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Cinema for Human Development as a Competence-Based Pedagogic Approach: Case of Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili

By

Anele Michael Obie

Department of English Modern Letters,
Higher Teacher Training College Bambili,
The University of Bamenda

Abstract

The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) is a teaching method that fosters real development since it seeks to render learners functional in their communities through the use of acquired skills. The problem is, although Cameroon has adopted the practice of the CBA in its primary and secondary schools, it has not replaced the Objective-Based designed curricula with Competency-Based structured curricula. Teacher training institutions like Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili, will be obliged to use the CBA upon graduation but do not train on the CBA. The consequences are enormous! In order to mitigate the challenges that student teachers in Cameroon face with regard to understanding and using the CBA to meet expected learning outcomes, the paper argues that a blend of the ideals of Anele Michael's Cinema for Human Development (C4HD), Shadrach Ambanasom's Socio-Artistic Theory and the CBA mind-set in the course of training teachers is an effective way to foster genuine development. The study focuses on the Higher Teacher Training College in The University of Bamenda to demonstrate how a filmmaking process and a literary theory can harness the merits of the CBA. Specifically, a blend of these three development approaches can help or encourage student teachers to appropriate the learning outcomes of the Competency-Based Approach and, most especially, use this tripartite setup to help their learners become active development agents to themselves and other community members.
Keywords: C4HD; Socio-Artistic Theory; CBA; Teacher Trainee; Cameroon

Introduction

This paper is concerned with blending Cinema for Human Development (C4HD) with Shadrach Ambanasom's Socio-Artistic critical theory to booster the learning and practice of the CBA in teacher training schools in Cameroon. The objective is to help student teachers understand and become used to the Competency-Based Approach. Given the serious challenges that both teachers and student teachers face in applying this teaching and learning approach in schools today, meeting this objective

of understanding and mastering the CBA is essential to realise its long-term aim in Cameroon in a relatively short time. The problem this paper grapples with is suitably captured by Stewart who quotes Burnett's (2016) definition of what Competency-Based Education (CBE), the philosophical basis of CBA, stands for: "CBE focuses on the individual student with interdisciplinary content informed by industry needs" (2021). This is exactly the task trainee teachers in teacher-training institutions (like the Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili) in Cameroon are expected to carry out upon their graduation. Although these trainee teachers would have to teach specific subjects – like Literature, English language, Mathematics, Biology, etc. – these subjects have varied career opportunities that they open learners to. Further, these teachers-to-be will handle learners whose dream career paths are connected in an interdisciplinary web. The issue becomes much more compounded by the fact that their learners are obliged (either by deliberate choice or institution's will) to take a varied number of subjects that are equally connected by an interdisciplinary expected learning outcomes hub. Logically, a Teacher Training institution like HTTC (Higher Teacher Training College) in Bambili, The University of Bamenda, puts important accent on bolstering teaching skills in its training process. This is the reason for its attributing the highest grading coefficient to teaching practice internships in secondary and high schools. It stands that if a trainee teacher earns a fail mark in a teaching practice session, s/he must repeat the class. This *law* obliges the trainee to fit in their future professional context. Since HTTC, like its peers in Cameroon, has the functional goal of producing teachers every academic year, it arguably neglects aspects related to the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in its formation package. As it stands, since 2011 till date, HTTC Bambili has organised no seminars or workshops directly geared at equipping its academic staff with the CBA parameters. The consequences are enormous on both trainees and their future learners. On their part,

trainees are very frustrated when the ill mastered CBA is imposed on them during teaching practice internships as well as after graduation from the college. As expected, their frustration has a direct impact on their learners since it negatively affects expected learning outcomes. While waiting that the worrisome institutional gap be addressed, this paper proposes a three-in-one teaching approach that can effectively generate and encourage trainees' understanding and mastery of the CBA. The proposed teaching design is a blend of the CBA, C4HD (Cinema for Human Development) and the Socio-Artistic Theory.

The most current studies on challenges of implementing the CBA as a replacement of traditional teaching methods predominantly come from the US and Europe. They seem to agree on six points:

1. The first point is related to CBA's inadaptability to function in spaces where several career paths are targeted in a subject taught. (Bates, 2014; UTA, 2024; Stewart, 2021 and Ranjan, 2024). This point is understood within the contexts of the fast advancement of today's technological development, and life's uncertainties caused by natural catastrophes, conflicts and more, that make humans' future increasing uncertain. It is rather risky to train learners to fit very specific career paths. CBA's limited capacities are amply demonstrated in largely populated classrooms (a current experience in most urban public schools in Cameroon) where most learners have diverse career aspirations. It is in this light that the CBA, as a teaching design meant for preparing learners to suit specific industrial demands, is not adaptable in producing varied outcomes in terms of jobs.

2. Transitioning into a CBA teaching design proves very challenging for both teachers and students that were hitherto either trained (for teachers) or taught (for learners) using

traditional methods (Bates, 2014; UTA, 2024; Mpofu and Maximus, 2024). While CBA warrants a student-centred teaching/learning approach, traditional approaches focus on the teacher-lecture/learner-listening or note taking setting. The transition process is very challenging especially in contexts like HTTC where sufficient administrative effort is not made to keep both teaching staff and learners abreast so that they understand and master CBA demands and requirements. In essence, CBA changes the teacher's role from that of a lecturer to one of a class/lesson coordinator. On the part of the instructor, s/he must be a master of both subject matter and class management techniques in order to handle a CBA design lesson. Further, CBA instructors are obliged to use teaching/learning pace depending on learners' acquisition of desired learning outcomes. In practical cases, while instructor's pace may work for some students, it may disfavour others, which is not the case with traditional teaching/learning methods.

3. Another challenge which education experts highlight has to do with the consequences of laying emphasis on the competency mastery as opposed to time spent to acquire the competence (UTA, 2024; Bates, 2014, and Ranjan, 2024). A strictly-based CBA design framework lays emphasis on competency mastery in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude, rather than time spent to acquire those expected competences. In this context, there are obvious problems with largely populated classrooms wherein students have various learning paces which are generally determined by learners' IQ, learners' learning pace, the learning environment as well as teaching aids used. Some learners are thus put at a disadvantage in case the time necessary for them to acquire expected competences is not

allocated to them due to the number enrolled in their class, which will result to learners' lack of motivation and engagement.

4. Education experts also think that, as teaching approaches change, so must the assessment criteria change. It is necessary to develop new grading measurement criteria in places where the CBA transitions traditional lecture-centric methods. In such places, student progress should be based on "*demonstrated mastery of specific competencies rather than traditional measures such as grades or seat-time.*" (Stanley, 2024). The fact is, using an assessment design to test learning outcomes that are based on another learning approach is dishonesty. This generally happens because, as Ranjan (2024) puts it, "*developing effective and reliable assessments to measure student mastery of competencies can be complex.*" Arriving at some effective and reliable assessment criteria is complex since a CBA testing base must be "*mapped back to the competencies to determine when the student has mastered the knowledge, behaviour, skills, abilities, or values desired with emphasis on transparency.*" (Stewart 2021). While waiting that such conditions be put in place, this paper proposes a blend of the CBA, the C4HD and the Socio-Artistic theory as an efficient means to help trainee teachers in HTTC understand and master the ideals inherent in a CBA teaching design as used in secondary and high schools in Cameroon.

5. It is equally normal that academic staff in learning institutions that are transitioning into the CBA, a Competency-Based Education (CBE) approach, demonstrate resistance to change (Stewart 2021; Josh Stanley, 2024 and, Ranjan, 2024). This is perhaps natural since such changes into a CBA design require enormous effort in transforming traditionally-setup courses as well as assessment measurement criteria (Stewart 2021). And,

since mitigating staff resistance tendencies requires administrative advocating using facts, seminars, workshops, conferences, financial costs, etc., it takes considerable time to arrive at the expected results. This resistance is obvious to many with regard to new approaches.

6. Education professionals such as Stanley (2024) and Ranjan (2024) agree that even though there are impediments to setting up a CBA teaching/learning space, CBA offers tremendous benefits to those who successfully use it when considering the fact that today's job market is competency-centric. Thus, to mitigate the aforementioned challenges, these education professionals recommend the integration of technology into CBA teaching/learning spaces as well as processes (Stanley, 2024; Ranjan, 2024). Prominent education specialists think that although the selection of the right and most efficient technological tool is demanding, the sacrifice is rewarding. This point justifies this paper's proposal to integrate C4HD, an applied cinema genre, in HTTC's effort to keep its trainees abreast with CBA demands and requirements in secondary and high schools in Cameroon, the job market for which they are trained.

1. **The C4HD, Socio-Artistic Critical Theory and CBA: Introducing the Three Learning Approaches**

   ### *1.1. Cinema For Human Development (C4HD)*

The C4HD (although a concept but used as a teaching approach here), emerged from my initial desire to seek for an efficient way that filmmaking, a one-way communication process from its conception, can involve its viewers in its formulation and development processes. C4HD is underlain by two concepts including the Applied Cinema concept and the Human Development (HD) concept (Obie, 2024). The former strives at

drifting cinema or filmmaking away from its traditional goals of entertainment and teaching to that of addressing social change concerns. The later focuses on enabling processes to create and improve on conditions that boost human wellbeing. Its preoccupying question is: What are the best development processes or conditions that would help humans live fulfilled lives, the kinds they cherish most? The concept of Human Development was created as a means to divert development discourses from economies to human beings. The achievement of HD frameworks and policies is another way to foster global peace, social justice and citizens' empowerment. This is so because, the root causes of many conflicts in the world are related to income inequality, social insecurity and the suppression of human freedoms. The two concepts put together creates a situation where a two-way filmmaking process – defined as film director and team – cooperate with a target population to develop and realise a film project meant for social change. The notion of social change here is attained by boosting what the UNDP calls:

> *Process of enlarging people's choices and improving human capabilities (the range of things that they can do or be in life) and freedom so they can live a long and healthy life, access education and a decent standard of living, participate in their community and decisions that affect their lives (1990)*

As an Applied Cinema form, C4HD is principally used to realise Human Development-spirited frameworks like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Cameroon's Vision 2035. Rather than being a film genre per se, it is more of a filmmaking process meant to facilitate educational processes in communities where it is used. Worth reminding that education is a process par excellence to boost human capacities and freedoms necessary for them to live long and healthy lives enshrined in descent living standards. It is in this vein that every educational

institution is a human development agency and agent, a rather active agent in the realisation of Human Development projects.

1.2. Socio-Artistic Critical Theory

The Socio-Artistic critical theory aims at examining in what ways a literary text connects to its worlds represented therein. Rather than putting complete focus on its representativeness in the literary critical process, it also lays equal importance to the artistic dimension of a given text.

Reading Shadrach Ambanasom's *Bernard Fonlon as a Literary Essayist* (2020), it is very decipherable that his design objective of the Socio-Artistic approach spring from his strong desire to find a *suitable* literary critical theory; one that takes into consideration all important aspects of an evaluation process of a literary piece. Matter and Manner, thus, constitute core principles of Ambanasom's critical theory.

The Matter criterion is the sociological dimension of a work. This includes the subject matter, themes, political, moral or ideological issues, social and cultural references and the overall social relevance of the work to its immediate community being none other than the human worlds represented in the text. As per the artistic dimension (Manner) of the theory, it covers aspects of style, linguistic choices, and creative devices. "It embodies the author's deployment of techniques, the totality of expressive devices deployed to produce an imaginative work that is artistically rich, beautiful, interesting and satisfying." (Shadrach, 2020). *The Socio-Artistic Critical Theory: Four Tenets*

I. **Effectiveness of technique**

The sub evaluation criteria to consider within the context of effectiveness of artistic techniques in literary text include: author's attitude (critical praise, wonder, etc.) towards their subject matter; effectiveness of narrative structure (plots, narrative points of views) use and effectiveness of imagery (metaphors, similes, proverbs, ironies, etc.).

II.   **Artistic Truthfulness**:

A critic at this stage is concerned with how realistic characters are portrayed, how real are conflicts and the story in relation to the human world. Characters' realism is evaluated in terms of culture, mannerisms, gestures, spirit of the represented time and place. In sum, the main preoccupation here is answering the question: "To what degree are literary conflicts and story believable?"

III.   Readability

The element of readability is defined along lines of readers' understanding, reading speed and interest sustained throughout the reading process. The key to readability are reader's interest and enjoyment of the literary piece read. At this level, the critic looks at syntactical structures, familiarity of vocabulary, etc. in relation to the supposed target reader.

IV.   Social Relevance

Ambanasom believes that since literature has a social basis that produced it and for which it is produced, a literary work must have an immediate value to a society in particular and humanity at large. The work must thus provide answers to questions like, for instance: what does it take to be an educated man in an uneducated African community, how does an illegal (without papers) immigrant Christian feel like in a strictly-Muslim community, etc.?

1.3. Competency-Based Approach

Understanding reconstructionism, as an educational philosophy, is essential to grasping the reasons the CBA would put more emphasis on the learning process over learning objectives, as an approach. While this pragmatic philosophy of teaching lays emphasis on making learning practical, reconstructionism wants it be highly interactive and student-centred. The idea is, the classroom should be a training ground for practical skills initiation and nurturing so that today's learner can conveniently do some precise thing (work, profession, etc.) tomorrow.

This is the reason the Cameroon government proscribed the teacher-centred teaching to introduce the student-centred teaching since 2012. The goal was to promote skill initiation over mere production of certification holders. With the CBA, the State decides to tailor teaching outcomes to concrete skills that a lesson either initiates or harnesses in the learner. This is what the CBA stands for. Its aim is laudable but its huddles are so many – most of them related to understanding and practising it.

Methodology of the Tripartite Blending Process

To begin with, the suggested blending process works as a whole to meet expected results under given circumstances. Although they operate concurrently within a given class session, each plays specific roles in the teaching/learning process:

i. The Socio-Artistic Critical theory is considered the subject taught (e.g. Literature, physics, Mathematic, English Language, etc.). In the case at hand, it is a Literature in English class wherein *Family Saga* (Bole Butake) is the literary text taught. Subject matter stands for Matter while allegory and proverbs (literary devices) are the artistic techniques (Manner) to be handled.

ii. C4HD, as an audiovisual material, works as a visual aid. As a teaching tool, C4HD captivates and focuses learner's interest on the whole teaching/learning activity, raises curiosity in learner, create a dialogical teaching/learning environment, booster learning needs process and help learner acquire social-emotional learning skills.

iii. The CBA is the teaching approach (learner-centred) in the trio.

2. Blending the CBA, C4HD and Socio-Artistic Critical Theory: Practical Procedure

In the case in point, practical procedures of the concurrent working of the 3 principal concepts within a class session is materialised in a detailed lesson plan, as seen below:

Trainees: *English Modern Letters student-teachers*

Trainer: *Dr. Obie Michael Anele*

Class: *Year 4 (HTTC, Bambili)*

Enrolment: *25*

Average age: *22+*

Hypothetical Duration: *2hrs*

Hypothetical Time: *11:30 – 1:30 PM*

Hypothetical Date: *Tuesday, 8th October 2024*

Subject: *Literature in English*

Area of Study: *Socio-Artistic Critical Theory – Effectiveness of technique (Author's attitude and literary devices)*

Learning Approaches: *Applied Cinema, Human Development (HD) and Competency-Based Approach (CBA)*

Category of Action: *Discussing, writing, film watching, identifying and analysing.*

Action: *Speaking, writing and identifying stylistic devices and themes from the text and film sequences.*

Essential knowledge: *Themes and Stylistic devices; cursory knowledge of the Socio-Artistic theory*

Previous Contributing Competence: *Students can bring out the author's attitude and also identify devices*

Expected Competencies: *Communicative, problem-solving and team-working skills, and result driven-mind-set*

Expected Outcome: *By the end of this lesson, students should use the socio-artistic critical theory to appreciate a text in terms of the effectiveness*

of technique and show how the texts relate to issues surrounding everyday life.

Visual Aid: *Short film sequences (C4HD)*

Reference text: <u>Family Saga</u> *by Bole Butake*

Stages	Subject matter	Teacher Activity	Student's Activity	Learning outcomes or Attitude	Rationale	Duration
Introduction	What do you understand by the socio-artistic critical theory? *Answer Can you name its tenets? Effectiveness of techniques Artistic truthfulness Readability Social relevance. *Today, we will critically examine the effectiveness of techniques in Bole Butake's work-* **Family Saga**	Teacher asks questions orally.	-Students answer questions orally.	- Learners link past competence to present competence -Engaging the learners to the lesson of the day.	-To introduce the lesson of the day -To arouse learner's interest	05 minutes
Presentation	**Effectiveness of two Techniques** **Author's attitude** *(towards subject matter)* **Literary Devices** (*metaphors, allegory and proverbs*) *- We want to find out how efficacious the*	-Teacher asks questions orally -Teacher gives explanations to students and clarify their answers -Teacher prompts learners	- Students answer questions orally. -learners pay keen attention to explanations and ask questions for clarity. -learners give their own examples	-Students explore the subject Matter and essential knowledge through general discussion.	- To get learners acquainted to Subject Matter as they interact with their teacher and classmates.	42 minutes

author is in informing the audience of his feelings and how well does he make use of these three devices. **Effectiveness of Technique Used (**Author's attitude**)** *- Did you notice the author's attitude towards the subject matter?* *The author expresses discontent towards exploitation and castigates marginalisation in all its forms.* *How? Give an example with textual evidence* *The author supports the idea of reconciliation.* *How? Give an example with textual evidence.* *Other examples* *Is the effectiveness of technique in terms of the author's attitude plausible in this piece of work?*	to give theirs.	as many as possible.			

	*Yes, it is *Why do you say so?* *Answer **Effectiveness of technique (Devices)** **Proverbs –** well known sayings giving a piece of advice or stating a general truth **Allegory-** refers to a piece of art that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one. **Metaphor –** comparing situations *Textual examples					
Controlled Practice	Two short film sequences (2nd and 5th Movements the film *Family Saga*) are screened to all groups: the first is the encounter between Kamala and Baakingoom and the second is that of Kamala, Ngong and Sawa preparing folk dances for Kamalo's entertainment. The actions of characters	-Teacher asks students to constitute themselves in 4 groups; each group's film watching activity is guided by one question. -	-Students constitute themselves in groups and watch the film sequences on the screen.	- Learners generate targeted competences including communication, problem-solving, team coordination and result-driven competences by thinking along the lines of group questions while watching the films.	-To enhance their communication, problem-solving, team coordination and result-driven abilities.	25 minutes

within these scenes guided the choice of the film in this lesson. *Groups' 1 – 4 Questions:* *Group 1: Appreciate Kamala's choice of communication approach (as expressed in his temperament) in his self-identification process* *Group 2: To what extent does Baakingoom's perspective of Kamala's true identity help Kamala solve the problem of Kamalo's deceit and betrayal in their signing of the "brotherhood Deed"?* *Group 3: Examine the effectiveness of Kamala's leadership role in helping other characters in Family Saga discover their true identities.* *Group 4: Pinpoint instances to show that Bole Butake effectively uses character development as a technique to*					

	arrive at a peaceful resolution of the class marginalisation crisis in his play.					
Free Practice	*Groups set to work; each is guided by their group question.*	-Teacher goes around the class supervising group work.	- Learners work among themselves in groups.	-Boosting targeted competences in learners.	-To reinforce the acquisition of targeted competences. -To verify if students can retain the essential points developed in the short films and in the whole lesson.	22 minutes
Evaluation	*Oral groups' work presentation.*	-Teacher goes round to check if the learners are doing the work. -Teacher marks some books. -Teacher gives corrections.	- Groups' representatives orally present their work Students do the task and take corrections.	Consolidating the acquired competences; Learners use guiding group questions effectively to proof competence gained in the course of the lesson.	-To ensure that the objectives of the lesson are met. .	22 minutes
Assignment	Class Project: *With the aid of characters (2) and settings (2), illustrate the extent to which*	-Teacher gives assignment to students.	-Students copy assignment in their books.	Learners stay focused as they exploit content material.	-To keep students busy at home.	3 minutes

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	<u>Family Saga</u> *is artistically relevant to its target audience.*				-Ensuring continuity of the lesson.	
Signing of log book		Teacher signs log book.				2 minutes

3. Discussion

Blending the CBA, C4HD and Socio-Artistic Critical Theory: Lesson Plan Interpretation

It is worth mentioning that the *Controlled Practice, Free Practice* and *Evaluation* stages are three very important stages within the whole teaching/learning process here-concerned. The use of visual aids, being short film sequences adapted from the studied text, is at the *Controlled Practice* level of the lesson plan above. Important to note that it is at this point that learners are *obliged* to watch these short films in groups whose activities are guided by 4 competency-based structured questions. The four competency-based designed questions are:

1. *Appreciate Kamala's choice of communication approach (as expressed in his temperament) in his self-identification process;*
2. *To what extent does Baakingoom's perspective of Kamala's true identity help Kamala solve the problem of Kamalo's deceit and betrayal in their signing of the "Brotherhood Deed"?*
3. *Examine the effectiveness of Kamala's leadership role in helping other characters in* Family Saga *discover their true identities, and*
4. *Pinpoint instances to show that Bole Butake effectively uses character development as a technique to arrive at a peaceful resolution of the class marginalisation crisis in his play.*

Respectively, the questions above aim at generating and boosting four main competences including communication, problem-solving, team coordination and result-driven work mindset. Let us note that the

Controlled Practice precedes the *Free Practice* teaching/learning stage in the lesson plan. This is meant so that the generated thinking paths (in learners) fostered by the four competency-based designed questions will actually be practised within the groups, after the screening of the two short film sequences. This organisation of the learning process follows Paolo Freire's mind: "*to see again what had already been seen before always implies seeing angles that were not perceived before. Thus, a posterior view of the world can be done in a more critical, less naïve, and more rigorous way.*" (38). The objective of helping students perceive new things from what they had seen before is met with well-tailored audiovisual materials at the *Controlled Practice* stage. It is intentionally used at this given point so as to help students visualise key aspects of author's attitude towards his/her subject matters and then encourage them (learners) to analysis the content differently from what they had perceived at the first reading of *Family Saga*. These processes are factors of critical thinking, which also puts in motion the generation and boosting of the four targeted competences in this lesson. As for the *Evaluation* stage, a sort of a continuation of the *Free Practice* stage, it is meant to verify the extent to which the learner understands and retains essential points in the lesson taught. It is as well a stage meant for the learner to showcase the four inherent competencies sort after in the lesson.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to provide a palliative necessary to help trainee teachers in teacher training institutions in Cameroon understand what the CBA (Competency-Based Approach) is about, as a means to ensure that they too use it when younger learners are entrusted in their hands. The problem is, although the State of Cameroon has officialised the practice of the CBA in Cameroon primary and secondary schools, it has perhaps not yet seen the need to replace the presently-used Objective-Based designed curricular with Competency-Based structured

curricular. The problem is more compounded in trainee teacher colleges like HTTC (Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili) that trains students who will be obliged to use the CBA upon graduation. For over ten years, HTTC has not organised any activities (workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.) aimed at training its academic staff on CBA specifically. The question is: if the teaching staff of a teacher-training institution is not trained on this somewhat novel teaching/learning approach in the Cameroon education landscape, what magic can be expected from the trainee-teacher on the field, if not frustration? Frustration is their obvious lot when their cooperating teachers (in internship schools) as well as pedagogic inspectors oblige these trainee teachers to draw lesson plans and teach using the Competency-Based Learning approach.

While waiting that the root cause of the trainee teacher frustration be addressed by the powers that be in teacher training institutions in Cameroon, this paper demonstrates that a blend of Anele Michael's applied cinema approach (C4HD), Shadrack Ambanasom's critical theory (Socio-Artistic Theory), and the CBA teaching methodology can be effective to help trainee teachers in HTTC Bambili (and sister institutions in Cameroon) understand and practice the CBA. The lesson plan used here puts to bear how each of the three aforementioned approaches can work in synergy to generate and boost targeted outcomes defined within the realms of the Competency-Based Learning (CBL) design in both primary and secondary education levels in Cameroon. It is thus expedient to integrate this tripartite blend in the curricula of Teacher Training institutions in Cameroon.

We recommend that further research considers the ways that this tripartite blend of Anele Michael's C4HD, the Socio-Artistic Theory, and the CBA can apply in learning non-literary subjects like Mathematics, Economics, etc.

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