

**STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE COMPULSORY INCLUSION OF  
CIVIC EDUCATION AND TRADE-SUBJECTS ON EXTERNAL  
EXAMINATION CANDIDATES IN NIGERIA IMPOSITION**

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**Abstract**

*The study examined stakeholders' perceptions of the inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on their relevance to academic performance, university admission requirements, and students' career aspirations. The study used a descriptive survey research design, with the population of 1,741 stakeholders, selected using multistage sampling techniques. Data were collected from several stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students/candidates. A researcher-designed questionnaire was employed for data collection, and mean scores were used to analyse responses based on a 2.50 decision benchmark. Findings revealed mixed perceptions among stakeholders. Trade subjects were strongly perceived as valuable for equipping students with practical, entrepreneurial, and employability skills, thereby enhancing career readiness and self-reliance, although not a requirement for university admission. Contrariwise, Civic Education was acknowledged for promoting civic awareness and social responsibility, but also having no relevance to university admission requirements or long-term career advancement. Also, the majority of the stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the compulsory inclusion of both Civic-education and trade subjects in external examinations, citing increased academic workload, student stress, reduced focus on core admission subjects, and constrained flexibility in course selection/switch for tertiary education. Furthermore, the study found weak alignment between Civic Education and trade subjects as well as traditional university admission criteria; trade subjects showed more relevance to real-life application and*

*entrepreneurship. The study concluded that there should be curriculum integration and school-based assessment over imposition or compulsory high-stakes external examinations. The study recommended, among others, policy review on compulsory subject inclusion, improved curriculum flexibility, differential academic and vocational pathways, as well as better alignment between secondary education curricula, examination policies, and alignment with tertiary admission requirements.*

**Keyword:** Stakeholders; Perceptions, Civic-Education; Trade-subjects; Concerns; Imposition

## **Introduction**

The Nigerian educational system has experienced several reforms over the years, aimed at improving the quality, relevance, and functionality of education in response to national development needs. These reforms have been largely driven by the Federal Government of Nigeria through policy frameworks such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), which emphasises value orientation, skills acquisition, citizenship education, and national cohesion (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). In line with these objectives, the curriculum at the senior secondary school level has been restructured to include both Civic Education and trade subjects like Catering Craft Practice, Dyeing and Bleaching, Garment Making, Fishery, Livestock Farming, Cosmetology, Carpentry, Marketing, Animal husbandry, to mention but a few, to produce all-round students who would not only be academically sound or competent but socially responsible and economically productive.

The subject, Civic Education (now called Citizenship and Heritage Studies), was introduced as a compulsory subject in senior secondary schools in 2014 to promote civic consciousness, democratic values, national unity, and responsible citizenship among Nigerian youths. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN](2013) as well as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Civic Education is designed to inculcate values such as patriotism, respect for the rule of law, tolerance, participation in governance, awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities, amongst others. Although it is a subject that is not or hardly regarded or considered for admission in any tertiary institution in Nigeria. It was necessitated and included in both school-based and external examination candidates; the government sought to ensure that all learners,

regardless of their mode of schooling, acquire essential civic competencies needed for national development and social stability (NERDC, 2014).

Similarly, like Civic Education, trade subjects were incorporated into the senior secondary school curriculum as part of Nigeria's drive toward technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The introduction of trade subjects aligns with national goals of reducing youth unemployment, promoting entrepreneurship, and equipping students with practical and marketable skills that can facilitate self-reliance and economic empowerment (FRN, 2013). Trade subjects such as catering, auto mechanics, electrical installation, garment making, and others were intended to prepare students for direct entry into the workforce or for further vocational and technical training. Internationally, this approach is consistent with recommendations by organisations such as UNESCO, which advocates for skills-oriented education as a means of addressing unemployment and fostering sustainable development (UNESCO, 2016).

Despite all these well-meaning policy objectives by the federal government, the compulsory inclusion and subsequent imposition of Civic Education and trade subjects for external examination candidates have generated considerable concern among key stakeholders like students, parents, teachers, and school administrators. A major source of dissatisfaction is the observed and or perceived mismatch between secondary school curriculum requirements and university admission criteria. Most, if not all, Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions do not list Civic Education or trade subjects as core requirements for admission into degree or other programmes, particularly in competitive academic fields (Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board [JAMB], 2023). As a result, many students, especially those aspiring to higher education, view these compulsory subjects as having limited alignment or relevance to their immediate and future academic goals as well as their university or tertiary education requirements.

Further, the inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects to an already crowded senior secondary school curriculum has heightened students' academic stress/workload. Accordingly, students are required to prepare and sit for examinations in these compulsory additional subjects alongside usual/conventional core subjects like Mathematics, English Language, and those in their respective fields of Arts, Commerce, or Science subjects that

are critical for university or any tertiary university admission. This situation may divert time, energy, and resources away from subjects that directly influence students' chances of securing admission into tertiary institutions. For external candidates in particular, who often have limited instructional support, the compulsory nature of these subjects can pose additional challenges and constrain their academic choices.

Consequently, the National Policy on Education (as amended in 2014), which led to the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and Trade Subjects, has led to growing discontent among students who feel that their educational pathways and career aspirations are being shaped by compulsory subjects that do not align with their intended fields of study or admission requirements. Parents and educators have also expressed concern that the pressure associated with these subjects may negatively affect students' overall academic performance and future opportunities. These concerns have sparked ongoing debates about the relevance, implementation, and impact of Civic Education and trade subjects on students' academic trajectories, freedom of choice, and long-term career development in Nigeria. Alas, these issues require empirical investigation, so as to investigate how such curriculum policy inclusions affect students, particularly external examination candidates, within the broader context of Nigeria's educational goals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite consecutive and well structured educational reforms aimed at improving the relevance and functionality of senior secondary schools' curriculum in Nigeria, the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects like Catering Craft, Fisheries, Garment making, Dyeing and bleaching, Carpentry, Cosmetology, Livestock farming, computer and GSM repair, etc being for both school-based and external examination candidates has generated great concern among stakeholders. While these subjects were introduced to promote civic responsibility, national unity, skills acquisition, and self-reliance, concerns and serious questions remain regarding their practical relevance to students' immediate academic goals, particularly for those seeking admission into Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions. Most higher education institutions do not list Civic Education or trade subjects as core admission requirements, creating a perceived disconnect between secondary school curriculum policies and tertiary admission

criteria (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013; Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board [JAMB], 2023).

The compulsory nature of Civic Education and trade subjects has also contributed to an increased academic workload for senior secondary school students, especially external examination candidates who often lack structured instructional support. Students are required to prepare for and sit examinations in these subjects alongside core subjects that are critical for university admission, potentially diverting time, effort, and resources from areas directly linked to their academic progression. This situation raises concerns about whether the policy unintentionally constrains students' subject choices, limits flexibility in academic pathways, and adversely affects overall academic performance.

Furthermore, the persistent dissatisfaction expressed by students, parents, and educators alike suggests that the implementation of Civic Education and trade subjects may not sufficiently account for students' diverse career aspirations and post-secondary educational plans. While the policy may align with national goals of citizenship education and vocational skill development, there is limited empirical evidence examining how these compulsorily imposed subjects influence students' academic trajectories, examination outcomes, and future educational opportunities, particularly among external candidates. Consequently, there is a need for systematic investigation into the relevance, perceived impact and alignment of the imposed or compulsory Civic Education and trade subjects on senior secondary school students in Nigeria, in order to inform curriculum policy decisions and align educational reforms more effectively with students' academic and career aspirations. Alas, studies on the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and Trade subjects in external examinations have been scarce and unavailable, to the best of the researchers' knowledge.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to examine stakeholders' perceptions on the inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

- a. Assess stakeholders' perceptions on the inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations.
- b. Examine the impact of civic and trade subjects on students' academic performance and course selection in tertiary institutions.
- c. Evaluate the alignment of Civic Education and trade subjects with university or other tertiary institutions' admission requirements/students' career aspirations.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions, derived from, were used as a guide for this study;

- a. What are the stakeholders' perceptions regarding the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations?
- b. How do Civic Education and trade subjects affect students' academic performance and ability to choose preferred courses in tertiary institutions?
- c. What is the alignment between Civic Education and trade subjects with university or tertiary institutions' admission requirements/career aspirations?

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to investigate stakeholders' concerns regarding the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects for senior secondary schools in external examinations in Nigeria. The choice of a survey design is informed by its suitability for obtaining detailed information from a large number of respondents and for capturing perceptions, opinions, and attitudes toward educational policies (Creswell, 2014). The study targeted key stakeholders in secondary education, including external examination candidates, teachers, parents, and school administrators, who are directly affected by and or involved in the implementation of the curriculum. The population comprised 1,741 stakeholders which were drawn from selected senior secondary schools across diverse geopolitical zones in Nigeria (Taraba, Benue, Kwara, Oyo, Osun, Akwa-Ibom, and Nasarawa) to ensure representativeness and inclusivity of perspectives. Using stratified random sampling, respondents were selected to reflect a balanced representation of students, educators, and parents, ensuring that each subgroup's views are adequately captured. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire

developed based on the study objectives, containing 24 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire was divided into three sections to explore stakeholders' perceptions, the impact of Civic Education and trade subjects on academic performance and course selection, and the alignment of these subjects with university admission requirements and career aspirations. Multistage sampling technique of purposive, simple random sampling technique and snowball/chain-referral techniques were used to harness stakeholders from other states online questionnaire. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used select the respondents where the researchers have access to teachers who can facilitate the snowballing or reposting the questionnaires at random to teachers in their states. The questionnaire was sent to respondents from different states but others played deaf ears to it. To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument was reviewed by experts in education and piloted with a small sample of stakeholders not included in the main study, with reliability assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with index of 0.83. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages and frequency count for demographic characteristics of respondents while mean deviation was to summarize stakeholders' concerns and perceptions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the implications of compulsory Civic Education and trade subjects for external examination candidates in Nigeria.

## Result

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations?

**Table 2: Stakeholders' Perception on Civic Education and Trade Subjects**

S/N	Statement/Item	Mean
1	Civic Education should be a compulsory subject for all senior secondary school students, including external candidates.	2.27
2	Trade subjects are essential for equipping students with practical skills.	3.74
3	The compulsory inclusion of Civic Education improves students' civic awareness and sense of responsibility.	3.14

S/N	Statement/Item	Mean
4	Stakeholders generally support the inclusion of trade subjects in external examinations.	<b>2.18</b>
5	Civic Education contributes to the promotion of national unity among students.	<b>2.28</b>
6	Trade subjects help students develop entrepreneurial skills that are valuable in the job market.	<b>3.81</b>
7	Students benefit more when Civic Education and trade subjects are integrated into the curriculum.	<b>3.41</b>
8	The compulsory nature of these subjects is perceived positively by most parents and teachers.	<b>2.39</b>

0-2.49= Should Not Be Included 2.50=Should Be Included

Using 2.50 as the decision benchmark, the findings show that stakeholders' perceptions of the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations are mixed, with clearer support for trade subjects than Civic Education. Items with mean scores above 2.50 indicate positive perceptions: stakeholders strongly agreed that trade subjects are essential for equipping students with practical skills (Mean = 3.74) and developing entrepreneurial skills valuable in the job market (Mean = 3.81). They also agreed that Civic Education improves students' civic awareness and sense of responsibility (Mean = 3.14) and that students benefit more when Civic Education and trade subjects are integrated into the curriculum (Mean = 3.41). These results suggest that stakeholders recognise the functional and developmental value of both subject categories, particularly the economic relevance of trade subjects.

Conversely, items with mean scores below 2.50 reflect negative perceptions regarding compulsion and external examination enforcement. Stakeholders tend to disagree with the view that Civic Education should be compulsory for all senior secondary school students, including external candidates (Mean = 2.27), nor did they strongly agree that Civic Education promotes national unity (Mean = 2.28). Similarly, general support for including trade subjects in external examinations (Mean = 2.18) and the belief that parents and teachers perceive the compulsory nature of these subjects positively (Mean = 2.39)

leaned more towards rejection. Overall, while stakeholders value the relevance of Civic Education and trade subjects, they are less supportive of their compulsory inclusion in external examinations, indicating a preference for curriculum integration rather than strict examination mandates.

RQ 2: How do Civic Education and trade subjects affect students' academic performance and their ability to select preferred courses in tertiary institutions?

**Table 3: Effects of Civic Education and Trade Subjects on Academic Performance**

S/N	Statement/Item	Mean
1	Compulsory Civic Education and trade subjects increase students' academic workload	<b>3.71</b>
2	The inclusion of these subjects reduces the time available for core academic subjects	<b>3.86</b>
3	Students often feel stressed due to the additional burden of Civic Education and trade subjects	<b>3.83</b>
4	Compulsory Civic Education affects students' performance in other subjects	<b>3.68</b>
5	Trade subjects distract students from focusing on subjects needed for university admission	<b>3.19</b>
6	Students' preparation for tertiary education is affected by the requirement to study these subjects	<b>2.93</b>
7	The compulsory nature of Civic Education and trade subjects limits students' flexibility in choosing courses aligned with their career goals	<b>3.84</b>
8	Students who perform poorly in Civic Education or trade subjects may experience reduced overall academic confidence	<b>2.38</b>

0-2.49= Does not Affect Students 2.50=Affects Students

The findings indicate that Civic Education and trade subjects are largely perceived as having a negative impact on students' academic workload/performance and don't add value at the end of the day. Using the 2.50 benchmark, most items recorded mean scores above the benchmark, suggesting agreement among respondents that these subjects increase academic pressure. Stakeholders agreed that compulsory Civic Education and trade subjects increase students' academic workload (Mean = 3.71), reduce the time available for core academic subjects (Mean = 3.86), and cause stress due to additional academic burden (Mean = 3.83).

Similarly, respondents perceived that compulsory Civic Education affects students' performance in other subjects (Mean = 3.68) and that trade subjects distract students from

focusing on subjects required for university admission (Mean = 3.19). These results suggest that while the subjects may be valuable, their compulsory nature is seen as academically demanding. Furthermore, stakeholders agreed that the inclusion of these subjects affects students' preparation for tertiary education (Mean = 2.93) and limits flexibility in choosing courses aligned with career goals (Mean = 3.84), indicating concerns about constrained academic pathways. However, one item fell below the benchmark: the perception of poor performance in Civic.

Education or trade subjects reduce students' overall academic confidence (Mean = 2.38), which was rejected. This suggests that although students experience increased workload and restricted course choices, stakeholders do not generally believe that poor performance in these subjects significantly undermines students' overall academic certainty/confidence. By and large, the findings reveal that stakeholders view the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects as academically stressful/burdensome and potentially restrictive to students' tertiary institution course selection or switch.

***RQ3: To what extent do Civic Education and trade subjects align with university admission requirements and support students' career aspirations?***

**Table 4: Alignment of Civic Education and Trade Subjects with Admission Requirements**

Statement/Item	Mean
1 Civic Education is relevant to university admission requirements	2.01
2 Trade subjects are relevant to university admission requirements	2.36
3 Civic Education prepares students for responsible participation in society beyond school	2.24
4 Trade subjects provide practical skills that enhance students' career readiness	3.01
5 Knowledge gained via Civic-Education contributes to students' long-term career aspirations	2.44

Statement/Item	Mean
6 Trade subjects support students in developing entrepreneurial ventures after secondary school	2.71
7 The skills learned in trade subjects are applicable in real-life situations/work environments	2.83
8 Civic Education and trade subjects positively influence students' career aspirations/development	2.46

0-2.49= Does Not Align 2.50=Does Align

The findings from the table clearly reveal unwavering differences in stakeholders' perceptions of Civic Education and trade subjects in regard to tertiary institutions or university admission requirements, as well as students' career aspirations, with 2.50 considered as the benchmark for decision making. Civic Education recorded low mean scores across most items, suggesting that stakeholders generally do not perceive it as relevant to university admission or career progression. Specifically, the mean score of 2.01 for its relevance to university admission requirements indicates strong disagreement, reflecting the reality that Civic Education is rarely prioritised in tertiary admission criteria. Similarly, the perception that Civic Education prepares students for responsible participation in society beyond school recorded a mean of 2.24, while its contribution to students' long-term career aspirations had a mean of 2.44, both below the benchmark. These results suggest that stakeholders view Civic Education as having limited tangible impact on students' academic advancement and career outcomes, despite its intended civic and moral objectives.

In contrast, trade subjects were perceived more positively, particularly in relation to career readiness and practical application. Stakeholders agreed that trade subjects provide practical skills that enhance students' career readiness (Mean = 3.01), support entrepreneurial development after secondary school (Mean = 2.71), and equip students with skills applicable to real-life situations and work environments (Mean = 2.83). The mean scores above the 2.50 benchmark show that respondents recognise and accept the role of Civic-Education and trade subjects in promoting employability, self-reliance, and alternative career pathways beyond formal university education. However, the mean score for their relevance to university admission requirements (2.36) was below the minimum

benchmark. This implies that, despite the fact that trade subjects are valued for social fittings and related practical outcomes, they are still not considered as significantly enhancing students' chances of gaining admission into tertiary institutions or switching their courses at will.

By and large, the whole perception that Civic-Education and trade-subjects have a positive influence on students' career aspirations and professional development recorded a mean mark of below average (2.46), which is slightly below the acceptable benchmark. Thus, indicating a moderate but insufficient endorsement of their combined impact on students' future careers. These findings connote that, even though trade subjects are appreciated for their practical and entrepreneurial benefits, both Civic Education and trade subjects suffer a great misalignment with university or admission requirements, limiting their value overall. Consequently, stakeholders appear to support these subjects more for life skills and employability rather than for academic progression into higher education.

## **Discussion**

The decision benchmark, the findings reveal that stakeholders' perceptions of the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations are mixed, with noticeably stronger support for trade subjects than for Civic Education. Stakeholders agreed that trade subjects are essential for equipping students with practical and entrepreneurial skills relevant to the labour market, as reflected in high mean scores. This perception aligns with existing literature, which emphasises that vocational and trade-oriented education enhances employability, self-reliance, and economic productivity, particularly in developing economies (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2019). Also, since the stakeholders acknowledged that Civic Education improves students' civic awareness and sense of responsibility, supporting earlier studies that highlight the role of civic learning in fostering democratic values, citizenship competence, and social cohesion, this is in alignment with Torney-Purta et al. (2010). However, despite recognising these benefits, stakeholders showed limited support for making Civic Education compulsory in external examinations, suggesting a preference for curriculum integration rather than high-stakes assessment. This means that Civic Education and trade subjects should be encouraged to

enhance skills and civil development, but should not be allowed to affect students' external examinations, given that the students would not be using or needing them for further academic purposes.

Contrariwise, perceptions regarding the compulsory enforcement of these subjects through external examinations were largely negative. Stakeholders disagreed that Civic Education should be compulsory for all candidates and were unconvinced about its role in promoting national unity through examination mandates. This scepticism mirrors findings from Nigerian education policy studies, which argue that overburdening external examination syllabi with non-core subjects can dilute academic focus and strain already limited instructional resources (Ajayi & Alabi, 2018; WAEC, 2020). Furthermore, despite acknowledging the value of trade subjects, respondents expressed reservations about their inclusion in external examinations, possibly due to challenges related to standardisation, assessment of practical competencies, and inadequate infrastructure in schools. These concerns reinforce arguments in the literature that vocational subjects require context-specific, skill-based assessment frameworks rather than uniform external examination formats (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018). This means that emphasis on civic education and trade subjects should be on ensuring that learners acquire all the skills they need while in school and with internal examinations, not at the expense of external examinations and career-related subjects, in case they later want to switch their careers.

Additionally, stakeholders perceived the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trades subjects as academically burdensome and potentially restrictive to students' educational progression. High mean scores indicate agreement that these subjects increase students' workload, reduce time for core subjects, induce stress, and limit flexibility in choosing tertiary courses aligned with career goals. Similar findings have been reported in studies on curriculum overload in secondary education, where excessive compulsory subjects negatively affect students' academic performance and preparedness for university admission (Okebukola, 2014; OECD, 2020). Nonetheless, stakeholders did not believe that poor performance in these subjects significantly diminishes students' academic confidence, suggesting resilience among learners. By and large, Civic Education and trade subjects generally contribute meaningfully to social development, civic competence, and

career readiness. Stakeholders view their compulsory inclusion in external examinations as misaligned with university admission priorities, advocating instead for flexible integration that balances career choices and the academic rigor as well as practical and civic outcomes. Consequently, there is a need for a balance or redirection towards ensuring trade subjects become part of the admission requirement or making it optional for the students in their external examinations, as is the case with the WAEC 2025/2026 academic session.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that while stakeholders recognise the valuable contributions of both Civic Education and trade subjects to students' development, their support is stronger for trade subjects due to their practical relevance and direct linkage to employability and economic empowerment. Stakeholders appreciate that trade subjects equip learners with hands-on skills that enhance self-reliance and labour market readiness, consistent with global educational perspectives that advocate vocational training as a driver of national development. Civic Education is also acknowledged as essential in fostering civic awareness, democratic values, and responsible citizenship; however, stakeholders appear to prefer its continued presence within the curriculum rather than its enforcement as a compulsory examination subject.

Conversely, the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations is largely perceived as burdensome and misaligned with students' academic and career aspirations. Stakeholders expressed concerns that such compulsion increases academic workload, strains limited school resources, and complicates assessment, particularly for skill-based trade subjects that require practical, context-specific evaluation frameworks. These reservations suggest that while the subjects are fundamentally beneficial, their current examination-based enforcement may not be the most effective strategy. Therefore, a flexible and supportive integration model that balances academic demands with practical and civic learning outcomes is recommended to maximise their educational value without compromising students' academic focus and progression.

## Recommendations

The study recommended, among others, that;

1. Since the study found limited stakeholders' support for the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education and trade subjects in external examinations, educational authorities should reduce or not make compulsory their mandatory status in external examinations and allow them to function primarily as curriculum-based subjects assessed through school-based examinations and or continuous evaluation.
2. Given the strong positive stakeholders' perceptions of trade subjects in equipping students with practical and entrepreneurial skills, these subjects should be retained and strengthened for skills and employability outcomes within the school curriculum, and emphasis should be more on hands-on training rather than mere external examinations.
3. Since findings revealed that Civic Education contributes to civic awareness and social values and or responsibility, with limited value to university admission, it should be taught and assessed as a value-oriented subject focused on citizenship development rather than as a high-stakes external examination subject.
4. Since the study findings revealed that the compulsory inclusion increases workload, stress, and affects performance in core subjects, curriculum planners should streamline subject requirements to allow students flexibility to prioritise subjects relevant to their academic and career goals.
5. Align Subject Requirements with Tertiary Admission and Career Pathways: Because findings of the study revealed weak alignment with university admission requirements and restricted course choice, education stakeholders should better align Civic Education and trade subjects with tertiary admission policies and clearly define their role in academic and vocational progression.

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