



Skills Development

Vision For The Skilled African Youth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NEDIS Education Innovation Summit is a platform designed to highlight the role of education innovations in solving challenges facing the delivery of accessible and high-quality education. On the 7th and 8th of December 2021, the sixth annual NEDIS Education Innovation Summit was held virtually. The theme for this year's summit, "Skills Development: Vision for the Skilled African Youth", is a reflection on the era ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic. It indicates that, beyond survival, there is a need to educate the African child for a future of innovation that contributes to the global economy and development. The continent's majority youth population needs diverse skills that position them for productivity, inclusion, creativity and adaptability within a rapidly evolving world. The event recognised the urgency of developing youths who possess the right skills for economic and national development. There is no doubt that Africa's future depends on the education of its young population. African youths present varied potential that can be harnessed by developing a blend of high-quality skills relevant for the future. Collaboration between education and industry to deliver these skills is crucial. Teacher training and capacity development are vital for developing a skilled workforce. NEDIS 2021 was two days of rich discourse and interaction amongst over 150 stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

NEDIS Education Innovation Summit is an annual gathering of stakeholders in the education sector hosted by The Education Partnership (TEP) Centre. This event is designed to highlight the role of education innovations in solving challenges facing the delivery of accessible and high-quality education. Conversations at NEDIS events have explored new, exciting, and sustainable approaches to increasing access to quality education, especially for the marginalised and underserved. Discussions at the summit underscore the importance of identifying and systematically scaling innovations such that they become more deeply embedded in policy systems and reach more beneficiaries.

Now in its 6th year, the summit has become a key event in Nigeria's education sector, bringing together stakeholders from the government, research and academia, development and funding organisations, corporations, civil society organisations, and a broad range of education innovators for two days of rich discourse, knowledge sharing, learning, capacity development, and networking. The sixth edition held on the 7th and 8th of December, 2021, was the first virtual edition of NEDIS.

Thematic Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic struck a massive blow to the global economy. It significantly impacted the education sector, with school closures interrupting the learning of over 1.2 billion students (UNESCO, 2020). In Nigeria, the abrupt closure of schools disrupted learning modes, access to school-related services, parenting routines, and crisis management capacities of the federal and state ministries of education. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in "The Economic Impacts of Learning Losses" paper published in 2020, investigated how school attendance and learning outcomes affect labour-market chances and economic development. Students who had experienced a break in learning due to the pandemic face the possibility of



reduced income in the long run. A less skilled workforce would also translate to an economy that is unable to function at full capacity.

With COVID-19, the outcome of lost school hours cannot be immediately measured. Unemployment in Nigeria is a major bane rather than an accident waiting to happen. Consequently, actions should be taken by both the state and non-state sector to mitigate more adverse social and economic outcomes. 2020 was a defining year globally. In Nigeria,



in the second quarter, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15-34 was 34.9%, up from 29.7%, while the rate of underemployment for the same age group rose to 28.2% from 25.7% in Q3, 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics - Q2 2020). Developing youths with the right skills for economic and national development is far from a futuristic problem. There is a real and present danger with the youth population in Nigeria and Africa. Yet, the future of Africa depends on how its youths are currently being educated.

In the past decade, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, many African countries have embraced alternative ways to increase access to education significantly. However, the current priorities are yet to deliver on the promise of education in our society for innovation and long-term economic growth. The era ushered in by the pandemic indicates that, beyond survival, there is a need to educate African children for a future of innovation that contributes to the global economy.

The continent's youths need diverse skills that will position them for productivity, inclusion, creativity and adaptability within a rapidly evolving world. Against this backdrop, NEDIS 6 strategically contributed to the education policy agenda within the continent.

ABOUT TEP CENTRE

The Education Partnership (TEP) Centre is Nigeria’s pioneering education partnership organisation. TEP Centre has a mission to improve the overall design, implementation, and evaluation of education initiatives through effective, enduring, and scalable partnerships.

TEP Centre has supported programmes funded, assisted, or managed by organisations and institutions such as the UK Department for International Development (DfID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), MacArthur Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, Google.org, Oxford University, Open Society Foundations, Results for Development Institute (R4D), Ford Foundation, Dalberg, Misesan Cara, British Council, the Lagos State Ministry of Education, MDF Netherlands, Corona Schools Trust Council, Lafarge PLC, Oando Foundation and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI).



Stay Connected to TEP Centre

TEP Centre implemented the LEARNigeria Assessment, Advocacy and Action programme. We oversaw a nationally representative and citizen-led household survey of learning in Nigeria. The study ascertained numeracy and literacy competencies in Nigeria’s children, thereby strengthening various stakeholders to take action to scale up the quality of teaching and learning in

Nigeria. The programme was implemented in partnership with institutional stakeholders, including the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the National Bureau of Statistics and the Nigerian Population Commission (NPC) as well as state ministries of education, academics, civil society organisations, and corporations. LEARNigeria has reached 49,000 children in 21,600 households across 6 Nigeria states. More information about LEARNigeria can be found at www.learnigeria.org/

TEP Centre leads the National Innovation Collaborative on Education (NICE), a platform for collaboration and engagement around education issues. NICE produces the Education Unscripted podcast, which addresses topical issues on education ranging from education technology to financing to inclusive education. Visit <https://anchor.fm/education-unscripted> to listen to the Education Unscripted podcast.

TEP Learning Academy is the training arm of The Education Partnership Centre, where we provide capacity development support to professionals and organisations through open enrollment and bespoke workshops. All our courses are available at <https://teplearningacademy.com>. For enquiries about how we can serve your organisation's learning needs, kindly contact us via learningacademy@tepcentre.com. For more information on TEP Centre, visit www.tepcentre.com and www.learnigeria.org. Visit our social media pages via @tepcentre and @learnigeria. Write to us at info@tepcentre.com or call us on +234 809 111 5403.



SUMMIT DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NEDIS 2021 started with a welcome address by the Managing Director of The Education Partnership Centre, Dr Modupe Adefeso-Olateju. She shared how the NEDIS innovation summit was born out of the need to scale innovations in the education sector.

The summit featured two keynote addresses delivered by Mrs Folasade Adefisayo, Honourable Commissioner, Lagos State Ministry of Education and Dr Joe Abah, Country Director, DAI Nigeria. Also, there were four panel discussions delivered by thought leaders in the education sector locally and globally. The summit concluded with the NEDIS fireside chat, a moderated discussion designed to extract depth from the insights and experience of the speakers.

Keynote Address 1: *Vision for the Skilled African Youth*

The Honourable Commissioner emphasised the importance of young children possessing future skills and the need for these skills to be integrated into the Nigerian curriculum. She shared her experiences and the lessons the Lagos State Government has learnt from the pandemic, which are:

1. Inadequate investment in technology: During the lockdown, several students lacked access to electronic devices and internet connection for continued but remote learning. These students missed schooling during that period, which strained the educators in getting the students back on track.
2. Curriculum inadequacy: The current curricula used by the Nigerian education sector is very didactic and theoretical. It is not practical and does not address skill acquisition development, digital literacy, and critical thinking. Therefore, there is a competitive gap in the graduates we produce compared to their contemporaries in other countries.
3. Teacher skills and parenting: Many parents had difficulties supporting their children's learning during the lockdown. Educating students does

Focus on 6 years to influence the 60 years that come after

- Mrs Folasade Adefisayo

not require money only, but also passion alongside taking advantage of our environment and building these youths around societal values and cultural norms.

Deliberate actions need to be taken to develop Nigeria's education sector by the educators, the students, and other critical players.

Mrs Adefisayo identified some core skills for the future of every African child, which are:

- the ability to discern what is true
- the ability to know what is fictional or factual
- the acquisition of digital and literacy skills
- the ability to communicate effectively and work with teams

Recommendations

- Identifying children's passions and areas of strength will help us design curricula that are fit for purpose
- Our teaching should include practical communication skills, marketing skills, good qualities, financial literacy, emotional intelligence, etc
- The vision can only come true when we invest. Investment of time and resources is critical to developing well-rounded youths
- Deliberate government involvement in developing the skills of young people is crucial. Taking a cue from the Lagos State Government, a working curriculum prioritising entrepreneurship is essential

Panel Discussion 1: *Teaching the Skills of the Future Today*

Employability is job security and not the job itself
- Barbara Kasumu

This panel started with discussants sharing their experiences as learners. The conversation covered how students in schools need to learn not only cognitive skills but also soft skills, which are just as crucial in any industry. There is a gap between the classroom and the industry, such that the skills demanded by industries differ from the skills the graduates

What you did with your time outside study is an important question to employers.

- Barbara Kasumu

have to offer. There is a push and a pull, demand and supply between the education sector and the industry. Therefore, collaboration is vital to ensure the schools and institutions impact the students with current skills demanded by the industry and not obsolete skills. For instance, skills related to the English Language as a subject are literary skills such as writing, speaking etc. So, learning should be beyond the subject. The focus should be the value gained from learning to the value transferable to any industry.

The demand and supply sides of education and skills development really need to be aligned.
- Dr Adetunji Adegbesan

Skills needed for the future, including critical thinking, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and technological skills (such as programming languages, software design and development), should be part of the curriculum.

In addition, the discussants emphasised the importance of teaching courses that solve the challenges peculiar to a country. For instance, if there are more cars in the country, there will be a need for people who can fix cars. Our education system should prioritise teaching youths to solve contemporary problems. It is a waste of energy and resources to teach courses irrelevant to societal needs.

There is an imbalance between cognitive/classroom learning and practical/skill learning. There is so much focus on classroom learning which is limiting and restrictive. African higher institutions have a pivotal role to play in this shift from an overwhelming focus on theories to skill-based learning. Even though most of them are grossly underfunded, we must pay attention to enabling higher institutions to provide the requisite skills for the existing markets and industry.

It is important to problematise "employability" as a CSR and investment issue. That's one way to draw in the private sector and leverage it for other things.
- Dr Kenneth Amaeshi

Recommendations

- Inclusion of technology in our curriculum is vital
- Prioritisation of 21st-century soft skills such as public speaking, conflict resolution, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, etc., in our educational curriculum will make our youths resourceful, employable, and independent
- Creation of environments where students can learn these skills and harness them
- Provision of capacity development support for educators as often as possible because the education of the students is in the hands of the teachers
- Collaboration with the private sector to ensure that institutions supply graduates employable by the industry
- Educational institutions should integrate internships and other skill acquisition development programmes. This will help boost students' work experience before they become graduates
- Training the students with skills they can use to compete and survive globally. Invite professionals that have undergone this journey to share their experiences to encourage students to achieve what they have only dreamt of

Panel Discussion 2: Developing a demand-driven curriculum for core skills in today's schools

This panel discussion further emphasised the need to harmonise the needs of the industry with the offers of the education system. COVID-19 accelerated a trend of using technology to work. Automation is moving forward, and we need to ensure Africa is not left too far behind. We need to juxtapose youth employability with the demands of those who are hiring, so it's crucial to consider backward integration by speaking with employers on their needs in the marketplace.

Some challenges we have are;

- Employers have to invest in bringing employees to where they can be fit for the purpose
- We barely have graduates that have skills employers need; hence many graduates are thrown into a socioeconomic world that schooling did not prepare them for
- Curricula do not factor content, context and design

Top skills demands/needs are based on what capacity these students will function in, whether as employees, as business owners, as government workers or in their communities. These transcend dispensations and are needed across industries – an entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking, leadership, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving.

The panellists explored how to teach these skills in school subjects. They agreed that integrating the skills into puzzles, projects, presentations and class activities will facilitate their adoption by students.

The National Educational Policy 2013 guides formal and vocational learning. However, it is not robust, as it doesn't address the question of 'how', which it left to schools and teachers to figure out. The focus should be on education providers, from lesson plans to how they teach to what they (educators) are taught. The use of community, business, and government scenarios in teaching is vital for showing relevance.

It's also important to assess that young people are learning what is expected. Schools are running curricula that are not tied to the country's socio-economic realities. The curriculum in Nigeria needs a shift from what it is currently. A demand-driven curriculum imbues graduates with the skills that meet the economy's demands. Building a curriculum is in three parts: content, methodology and context. The appropriate approach will be to conduct a curriculum redesign before focusing on the teaching and assessment aspects. There are two necessary categories of skills: soft/human/light skills and technical skills. The former set transcends any industry, and possessing these skills will help in getting a job and thriving in it. Unfortunately, the Nigerian education sector has not been able to impact graduates in this regard. In assessing students' level of skills, we also need to make them participate in internships and mentorship programmes in real-world scenarios to see how they apply these skills.

In pursuing socio-economic development in Nigeria, we have only achieved the 'how' of the subjects but not the 'how' of acquiring skills. This has been left for the educational training institutions to handle. As an economy, there is outstanding work regarding assessment, M&E for the educators and on the aspect of the curriculum.

Recommendations

- Start from low-hanging fruits since revamping curricula across the board might be difficult. E.g., upgrade teaching methods with real-life practical applications infused into teaching methods
- Review the Nigerian teaching pedagogy to transform the quality of graduates produced. Otherwise, the consequences of producing half-baked graduates will eventually affect us all
- Collaboration between government, institutions and industry is essential.

Take a cue from the South African government, which provided internet-enabled learning centres for their students to utilise at no cost/expense to students

- The funding of some of these projects can come from external sources to ease the government's burden. It can also be done as CSR by organisations or financing NGOs to ensure these education goals are realised. Nigeria is a very political country, so the tendency of funding educational projects is little, except external partners collaborate with the government to achieve it

Panel Discussion 3: *Exploring Alternative Pathways to Skills Development and Economic Growth in Africa*

This session clarified that to develop a skilled workforce and drive economic growth in Africa, we cannot shy away from our roots and history as a nation and as a people.

The Igbo apprenticeship system started after the Biafran war, where Igbos began building businesses crucial to their communities' survival and to support their kin. The system was informal but structured to involve trading and hands-on learning. Apprentices learnt bookkeeping/record keeping, financial management, supply chain management and procurement without earning an MBA degree. The system also allowed the Igbos to come together and advocate for more effective policies. Also, Yoruba market women are very influential. They are financially literate and a force to be reckoned with. Our institutions should pick some lessons from our history and cultural background.

Unfortunately, students are taught in silos. However, everything is interdisciplinary in the real world. The 1969 curriculum conference in Nigeria was not inclusive, setting a faulty foundation for the current realities of the Nigerian education system.

Recommendations

- Entrepreneurship should not be a standalone course. Instead, it should be integrated into other subjects in the curriculum, including Computer Science, Chemistry, Physics, etc.
- It is essential to move from a silo mindset to a multi-disciplinary approach, where problem-solving is approached from multiple perspectives and considers future generations. Problem-solving should involve historical consciousness, contemporary realities, and should transcend generations
- We need a national conversation to discuss who we are as a nation, what an inclusive country looks like, and what our core values are. These values should include justice, inclusion, and prosperity for all. Only then can we position our education system to address our peculiarities. Nigeria's comparative advantage is her culture, so a curriculum that acknowledges diverse historical and epistemological perspectives is essential. The curriculum should factor in historical and contemporary realities, as well as global perspectives
- A parallel initiative should be set up to consider how the current education/ curriculum system can be maximised. The measures of success should also be modified to include community service, political engagement, etc. Simultaneously, we should focus on what the future education system would look like
- Entrepreneurship should be localised to have a system that works for Nigeria's ecosystem
- Tertiary institutions should be entrepreneurially minded. The stakeholders involved need to work together. An example is the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) Triple Helix roundtable

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involving private sector representatives and the National Universities Commission partnering to include entrepreneurship as a core subject in the university curriculum

Entrepreneurship should be localised to have a system that works for Nigeria's ecosystem

Keynote Address 2: A Future-Ready Africa is a Skilled Africa

This session began by providing background information and statistics in Africa that show how we have evolved over the years. Africa is blessed with the wealth of youths in their number. Unlike other countries with a higher percentage of seniors, Nigeria's population consists mainly of youths. So, our future is now. Although regarded as the "Giant of Africa", Nigeria has some alarming statistics, including being ranked in the top five highest poverty levels, highest in the world in the number of out-of-school children, and second highest in the world in open defecation. Nigeria has weak policy conceptions and short-term goals that don't tackle future issues. Many government parastatals tackle youth issues with no clear strategy or plan to handle the problems. By 2030, less than 10 years away, 80% of Africa's working population will be working in positions that do not exist today. This means that, for students currently in secondary schools, there is no clear plan yet to bridge the gap, so these youths are ready for that future.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for Nigeria to take advantage of the numbers we have in the youth population and train them for the future.
2. The government needs to establish policies that will encourage institutions to take the future of their students seriously. Establish clear-cut strategies and plans that educators and institutions can follow.
3. Investment in human capital is the crux of it all because even when the money runs out, problems remain, and so do people. It is crucial to invest in young people.

Panel Discussion 4: Education Management: Then, Now, The Future

The panellists discussed how it would be a total disservice to ourselves and the

future to ignore our responsibilities of equipping students with the needed soft/human skills and technical skills. It is also not sufficient to build the skills but to assess the result or the system's effectiveness. Through monitoring and evaluation, we can identify the areas of change and improvement. Monitoring education systems should be focused on supporting rather than punishing schools. The Office of Education Quality Assurance in Lagos state ensures continuous, unbiased and supportive monitoring and evaluation activities. The United Kingdom's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) looks at every aspect of what makes up a school system and gives schools the support and training needed.

Nigerians need to sit down and decide what education means to us and what we want education to do for us. Is our education fit for purpose? Does it position us to function in the global sphere? There is a need for joint responsibility in delivering the promise of education. We need to monitor and regulate schools with diverse curricula (British, American, Indian, Finnish), and teacher quality has to be emphasised. Therefore, reskilling teachers, accountability, monitoring and evaluation and data are critical.

We need to be intentional about ensuring that schools are doing what they need to do, using data to identify performance gaps, and then closing the gaps systematically. Schools cannot keep running without being accountable to monitoring and evaluating systems.

Moreover, it is vital to build backwards. In the past, there were no private schools. Let's go back and build from where Nigeria started. We cannot fund a dysfunction; hence, we should track funds to know how money is spent. Paid education should mean subsidised education and not levying people out of their comfort zone.

Recommendations

- Firstly, Nigeria needs to establish the meaning of education, and then the approach to achieving good education has to be multi-sectoral. There is a need for collaboration in funding and data gathering to achieve it
- Nigeria needs to assess the factors that enabled us to thrive in the 1960s

Firstly, Nigeria needs to establish the meaning of education, and then the approach to achieving good education has to be multi-sectoral. There is a need for collaboration in funding and data gathering to achieve it

and 70s and tap into it to succeed. Students' education should be financed with taxes, personal funds, or private sector collaboration

- Technical skills are essential, but even more important are soft skills, and there are tools designed to assess these skills. These tools should be contextualised to fit into each unique environment. It is not only about measurements but how the results can lead to a positive change
- In addition, parents need to be

taught that it is not solely the responsibility

of schools and the government to educate their children. The parents have a crucial part in ensuring their children get well-grounded and balanced education

Fireside Chat: Policy Priorities for Skills Development in Africa's Next Decade

The fireside chat focused on restructuring the public sector, producing education leaders in knowledge and policymaking, and the roles of private institutions in collaborating with the government to improve education. The discussants observed that the government is often bureaucratic towards improving the educational sector because education policymakers are not well informed, trained or equipped to reform the educational sector.

Everything rises and falls on leadership, and the current leadership we have in place cannot propagate the kind of change we desire in the educational sector. Modern models must be used to teach people values. For example, learning how programming takes patience, thus helping to develop both technical and soft skills. Our focus should be on building value-driven technology that solves contemporary issues.

Recommendations

- The private sector should show more sentiment towards assisting the government in improving the educational sector. Members of the private sector are stakeholders, and building the educational sector is a part of their responsibilities
- Learning in Nigeria should be incentivised
- We have to be strategic about positioning competent and experienced leaders in government. A strategic plan to train or educate leaders, particularly in the public sectors or influence them on the appropriate way to reform the educational sector.
- Advocacy platforms that address politicians should be in place
- There is the need to think creatively about raising the next generation from ages 0 to 8. Cluster learning can take place in communities, and learning kits can be donated to parents
- The government should still be the biggest provider of education even though there should be platforms that allow conversations between the private and the public sectors
- Everything rises and falls with leadership. We must be strategic and intentional about leadership. Citizens can activate their agency in the office of the citizen

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OVERALL SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Curriculum review

- Identifying children's passions and areas of strength will help us design curricula that harness these strengths.
- Including technology in our curricula is fundamental. The world is fast evolving, and we must move with it.
- Prioritisation of 21st-century soft skills such as public speaking, conflict

resolution, entrepreneurship, critical thinking etc., in our educational curriculum will make our youths more resourceful, employable and independent.

- Our curriculum should move from a silo mindset to a multi-disciplinary approach, where problem-solving is approached from multiple perspectives and considers future generations.
- Entrepreneurship should not be a standalone course. Instead, it should also be integrated into other subjects in the curriculum. Subjects such as Computer Science, Chemistry, Technology.
- The Nigerian curriculum should factor in historical and contemporary realities, as well as global perspectives. Nigeria's comparative advantage is her culture. Therefore, a curriculum that acknowledges diverse historical and epistemological perspectives is important.
- A parallel initiative should be set up to consider how the current education/curriculum system can be maximised. The measures of success should also be modified to include community service, political engagement, etc. Simultaneously, we should focus on what the next education system would look like.

Partnership and Collaboration

- Collaboration of the family, institutions, the government, the private sector and civil society is critical to address the challenges in the education space
- Collaboration both in funding and data gathering should be encouraged
- Increased collaboration with the private sector is critical to ensure that educational institutions are supplying employable graduates
- Parents need to be taught that it is not solely the responsibility of schools and the government to educate their children. They also have a crucial part in ensuring their children get quality education.

Education Investment

- The vision can only come true when we invest. Investment of time and resources is critical to developing well-rounded youths
- Students' education should be financed with taxes, personal funds, or private sector collaboration

- Investment in human capital is the crux of it all because even when the money runs out, people remain. It is crucial to invest in young people
- External funding should be encouraged and prioritised. The funding of some education projects can come from external sources to ease the burden of the government. It can also be done as CSR by organisations or financing NGOs to ensure these education goals are realised
- Learning in Nigeria should be incentivised, i.e., incentivising universities to build strong alumni-student communities will go a long way

Education Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Technical skills are essential, but soft skills are more critical, and there are tools designed to assess these skills. These tools should be contextualised to fit into each unique environment. It is not only about measurements but how the results can lead to a positive change

Policy Making

- We have to be strategic about positioning competent and experienced leaders in government. A strategic plan to train, educate, and influence leaders, particularly in the public sector, on the appropriate way to reform the educational sector
- There should be platforms that allow conversations between the private and the public sectors, as well as advocacy platforms that address politicians
- Clear-cut strategies, policies, and plans should be put in place for educators and institutions to follow
- Deliberate government involvement. There is a need for government intervention in scaling up work around skills development for young people
- Everything rises and falls with leadership. We must be strategic and intentional about leadership. Citizens can activate their agency in the office of the citizen.

Teacher training and pedagogy development

- Capacity development support should be provided for educators because the education of the students is in the hands of the teachers
- There is a need to review the Nigerian teaching pedagogy; this will transform the quality of graduates that Nigeria produces

- Revisiting of teaching methods, with real-life practical applications infused into them
- Institutions should integrate internship and other skill acquisition programmes that will help students gain experience before they become graduates
- Creation of a learning environment where students can learn quality skills and harness them
- Tertiary institutions should be set up to be entrepreneurially minded. The stakeholders involved need to work together
- There is a need for Nigeria to take advantage of the number we have in the youths and train them for the future. Skills relevant for the future should be taught in schools today





...Global standards for education partnerships

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