

Explicating the de-bureaucratization of African public sector in the 21st century globalized world

Kehinde Abiodun Isinkaye^{1*}

¹Department of Political Science, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

*E-mail: kehindeinsinkaye@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

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Abstract: The objective of the paper is to assess the processes, methods, and challenges of de-bureaucratization of the public sector in Africa. This study adopted historical approach to administrative research and used secondary sources of information. The study observed that under-development of state bureaucracy arose from the legacy of authoritarian nature of colonial rule, unethical behavior of public servants, skewed recruitment process, lack of competition among others. The paper concludes that if right strategies such as adequate funding of privatized organizations, technological development, good governance, itemization, and right pursuance of developmental agenda by the state favorable industrial policy environment, the public sector dynamism will be attained.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, de-bureaucratization, African States, public sector, African public service.

INTRODUCTION

African modern public service developed during the colonial with structure, practices and rules instituted and dictated by European colonizing powers. On attainment of political independence, the process of indigenizing African public service started in earnest, thereby afforded educated citizens opportunity to assume higher level of responsibility but with principles of rationalism, impersonality, expediency, and command that characterized the old order. The challenges of centralization of powers in few hands and clear manifestation of rabid corruptive and unethical behavior hamstrung the operation of the African public service in decades that followed independence. This necessitated de-bureaucratization of African public sector in the mid-1980s in order to divest the use of public funds to financing weak public institutions and pave way for private sector participation in strategic areas of the economy. However, it has also been suggested that policy makers and stakeholders should consider the use of non-traditional privatization methods such as leasing, management contract and franchising of monopoly rights rather than engaging in full divestiture from government control. But a critical examination of the ongoing de-bureaucratization processes in African states, there are significant changes in development but there are still challenges.

According to United Nations Economic Development For Africa Report (2020), Africa is the second fastest growing region in the world with the estimated growth rate of 3.4% as small and medium enterprises is the backbone of African economies account for 60% employment generation, 90% of all private businesses organizations and availability of 1.1 billion dollars in private employment market, but noticeable challenges can still be gleaned from 20% access to electricity, transport 3.6, 590



million lacked access to electricity, and 6.31% of firms faced corruption challenges, 19.6% operational funding problem, among others. Hence the paper focuses on assessing various strategies of de-bureaucratization processes and its challenges in Africa and consequently offered suggestions on how to strengthen the process in African states.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a systematic arrangement or structure of related and relevant concepts put together to serve as a blueprint for the study. It is used to present the basic assumptions of the research and highlight the guiding principles of the research. (Ulocha, 2015). The concepts to be explained are bureaucracy, de-bureaucratization, and African public sector.

The concept of bureaucracy

The word bureaucracy was coined by a French economist, Vincent de Gourrnng in 1945 and popularized my German interdisciplinary scholar and distinguished sociologist, Marx Weber (Naidu, 2014). The word bureaucracy was from French word 'bureau' meaning desk or office and this implies the rule by administrative agencies or units. Bureaucratic organizations are characterized by centralization of powers, rationalization, impersonality, Marx Weber developed the bureaucratic model characterized my formal rules, and regulations, specialized roles, hierarchical structures and a clear chair of command. He however failed to realize that bureaucratic practices usually bring unintended consequences such as unethical behavior by public officers, condoning corruption and undue personal interest (Holzer, 2008).Bureaucratic theory is an integral part of the classical management theories that believe that man is an economic man that is motivated to work in a bid to meet social needs and most governments in the world have been organized based on the prescriptions of the bureaucratic theory popularized by Marx Weber. Bureaucratic machinery was instituted during the colonial rule in African states and their operations in the post-colonial period are characterized authoritarianism of the old order.

Concept of de-bureaucratization

According to Obasa (2017) de-bureaucratization can defined as the transfer of powers and functions from the public service institutions to private institutions and harnessing of the administrative and productive activities of various institutions in the voluntary sector to private hands. It is the process of removing the monopoly of a few bureaucrats/ politicians in the government and the creation of rooms for the participation of citizens in the country governance (Frendrich Ebert). De-bureaucratization process was initiated by young public administration scholars who gathered at Winnow brook conference in the York in 1968 to ignite a re- orientation of public administration from old traditions of effectively economy due to the social strains and non-performance in the western world between 1960s and 1970s (Sharma, 2012). They were goal oriented well as change oriented in the approach,

but their agenda has varied from country to country, but it has remained consistent to create organizations that are mission driven, decentralized and incentive based (Denhardt, 2009). African states keyed into the global sweep of de-bureaucratization in the mid-1980s by divesting government funding and operation from industrial sector and to ensure that government is concerned with the making of public policy and regulation.

African public sector

According to Fashoyin (2014) the concept of public sector is an all-embracing entity covering all agencies and institutions or organizations whose principal benefactor is government whether at federal, state, or local government level. Ademolekun (2015) equally note that public sector usually indicates a wider scope than the civil service and in this usage; public service means the totality of services that are organized under public authority. In addition, to covering the civil service (ministries and departments) at the federal level, it equally covers local government, military and security services and the judiciary. Hence, the African public service covers government departments and ministers and other agencies that secure their finances from the government. In the immediate post-independence era, there was centralization of powers at the center, due to diverse legacy of colonialism, economic distortions generated by the West, international economic patterns, climate changes among others (Wunsch & Olowu, 1995). The scope of the public service activities were very wide prior to the implementation of structural adjustment program to the 1980s in various African States. This has opened a new chapter embracing the principles of the public management in the African public service. These principles include privatization, commercialization, deregulation, profitability among others, in current age of globalization.

Instructively, globalization is about the liberalization and interconnectivity of the social, economic and political decisions, public policies and management practices and with technological advantage among nations. Globalization serves as game-changer and leveler in the field of public service as it helps in the free flow of ideas and template for managing resources. The idea of globalization has brought some changes to public sector. Hence, in a globalizing world, there is an increasing stress on the role of the public sector to manage public resources and provide goods and services and these are without challenges. Such challenges are (1) expectation of citizens regarding effective service delivery and (2) local devolution of power (Tav, 2014). This necessitated deregulation of the provision of social services and relinquishment of government control and equity and interest in enterprises and transfer of ownership of public enterprises to private investors in order allow forces of demand and supply determine the prices of goods and services offered by such enterprises (Oluleye, 2005).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

This provides the skeleton that form the foundation of research studies as it provides necessary support for the proposed study by helping to systematically identify variables as well as establishing the relationship among them (Ulocha, 2015). In this research work, the paper is adopted eclectic mode by positioning the paper within two theories of administration.

Bureaucratic theory of administration

The word bureaucracy was derived from the “bureau” meaning ‘office’ and “cracy” that means ‘power’, hence bureaucracy means the power of the office or rules of administrative office. Bureaucracy refers to any large-scale organization of appointed officials whose primary function is to implement the policies of the decision marker (Naidu, 2014).

The features of Max Weber’s Ideal typical rational bureaucracy include:

1. The presence of fixed and official jurisdictional area which are ordered by the rules or law of administrative regulations and the authority gives command required for the job and is usually obeyed.
2. Principles of office hierarchy and of level is graded authority indicating an ordered system of superior, and subordinate in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones.
3. The management of the modern office is based written documents which are preserved in their original or draft.
4. Office management is distinctly modern usually involving thorough and expert training.
5. The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, exhaustive and which can be learned (Engomwan, 2018).

African states have bureaucratic institutions organized during colonial rule and sustained after the attainment of political independence in the mid- twentieth century and In the immediate post-independence era, deliberate steps were taken by African government to set up may industrial and developmental administrative institutions in a bid to instigate social political development n the continent. However, many of those institutions were characterized by mal administration as they are mostly ineffective and characterized by low productivity. Hence, bureaucratization processes embarked upon in African states are meant to solve bureaucratic problems through privatization, commercialization, deregulation among others etc.

System theory of administration

According to Egunmwan (2018) the system theory of management owns its origin to the general system developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and views an organization as an interconnected

purposive system that consists of several units or sections. Such organizational system can be broken to three parts.

- a. Input that includes material, fund, technology, public demands, union demands, interest group pressures, training and so on.
- b. The transformation process includes management functions, operational and procedures, control techniques and so on to produce outputs.
- c. Outputs process involves results, services, employees' behavior and so on. The feedback or response comes back into another round of inputs.

In organizational management, environmental or external influences is so great and exact influence on the administrative behavior in all organization African public institutions and organizations have suffered from unregulated internal procedures and this range from ethnicity, corruption patronage and sundry of unethical behaviors that have t harm strung the process of these establishment. Externally too, the sweeping forces of globalization and global change necessitating the reduction of the state in the provision of infrastructural facilities in African States and restructure to their economic system to embrace privatization, deregulation, and commercialization. This is necessary to create rooms for private sector participation in the government dominated economic system and give opportunity for efficiency and effective modes resource management.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper utilized descriptive research design that deals with the gathering of descriptive data that explains the general characteristics to ascertain the prevailing conditions, attitude, behavioral patterns among others. Also, secondary qualitative and quantitative data were collected from published institutional reports, journals, periodicals, internet sources, among others. Data analysis deals with evaluation of the trends of published statistical data and interpretive mode of secondary, qualitative data and authors' viewpoints to examine the transformation of the old government dominated public sector to moderate sized, service oriented, peoples' conscious public sector. The paper aims to explore the de-bureaucratization process in the African public sector through logical deductions and insights from analysis of both primary and secondary materials from published and unpublished materials sourced for the purpose of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The paper sought to analyze the de-bureaucratization of the African public sector in the contemporary time. This section of the paper assesses strategies that were adopted in bureaucratization processes in African states. From thick literature reviews, theoretical expositions, textual and statistical analysis of

relevant published works, journals and other materials, the researcher draw together relevant information for further discussion on the issue under research.

Strategies to de-bureaucratize African public sector in the contemporary age of globalization

Public service reform is global, as it has achieved greater success in the United States of America with the launching of National performance services in 1993 and in Britain, similar public service re-organization and re-orientation to improve the public services was handled by the government of Margaret Thatcher called three E, that is Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness (Khoda, 2007). Also, the collapse of the old Soviet Union in 1991 pushed the socialist countries to adopt de-bureaucratization process that involves the introduction of privatization and deregulation policies. Peter (2010) contends that a wide range of political and administrative leaders in many countries of the world favor change in the public sector of the need to attain under-listed desires.

- a. The market: the need to adopt market approach and break government monopolies through partial or full privatization and the need to use market ideas to change the operation of many governments sponsored organization and this equally reflected in policy making process in them.
- b. Participation: participation approach transforms the public sector to lay emphasis on greater involvement of clients and the general public in the design and implementation of the programs. This necessitated the idea of citizen charter as a means of empowering citizens to participate and ensuring accountability.
- c. Deregulation: this is to reduce the constraints imposed by excessive rules of the public sector as the member in the reformed organization and can act independently in matters of recruitment, discipline and dismissal.
- d. Flexible government: This is desired to be attained, as it has been a great challenge under the centralized structure. This creates room for effective performance, as prompt responses to challenges as they appear are possible, and it makes it easy for several actors to influence policymaking, i.e., interest groups, clients, consultants, etc.
- e. He adds that the reason for reforms was instigated and justified by the needs to reduce cost to government and promote efficiency, to place the political appointees in a position to handle government department efficiently, checkmate the excesses of the senior bureaucrats, to inspire coordinating of the numerous activities of the public sector through a workable size of governmental department, changing policy making by involving the private sector in policy making with the government and finally to promote transparency and accountability in the management of institutions and public affairs.

Studying its developing region of the world, Ademolekun (2015) identifies three basic features in the Africa public sector. They included the following:

1. Reduction in the role of the state in production of infrastructural facilities due to weak state capacity. This has existed in the desire for developing capacity to perfect basic functions through downsizing to reduce staff bills, have a sizable functional staff and skilled staff
2. Modernization of public management system to achieve improved performance. This involves policy reform measures aimed at improved performance through modernizing human resources management system and sound financial management system. This involves merit-based recruitment, decent pay and effective promotion by staff. In regard to financial management, budget reform and expenditure control's and linking of budget control measures.
3. Improved service delivery: This reform measure had to target improved service delivery through quality charters and program delivery, and benchmark were established to measure progress.
4. Promotion of accountable and transparent government: The step toward the realization of this objective, staff stated with merit-based recruitment to free press, competitive se in the characterized recruitment and fund financial management to free press, competition election, free association and selection, free association and freedom of expression. On accountability, with internal and external control of administration were embarked upon to achieve this purpose. These range from strong internal audits, code of ethics, and the strengthening of existing institutions and creation of the ones, such as EFCC and ICPC in Nigeria and other Africa states. Other forms of African policy reforms identified by Obasa (2017) include.
 - a) Management contract: This is a situation the control of an enterprise is handled through the award of contract to a private company upon the performance of the job in return for fee or an agreed amount. Different government functions that are handled through contract include production facility, technical operation, accounting, human/ personnel resources, training facilities, marketing among others.
 - b) Build– operates and Transfer: This is the nerve of the public/private partnership system, and in this case, a private company is permitted through a concession to design, build, and operate for a concessionary period, which may be upward of 30 to 50 years. The idea is to allow the investor to recover the money invested in such a facility through a fee paid by the users of the facility, e.g., a toll gate fee. The finance is provided by the private investor, usually through a loan sourced from financial and investment entities.
 - c) Lease contract: This usually involves two to more partners to develop a business operational facility by contributing equity based on agreement on finance, management, and profit-

sharing and operational facility are agreed upon. This usually based on initial agreement on dissolution after the expiration of the business entity.

- d) Cooperatives: These may be producer or consumer cooperatives where members contribute equally and are equally involved in the management and control of the business entity. Decisions are based on a democratic decision-making process of “one man, one vote,” and decisions are reached based on majority votes.
- e) Service contract: This is a situation in which a private business enterprise is licensed to perform services that were previously handled by the public sector for a specific period. The mode of operation and the cost are agreed upon before the commencement of the contracted services.
- f) Full concession is full privatization: This connotes the total divestment of the public sector from service and production and production and licenses are granted to private sector service provider to handle production of such services.
- g) Concessive: This involves the granting of license to private sector agencies to provide such services. This is usually a program that runs for a very long period. The production, management and financing is totally handled by private sector agencies e.g. Airline operations in Nigeria and African States.

Dibbie (2014) and Engonwam (2018) enumerated other forms of policy reform in African States to de-bureaucratizing the public sector such include:

1. Deconcentration which involves passing down of selected administrative functions to sub-national units within governmental agencies. This was very visible in South Africa, Nigeria and Zambia where revenue generating agencies enjoin such decentralization process.
2. Delegations that involve the transfer of specific authority and decides making process to organizations outside the regular bureaucratic structure. Nigeria has done that in the health sector, training, and industrial fund allocation to the citizens.
3. Devolution that involves granting of decision-making process to lower authorities in order to allow them to take full responsibility without referring the higher-level authority. An example is the separation of state/local government fund account in the Nigeria federation.

Fundamentally, African public sector was initiated during the colonial rule in the continent and policy making and implementation was designed to satisfy the prime interest of the colonial power and it was essential economic in nature and the process was close and could not address the important needs and aspirations of African colonized people (Adebayo, 1998). Upon the attainment of political independence, the legacy of the colonial rule in Africa is the existence of public service organized according to western administrative practice that incorporate western notions of rationality,

impersonality, professionalism and neutrality (Akinsanya, 2017). In developing areas, there is always differences between the impression by the constitution, legal, regulation, statistics and actual practices and this affect the quality of administration action and behavior and the impacts is a negative in the society (Riggs, 1959; Basu, 2014). This gives rise to red-tapism, corruption, inefficiency among others, in African states. The effects of policy reforms in Africa have been assessed in the Global Economic Prospect of the World Bank (2025) that focused on performance of the economies of the emerging markets of China and Brazil and developing markets of Africa.

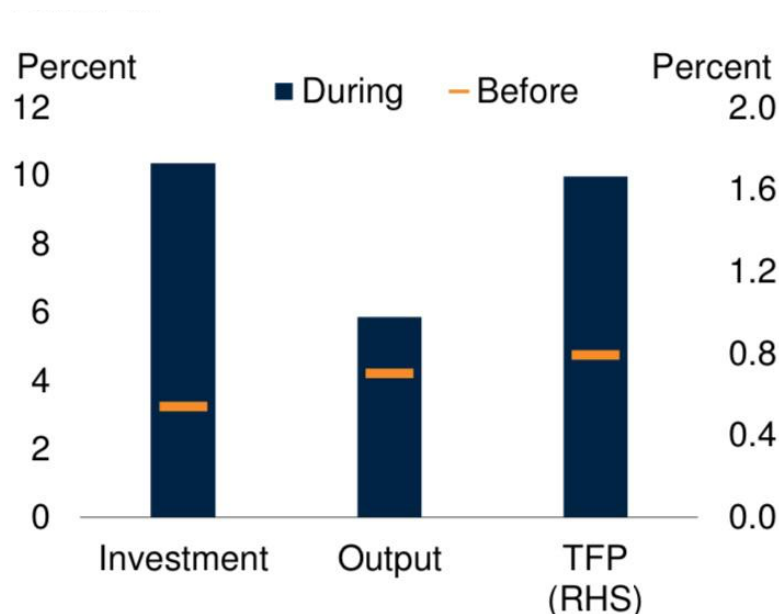


Figure 1 Annual growth of investment, output, and productivity before and during investment accelerations in Emerging and Developing Economies (EMDEs) of Africa and Asia

Source: Stamm & Yu (2024)

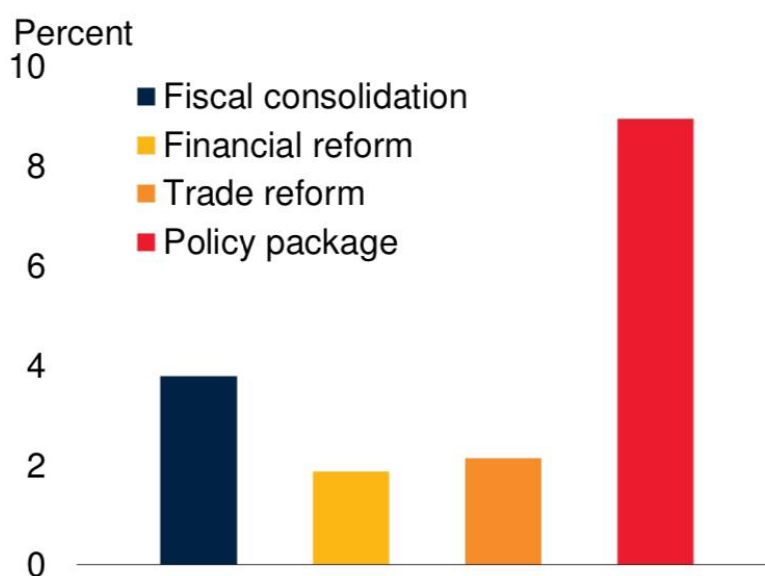


Figure 2 Change in probability of investment acceleration

Source: Stamm and Yu (2024)

Figure 1 shows the changes in the percentage of the probability of investment acceleration in emerging and developing economies in financial consolidation, financial reforms, trade reforms and policy package between 2018 -2024. Figure 2 above shows the annual growth of investment, output and productivity emerging and developing economies of the world as result of policy changes and reforms between 2018 – 2020. Policy reforms in Emerging and developing Economies has sparked new rounds of investment acceleration and this came as a result of well designed, fiscal, financial trade policy reforms, private sector regulatory environment and operational efficiency.

Challenges facing the de-bureaucratization process in Africa States in the ccontemporary period

There are diverse opinions over the impact of de-bureaucratization in African public service in the contemporary period.

Firstly, Obasa (2017) explicates that it has been observed that there has not be sufficient efforts in building and nurturing professionalism in the Nigeria Pubic sector. This has been the bane of activating good governance in African bureaucratic institutions. This has opened the way for mediocrity, inefficient and corrupt officials in the public sector.

Secondly, the absence of persistent drives to teach ethnics at training institutions to enlightened the prospective public servant on the importance of values and morality and the consequences of immorality and corruption.

Thirdly, African states have ignored the importance of introducing tough screening techniques in the course of recruitment, selecting and promoting staff in bureaucratic and political institutions.

Fourthly, African governments have been avoiding the public sector competing with the private sector, as the public sector keeps away from observing the norms of the private sector. This has been embraced by privatized companies through commercialization and profit-making motives in the contemporary period in the country.

In addition, the reduction of the state through privatization and commercialization has brought severe economic and social problems, including unemployment, inflation, domestic cuts in public spending, and reduced production of social services (health and education). Also, foreign businesses have dominated and impacted the economy, resulting in economic decline and rising levels of poverty (Atuonwu & Odinaka, 2019). Policy reform in African states, particularly Ghana, suffered from some observed socio-public factors, such as the non-conformity of West-induced policy reforms to Ghana, Nigeria, and other predominantly poor, rural, ethnic societies, and the fact that the reforms overlooked socio-cultural differences and gender gaps that did not favor women.

Dibbie (2014) holistically observed that reform processes in African States face the challenges of Skewed international political economy process that has not been in African favor due to their weak productive capacity. In addition, are the challenges of population density, depended economy, and the growing influence of religion and traditional values that have tendered to impact negatively on state transformation in African states.

In a sharp contradiction to developments in the developed world, it has been discovered that monitoring and evaluation processes have not been effective, and in some cases, privatized agencies have been acquired by cronies, friends, or surrogates of the elites at the corridors of power. The situation has also not been helped by the constant control and undue intervention of government in the activities of the agencies responsible for the privatization processes. Coupled with this is the challenge of a paucity of investment funds among interested national investors, thereby making acquisition open to foreign investors from different parts of the world.

A comparative description of the constraints facing de-bureaucratic processes in Africa in the contemporary period, with examples from South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya, revealed that South Africa has recorded the most successes due to a strong framework, high institutional capacity, and a stable investment climate. Whereas the reverse is the case in Nigeria and Kenya, as they have suffered from poor administration, political instability, public resistance, regulatory shortcomings, among others (Adejuwon, 2025). Added to these are the challenges of ethnic division, high levels of poverty, low investible funds, poor salaries, low savings, and a harsh operational environment.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, the de- bureaucratization process has begun in African States in under to minimize the state domination of the economy and promote the private sector led, economic growth and social development. This has initiated under structural adjustment progamme adopted in African states in themed 1980s. This paper therefore concluded right and appropriate funding of the de-bureaucratized organizations. This is because funding is integral to managing on organization. Such organization can embrace international financing processes, foreign fund transfer or cash remittances by oversee based citizens so that many of them will not be brought by foreign interests. The paper hereby recommended the following strategies to enhance de-bureaucratization process in African states in the contemporary period.

Firstly, there is need for pursuance of loans for credible lending organizations by business men and investors in Africa in a bid to access needed funds for asset acquisition in the continent.

Secondly, effective monitoring of privatization processes by the technical committees or commissions is highly essential so that the process will be made transparent, and a situation of manipulation can be

forestalled. This will help to further democratize the whole processes for all interested business men and investors.

Thirdly, there is need for adaption or replication of technology by African States. Much of technological development is achieved abroad and African State can seek to replicate such development to solve their problems. Taiwan initiated their technical development though this process and in the contemporary times, the country technological development has greatly improved such that, they are attracting patronages from different countries of the world.

Fourthly, private sector investors must be encouraged to explore the lee-way created by the de-bureaucratization process and invest massively in the critical sectors that were formerly dominated by the government. Such investment can be made in oil refineries, power generation, transportation, and mechanized agricultural practices. This will further broaden the production process, generate projects, and make available the needed goods and services for the people.

Fifthly, there is need for effective and broad planning and regulation of social services promotion in African states. All over the world, governments provide broad economic system of production and planning process that guide the whole process of societal development. The twenty first century global process demands the itemization of development agenda that can advance human condition in the continent. The private sector is expected is cooperate with the public sector in a bid to advance socio- economic development of the citizens.

Sixthly, there is need for good governance in African states to curb mis-governance such as corruption, nepotism, stealing, and contract inflation among others. Primarily, government exists to promote human condition in the society and hence, good governance is fundamental to realizing that lofty objective.

Lastly, provision of social welfare schemes such as loan, and financing development agenda like education, health and offer facilities will increasingly instigate the development of skills necessary to transform African States in the twenty first century.

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