



Analysis of Factors Responsible for Poor Funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria and Way Forward

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Annotation:

Purpose: This paper discussed the factors responsible for poor funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria.

Method: Content analysis method was adopted in the paper. Data used were both primary and secondary data. The data were sourced from online and print resources.

Conclusion: The paper concludes that poor implementation of national policy on education on funding, fall short in national revenue, insecurity, lack of political will to access federal counterpart funds, corruption, poor implementation of UNESCO 26% recommendation for education, poor allocation of funds to early child education, poor support from private sector, subsidy payment and debt servicing are the factors responsible for the poor allocation of funds to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria.

Recommendation: The government both federal and state government should increase the funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, Funding, revenue, Subsidy.

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Introduction

The smooth running of any educational institution depends largely on the availability of resources, be it human, material or financial. These resources also determine to a large extent the achievement of the set goals of any organization (Gambo, & Fasanmi, 2019). Gambo, & Fasanmi, (2019) and Ozigi & Canham (1979) stated that no organization can carry out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal. Funding which represents financial resources plays a vital role in the development of universities. Therefore, the funding of education is a vital area of Economics of Education (Gambo, & Fasanmi, 2019; Akangbou, 1986).

In Nigeria educational institutions are always faced with the challenges of adequate funding. This problem is cut across all the forms of educational institutions such as the tertiary institutions, secondary schools and the basic education which include the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). A study by Budget in Nigeria indicated that in 2022, Nigeria budget for some sector showed that that Defence and Security got N2.41 trillion (15%); Infrastructure N1.45 trillion (8.9%); Health N820 billion (5%); Social Development and Poverty Eradication N863 billion

(5.3%) and Education N1.29 trillion (7.9%) of the entire allocation. The history of education funding in Nigeria showed that from 2011, education got N393.8 billion or 9.3 per cent of the total budget; N468.3 billion or 9.86 per cent in 2012; N499.7 billion or 10.1 per cent in 2013; N494.7 billion or 10.5 per cent in 2014; N484.2 billion or 10.7 per cent in 2015; N369.6 billion or 7.9 per cent of the total budget in 2016; N550.5 billion in 2017 representing 7.4 per cent of the total budget; N605.8 billion in 2018 or 7.04 per cent; N620.5 billion or 7.05 per cent in 2019 and N671.07 billion or 6.7 per cent in 2020 and N742.5 billion or 5.68 per cent of the total budget in 2021 (Blueprint 2021).

In 2022, the federal ministry of education was allotted N65.3 billion, out of which UBEC which supervises Education at basic education and junior secondary school levels got N77.6 billion. The remaining N599.6b was shared across 21 commissions and agencies under the federal ministry of education with an average of N28.5 billion per institution. The budgetary allocation for the administration and management of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) at both the federal, state and local government level is considered poor and inadequate. It is important to analyse factors responsible for the poor allocation of funds to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria.

Concept of Early Child Education

The federal government first introduced the Universal Basic Education Programme in 1999 as a reform programme in education, aimed at providing greater access to, and ensuring quality of basic education in Nigeria. As a free, universal, and compulsory basic education programme, it was later backed by the UBE Act 2004, which made the provision for basic education consisting of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Primary education and Junior Secondary Education (Blueprint 2021). The programme is seen as a demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to global protocols and conventions on education, including the Rights of the Child Convention (1989) and the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (1990). One of the major goals of the UBE programme is to ensure that all children, regardless of ethnicity, religion, class, or gender, have access to quality basic education. Hence access, equity and quality are the cardinal pursuits of the UBE program (Blueprint 2021).

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme is a programme under the universal basic education programme. The early child education is the first school education children receive. The Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) according to the National Policy on education (2013) is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0 - 4 years in a crèche or nursery (FRN, 2013). Ojameruaye (2010), observed that the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) covers very diverse arrangements, from parenting programs to community-based child care, center-based provision and formal pre-primary education, often in school. ECCDE programmes typically aim at two age groups: (i) *children under 3 years*; and (ii) *children from age 3 to primary school* (usually by age 5+ or 6years in the case of Nigeria). Olowe, Kutelu, and Majebe (2014), views Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) as any group programme that is designed to promote children's intellectual development, socio-emotional development, language development, physical development and learning from birth to age 8. From the above, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a form of education for children under the age of five years. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is an education before the basic education meant to introduce elementary education for the children.

The purpose of Early Child Care Development and Education shall be to effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level of education; provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work; inculcate social, moral norms and values; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the

exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc; develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit; stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits; and teach the rudiments of numbers; letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc, through play.

Sources of Funding Early Childhood Education

The financing of basic education including pre-primary education is the responsibility of states and local governments while the federal government provides intervention fund of 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund every year. The states government are expected by law to provide counterpart fund to access the fund.

The Universal Basic Education Act provides for the utilization of 2% of the Consolidated Revenue in the following format:

A: 70% of this fund is reserved as a matching grant for the implementation of state level projects, while 5% of the 70% is allocated for early childhood education. 60% is for primary education and 35% for junior secondary.

These funds are utilized as follows: 70% for infrastructural development; 15% for supply of instructional materials and 15% for care-giver/teacher professional development.

Other external sources of funding of early child education in Nigeria include World Bank - providing grants for Early Childhood Education model centres and training of teachers, caregivers and stimulating materials through school grant and UNICEF and UNESCO - in some local communities. Under the 1999 Constitution, the basic education sector in Nigeria is managed by the three tiers of public administration, the federal, state, and local government. Thus, all levels of government have defined legislative jurisdiction with equivalent responsibilities, including financing (Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated); World Bank, 2015, Santcross et al, 2009). While the national framework for basic education delineates the responsibilities of each level of government based on the legislative responsibilities, in practice there is a significant overlap of responsibilities, albeit with significant variations across states. For instance, Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated) and World Bank (2008) identified three distinct categories of state-level basic education management in Nigeria: Basic education under the management of State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) as envisioned by the 2004 Universal Basic Education (UBE) Law; Primary education fully under SUBEBs with partial responsibilities in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS); and primary education under SUBEB, with JSS under Senior School State Management Board (SSSMB).

Factors Responsible for Poor Funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria.

In this paper, the following; poor implementation of national policy on education on funding, fall short in national revenue, insecurity, lack of political will to access federal counterpart funding, corruption, poor implementation of UNESCO 26% recommendation and poor allocation of funds to early child education, poor support from private sector, subsidy payment and debt servicing would be considered as the factors responsible for poor funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria.

Poor Implementation of National Policy on Education on Funding

Poor implementation of National Policy on Education on funding in Nigeria is responsible for the underfunding of the early child education programme. The National Policy on Education FRN (2013); Ogunode, Akinsua-Ajape, Jegede (2021) and Ogunode, Gregory, Jegede, (2021) stated that Education is a capital-intensive social service, which requires adequate financial provisions from all tiers of government for successful implementation of its programmes. Government's ultimate

goal is to make education free at all levels in addition to assistance from International and Local Development Partners, grants for research and other donor agencies. The financing of education is a joint responsibility of the Federal, States/FCT and Local Governments and the private sectors. In this connection, government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and organisations. Efforts towards the improvement in the funding of education at all levels shall include increasing government investment in education in order to eliminate the deficiency in public investment between Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan and developing countries. At least 26% (UNESCO minimum standard recommendation) of the Federal, States and Local Governments budget should be dedicated to funding of education at all levels. The poor implementation of this policy is affecting the funding of early child education in Nigeria. This submission is supported by Ogunyinka, 2013; Olubor (undated); Odigwe, & Owan, (2019); Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) who stated that poor implementation of the UNESCO 26% recommendation is responsible for poor funding of education in Nigeria.

Fall Short in National Revenue

The fall short in national revenue of Nigeria as impacted negatively in the funding of education especially the funding of early child education. A report by Punch (2021) revealed that the Federal Government recorded a revenue shortfall of N15tn from 2015 to 2020. The revenue shortfall led to a funding gap of N3.75tn in the implementation of capital projects of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, according to an analysis of the budgetary provisions and budget implementation reports from the Budget Office of the Federation. The result disclosed that total revenue projection for the six-year period was N31.9tn, while about N16.9tn was generated, resulting into a shortfall of N15tn. The total revenue allocated for capital projects in the period under review was N11.9tn, while the actual amount released to the MDAs was estimated at N8.2tn. The data made available to the public showed that in 2015 fiscal year, the Federal Government approved the sum of N557bn for capital projects, out of which, N387bn was actually released, resulting into a funding gap of N169.6bn. From the N1.58tn budgeted for capital projects in 2016, the sum of N1.21tn was released, creating a deficit of N368bn. For 2017, N1.56tn was released for the execution of capital projects, out of the budgeted amount of N2.17tn. This resulted into a funding shortfall of N611.35bn. In 2018, the government approved N2.8tn for capital projects but, released N1.8tn for implementation. This caused a funding deficit of N1.01tn. Punch also revealed that in 2019, a funding gap of N863.9bn for the execution of capital projects was recorded. In the 2019 annual budget, the total amount of N2.03tn was allocated for capital expenditure, out of which, N1.16tn was released. An analysis of the revised budget for the 2020 fiscal year showed that, N2.6tn was projected to be spent on capital projects, but N1.94tn was released. This resulted into a funding gap of N733bn. The fall in national revenue also affected the allocation to education. There are many factors that accounted for the short fall of revenue in Nigeria. Some of the factors include fall in crude oil prize in international market and corruption.

Insecurity

The insecurity problem facing Nigeria is consuming a lot of funds. The Nigerian government yearly spent huge sum of money in tackling insecurity problem across the federation. The state government and local government too are involved in spending huge of their resources in the fight of insecurity in their respective states and local government areas. This submission is confirmed by Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) who observed that Nigeria as a country faces with the challenges of insecurity since 1999. The insecurity problems have many dimensions across the six geo-political zones. Every year huge amount of funds are budgeted to prosecute the war against the insurgencies and bandits in the Northern Nigeria, and reduce the high rate of crime in the country. The funds that are supposed to be allocated for another sector of the economy like education and health is reduced and added to the budget of defense. The huge amount of money being spent every year on

management of security in the country is contributing to the poor funding of education. From 2015 to 2021 according to Blueprint, 2022, security budgets have been on the increase just as total national budgets increased. In 2015, when the national budget was N4.405 trillion, the total budget for the security sector was N988,892,506,442. In 2016, when the budget rose to N6.06 trillion, the security sector got N1.07 trillion, just as it got a total of N1.15 trillion in 2017 when the budget rose to N7.44 trillion. In 2018, the budget was N9.12 trillion while the security sector got a total vote of N1.35 trillion. And in 2019 and 2020, the budget was N8.92 trillion and N10.59 trillion, while security got N1.4 trillion and N1.8 trillion respectively. In the N13.59 trillion 2021 budget, defence and security got N1.96 trillion with another N722.53 billion about to be added through the supplementary budget. Nigeria's military budget is greater than the combined armed forces spending of the rest of West Africa. The funding covers the main security agencies, including the army, air force and the navy, the intelligence agencies as well as the Interior Ministry, which is in charge of homeland security, including the Nigerian Police Force. Checks indicated that an average of N1.3 trillion was yearly appropriated and fully disbursed to the agencies involved to take care of their capital and recurrent needs, including training and acquisition of soft and hardware for the purpose of upgrading their operations meant to keep the country safe (Blueprint, 2022). The large amount insecurity is consuming is affecting spending on other sector like the education including the early child education.

Lack of Political Will to Access Federal Counterpart Funds

The lack of political will to pay the counterpart funding of UBE and access the federal fund is another major factors responsible for poor funding of the early child education in Nigeria. Report from Blueprint (2021) indicated that several of the 36 states have reportedly failed to pay the counterpart funds to access over N51bn matching grants earmarked by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) for basic education in the country, as at July 2019. "The report by UBEC that several states have failed to access N51.6bn of matching grants suggests that these states are doing very little for poor children. It also explains why the number of out-of-school children in the country has risen from 10.5 million to 13.2 million." According to SERAP, (2022) "A violation of the right to education will occur when there is insufficient expenditure or misallocation of public resources, which results in the non-enjoyment of the right to quality education by poor children within the states." SERAP said that, "States' dereliction in paying counterpart funds is antithetical to the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, and the country's international human rights obligations. Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated); Peter & Isaac (2013) and Olubor, (undated) opined that it is being alleged that some state governments have not been able to access this because they cannot provide the counterpart fund. The federal government has described this trend as worrisome. Billions of naira meant to expand access and improve the quality of basic education delivery are deliberately left un-accessed and therefore un-utilized while the problems facing effective basic education delivery continue to persist. Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated) and Gershberg et al (2015)¹⁷, subsisted that some of the factors responsible for the delayed and non-assessment of UBEC-IF matching grants by states include: the non-contribution of counterpart fund, slow utilization of FGN-UBE intervention funds, low commitment to basic education on the part of some state governments, as well as political economy interests at the highest level of state administration. Nwoko (2015), lamented that states tend to prioritize financing tertiary institutions over basic education. In part, this undoubtedly relates to their limited fiscal space for increased spending.

Corruption

Corruption in the administration and management of education (Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria is also responsible for the limited funds in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Funds released for the implementation of programme and policies in the

educational institutions are mismanaged and looted (Ogunode & Abashi, (2020) and Ogunode & Stephen (2021). This submission is confirmed by Transparency International which says that 66% (per cent) of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). “This affects education access, quality, inclusion and learning outcomes with devastating consequences, not only for national economic growth but also for the life chances of children, their families and communities,” the report said. The report highlighted “Resource misallocation, corrupt procurement, exchange of sex for grades, examination malpractices, fake qualifications, teacher absenteeism, and corrupt recruitment practices” as the various corruption risks and challenges facing education systems in all the countries (Premium, 2019). The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) reported that the sum of N1,016,133.08 billion (N1 billion) misappropriated by six State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) was yet to be returned (Allafrica, 2021). The funds were meant for the provision of human and materials resources that will support the delivery of quality education at the primary schools across the country. Also, Gift (2018), submitted that in September 2018, AnumIho, former chairman of the State Basic Education Board (SUBEB) – an offshoot of the Universal Basic Education Commission in the states, established to address the inequality in educational opportunity at the basic level and improving the quality of its provision – was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for embezzling funds meant for the training of teachers in Benue State. Iho was found guilty of misappropriating N91,5 million (€220,000), and of taking a bribe of N14,9 million (over €36,000) (Ogunode 2020; Ogunode, & Ojo, 2021; Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape 2021).

Poor Implementation of UNESCO 26% Recommendation

The inability of the federal government to implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for education in the national budget every year is one of the major reason for the shortage of funds for the administration of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The Federal Government has in the last six years, failed to meet up with the benchmark proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization from the percentage of national budget to the education sector. UNESCO had in the Education-for- All Report for 2000 to 2015 tagged, ‘The Dakar Framework for Action,’ called for significant increase in financial commitment by national governments and donors to the education sector to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals. “The high level group on EFA proposed that, governments should spend between four per cent and six per cent of Gross National Product (GDP) on education and that within government budget, between 15 per cent and 20 per cent should be earmarked for education. This recommendation is **poorly** implanted in the Nigerian education system. Odigwe, & Owan, (2019) concluded that the total allocation to the education sector from 2009 to 2018 is N4, 038,115,000,000. The results further revealed a difference of N 10,311,805,000,000 between UNESCO benchmark of 26% and the actual allocation to the education sector for the same time period. It was concluded that the total allocation made to the education sector within the period of 2009 to 2018 is low, and below the UNESCO benchmark. Odigwe, & Owan, (2019) observed that the total amount that would have been allocated to the education **sector** in Nigeria from 2009 to 2018 if UNESCO benchmark was followed is N 14,349,920,000,000 (Fourteen trillion, three hundred and forty-nine billion, nine hundred and twenty million naira); as opposed to the N 4,038,115,000,000 (Four trillion, thirty-eight billion, one hundred and fifteen million naira) that was eventually allocated. A cursory look at the figures also shows a clear difference of N10, 311,805,000,000 (ten trillion, three hundred and eleven billion, eight hundred and five million naira) between UNESCO’s specification and what was allocated to education from 2009 to 2018. Also, in the states, case studies of education financing in Lagos and Kaduna states clearly show that while both states have made some progress in the past few years, their total expenditure on education as share of total budget and GDP is still considerably below the education financing benchmarks recommended by UNESCO and the Dakar

Framework (Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated). So, the inability of the government to implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for education is among the causes of shortage of funds in the early child education in Nigeria.

Poor Allocation of Funds to Early Child Education

In Nigeria, states and local governments are responsible for the financing of early childhood education including the training of staff under the federal government programme. The federal government has chosen to build the management of essential training with only 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund each year, subsequently set up models to agree to by the states. 70% of this fund is reserved as a matching grant for the implementation of state level projects, while 5% of the 70% is allocated for early childhood education. This 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund by the federal government of Nigeria is too small considering the huge population of Nigerian children. Emmanuel (2013) lamented that the 2% dispensed to Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) is inadequate for administration and management of the programme. The 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund is among the factors responsible for limited funds in the administration of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

Poor Support from Parents and Private Sectors

Another **factor** responsible for the limited funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria is the poor support from the parents and private individuals to the development of early child education in Nigeria. The parents show little financial support to the various **centers** while the private sector to the programme is not high as other forms of education in Nigeria.

Subsidy Payment

The subsidy payment programme of the Nigerian government is also contributing to the poor funding of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria. Subsidy payment is consuming resources that are supposed to be used for the development of other **sectors** in the economy especially the education sector which includes the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Analysis of government allocation according to Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated) over the last decade shows that fossil-fuel subsidy has been one of the largest expenditure items in the budget. In addition, enormous resources are annually lost due to leakages in public-procurement and outright corruption.

In the first half of 2022, petroleum subsidy claims surpassed oil and gas revenue from crude sales by N210 billion according to The Cable (2022). The Cable furthered disclosed that the revenue excludes other revenue sources from oil such as petroleum profit tax (PPT), royalty, signature bonus, and others. Subsidy or under-recovery is the shortfall for the underpriced sales of premium motor spirit (PMS), better known as petrol. The cost is deducted from the federation account because Nigeria regulates petrol price and sells it at a cheaper rate for its citizens. Within the first six months, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited recorded N2.39 trillion as gross revenue from oil and gas sales receipts, while subsidy claims amounted to N2.6 trillion. The Cable Index analysis showed that Nigeria paid N1.59 trillion to cover part of the subsidy costs in the last six months — leaving an outstanding balance of N1.01 trillion to be recovered from July 2022 proceeds in August. This year, the federal government has projected to spend N4 trillion on petrol subsidies. The subsidy payment is reducing the revenue of the country and is affecting government expenditure on other sectors which include education and early child education programme.

Debt Servicing

The debt servicing programme of both the federal and state governments in Nigeria is reducing the revenue of the government which directly affected allocation to sectors like education in the country. Oyekanmi (2022, June 9) stated that the breakdown of the debt stock shows that federal government domestic debt increased by 3.99% in the first three months of the year to \$48.45 billion from \$46.59 billion recorded as of December 2021. In the same vein, states domestic debt increased by 7.91% to stand at \$11.65 billion as of 31st March 2022. This represents an \$853 million increased quarter-on-quarter. In all, total domestic debt rose by 4.73% to stand at \$60.1 billion. A further look at the federal government debt stock by instrument, FGN Bonds accounted for 70.7% of the total domestic debt at N14.24 trillion. Similarly, Nigerian Treasury Bills accounted for 21.88% with a total of N4.41 trillion debt stock. On the other hand, external debt rose by 4.08% to stand at \$39.96 billion, compared to the previous quarter. The federal government in the review period spent a total of N668.69 billion on domestic debt service, which is 115% higher than the N310.49 billion spent in the previous quarter and 9.1% more than the N612.71 billion incurred in the corresponding period of 2021. External debt service surged to \$548.79 million in Q1 2022 compared to \$286.35 million spent in the previous quarter. Undoubtedly debt servicing programme is reducing the revenue of the country and is affecting government expenditure on education and early child education programme.

Conclusion

The paper examined the factors responsible for the poor allocation of funds to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria. The paper concludes that poor implementation of national policy on education on funding, fall short in national revenue, insecurity, lack of political will to access federal counterpart funding, corruption, poor implementation of UNESCO 26% funding recommendation and poor allocation of funding of early child education, poor support from private sector, subsidy payment and debt servicing are the factors responsible for the poor allocation of funds to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the factors identified in this paper, the following recommendations were made;

1. The federal, states and local governments should implement the recommendation of national policy on education and UNESCO 26% recommendation in Nigeria. This will help to provide adequate funds in the administration of early child education.
2. The federal government should amend the constitution to enable the federal government to deduct the counterpart funds from each of the states from the source of federal revenue and release the full funds to the states and local governments. This will help to solve the problem of un-accessed federal counterpart funds.
3. Funds released for the Universal basic education should be monitored by the respective anti-corruption agencies in the country to prevent diversion and mismanagement.
4. The government should encourage the private **sectors** to invest in the basic education. This will help to increase the funds in the administration.
5. The government should block linkages in the revenue generation, subsidy and debt servicing should be properly managed to prevent it from affecting allocation of education. Short term measures to increase education financing could involve restructuring the current public expenditure mechanisms, which includes fossil-fuel subsidy, public procurement, and reprioritization of resources in favor of basic education. Strong political will and decisiveness on the part of the government are key determinants of their successful implementation.

6. The government should make sure that ICPC is not compromised and should be solely independent of any body and the government, so that law shall be meted upon any official that is found guilty in any form of corrupt practices, which will definitely serve as deterrent to others.

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