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Simon Berge

The education provided to undergraduate business students at Canadian Universities has been strongly focused on capitalist ideology. At the University of Winnipeg a concerted effort has been made to introduce alternative business models such as co-operatives through the development of a Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises (Business Chair). The Business Chair is based within the Business and Administration Department, which is part of the Faculty of Business and Economics, making it possible to introduce new ideologies to undergraduate business students. By introducing alternative ideologies business students can critically assess the basic precepts of the capitalist system. In order to implement the Business Chair programme, partnerships needed to be formed with government, community development groups and the co-operative sector. This paper will present the opportunities and challenges of these partnerships in bringing education on the co-operative business model to undergraduate business students within a complex partnership arrangement.

Introduction

The Business Chair is a partnership-oriented programme that is supported by the Manitoba co-operative sector, the Manitoba Provincial Government and the University of Winnipeg. Each of these founding stakeholders brings resources and expectations to the role of the Business Chair that affect the outcomes of the programme.

The co-operative sector provides experiential learning opportunities, experts for in-class lectures and real world examples to educate undergraduate business students on the co-operative model. The co-operative sector's expectations of the programme are that the graduates from the Business Chair educational programmes will build the workforce capacity for the co-operative sector.

The Manitoba Provincial Government seeks to increase the economic activity of the co-operative sector. The education of new highly qualified personal that are knowledgeable about the co-operative sector should help improve the efficiency and profitability of the entire sector. Co-operatives in Manitoba are equal to \$1.7 billion (CND) in value-added GDP, or 3.25% of the total provincial economy representing a significant portion of the province's economic activity (Duguid et al, 2010).

Expectations from the University of Winnipeg, which hosts the Business Chair, are to increase enrolment and provide students with an alternative view of business practices. As the co-operative economy is extensive in Manitoba the inclusion of business courses in the management of co-operative organisation also provides University of Winnipeg students with viable employment opportunities following graduation from the programme. There are also significant opportunities for the University to directly assist its partners by providing research outcomes that are tangible and directly affect economic activities within the province.

While the opportunities are significant when entering into partnerships there are challenges that must be understood and managed to effectively operationalise the partnership. The challenges involved in managing the expectations of a partnership programme can give rise to tensions between academics, academic institutions and market partners that will be further discussed later in this paper. Challenges arise around the role of the academic within the partnership. The academic typically finds themselves in the role of manager of the partnership and knowledge broker rather than academic knowledge creator. This new role puts the academic

at odds with the traditional measures of academics within an academic institution, which remain the production of new knowledge through strong research programmes. The focus on new knowledge through novel research can lead to difficulties in setting priorities within the partnership.

Background

The literature on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) between academic institutions and industry sectors has largely been focused on the financial support provided by these partnerships (Mainardes et al, 2012; Murphy et al, 2016; Slantcheva et al, 2007). The rationale for seeking out PPPs has been the growing demand for university services and the simultaneous and significant reduction in government support (Garrett, 2003; Hicks, 2010; Mainardes et al, 2012; Tessema, 2009). As the connection between the private sector and universities becomes stronger there is an increased emphasis on conveying and diffusing knowledge rather than creating knowledge (Engwall, 2007). This new focus on knowledge translation and transference adds a new demand to the university's limited resources and refocuses the role of the academic from knowledge creation to knowledge broker (Meyer, 2010). The move to knowledge broker places the academic in the role of network builder requiring them to develop and maintain links to appropriate stakeholder groups. Horowitz Gassol (2007) suggests that links between businesses and academia tend to arise as ad hoc solutions to intermittent situations and as such university culture is ill equipped to support the needs of the PPPs.

The difficulty in developing links between academia and businesses is due to the notion that universities once stood apart as bastions of knowledge. Universities were the producers and guardians of knowledge for their own ends, not disseminators of information for stakeholder groups (Mainardes et al, 2012). Universities were believed to stand apart from business and governments to avoid undue influence in the search for pure knowledge. The ability to remain a stable repository of knowledge was considered a hallmark of higher education institutions:

Universities in the past have been remarkable for their historic continuity, and we may expect this same characteristic in the future. They have experienced wars, revolutions, depressions, and industrial transformations, and have come out less changed than almost any other segment of their societies (Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, 1980: 9).

In more recent years Engwall (2007) has discussed the changes in the governance of universities as a result of the adoption of management ideology, which has allowed coercive forces to expand their influence past simple budgetary forces and into university leadership. This expansion of influence within the confines of an academic institution immediately raises concerns in the academically minded individual in terms of academic freedom. As Areen (2009: 947) states:

Contrary to common understanding academic freedom is about much more than faculty speech ... Rather, academic freedom is central to the functioning and governance of colleges and universities ... It is not only about faculty research and teaching; it is also about the freedom of faculties to govern their institutions in a way that accords with academic values whether they are approving the curriculum, hiring faculty or establishing graduation requirements for students.

There are opportunities, however, within PPPs that must not be negated out-of-hand and the role of the academic in society as knowledge disseminator must be thoroughly examined.

Modern academics act as a knowledge disseminator (teachers) for their students within the academic institution, but even in this role there are tensions between dissemination and knowledge development. As Elstad (2010) outlines there is a tension between the requirement to adapt to academic standards, norms, and values and the requirement to maintain a close professional relationship with the practice of teaching in academic institutions. By maintaining a close relationship to the practice of teaching, academics attract students to their institutions through the promotion of courses of interest to the student audience base.

In an article by Mainardes, Domingues and Alves (2009) the researchers outline what attracts students to undergraduate administration courses indicating that students were attracted to Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) by the quality of the course and the relationship between theory and practice. It is the link between the theory and practice that PPPs can strengthen to further encourage students toward higher education. Students can visualise an end goal for their educational efforts, as potential employers are involved in their academic studies.

In addition to the practical outcome in the form of future employment from the successful completion of their academic studies, students can also benefit financially from university industry partnerships. In Murphy, Tocher and Ward's (2016) article the authors discuss the benefits of Public-Private-Academic Partnership (PPAP) for all the partners involved emphasising the role of educational subsidies to students offered by universities through stakeholder partnerships. At present student fees in Canada make up 11% to 37% of university funding (Statistics-Canada, 2011). The high tuition fees, an average of \$4,747 (CND) for undergraduate studies and \$5,737 for graduate studies, make it difficult for universities to attract students to their institutions (Statistics-Canada, 2011). To ensure sustainability universities need to attract new students. The ability to attract students to HEIs increases enrolment, translating into increased government subsidies and student fees.

In an article entitled, "Public Private Partnerships and the Role of Universities in 'Sustainable Development'" Lehmann, Christensen and Hansen (2006) outline the role of universities in a sustainable PPAP. The role of universities, according to Lehmann et al (2006), within the PPAP is one of mediator providing the partnership with new knowledge and conciliation of opposing views. In this role of mediator with the PPAP the university can act as a catalyst speeding up innovative processes that industry or government alone is not able to complete in a timely fashion by bringing new concepts or ideas to their partners (Lehmann et al, 2006). It is only possible, however, to act as a catalyst if the university does not change in the process.

In Gopalan's (2013) book, *PPP Paradox: Promise and Perils of Public-Private Partnership in Education* she discusses reforming schools to include private partnerships and the requirement for a multidimensional approach. Gopalan (2013) suggests that there is a need for a comprehensive design and plan for reform that requires measurable goals and benchmarks. The plan and goals assist the partners in maintaining their roles within the partnership, which is critical to the catalytic role of the university. In addition to the plan and goals Gopalan (2013) outlines the need for support for any reform from the district (ie government), the schools, teachers, parents and community. This need for support from all the players in the partnership requires a manager or director within the partnership to be willing to take on the role of facilitator to co-ordinate communications within the partnership. Without the inclusion of a leadership/ co-ordinating role within the partnership management of expectations of the players within the partnership becomes problematic. The question becomes who, within the partnership, should take on the coordination role of the PPAP?

There are many discussions on the role of the academic (Greenbank, 2008; Macfarlane, 2005; McLean and Barker, 2004; Young, 2004). In Greenbank's (2006) article entitled *The academic's role: the need for a re-evaluation* the author speaks to the focus on research and teaching in Britain when discussing academics. Greenbank (2006) notes that it was from the United States that the idea of service was included in the discussion on academics (Gordon et al, 2003; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995). According to Greenbank (2006: 107),

Service includes both internal work (membership of committees, course leadership, administrative duties, etc) and external work (as a consultant, adviser, etc).

Greenbank's (2006) definition of service fits well within the literature distinguishing the service contribution of the academic into two categories; 1) contributions within the institutions such as administration tasks, peer reviews, committee participation and 2) contributions within the community such as consulting, public speaking, and seminars for laypersons (Greenbank, 2006; Knight, 2002; Macfarlane, 2005; Paulsen and Feldman, 1995).

It is the external work that concerns us when speaking about PPAPs. Karlsson (2007: 282) suggests that service is, “a fuzzy and tenacious term nobody likes” and questions if we should keep the term. Karlsson’s (2007) views spring from Boyer (1991: 22) where Boyer stated that, “Colleges and universities have recently rejected service as serious scholarship, partly because its meaning is so vague and often disconnected from serious intellectual work”. Confusion in terminology can result in expectations within a PPAP to be unmet as partners misinterpret the anticipated end goals of their partner organisations. Like Boyer (1991), Macfarlane’s (2005) article suggests there is considerable confusion surrounding the term service within academic institutions. Macfarlane (2005) studied academic staff from the United Kingdom, North America, Australia, Canada, and southern Europe yielding five differing opinions on the meaning of service. According to Macfarlane (2005) service refers to administration, customer service, collegial virtue, civic duty, and integrated learning carried out by students, not academic staff. Based on this confusion on the definition and nature of service within the role of the academic Karlsson (2007) suggest a need for a more nuanced definition of service, which she adapts from Boyer (1991: 22-23) definition which states:

To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one’s special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor — and the accountability — traditionally associated with research activities ... theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other.

Karlsson (2007) adapts Boyer’s definition to focus on the need for interaction between academics and practitioners through collaboration. Karlsson (2007) sees the role of the academic as one of the creation of new knowledge through ‘interactivity’ with practitioners.

In a similar article Karlsson and Booth (2006) elaborate on this interaction between theory and practice (or academic and practitioners) calling it a “collaborative activity” between the university and the vicinity. It is here that the concept of community begins to inject itself into the discussion on academic service. The focus on contributions within a community has now become pivotal to an academic’s success.

Academics are well aware of the movement of granting agencies toward practical research with identified end-users or audiences with an associated knowledge management plan for dissemination of the research outcomes. The trend for more practical, audience focused research fits with the discussions on academics needing to be more integrated within the community to address the community’s practical demands (Barnett, 2000; Boyer, 1991; Gibbons, 1994). As an example of such interactions that integrate academics within the local community we can look to the industrial interactions of Silicon Valley industries and the Bay Area in California. These interactions between industry and academia are made up of relationships between universities, such as Stanford and Berkeley, and business enterprises in the Bay Area vicinity to benefit the community through improvement of the local economy (Brulin, 1998).

Co-operatives have an ingrained principle of concern for the community and education has been part of the co-operative principles since the Rochdale Pioneers. These principles represent a strong driving force for the development of PPAPs within the co-operative sector. The remaining section of this paper will present the PPAP that has developed to form the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises at the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada.

Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises

In 2009, in an innovative move the Manitoba Co-operative Association (MCA) partnered with Le Conseil de Développement Économique des Municipalités Bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM) and the Manitoba Provincial Government on a Manitoba Co-operative Community Vision and Strategy for the province.

Vision: A growing and thriving co-operative community providing a strong leadership role in the social and economic development of Manitoba (MCA, 2013).

The overall goal of this new Vision and Strategy for the co-operative sector was to broaden and sustain the development of a socially and economically successful Manitoba co-operative community. The initial terms of the strategy were for a 10-year mandate divided into two 5-year phases. To ensure the Vision and Strategy met the expectations of the various partners a consultation process was conducted in 2014 prior to the implementation of the second phase and renewal of the partnership (Manitoba, 2014).

The rationale for developing the Vision and Strategy was to create a larger, stronger and more influential co-operative community that would yield significant benefits:

- Growth in the importance of co-operatives as a force in Manitoba's economy. This could include increases in market share, increases in the number and types of co-operatives, in the number of co-operative jobs created and in the total assets of co-operatives.
- More integrated approaches to financing and skills development will make the co-operative community more self-sufficient and better able to meet challenges and pursue new opportunities.
- Co-operatives will have a greater positive impact on the social and economic resilience of their communities, and be recognised for having that impact.
- Increased awareness and understanding of co-operative values and principles in specific target audiences (Manitoba, 2014).

To meet the goals of the strategy the partners developed three strategic objectives:

- 1 To create a more supportive environment for the establishment and on-going operation of co-operatives.
- 2 To foster better awareness and understanding of the values and principles of co-operatives.
- 3 To improve infrastructure supports and services for co-operatives (Manitoba, 2014).

It is under the second strategic objective that the establishment of a Chair on Cooperatives (later to be renamed Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises) was initiated. The original 2008 strategy for developing and maintaining Manitoba's co-operative community called for the creation of a Chair on Cooperatives at a provincial business school (One World, 2008). The University of Manitoba's Department of Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics was chosen to host the new Chair on Co-operatives calling it the Agribusiness Chair in Cooperatives and Marketing.

The objectives laid out for the Agribusiness Chair in Cooperatives and Marketing were:

- 1 To develop course material with appropriate emphasis on co-operatives and marketing for use in marketing, policy and business courses at the University and elsewhere;
- 2 To undertake and encourage research on and to further the understanding of co-operatives and marketing.
- 3 To develop outreach activities which assist co-operatives and marketing agencies in such areas as:
 - Governance. Leadership and management.
 - Finance.
 - Marketing.
 - Technological changes.
- 4 To develop networks with colleagues at other universities and co-operative institutions (University of Manitoba, 2016).

The Agribusiness Chair in Cooperatives and Marketing, as the name implies, maintained a strong focus on agribusinesses. Students within the Department of Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics, where the Chair was established, were meant to be the main audience of the programme. However, by limiting the focus of a Chair on Co-operatives to a single sector proved to be detrimental to student enrolment in the programme.

Maintaining a Chair on Cooperatives within a Faculty of Agricultural and Food Science placed the programme outside the general business studies of the university. Interestingly the student audience for the courses presented by the Agribusiness Chair in Co-operatives and Marketing came from the Asper School of Business within the University of Manitoba. The rationale for this audience base was due to Asper's School of Business' requirement that students attend an alternative business course (Asper School of Business, 2016). Given that students within the agribusiness department chose not to attend courses in co-operative business in significant numbers the courses were eventually dropped. With the history of the Chair on Cooperatives at the University of Manitoba it was deemed prudent to have the Chair position moved to a business department at the University of Winnipeg.

The position with a business school was deemed to be unique in Canada and a first in Manitoba. At the University of Winnipeg, the position was originally named the Chair in Co-operative Enterprises and was aimed at strengthening the co-operative movement by developing socially responsible entrepreneurs.

The Chair position was launched with a total of \$625,000 (CND) through a collaborative partnership with the Manitoba government, the co-operative sector and the University of Winnipeg. Funding for the position came from:

- Province of Manitoba — \$250,000.
- Federated Co-operatives Limited — \$100,000.
- The Co-operators Group — \$100,000.
- Credit Union Central of Manitoba Limited — \$100,000.
- Assiniboine Credit Union Limited — \$25,000.
- Arctic Cooperatives Limited — \$25,000.
- Red River Cooperative — \$25,000 (Pollin, 2012).

The Provincial Minister responsible for Co-operative Development, Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister of Housing and Community Development, stated that, "Co-ops provide a wide range of important products and services that help build communities by creating jobs" (Pollin, 2012). This statement on the role co-operatives play within the province indicates the logic used in moving the Chair position to a business school with a broader focus on economic activities than an agribusiness school. Co-operatives play a role in housing, food retail, petrochemical and many other sectors within the Manitoba economy.

It is, however, the inclusion of a broader view of what co-operatives mean to the economy and society that begins the mission creep within the Chair programme. The Chair of Co-operative Enterprises was not only the creation of its funding partners, but included parties that helped to develop and spearhead the co-operative strategy. Community development groups such as SEED Winnipeg (Supporting Employment & Economic Development Winnipeg), a non-profit organisation supporting the economic development needs of Winnipeg's inner city, provided the impetus for the development of the Chair. In addition, advocacy groups such as the Manitoba Co-operative Association who assisted in the development of the co-operative strategy for Manitoba that outlined the need for the Chair position within a post-secondary institution were included in the PPAP. These additional actors within the scope of the Chair of Co-operative

Enterprises' mandate provided valuable expertise, but also brought with them expectations for the outcomes of the Chair programme.

As Horowitz Gassol (2007) would predict, it is not necessarily the addition of the new stakeholders to the table, but the approach utilised for their inclusion in the process. As there was a previously existing process utilised in the initial development of the Chair on Co-operative Enterprises, which created the Agribusiness Chair in Cooperatives and Marketing it is possible to consider this what Horowitz Gassol (2007) would call a turnkey approach to implementing a Chair programme at the University of Winnipeg. As Horowitz Gassol (2007) puts forward, when links between university and business are introduced into the university system as a turn-key proposition rather than as developmental process, the prevailing university culture and structure will exert resistance against such change. This is the academic's attempt to maintain their ability to create knowledge and not simply be a means to diffuse knowledge for the benefit of stakeholders (Engwall, 2007). This brings us back to the discussion on the role of the academic and the university within society. The issue of academic freedom to discover for the sake of discovery being a corner stone of academic work can be pushed aside in favour of knowledge dissemination within a PPAP.

While the inclusion of community development and advocacy agencies must be taken into account we cannot forget to include the new university department, which now hosts the Chair of Co-operative Enterprise programme. As noted previously the Chair was, at one time, called the Chair on Co-operatives. It later changed to Agribusiness Chair in Cooperatives and Marketing due to its association with the Agribusiness and Economics Department at the University of Manitoba. When the Chair moved to the University of Winnipeg it was originally named the Chair of Co-operative Enterprises. This new name, however, caused some confusion within the university structure, as there are many forms of chairs within a university.

As most academics know there are industry chairs, research chairs and department chairs within the university structure. With an industry chair, business generally provides a significant, sustainable amount of funding to the chair. For example, Loblaw's Canada provided \$3 million (CND) for the establishment of The Loblaw Companies Limited Chair in Sustainable Food Production at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada (University of Guelph, 2010). The \$3 million (CDN) gift allows for the establishment of the chair position, but also the independency of the chair as the gift is provided upfront to the university providing a stable base for research and teaching activities by the Chair.

With research chairs in Canada funding is normally provided through granting agencies. Funds are provided once the candidate for the research chair has successfully completed a transparent selection process. The granting agencies and the university enter into a codified agreement on the disbursements of funding. These research chairs are normally only allowed to be held for two terms or less, which helps to minimise the influence on the academic to cater their work toward the granting agency's needs in order to secure additional funding (Canadian Government, 2015; NSERC, 2016).

Department chairs within a university structure represent the administration of the university itself. These chairs sit on the senate committees and interact with university senior management to promote the institution. There was the concern within the University of Winnipeg that the title Chair on Co-operative Enterprises would misrepresent the scope of the position. The Chair of Co-operative Enterprises was never meant to represent the administration of the university. The change in the title to Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises was meant to avoid this confusion defining the Chair as a business or market related position.

As we can see from the discussion the title of Chair within a university structure is a complicated and nuanced issue. The funding and authority level of a chair position when interacting with stakeholders and the university structure touches on issues of academic freedom. Industry and Research Chairs are provided with sustainable funding or limited terms to avoid external pressures on the Chair to meet the needs of the funders. As Mainardes et al (2012) suggest

there needs to be a pro-active method in managing and maintaining the relationship between funders and the universities in cases where the market is involved to ensure the university's stability and strategies are not compromised for the sake of funding.

In a pro-active move those involved in the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises at the University of Winnipeg developed an Advisory Committee for the Chair position. This Advisory Committee is comprised of funders, government officials, community development organisations, and advocacy agency officials involved with the Business Chair. The Advisory Committee is meant to guide the Business Chair programme to meet the needs of the sector and the university. However, as mentioned previously, the sector has grown in scope from co-operatives, credit unions and government to include community development organisations, and advocacy agencies. This larger sector scope means greater expectations for outputs from the Business Chair putting significant pressure on the limited resources available to the Business Chair. In addition, the formalised expectations outlined by the funders in the form of contracts with concrete deliverables take precedence over the informal expectations of non-funding members creating the opportunity for disassociation within the group. Further disassociation within the group can also develop as the university and the department maintain clear, concrete deliverables from their academic staff when it comes to assigning tenure and promotion, which must be considered by the Business Chair as well.

While we have discussed the market and government based stakeholders within the Advisory Committee for the Business Chair, further discussion on the university presence on the committee is warranted. The senior management of the university and department management sit on the Advisory Committee to ensure the interests of the university are captured in the discussions. The Dean and the Department Chair play key roles in managing and maintaining the Business Chair programme at the University of Winnipeg.

The remaining university presence on the Advisory Committee is the academic who has taken on the role of the Business Chair. The requirement for the academic in the Business Chair role to seek tenure puts further pressure on the resources available, ie time and funding. In addition, the focus on publishing, or knowledge creation, takes away from the focus on the sector needs for knowledge dissemination. A new academic must produce new knowledge for publication to be considered for tenure within the university system. This brings us back to the question of the role of the academic as producers and guardians of knowledge for their own ends or disseminators of information (Mainardes et al, 2012).

Conclusion

This article presented a scenario on the development of a position within a university through the creation of partnerships with market and government stakeholders. The expectations within the partnership places significant pressure on the academic associated with the position. Stakeholders seek to disseminate knowledge while university management expect knowledge creation for attainment of tenure. The focus of the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises, however was to provide an alternative perspective to business practices for the next generation of business leaders. Has this focus on undergraduate education been lost as the sector and government seek to develop the economical sector and the academic seeks to create new knowledge?

The scenario presented in this article shows how the expectations of the partners involved in the Business Chair differ. Outcomes from the Business Chair are specific to the needs of the stakeholder groups. The expectations from the university are clearly outlined as the academic in the position of the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises is assessed in the same manner as any other academic seeking tenure. To achieve tenure the Business Chair must produce new knowledge. The expectations of the funders of the position are also clearly laid out in a contractual format as they seek to grow the sector through the dissemination of knowledge. The expectations from the additional groups within the Advisory Committee further broaden

the mandate for the position including the interests of community development groups and advocacy agencies.

The strategic goal that provided the impetus for the Business Chair was to foster better awareness and understanding of the values and principles of co-operatives. The undergraduate education programme at the University of Winnipeg on co-operative enterprises is an outcome directed at meeting this goal. This goal could only be achieved through the partnership with co-operative funders as additional resources are brought to bear to attract and retain students in the business school who are interested in the co-operative model. This model for PPAP within the co-operative sector allows for the integration of alternative business ideologies within existing business schools and attracts new students through the linkage with a practical outcome, ie jobs within the co-operative sector.

The scenario presented in this article should provide the co-operative sector with a better understanding of the challenges in enacting a PPAP. Any partnership must include formal expectations and a transparent mechanism for communications and operations to avoid mission creep and unmet expectations. Within the partnership the acknowledgement of the academic's need for academic freedom to produce knowledge is as important as the sector's need to disseminate knowledge. Any partnership with an academic institution must be cognisant of the potential influences involved in funding an academic position that may affect academic freedom. Funders, while key to creating the position, must be willing to allow the academic to develop the position.

The Author

As part of the Business and Administration Department in the Faculty of Business and Economics Dr Berge holds the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises. The mandate for the Business Chair is to increase the awareness of the co-operative business model by introducing new courses focused on co-operative business practice. A concentration in co-operative business practices will be offered as part of the Bachelors of Business Administration Degree at the University of Winnipeg.

Dr Berge completed his Doctorate at the University of Guelph studying co-operatives as an alternative distribution system for local food and community development. He also holds a Masters of Business Administration in Finance from McMaster University.

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