



## POLITICS OF ETHICS AND VALUE EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING IN SCHOOLS



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### **Abstract**

*The re-engineering of ethics and value education in schools represents a complex nexus where moral instruction intersects with power dynamics, ideological contestation, and institutional transformation within educational contexts. This paper examines the inherently political nature of moral education reform, acknowledging that such processes involve systematic restructuring of how ethical principles and values are conceptualised, delivered, and embedded within school systems. The research reveals that schools function as sites of ideological negotiation where diverse stakeholders, policymakers, educators, parents, religious leaders, and community representatives compete to influence curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and moral frameworks, receiving institutional legitimacy. Four primary challenges emerge from this political landscape: resource constraints and funding limitations that force difficult prioritisation decisions; ideological conflicts and cultural tensions among diverse stakeholder groups with varying perspectives on appropriate moral instruction; institutional resistance and change management obstacles from established educational practices and entrenched cultures; and assessment and evaluation difficulties inherent in measuring subjective moral development and character formation. The paper proposes strategic solutions, including community partnerships for sustainable funding, inclusive dialogue platforms for culturally sensitive curriculum design, gradual pilot programmes to overcome resistance, and innovative portfolio-based assessment systems.*

### **Introduction**

Education stands as the cornerstone of human civilisation, serving not merely as a vessel for knowledge transmission but as the fundamental architect of societal transformation and national development (Enu & Esu, 2011). Schools, as the primary institutional guardians of learning, bear the profound responsibility of shaping minds, character, and the moral fabric of future generations. Within this educational ecosystem, the integration of ethics and value education emerges as a critical imperative, particularly in contemporary societies grappling with rapid social, economic, and technological changes that challenge traditional moral frameworks.

The concept of value education encompasses the systematic cultivation of moral principles, ethical reasoning, and character development within formal educational settings (Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). It represents a deliberate pedagogical approach designed to foster integrity, responsibility, empathy, and social consciousness amongst learners. Value education transcends the mere acquisition of academic knowledge, extending into holistic human development where intellectual growth is harmoniously balanced with moral and ethical maturation (Ekeh, 2019). This educational philosophy recognises that knowledge without moral grounding may lead to technically competent but ethically deficient individuals who inadvertently contribute to societal decay rather than progress.

Ethics education focuses specifically on the philosophical examination of moral principles and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for ethical decision-making. It involves the systematic study of what constitutes right and wrong, empowering students to navigate complex moral dilemmas with reasoned judgment and fostering a generation capable of addressing modern society's multifaceted challenges with principled approaches.



The re-engineering of value education represents a fundamental reconceptualisation of how moral and ethical instruction is delivered within educational institutions (Nwafor, 2022). This process acknowledges that traditional approaches may no longer adequately address contemporary society's complexities or effectively engage modern learners. Re-engineering involves the systematic redesign of curricula, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and institutional cultures to create more effective, relevant, and impactful value education programmes (Wobo & Chuku, 2024).

However, the implementation of ethics and value education within schools is inherently political, involving complex negotiations between various stakeholders with differing ideological perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and vested interests. The politics of ethics in educational settings manifests in numerous ways, from curriculum content decisions and resource allocation to teacher training priorities and assessment methodologies. Educational policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, religious leaders, and community representatives often hold varying views on what constitutes appropriate moral instruction and whose values should be prioritised.

These political dimensions become particularly pronounced in pluralistic societies where diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions coexist. The challenge lies in developing value education programmes that respect diversity whilst promoting common civic virtues essential for social cohesion and national development. Those with decision-making authority shape not only what values are taught but also how they are presented, which voices are heard, and whose perspectives are marginalised.

The need for rethinking and re-engineering value education has become increasingly urgent as traditional approaches prove inadequate for addressing contemporary challenges such as corruption, social inequality, environmental degradation, and global interconnectedness (Enu & Esu, 2011; Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). Educational systems must evolve to prepare students for a rapidly changing world whilst maintaining their role as guardians of moral and ethical standards, requiring sophisticated approaches that develop ethical reasoning capabilities, cultural competence, and adaptive moral leadership skills (Ekeh, 2019).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Critical Theory**

Critical theory emerged in the 1930s from the Frankfurt School, founded by German philosophers including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, who sought to challenge mechanisms of social oppression within capitalist societies. This theoretical framework fundamentally critiques the relationship between knowledge, power, and society, arguing that traditional approaches often serve to maintain existing power structures rather than questioning them (Tyson, 2023). The theory's core attributes centre on the belief that all knowledge is inherently political, that social institutions perpetuate inequalities through seemingly neutral practices, and that genuine transformation requires critical examination of underlying power dynamics.

Within educational contexts, critical theory manifests as critical pedagogy, which challenges the traditional banking model of education where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students. Instead, it advocates for dialogical education that recognises both educators and learners as critical co-investigators of reality, capable of transforming their world through praxis. Critical pedagogy emphasises that schools are not neutral institutions but are embedded within political structures that can either reproduce existing inequalities or serve as sites of liberation and transformation (Wariboko, 2019).

The relevance of critical theory to the politics of ethics and value education re-engineering is profound. Critical theory illuminates how power dynamics within educational institutions shape what values are deemed legitimate, whose moral frameworks are privileged, and which ethical perspectives are marginalised. This theoretical lens reveals that value education programmes often reflect the interests of dominant groups whilst potentially suppressing alternative moral traditions, particularly those of marginalised communities (Anyanwu, 2018). Critical theory exposes how dominant ideologies become embedded within seemingly objective curricular content and teaching methodologies, thereby naturalising particular value systems whilst rendering others invisible. This understanding reveals the



necessity of critically examining whose values are being promoted and whose voices are excluded from ethical discourse within schools, ultimately fostering more inclusive and socially just approaches to moral instruction.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Ethics in Schools**

Ethics in schools encompasses the moral principles, values, and standards of conduct that govern the behaviour and decision-making processes of all stakeholders within educational environments. This multifaceted concept extends beyond traditional notions of moral instruction to encompass the entire ethical climate and culture that permeates educational institutions. At its core, ethics in schools involves the systematic integration of moral reasoning, character development, and ethical behaviour across all aspects of school life, from curricular content and pedagogical approaches to administrative practices and interpersonal relationships (Uwaezuoke, 2020).

Ethics in schools recognises that educational institutions serve as moral communities where values are not merely taught but lived and experienced daily. This understanding emphasises the critical role of teachers' professional ethics in shaping students' moral development and academic performance. Research demonstrates that teachers' ethical conduct and instructional performance are significantly correlated with students' academic achievement, highlighting the profound impact of educator behaviour on learning outcomes (Ayeni, 2018). Teachers' work values and ethical practices fundamentally influence the moral atmosphere of classrooms and schools, creating environments that either foster or hinder students' character development and academic success.

Furthermore, ethics in schools involves the management and cultivation of ethical behaviour amongst all educational personnel. The ethical conduct of teachers and school administrators directly affects students' academic performance and overall school effectiveness (Ipalibo-Wokoma et al., 2020). These ethical practices in schools are not merely individual concerns but institutional responsibilities that require systematic attention, professional development, and ongoing support. The perception and implementation of work values and ethical practices amongst primary school teachers reveal the complex interplay between personal values, professional standards, and institutional expectations (Ede et al., 2023).

Ultimately, ethics in schools represents a comprehensive approach to moral education that recognises the interconnectedness of ethical behaviour, educational quality, and societal development. These emphasise that sustainable development in education requires the cultivation of ethical practices at all levels of the educational system, ensuring that schools serve as exemplars of moral excellence whilst preparing students to become ethically responsible citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities and nations.

### **Politics of Ethics**

The politics of ethics represents the complex interplay between power structures, ideological frameworks, and moral decision-making processes within institutional contexts. This phenomenon encompasses how ethical principles become contested terrain, where different stakeholders compete to define, legitimise, and implement particular moral visions (Wariboko, 2019). The politics of ethics is particularly pronounced in educational settings, where questions of whose values should be taught, how moral instruction should be delivered, and what constitutes appropriate ethical behaviour become sites of negotiation and struggle between various interest groups (Enu & Esu, 2011).

### **Power Dynamics in Ethical Decision-Making**

The politics of ethics fundamentally concerns the distribution and exercise of power in determining moral standards and ethical practices within institutions. Educational systems exemplify how power dynamics shape ethical discourse, as those in positions of authority—policymakers, administrators, and influential community leaders—possess disproportionate influence in defining what constitutes appropriate moral instruction and behaviour (Tyson, 2023). This power imbalance becomes particularly evident in the implementation of value-based education programmes, where dominant



groups often impose their ethical frameworks whilst marginalising alternative moral perspectives, particularly those of minority communities or dissenting voices (Anyanwu, 2018). The result is a hierarchical system where ethical standards reflect the interests and worldviews of those with decision-making authority, rather than emerging from democratic dialogue or inclusive consultation. This concentration of ethical authority raises critical questions about legitimacy, representation, and the extent to which institutional ethics truly serve the common good or merely perpetuate existing power structures and social inequalities.

### **Ideological Contestation and Moral Frameworks**

The politics of ethics involves ongoing contestation between competing ideological frameworks that seek to establish their particular moral vision as normative and universal. Within educational contexts, this ideological struggle manifests in debates over curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and institutional policies that reflect different philosophical approaches to ethics and values (Ekeh, 2019). Religious, secular, traditional, and progressive ideologies compete for influence in shaping value education programmes, each claiming legitimacy and seeking to embed their moral principles within educational structures (Nwafor, 2022). This contestation reveals that ethics is not a neutral or objective domain but is deeply embedded within broader political and cultural struggles over meaning, identity, and social organisation. The challenge for educational institutions lies in navigating these competing claims whilst developing coherent and effective approaches to moral instruction that acknowledge ideological diversity without descending into relativism or moral paralysis. The politics of ethics thus requires careful negotiation between different moral traditions, seeking common ground whilst respecting legitimate differences in ethical perspective and cultural values.

### **Institutional Legitimacy and Moral Authority**

The politics of ethics encompasses questions of institutional legitimacy and the sources of moral authority within educational and social systems. Schools and other institutions must establish their credibility as moral educators and ethical exemplars, yet this authority is increasingly challenged by diverse stakeholders who question traditional sources of moral guidance (Uwaezuoke, 2020). The legitimacy crisis facing many institutions reflects broader social changes that have undermined traditional authority structures, creating spaces for alternative voices and perspectives to challenge established ethical norms and practices (Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). This political dimension of ethics requires institutions to justify their moral positions and demonstrate their ethical credentials through consistent behaviour and transparent decision-making processes. Teachers, as moral agents within educational systems, face particular challenges in establishing and maintaining their ethical authority, as their professional conduct directly impacts their credibility as moral educators and influences students' perceptions of institutional legitimacy. The politics of ethics thus involves ongoing negotiation between different claims to moral authority and the need to establish trustworthy and credible ethical leadership within educational contexts.

### **Resource Allocation and Ethical Priorities**

The politics of ethics extends to practical questions of resource allocation and the prioritisation of different ethical concerns within institutional contexts. Educational systems must make strategic decisions about how to allocate limited resources—time, funding, personnel, and attention—to various ethical initiatives and moral education programmes (Wobo & Chuku, 2024). These allocation decisions reflect underlying political priorities and reveal which ethical concerns are deemed most important by those with decision-making authority. The competition for resources between different value education programmes, character development initiatives, and ethical training opportunities creates a political arena where different moral priorities must compete for institutional support and recognition (Ede et al., 2023). This resource politics of ethics highlights how moral commitments must be translated into concrete institutional practices and sustained through ongoing investment and support. The challenge lies in developing fair and transparent processes for making these allocation decisions whilst ensuring that resource constraints do not undermine the effectiveness of ethical education or create inequitable



access to moral development opportunities across different student populations and educational contexts.

### **Accountability and Ethical Governance**

The politics of ethics involves complex questions of accountability, governance, and the mechanisms through which ethical standards are established, monitored, and enforced within institutional settings. Educational systems must develop governance structures that ensure ethical behaviour whilst respecting professional autonomy and avoiding excessive bureaucratisation that might undermine moral agency (Ipalibo-Wokoma et al., 2020). This political dimension of ethics encompasses the design of accountability mechanisms, the establishment of ethical oversight bodies, and the creation of processes for addressing ethical violations or moral conflicts within educational contexts. The challenge lies in balancing the need for clear ethical standards and enforcement mechanisms with respect for individual conscience and professional judgment (Ayeni, 2018). Political considerations also arise in determining who has the authority to judge ethical behaviour, what processes should be followed in investigating ethical concerns, and how sanctions or remedial actions should be applied when ethical standards are violated. The politics of ethics thus requires careful attention to procedural justice, due process, and the fair treatment of all stakeholders whilst maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of ethical governance systems within educational institutions and broader social contexts.

### **Value Education**

Value education represents a comprehensive pedagogical approach that seeks to cultivate moral principles, ethical reasoning, and character development within formal educational settings. It encompasses the systematic transmission of societal values, cultural norms, and ethical standards that are deemed essential for producing responsible, morally conscious citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to national development and social progress (Enu & Esu, 2011). Unlike traditional academic subjects that focus primarily on knowledge acquisition, value education integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of learning to foster holistic human development that balances intellectual growth with moral maturation.

The conceptualisation of value education extends beyond mere moral instruction to encompass the entire educational environment and culture that shapes students' character and ethical sensibilities (Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). This educational philosophy recognises that values are not merely abstract concepts to be studied but lived experiences that must be modelled, practised, and internalised through meaningful engagement with moral dilemmas and ethical challenges. Value education serves as a crucial instrument for socio-political and economic development, as it produces graduates who possess not only technical competence but also the moral foundation necessary for ethical leadership and responsible citizenship (Ekeh, 2019).

Effective implementation of value-based education requires careful consideration of cultural contexts, diverse perspectives, and the complex interplay between traditional values and contemporary challenges facing modern societies (Nwafor, 2022). This educational approach must navigate the delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and preparing students for an increasingly globalised world, ensuring that value education remains relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of diverse learners and communities.

### **Politics of Ethics and Value Education Re-engineering in Schools**

The politics of ethics and value education re-engineering in schools represents a complex nexus where moral instruction intersects with power dynamics, ideological contestation, and institutional transformation within educational contexts. This phenomenon encompasses the systematic restructuring of how ethical principles and values are conceptualised, delivered, and embedded within school systems, acknowledging that such processes are inherently political rather than purely pedagogical endeavours (Enu & Esu, 2011). The re-engineering of value education involves fundamental reconceptualisation of traditional approaches to moral instruction, requiring careful navigation of



competing stakeholder interests, cultural sensitivities, and philosophical differences about the nature and purpose of ethical education.

Within this political system, schools become sites of ideological negotiation where different groups seek to influence what values are taught, how they are presented, and which moral frameworks receive institutional legitimacy and support (Wariboko, 2019). The process of re-engineering value education necessarily involves power struggles between various stakeholders—policymakers, educators, parents, religious leaders, and community representatives—each bringing distinct perspectives about appropriate moral instruction and ethical behaviour. These competing voices create tension between preserving traditional values and adapting to contemporary challenges, between maintaining cultural authenticity and embracing global citizenship, and between promoting universal ethical principles and respecting diverse moral traditions.

The implementation of ethics and value education re-engineering programmes reveals how institutional politics shape educational outcomes and student development (Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). Decision-making processes regarding curriculum content, teaching methodologies, resource allocation, and assessment strategies reflect underlying power structures and ideological preferences within educational systems. The challenge lies in developing inclusive approaches that acknowledge diverse perspectives whilst maintaining a coherent moral vision and effective pedagogical practice. This political dimension requires careful attention to democratic participation, transparent decision-making, and equitable representation of different stakeholder groups in shaping value education initiatives.

Furthermore, the politics of ethics and value education re-engineering involves questions of accountability, legitimacy, and the measurement of moral development within educational contexts (Ekeh, 2019). Schools must justify their ethical programmes to diverse constituencies whilst demonstrating tangible outcomes in character development and moral behaviour, creating complex political dynamics around evaluation, funding, and institutional credibility in moral education endeavours.

### **Strategies for Effective Re-engineering**

The successful re-engineering of ethics and value education in schools requires systematic and comprehensive approaches that address the complex challenges inherent in transforming moral instruction within educational contexts. Effective re-engineering involves moving beyond traditional approaches to embrace innovative strategies that acknowledge the political dimensions of value education whilst ensuring meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholders and sustainable implementation of reformed programmes. These strategic approaches must balance theoretical foundations with practical considerations, ensuring that re-engineered value education systems are both pedagogically sound and institutionally viable.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Effective re-engineering of ethics and value education requires comprehensive stakeholder engagement that brings together diverse voices and perspectives in collaborative dialogue and decision-making processes. This approach recognises that value education is not solely the domain of educators and administrators but involves the broader community, including parents, religious leaders, cultural representatives, and students themselves (Wobo & Chuku, 2024). Meaningful stakeholder engagement ensures that re-engineering efforts reflect the values and priorities of the communities they serve, whilst maintaining educational coherence and institutional integrity. This collaborative approach helps to build consensus around moral instruction goals, reduces resistance to change, and creates shared ownership of value education initiatives that enhance their sustainability and effectiveness.

### **Policy Development**

Strategic policy development provides the institutional framework necessary for the successful re-engineering of ethics and value education programmes within schools. Comprehensive policy frameworks establish clear guidelines, standards, and expectations for moral instruction whilst providing flexibility for contextual adaptation and innovation (Nwafor, 2022). Effective policy



development involves systematic analysis of existing approaches, identification of gaps and challenges, and the creation of coherent strategies that align value education with broader educational objectives and national development goals. Well-designed policies also establish accountability mechanisms, resource allocation priorities, and professional development requirements that support sustainable implementation of re-engineered value education programmes across diverse educational contexts and institutional settings.

### **Professional Development and Teacher Training**

Comprehensive professional development and teacher training programmes are essential for equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to deliver effective ethics and value education in re-engineered educational contexts. Teachers require specialised preparation that goes beyond traditional subject matter expertise to include understanding of moral development theory, ethical reasoning skills, and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches (Uwaezuoke, 2020). Professional development initiatives must address both theoretical foundations and practical strategies for implementing value-based instruction, helping teachers navigate complex moral terrain whilst maintaining their role as ethical exemplars. Ongoing support and continuous learning opportunities ensure that educators remain current with best practices and can adapt their approaches to meet evolving student needs and societal expectations.

### **Curriculum Integration and Pedagogical Innovation**

Effective re-engineering requires innovative approaches to curriculum integration that embed ethics and values across all subject areas rather than treating moral instruction as an isolated component of education. This holistic approach recognises that value development occurs through multiple channels and requires consistent reinforcement across the educational experience (Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017). Pedagogical innovation involves adopting interactive, experiential learning methodologies that engage students actively in exploring ethical dilemmas, practising moral reasoning, and developing character through meaningful activities. Curriculum integration also requires alignment between formal instruction, hidden curriculum elements, and the broader school culture to create coherent moral learning environments that support comprehensive character development and ethical maturation.

### **Challenges to the Politics of Ethics and Value Education Re-engineering in Schools**

The re-engineering of ethics and value education in schools faces numerous complex challenges that emerge from the inherently political nature of moral instruction and the diverse interests of multiple stakeholders. These challenges reflect the tensions between maintaining traditional values and adapting to contemporary realities, between preserving cultural authenticity and embracing global perspectives, and between achieving institutional coherence and respecting individual autonomy. Understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective strategies that can navigate the political complexities whilst ensuring the successful implementation of reformed value education programmes.

### **Resource Constraints and Funding Limitations**

Inadequate financial resources and limited funding allocations present significant challenges to the effective re-engineering of ethics and value education programmes in schools. Educational institutions often struggle with competing priorities for scarce resources, forcing difficult decisions about whether to invest in value education initiatives or other pressing academic needs (Wobo & Chuku, 2024). These resource constraints affect teacher training opportunities, curriculum development, materials acquisition, and programme sustainability, creating barriers to the comprehensive implementation of re-engineered approaches. The political dimensions of resource allocation further complicate matters, as different stakeholder groups advocate for their preferred priorities whilst educational leaders must navigate these competing demands within constrained budgets and institutional limitations.



### **Ideological Conflicts and Cultural Tensions**

Conflicting ideological perspectives and cultural tensions among diverse stakeholder groups create substantial challenges for re-engineering ethics and value education programmes. Different religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions hold varying views about appropriate moral instruction, creating friction when attempting to develop inclusive approaches that satisfy all constituencies (Anyanwu, 2018). These ideological conflicts often manifest in disputes over curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and the philosophical foundations underlying value education programmes. The challenge lies in navigating these differences whilst maintaining educational coherence and institutional integrity, requiring careful negotiation and compromise that may satisfy no group completely whilst attempting to serve the broader educational mission effectively.

### **Institutional Resistance and Change Management**

Institutional resistance to change presents significant obstacles to the successful re-engineering of ethics and value education in schools. Established educational practices, traditional approaches to moral instruction, and entrenched institutional cultures create inertia that impedes transformation efforts (Enu & Esu, 2011). Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders may resist new approaches due to familiarity with existing methods, concerns about additional workload, or scepticism about the effectiveness of proposed changes. Overcoming this resistance requires comprehensive change management strategies that address fears and concerns while building support for re-engineered approaches through demonstration of benefits, provision of adequate support, and recognition of legitimate concerns about implementation challenges.

### **Assessment and Evaluation Difficulties**

The assessment and evaluation of ethics and value education present unique challenges that complicate re-engineering efforts in schools. Unlike traditional academic subjects, moral development and character formation are difficult to measure objectively, creating problems for accountability systems and programme evaluation (Ekeh, 2019). The subjective nature of ethical behaviour and the long-term timeframe required for character development make it challenging to demonstrate programme effectiveness to stakeholders who demand evidence of success. These assessment difficulties affect funding decisions, policy support, and institutional credibility, requiring innovative approaches to evaluation that can capture the complex dimensions of moral learning whilst satisfying accountability requirements and stakeholder expectations for measurable outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

The re-engineering of ethics and value education in schools emerges as a fundamentally political endeavour that requires sophisticated navigation of competing interests, ideological frameworks, and institutional dynamics. This examination reveals that successful moral education reform cannot be achieved through purely pedagogical approaches but demands a comprehensive understanding of power structures, stakeholder engagement, and cultural sensitivities inherent in educational transformation. The four critical challenges identified, resource constraints, ideological conflicts, institutional resistance, and assessment difficulties, underscore the complexity of implementing meaningful change in value education systems. These obstacles reflect deeper tensions between preserving traditional moral frameworks and adapting to contemporary realities, between maintaining cultural authenticity and embracing global perspectives. However, the strategic solutions proposed demonstrate pathways for overcoming these challenges through collaborative stakeholder engagement, innovative funding mechanisms, gradual implementation approaches, and creative assessment methodologies. Success in re-engineering value education requires recognising that schools function as moral communities where values are lived rather than merely taught. Ultimately, effective ethics and value education re-engineering demands institutional commitment to democratic dialogue, inclusive decision-making, and sustained investment in professional development, ensuring that reformed programmes serve diverse communities while maintaining educational coherence and moral integrity.



## Suggestions

Based on the challenges identified, here are my suggestions:

- The government should develop strategic partnerships with community organisations and businesses to secure sustainable funding for the comprehensive ethics education programme implementation.
- The government should create inclusive dialogue platforms where diverse stakeholders collaboratively design culturally sensitive curricula that respect multiple perspectives while maintaining core values.
- The government should implement gradual pilot programmes with volunteer teachers, providing extensive support and showcasing early successes to build momentum for broader adoption.
- The government should design portfolio-based assessment systems combining behavioural observations, peer feedback, and long-term tracking to measure character development and ethical growth effectively.

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