



Vocational High School Strategic Efforts in Dealing with ASEAN Economic Communities

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Abstract: This study aims to reveal the readiness and efforts of vocational high schools in dealing with the ASEAN economic community. This research was qualitative research with an ethnographic design. Informants in this study were the principal, deputy head of the curriculum, the head of the accounting department, and the accounting teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta. The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews and observation. Data analysis was carried out through data collection, data reduction, and data presentation to draw conclusions. The results of this study showed that SMKN 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta made preparatory efforts to deal with the ASEAN economic community. Those preparatory efforts included increasing the students' skills through learning, both theoretically and practically, inside and outside the school environment, such as collaborating with the industrial and the business field, implementing the 2013 curriculum, increasing teacher knowledge through MGMP (Deliberation Subject Teachers), inviting teachers from institutions or universities, and completing school infrastructure. The research conducted in both schools revealed differences in efforts to prepare their students. These differences include SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar innovating to invite other teachers to update the knowledge of teachers and students, build their accounting laboratories, and support teachers to be assessors. Meanwhile, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta lacks school innovation and teachers as assessors. Furthermore, the laboratory of accounting majors is also used as other majors.

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Introduction

Cooperation between countries in ASEAN is established upon several key areas, i.e., economic, security, and social culture. In 2015, Indonesia entered a new phase in global competition. One of the manifestations is the ASEAN community through the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). The AEC community creates a stable, prosperous, and competitive ASEAN economy. Labor competition in the AEC era is highly unrestricted since Indonesia will be flocked by workers and business people from foreign countries in the ASEAN region. Without skilled, qualified, and professional human resources owned by the Indonesian people, certainly, Indonesia will only create unskilled workers, such as laborers and housemaids (Johan, 2014).

According to Atef (2018), increasing the number of highly educated human resources is necessary to improve quality and competitiveness. Education is the keyword in every effort to improve the quality of human life and life maturation. The focus of education seizes the



formation of a superior individual and makes one who grows in line with his talents, character, abilities, and conscience intact (Praptini, 2014; Hermino, 2016). Education is a conscious and planned effort to develop students' self-potential to have spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills required by themselves, society, nation, and country. Based on the demands of the times, such as the AEC, education must generate students to develop their potential (Tasiam & Kustono, 2017; Ulum & Ismanto, 2017).

Vocational High School (SMK) is a secondary education level that prioritizes the development of personal abilities and emphasizes the preparation of students' professional attitudes to join the workforce, such as implementing the Dual-System Education (*Pendidikan Sistem Ganda* or *PSG*) program. Based on the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia Number 323/ U/1997 article 1 paragraph 1, the definition of dual-system education is a form of organization of vocational skills education that systematically and synchronously combines the educational programs in vocational high schools with the skills mastery program obtained through working directly on real work at a partner institution, directed to achieve a certain level of professional expertise (Mahmudi, 2013).

A dual-system education approach usually implemented in Indonesia is industrial work practices (*praktek kerja industri* or *prakerin*) or collaboration between schools and businesses as a place for students to obtain work training (Kuat, 2015). In addition to dual-system education, there is a vocational education approach to produce skilled workers in their fields, namely work-based learning.

Through work-based learning, students can develop attitudes, knowledge, skills, enlightenment, behavior, habits, and connections as learning relates to real-life work activities (Fallows & Weller, 2014). Hence, the government establishes vocational schools to prepare people at productive ages after graduation to be ready to join the workplaces so that unemployment after graduating from school can be reduced. According to Tobari, Kristiawan, & Asvio (2018), Vocational Schools are educational institutions that attempt to bear the potential generation who are ready to compete. One of Indonesia's most popular majors is Accounting since the jobs offered in the accounting department are quite extensive compared to other majors.

Through vocational accounting, students are assisted in improving their potential and skills in accounting. The learning potential is used to achieve cognitive abilities by using these skills in the right situation to solve shortcomings (Sternberg R. J., & Grigorenko, 2000). The ability of attitude and knowledge capacity workers possess determine their professional level (Sultana & Ibrahim, 2014).

One of the competitions in the AEC is the labor market competition that will be joined freely and leave foreign workers in the ASEAN region. It will create high competition in the ASEAN region (Putra, Siswandari, & Jarwanto, 2017). Numerous SMK graduates are not ready to join the high workplace competition in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) era. Therefore, schools must conduct a strategy, especially SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta, to prepare their students to face AEC. This study aims to reveal the readiness and efforts of SMK N 1 Karanganyar as a public school and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta as a private school in dealing with the ASEAN economic community.



Research Method

This research was a qualitative study because the data generated are descriptive, while the research design used is ethnographic. Ethnography research is qualitative research that examines the life of an educational group/community, conducted scientifically, and aims to study, describe, analyze, and interpret the cultural patterns of a group in terms of structure, relationships between structures, values, behavior, beliefs, language, and views (Harsono, 2019).

The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews and observation. Interviews were conducted with the principal, deputy head of the curriculum, the head of the accounting department, and the accounting teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta. The interview issues were the informants' knowledge about the AEC and the extent of the efforts made by the school in dealing with the AEC. At the same time, the observations were the condition of the school environment, teaching and learning activities, and school infrastructure—data validation utilized source triangulation, that is, a comparison of various data sources with other data. The data analysis technique applied the model of Miles and Huberman's (2014) data analysis techniques with stages of data analysis, from data collection, data reduction, and data presentation to conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of research conducted by researchers on two vocational high schools, there are some differences in efforts to prepare students for AEC. This is all information from the research obtained through the results of interviews with SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar (table 1).

Table 1. Results of interviews related to efforts to prepare students for MEA in SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar

Informant	Interview Result
Informant 1	We prepare students with theoretical skills and practical internships directly at companies and agencies. Further, our school also has an Arta Unggul bank managed by accounting students and guided by an accompanying teacher. Besides chairs, desks, and blackboards, the classroom has LCD (liquid crystal display), projectors, and internet networks to complete the learning process. The accounting practice room has its laboratory, and each student holds his or her accounting computer. For teachers' knowledge and insights, we usually have workshops from Deliberation Subject Teachers (MGMP), and we also work with industry and business fields to align market needs and the curriculum being taught.
Informant 2	Students should be equipped with skills. For the competencies, there are C1 for vocational fields and C2 for basic vocational programs such as basic accounting spreadsheets, banking accounting, and professional ethics. In terms of the quality of the teachers, several assessor accounting teachers are the examiners assigned by the Professional Certification Agency (Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi or LSP). To develop the ability of teachers every month, the concerned government (education office) organizes workshops from the relevant department, PPG, and invites guest teachers. Accounting major already has a mini bank, accounting laboratory, and a comfortable class



Informant 3

The school infrastructure facilities in SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar, accounting major, are already good for students learning. The Unggul Arta Bank is where students can practice directly and continuously. Besides, there are BKK (Special Work Exchanges) where BKK can facilitate graduate distribution to companies. BKK itself has collaborated with various companies inside and outside the country. In Learning facilities, there are accounting laboratories and theory classes.

Based on the results of the interview with informants from SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar, it shows that the school's effort to prepare its students for facing AEC was by giving students the form of accounting theory skills and practice skills obtained through fieldwork practices (*Praktik Kerja Lapangan* or PKL) in companies or government agencies. In the theory field, students were taught the practice of accounting services and trade, accounting institutions and government, MYOB (Mind Your Own Business), entrepreneurial, creative products, and tax administration. Each subject was delivered by a different teacher according to the respective competency so that the teacher's professionalism could be maintained, and students were not easily bored with the teacher if teachers changed in each subject. However, concerning this issue, the students' competency must ultimately be examined by First-Party Professional Certification Agency (LSPP1 or *Lembaga Sertifikat Profesi Pihak Pertama*), which has received a license from the Indonesian National Certification Agency (BNSP).

The other effort of SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar in preparing their students to face AEC was by providing a Mini bank (Arta Unggul), which is managed by accounting students guided by accompanying teachers. Besides that, those efforts included involving students in the competency test, applying discipline such as joining a class on time, praying before class begins, and accustoming students to ask for permission from the counseling teacher when they have to leave class during a learning activity. For those who defied the regulation, the school would provide sanctions. Students were also equipped with character education through extracurricular activities that were free to choose as a means of developing their potential outside of learning activities. At the same time, it is also a means of working together and educating a sense of responsibility. Extracurricular activities available at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar include OSIS, basketball, volleyball, scouts, youth red cross, spirituality, and school security patrol.

Other efforts made by teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar to support students' skills were equipping classrooms with chairs, tables, blackboards, liquid crystal displays, projectors, air conditioners, and internet networks. Therefore, students can enjoy learning, and their learning needs also can be fulfilled. The school also provided its laboratory for accounting practices, and each student held an accounting computer. In addition to school students, the school provided facilities for graduates who wanted to be involved in the workplace by following the BKK program. All teachers at SMK N 1 Karanganyar follow government standards with SKKNI (Indonesian National Work Competency Standards). Teachers' knowledge and insights are renewed with the presence of invited teachers from companies and universities, workshops from MGMP, and collaboration with industry and business fields. The collaboration is to harmonize the curriculum taught in schools with market needs. Moreover, teachers are also obliged to follow PPG (Teacher Professional Education).



The research results through interviews and observations at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar proved that the school made various efforts. Those efforts range from preparing students' skills and improving the quality of teachers to completing school facilities. The detailed efforts shown by SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar include several aspects, as follows:

a) Preparation of Accounting Students Skills

The skills provided were in the form of real skills in the world of work and theoretical skills delivered by teachers. The theoretical skills were taught to students through lessons and outside of school. Learning in schools can be theory delivery or practice in the laboratory. According to the application, accounting lessons in class generally cover basic accounting subjects, banking accounting, professional ethics, accounting for trade services, accounting for institutions and government, entrepreneurial, creative products, and tax administration. Meanwhile, learning practices in the laboratory include spreadsheets, trading practice accounting services, and MYOB.

Furthermore, for the accounting department, facilities were provided in the form of a mini bank called the Arta Unggul Bank, whose management is given to the accounting department. Accounting students were trained to be familiar with the banking domain directly by giving the duty to maintain and serve every transaction in the mini-bank. In improving the student's skills, students were also given time to study outside of school through internships/fieldwork practices (PKL). PKL partners with the industrial and business field or government agencies. The practice of fieldwork is intended so that students can develop professional skills in line with their respective fields of competence. Moreover, students can experience the real world of work. Hence, it is expected that they already have sufficient experience when graduating.

Another aspect that strengthens students' readiness in facing AEC is the existence of student certification through competency tests conducted through LSPP1, which has been licensed by BNSP (Indonesian National Certification Agency). SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar is one of the schools permitted to conduct competency tests so that students can receive a certificate of expertise. SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar also provides readiness in terms of character. The character instilled discipline by joining a class on time, praying before class begins, and accustoming students to ask for permission from the counseling teacher when they have to leave class during a learning activity. For those who defy the regulation, the school will provide sanctions. It is in line with the vision of the accounting department, which is to accomplish competency in accounting and quality expertise in the business field to reach global competition. Based on the research results, the character education instilled in students by SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar is discipline, religious, and responsible.

b) Educators or Teachers

Based on a statement one of the informants stated, "in my opinion, students depend on the guidance of the teacher. It means that if the teacher is ready, then the teacher can construct students according to what he/she taught". That statement concludes that the teacher is a crucial factor in constructing human resources. Accounting teachers in SMK 1 Karanganyar have a minimum accounting bachelor's degree qualification, either pure or education. Further, most of the teachers have participated in PPG (Teacher Professional Education) as one of the improvements in the quality of teachers. It is expected that good competency of teachers is followed by good income and good performance, which in turn will bring a good KBM (Teaching and Learning Activities). A good KBM can produce a high-quality education (Suranto, 2016). Moreover, most



accounting teachers have become assessors. In improving and renewing teacher knowledge, there are MGMP workshops to discuss curriculum or all educational needs and invited teachers from companies or lecturers to update teacher and student knowledge. According to Sharma, Joshi & Kansal (2017), the realignment of processes has future-oriented, relating to various changes in the curriculum to align graduates with changes. Principal policy support for increasing teacher competence can also improve teacher quality (Rohmah, Nurjanah, & Hayati, 2017).

c) School facility

Based on the research results, the facilities owned by the accounting department were already complete. The accounting department provided a comfortable classroom with a complete LCD projector (liquid crystal display), an accounting laboratory equipped with a computer that can be accessed by students one person, and an internet network in all areas of the school. Additionally, there is a mini bank (Unggul Artha Bank) where the manager is an accounting student accompanied by a responsible teacher. According to Sari (2016), infrastructure positively and significantly affects motivation and learning outcomes.

Based on the research results, the obstacles faced by SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar include the following: (a) graduate students need more confidence to compete abroad, (b) Parents do not approve of their children being proposed to work abroad, (c) Students have inadequate international languages, especially English, (d) There are no teaching factory products produced yet, (e) There is difficulty in finding suitable partner industries for internships and channeling graduates. The following excerpts are the information obtained from research through the results of informant interviews at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of interviews related to efforts to prepare students for MEA in SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta

Informant	Interview Result
Informant 4	Every year we invite students to take the LSPP1 (First-Party Professional Certification Agency) test, where there is SMK 6 Surakarta in the Solo area. Besides, students practice in the Primary Tax Service Office (KPP Pratama) of Purwosari, government agencies, and other private agencies. Additionally, an accounting major has Mentari Bank, which is managed by accounting students and guided by an accounting teacher. There is a forum called MGMP (Deliberation Subject Teachers) for developing teaching skills. Regarding infrastructure facilities, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta is a technology-based school. It means an LCD (liquid crystal display) is in the classroom. Our school exam is based on Android. The school also has a complete computer for the laboratory. Additionally, this school already has WiFi to support the learning activity.
Informant 5	For character education, the school prepares students in various forms. For examples are <i>Hisbul Wathan</i> (Scouting), PMR (Youth Red Cross), IPM (Muhammadiyah Youth Association), and also the regulation of the school, such as discipline to go to school, get dressed, have a good manner in behavior,



Informant 6

be honest in speaking, and pray on time. To improve the quality and knowledge of teachers, teachers attend workshops organized by MGMP.

We also adjust teaching practices with the cooperation of industry and the business field. Thus, the curriculum we teach is in line with market needs. The facilities of the school are sufficient. The class already has an LCD (liquid crystal display) and Android for the accounting major laboratory. Many students, after graduation, are channeled domestically and abroad, especially in Malaysia (in companies and shops).

From the results of the interview at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta, to face the AEC, the aspects that schools have prepared include equipping students with skills through work practices both directly and indirectly, such as practices in school laboratories, Mentari bank school property and fieldwork practices that held in companies, government institution, and private agencies. Fieldwork practices aim to channel graduates and synchronize the curriculum with the skills that must be prepared to fit the market's needs. For that reason, the school partners with the industrial world or the business field. The skills owned by students are also proven by following the competency test of LSPP1 (First Party Professional Certification Agency), held at SMK 6 Surakarta, to obtain a competency certificate.

Regarding character education, schools apply it in various aspects, for example, in *Hizbul Wathan* (Scouting), PMR (Youth Red Cross), IPM (Muhammadiyah Youth Association), and also the regulation of the school, such as discipline to go to school, get dressed, have a good manner, be honest in speaking, and pray on time. This effort aims to educate students so that they have the character of discipline, responsibility, and honesty and can be implemented later in the workplace because attitude is one of the aspects considered in the real world of work. The school also required teachers to attend workshops organized by MGMP and PPG activities to enhance the knowledge and quality of teachers in the school.

MGMP also discusses curriculum or learning methods using e-learning and issues relating to productive subjects. It concerns students' skills in using technology and the abilities of each student according to their field of competence. The teacher strives to target indicators of competency achievement, adjusting to the current situation, where the teacher must also be skilled in keeping abreast of the times. Regarding facilities, the school provided classes with LCD (liquid crystal display), internet networks, laboratories for students to practice, and a mini bank. This mini-bank is specifically for customers inside the school to facilitate school financial transactions so that students can learn directly about transactions and activities of financial institutions.

The results of research conducted by researchers through interviews and observations at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta comprise creating various efforts ranging from preparing students' skills, improving the quality of teachers, and completing school facilities. The detailed efforts undertaken by the school at SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar include several aspects include:

a) Preparation of Accounting Students Skills

Vocational education has different characteristics from education in general, such as educational criteria, the substance of the lesson, and its graduates (Johan, 2013). Hence, constructing students who are skilled in their fields requires much training both inside and outside of school. In this regard, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta



implemented the efforts in the form of theory reinforcement in the classroom, practice in the laboratory, and practice of fieldwork in companies that cooperate with the business field, industry, and government agencies. The other effort is implemented through extracurricular activities such as Hisbul Wathan (Scouting), PMR (Youth Red Cross), and IPM (Muhammadiyah Youth Association), which can support students' soft skills. Another way to develop work skills is by collaborating between educational institutions and related industries, focusing on learning outcomes and competencies that must be achieved so students can succeed in their careers (Jauhari, 2013).

In addition to practices such as spreadsheets and MYOB (accounting computers) in school laboratories, accounting students also practice in mini banks (Mentari Bank) schools. SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta also registered the students in the competency test conducted by the First Party Professional Certification Agency (LSPP1), where the certificate is useful as proof of work competency of the students.

Based on the research of Mustika, Nurjanah, & Chisbiyah (2017), Fieldwork Practice affects students' soft skills. In the implementation, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta assigned the accounting students to banks and government institutions such as the Primary Tax Service Office (KPP Pratama) of Purwosari.

Other aspects that support students' skills include character education. Character education forms students' concepts, attitudes, and moral behavior so that they are not trapped in a circle of behavior contrary to the rules of the social system (Harsono, 2017). In line with this, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta provided character education for students through conducting extracurricular, implementing disciplines, and accustoming students to pray collectively at school. The efforts are conducted by schools so that their students have a sense of hard work, cooperation, discipline, and responsibility in the world of work and society.

b) Teachers

Based on the research, the teacher is one factor that influences school preparation in facing AEC. Teachers have a role as educators who go directly to students and implement the applied curriculum. In this regard, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta continues to improve the knowledge of teachers by actively participating in workshops from MGMP (Deliberation Subject Teachers), PPG (Teacher Professional Education) and establishing cooperation with the industry and business field to improve the quality of learning that leads to improving the readiness of graduates in facing AEC.

c) Facilities and infrastructure

Providing school facilities and infrastructure is one of the efforts to deal with the ASEAN Economic Community. Based on the study results stated by the informant, the facilities and infrastructure prepared by the accounting department included classrooms equipped with LCD (liquid crystal display), a projector, and an internet network. Internet network supports the learning process so students can search for incomplete material online. Hence, it helps maximize the teacher's task in delivering material. Moreover, there is a Mentari Bank that can be used by accounting students to practice their skills and laboratories, even though there is only one for all majors. However, students and teachers tried to learn maximally. Based on the research conducted by Setiadi and Eko (2008), infrastructure significantly affects student learning outcomes.

Based on the research results, the obstacle experienced by SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta is the lack of funds to accomplish learning support infrastructure, especially accounting laboratories. The other obstacles are: (a) The graduate students are not confident about



competing abroad, (b) Students have inadequate international languages, especially English, (c) There are no teaching factory products produced yet.

A similar result is also expressed by Johan (2014) in a study entitled “*Peran Pendidikan Kejuruan dalam Menghadapi Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA)*.” Vocational education positively contributes to economic growth in Indonesia through the ability to produce human resources or a skilled and productive workforce according to the demands of the globalization era. Vocational education can be interpreted as a worldwide education. According to Zekos (2003), increased transfer of technology and other types of knowledge can weaken competitiveness. It is caused by the world of work and works changing and developing due to technological advances. In organizing effective vocational education, several efforts need to be considered including:

- a) The training tasks are conducted similarly, device and machine, to those set at the workplace (facilities).
- b) Students are trained in thinking and working as required in the job market
- c) The teacher has successful experience in applying skills and knowledge to the operations and work processes that will be conducted.
- d) Since the beginning of the exercise, there has been accustoming behavior that will be performed in their work (learners' skills).
- e) Training is given in real work.

Based on the study results, there were similarities and differences between SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta in dealing with the AEC.

1). Similarities

- a. The teachers participate in the MGMP (Deliberation Subject Teachers) to renew their knowledge and skills.
- b. Both schools equip students with theoretical skills in the classroom and practice at the company.
- c. Both schools apply the 2016 revised 2013 curriculum.
- d. Certification for students with a competency test with LSPP1 (First Party Professional Certification Agency)
- e. Both schools equip students with character and religious education
- f. Both schools collaborate with the industrial and the business fields
- g. Both schools complete school facilities and infrastructure, especially for supporting the skills of students.
- h. Both schools channel graduates to work both domestically and abroad.

2). Differences

These differences include SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar innovating to invite other teachers to update the knowledge of teachers and students, build their accounting laboratories, and support teachers to be assessors. Meanwhile, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta has no innovation from the school and the absence of teachers as assessors. Moreover, the laboratory of accounting majors has yet to be specifically proposed alternating with other majors. These differences make SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar better equipped to face the AEC. It is proven that if there is a teacher who becomes an assessor, students are more ready to take the competency test.

In addition to being an assessor in supporting learning, SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar created innovation by inviting teachers from universities or companies to become speakers for teachers and students. It is done to update the knowledge of students and teachers. The laboratory is also one of the factors to support the creation of good learning; without facilities



such as tools that support the practice, vocational school students will not be able to learn optimally (Wahono, 2015).

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussions, it can be concluded that SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta have made preparatory efforts to deal with the ASEAN economic community by preparing students' skills through conducting reinforcement both in theory and practice, improving the quality of teaching staff, and implementing the 2013 curriculum where the curriculum demanded students to think creatively, critical, and independent. The other efforts are improving school facilities and instilling character education to produce accountants with ethics, honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, and professionalism. Research conducted on the two schools revealed differences in the efforts to prepare students. These differences include SMK Negeri 1 Karanganyar innovating to invite other teachers to update the knowledge of teachers and students, build their accounting laboratories, and support teachers to be assessors. Meanwhile, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta has no school innovation or teacher who becomes an assessor. Further, the laboratory of accounting majors is as yet alternating with other majors.

Recommendation

The recommendations in this study are that schools need sustainable readiness in facing the ASEAN economic community by carrying out: 1) Adjusting the curriculum (link and match) according to the development of competencies needed in the industry, 2) Increasing the competency and professionalism of SMK teachers, 3) Improving learning facilities in schools, 4) Increasing collaboration with industry. These steps are expected to produce productive, creative, and innovative SMK graduates ready to compete in the ASEAN economic community.

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