

Aligning School Teacher Training and Development with Vision to Improve the Quality of Education in a Rapidly-Changing Environment: A Case Study Az-Zahra Islamic School

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Abstract

This study investigated the need to align teacher training programs with the vision of AZ-Zahra Islamic School in the context of a rapidly changing educational landscape. Employing a qualitative research approach through interviews, group discussions, and observations, the study aimed to analyse teachers' competencies, training needs, and interests in professional development. The research involved three stages: 1) In-depth conversations with six diverse teachers, 2) Observation of teachers and students in natural classroom settings, and 3) Document Analysis (Examining training program materials, school vision statements, ...etc). Interviews with selected teachers revealed a range of readiness levels, with some demonstrating a low level requiring significant support for professional development. The study emphasizes the importance of regulating training processes based on the school's vision and quality education standards. It proposes a framework for aligning teacher training with a school's vision through a continuous improvement cycle that incorporates needs assessment, individualized learning, active collaboration, essential competencies, and ongoing evaluation. By aligning training with the school's vision and addressing identified teacher needs, this research contributes to enhancing the overall quality of education at AZ-Zahra Islamic School and offers insights for similar institutions.

Keywords: Teacher training and development program, Quality education, Teacher competencies and skills, Professional development need.

1. Introduction

AZ-ZAHRA School established back in 2016 by Dr. Zulkifli Rabban whom known for his remarkable accomplishment as a successful entrepreneur. Education is an essential most powerful key to achieve any goal in life (Zulkifli R., 2015). The school's vision emphasizes excellence, courtesy, resilience, compassion, and literacy to foster academic and personal development. It aims to cultivate individuals who excel academically, exhibit empathy, and face challenges gracefully, while promoting collective responsibility and environmental stewardship. The school is dedicated to a holistic approach to literacy and knowledge, creating a community that contributes positively to society.

Achieving high-quality education hinges on strong teacher competencies, as established by research (Lakshminarayanan, 2016). However, educational institutions, including schools, face significant challenges in providing this quality education (Sain, 2022). This research focuses

on the case of AZ-ZAHRA Islamic School, which grapples with the need to adapt its teacher training program to the evolving educational landscape and ensure alignment with its overarching vision. This study aims to analyse the current teacher training program at AZ-ZAHRA Islamic School and its effectiveness in addressing the demands of a rapidly-changing educational environment; identify the specific competencies or skills teachers perceive as essential for adapting to this dynamic environment; assess the impact of professional development opportunities on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes; explore the challenges hindering effective teacher training and development at AZ-ZAHRA Islamic School. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current training program and its effectiveness in a dynamic educational environment, this research delves into four key questions: 1) how well does the existing program equip teachers for the evolving landscape, 2) what specific skills do teachers themselves consider essential for adapting to these changes, 3) how significantly do professional development opportunities influence both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, and 4) what specific challenges currently hinder the effectiveness of teacher training and development at AZ-Zahra Islamic School.

AZ-ZAHRA Islamic School currently faces several challenges within its teacher training program that hinder its effectiveness in preparing educators for the evolving educational landscape and aligning with the school's vision. One significant issue lies in the potential outdated nature of the training content. The program might prioritize traditional teaching methods, neglecting contemporary approaches like technology integration, student-centered learning, or differentiated instruction. Additionally, insufficient integration of Islamic values and principles across the curriculum could create a disconnect with the school's vision. Furthermore, the program might not equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the school's specific educational goals. This misalignment with the school's vision and the rapidly changing educational landscape, characterized by new technologies, diverse learning needs, and evolving pedagogical approaches, can hinder the overall effectiveness of the training. Teacher-specific challenges further complicate the situation. Burnout, time constraints, and resistance to change due to personal preferences or feeling overwhelmed can impede the implementation of new strategies learned through training. Finally, the absence of a robust feedback mechanism and inadequate evaluation of the program's effectiveness prevent the school from identifying areas for improvement and tailoring the training to the specific needs of its teachers.

Aligning schoolteacher training with the school's vision is crucial in navigating the complex educational landscape and achieving the mission of providing high-quality education. This research bridges the gap between traditional teacher roles and the demands of a rapidly changing environment, addressing a critical need for AZ-ZAHRA Islamic School and offering insights that can benefit similar educational institutions. By examining the multifaceted aspects of this alignment process, this study aims to provide valuable solutions and contribute to the continuous improvement of teacher training and development within the educational sector.

2. Literature Review

This comprehensive literature review delves into various aspects relevant to teacher training program alignment, encompassing all the objectives of the research. The crucial role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in education is emphasized, highlighting its contribution to ensuring teacher competence and the overall quality of education (Zīds, 2019). The concept of competence is further defined as the ability to effectively apply knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios (Pāvels Jurs, 2023). Maulina and Santoso (2020) outline a structured HRM process encompassing stages like job analysis, training, and evaluation. (Gunawan I. , 2017) underscores the positive impact of effective HRM on productivity and school goal achievement. Shifting the focus to the education professional, Cheng (2022) emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the modern teacher's role, encompassing responsibilities as a professional, learner, partner, initiator, decision-maker, and vision realizer. Jurs and Kulberga (2021) delve into the concept of teacher competence, defining it as a combination of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and personality traits that manifest in their actions. They further identify key components such as pedagogical knowledge, skills, attitudes, and the ability to adapt to changing contexts. The importance of Human Resource Training is highlighted, with (Noe, 2005) outlining seven stages for effective implementation. (Siagian, 2011) emphasizes the collaborative nature of identifying training needs, involving input from organizational units, managers, and the employees themselves. The necessity of careful planning, delivery, and evaluation of training programs is stressed by Dinah Gould (2004) and Ajani (2018), emphasizing the need for ensuring meaningful changes and fostering a culture of continuous improvement that helps educators adapt to new challenges (Clarke, 2005).

Focusing specifically on Teacher Training, Mulyasa (2005) recognizes teachers as strategic human resources crucial for successful school development programs. Various training methods are explored, including modules, aids development, syllabus creation, and standard materials. The review acknowledges the increasing adoption of modern methods like e-learning, mentorships, and needs analysis to enhance training effectiveness. The significance of Professional Development and Performance Management is underscored. The positive impact of professional development on strengthening teachers' knowledge base and contributing to their professionalism is highlighted by the (OECD, Programme for is International Student - Teachers' professional development, 2016). Performance Management Models, like the one proposed by (Armstrong M. , 2009), are identified as valuable tools for guiding the design and implementation of effective teacher training programs. This model emphasizes setting clear goals, monitoring performance, providing feedback, and offering targeted training (Armstrong, 2009). The role of performance management in ensuring job satisfaction, expertise, and career progression for teachers is recognized by (Anderson, 1993) and (Gentle, 2001). Key developmental areas in teacher professional development are identified by (Korthagen, 2014) to include effective communication, pedagogical knowledge, and adaptability.

Qualitative Approaches to Teacher Training and Development are explored, with research by (Sağır M. , 2014) suggesting that teachers prioritize self-directed learning and collaboration with colleagues for their professional development. This highlights the importance of fostering

a culture that values both individual and collaborative learning for continuous teacher growth (Sağır M. , 2014). The crucial concept of Alignment of Teacher Training with Vision is addressed. Bryson (2018) emphasizes the need for a systematic approach that considers the evolving needs of learners. This involves steps like clearly defining the vision, understanding learners, engaging them in co-creation, integrating social impact themes, and utilizing project-based learning (Bryson, 2018). Continuous evaluation is identified as essential to ensure ongoing alignment and assess the impact on the educational vision (Bryson, 2018). Strategies for Aligning Teacher Training with Vision are explored. Caena (2019) recommends directly integrating the institution's vision into the training curriculum to ensure alignment. Conducting thorough needs assessments helps identify areas where training can have the most significant impact (Caena, 2019). Customized professional development opportunities cater to the identified needs of teachers (Caena, 2019). Incorporating technology and innovative teaching methods prepares teachers for the evolving educational landscape (Caena, 2019). Fostering collaborative learning communities encourages the exchange of best practices and a shared vision (Caena, 2019). Implementing continuous feedback and evaluation systems ensures ongoing improvement and alignment with the vision (Caena, 2019). When aligned with the vision, teacher training enhances pedagogical skills and cultivates a sense of purpose among educators (Armstrong M. &, 2020; Killion, 2017). This leads to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and a commitment to fostering a positive learning environment (Killion, 2017). Aligned training also contributes to a cohesive teaching community and improved student outcomes (J. Killion). Similar to other industries, aligned training within the educational sector has a positive impact on employee performance, productivity, and organizational success (Ulrich, 2017).

3. Research Method

This research delves into the alignment between Az-Zahra Islamic School's teacher training program and its educational vision through a qualitative case study approach. To gather comprehensive data, the study will employ a combination of methods: **a.** firstly, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with six purposefully selected teachers, representing different grade levels. These interviews will delve into their perceptions of the current training and professional development opportunities, the challenges they encounter in the evolving educational environment, and the competencies they believe are crucial for success. Additionally, teachers will be asked about their technology integration practices and desired support, strategies for student engagement, the role of collaboration in their professional growth, and how they balance traditional and innovative teaching methods. Finally, participants will share their thoughts on resources or support needed to better align their teaching with the school's vision for quality education. **b.** Secondly, classroom observations will be conducted to gain insights into how teachers apply acquired skills and whether their practices reflect the school's educational vision. Observing teachers and student interactions will provide valuable context and a deeper understanding of the program's effectiveness. **c.** thirdly relevant documents like the training program curriculum, school vision statements, needs assessments, and evaluation reports will be analysed. This analysis will offer background information, highlight

potential areas of misalignment, and provide a more holistic understanding of the program's design and implementation.

By combining these data collection methods, the research aims to identify recurring themes and key insights regarding the perceived alignment between the training program and the school's vision. The analysis will explore factors influencing alignment, potential challenges and opportunities, and the impact on teacher practices and student outcomes. This comprehensive approach will ensure the research findings are robust and provide valuable recommendations for improving the program and achieving stronger alignment with the school's educational goals.

4. Finding and Discussion

This qualitative case study delves into the perceived alignment between Az-Zahra Islamic School's teacher training program and its educational vision. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the research explores the experiences of six teachers representing different grade levels. This investigation acknowledges the inherent limitations of a small sample size, yet seeks to provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and identify potential areas for improvement. By considering both internal factors within the school and external influences on the educational landscape, the research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the alignment between training and the school's vision. These findings, based on the perspectives of six teachers, offer a glimpse into the perceived alignment between Az-Zahra Islamic School's teacher training program and its educational vision. While the program provides valuable opportunities for professional development, there is a need for further refinement to address the challenges of a dynamic educational environment, foster stronger collaboration, enhance technology integration skills, and ensure a more explicit connection to the school's vision.

Thematic analysis revealed several key findings regarding teacher perspectives on the training program and its alignment with the school's vision.

1. Perceived Value of Training: Teachers acknowledged the value of the training program in enhancing their knowledge and skills. One teacher noted, "The training on differentiated instruction provided me with practical strategies to cater to diverse learning needs in my classroom." However, another expressed, "While the training sessions cover relevant topics, I often feel they lack depth and practical application to our specific school context."

2. Challenges in a Dynamic Environment: Teachers highlighted the challenges they encounter in adapting to a rapidly changing educational landscape. One teacher stated, "The constant updates in curriculum standards and technology integration can be overwhelming without ongoing support and guidance." Another mentioned, "The training program could benefit from focusing more on preparing us for the evolving needs of 21st-century learners."

3. Importance of Collaboration and Technology: Collaboration emerged as a crucial factor in professional growth. A teacher shared, "Learning from colleagues through peer observations and discussions has been instrumental in refining my teaching practices." Regarding technology

integration, one teacher commented, "While I recognize the importance of technology, the training program could provide more hands-on support to enhance our comfort and confidence in using digital tools effectively."

4. Balancing Traditional and Innovative Approaches: Teachers emphasized the need to strike a balance between traditional and innovative teaching methods. One stated, "While incorporating technology is important, it shouldn't replace the value of strong foundational skills and interactive classroom experiences." Another added, "The training program could offer more guidance on integrating innovative approaches seamlessly into our existing curriculum." 5. Alignment with the School's Vision: Teachers expressed a desire for the training program to more explicitly align with the school's vision for quality education. One teacher suggested, "Connecting the training content directly to the school's vision statements and goals would provide greater clarity and purpose." Another stated, "It would be beneficial if the training program actively involved teachers in shaping its content and delivery methods to ensure better alignment with the school's specific needs and vision."

Examining the heart of the interviews conducted with six Az-Zahra Islamic School teachers, we focus on their perspectives regarding the current training and professional development opportunities, the challenges they face in their work, and the essential skills they believe are necessary for navigating the ever-changing educational landscape.

Teacher Perceptions of Training and Professional Development: Teachers acknowledge the value of the school's TPD programs in enhancing knowledge and skills, appreciating workshops and sessions on classroom management and student assessment. However, they also express a desire for more personalized training tailored to their specific needs, with suggestions including interactive elements, practical demonstrations, and follow-up sessions to solidify learning. Similar findings are reported in research by Guskey (2002), who emphasizes the importance of personalized and job-embedded TPD for effective professional growth. This resonates with the teachers' desire for training that directly addresses their classroom challenges and aligns with their students' specific needs.

This finding highlights the need for a shift from one-size-fits-all TPD models towards more individualized approaches. Tailored training programs that consider teachers' unique needs and school contexts can lead to greater engagement, improved skill acquisition, and ultimately, enhanced student learning outcomes.

Challenges in a Dynamic Educational Landscape: Teachers identified several challenges in adapting to a rapidly changing educational landscape, including:

- Meeting Individualized Needs: Catering to diverse student learning styles and personalizing instruction.
- Curriculum Changes: Keeping pace with evolving curriculum standards and integrating new teaching approaches.
- Standardized Testing: Balancing the pressure to prepare students for assessments with fostering a holistic learning environment.

- Technology Integration: Staying updated with technology advancements and integrating them effectively while addressing digital safety concerns.
- Student Engagement: Maintaining student motivation and creating engaging learning experiences.

These challenges align with those identified in various studies on contemporary education, such as Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) who discuss the complexities of curriculum reform and Hargreaves (2003) who emphasizes the demands of a changing educational landscape. These challenges underscore the need for TPD programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to navigate these complexities. This includes training on:

- Differentiated Instruction: Providing effective instruction that caters to diverse learning needs.
- Curriculum Implementation: Successfully adapting to evolving curriculum standards and integrating new teaching methods.
- Assessment Literacy: Utilizing various assessment strategies for a comprehensive understanding of student progress beyond standardized tests.
- Technology Integration: Effectively integrating technology tools while ensuring responsible digital citizenship practices.
- Engaging Pedagogy: Employing creative and interactive teaching methods to motivate and engage students.

Crucial Competencies for Adapting to Change: Teachers highlighted the following competencies as essential for success in a dynamic educational environment:

- Flexibility and Adaptability: Readily adjusting to new trends and educational shifts.
- Digital Literacy: Confidently navigating online platforms and integrating technology seamlessly.
- Creativity and Innovation: Developing fresh approaches to engage students and promote active learning.
- Resilience: Persevering through challenges and embracing continuous learning.
- Collaboration: Effectively working with colleagues to share best practices and enhance impact.
- Data Literacy: Interpreting student performance data to inform instruction and improve outcomes.
- Lifelong Learning: Maintaining a commitment to continuous professional growth and knowledge acquisition.
- Critical Thinking: Guiding students in critically analysing information within an information-rich world.
- Empathy: Understanding and responding to student emotions during periods of rapid change.

These competencies resonate with those emphasized in various educational frameworks, such as the 21st Century Skills framework, which highlights the importance of critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy. Additionally, (Fullan, 2007) emphasizes the significance of

lifelong learning for educators navigating a constantly evolving profession. This finding underscores the need for TPD programs that go beyond traditional content knowledge and focus on developing these crucial competencies. By equipping teachers with these skills, they become better prepared to adapt to change, embrace innovation, and ultimately provide a more effective and dynamic learning experience for their students.

Aligning Teacher Training with Vision: A Proposed Framework: The case study of AZ-Zahra Islamic School exposed a critical misalignment between the teacher training program and the school's vision. Teachers expressed a desire for training that directly addressed the challenges they faced in the classroom and aligned with the specific goals outlined in the school's vision (current study). This finding resonates with (Fullan, 2007) emphasis on the importance of a clear vision for school improvement and translating that vision into actionable plans, including aligned professional development for teachers. The current state of affairs underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to teacher training, one that bridges the gap between theoretical training content and the practical application of the school's educational philosophy.

To address this need, this study proposes a framework for aligning teacher training with a school's vision. The framework incorporates five key components:

1. **Needs Assessment and Vision Integration:** This initial stage involves gathering data on teacher needs and the school's vision. Similar to the approach outlined by (Cheng, 2022), this data informs the development of training content that directly connects to achieving the school's goals.
2. **Individualized Training and Development:** Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, the framework emphasizes tailoring training to individual teacher needs and experience levels. This aligns with (Tomlinson, 2017) concept of differentiated instruction and (Tomlinson, 2017) research on the importance of involving teachers in identifying their training needs.
3. **Interactive and Collaborative Learning:** This component emphasizes active learning methods that promote knowledge sharing and collaboration among teachers. (Moon, 2013) provides practical guidance on creating such learning environments for adult learners. Research by (Sağır M. , 2014) further highlights the positive impact of collaborative professional development on teacher knowledge and practice.
4. **Focus on Essential Competencies:** The framework recognizes the critical role of specific skills in effective teaching. It emphasizes developing competencies like flexibility, digital literacy, collaboration, and data analysis, all of which are aligned with the essential skills for 21st century learners outlined by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2018). Caena and Hiijärvi (2019) further emphasize the growing need for these competencies to prepare teachers for the demands of the future.
5. **Continuous Improvement through Feedback and Evaluation:** Regular feedback from teachers and analysis of student learning outcomes are essential for continuously monitoring and improving the training program's effectiveness. This aligns with the cyclical

improvement model presented by Fullan (2000) and the emphasis on using feedback and evaluation for program improvement highlighted by (Dinah Gould, 2004).

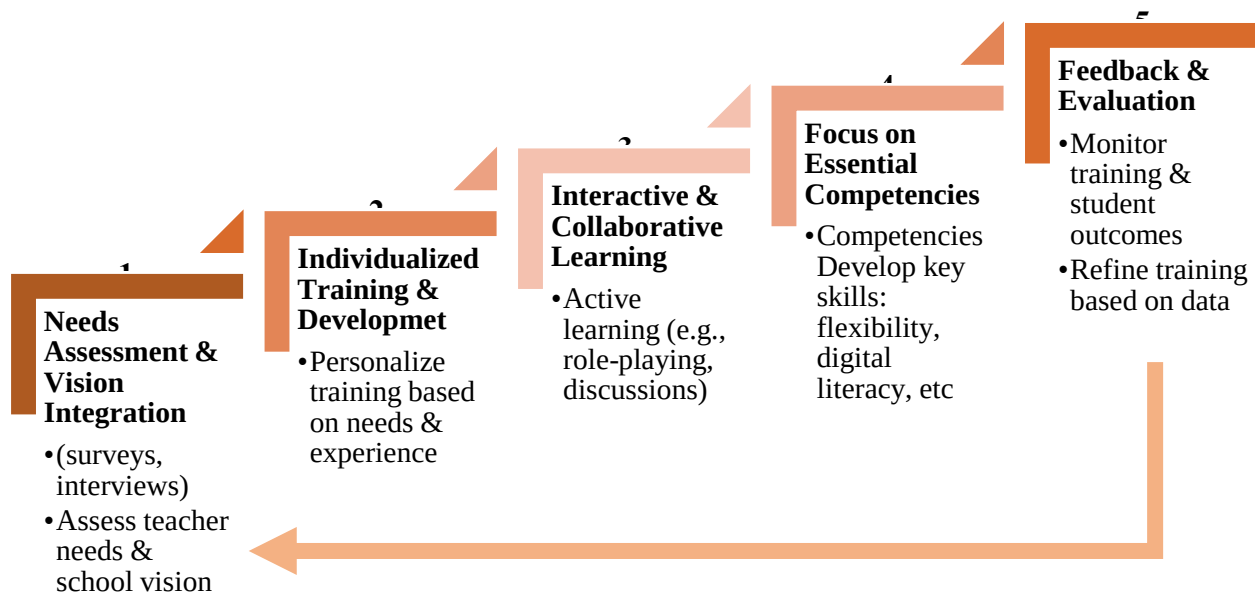


Figure 1: Framework for Aligning Teacher Training with School Vision, (Cher Ping Lim, November 2019)

This proposed framework for aligning teacher training with a school's vision, depicted as a cyclical process in Figure 1. This continuous improvement cycle emphasizes ongoing data collection and adaptation. The framework begins with Needs Assessment & Vision Integration. Data on teacher needs and the school's educational vision informs the development of training programs directly linked to achieving the school's goals. Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, Individualized Training & Development tailors training to each educator's needs and experience level. The framework promotes Interactive & Collaborative Learning through active methods like role-playing and discussions, fostering knowledge sharing among teachers. Focus on Essential Competencies underscores the importance of developing specific skills like flexibility and digital literacy, crucial for navigating the complexities of contemporary education. Finally, Feedback & Evaluation through teacher feedback and student learning outcomes allows for continuous monitoring and improvement of the training program's effectiveness. This cyclical framework empowers educators to translate the school's vision into successful classroom practices, ultimately contributing to improved student learning.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for enhancing the effectiveness of Az-Zahra Islamic School's TPD programs:

- Individualized Training: Move towards needs-based assessments and personalized training plans that address teachers' specific requests and school context.

- **Interactive and Collaborative Learning:** Incorporate more interactive elements like role-playing, peer observations, and collaborative activities within TPD sessions.
- **Technology Integration Support:** Provide ongoing training and support on effectively integrating technology tools, including educational apps, online platforms, and digital safety protocols.
- **Focus on Essential Competencies:** Design TPD programs that explicitly develop the identified crucial competencies, such as flexibility, digital literacy, collaboration, data analysis, and lifelong learning.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms and evaluation processes to monitor the effectiveness of TPD programs and ensure ongoing improvement based on teacher needs and student outcomes.

By incorporating these recommendations, Az-Zahra Islamic School can create a more responsive and effective TPD system that empowers teachers to thrive in a dynamic educational landscape and ultimately contribute to enhanced student learning and success.

5. Conclusion

This qualitative case study investigated the alignment between Az-Zahra Islamic School's teacher training program and its educational vision. Through in-depth interviews with six teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis, the research explored teachers' perceptions of the training program, the challenges they encounter, and the crucial competencies needed for success in a dynamic educational environment.

The findings revealed a general appreciation for the TPD opportunities provided by the school, with teachers valuing workshops and sessions on relevant topics. However, they also expressed a desire for more personalized training that directly addresses their specific needs and aligns with the school's vision. Additionally, the research identified key challenges faced by teachers, including the need to cater to diverse student needs, adapt to curriculum changes, integrate technology effectively, and maintain student engagement. To address these challenges, the study highlighted the importance of developing crucial competencies such as flexibility, digital literacy, collaboration, data analysis, and lifelong learning.

By delving into these insights, this study offers valuable recommendations for enhancing the alignment between Az-Zahra Islamic School's TPD program and its educational vision. Moving towards more individualized and needs-based training, incorporating interactive and collaborative learning elements, providing ongoing technology integration support, and explicitly focusing on developing essential competencies can significantly contribute to a more effective TPD system. This, in turn, will empower teachers to adapt to the evolving educational landscape, implement the school's vision with greater clarity, and ultimately foster a more dynamic and successful learning environment for all students.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the alignment between teacher training programs and educational visions within a specific school context. By providing practical recommendations based on the teachers'

perspectives and identified challenges, this research offers valuable insights that can guide Az-Zahra Islamic School in refining its TPD programs to achieve a stronger alignment with its educational goals and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

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