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The Role of Faculties of Education on Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students

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Summary

The purpose of this research is to identify The Role of collages of Education of Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students. To achieve the objectives of the research, the descriptive-analytical method was used, and a questionnaire was developed to identify (the role of collages of education in Saudi universities in developing soft skills among their students). The research tool was applied to a sample of 362 students from the Colleges of Education at Najran University and King Khalid University. The results of the research showed that the degree of colleges of education's practice of their role in developing soft skills (communication and communication skills, critical thinking skills, time management skills, and crisis management skills) of their students came in a high degree, with an arithmetic average of (3.54). The research presented a number of recommendations, the most important was organizing training courses and workshops for students to develop soft skills and including soft skills in university curricula.

Keywords: Soft skills, Colleges of Education, Saudi universities, Students

Introduction

The current era is witnessing rapid changes in various aspects of life due to the knowledge explosion, technological development, and the diversity of sources of knowledge. These changes have cast their shadows on the educational system, and it has become necessary to verify the quality of its outputs and focus on the process of continuous improvement.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has emphasized the importance of developing the education system for its prominent role in building the individual and society. It is a factor that affects the support of the prosperous economy. The vision states that it continues to invest in education and training and equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for future jobs and enhance efforts to align educational outputs with the needs and requirements of the labor market. (Kingdom Vision 2030)

Given the current educational outcomes, we find that they are not commensurate with the cognitive and technological revolution. Educational institutions are still preparing learners with traditional methods and outdated knowledge that are far from the requirements of the labor market. Therefore, learners must be armed with some additional skills to face the challenges of the future, and among these skills are (soft skills). (Al-Taher, 2022)

Hard skills are no longer sufficient to keep pace with the requirements of the twenty-first century. Therefore, soft skills must be developed because they contribute to improving the professional competence of learners and preparing them to face economic, political, social, and technological changes. (Al-Tamimi, & Al-Moumani, 2022).

Success in the twenty-first century requires the teacher to possess a number of soft skills that help him perform his professional roles effectively, and enable him to bear responsibility, coexist with others, and adapt to different situations. Which is reflected in his self-development, the integration of his personality, and then the development of society. (Al-Enezi, 2022)

Soft skills are the personal characteristics associated with communicating with others through cooperation and interaction with them, including (communication and communication, planning, decision-making, time management, and working as a team). They are skills related to a positive work environment, and a successful teacher is the one who possesses these qualities and professional skills (Nasser Al-Din, 2021)

The importance of soft skills is highlighted in that they contribute to developing mental, psychological and social skills, adapting to daily situations, and interacting positively with problems. They also increase self-confidence, build personality, and promote positive behaviors that improve their lives. (Al-Enezi, 2022)

Many studies have addressed the importance of developing soft skills because of their role in the prosperity of society, and among these studies is the study (Thabet, 2020), which recommended conducting research and studies on soft skills, and the study (Agha, 2018), which recommended

the necessity of including soft skills in the curricula. Studies by decision makers, and a study (Shabir, 2016) which recommended the necessity of conducting studies on the role of higher education institutions in acquiring and developing soft skills among students.

Research problem:

In light of the directions of the Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which is based on investing in education and training and providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for the future, colleges of education in Saudi universities aspire to contribute to serving and developing society by providing learners with the skills of the future, including soft skills.

The weakness of students' soft skills is an indicator of their weak ability to fill future jobs and keep pace with the requirements of the labor market, The outputs of higher education are the same as the labor market inputs. Therefore, any defect in the education and training systems must be matched by a state of confusion in the labor market, and in return, any defect or fluctuation in the labor market is matched by a defect in the education system. (Otaiba, 2021)

Previous studies Recommended, including the study (Kulkarni, & Kulkarni. 2019), have recommended the importance of equipping university students with soft skills because of their important role in developing professional work. The study was able to develop the soft skills of graduates through group projects among students, which included positive cooperation to achieve the goal The project is joint. (Suryaningsih, 2021) Recommended on the necessity of developing soft skills among students, and the study was able to refine the soft skills of the study sample during the distance learning period using various media and the cooperative learning method.

Through the research team's experience in the field of education, and their knowledge of the educational reality and educational outcomes for female students at the College of Education, Najran University, they noticed a discrepancy in the use of soft skills in the educational process, e.g. the lack of positive interaction between female students while practicing cooperative and participatory tasks, in addition to the lack of participation of some female students. In work groups, communication is weak, while some of them desire to be alone in presenting opinions, which requires the necessity of studying the degree to which male and female students practice soft skills. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of students from the College of Education, which consisted of (60 students), and it turned out that 66.6% of the sample members They do not have knowledge of soft skills and their importance to keep pace with the requirements of the labor market.

The International Conference on Education Evaluation, 2018 emphasized the importance of building and designing a flexible national framework for future skills that takes into account the needs of economic sectors, and integrating future skills into university education curricula in order to prepare the new generation for future jobs, with the need to raise awareness of the skills required for success in Life and the labor market, and then work to reduce the gap between the

twenty-first century skills required by future professions and the skills of job seekers from the new generation.

Based on the above, the current research came to contribute to this fertile field that needs research and study, by identifying the role of colleges of education in developing the soft skills of their students.

Research questions:

▫ What is the degree of practice of colleges of education in their role in developing soft skills among their students from their point of view?
▫ Are there statistically significant differences at a significance level of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) between the average scores of the sample members' estimates of the role of colleges of education in developing soft skills among their students due to the variables (educational institution, scientific department)?
▫ What are the proposals for developing the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing soft skills among their students?

Research importance:

▫ Contributing to supporting the directions of the Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 in enhancing individuals' skills to join the professions of the future and achieving the slogan "Learn to Work."
▫ Contributing to achieving the goals of the human capabilities development program (KSA) by focusing on developing soft skills as a skill of the future.
▫ The results of this research may guide those responsible for curriculum development to include soft skills within the curriculum to meet the needs of the labor market.
▫ Conducting other future studies dealing with the development of students' soft skills.

Research aims:

▫ Identifying the degree to which colleges of education practice their role in developing the soft skills of their students.
▫ Revealing the significance of the differences between the average estimates of the sample members' opinions of the role of colleges of education in developing soft skills, which are attributed to the variables (educational institution, scientific department).
▫ Providing a set of proposals to develop the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students?

Research terms:

Soft skills:

It is defined procedurally as a set of abilities and attributes that qualify male and female students in colleges of education to join the labor market and achieve the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and it

includes (communication skill, time management skill, crisis management skill, critical thinking skill).

Theoretical background

Soft skills

It is so difficult to precisely determine soft skills (because they vary according to an individual's needs and demands in the face of environmental problems and attitudes. (Ouchen et al. 2022)

and defined as traits and abilities that enhance an individual's relationship with others through communication, leadership, problem solving, and decision making (Edwards, 2018)

and it is intra- interpersonal skills that are essential for personal development, social participation, and workplace success. It is personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. (Macqual & et al, 2021)

 soft skills define as the skills and abilities that an individual possesses and contribute to the development and success of the institution to which he belongs. These skills relate to effective dealing and forming relationships with others, and include communication skills, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and the ability to Teamwork, negotiation skill, self-management, time management, cultural awareness, shared knowledge, conflict management, taking responsibility, good morals, self-esteem, integration with others and project management. (Madkhali, & Abdul Karim, 2022)

Soft skills are a combination of personal traits and individual skills necessary for learners in light of the acceleration of science and technology to help them discover their abilities, develop their skills, form friendships, build relationships, make the right decisions, and deal with the problems they face in life in the best ways. (Taha, 2022)

Soft skills are also called non-technical abilities that are essential to academic abilities and make a person's presence more felt in the community, soft skills complement hard skills. This skill is part of a person's intellectual intelligence and is often used as a condition for obtaining certain positions or jobs.(Tusyanah, &et al, 2023)

Acquiring soft skills:

There are many opinions about acquiring soft skills. There are those who believe that it is difficult to teach it in classrooms and study halls, and that it is difficult to assess the extent to which individuals possess it. Others believe that it is skills that can be taught with experience and practical training, and that study halls are a fertile environment for learning, transferring skills, and interacting with others. The following is a set of opinions from researchers and educators among supporters. Opposition to the possibility of learning and acquiring soft skills is as follows: Hajjaj, (2014) and Qwaider, (2017) see the difficulty of teaching soft skills in general, especially

in classrooms. Despite this, human capabilities do not stop at a certain limit, and anyone can access skills. New by making effort and insisting on developing it.

From these opinions soft skills are difficult to teach Because they are more tied to an individual's personality, they are not as tangible as hard skills, and they are difficult to judge quickly. (Al-Halabi, 2020)

that integrating soft skills into programs for graduating students enables them to solve the problems they face and makes them more able to communicate and engage in society, thus making them more efficient and able to deal with Jobs. (Snape, 2017)

It is important to integrate soft skills into higher education programs and Tang, (2019) sees the necessity of including the soft skills that the graduate must possess, obtain, and learn in the classroom, that is, before leaving the labor market.

There is no agreement on how to best incorporate soft skills into curricula and teaching, how soft skills are taught to students is crucial content can be embedded in classes that complement the Curriculum so students can gain the required soft skills through engagement or team-related activities. (Cinque, & Kippels, 2023)

soft skills can be taught or acquired even if they are not a characteristic possessed by the individual, through two methods: the first is obtaining formal training in soft skills through a professional trainer and obtaining an accredited certificate, and the second is through self-training through the individual developing his skills himself. (Abdul Wahed, 2016) & we can develop soft skills among learners in the classroom by using various strategies such as using lateral thinking strategies. (Jabr, 2020)

The importance of soft skills:

When moving from the learning stage to the labor market, the learner feels that there is a big difference between work and study. It is possible for the learner to be very successful in his studies, but he fails when he starts working, and this is due to him lacking the soft skills that make him distinct from others. Therefore, the importance of soft skills for success in the labor market has emerged. (Mosa, 2019)

Soft Skills are necessary for various reasons. e.g. To communicate effectively, work in a team and to build good interpersonal skills with other team members. Soft Skills are also helpful in bringing out the leadership qualities in an individual. Soft Skills are also required to understand the cultural norms and to adopt them easily. (Kulkarni, & Kulkarni, 2019).

teachers require hard and soft both skills to be successful in their professional life.

the researchers felt that soft skills are considered desirable for moving forward in the career and vocational advancement. (Malik & Mohan, 2022) It contributes to preparing individuals who are able to adapt effectively to the cognitive and technical changes of the era, who have the ability to

make the right decisions at the right time and provide them with good experiences through direct interaction with others. (Asiri, 2021)

They can be considered a significant added value that allows for the attainment of broader and better valued achievements in the current labour market & obtaining more consistent and accurate results. (Caggiano, & et al, 2020)

Methodology:

The current research was based on the descriptive-analytical method, as it was suitable for the subject and objective of the research. This evidenced in the theoretical study of the soft skills topic, the review of relevant previous studies, and the description of the procedures that followed to prepare the research tool and analyze and interpret the results.

Research community and sample:

The research community determined by all male and female students at the College of Education at Najran University and King Khalid University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As for the research sample, it was chosen by the simple random method, and it included)362(students

search tools:

Soft skills questionnaire.

Soft skills questionnaire was developed based on a number of previous researches, The questionnaire consisted of Five axes Communication and Connection skills (10 items), critical thinking skills (10 items), Time management skills (9 items), Crisis management skills (11 items), Each item was evaluated using a fivepoint Likert scale .The trial version of the soft skills questionnaire was presented to a panel of arb itrators who were specialists, to check its validity.

Besides, the questionnaire's internal consistency was further tested by implementing it to a pilot sample of 50 students at the Students of the College of Education who were not a part of the main sample in this research. Validity and reliability were calculated according to the following.

Internal consistency validity:

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated between the scores of each statement of the questionnaire and the total score of the axis to which it belongs, using the statistical program (SPSS), as shown in the following table:

**Table (1) Internal consistency validity of
the correlation coefficients between each item of the questionnaire**

First Axis		Second axis		Third Axis		fourth Axis	
Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation

No.	Coefficient	No.	Coefficient	No.	Coefficient	No.	Coefficient
1	*0.682	11	*0.738	21	*0.812	30	*0.863
2	*0.718	12	*0.829	22	*0.771	31	*0.797
3	*0.760	13	*0.836	23	*0.751	32	*0.880
4	*0.748	14	*0.792	24	*0.691	33	*0.783
5	*0.850	15	*0.808	25	*0.673	34	*0.847
6	*0.808	16	*0.808	26	*0.711	35	*0.874
7	*0.865	17	*0.691	27	*0.751	36	*0.810
8	*0.855	18	*0.841	28	*0.711	37	*0.877
9	*0.841	19	*0.711	29	*0.724	38	*0.806
10	*0.825	20	*0.718			39	*0.788
						40	*0.902

* Significant at the significance level (0.05)

Table (2): The internal consistency validity of the correlation coefficients between each axis of the questionnaire and the total score of the questionnaire

Axes	Correlation coefficient
Communication and Connection skills	*0.795
critical thinking skills	*0.777
Time management skills	*0.643
Crisis management skills	*0.833

Calculating the reliability of the questionnaire:

The reliability of the questionnaire was verified by calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, as shown in the following table:

Table (3): Calculating the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Axes	Number of phrases	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Communication and Connection skills	10	0.925
critical thinking skills	10	0.868

Time management skills	9	0.855
Crisis management skills	11	0.933
Total stability	40	0.979

Results:

The first question: What is the degree of practice of colleges of education in their role in developing soft skills among their students from their point of view?

To answer the previous question, frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for the responses of the research sample members. Then the questionnaire items as a whole and the items for each axis were analyzed individually, and the results were as follows:

Table (4) The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research sample in all aspects of the questionnaire (N=362)

Axes	Arithmetic mean	SD	Relative weight	Rank	Degree of approval
Communication and Connection skills	3.53	0,78	70.66%	2	High
critical thinking skills	3.65	0.73	73,52%	1	High
Time management skills	3,47	0.82	69.42%	4	High
Crisis management skills	3.49	0.79	69.71%	3	High
General average	3.54	0.68	70.83%		High

It is clear from the previous table that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing the soft skills of their students was to a high degree, and the arithmetic averages ranged between (3.65) and (3.47), and the overall arithmetic average reached (3.54). The "Critical Thinking Skills" axis came in first place with a mean of (3.68), followed in second place by communication and communication skills, while time management skills came in last place with a mean of (3.47). This result is consistent with the study of (Naibahoa, & et. Al, 2021) The results of which reached that the level of soft skills of Pre-service English foreign language Teachers is at an excellent level (Kinsella, & Waite, 2021), and the study OF (Al-Adwan, 2014), which concluded that the degree of possession soft skills of the study sample was high in all fields, and Al-Masry, (2020), study concluded that the degree of availability of soft skills was very high. This result differs from the study (Nasser El-Din, 2021), which found that the degree of possession of soft skills among the study sample was moderate.

Table (5) The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research sample in the axis of communication and communication skills (N=362)

Axes	mean	Standard deviation	Relative weight	Rank	Degree of approval
1	3.40	1.13	68.07%	9	High
2	3.72	1.00	74.36%	1	High
3	3.60	1.00	72.04%	2	High
4	3.59	0.97	71.88%	3	High
5	3.47	1.04	69.45%	7	High
6	3.58	1.03	71.60%	5	High
7	3.59	1.11	71.71%	4	High
8	3.54	1.08	70.72%	6	High
9	3.46	1.14	69.12%	8	High
10	3.38	1.18	67.62%	10	Intermediate
General average	3.53	0.78	70.66%	-	High

It is clear from the previous table that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing communication and communication skills was to a large degree, and the arithmetic averages ranged between (3.72) and (3.38), and the overall arithmetic average was (3.53)

Table (6) The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research sample in the critical thinking skills axis (N=362)

Axes	mean	Standard deviation	Relative weight	Rank	Degree of approval
1	3.86	1.12	77.24%	2	High
2	3.95	1.03	79.01%	1	High
3	3.85	1.08	76.91%	3	High
4	3.81	1.01	76.24%	4	High
5	3.55	1.18	70.94%	7	High
6	3.31	1.18	66.24%	9	Intermediate
7	3.54	1.15	70.88%	8	High

8	3.26	1.28	65.14%	10	Intermediate
9	3.79	1.00	75.75%	5	High
10	3.59	1.14	71.82%	6	High
General average	3.65	0.72	73.02%	--	High

It is clear from the previous table that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing the critical thinking skills was to a large degree, and the arithmetic averages ranged between (3.95) and (3.26), and the overall arithmetic average was (3.65).

Table (7) The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research sample in the Time management skills axis (N=362)

Axes	mean	Standard deviation	Relative weight	Rank	Degree of approval
1	4.07	1.02	81.33%	1	High
2	3.70	1.09	74.09%	3	High
3	3.38	1.22	67.68%	4	Intermediate
4	3.75	1.10	74.92%	2	High
5	3.38	1,11	67.51%	6	Intermediate
6	3.38	1.09	67.51%	5	Intermediate
7	3.34	1.23	66.85%	7	Intermediate
8	2.98	1.24	59.61%	9	Intermediate
9	3.26	1.22	65.25%	8	Intermediate
General average	3.47	0.82	69.42%	--	High

It is clear from the previous table that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing Time management skills was to a large degree, and the arithmetic averages ranged between (4.07) and (2.98), and the overall arithmetic average was (3.47).

Table (8) The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the research sample in the Crisis management skills axis (N=362)

Axes	mean	Standard deviation	Relative weight	Rank	Degree of approval
1	3.66	1.05	73.20%	1	High

2	3.55	1.06	71.05%	5	High
3	3.63	1,08	72.60%	2	High
4	3.61	1.06	72.27%	3	High
5	3.57	1.02	71.33%	4	High
6	3.41	1.15	68.23%	8	High
7	3.55	1.09	70.99%	6	High
8	3.38	1.09	67.68%	9	Intermediate
9	3.01	1.34	60.11%	11	Intermediate
10	3.48	1.17	69.61%	7	High
11	3.38	1.18	67.62%	10	Intermediate
General average	3.49	0.79	69.71%	--	High

It is clear from the previous table that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing the Crisis management skills was to a large degree, and the arithmetic averages ranged between (3.66) and (3.01), and the overall arithmetic average was (3.49).

The second question: Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05 α≤) between the average scores of the study sample members' appreciation of the role of colleges of education in developing the soft skills of their students due to the variables (educational institution, scientific department)?

To answer the previous question, the following steps were followed:

(1) The educational institution variable

Arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated for the research sample's responses according to the educational institution variable, and the differences between them were calculated using (T test) for two independent samples, and the following is an explanation of that:

Table (9) T-test analysis to compare the sample members' estimates about the role of colleges of education in developing the soft skills of their students due to the educational institution variable (King Khalid University - Najran University)

Axes	educational institution	N	Standard deviation	mean	T	sig
1	Najran University	165	0.76	3.60	2.32	0,01
	King Khalid	197	0.65	3.77		

	University					
2	Najran University	165	0.83	3.41	2.61	0.00
	King Khalid University	197	0.71	3.61		
3	Najran University	165	0.82	3.41	2,075	0.02
	King Khalid University	197	0.77	3.57		
4	Najran University	165	0.81	3.44	2.56	0.01
	King Khalid University	197	0.72	3.64		
questionnaire	Najran University	165	0.71	3.45	2.49	0,01
	King Khalid University	197	0.62	3.62		

It is clear from the previous table that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the average scores of the research sample's assessments of the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students due to the educational institution variable in favor of (Najran University) &the significance level ranged between (0.00) and (0.02)

(2) Scientific department variable

The one-way test of variance (ANOVA) was used to identify the significance of the differences in each axis of the questionnaire, as well as in the questionnaire as a whole.

Table (10) One-way ANOVA analysis table to compare the sample members' estimates about the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing soft skills attributed to a variable.
Scientific Department (early childhood, special education, psychology)

Axes	Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	f	sig	Significance level
1	Between groups	0.471	2	0.033	0.949	Not a sign
	Within groups	243.481	359	0.639		
	Total	243.951	361			
2	Between groups	0.004	2	0.002	0.997	Not a sign
	Within groups	218.816	359	0.610		
	Total	218.818	361			
3	Between groups	0.366	2	0.183	0.748	Not a sign

	Within groups	226.286	359	0.630		
	Total	226.652	361			
4	Between groups	0.727	2	0.362	0.506	Not a sign
	Within groups	191.485	359	0.532		
	Total	192.212	361			
questionnaire	Between groups	0.042	2	0.021	0.956	Not a sign
	Within groups	165.122	359	0.460		
	Total	165.164	361			

It is clear from the previous table that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the average scores of the research sample's assessments of the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students due to the scientific department variable (early childhood, special education, psychology) and the result is due to the college's interest in developing soft skills is not limited to a specific department, but rather targets all college students. Therefore, the estimates of all sample members are similar in determining the role of the College of Education in developing soft skills. This confirms the keenness of all departments in college to provide all its students with soft skills to keep pace with the Kingdom's Vision 2030, This result differs from the study (Ağçami & Dogan, 2021) it reached result that pre-service teachers differ significantly in soft skills in relation to specialization.

The third question: What are the proposals to develop the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students?

To answer the previous question, an open question was formulated at the end of the questionnaire to identify the proposals of the study sample regarding methods of developing soft skills. In light of these proposals and in light of previous studies, a set of proposals was developed and can be explained as follows:

▫ Spreading the culture of investment in soft skills through university media.
▫ Adopting partnership programs between the university and external community institutions to develop and build students' soft skills.
▫ Linking soft skills to the university environment.
▫ Providing material and moral incentives for students enrolled in soft skills programs.
▫ Exchanging distinguished experiences between universities in the field of soft skills.
▫ The college adopts programs to train students and faculty members in soft skills.
▫ Preparing introductory guides to develop students' soft skills.
▫ Adopting extracurricular activities for the soft skills development policy.
▫ Developing faculty members' abilities to plan for the development of soft skills through curricula and extracurricular activities.

▫ Linking school curricula to the future needs of the labor market

▫ Developing educational programs that focus on soft skills.

▫ Developing evaluation methods to suit emerging variables.

Summary of results

The results showed that the degree to which colleges of education practiced their role in developing the soft skills of their students, from their point of view, was high, at 70.83%.

The results showed that there were statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the average scores of the research sample's assessments of the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students due to the educational institution variable in favor of (Najran University).

The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the average scores of the research sample's appreciations of the role of colleges of education in Saudi universities in developing the soft skills of their students due to the scientific department variable (early childhood, special education, psychology).

Recommendations

▫ Organizing training courses and workshops for students to develop soft skills

▫ Including soft skills in university curricula

▫ Including soft skills in student assessment in academic courses.

▫ Proposals

▫ A proposed scenario for including soft skills in Saudi university programs.

▫ The role of teachers in developing the soft skills of students at different stages of education.

▫ The reality of teachers' use of soft skills from the students' point of view.

▫ The effectiveness of a proposed training program to develop the soft skills of student teachers.

Acknowledgement

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