

The Practice of Integrity Within the University

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the practice of integrity within the university and its relationship to university programs, faculty, and community. Integrity is framed within the construct of the university's social contract with the community. Examining integrity as occurring in faculty actions, programs, and the university's relationship to the community demonstrates the vibrant nature of organizational behavior through interdependent relationships within the university and in the university's relationship to the community. True stories are used to demonstrate the complex nature of organizational integrity and the difficulty the university and its members have aligning espoused values with theories-in-use. Aligning espoused values with theories-in-use requires a commitment to ethical action and integrity to fulfill the tenets of the university's social contract.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article étudie comment s'exerce la probité à l'université et ses relations avec les programmes universitaires, les facultés, et la communauté en général. La probité est enchâssée dans la structure du contrat social de l'université et de la communauté. Considérer la probité comme se produisant dans les actions de la faculté, dans les programmes et dans les relations de l'université avec la communauté, démontre la nature vibrante du comportement organisationnel à travers les relations interdépendantes à l'intérieur de l'université et à travers les relations de l'université et de toute la communauté environnante. Des témoignages ont l'habitude de démontrer la nature complexe de l'intégrité organisationnelle et la difficulté que l'université et ses membres ont d'en épouser les valeurs en

s'alignant sur les théories en usage. Épouser l'alignement sur les valeurs actuelles nécessite un engagement dans une éthique et dans le respect intégral des principes du contrat social de l'université.

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether ethical standards in universities are achievable without personal, institutional, and program integrity. Ethics and integrity shape human and organizational behavior. Ethics examines moral principles, codes of right and wrong, social values and laws, and moral practice. Integrity links beliefs and principles to actions. An institution or person operates with integrity only when the institution or person acts ethically.

Theory of Action

Argyris and Schön (1974) speak of people and organizations as having a theory of action. A theory of action has two primary components: an espoused theory and a theory-in-use. According to Argyris (1991), "Espoused theory of action is based on principles and precepts that fit our intellectual background and commitments" (p. 282). An espoused theory is what we say we believe. We associate espoused theories with higher ideals such as treating people fairly and equally, advocating for the poor, and promoting equal access to positions. In essence, espoused theories act as a moral compass. The theory-in-use is associated with our actual behavior. Espoused theories determine what we want to see in terms of our behavior; they actually override our recognition of our actual behavior. To the degree that we create an alignment between our espoused theories and our theories-in-use, we act with consistency, but not necessarily integrity.

The concept of espoused theories and theories-in-use can serve as a conceptual framework in examining the relationship between ethics and integrity in higher education. Organizations operate with espoused theories and theories-in-use. They may at times not be conscious of either; yet, they will always refer to espoused theories to explain and rationalize their actions. Bolman and Deal (1991) state: "The question is not whether organizations will have politics, but what kind of politics they will have" (p. 223). If we

posit, in a moral society, that people and organizations seek to live in harmony and contribute to the common good, then we can frame espoused theories as being the theoretical underpinnings of theories-in-use that contribute to the common good.

We speak of the university as being an organization whose primary purpose is to contribute to the common good. The Commission on Financing Higher Education stated: "They [colleges and universities] grew up to meet the needs of the country. They reflect the particular interests of different communities" (Delattre, 1988, p. 28). This concept is generally accepted by those in higher education as well as the public. Citing Immerwahr (1999) in a study conducted by the Public Agenda for the Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, National Center, *Taking Responsibility: Leader's Expectations of Higher Education*: "Our society has great expectations of higher education. ... Higher education's job is not just to train students, but to contribute and answer the questions we face about society, quality of life and health" (p. 2). The ethical nature of the university always seeks the common good and expresses itself through its integrity in the alignment of its theories of action and their contribution to the common good.

Many universities have codes of ethics that correspond to their espoused theories. Most university administrators, however, rarely reference the university's espoused theories as long as the independent actions of the members of the university do not come to public attention. In effect, acting with integrity or alignment of espoused theories and theories-in-use is important as long as it serves a political function. Ironically, the university has a public trust to act with integrity; it is fundamental to its mission and success. Pelikan (1992) states: "The university as institution, employer, way-payer, and property-owner contributes to its local society and in turn depends upon it: if either of these partners is sick, the other suffers as well" (p. 138). It is in the interaction of the university with its members and surrounding environment that the university has the opportunity to operate with organizational integrity.

Integrity

Integrity relates to wholeness. It requires the integration of one's personal life with his or her public life, and it is sustained through the ethical relationships within both in ways that are mutually beneficial. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, (1985) state:

In short, we have never been, and still are not, a collection of private individuals who, except for a conscious contract to create a minimal government, have nothing in common. Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of, because of the traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us to know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another. (p. 282)

We argue that personal, institutional, and program integrity is at the heart of the ethical relationship that the professor and university have toward the community and each other. Without personal integrity, trust is absent. Without institutional integrity, we cannot rely on the organization. Without program integrity, the university cannot deliver what it promises. In essence, integrity makes ethics authentic by establishing a climate of trust. Integrity becomes the public expression of what constitutes the private character of an individual or organization. People acting with integrity promote trust among members of a family, school, organizations, and society. Organizations acting with integrity create the basis for public trust.

Characteristics that comprise integrity include courage, honesty, responsibility, accountability, justice, openness, self-respect, humility, being one, being whole, knowing one's fundamental commitments, persistent adherence to one's fundamental commitments, and defending one's fundamental commitments (Hinman, 1999; Integrity First, 1999). We recognize these characteristics in persons and organizations with integrity. Some characteristics may be missing in a specific act; however, if it were necessary for that characteristic to be present to make the act one of integrity, it would be present.

Karen Horney (1945) using the Buddhist definition of integrity to express the importance of wholeness in the healthy human personality states:

Sincerity, that is not deceiving, means putting forth one's whole being, technically known as the whole being in action in which nothing is kept in reserve, nothing is expressed; under disguise, nothing goes to waste. When a person lives like this, he is said to be a golden haired lion, he is the symbol of virility, sincerity, wholeheartedness; he is divinely human. (p. 163)

Some see this sense of wholeness representing a person acting consistently and in accord with basic commitments and a fundamental identity (Hinman, 1999). Others relate wholeness to one's total identity (Wakins, 1998). Chambers (1952) expresses this wholeness as integrated in every perspective of a person's life. He states: "A man whose life and faith are so completely one that when the challenge comes to step out and testify for his faith, he does so disregarding all risks, accepting all consequences" (p. 5). In essence, integrity represents a sense of wholeness in the person or institution's actions. This sense of wholeness has a set of core values at its center that find expression in mutuality and the consistent application of universally recognized principles toward people, environment, and events.

We fail to act with integrity when our espoused theories and theories-in-use are misaligned. For example, the university has an espoused theory that emotional abuse is wrong. When a student brings a complaint against a popular and well-respected coach, the university sidetracks the charges protecting the coach. In this case, the university has lost its inner moral compass. People and institutions with integrity access an ever-present inner moral compass that leads to building not destroying, interconnecting not fragmenting, and communion not isolation. This view reflects the modern ethical worldview that considers the world as still growing and evolving. Society and its institutions are marked by continuous progressive growth where change is ever apparent (Rebore, 2001).

Ethics governs this inner moral compass; integrity is the map that institutions and people use as a guide through life. In this

sense, ethics and integrity are inseparable. An organization cannot act with integrity if its actions lack ethical authenticity. In the organization, integrity is expressed through the synergistic relationship existing between members and the organization. This synergistic relationship is expressed as the members operationally put into practice the university's espoused theories. When the observed theories-in-use of the membership does not reflect the organization's espoused theories, fragmentation occurs. Integrity cannot survive in this environment. In effect, the fragmented organization creates an environment that cannot sustain integrity (Bohm & Edwards, 1991).

Application of Integrity

The public university as an organization has evolved and in its evolvment, confusion exists as to its primary role (Barnett, 1990). On the one hand, traditionalists may refer to Newman (1976) and believe that "a university may be considered with reference either to its students or to its studies; and that all knowledge is a whole and the separate science parts of one" (p. 99). In this sense, the mission of the university refers to the transmission of knowledge and scholarly inquiry (Kerr, 1994). On the other hand, Green and Hayward (1997) assert that even in the face of faculty and traditionalist resistance, the university has changed considerably during the last quarter century. These researchers believe that the prominent themes of mass education, distance learning, and life-long learning forced the university to broaden the scope of its mission. The changes were not isolated to curriculum and degrees. A prominent change occurred in the way that members of the university, faculty, and administrators, viewed their roles.

According to the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University (1998), the change in the perceived and actual role of the university resulted in a sense of fragmentation where professors are more aligned with colleagues who share similar interests than with colleagues who share the same building. This is not surprising. According to organizational researcher Edgar Schein of MIT, there are three distinct cultures found in every organization throughout the

world: executive, engineer, and operator (Schein, 1997). Calabrese and Shoho (2000) postulate that these three cultures exist in higher education. As a result, allegiance in these cultures is given, not to the institution, but to colleagues in and external to the university who belong to the same culture. Professors of educational administration, for example, feel a stronger affiliation to professional organizations and colleagues who are affiliated with educational administration more so than toward colleagues in their college or university. The university, however, has never been isolated from the community. Franklin (1959) nearly a half-century ago, argued that in the United States university attendance had taken on a populist trend. Franklin stated: "By the twentieth century the people of the United States were becoming increasingly committed to the proposition that the opportunity to secure a higher education was an important feature of a democratic society" (p. 68). This trend accelerated during that period. As a result, the university and its function are more closely related to the local, regional, national, and international community. What now exists is a symbiotic relationship between the university and the community; both components need each other to survive in a rapidly changing world. Bellah et al. (1985) states: "Human beings and their societies are deeply interrelated, and the actions we take have enormous ramifications for the lives of others" (p. 284). Because of this relationship, we can speak of the social contract that the university has with its community.

The University's Social Contract with the Community

The university's social contract with the community is the university's primary reason for existence. To the extent that the university lives up to its social contract, the university has integrity. It follows that the university and its faculty address the needs of the population through program offerings. As faculty deliver programs to the public, they form relationships with students who invest material, intellectual, and emotional resources. The relationship formed between faculty and student is essential to the university's mission. Hence, we identify three perspectives of integrity within the university. The perspective of integrity presented by the faculty member; the perspective of

integrity in the university's relationships with students, faculty, community, and governing agencies; and the perspective of integrity in the alignment of university programs to community needs and expectations.

The following sections explore the three perspectives of integrity. Each section has two vignettes that represent each perspective of integrity. The people and universities are fictitious but the events are true.

The First Perspective of Integrity:

The Faculty Member

The university professor has a specific duty to fulfill the role assigned by the university. Traditionally, the professor's role is centered in scholarly inquiry, teaching, and providing service to the university and community. Recent criticism of the professorate focuses on professors who commit nearly all of their time to scholarly inquiry and its contribution to the professor's field rather than focusing on teaching. In the United States, this has led to a challenge of traditional tenure policies. States such as Arizona, Massachusetts, and Texas have post-tenure review policies in place. Legislation is determining the role of the professor. In spite of the legislative challenge to define the role of the professor, the junior faculty member, however, will likely earn tenure and promotion only through focusing on scholarly inquiry.

The faculty member compromises his or her integrity to meet professional role demands. For example, when publications, grants, and related research without consideration for teaching drive tenure, promotion, and pay formulas, the university ignores the needs of students and places the faculty member in a position to choose one path over another. When faculty members work in this type of institution, how can they act with integrity without great peril to their career?

Situation One

Professor Jill Sparks teaches educational leadership at State University. Jill understands that the quality of her annual

evaluation directly relates to the number and quality of publications and the amount of grant money secured each year. Although teaching is a consideration in her evaluation, Jill knows that as long as she keeps students from complaining and gets above average student evaluations, the department chairperson ignores her teaching quality.

Jill manipulates this situation. She concentrates on her research making sure that she has a significant number of publications, she connects with national organizations to fulfill service obligations, and she makes sure that her students know they will receive A's if they do the minimum work. Students do not complain about boring classes or her absence when she attends a national meeting as long as the students receive an 'A'. This situation places Jill in a Catch 22. She feels guilty about the marginal quality of her teaching. She knows, however, that merit guidelines drive her success at the university. In moments of self-awareness, Jill realizes she is acting without integrity. In the end, she rapidly justifies her actions by casting attention on her merit awards.

Situation Two

Associate Professor Mary Carlton, while grading papers, had an intuitive feeling that the paper she was reading was similar to a paper she graded earlier. She compared both papers. She discovered substantial portions that were identical. Students knew they did not have permission to jointly submit papers. She knew she had to confront the students to act consistently with her values. Ms. Carlton met with the students. The students acknowledged their collaboration, but felt they had done nothing wrong. They demanded that she mark the papers as submitted. She told the students she had no choice but to charge the students with academic dishonesty. The professor's personal integrity was at stake if she ignored the situation. The students complained to the Dean. The Dean suggested the professor drop the matter, since both students had an excellent record. Professor Carlton ignored the Dean's request, even though she was risking the Dean's displeasure.

Two professors, in different situations, respond differently to situations demanding integrity. One professor responds by

rationalizing her actions. The other responds by acting consistently with her inner moral compass.

The Second Perspective of Integrity: The University

The university's integrity also focuses on its relationship with the community. According to Johnstone (1997),

All institutions, public or private, research university or undergraduate college, are expected to contribute to their communities and to be responsible institutional citizens Institutions of higher education are also expected to be major institutional players in the social agendas of promoting greater racial, class, and gender equity. (p. 139)

This expectation, as suggested by Johnstone, implies that a social contract exists between the university and the community. If the university exists to serve the needs of the community then it has a social contract with its members of the community. The RAND Corporation (1999) advises that the university's social contract relates to its ability to establish ideals for academic quality and right of entry for its constituents.

The university's social contract with the community addresses the community's needs. Trust is inherent in the social contract between the university and the community. The higher the levels of trust by the public, the greater the degree of accountability with the university. In effect, the public trusts the university to address the public good. Moore (1972) says: "A great many of the university's present and severe difficulties arise from the fact that it has no agreed-upon ideals, no established purpose" (p. 92). Moore's criticism, given more than a quarter century ago, still applies. A myriad of examples, however, demonstrate that the university, like other private, social, and public organizations ignore the tenets of its social contract and often act with a high degree of freedom and autonomy of action neglecting its responsibility toward the community.

Situation One

State University is the only public higher education institution in a large metropolitan area. The population that State University serves is primarily poor and minority. The administrators at

State University commit the institution to a vigorous growth plan. Unfortunately, the state legislature does not support the university administrator's plan and fails to approve the needed growth resources. The university administrators undermine the legislator's intent by devising a plan to have the students agree to special fees added to their tuition. The administrators worked with student leaders to secure support for adding new buildings. University administrators manipulated student leaders into endorsing the proposal by promising that a new student wellness center would be among the building projects. The university held a student referendum when the majority of students were not on campus. Less than two percent of the students voted. The student referendum passed and the university proceeded with its expansion plans.

Situation Two

Two professors believe that the university needs to improve program offerings to students in chemical engineering. The professors, working with community leaders, private sector engineering firms, students, and faculty, constructed a new curriculum and degree program addressing student needs and the desires of potential employers. The professors' proposal encountered staunch resistance because the proposal was inconsistent with the traditional format of university programs. The courses were markedly different; the degree requirements inconsistent with traditional degree requirements, and the proposed teaching strategies diverged from traditional formats. The Dean aligned with faculty having philosophical differences with the proposal. They stymied the proposal until the two professors conformed the proposal to fit the traditional university approach. Local students enrolled in the new program and engineering firms in the community, however, did not trust the program and continued to seek employees from other institutions.

In both situations, we need to examine commitment, core values, trust, and mission to determine if the university's actions were consistent with its goals and mission. Derek Bok (1990) says:

The true mission of the university would be to nurture a healthy balance between applied intellectual pursuits and

the search for truth and meaning for their own sake. The central purpose of (professional schools) is to prepare students for specialized careers and to investigate problems that practitioners have to confront in their working lives. (p. 10)

In the first situation, the university acted with greater commitment to its own goals and not the needs of the community. Even if administrators argue that the building met the needs of the community, they had to consider the priority of needs held by the community. This university failed to understand the terms of its social contract with the community. Part of that social contract included the facilitation of access to higher education. Therefore, it has to take into account the community member's ability to pay.

In the second case, the internal mechanisms of the university thwarted two professors trying to address community needs. Vroom (1984) states: "The university is organized anarchy. Its goals are either vague or in dispute and are of little use in guiding the choices that must be made" (p. 131). The community's interests were ignored; tradition and conformity to practice took precedence over community needs. Integrity is lacking when special interest groups use political power and influence to maintain an advantage to the detriment of the community. An environment that promotes its self-serving interests must question its integrity. The irony is that the problem is systemic and seldom are systemic organizational policies questioned because potential questioning raises the possibility of threat or embarrassment (Argyris, 1999).

The Third Perspective of Integrity: The Program

Program integrity is tightly bound to the social contract the university has with the community. Ernest Boyer and Arthur Levine (1990) in their book, *A Quest for Common Learning*, refer to the university's social contract in determining the university's curriculum. They stated:

All societies, argued John Locke, are bound together by a tacit social contract, a compact among individuals who cede a portion of their autonomy for what is defined as the

greater good. In exchange for this concession, every citizen expects certain services, specified protections, and agreed-upon rights and freedoms. (p.18)

This social contract, as it relates to program has three components: how well the academic program meets the needs of the community, the standards inherent within the program, and the competence of the professor. In effect, the program must deliver what it promises to deliver by meeting the community's needs. For example, an urban university in a high tech setting may offer programs in forestry; yet, forestry programs may not meet the immediate economic needs of the community. Alternatively, the university may offer a teacher preparation program in a large urban setting, home to many immigrant communities, and ignore course work in inclusive teaching practices for language for minority students.

In cases where the program meets the needs of the community, program integrity demands that the standards inherent in the program demand quality work from students. This requires the cooperation of the professor. The standards set for the program may be high; if the professor lacks competence, however, then the program cannot deliver what it promises to students and the community. Furthermore, the university must be careful in identifying community-based needs. Often times, community-based needs are suspect to value-codes put forth by those in power within the community. For example, what does it mean if community leaders respond to a poor community by offering primarily vocational training within the high school or the community college aimed at low paying jobs with little, if any, economic security? Although this responds to the immediate needs of the community for job training, it leaves the community without job opportunities that provide long-term economic security.

Situation One

State University offers a program to prepare principals to lead the urban schools in its community. Ninety percent of the students who attend this program work in the urban environment. Only one course, however, deals specifically with urban schools. The other courses, generic in nature, fulfill the

requirements of the state education agency. Students who enroll in this program receive a degree and certification, and jobs in local school districts. They do not receive practical training to prepare them to lead urban schools. Their university education was inadequate; they must learn through experience. The university continues this practice even though the urban school district continues to be plagued with low achievement scores, episodes of school violence, and high dropout rates. Local public school and community leaders feel frustrated because the university remains steadfast in the type of program it offers and the school district cannot find qualified principals to lead their schools.

Situation Two

State University offers a program to train counselors for work in schools and other social agencies. The program meets the needs of the community. The standards adopted by the faculty conform to the highest standards set by national organizations. The faculty have a recognized curriculum although they operate with minimal academic standards. During the past five years, no student failed any course and more than ninety percent of all student grades were 'A's.' These students graduate from the university as certified counselors. They eventually work in the community.

In the first case, program integrity is lacking since the program does not address the needs of the community. The program addresses the overall requirements of the state education agency and uses this as a rationalization that it is addressing student needs. Program integrity requires movement beyond basic requirements and identification of the community's immediate needs. It requires collaboration between the university and community so that the needs of the community are met without the university surrendering its autonomy.

In the second case, both program and standards meet the requirements for integrity. Yet, faculty members fail to maintain program integrity. This is analogous to the manufacturer of surgical tools who uses the highest quality raw materials, maintains the highest standards for manufacturing, and fails to

hold workers responsible for making quality surgical instruments. The result is that the surgeon in the operating room has an inferior product when operating on the patient. We see this in the second case where graduates from the university work as counselors in the community. There is no guarantee that any of these counselors are ready to work within the community and provide quality service based on community expectations. Hence, there is no program integrity.

Connecting the Three Perspectives of Integrity

Each scenario finds its inspiration in a set of university expectations lacking integrity, a set of programs complicit in those expectations, and a set of faculty within those universities who lack integrity by failing to reflect on how ingrained systemic behavior perpetuates a set of questionable ethics devoid of integrity. Thus, it seems that organizational integrity as witnessed in actions driven by governing beliefs and values, exists in a larger context, subject to multiple interpretations. For us, this raises the question: How do we, in the university, move beyond perspective and respond to the web of identities and relationships from which integrity-based stimuli emerge?

It is easy to identify the lack of integrity. It is more difficult to discover people and organizations that consistently exemplify integrity. Yet, there is the constant demand for higher levels of integrity of public institutions and those who serve in public institutions. This call to higher levels of integrity is no less than that demanded of private sector organizations.

The mission of public institutions and their members should be to promote policies and practices that encourage, mandate, and monitor integrity. It is the individual efforts of each member of the organization to create and sustain organizational integrity. When the organizational climate is such that it does not promote integrity, the chances increase that the occurrence of integrity will be rare. Even in these climates, however, integrity finds ways to express itself. Professors and administrators, with great risk to careers, find the courage to challenge existing practices. There is a path out of this dilemma. This path concentrates on

organizational awareness and the creation of environmental integrity.

Environmental Integrity

Environmental integrity begins by making integrity a primary university purpose. Because the university has a basic reflective nature, it creates and sustains a deep conversation among its members as to what it means to be dedicated to organizational integrity. In a sense, the university becomes keenly aware of its espoused theory, its beliefs and values, and the links of the espoused theory to its theories-in-use (Argyris, 1999). Conversations regarding espoused theories and theories-in-use need to take place throughout the university. These conversations lead to greater faculty and administrator dialogue regarding the place of the university in the greater context of the community.

Defining Values

It is essential for faculty and administrators to define values inherent within the university and within the faculty's practice. This form of value clarification is institutional, programmatic, and personal. The identification of shared values at the organizational level links members within the university to each other. The identification of programmatic values creates an awareness of the relationship of university to the community and the faculty member's place in delivering the program. The identification of personal values makes one more aware of how he or she is supposed to act. This reflective step links espoused theories to theories-in-use.

Establishing Standards for Teaching, Research, and Service

Environmental integrity linked to a core set of values encourages the establishment of standards for teaching, research, and service. These standards are consistent with the demands of the profession, commitment to the scholarly nature of the university, and mindful of the needs of the community. It may be that the university has to recognize that faculty can and should have

different roles. For example, some faculty are primarily teachers and others primarily researchers. The university must review its policies of reward so that these policies promote integrity and achievement. Both integrity and achievement can be mutually inclusive events.

Linking Integrity to University Policies

Barriers to integrity exist at all levels in all organizations. Often these barriers burrow themselves in policies that met a need in one context but are inapplicable to new contexts. These policies, for example, may deal with merit pay, faculty evaluation by students, or grievances. Wherever a policy exists that encourages a faculty member, administrator, student, or staff member to act without integrity the university and its members must consider the elimination or alteration of the policy.

Seeking Feedback Regarding Integrity

Any commitment to organizational integrity requires that the university construct mechanisms for honest and direct feedback. Many public organizations have formal units that seek feedback regarding program integrity. The university needs to construct a similar classification to determine the viability of each program and measure compliance to the social contract the university has with the community. This alignment is central to integrity and relates directly to the university's survival. Attaining integrity is the work of each member of the university. To act with integrity takes a personal act of courage by each member. It often requires the member to act alone, to risk career opportunities, and to challenge authority.

Summary

Integrity always speaks to wholeness; it does not embrace fragmentation. As such, it exists primarily as the relationship that each member of the university has with each other, the university, and community. Integrity is the relationship between the people and their chosen leaders. This integrity-driven relationship is built on mutual trust and commitment in solidarity. In essence, the integrity of the university rests in the

integrity of its administrators, faculty, and staff. It relies on members within the university to refrain from acting in protective self-interests and to seek generative ways to operate inclusively to benefit of the entire community. Maslow (1971) spoke about the need to balance autonomy with homonomy or the struggle to balance one's ego needs and to involve other people in one's life. This balance is true in the self-actualized person and it is true in the self-actualized organization. The self-actualized organization, by definition, sustains organizational integrity through its people, programs, policies, and structure.

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