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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Towards a Teacher Leadership Model in the Moroccan Dynamic Classroom Environment: Authentic Leadership**

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**ABSTRACT**

The achievement of positive outcomes in the classroom is not solely dependent on the acquisition of subject expertise and a strong foundation in pedagogical understanding but also on the ability to inspire, motivate, and provide guidance to students. The utilization of the Authentic Leadership (AL) model is proposed as a framework to establish a systematic approach for inspiring others and linking the principles of teacher leadership to the core principles of English Language Teaching (ELT). The AL framework comprises two fundamental concepts, namely authenticity and leadership. The distribution of an inquiry to instructors through social media was facilitated by employing a Google Form. A sample of 50 English teachers hailing from various cities in Morocco responded to the questionnaire. Considering the feedback that participants provided, it can be inferred that teachers possess a subconscious understanding of the various dimensions associated with authentic leadership. However, they encounter numerous obstacles when attempting to incorporate these dimensions into their instructional practices within the classroom setting. This study proposes the establishment of an additional tier within the educational framework of Moroccan schools. The primary objective of this tier is to offer a comprehensive program of professional development for teachers, with the aim of enhancing their pedagogical skills as well as their psychological well-being. This would be achieved through the implementation of the AL model in a systematic manner.

**KEYWORDS**

Authentic leadership (AL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Authenticity

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### **1. Introduction**

In the context of an educational setting, rapid transformations can occur within a brief timeframe. Hence, it is imperative for educators to possess a comprehensive understanding beyond pedagogical knowledge in order to effectively address the intricate organizational dynamics within educational institutions. The cultural self, in its various dimensions and expressions, assumes a paramount role in shaping the competencies of students. According to the 2018 PISA study, it is evident that economically and socially advantaged students in Morocco achieved higher scores in reading compared to disadvantaged students, with a difference of 51 score points. However, it is noteworthy that 13% of the disadvantaged students managed to attain high scores in reading proficiency, indicating that economic disadvantage alone is not a definitive determinant. This finding underscores the considerable influence of cultural factors on students' academic achievement (Schleicher, 2018). In a similar vein, when examining bullying as an expression of cultural identity, the PISA study indicated that students who experienced bullying were more likely to experience school disengagement and an increased likelihood of dropping out. On the other hand, students who receive emotional support from the school's staff tend to place a higher value on the overall school environment (Schleicher, 2018). According to the aforementioned study, a quarter of the student population expressed agreement with the notion that they experience feelings of loneliness within the school environment. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure a successful learning process by providing a

supportive atmosphere for learning. This paper proposes that the adoption of a proficient and adaptable teacher leadership model can facilitate the establishment of a secure educational setting in which students can enhance their self-assurance and sociability. The leadership model posited within this scholarly article is referred to as Authentic Leadership (AL). The model is characterized by its multidimensionality, encompassing four distinct dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and cultural standards. Teachers need to demonstrate competence in these four key areas before they can occupy a position of authority inside the classroom. In this study, we make use of the strength-based approach (SBA), which Diddams and Chang (2012) first introduced. This strategy claims that placing an exclusive emphasis on the positive characteristics of teachers may potentially weaken the effectiveness of leadership and prompt a defensive reaction from the instructors themselves. The existence of defensiveness can function as a hindrance to the facilitation of motivation, alteration, and advancement within individuals (Diddams & Chang, 2012).

The research questions that will be addressed are as follows:

1. Do educators demonstrate a comprehensive comprehension of the importance of the four dimensions encompassed within the Authentic Leadership model?
2. To what extent do educators integrate the principles of Authentic leadership into their pedagogical approaches?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Teacher Leadership**

The pivotal significance of teacher leadership in educational settings cannot be overstated. It is imperative to recognize and appreciate the multifaceted role that teachers assume in shaping the educational landscape. Teacher leadership encompasses a diverse range of responsibilities and actions that go further than the conventional boundaries of the classroom. In educational settings, teacher leadership serves as a catalyst for positive change and innovation. The Future of Jobs 2020 report identified leadership and management skills as being third among the top 10 most in-demand expertise areas (p. 38). Leadership has the potential to trigger creativity and innovation. In 2020, the World Economic Forum found that to be a good leader, you need to be able to build and keep relationships that help you consistently get great results. The authors, McGee, Haworth, and MacIntyre (2015), have made a significant contribution to the field of educational leadership. In a 2015 academic study, the researchers meticulously examined the leadership practices that provide invaluable assistance to English language learners. The practices mentioned above encompass the provision of opportunities for the professional development of teachers, the cultivation of a secure school environment that encourages tolerance of diversity, the establishment of efficient interaction networks between teachers and parents, and the implementation of techniques for differentiated instruction that cater to the distinctive requirements of students (McGee et al., 2015). In accordance with Grint's seminal work in 2005, the realm of leadership can be understood through the lens of four fundamental dimensions. These dimensions involve leadership as an individual, leadership as an outcome, leadership as a position, and leadership as a process. This classification, as defined further by McGee et al. in 2015, is a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of leadership (p. 6). The focus of this paper is on two distinct perspectives: the individualistic approach, which emphasizes the personal characteristics and behavior of a leader, and the interpersonal approach, which focuses on the interaction between teacher and student within the realm of leadership. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), teacher leaders exhibit distinctive qualities like self-assurance, sanguinity, and tenacity in the context of the paradigm of leadership at the individual level (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Teacher leaders demonstrate a profound sense of self-assurance as they hold a comprehensive understanding of their own capabilities and constraints. They possess a commendable level of self-esteem, which enables them to maintain their admirable qualities. Leaders in the classroom are optimistic people who are not afraid to admit they have made errors. They know that these mistakes offer important opportunities for personal and pedagogical growth. According to the research of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2001), teacher leaders should be role models not only for their students but also for their colleagues in the educational community. This is not to downplay the significance of sound pedagogical practices; quite the contrary. Teacher leaders are held in high esteem by their peers and administrators because of their demonstrated mastery of fundamental teaching concepts and methods, as found in studies by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2001). However, it is important to acknowledge that educators can also be regarded as leaders when they exhibit a sense of vulnerability. Teacher leaders have a good tendency to admit their own weaknesses without feeling embarrassed. Moreover, they possess an unwavering determination to actively address and enhance these areas of weakness, all the while seeking the valuable helping hands of their students in this noble pursuit. For an individual assuming the role of a teacher to effectively embody the position of a leader, it is of utmost importance to possess a thorough understanding of human nature and individual motivation and adhere to a set of higher ethical standards (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016).

### **2.2 Authenticity**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines authenticity as the quality of remaining true to one's true nature. In a similar vein, Susan Harter (2002) eloquently conveyed the concept of authenticity by invoking the language of Shakespeare, positing that it encompasses the habit of staying "true to oneself." The notion of authenticity is not characterized by a fixed state but rather

exhibits a dynamic nature, manifesting itself on a spectrum that includes various degrees of decline or rise. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for educators to possess the means to acquire appropriate resources for the purpose of self-assessment. Walumbwa et al. (2008) define authenticity as "the quality of being honest with oneself. According to Gardner et al. (2005), the quality of self-authenticity is acting in a way that is consistent with one's true nature while also being true to one's own unique history and values. The concept of authenticity is intricately intertwined with the multifaceted dimensions of human strengths and weaknesses. To show one's true self without any kind of filter is to be authentic, and this includes all of a person's many different traits. Kernis (2003) argues that self-awareness and objective processing are two crucial factors in determining a person's level of Authenticity. Genuine people are those who, when they interact with other people, do it in a way that is open and honest, and they act in accordance with the opinions and convictions that they hold deeply within themselves. Developing authenticity helps create a setting that is beneficial to development. Educators who model these qualities of genuine leadership—openness, trust, cohesion, and ethics—are worth looking up to. Through their actions, they exhibit exemplary leadership qualities and actively contribute to fostering an atmosphere of authenticity within the educational milieu. Moreover, they extend their support to fellow individuals, aiding them in their pursuit of genuine growth and development.

### **2.3 Authentic Leadership**

The concept of genuine leadership has been given more attention in recent years within the field of leadership studies. Kernis (2003) is widely acknowledged within scholarly circles as a seminal figure who has made substantial contributions to the understanding and appreciation of authentic leadership. Walumbwa, Avolio, and Gardner define "authentic leadership" as a set of practices followed by effective leaders. These practices rely on and foster high levels of psychological competence. According to Diddams and Chang (2012), this style of leadership seeks to create positive human growth by encouraging self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, unbiased information processing, and transparent connections between leaders and followers (as quoted in Diddams & Chang, 2012). This paper looks at the possibility of Authentic Leadership (AL) as a framework to improve standards for teaching and learning. The Authentic Leadership model furnishes an in-depth structure that can assist educators in effectively navigating the multifaceted challenges that are inherently associated with the realm of English language teaching (ELT) within a foreign context.

### **2.4 Authentic Leadership Model**

#### **2.4.1 Self-awareness**

The AL multidimensional model, as proposed by Greenier (2016), is a comprehensive framework with four key dimensions. The first dimension of the AL model is the notion of self-awareness. The development of reflective thinking skills is crucial in the discipline of second language instruction. The practice of engaging in introspection allows educators to acquire a deeper understanding of diverse facets of their individual attributes, thus fostering the refinement of their instructional methodologies. According to Greenier (2016, p. 4), educators who have a high level of self-awareness demonstrate characteristics such as reflection, flexibility, accountability, enthusiasm, and a strong dedication to their professional field. To foster the development of self-awareness, it is imperative for individuals to actively partake in a genuine and authentic endeavor of self-examination and self-appraisal. The act of engaging in self-assessment entails the deliberate undertaking of discerning and articulating one's inherent capabilities and limitations alongside one's subjective understanding of the external environment. The concept of self-image can be viewed as a continuum, but the majority of people are unaware that there are gaps in this continuum; that is, it is not the case that you either know yourself completely or not at all. Specifically, people may not know about certain parts of themselves, which shows that they don't know (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 596). Caputo and Dunning (2005) came up with the phrase "unknown unknowns" to refer to the voids they noticed in the range of self-awareness. Based on the ideas of Caputo and Dunning (2005), determining the self's unknowns requires a comprehensive self-awareness evaluation. The latter includes examining an individual's personal history and identifying trigger events. In turn, this can aid in the development of genuine leadership abilities.

#### **A. Personal history**

Many things combine to form an individual's past, such as their upbringing, relationships with significant others, recollections from their formative years, and formal education. Personal history has a subtle effect on an individual's perception of themselves. According to Hoyle (2015), the personal history of an individual's life events is encoded in their memory as self-knowledge, which is also referred to as self-schemata. When an individual is navigating the most fundamental question of self-discovery, "Who am I?" These self-schemata play a crucial role in the formation of one's identity. Implicit prejudices may make it more difficult for a teacher to be self-aware.

Teachers can examine their own biases in their teaching approaches through self-reflection and the sharing of professional experiences. Furthermore, teacher professional development sessions can help teachers develop self-awareness through the investigation of their own personal histories. Effective instructors, according to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), are self-reflective practitioners who can recognize their own biases and modify their methods to better accommodate students from a wide range of backgrounds. As a result, teachers can use professional development to learn more about themselves and improve their

methods. By encouraging introspection, it helps teachers develop the kind of self-awareness that is crucial for developing effective pedagogical strategies and improving students' learning results. Therefore, it is impossible to emphasize the significance of continual teacher professional development in molding a teacher's sense of self and affecting their pedagogical approach.

### ***B. trigger events***

An occurrence is said to be a trigger event if it causes a noticeable change in the behavior of an individual, even if this change is of a minor nature. It is of the utmost significance to have a thorough understanding of the qualities of the situations that operate as triggers, as these play a vital role in shaping individuals' attitudes. An event that serves as a trigger is capable of producing either positive or negative outcomes. A person's behavior and sense of self-worth can be profoundly affected by traumatic events such as the death of a loved one, a health or financial crisis, an emotional or physical assault, or other catastrophic experiences. Success in a global or local competition, earning love, respect, and support, or getting the top mark in class can also boost self-esteem.

It is important to give teachers a chance to look into and understand their triggers, as well as ways to deal with the changes in behavior that happen as a result. At the same time, it is important to train teachers so they can learn to recognize situations that might set off triggers in their students, improve their ability to respond well, and actively help their students' emotional and mental health. The incorporation of Authentic Leadership principles into teacher professional development programs has the potential to create classrooms where students are encouraged to focus on more than just their academic performance.

### ***2.4.2 Relational transparency***

The second dimension relates to the concept of relational transparency, which necessitates the establishment of authentic and meaningful conversations between educators and students. This fosters an environment of coherence and openness. This aspect serves as a means of protecting the classroom environment from the potential dangers associated with bullying while simultaneously fostering an environment in which students are actively encouraged and motivated to pursue academic success. Transparent teacher-student relationships can foster student respect and make subject syllabuses more relevant and relatable. As a result, this change can help students do better in their classes. Authentic leaders must reveal not only their areas of expertise but also their limitations in order to demonstrate transparency.

According to Diddams and Chang (2012), self-disclosure of vulnerabilities can strengthen the relationship between instructors and students. In a classroom setting, when teachers reveal their vulnerabilities, it creates an opportunity for a transformation from the conventional hierarchical dynamic to a more equal one. This shift fosters the development of mutual trust and respect among all individuals involved. Students have the ability to view their teachers as authentic individuals who, just like them, face difficulties and errors, thus bringing a human touch to the educational journey.

### ***2.4.3 Balanced processing***

This dimension aims to balance educators' goals and students' aspirations. Conducting a thorough and evidence-based analysis is crucial to systematically identifying students' needs. If a language class aligns with the passions of students, it is likely to increase their motivation to learn. According to Gardner (2005), balanced processing entails taking in and processing knowledge about oneself without prejudice, whether that knowledge is positive or negative. It is crucial to establish a shared understanding and agreement between educational institutions' objectives and the needs of students.

Recent research shows that taking students' interests into account when designing the curriculum can increase their motivation to learn, according to a study by Kizilcec et al. (2017). According to Cheung (2001), incorporating elements of popular culture, current events, or personal interests into English lessons can greatly increase student engagement. Additionally, research indicates that students experience higher levels of motivation when they believe that their perspectives are respected and taken into account during the educational journey (Reeve & Jang, 2006). In the context of language learning, the use of balanced processing can effectively connect the goals of educators and the aspirations of students, resulting in a highly inspired setting for learning the English language.

### ***2.4.4 Cultural Standards***

The fourth dimension is concerned with cultural norms and practices. The responsibility of teachers is to identify similarities between their own thought processes and those of their students. According to Greenier (2016), teachers need to fully understand students' cultural features and viewpoints in order to fully comprehend how they behave in the classroom. This is due to the fact that students originate from diverse backgrounds, each with its own set of cultural characteristics and perspectives. Bhindi and Duignan (1997) argue that genuine leaders develop empathy for their followers by understanding what they go through in terms of feelings, wants, and needs.

The Authentic Leadership style can help teachers and students connect by encouraging them to become more culturally aware and empathetic. It strengthens the idea that educators who take on leadership roles are genuine, compassionate people who can educate pupils in a manner that recognizes and appreciates their many different life experiences.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The study sample consisted of 50 English teachers from Morocco. The participants in question were not selected through a formalized selection process; instead, their inclusion in this study was solely dependent upon their voluntary choice to take part.

#### **3.2 Instrument**

The primary method of data collection applied in this study was an online survey. The survey instrument consisted of a combination of open-ended questions and two multiple-choice items. The inclusion of open-ended questions aimed to elicit participants' perspectives and observations on teaching practices. In contrast, the multiple-choice items were used to quantitatively evaluate the teachers' responses. The questionnaire comprised a total of 12 questions, which were categorized into four sections aligning with the four primary aspects of the AL model: awareness of oneself, relational transparency, unbiased processing, and cultural standards.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The collected data underwent analysis employing a blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The data obtained from the Google Form was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis in order to examine the multiple-choice questions. Additionally, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify themes from the open-ended responses.

#### **3.4 Results and Discussion**

The responses from the participants in this study are consistent with Greenier's (2016) findings, which also found that the participants made indirect references to AL principles. The participants' responses were classified according to the four fundamental principles of Authentic Leadership (AL), namely self-awareness, relational transparency, unbiased decision-making, and cultural norms.

##### **3.4.1 Self-awareness**

Based on the data collected from the participants, it is apparent that a substantial majority of educators (93.3%) consistently employ reflective practices to assess their pedagogical strategies in the context of teaching English to their students. One individual demonstrated rare introspection regarding their pedagogical methodologies. The survey results demonstrate that a substantial proportion of educators perceive self-reflection as an essential element of their pedagogical approach.

The participants were instructed to express their perceptions regarding their level of competence in English instruction in order to evaluate the degree to which they possess self-awareness. A number of educators highlighted their specialized knowledge in specific areas, including the teaching of grammar, the effective delivery of educational materials, the clear articulation of learning objectives, and the development of oral communication skills. A number of educators engaged in a discourse regarding their ability to sustain student motivation and develop a tolerance for errors within the classroom. Conversely, some educators emphasized their proficiency in building rapport with students and understanding the various challenges they face.

Overall, the findings suggest that educators exhibit diverse viewpoints and expertise concerning the elements of successful teaching methods, which encompass both technical competence and interpersonal skills. However, it becomes evident that a significant number of participants exhibited a hesitancy to openly acknowledge their deficiencies as instructors of the English language. A significant number of responses were either vague or centered on external factors, such as limited financial resources, time constraints, or inadequate training opportunities. Certain responses also employed the strategy of reframing deficiencies as developmental issues rather than explicitly acknowledging flaws or failings.

##### **3.4.2 Relational transparency**

According to the participants in the study, establishing a favorable rapport with students is regarded as a crucial factor in attaining favorable educational outcomes. The absence of external pressure and the avoidance of potential embarrassment create an environment that fosters the willingness of students to express themselves and enhances their abilities in interpersonal communication. Educators who possess the ability to establish a robust connection with their students are more likely to experience a reduction in disruptive behaviors within the educational setting.

The majority of participants shared the view that the establishment of a considerate teacher-student relationship has the potential to exert a beneficial influence on students' academic achievement and conduct. The likelihood of students demonstrating

enhanced focus, active engagement, and dedication to a desired behavior is higher when they perceive that their teachers hold them in high regard and value their worth. In general, it is evident that educators possess an understanding of the significance of effective communication with their pupils and are employing diverse tactics to accomplish this objective.

### **3.4.3 Balanced Processing**

It was found that 66.6% of teachers engage in regular or frequent discussions with their students regarding their individual needs. A total of 26% of teachers engage in occasional discussions regarding the demands of pupils, while 7.4% of teachers seldom or never partake in such discussions.

The participants agreed that addressing students' individual goals and passions is critical to delivering high-quality language training. Teachers, according to the respondents, employ a wide range of methods to encourage student participation and collaboration, tailor lessons to individual students' needs, and deliver content with enthusiasm. They highlight the need for conducting a requirements analysis and involving students in determining course objectives, selecting engaging subjects and themes, including engaging materials, and delivering authentic content.

However, certain educators believe that merely prioritizing students' interests within the classroom may not be sufficient. They argue that teachers should also incorporate subject matter that is relevant to students' future pursuits. The participants generally agreed that it is crucial for ELT professionals to focus on their students' individual requirements. The study participants demonstrated a variety of methodologies aimed at understanding the needs and preferences of their students within the specific context of learning the English language. There exists a divergence of opinions among the participants regarding the most effective means of ascertaining students' strengths and weaknesses. One perspective advocates for the utilization of diagnostic exams and evaluations, whereas an alternative viewpoint posits that engaging in candid conversations and administering surveys to determine students' preferences is the optimal approach for identifying their sources of motivation in the learning process. Alternative suggestions have been put forth regarding the incorporation of captivating activities that effectively capture the interest of students, including the organization of film screenings and the integration of musical components within classroom pedagogy.

The participants have presented a range of approaches for effectively balancing their pedagogical goals with the needs and preferences of their students. There exists a group of individuals who advocate prioritizing the implementation of effective planning and thoughtful teaching practices. In contrast, another group advocates for the organization of courses in a manner that integrates specific skills throughout theme-based topics, thereby fostering student engagement. Overall, the participants' responses demonstrate a wide range of strategies that can be used to achieve a balance between their instructional goals and the wants and tastes of their students.

### **3.4.4 Cultural Standards**

The data collected from the participants suggest that it is crucial for educators to have an in-depth understanding and recognition of their students' cultural viewpoints when it comes to teaching English. Educators who invest effort in familiarizing themselves with the cultural and personal backgrounds of their students are more capable of addressing their students' individual requirements, fostering motivation and active participation within the educational setting, and designing captivating and pertinent instructional materials.

The participants emphasized the significance of teachers maintaining a neutral stance and promoting an environment where students can express their own beliefs based on factual evidence. They stated that Teachers ought to possess an awareness of their personal biases and cultural predispositions and make efforts to overcome them. This is crucial in order to effectively facilitate the academic progress of their students while simultaneously valuing the distinct viewpoints of each individual learner. According to the accounts provided by the participants, the significance of upholding cultural values cannot be overstated in the establishment of an effective learning milieu that fosters comprehension, acceptance, and development.

The participants put forward a variety of strategies aimed at acquiring a deeper understanding of the mindsets and perspectives of their students. Various methodologies have been suggested for examining students' behavior, such as using a variety of observational techniques. In addition, the application of questionnaires or the initiation of informal conversations were proposed as viable methodologies. Participants also said that things like media trends, films, and songs could give them useful insights into how their students think. Hence, the adoption of feedback mechanisms and the development of awareness regarding contemporary trends have been recognized as effective strategies for comprehending the cultural norms of students. In general, the participants emphasized the significance of understanding the thought processes of learners as a means to enhance pedagogy, and they proposed various methodologies to achieve this objective.

#### 4. Limitation

The study's research was subjected to several limitations. It is imperative to recognize at the outset that the sample employed in this study may not possess complete representativeness with regard to the general population of English language teachers in Morocco. The reason for this is that the sample was obtained through a convenience sampling technique, wherein individuals who had easy access to the online survey through email and social media platforms were selected. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, which may have introduced bias and consequently affected the validity of the results. In conclusion, the study exclusively gathered data from educators who specialize in the English language without considering the participation of other relevant stakeholders. Other external parties' perspectives were excluded from the study to narrow its scope.

#### 4.1 Future Suggestions

This study highlights the need for future research inquiries related to authentic leadership in the field of education. It is advisable that future research projects prioritize the examination of teachers across various academic disciplines in order to assess the efficacy of the Authentic Leadership framework. In addition, the involvement of administrators, learners, parents, and policy-makers may provide a more holistic perspective on the application and potential consequences of the Authentic Leadership model in educational settings. Furthermore, it is suggested that future interventions ought to emphasize the creation and evaluation of professional development programs designed to tackle the challenges faced by educators in incorporating AL principles into their teaching approaches.

#### 5. Conclusion

In this study, we argue that it is crucial to provide teachers with access to ongoing professional development opportunities that help them improve their teaching practices and analytical reasoning. It also implies that the AL multidimensional model be used as the basis for teacher professional programs.

The findings suggest that the AL model can improve the efficiency of ESL classes by emphasizing the development of self-awareness, encouraging open communication, promoting reasonable decision-making, and taking account of cultural norms. Educators' belief that a genuine leader is mainly characterized by positive traits may explain why participants are reluctant to discuss their own flaws. Therefore, it may be an indication of insincerity to acknowledge a vulnerability. Diddams and Chang (2012) offered empirical evidence to argue that authenticity includes both positive and vulnerable characteristics.

This study is in line with the argument that recognizing and accepting an individual's shortcomings contributes to the confirmation of a leader's personal integrity. This study also highlights the importance of providing support and guidance to English language educators, enabling them to gain in-depth awareness of the AL model and effectively incorporate it into their teaching practices.

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