



Deep In 2

Conceptual Guidelines/Methodology For Devising And
Delivering Educational Programmes For Adult Educators
Involved In Motivating And Educating Less Educated And
Less Skilled Adults Aged 45+

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CIP

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*It is clear that they have something to say
and with texts it is possible to learn words*

Introduction

During the COVID sanitary crisis it has become clear that its »victims« are people with poor literacy skills and fewer possibilities in all areas of life. They either stop working or become redundant and lose their job. Their children's schooling is at risk. They are not able to help their children as improvised teachers and overcome the harmful interaction of different risk factors of personal, family, school and social nature (Blaya, 2010). Too often they believe and forward fake news.

It appears that literacy programmes can help enhancing their relationships with reading, writing and mathematics... their work and life. Throughout the LearnersMot2 project three questions will be asking for answers: (1) How do literacy skills impact older people's working and their everyday life? (2) How the essential basic skills can be developed in in everyday life and at work?(3) How can literacy programmes change older adults' engagement with further learning? Namely, the first project LearnersMot made a strong case that older employees with poor literacy skills are rarely invited to participate in educational provision. When convinced to participate and enrolled they experience good and bad moments. Therefore, they need to be continuously motivated for staying in education for their own benefit, the benefit of the companies and indeed entire community. Knowing this, we engaged in this LearnersMot2 project.

Reaching common understanding of words and concepts that will be used in developing educational tools and generalisations in the project LearnersMot2 will hopefully enhance

the quality of all project activities as well as project results. Some concepts were already touched upon in DeepIN 1 (definitions of functional literacy/illiteracy etc., competencies, language ability, etc.)

Concepts will underpin the following and other project activities/goals

- turning single motivating approaches, methods and techniques into a constant motivational process in the field of reading, writing, numeracy and other basic skills;
- establishing links between the end users (the low educated and low skilled older workers) and their social, professional environment through reading, writing and counting and enhance their social inclusion through overcoming shame and guilt they feel;
- selecting the most common environments/areas/activities people in situation of functional illiteracy need to link to in everyday life; work, shopping, health, the use of computer in everyday life;
- dealing with various aspects of numeracy, i.e. mathematics applied to everyday life: using number in context, estimating and calculating, using money, continuing and predicting patterns and relationships, interpreting proportional reasoning, spatial reasoning, etc;
- supporting the development of digital skills as new basic skills increasing all others;
- deepening basic skills related to oral and written languages, cognitive and cultural skills, communicative and social skills, numeracy and digital skills needed in today's companies and everyday life;
- deepening learning how to learn skills addressing adult educators and their learners;
- offering opportunities for technological socialisation and education of low educated and low skilled workers thus developing interactional learning between adult learners and computers as well as social skills;
- giving constructive feedback to learners in non-formal education environment through assessment of their knowledge based on problem solving.

Over the last 30 years the adult earner audiences have changed due to demographic developments and emerging information society. Older learners and low educated and many non-traditional audiences have gained access to education among whom less educated and less skilled workers over 45 of age.

Low educated and low skilled workers like anybody need to cope with the changing world where division of work is ever less present and companies are ever more service oriented, where ever more composite skills are required from each worker. Which skills are we talking about:

Basic skills like listening, reading, writing, understanding, cultural skills, social skills, digital skills and numeracy. But also communication skills and team building skills. There is no literacy without basic skills. They cannot be dealt with separately but rather jointly, several at a time.

Beside **skills** there are **competencies** (PIAAC) and **proficiency skills** the latter referring to the degree of competence a person achieves. (Schlaihler, 2018)

I. The functional literacy approach- definitions and the need of awareness

The functional literacy approach was initially defined for UNESCO by William. S. Gray as the training of adults to meet independently the reading and writing demands placed on them. (Casper, Russell, 2021)

Currently, functional literacy is about the acquisition of appropriate verbal, cognitive and computational skills to accomplish practical ends in culturally specific settings.

At a global level, a number of scholars have discussed *functional literacy* Collins and O'Brien (2003) argue that functional literacy could be viewed as the literacy that sees the minimum needed skills to meet personal and social needs in general education.

A report by UNESCO (2011) on 'The Current Literacy Situation in the World' holds the view that functional literacy is the envisioned minimum requirements for fundamental education including domestic skills, knowledge of other cultures and an opportunity to develop personal characteristics such as initiative and freedom. The report further reveals that despite the deeper, conceptual aspects of functional literacy, there is little that has been done in articulating it in official national or international definitions. The report also holds the view that international organizations have acknowledged broader understandings of functional literacy, which encompass 'conscientization,' literacy practices, lifelong learning, morality, and information and communication technology literacy.

Freire (1973) indicates that functional literacy is seen as a process by which is achieves the quality of consciousness and awareness, which may be expressed through language and action. In line with this idea, the UNESCO (2011) report further indicates that functional literacy is a range of skills and competencies, cognitive, effective and behavioural, which enables individuals to live and work as human persons who can develop their potentials, make critical and informed decisions, and function effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community.

Freire felt that before teaching the illiterate adult to read, he or she should be helped to overcome his or her passive understanding and develop an increasing critical understanding of his or her reality. He proposed that such conscientization could be achieved through an *active dialogical and critical pedagogy* (Freire, 1972).

Dialogue is the means of achieving conscientization. Conscientization requires that an individual change his or her attitudes, perception or beliefs. In other words, individuals must not accept that social reality cannot be questioned and changed. Critical understanding of situations leads to critical action (Freire, 1972)

So, *knowing learners and learning audiences* as well as their specific characteristics has become one of the basic concepts in adult education. In order to devise and deliver successful programmes for educators as the direct target group and older workers as the indirect target group, thorough knowledge of these target groups gained through observation of learners and dialogues with them.

The groups of learners in situation of functional illiteracy, however, are not easily accessible since those who are in situation of functional illiteracy hide their deficiencies.

II. How one finds oneself in situation of functional illiteracy

In Learners Mot₁ functional illiteracy was studied from different perspectives but mostly from the psychological, cultural, sociological perspective, the one of *life condition leading to the situation of functional illiteracy*. This life condition is characterised by: lack of parental emotional support, large family where not enough attention was paid to single children and their individual needs, , long term sickness and absence from school, life transitions, isolation, dyslexia with its different kind of neurological organisation of brain and language, schooling that was not centred on real life, early dropping out of school as to help parents with their work, , long social interruptions etc. reasons for one to land in a situation of functional illiteracy are many.

Persons in this situation did go to school, wanted to learn but nobody really taught them how to learn and important adults like teacher etc, did not respect them not their learning. Therefore their bad school memories hinder their learning sometimes for a life time.

On the other hand *social unfairness* on different levels, families are to cope with (low income, poor economic level, poor socio-cultural level and a symbolic level strengthen the situation of functional illiteracy of individuals. Living on social allowance, narrow social cultural habitus, and stigma may contribute to adults" finding themselves *in situation of functional illiteracy*.

There is evidence of a life course trend in skills acquisition and loss which is a highly individual phenomenon. Skills have tendency to improve up to early middle-age. They reach a plateau in the middle age. The increase in literacy and numeracy skills post-compulsory education may be a result of improving skills in employment. The down-slope in older age is likely to be related to the ageing process, but it may demonstrate a reduction in the use of those skills as well (David Mallows and Jennifer Litster, 2016)

Alleviating the problem of functional illiteracy could offer benefits to all. Individuals, their families, companies, communities.

III. Relevant learning theories

When addressing *learners in situation of functional illiteracy* a stronger foundation in educational theories is needed to design, deliver and evaluate educational programmes.

Due to its social transformative role, education of learners in situation of functional illiteracy should never be understood as simple transmission of knowledge, rather as a collective *construction of knowledge*.

There has been general acceptance that the design of our educational materials should include a foundation in conceptual frameworks. Theories should serve as a frame of reference for project partners and educators to reflect on how to best help learners in situation of functional illiteracy to succeed.

There are numerous *learning theories* that might underpin the development of learning materials and the implementation of the educational programmes in this project. Intentionally have been chosen only some of them based on our practical observation of how low educated and low skilled adults learn and our trial and error approach to their learning.

Cognitive learning theory

is relatively relevant for us as it underlines the importance of personal agency as well as social and environmental variables to shape appropriate behaviour and to build both *content knowledge* and *underdeveloped self-regulatory skills*. Initially learners in situation of functional illiteracy need to be sure about the steps to take in their learning. They need to be told *how to learn* and they need to be told very simple things like that they need paper

and a pen when attending learning sessions. Therefore first steps are to be very clear to them and only then self-regulatory principles can be applied, learning in pairs etc.

Constructivism

Experiential learning as well as *inquiry-based* and *problem-based learning approaches* are representative of constructivist teaching approaches. The underlying principles of constructivism, that students construct knowledge through active engagement in their environment, allow for the use of creative instructional approaches.

Lev Vygotsky viewed learning and development as a social process wherein learners “grow into the intellectual life of those around them”

“ Learning is a process in which learners gradually “take for themselves knowledge and skills they developed in their interaction with others and with cultural tools.”

These can be quite different: language, symbol systems, calendars, processes, art, maps, writing, writing utensils, technology, and machinery; essentially any tool, tangible or symbolic, that humans use to adapt within the context of their environment. Through exposure to and continued use of the cultural tools, real experience becomes symbolically represented in the mind and the external is internalized; appropriation takes place. Theory of constructivism is relevant for this project activities since

Learners in situation of functional illiteracy have mostly been exposed to the influence of unchallenging narrow social and cultural environment which makes them functionally illiterate, less flexible and afraid of changing.

Literacy programmes should therefore be designed to broaden the presence of cultural tools. All above cited theories require interactions with the cultural norms, signs, symbols, and tools, and all require access to more expertise than the learner currently possesses.

Experiential learning theory

David Kolb interested in how people learn published his **learning styles model** in 1984. Much of Kolb’s theory of **experiential learning** -one learns best through experience- is concerned with the learner’s *internal cognitive processes*. Kolb states that learning occurs

when abstract concepts are acquired the ones that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations, when they are transferable. Similarly there is much discussion going on concerning *knowledge, skills and competencies*. Findeisen(2015) argues that competencies are acquired only when the skills and knowledge gained are applied in real life situations and abstract concepts about work tasks and activities have emerged and have been developed to the extent that they may be passed onto others. Thus it is not enough to be able to build a brick wall, what you need as well is to understand the principles of successful building and can talk about them; when you can describe not only how but also why, what for, what of...etc. Then you can be called competent and can be said to possess competencies. *In Kolb's theory*, however, there is an omission which is relevant to mention. He omits to talk about the person in the centre of the learning process, his and her characteristics . While educated persons do not need experience learning by doing and can start right away by using their cognitive abilities, by reading a book for instance or watching a video or talking to an expert, low educated and low skilled learners need to apply skills, carry out a task and reflect on it only later on. This is important to bear in mind when developing the educational programme or delivering it.

Low educated and low skilled learners need to apply skills, carry out a task and then reflect on it. This is how they learn.

Those who want to understand how less educated people learn might want to consult numerous other learning theories and might find out that learning is a complex activity that needs observing and using a trial and error approach concerning the learners, the programmes, the implementation of the programme. So let us create our own definition of learning out of many others:

Learning is the process by which one experiences a relatively stable change in thinking, doing, attitude, behaving in general. For learning to exist there should be a noticeable or measurable change produced. It occurs when a person uses his or her cognitive abilities, body, emotions and senses, when the person is exposed to the impact of a learning group and a variety of » cultural tools«. When facilitating the learning of a

group of low educated and low skilled learners the educator's methods should be problem solving, eclectic, focused on learners' life situations and challenges.

IV. Motivating less educated and less skilled older learners

In LearnersMot1 we were interested in how to trigger the **primary motivation for learning** in less educated and less skilled learners aged 45 + Now, we would like to discuss how to continuously, **permanently motivate older workers to remain in the learning process.** There are some crucial moments however when motivating learners has to be particularly intensive.

When they are invited into the learning provision educator has to be ready to cope with their resistance;

When learners get enrolled and start learning and are ready to quit any moment

When learning becomes more demanding for them;

When learners have to cope with some difficult life events.

When learners do not like some other learner in the group;

Moreover, learners motivate each other to stay in education and should be encouraged to do so.

Educators should "forget" about the learning curriculum or better should make it as flexible as possible and restructure it whenever needed **to start by what learners already know** or **by addressing the learners' higher psycho-social needs** (the need for decency and esteem, the need for belonging, etc.). Approaching learners through **art** (decency) might impact them positively.

Learning will be addressing learners' interests, needs, aspirations, whenever possible. To trigger learning situational learning will be used with carefully selected situations and methods.

V . The role of adult educators regarding learners in situation of functional illiteracy

Developers of educational programmes and adult educators for less educated learners are supposed to **create learning situations** to match with their learners abilities, needs, wishes and expectations. The problem here is that the low skilled mostly do not know what they need , wish or expect nor are they aware of the implicit knowledge they have.

Adults have very concrete biographical experiences which enable them to act in the way they act. **Learning experiences** adult educators trigger are supposed to **stem from their learners' biographical experiences** and should integrate biographic novelties into the existing patterns of interpretation. This implicit knowledge is strengthened and learners know better than before. (Alheit and Hoernings, 1989) Therefore more **learner focused methods** are needed as well as **a combination of different learning locations**.

Adult educators should first learn about what and how learners have learned. Learners will be their basic source of knowledge, despite their being unaware of the knowledge they have gained with informal learning beforehand. Adult educator guides their thinking in the right direction, inquires about their feelings, observes their body language taking care to include into the educational programme what students already know.

A competent adult educator is able to interpret the requirements and limitations of real job or everyday life situations while combining different sources .

Adult educators should have the ability to establish a critical distance towards the contents and the elements of knowledge to be taught. Not all situations will be useful to exploit ,not each situation will be a learning situation in a structured educational programme.

Educators should constantly bear in mind the context in which knowledge will be used by their less educated and less skilled learners.

VI. How to approach learners in situation of functional illiteracy

The method of choice is "*biography*" or ***life history*** which is not unfamiliar to professional teaching. Its affinity with the classical task of adult education which is to accompany adults on their lifelong journey, is significant. Contemporary life course seems to have become harder and in our times biographies of working and occupation are becoming less important than they used to be. Other biographies than work biography have become important, therefore educational *programmes for bettering functional literacy have to be devoted to both life and work biographies.*

The method of life history seems particularly valuable for persons in situation of functional illiteracy. "Life history is a promising approach that helps adult learners learn about what they already know. They learn when and how and what they learned in the past and discover what motivates them to pursue new educational opportunities in the future.

"Through the process of talking in the group and the process of writing the learners discover not only their learning experiences but also enhance their critical thinking and collaboration in community" (Dominicié, 2000) Moreover, self-insight should not be a neglected dimension of learning.

Connecting learners' learning with everyday situations is another essential approach to reach out to learners in situation of functional illiteracy. The definition of any situation has three parameters: *space, time and scenario.*

Space may vary. *I can be intimate, private or public.* These different spaces require different activities and different speech acts and types of communication. Learners in situation of functional illiteracy, however, are not "multilingual" !

Speaking of **time**, it is either *personal* around the person (shared with people close to the person) or *socially determined* expressed by calendars, schedules, cycles of diverse natures. **Scenario** draws upon the recognition of typical developments with known actions mostly called **routines**. Routines help to organize one's life and to plan. Many relevant learning subjects arise when talking with learners about their everyday routine i.e. discovering

relationships or latent knowledge and skills to build on when starting a new economic activity, etc.

Learning will be connected with learners' *every day or daily or routine life or work situations*.

Any every day or daily or routine situation in everyday life and particularly at work may be defined by

- (1) the circumstances and tasks to be performed;
- (2) linguistic interactions;
- (3) spatio-temporal environment ;
- (4) the person, the learners and their characteristics.

(Javeau, 2011)

In everyday situations persons in situation of functional illiteracy act well taking care to hide their illiteracy, but any changes occurring within these situations may put them out of balance. Not being able anymore to rely on the wisdom or common sense of their parents, nor on their own experience they get frightened. For learners in situation of functional illiteracy changes are daunting.

In LearnersMot 2 we are *interested* in how adults in situation of functional illiteracy **spend their time** .We will be particularly interested in their daily life, their routine activities and situations at work. *Everyday life, daily life or routine life* comprises the ways in which people typically act, think, and feel on a *daily* basis. *Everyday life* may be described as routine, natural, habitual, or *normal and is important for situational learning privileged in literacy programmes*. *Situations adults face in their everyday life may have similarities but they should be analysed with each and for each single learner*.

In this project we will be analysing the everyday life and situations of adults in situation of functional illiteracy dwelling upon sociological theories of everyday life. (Javeau,2011)

Our civilization has ceased being civilization of **observation** but in relations with low educated and low skilled adults educators and animators' observation is essential. Sharp observation is needed for colleagues at work, personal managers, adult educators and animators *to identify* those who are *in situation of functional illiteracy*, to encourage them, talk to them, spot their **strengths and weaknesses** as well as their **emotions** (fear, uneasiness, shame, social pain that comes back).

Identifying adults in situation of functional illiteracy is not easy, since they have developed an array of strategies to hide their situation from the eyes of others.

In the project LearnersMotz a manual, a course with modules will be written for adult educators who are involved in education of low educated and low skilled older 45+ workers. The educators want **to attract** their learners into educational provision triggering their **primary motivation for learning** and they want **to retain them**. The modules of the course should serve as a learning resource and inspiration. They will be applied to adult educators, but they will not be applied as such directly to the end users, older learners. "That would be aggressive" said a course leader dealing with life histories of adults in situation of functional illiteracy wanting to enhance their **reading, writing and saying** and on these grounds their **ties with society**.

It is important for adult educators to use an **eclectic method** and create **small groups** from four to six learners who can help each other and restructure each other's sentences. The role of the group of peers and *peer teaching* is crucial for *developing listening, reading, writing, narrative, cognitive, social, cultural and digital skills*.

The peers and the educator or animator help each member of the learning group *to understand and to say, to read and write* without fear to be judged. (safe learning environment). It is of primary importance that **safe learning environment** be created where nobody is judged.

Actually there is no tool that can be used directly. On the contrary, adult educator has to have a wide picture of what he or she might work on (contents) and how (methods) *but should adapt to each time, to every moment, to each person*.

*Links with learner's life and their social environment will be established through **writing**.*

Basically adult educators should take care to establish a direct link between their learners and their **social environment**. Whatever method the adult educator applies, it has to be in a **context** of the learners' life, it should help the learners and the learning group **to solve problems** in their learners' life helping them to **relate to their environment** and to live their life outside their home, family and workplace.

So, learners should discover their social, professional, cultural or natural environment through reading, saying, writing and doing. Writing out of the need to write make people aware of the issue of literacy.

Integrational linking, through socialized narration. Learners talk in the group but it is even better if they can talk about their **relationship to learning, reading and writing** to a group of people outside their own group. This can be a group of young people in a (vocational) school who do not understand why learning is important and will be important in their future life.

This is an example for such "**socialized**" narration.

"When I was a little boy, I was naughty and kept fighting. I even knocked down two boys so badly that they had to go to the hospital. I am not proud of it. I was constantly opposing teachers. So nobody wanted to have me. I was taken to a special institution. [...] When I received letters from my girlfriend I had to ask my sisters to read them for me. That was embarrassing. [...]. When my wife sent me to do the shopping and she asked for salad I had to draw it, the same for milk I drew a box of milk. That was painful. [...] I was not able to spell my address. [...] At work I was good I think, so they gave me some plans to read. I had nobody to ask...I couldn't figure it out. Now it feels good learning. Now I am 25 and it is time for me to.... learn.. So learn, learn as not to be like me ..."

Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue **life events from different settings** (work, home, pubs) with the temporal and logical order [...] to establish coherence between past, present and as yet non-realized experience (Ochs, E., Capps, L., 2001).

When you change the setting, your narration changes as well, your perspective on the events changes when you change interlocutors, when time changes etc. People in situation of functional illiteracy have difficulties including the interlocutor in the narration. The literary philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin argues that "the life of the (oral) narrative always *develops on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects!* Moreover, **oral narratives** are of different "genre" than the written narratives that "absorb" digest" transform everyday conversational genre. It is important that learners involved in literacy programmes may practice different -what in linguistics is called text (written, oral, performed text) They engage in oral narration but also in written narration, or even (performed narration on the stage while deepening their understanding of the text itself. Dentith (1995)

There are different possibilities for educators to make the narrating and writing of their learners socialized. By establishing intergenerational links, by taking adult learners as a group to another group with the same problem of learning, narrating, writing. . they can encourage both groups.

Knowledge cannot be transmitted, it is being constructed collectively and learners' writing must be meaningful. What they could not say in the past they can say now in the educational programme.

*It is possible to shape attitude *attitude to reading and writing* through talking about what learners have read, written, how their parents and grand parents felt about reading and writing.*

Memories about reading and writing can be exploited. The first and the last piece of writing for which learners were marked. Memories lead to a different perspective! In social situations there are direct relationships between reading and saying..

Numeracy

Beliefs about learning, about learners, about the subject taught etc. are different. Adults learn mathematics in very diverse contexts. Mathematics is believed to either *a tool, a system* or **a problem solver**. A problem-solving view of mathematics is the most beneficial for learners in situation of functional illiteracy. (Sommer, 2020=)

All cognition in general and learning in particular is situated. So, situated learning can be perceived as a **function of activity, context and culture** while the context is *everyday life activities*. Moreover, situated learning should target **authentic context**. An inspiration can be found in mathematical picture books addressing children where situations in children's life with potential for children's learning mathematics are pictured. Situations in books are to be considered, talked about acted out, etc.

Likewise all other skills, acquiring numeracy is connected to everyday life situations. If this is educator's belief, he or she recognizes that **learning can occur in interaction**. In addition, educator's conception of the physical world also accounts for their conception of learning mathematics. They can view reality in their subjective or objective way.

Numeracy is a complex skill in itself and its relations with most areas and activities of everyday life are not well researched (health, managing time, managing social relations, geography, reading maps, digital devices etc.). Poor numeracy skills in adults can reflect in poor reading tables, filling in forms, reading schedules, calculating, poor linear representation of numbers, etc.

The latter can be addressed through numerous *educational games* board games, etc. adults in situation of functional illiteracy might later use in playing with their children.

With such games it is possible to improve at least four areas of mathematical knowledge like: identifying numerals, counting, comparing number magnitudes, understanding a number line

Adults in situation of functional illiteracy should make mathematical discoveries as to better integrate in everyday life, use material and time in right proportions.

Identifying and observing everyday life situations As to integrate mathematics into learners' everyday life, programme developers and educators should observe their life, identify situations and activities (cooking, repairing, setting table-there is a possibility to count pieces of dishes and cutlery for each person at table, or the number of guests is being counted and then the entire number of dishes, cutlery etc.). It is indispensable that educator identifies situations having potential for stimulating learning mathematics..

(Peter-Koop/ Grüßing, 2007). Pictures with real photos of learners in situations can be collected representing counting, space and form, patterns and structures, quantities and measures, probability, dates.

<https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-8-media-and-technology/>

Digital skills

There are many divides in our fragmented societies not only the digital one that needs to be addressed particularly in countries with **low digital economy and society index (DESI)**. Some older workers and learners, be they well educated or not, voluntarily cut themselves from new technologies and thereby from understanding how the contemporary world functions. Digital skills, being basic skills are based on person's **technical biography**¹ support the development of all other skills. They can be effective for older learners making them feel empowered and in control of their own lives. Digital skills help their relationships with families, colleagues at work, communities and even beyond. They better independent access to public and private services. The lack of access to technology can

¹ Technical biography comprises socialization through technical devices like radio set, tv sets, phone, household appliances, car etc.

marginalize older less educated and less skilled workers from the mainstream of development, undermining their economic and social roles, reinforcing their dependency on others. Developing digital skills though education should not be separated from educational contents, rather integrated into them (also in all educational modules contained in the educational programme for educators we are going to develop in the LarnersMotz project.

Conclusion

Education of adults in situation of functional illiteracy aims primarily to socially integrate them through reading, writing, saying, counting. Educating them requires combining learning and didactics oriented towards real life and situations which demands *structuring teaching and learning situations* with a potential for learning. **Educational programmes should include** identification of learners' existing knowledge gained in their social roles and development of basic skills based on situational learning. They should address challenges less educated and less skilled older workers have to cope with and apply problem solving methods. Educators help learners in situation of functional illiteracy to discover themselves, go out and live outside their home.

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