GLOBALISATION AND INDIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Globalization is an important phenomenon that has affected the entire world in the contemporary era. Its impact on the education system of a country is intrinsic. In the context of India, globalization has impacted upon the education system in complex and conflicting ways. There is an increased emphasis on preparing *global* citizens who are ready to face the highly competitive world. There is a huge upsurge in the demand for learning English language, growing popularity of international schools, need for curriculum restructuring and inclusion of ICTs etc. While the basic aims of education are to enable children develop their potentials, define and pursue a meaningful purpose; globalisation has put an extra pressure on the education system to create 'winners' who are ready to battle in the race for the survival of the fittest. The present paper is an attempt to unveil the impact of globalisation on the school system as a whole. The paper is based on an empirical research conducted in sixteen government and private schools of Delhi, India. It explores their overall resources- physical infrastructure, human and non-human assets and various facilities that are intrinsic in order to provide quality education to the children. It attempts to present the contrasting revelations across the two categories of school education with respect to diverse variables such as strength of teachers and pupils, available infrastructure and its maintenance, co-curricular activities etc. It dwells into an investigation of attempts by the schools to provide a pro-social learning environment to pupils for indulging in innovative and creative accomplishments and providing a platform to explore and nurture their hidden talents. An interesting component that emerges is the strident diversity in the broad Art Education and Health and Physical Education school activities that are indeed significant for overall personality development. It also seeks to compare and critique the two categories of schools in terms of their inherited inequalities and explore their efforts as well as challenges to provide high standards of education. Last but not the least, the paper links the outcomes of the research with globalisation. It seeks to suggest few areas significant for developing an ideal knowledge base for a

global education within the contemporary Indian school system keeping in mind the child and human rights perspective.

Keywords: Globalization, education, India

Introduction

Globalization is an important phenomenon that has affected the entire world in the contemporary era. As the underlying structural dynamics, it drives the various socio-cultural, economic and political processes around the world and brings in new concepts, values, perspectives and information to the society. The increased communication contributes toward a world which is much more interactive, the one in which communication and transactions can emerge between people even when may never meet (Stromquist, 2005).

Impact of globalization on the education system of a country is intrinsic. It brings education to the front lines and in the prevailing discourse, is expected to be the major tool for incorporation into the 'knowledge society' and the technological economy. Educational access with quality is very much part of the globalization discourse where quality is defined as 'an educational content that enables students to obtain the knowledge they require for the construction of an equitable social and economic world' (Stromquist, 2005). Adopting a holistic approach to the problems, globalisation enables the ability of learners to access, assess, adopt and apply knowledge to think independently and exercise appropriate judgment and to collaborate with others to make sense of new situations. Breaking the boundaries of space and time, it uses advanced information and communications technologies, new systems of knowledge in teaching and learning that aid both the teacher as well as the student. Globalization encourages explorations, experimentation to push the frontiers of the potential of information technologies and communications for more effective learning (Cogburn, 2000). It also creates and supports policy makers and practitioners for the purpose of rethinking education and supports mechanisms for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Impact of Globalisation on Indian Education

In the context of India, globalization has impacted upon the education system in complex and conflicting ways. There is an increased emphasis on preparing *global* citizens who are ready to face the highly competitive world. There is a huge upsurge in the demand for learning English language, growing popularity of 'international' schools, need for curriculum restructuring and inclusion of ICTs etc. While the basic aims of education are to enable children develop their potentials, define and pursue a

meaningful purpose; globalisation has put an extra pressure on the education system to create 'winners' who are ready to battle in the race for the survival of the fittest. It has led to the preparation of a curriculum that has to be internationally acceptable. There is also a huge demand for learning English language, schools with an international appeal with unconventional syllabi that focus on overall development of personality instead of rote learning, newer means of teaching learning pedagogy etc. School facilities have also come under the scanner as there is a demand for quality in available infrastructure that can aid in preparing a different class of people who are ready for a global world. In the contemporary context, students are seen as customers as well as partners in the process of learning.

Efforts by the Government to Improve the Quality of Education
The Twelfth Five Year Plan by the Government of India (2012-17) clearly links the quality of education to the available of physical infrastructure, textual materials, classroom processes, academic support to the teachers, assessment procedures and community involvement. It focuses on providing adequate inputs and infrastructure for the proper functioning of schools and treats improving school inputs as just the starting point in improving educational quality. It commits to taking a more comprehensive view for building a strong systemic focus on teacher capacity, improving school leadership/management, strengthening academic support system, better community and parents' participation, measuring and improving learning outcomes in a continuous manner. Focus is being laid on provision for having child-friendly schools and systems in teaching learning processes as well as in improved water, sanitation, hygiene and mid-day meal practices (Planning commission, 2013). The holistic view of the school as a system has also been stressed by the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCERT, 2006) that highlights the importance of having meaningful classroom experiences, well planned physical and sports activities; re-conceptualization of curriculum areas or school resources to improve the quality of school ethos; ensuring health, nutrition and an inclusive school environment; and, bringing about substantial systemic reforms in our school system.
The policies and legislations by the Indian government reflect its focus to meet the targets. The passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act in the year 2009 has been the landmark effort by the government to implement its commitments into action. Every child between the age of six and fourteen years now has the fundamental right to education. Major government programmes like the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* ('Education for All Movement' launched in 2001-02) considered as a flagship programme, The National Programme for Universalization of

Elementary Education for children in the age group 6-14 years also show the governmental efforts towards education. These programmes focus on providing free textbooks for girls, construction of toilets especially for girls, monitoring the quality of education etc. The National Plan of Action for Children (2005) too reflects the government's special emphasis in bridging all gender and social category gaps and commitment to universalization of elementary education.

At the international level, India is a signatory to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that lays down emphasis on the quality of education in the context of overall development of children. India is also committed to meet the Millennium Development Goals where the second goal is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. India is on track to reach the MDG targets of meeting universal primary education under goal two and the target on gender equality in education under goal three (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2014).

Minding the Gap: Progressive Polices and Grassroots Realities

In a sharp contrast to the progressive polices and commitment to improve quality of education by the government; the recent studies reflect few gaps and challenges in the area of education. The latest Annual Status of Education Report survey carried out by Pratham (2015) reveals deep concerns related to the kind of education being imparted in the schools. According to its latest report, 32.5% children of class III could not read simple letters while a growing proportion of class II children did not know numbers 1 to 9. Moreover, an increasing number of children in class III could not recognize numbers till 100 (Pratham, 2015). The DISE data (2015) too shows alarming observations in terms of infrastructure facilities available in schools. According to their latest report, only 22.2% of the upper primary schools/sections had computer aided learning lab, 76.1% schools had a library while only 58.1% schools had playground facility. These statistics reflect the gaps between the efforts by the Indian government towards quality education and the grassroots realities.

There is a need to dwell upon the kind of education being provided in schools. Is there a lot of pressure on 'retention' of children in schools that is hampering the overall teaching-learning process? Are the schools really catering to the need for developing overall personalities or are they merely promoting children from one class to another? Do the schools really have a pro-social learning environment for pupils to indulge in innovative and creative accomplishments or are they merely acting as institutions that provide literacy? Can the schools that lack the basic infrastructure attempt to provide quality in education and meet the overall aims of education? Such

queries present the need to unveil the schools from a holistic perspective, to seek information regarding the facilities available, strength of teachers and pupils, available infrastructure and its maintenance, and co-curricular activities. It dwells into an investigation of attempts by the schools to provide a platform to explore and nurture their hidden talents.

Present Research: Objectives and Methodology

The present research was conducted among 16 schools of Delhi — eight government and eight private. Schools were selected from four different zones of Delhi with equal representation of both categories of schools, that is, two government and two private schools from each zone. Broad objectives of the current study are enumerated as follows:

1. To examine the physical infrastructure available in the government and private schools of Delhi.
2. To explore the co-curricular activities in the government and private schools.
3. To observe and analyze the strength of teachers and students across the two categories of schools.
4. To study the contrast between the educational facilities provided by government and private schools.

To meet the above objectives, quantitative as well as qualitative information was gathered from school Principals/ administrators. A structured interview schedule was administered among school Principals/ administrators. Focus group discussions were held with 160 school children (80 males and 80 females) from the upper primary classes (classes VI–VIII). All respondents were taken into confidence before gathering information and all efforts were made to ensure the ethical principles in terms of maintaining confidentiality with respect to identities of respondents/schools at any given time. Analysis was done on the basis of findings of the interviews, group discussions with children and observations made by the author. Major findings of the present research are as follows.

Major Research Findings

Current research discovered various contrasting observations across the two types of schools in relation to various domains and variables. Major research findings can be listed as follows:

A) School Infrastructure

The overall physical environment plays an important role for paving the way for creating a learner friendly and an enabling environment in the schools. Current research unveiled the following trends in terms of infrastructural resources:

School Building

Fourteen out of the sixteen schools had a *pucca* school building. Two government schools were having a 'Multiple Type' of building as some of the primary level classes were made of tin shades. This reflects a grim reality that even in the National Capital we still have schools that do not have a proper school building. Three out of eight government schools displayed teaching and learning aids in their corridors, classrooms and school receptions. With regards to the furniture, half of government schools had furniture in dilapidated condition that questions the overall quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms.

In contrast, most private school buildings boasted a 'corporate' culture as five (out of eight) private schools flaunted huge receptions displaying beautiful paintings, multicolored charts and large display boards prepared by children and teachers. Their magnificent buildings with well-lit, ventilated class-rooms and large displays of teaching aids in the corridors showed the attempts by the schools to keep pace with creative learning methods in the education process. Most private schools had adequate and better quality furniture.

Library

Library is an extremely important part of the school set up that provides excellent opportunities to children to learn and develop reading habits. In the current research, fifteen schools had a library. Most of the private schools were seen well equipped with 'functional' libraries having a wide range of reference books, encyclopedias, journals, newspapers, comics, Compact Discs (CDs), biographies to enrich the classroom activities and provide knowledge to students and teachers. This reflects efforts to provide opportunities to the students for divergent thinking rather than sticking to conventional methods and rote learning. Half of the private schools particularly had a rich collection of books and valuable reading material. In contrast to the private schools, there was underutilization of the library facilities in the government schools where in a few cases, the books were seen gathering dust and seemed to be old. In one school, a class was also observed to be conducted in the library that echoes the shortage of space in the school.

Auditorium

Out of the sixteen schools, auditorium was available in eleven schools. Two government and three private schools did not have auditorium facility in their schools. Most private schools and two government schools particularly had spacious auditoriums and children were seen practicing for

their upcoming functions in both types of schools with great interest and enthusiasm.

Computer Room

All the sixteen schools had a computer room and a computer teacher was available in all the schools. According to the computer teachers, children had a lot of interest in working on the computer and learning it. This was more true for the government school children, who were in many cases, the first generation learners. The progressive attempts being made by the government to equip the government school children with computer skills are observed.

Safe Drinking Water

A basic amenity like safe drinking water was not found to be available in all the sixteen schools. All government schools had either a tap water facility or a water cooler that was not attached to any water purifier. Unhygienic conditions around the drinking water (water logging, dampness, fungal growth) were seen in one private and one fourth government schools. Three fourth private schools had provision of water coolers that were found attached to a water purifier. This again reflects the need for up gradation of infrastructural facilities to meet the basic need of the children as well as staff of the government schools.

Toilets

Startling comparisons were made between government and private schools in terms of their provision for students' toilets. More toilets (blocks) were seen in the private schools as compared to the government schools. Three government schools had the lowest number of toilets while half of the private schools had the highest. This reflects better infrastructure for toilets and sensitivity among the private schools. Girl's toilets were seen in all the schools. It may be also noted that that one of the government schools had only two toilets to meet the needs of their 1864 children. Inadequate number of toilet facilities seen in government schools.

Playground

All the sixteen schools had a playground (outdoor/ indoor). Private schools had better maintained playgrounds as compared to the government schools. In two private schools, huge and separate halls for playing different games instead of an open ground were seen. Separate play way area for toddles along with a jogger's track, swings, slides and a safety traffic park was seen in one private school. In contrast to the private schools, the sports ground was not as well maintained as in private schools. Most government

schools had a poorly maintained sports ground with untrimmed grass, dust, garbage dumps here and there. However, the sports grounds at one fourth government schools were well maintained. This reflects the under-utilization and misuse of playgrounds in most government schools that are unable to use them for holistic development of their students.

B) Shortfall of School Teachers

The research shows the contrast in the number of teachers teaching in the government and private schools. The table 1.01 presented below gives the gender disaggregated data of teachers teaching in the sixteen schools covered under the present research:

Table: 1.01
Zone Wise Gender Disaggregated data on Strength of Teachers in Schools

Zone	Govt. Schools *	Female Teachers	Male Teachers	Total	Private Schools *	Female Teachers	Male Teachers	Total
East	GEZS1	24	28	**52**	PEZS1	92	20	**112**
	GEZS2	12	48	**60**	PEZS2	67	3	**70**
North	GNZS1	23	18	**41**	PNZS1	7	53	**60**
	GNZS2	16	33	**49**	PNZS2	65	11	**76**
South	GSZS1	23	24	**47**	PSZS1	75	4	**79**
	GSZS2	35	3	**38**	PSZS2	59	6	**65**
West	GWZS1	27	11	**38**	PWZS1	60	11	**71**
	GWZS2	58	5	**63**	PWZS2	50	10	**60**
Total		**218**	**170**	**388**		**475**	**118**	**593**

(*G=Government, P=Private, S=School, The four geographical zones East, North, South and West are denoted by E,N,S and W respectively)

The number of teachers in majority of the private schools is almost one and a half to two folds as compared to the government schools. This indeed has an impact on the teacher pupil ratio of the schools. The following excerpt shows the opinion of teachers from a government schools on the shortage of teachers and high teacher pupil ratio:

We have eight classes at the primary level with only two permanent teachers in the entire primary wing who catered to the needs of two hundred and ninety three children studying at the primary level. I have to take two classes simultaneously and have a lot of additional workload. It is practically impossible to do justice when I cater to two different classes, each having about fifty children.

The higher teacher pupil ratio seems to be taking a toll on the quality of education in the government schools. The ratio is lower in the private schools due to adequate number of teachers.

C) Difference in the number of male and female teachers

Another significant difference that emerges from the above table is the contrast in the number of female and male teachers in government and private schools. There were more male teachers teaching in the government schools as compared to the private schools. It was also observed that in private schools, most of the male teachers were engaged in teaching either co- curricular subjects like art, music or sports or were teaching higher secondary classes in their schools. Higher number of male teachers in the government schools may be attributed to the fact that government service provides job security. Though teaching is considered normally as a female dominated profession, but male teachers are seen in the government schools and not in the private schools because government job provides economic security and all employment benefits.

D) The Male Versus Female Students

Current research reveals the stark difference in the number of male and female students from the schools in the research sample. It also reflects that in each and every private school, there was more number of boys than girls.

Table: 1.02
Zone Wise Gender Disaggregated data on Strength of Students in Schools

	Govt. Schools	Female	Male	Total	Private Schools	Female	Male	Total
East	GEZS1	593	1187	**1780**	PEZS1	678	856	**1534**
	GEZS2	400	1464	**1864**	PEZS2	680	1020	**1700**
North	GNZS1	841	557	**1398**	PNZS1	390	910	**1300**
	GNZS2	319	1389	**1708**	PNZS2	641	895	**1536**
South	GSZS1	786	678	**1464**	PSZS1	753	1003	**1756**
	GSZS2	580	350	**930**	PSZS2	496	744	**1240**
West	GWZS1	616	594	**1210**	PWZS1	760	956	**1716**
	GWZS2	1200	400	**1600**	PWZS2	**520**	**780**	**1300**
Total		**5335**	**6619**	**11,954**		**4918**	**7164**	**12,082**

(*G=Government, P=Private, S=School, The four geographical zones East, North, South and West are denoted by E,N,S and W respectively)

Though there is a difference in the total number of girls and boys in both types of schools, this differentiation is more visible in private schools.

This may be correlated with the declining sex ratio of girls, particularly in Delhi. According to the 2011 census, Delhi has a child sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males. Research has also shown that this ratio is lower in the families belonging to the affluent sections of the society in comparison to those belonging to the lower socio economic strata of society. The same gets reflected in the distribution of boys and girls in private schools that are usually approached by those belonging to the affluent sections of our society.

E) Availability of Administrative Staff

In addition to the school children, teachers, Principal, administrative staff has an important role in assisting and supports the day to day operations of the school and contributes in the administrative processes. The administrative staff comprises of the office staff, maids/ *ayahs*, gatekeepers, receptionist, secretarial staff etc. Presented in table 1.03 are the details of the total school strength of all the sixteen schools covered under the present research:

Table: 1.03
Zone Wise Strength of Staff in Schools

Zone	Government	Teaching Staff	Administrative Staff	Total	Private Schools	Teaching Staff	Administrative Staff	Total
East	GEZS1	52	9	61	PEZS1	112	40	152
	GEZS2	60	7	67	PEZS2	70	12	82
North	GNZS1	41	10	51	PNZS1	60	9	69
	GNZS2	49	10	59	PNZS2	76	32	108
South	GSZS1	47	7	54	PSZS1	79	35	114
	GSZS2	38	8	46	PSZS2	65	25	90
West	GWZS1	38	8	46	PWZS1	71	16	87
	GWZS2	63	10	73	PWZS2	60	20	80
Total		388	69	457		593	189	782

(*G=Government, P=Private, S=School, The four geographical zones East, North, South and West are denoted by E,N,S and W respectively)

The above statistics clearly show that the majority of private schools have two to three times more the number of administrative staff as compared to the government schools. The posts for the administrative/non-teaching staff in the government schools comprised broadly of about eight to ten people including the office staff, sweeper, gardener and peon. On the other hand, the non-teaching staff in private schools consisted of a range of office staff: administrative officer, office coordinator, assistants, accountants, receptionist, secretarial staff, housekeepers, sweepers (allocated floor wise), gardeners, attendants etc. There was a clear cut segregation of roles to be performed by each of these personnel in the private schools. Mechanisms for close supervision were also seen with the hierarchical division of responsibilities.

E) Contrast in the Co-Curricular Activities
Art Education

A higher proportion of art education activities in the private schools were seen as compared to those in the government schools. Children from the government schools shared during the focus group discussions that such activities were held only at the time of special occasions like annual day/ sports day etc. On the other hand among private schools, such activities were found to be embedded as an integral part of the day to day school activities. The following excerpt from a focus group discussion with children from a private school reflects the nature of art education activities:

We have many innovative activities like gift wrapping, candle making, environment clubs, creative writing offered in our school. Under music too, we have a wide range of musical instruments to choose from like congo, bongo, tabla, casio, drums, harmonium, santoor, guitar, tarang, surmandal, synthesizers, and dafli. We also have 'Just A Minute' (JAM) sessions in the morning assembly where we have to speak on a given topic for one minute. This helps in boosting our confidence..

Most private schools were able to integrate art education in their overall school curriculum. The attempts of the private schools to utilize art education as a means to harness creativity among children are apparent. Conventional art education activities were offered by all schools and its importance for personality growth was more or less recognized. The government schools provided various forms of instrumental learning like congo, harmonium, santoor, surmandal and dafli. However these too were available only in one of the government schools along with two music teachers. In most government schools, art education was being treated as an isolated and a subsidiary subject. Most of them offered the conventional activities to their students as compared to the private schools that had a range of innovative activities for their students. The gap between progressive education policies and ground realities at the implementation level are found to be very wide especially in the government schools.

Health and Physical Education

Government schools were found to be offering adequate number of sports and physical education activities. Three government schools were particularly seen active in sports. While most government schools stuck to traditionally played sports like *kho-kho*, volleyball, basketball, yoga and badminton; one fourth also offered swimming to their students. Kabaddi, an Indian sport was offered by four government schools. National Cadet Corps (NCC) was offered by three government schools. Private schools due to their better infrastructure and facilities provided a wider range of sports activities

like chess, table tennis, taekwondo, squash and handball apart from offering the other routine sports. One half were taking more interest in providing all round sports activities to their students and greatly encouraged sports as an integral part of the school curriculum. One of them had a huge sports complex with indoor facilities for playing squash, volleyball, table tennis, skating, basketball, shooting, clay modeling etc. One fourth private schools had separate play yards for younger children with swings, traffic-park, jungle gym and open space. There was no wing of National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Social Service (NSS) or Scouts in any of the private schools. *Kabaddi* was not offered by any private school.

Emerging Discussions

India has been among the fastest-growing economies in the world in the last decade. However, concerns related to the quality of education question the ability to cope with the demands of a globalized world. Ensuring access to quality education is crucial for India if it wants to take advantage of its demographic dividend. An educated population not only drives economic growth, but also has a positive impact on human development indicators. Despite the focus of the government on improving the quality of inputs provided in schools, the efforts seem to be focused on enrolment and not on children's learning. The present research has presented contrasting trends and serious quality concerns to be pondered over across the two categories of schools.

Current research has corroborated the inadequacy of basic infrastructure in most government schools. This raises various critical issues and questions the quality of education being provided. Thus, though the school enrolment is increasing, but are the children learning? There are stark differences in the availability and maintenance of physical infrastructure across government and private schools. Basic infrastructure like the availability of safe drinking water, toilets, clean surroundings, library and playground are inadequate in most government schools. Can we imply that the private sector is able to deliver better than the government? Moreover, there is no norm to ensure that a school provides a minimum quality of education. Thus the debate on private versus government school provisioning becomes louder.

Another serious issue raised in the research is the availability of adequate number of school teachers, an area of concern for the not only the educationists but also for those who have been fighting for children's right to education. There is a major statistical link between teacher absence in government schools and private enrollment (Baird, 2009). Numerous studies have cited the importance of teacher-pupil ratio in a classroom. National and international experience has shown that a ratio higher than one teacher for

thirty students is not desirable at any stage of school education. Thus, availability of number of teachers impacts the size of the classroom and the teacher pupil ratio. This is also an important factor that influences the choice of desirable methods and practices that the teacher uses in the process of curriculum transaction. High teacher pupil ratio, as evident in most government schools questions the quality of education and the consequent high workload on teachers. Parents also recognize teacher absence and cite government-school teacher absenteeism as one reason for choosing private schools.

There is an increased demand for private players in education. Government schools in India due to their challenges in meeting the goals of providing quality education have led to greater demand for private schools. There is also a perceived superior quality of private school education due to which greater number of parents is choosing private school education for their children as they want to provide better future opportunities for their children. School curriculum and language of instruction can also impact parents' preference. Many families choose private schools because they are English-medium that would provide a competitive edge to their wards in the globalized economy. Thus even the families with low socio-economic background are preferring private school education which would enhance the 'linguistic skills' of their children. The popularity of private schooling as a choice even for low-income parents suggests that the demand for private education is likely to be increase throughout the country (Baird, 2009).

Conclusion

Education holds the key to India's growth and socio-economic development. This has assumed greater importance over the last decade with India positioning itself as a knowledge economy in a fast globalizing world. An educated population not only drives economic growth, but also has a positive impact on health and nutrition. Well-balanced education is also essential in building a just and democratic society. Thus, it is indeed critical for India, having a large young population and being low on human development indicators, to fast track access to quality education (Basu, 2013).

Education sector in India is facing serious concerns and encounters. While there is a pressure to prepare *global* citizens who are ready to face the highly competitive world, the grassroots realties present an altered image. The basic aim of education is to enable children develop their potentials, define and pursue a meaningful purpose and recognize the right of others to do the same. However, current research has reflected the need for availability as well as up gradation of physical infrastructure and further deployment of resources to enhance the quality of schooling. On one hand, most private

schools are seen utilizing resources to enable their pupils to express themselves, exploring their natural and social milieu; government schools due to the administrative hurdles and lack of physical infrastructure are unable to cater to the demands of education. This comes as an irony since the government policies and documents clearly focus on responding to the physical, psychosocial and emotional needs of children with the purpose of holistic development of their personalities.

The priority concern for the country remains particularly with improving the quality of education and making education effective, enjoyable and relevant to the children. Schools have to aim at providing children fruitful experiences that enable them to realize fully their innate talents, develop capacities and empower all children in their learning, across differences of castes, religion, gender and disability. Its only when the country will be able to provide quality education to the children across the socio-cultural milieu; it will be able to truly achieve the potentials of a globalized world.

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