from the intricacies of the organization and employee management. Much leeway is given to employees to use their best judgment and achieve individual or teamwork requirements, and meet targets and work deadlines (Senior and Swailes, 2010). The leader's desire is to remain as uninvolved as possible with other people, compatible with fulfilling the requirements of the job and sustaining organisation membership.

The choice in type of leadership is often the result by various factors, and leadership styles can be combined; they are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Senior and Swailes, 2010).

Literature Review

Many institutions world-wide, but particularly in North America, Australia and New Zealand, the United Kingdom and several other European countries such as Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands have taken early lead and invested heavily in dual-mode HE institutions, particularly online universities (Daniel, 1996).

One of the key factors that impeded the development of a fully integrated dual-mode system of delivery in some traditional face-to-face institutions has been resistance from the academic staff. This may be born of concerns about additional workload; perceptions of the status of external students vis-a-vis their

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full time counterparts; or the fact that the design and development of distance teaching materials carries little weight in terms of career path aspirations (Freeman 2004).

In the theory and practice of open and distance learning, there are certain basic assumptions and underlying principles which are held sacrosanct and which ought to be identified with by anyone involved either as a student or as a stakeholder. According to Cohen P.S (2003), stakeholders in open and distance learning including tutors, policy makers, instructional designers, scholars, practitioners, among others must identify with the following basic assumptions and underlying principles. They are:

- The belief that learners must be assisted with administrative and academic support services to cushion the effect of their partial separation from their tutors, the institution, and other learners.
- The belief that open and distance learning is more cost-effective than the conventional educational system.
- The conventional education system and the Open Education systems have its own unique qualities and disadvantages. It is felt that a perfect blending of both the systems could bring down significantly the limitations of both the systems whereby the society can benefit more out of this convergence Scheme.
- The blended learning system is consistent with the values of traditional higher education institutions and has the proven potential to enhance both the effectiveness and efficiency of meaningful learning experiences.
- As the colleges have grown larger and more complex administrators, faculty members, and trustees all have had to adjust.

Hence, in today's demanding environment the key challenge facing educational planners and management teams is related to their "ability" to identify a long-term vision, mission and strategies that can deal effectively with the changes systemically through the best practice of strategic management techniques. The result of a systemic design methodology is a system with interrelated, inclusive, interdependent and internally consistent components.

Schrenk (2011) conducted a study in colleges of education in the United States of America whose purpose was to compare distance education leadership styles and future investment in two-year colleges. This study showed that taking and teaching online courses will have a positive impact upon

that goal as well pursuing an advanced degree. Also, the level of position in the organization and reporting line of the distance education leader made a difference in leadership style.

Recently, David (2012) conducted a study in United States of America (U.S.A) schools whose purpose was to explore teacher perceptions of principals' leadership styles, curriculum reform, and student achievement to ascertain possible factors to improve adequate yearly progress. The study indicates a correlation between principal leadership style and student achievement. My study was different in that the focus is on dual-mode colleges of education and not schools in general. In addition, my research is qualitative in nature as opposed to the quantitative one in the above study.

Kenyatta University, Egerton University and the University of Nairobi in East Africa, among others; offer dual-mode instructional programmes. Higher education institutions across the continent offering dual mode education also include University of Abuja, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and the National Teachers Institute in Nigeria. University of Zambia, University of Juba, Kigali Institute of Education, University of Eduardo Mondlane, and Copperbelt University are some of the other African institutions offering dual-mode delivery programmes.

In Zambia, The University of Zambia (UNZA) including most Colleges of Education are dual- mode in that they all have a distance education unit along-side their main conventional face-to-face main stream. Most of those students were school teachers trying to upgrade their qualifications in pursuit of promotion and salary increases. The University of Zambia (UNZA) established its distance education Unit in 1966, the year of its inception. Chifwepa (2006:2-3) states that, "since its inauguration in 1966, the University of Zambia has adopted various means of delivering university education. The programmes and means of delivery include the distance education mode which aims at providing university education to those who missed it after their school and those who may be working but wanting to study without being in full-time. The students in this mode undertake most of their study without having to attend regular classes".

Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature. A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivists perspectives that is multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a

theory or pattern or advocacy/participatory perspectives(i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both(Creswell, 2005).

Further Creswell points out that a qualitative researcher uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies or case studies. The researcher in such cases collects open ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data. On the other hand Kombo and Tromp (2006) look at qualitative as that type of research which involves description, implying that it seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied. They further state that qualitative research uses the natural setting and not necessarily a laboratory as the case may be with a predominantly quantitative research. Qualitative research also relies on a research approach or strategy that is rather flexible and interactive as opposed to something that is rigid. This includes interviewing, focus group discussions and questionnaires to get people's feelings and insights considered to be important in the study Orodho and Kombo, (2002).

The themes that emerged from the study were: authoritative/dictatorial leadership style, democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style, mixed leadership styles.

Discussion of findings

This study primarily sought to establish the leadership styles employed at Zambia's colleges of education in the context of the research question.

Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson's (2001:265) studies indicate that "all leaders have a 'primary' leadership style while most of them have a secondary leadership style. They define a leader's primary style as the behaviour pattern the leader uses most times while he/she endeavours to affect the activities of others whereas his/her secondary style is the style he/she uses once in a while".

Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (1996:299) explain further that "some leaders appear to be restricted to one main style and as a result, they are effective in a situation in which their style is in consonance with the situation. Whereas, other leaders have the ability to adjust their behaviour to suit many of the basic styles, yet some leaders are able to use two or three styles". The issue is that leaders that are adaptable are likely to be more successful in different circumstances.

The study has revealed that most principals and Middle managers used one of the 'basic' leadership styles during the execution of their duties, and at times used more than one leadership style.

Given such a position by those charged with the responsibility of leading colleges of education, one would conclude that It is probably correct to re-affirm the view propagated by Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson's (2001) that all leaders have a 'primary' leadership style while most of them have a secondary leadership style. If leaders, particularly those in dual-mode colleges of education do not have a variety of leadership styles, then it may be difficult to manage the different categories of students and even staff. Bearing in mind that the various categories have different challenges, even the manner of handling them ought to be different.

The study observed that some Principals and Middle managers used authoritative/dictatorial leadership style in the dual-mode colleges of education. According to Mullins (2007), such a leader maintains the focus of power and runs an organization with a tight leash. He or she is a manager whose word is law. In the context of the dual-mode college of education setting, a college principal makes decisions about how the institution is run without consulting with lecturers or students on policies that directly affect them.

The study therefore infers that this behaviour (authoritative/dictatorial leadership style) may lead to lecturers feeling unappreciated; they are not involved in running the college or making decisions relative to operation of the college and are therefore not sufficiently motivated to perform their duties adequately.

The first impression that this study makes about this particular theme is that democratic /consultative leadership style is wide spread in dual-mode colleges of education in Zambia. The study noted that democratic leadership style was the highest among other leadership styles. From the results it would appear that most of the Principals applied democratic leadership style in their interaction with the staff and students. This position appears to be related and consistent with what most Principals said during interviews.

From the above views, the study reveals that by and large, most Principals apply democratic leadership styles in their day to day discharge of their duties. As aptly put by Mullins, (2007:371) a democratic leadership style is one in which the focus of power is more with the group as a whole, and there is greater interaction within the group; group members have a greater say in decision making.

In view of the above, the deduction can be made that, in the main, democratic and authoritative styles of leadership are exercised by most Principals and middle managers while dealing with issues that concern the college.

The study also noted from the interviews with some Principals and middle managers in these institutions that the laissez-faire leadership style was sparingly applied as observed.

Transactional leaders are concerned with the everyday transactions involved in the running of an organisation. This leadership style frequently involves 'a quid proquo between the leader and the follower' (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). That is, the role of the leader is seen primarily as 'motivating followers to bring about intended out-comes, and to reward them appropriately.

Transactional leaders use an exchange model, with rewards being given for good work or positive outcomes. Conversely, people with this leadership style also can punish poor work or negative outcomes, until the problem is corrected. One way that transactional leadership focuses on lower level needs is by stressing specific task performance (Hargis et al, 2001)

A transformational leader is a person who stimulates and inspires (transform) followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Robbins and Coulter, 2007). He/she pay attention to the concern and developmental needs of individual followers; they change followers' awareness of issues by helping them to look at old problems in a new way ; and they are able to arouse, excite and inspire followers to put out extra effort to achieve group goals.

According to Hersey and Blanchard (1996), the central features of situational leadership theory (SLT) include the interaction between task behaviour and relationship behaviour, the readiness or maturity of followers to perform certain tasks, and how different leadership styles relate to the followers' confidence or abilities to perform a task. This study, shows that middle managers employ situational leadership theory sparingly in relation to transactional and transformational leadership theories in their colleges.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for Principals of Colleges of Education in Zambia:

- Principals of dual-mode colleges of Education should consider establishing new organisational structures and roles that will adequately cater for their students.
- Principals of dual-mode colleges of education should consider using leadership styles according to the demand of the situation at hand
- Due to increasing use of ICTs in ODL, delivery of ODL is rapidly evolving. Principals of Dual-mode Colleges of Education should permit this dynamism to flourish so as to enable face-to-face to benefit from modern forms of ODL delivery.

The following are recommendations for Ministry of Education (MOE) in Zambia:

- MOE to ensure that quality education is attained in all its institutions including colleges of education through formalised tailor-made programmes for Principals and Middle Managers and conduct regular monitoring.

The following are recommendations for future researchers:

- Future researchers should consider expanding the unit of analysis to include Principals of privately owned dual-mode colleges of education and carry out a comparative study of private and government owned colleges.
- Future researchers should consider the role that school culture plays in shaping or improving Principals' leadership skills and styles.

Conclusion

The researcher believes that, now that the leadership styles employed in dual-mode colleges of education in Zambia are known, this study could assist in addressing the challenges of managing dual-mode colleges of education in Zambia by applying leadership styles that have been identified. Theories surrounding leadership are diverse, with no real consensus among researchers. Many elements influence leadership and only a select few were discussed. The researcher further believes that the problems which were revealed related to leadership styles at Zambia's colleges of education need to be addressed earnestly and urgently in order to improve the quality of education in the country.

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