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SAFETY AND SECURITY OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION INTO ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN IMO STATE

NWAGBA, OLUCHI MARVELOUS,
Department of Social Science Education, Education Management,
Faculty of Education, Imo State University, Owerri
marvelousnwagba@gmail.com
08065449212, 09039114990

Abstract

This study investigated safety and security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State. To guide the study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is 1,625 Entrepreneurial staff and 261 ICT staff in the 9 tertiary institutions in Imo State. The researchers drew a sample of 479 respondents from 4 sampled tertiary institutions in Imo State. This sample size was determined through Taro Yamane formula using multistage sampling technique. A rating scale constructed by the researchers was titled "Safety and Security Considerations Required for Digital Technology Integration into Entrepreneurial Education Programmes (SSCRDTIEEPS)" was used to elicit information from the respondents. The scale contained 18 items using the 4 point scale options of Highly Required (HR), Moderately Required (MR), Rarely Required (RR) and Not Required (NR). The instrument was validated by 1 research expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and 2 research experts from Department of Social Science Education, all in Imo State University, Owerri. A reliability coefficient value of 0.89 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean statistics and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The result revealed that data security and cybersecurity measures as safety and security considerations are highly required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State. It was recommended among others that tertiary institutions in Imo State should prioritize the implementation of robust data security and cybersecurity measures to safeguard digital technology integration in entrepreneurial education programs, including regular software updates, firewall configuration, and cybersecurity awareness training for students and staff.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Education, Data Security, Digital Technology, Safety and Security, Cybersecurity Measures, Tertiary Education.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education is also referred to as higher education. It is the education received after secondary school from tertiary institutions to meet the educational manpower and development needs of the nation. Tertiary or higher education as emphasized by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), is any education given to an individual after secondary education in formal institution including those running correspondence courses such as the adult education programmes. Tertiary institution is where people acquire advanced training for the purpose of improved workforce and other societal engagements. Every educational system is goal-driven and tertiary institution is no exception. According to Isuku and Emunemu (2019), higher education exercise a direct influence on national productivity, which to a very large extent determines the country's standard of living as well as contribute towards the stimulation of local economy as an engine of growth. However, one of the courses taught in tertiary education institutions that could be capable of driving growth of any given nation is the entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, combining them with management and organization skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth. It is also the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run a business or enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship education according to Godspower, Nmerukini and Duson (2025) is a structured teaching and learning processes aimed at equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to identify business opportunities, innovate, and successfully manage entrepreneurial ventures. It prepares individuals not only to start and grow their own businesses but also to contribute creatively and effectively in various roles within existing organizations. The entrepreneurship world is characterized by innovation and inventions. Entrepreneurship is designed to educate people on skills acquisition and the knowledge needed before taking a decision on embarking on a business venture (Dambo, Godpower & Kire, 2019). Entrepreneurship training programme is a job oriented process (input), where entrepreneurship is the final output. The achievement of the aims and objectives of entrepreneurial education programmes, the need to integrate digital technology becomes very imperative.

Digital technology refers to the use of electronic tools, systems, and platforms that generate, store, process, and communicate information through digital signals, enabling efficient and innovative solutions in various aspects of life. Digital technology according to Oluwakemi (2019) is a broad range of electronic devices, software, and networks that facilitate the creation, management, and exchange of information in digital form, transforming how individuals, organizations, and societies operate and interact. In the context of this study, digital technology

refers to the use of digital tools, platforms, and resources that enable students to develop skills and knowledge in areas such as e-commerce, digital marketing, online business planning, and innovation, preparing them for success in the digital economy. It is a range of digital tools and platforms that support the development of entrepreneurial skills, such as online business simulations, digital prototyping, social media marketing, and e-commerce platforms, allowing students to design, launch, and manage digital ventures (Olanrewaju, Aluko & Akinola, 2023). However, the integration of digital technology into entrepreneurial education programs enhances learning experiences by providing students with practical skills in digital tools and platforms. This integration fosters innovation, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, preparing students for success in the digital economy. When digital technology is integrated into entrepreneurial education programmes, students can develop and launch digital ventures, access global markets, and connect with a wider network of entrepreneurs and mentors. This integration of digital technologies into entrepreneurial education programmes requires some levels of safety and security considerations.

Safety and security is the state of being free from danger or threats; freedom from doubt, anxiety or fear. Safety and security according to Okeke (2019), is something that gives or assures safety. It incorporates measures taken by an organization or government to prevent espionage, sabotage, or attack. It can be measures adopted by a business or home owner to prevent crime, assault, and to prevent an escape. According to Rogers (2019), safety and security can broadly be defined as a means of providing effective levels of protection against pure risk. It is a process used to create a relatively crime free area. The aim of safety security is to assess the vulnerability to risk and thereafter to employ techniques and measures in order to reduce that vulnerability to a reasonable level. Safety and security means different things to different fields of life. In the field of entrepreneurial education programmes refer to the measures and practices put in place to protect students, lecturers, and digital resources from potential risks, threats, and harm, creating a secure environment that fosters innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. In considering safety and security in entrepreneurial education programmes, protecting intellectual property, ensuring data privacy, and preventing cyber threats can never be underestimated. According to Manga (2019), the safety and security measures entrepreneurial education programmes are expected to consider data protection and privacy, cybersecurity measures (e.g., firewalls, antivirus software), cybersecurity measures, secure authentication and access controls, intellectual property protection, online safety and digital citizenship and protection against malware and viruses towards creating a safe and supportive learning environment, free from physical and emotional harm. Based on the foregoing, the safety and security considerations which this study focused on are data security and cybersecurity measures.

Data security refers to the protective measures and protocols implemented to safeguard sensitive student and staff information, ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data, and preventing unauthorized access, theft, or damage. Hsieh and Maritz (2023) assert that data security considerations are crucial when integrating digital technology in schools to protect sensitive student and staff information from unauthorized access, breaches, or cyber

threats. Ensuring data security helps maintain the trust and confidentiality of the school community, while also complying with relevant regulations and laws (Eze, Chinedu-Eze, Okike & Bello, 2020). By prioritizing data security, schools can create a safe and secure digital learning environment that supports the well-being and success of students and lecturers. Empirically, Akinloye (2023) who investigated an analysis of data protection and compliance in Nigeria's educational institutions in private schools found that private schools in Nigeria have a high requirement for data protection and compliance, but currently lack adequate policies, security measures, and practices to effectively safeguard sensitive student and staff data. Similarly, Anthony, Imoke and Imoke (2023) who examined data privacy and security required in Nigeria's online education in Open University found that Open University in Nigeria has a high requirement for robust data privacy and security measures to protect sensitive student information, however, current practices and infrastructure are inadequate to effectively safeguard against cyber threats, data breaches, and unauthorized access.

Cybersecurity refers to the practices, technologies, and processes designed to protect digital assets, networks, and data from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction, ensuring a safe and secure learning environment. It involves the measures taken to safeguard school computer systems, networks, and data from cyber threats, including malware, phishing, and hacking, to protect sensitive information, maintain system integrity, and ensure continuity of educational activities (Ojo & Fagbemi, 2022). Adeyemi and Bello (2023) emphasize that implementing cybersecurity measures in schools protects sensitive student and staff data from unauthorized access and cyber threats. Effective cybersecurity measures also help prevent disruptions to educational activities, ensuring continuity of learning and minimizing downtime. In a related study, Igbokwe (2024) who explored level of cyber security practices needed in the era of digitalization in secondary schools in Nigeria found that secondary schools in Nigeria have a high need for robust cybersecurity practices, including regular software updates, firewall protection, antivirus software, and cybersecurity awareness training, to mitigate the increasing risks of cyber threats and protect sensitive data in the era of digitalization. Udumukwu and Nwali (2024) examined cybersecurity and privacy in federal university libraries in Nigeria found that the University libraries require improved cybersecurity infrastructure, the introduction of comprehensive staff and user training programs, and the fostering of collaborative efforts between universities, governmental agencies, and private sector partners to strengthen security practices.

The integration of digital technologies towards achieving the lofty aims and objectives of entrepreneurial education programmes cannot be overstated. These digital technologies such as learning management systems, online collaboration tools, virtual business simulation software, digital marketing tools, e-commerce platforms, video conferencing tools, online resources and libraries as well as data analytics tools are very indispensable in entrepreneurial education programmes. It is therefore expected that safety and security considerations are put into place to safeguard these digital technologies towards championing entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions. Several studies have been conducted on safety and security considerations in the areas of online education, private schools, secondary schools

and university libraries (Manga, 2019; Rogers; 2019; Okeke; 2019; Hsieh & Maritz, 2023; Eze, Chinedu-Eze, Okike & Bello, 2020; Akinloye, 2023; Anthony, Imoke & Imoke, 2023; Ojo & Fagbemi, 2022; Adeyemi & Bello, 2023; Igbokwe, 2024; Udumukwu & Nwali, 2024) without any study or emphasis on entrepreneurial educational programmes. An urgent need to bridge this gap is required hence, the need to explore safety and security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

The integration of digital technologies into entrepreneurial education programs in tertiary institutions has become increasingly important in today's digital age. Digital technologies offer a wide range of benefits, including enhanced learning experiences, improved access to information, and increased opportunities for collaboration and innovation in entrepreneurial education programs. However, despite the potential benefits of digital technologies, their integration into entrepreneurial education programs in tertiary institutions in Imo State has been hindered by safety and security concerns. One of the major challenges facing the integration of digital technologies into entrepreneurial education programs in tertiary institutions in Imo State is the incidence of theft and vandalization of digital technology tools. Many schools have reported cases of stolen laptops, tablets, and other digital devices, which has resulted in significant financial losses. These security challenges have made it difficult for schools to fully explore the potential benefits of digital technologies in entrepreneurial education programs. Authorities of tertiary institutions in Imo State have tried several measures to curb the high level of insecurities in schools. These measures have included the installation of security cameras, employment of security personnel, and implementation of access control systems. However, despite these efforts, the incidence of theft and vandalization of digital technology tools remains a major concern. This study is therefore put in question form: what are the data security and cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State? Providing answer to the question becomes the thrust of this study.

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State?

2. What are the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State?

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The use of descriptive survey design allows the researchers to collect and describe data in a systematic manner. The justification for adopting descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2015) is that it studied a large group by collecting a representative sample to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of the variables. The population of the study is 1,625 Entrepreneurial staff and 261 ICT staff in the 9 tertiary institutions in Imo State. The researchers drew a sample of 479 respondents from 4 sampled tertiary institutions in Imo State. This sample size was determined through Taro Yamane formula using multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, the population was divided into clusters and some clusters were selected. At the second stage, those selected clusters were divided into smaller clusters. Same process was repeated until the last step. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the 479 administrators to ensure equal representation. A rating scale constructed by the researchers was titled "Safety and Security Considerations Required for Digital Technology Integration into Entrepreneurial Education Programmes (SSCRDTIEEPS)" was used to elicit information from the respondents. The scale contained 18 items using the 4 point scale options of Highly Required (HR), Moderately Required (MR), Rarely Required (RR) and Not Required (NR). The instrument was validated by 1 research expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and 2 research experts from Department of Social Science Education, all in Imo State University, Owerri. A reliability coefficient value of 0.89 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. For administration of 479 copies of the rating scale, on-the-spot collection was made by the researchers and three research assistants which ensured 100 per cent retrieval rate. Mean statistics and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What are the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes. Where N̄ = Sample size, X = Mean score, and SD = Standard Deviation.

S/N	Item	Entrepreneurial Staff n = 321			ICT Staff n = 158		
	Data security considerations required for technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes include:	**X̄**	**SD**	**Remark**	**X̄**	**SD**	**Remark**
1	Data encryption is required to protect sensitive student and staff information in entrepreneurial education programs	2.94	0.80	Highly Required	3.02	0.76	Highly Required
2	Firewall protection is necessary to prevent unauthorized access to school networks and digital resources	3.06	0.91	Highly Required	2.92	0.89	Highly Required
3	Secure authentication methods are required to protect access to digital tools and resources	3.00	0.88	Highly Required	2.97	0.87	Highly Required
4	An incident response plan is necessary to respond to and manage cybersecurity incidents	1.99	0.62	Not Required	2.56	0.79	Not Required
5	Antivirus software is required to protect digital devices and systems from malware and viruses	3.31	0.87	Highly Required	3.27	0.88	Highly Required
6	Regular data backup is necessary to ensure the availability of critical data in case of system failure or data loss.	3.13	0.91	Highly Required	3.21	0.90	Highly Required
7	Cybersecurity awareness training is required for students and staff to prevent cyber threats	2.88	0.88	Highly Required	2.84	0.86	Highly Required
8	Access control measures (e.g., role-based access) are necessary to limit access to sensitive data and digital resources.	3.06	0.80	Highly Required	3.09	0.80	Highly Required

9	Network monitoring is required to detect and respond to potential security threats	2.78	0.87	Highly Required	2.81	0.87	Highly Required
10	Regular software updates are necessary to ensure the security and integrity of digital systems	2.58	0.80	Highly Required	2.56	0.79	Highly Required
	Obtained Mean	**28.73**	**8.34**	**Highly Required**	**29.25**	**8.41**	**Highly Required**
	Criterion Mean	**25.00**			**25.00**		
	Average Obtained Mean = 28.98						

Data in Table 1 showed the mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes. The results indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 recorded mean scores above the criterion mean score of 2.50, while only item 4 had mean score below the criterion mean score of 2.50. The analysis was buttressed with the grand mean scores of 28.73 and standard deviation of 8.34 for entrepreneurial staff and 29.25 and standard deviation of 8.41 for ICT staff. The result concluded that data security considerations are highly required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis One:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Table 2: t-test of significant difference between the mean rating score of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes; Where n = Sample size, X = Mean score, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of Freedom, t-cal = t-test calculated, and t-tab = t-test tabulated.

Respondents							
	n	**X**	**S.D**	**df**	**t-cal**	**t-tab**	**Decision**
Entrepreneurial staff	321	28.73	8.34				
ICT staff	158	29.25	8.41	477	0.673	1.96	Accept Ho_4

Data in Table 2 presents an independent sample t-test comparing the mean rating score of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes. The results indicate a non-significant difference (t = 0.673, p = 1.96) between entrepreneurial staff (ES = 28.73) and ICT staff (IS = 29.25) leading to the conclusion that the null hypothesis one (Ho_1) is upheld. The result therefore indicated that there is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the data security considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Research Question Two: What are the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State?

Table 3: Mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes. Where $\bar{N}$ = Sample size, X = Mean score, and SD = Standard Deviation.

S/N	Item	Entrepreneurial Staff n = 321			ICT Staff n = 158		
	The cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes include:	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
11	Protection against malware and viruses is required for cybersecurity in entrepreneurial education programs.	3.02	0.80	Highly Required	3.02	0.80	Highly Required
12	Firewall configuration is necessary to prevent unauthorized access to school networks.	2.78	0.87	Highly Required	2.81	0.87	Highly Required
13	Secure online authentication methods (e.g., two-factor authentication) are required to protect access to digital resources.	2.88	0.90	Highly Required	2.86	0.89	Highly Required
14	Regular system updates and patches are necessary to ensure cybersecurity.	2.93	0.87	Highly Required	2.91	0.88	Highly Required

15	*Cybersecurity awareness training is required for students and staff to prevent cyber threats*	2.98	0.89	Highly Required	3.01	0.89	Highly Required
16	Network monitoring and incident response are required to detect and respond to cyber threats	2.01	0.64	Not Required	1.99	0.61	Not Required
17	Data backup and recovery are necessary to ensure business continuity in case of cyber attacks.	2.94	0.87	Highly Required	2.92	0.87	Highly Required
18	Secure data storage is necessary to protect sensitive student and staff information.	2.98	0.90	Highly Required	3.01	0.89	Highly Required
	Obtained Mean	**22.52**	**6.74**	**Highly Required**	**22.53**	**6.70**	**Highly Required**
	Criterion Mean	**20.00**			**20.00**		
	Average Obtained Mean = 22.55						

Data in Table 3 showed the mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes. The results indicated that items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20 recorded mean scores above the criterion mean score of 2.50, while only item 16 had mean score below the criterion mean score of 2.50. The analysis was buttressed with the grand mean scores of 22.52 with a standard deviation of 6.74 for entrepreneurial staff and mean scores of 22.53 with standard deviation of 6.70 for ICT staff. The result concluded that cybersecurity considerations are highly required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Hypothesis Two:

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Table 4: t-test of significant difference between the mean rating score of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes; Where n = Sample size, X = Mean score, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of Freedom, t-cal = t-test calculated, and t-tab = t-test tabulated.

Respondents		_					
	n	**X**	**S.D**	**df**	**t-cal**	**t-tab**	**Decision**
Entrepreneurial staff	321	22.52	6.74				
ICT staff	158	22.53	6.70	477	0.016	1.96	Accept Ho_2

Table 2 presents an independent sample t-test comparing the mean rating score of principals and teachers on the level of principals' application of financial planning skill to the administration of schools. The results indicate a non-significant difference (t = 0.016, p = 1.96) between principals (P = 22.52) and teachers (T = 22.53) leading to the conclusion that the null hypothesis two (Ho_2) is upheld. The result therefore shows that there is no significant difference between the rating scores of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff on the cybersecurity considerations required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

The result revealed that data security considerations are highly required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes with no significant difference between the mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff in tertiary institutions in Imo State. The result is a proof that both entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff in tertiary institutions in Imo State strongly agree that data security considerations are crucial for integrating digital technology into entrepreneurial education programs. This implies that data security is a critical factor that can impact the effectiveness and sustainability of digital technology integration in entrepreneurial education. The educational implication is that data security is highly required for the adoption and utilization of digital technologies in teaching and learning processes in entrepreneurial education programmes. Supporting the finding, Akinloye (2023) found that private schools in Nigeria require data protection and compliance, but currently lack adequate policies, security measures, and practices to effectively safeguard sensitive student and staff data. Similarly, Anthony, Imoke and Imoke (2023) found that Open University in Nigeria has a high requirement for robust data privacy and security measures to protect sensitive student information, however, current practices and infrastructure are inadequate to effectively safeguard against cyber threats, data breaches, and unauthorized access. The result also revealed that cybersecurity considerations are highly required for digital technology integration into entrepreneurial education programmes with no significant difference between the mean ratings of entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff in tertiary institutions in Imo State. The result highlights the importance of prioritizing robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard digital technology integration in entrepreneurial education programs. The consensus between entrepreneurial staff and ICT staff underscores the critical role cybersecurity plays in ensuring the success and reliability of digital initiatives. This finding implies that cybersecurity is a fundamental aspect of digital technology integration that requires careful consideration and

planning in entrepreneurial education programmes. Igbokwe (2024) found that secondary schools in Nigeria have a high need for robust cybersecurity practices, including regular software updates, firewall protection, antivirus software, and cybersecurity awareness training, to mitigate the increasing risks of cyber threats and protect sensitive data in the era of digitalization. Udumukwu and Nwali (2024) found that the University libraries require improved cybersecurity infrastructure, the introduction of comprehensive staff and user training programs, and the fostering of collaborative efforts between universities, governmental agencies, and private sector partners to strengthen security practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of digital technology into entrepreneurial education programs in tertiary institutions in Imo State requires careful consideration of both data security and cybersecurity measures to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. The findings highlight the importance of prioritizing robust safety and security protocols to protect sensitive information and prevent potential threats. When data security and cybersecurity measures are considered, full potential of digital technologies would be harnessed to enhance entrepreneurial education programmes in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Tertiary institutions in Imo State should prioritize the implementation of robust data security and cybersecurity measures to safeguard digital technology integration in entrepreneurial education programs, including regular software updates, firewall configuration, and cybersecurity awareness training for students and staff.

2. Authorities of tertiary institutions should invest in infrastructure and resources that support data security and cybersecurity, such as secure data storage, network monitoring, and incident response plans, to ensure a safe and secure digital learning environment for entrepreneurial education programmes.

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