

## **TEACHING AND TRAININGS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OF ENGLISH TEACHERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teachers are the change agents of the society and nation and they always have to update themselves with the changes in time, technology and situation. They have to learn all the time. Many teachers are not aware of the teacher learning processes and they are not aware of the various opportunities of teacher learning and professional development. Teacher professional development is not just the product of formal teacher trainings organized by the authorities outside but a product of continuous teaching learning activities of the teachers themselves. The study was conducted by purposively selecting 30 secondary school English teachers of Rupandehi District using a set of questionnaire. This article aims at analysing the teachers' views regarding how teaching and trainings help their professional learning and tries to highlight some of the most common and useful strategies for the process of teacher learning and teachers' professional development. As most of the strategies presented below do not cost extra fund to apply in the day to day life, the teachers need to use these activities in their day to day life so that they can improve their practices which will ultimately improve the education. It was found that the teachers were not much aware of the fact that they can learn much by teaching and they can develop their practices of teaching through teacher trainings they attended. Not only this, the teachers were found to be not much willing for their professional development as well.

**Key Words:** *Teachers' professional development, teachers' portfolio, teacher support group, team teaching, peer coaching etc.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The world has become a small global village and with this change, the education system is also changing and updating day by day as per the demand of changing time and interest of the learners. Unfortunately the knowledge and skills of teachers who have been involved in teaching for years is blamed to have remained constant ignoring what is going on around the world and the learners. Every teacher must get a chance to update the knowledge and skills time to time, according to the situations' demands. Otherwise the teaching will not be satisfactory to fulfill the demands of the learners and the expectations of the society. Thus, for this, teacher training is very essential to be conducted regularly in a certain period of interval. Training is a basic requirement

of development which helps to foster the professional activities of the teacher and motivates them to develop new innovations in classroom situation.

There are two ways of developing knowledge relating to professional action, each of which is complementary to the other and both of which are necessary. The first is by mastering the 'received knowledge' which is appropriate (or deemed to be appropriate) to the practice of the profession in question. The second is by acquiring and reflecting on, 'experiential knowledge' of professional action itself. Naykki et.al (2021) studied the teachers' behaviours specially comparing the ways of reflection of the pre service teachers and in service teachers and found that both types of teachers were confused on their roles of training to them and they at least were ready to actively involve in learning.

The scope of language teacher education has been widening day by day. Only trainings are not sufficient to develop a teacher professionally in the present day context. Therefore, teachers' professionalism is at the crossroads. Nowadays, teachers are trying to involve themselves in different educational activities that help them to enhance their professionalism. Teachers are currently recognized as participants in two domains of engagement: within classrooms, instructing students, and in informal educational settings for professional training. These settings range from brief courses to comprehensive postgraduate programs, as well as non-formal environments like internships or professional development schools, where they acquire knowledge and skills Top of Form. Freeman (1982) asserts that, "It was argued that the procedural aspects of teacher training could be balanced by the person-centered notion of teacher development" (as cited Richards and Burns, 2009). As teacher training expanded to cover a career trajectory through ongoing support and professional development, concerns were raised. Research and conceptual discussions brought up concerns about the consistency of the training, with questions emerging about the order and progression of professional learning. The tendency over the last few years has been to begin to accept teaching as a profession, and consequently the transformation from teacher training to teacher professional development (Reimers-Villegas, 2003). Professional development programs aim to enhance and expand the knowledge and skills of teachers. Beyond this goal, these programs also serve to support educational reforms, enabling teachers to take on new roles and contribute to broader school development. The extensive scope of teacher professional development is viewed as a gradual and ongoing process that involves both formal and informal avenues.

Teachers' professionalism is truly at crossroads. Recently, countries across the world have taken definite steps to regulate teachers' professionalism. The word 'Professionalism' is now explicitly mentioned as a qualification to be attained by teachers. Khora, (2011) describes that in countries like the U.K, it has also been translated into particular activities and sentences. In the U.S.A, teacher standard now broadly refers to subject content knowledge and verbal activity for which there are national standards, which the states are to follow within a definite time period. In India, the government is soon going to have more control over teacher education through the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). In China also, teacher training institutes have to raise some part of their finance. Likewise in Nepal, the National Education System Plan (NESP-2028-32) brought a new impetus in teacher education making teacher training compulsory. Sharma (2014) asserts that exactly speaking about the training programs conducted by government of Nepal for the teachers what we see is all the training programs were conducted in project-based mode. Some of those project-based training programs were Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP), Teacher Education Project (TEP), and Teacher Professional Development (TPD) and so on. In conclusion, we can say that in the present era, the teacher professional development

is broadening its scope. Teachers are now involving themselves in various kinds of professional activities personally besides classroom activities and the limited training opportunities are provided to them. Therefore, there has been seen a shift of teachers' training towards professional development.

### **Strategies for Teacher Learning**

The various strategies of teacher learning and professional development do not cost the teachers much. In Nepal the teachers do not have to pay even to the teacher trainings as well. The other practices as well the teachers do not have to pay any amount. Strategy is the possible procedures/plans of obtaining or achieving the targeted purposes or intentions. There are various types of teacher learning strategies among them Richards and Farrell (2008) provided eleven different teacher learning strategies. They are presented in following ways:

**Workshops:** The workshops related to teaching learning are most common and useful forms of professional development. It is an intensive, short-term learning activity that is designed to provide an opportunity to acquire specific knowledge and skills. Workshops are usually longer often one or two days. It includes far more interactive exercises. According to Richards and Farrell (2008), a meticulously organized workshop can leave a lasting impression on its participants. Workshops, as emphasized by the authors, play a crucial role in realizing institutional objectives for schools and addressing the specific needs of individual teachers. An essential aspect of staff development involves offering opportunities for senior teachers to acquire skills in conducting workshops. Workshops provide teachers with a chance to take a break from the classroom, establish connections with fellow educators, and come back to teaching with a revitalized sense of enthusiasm. During a workshop, participants are anticipated to acquire knowledge that they can subsequently apply in their classrooms. Additionally, workshops often offer hands-on experiences related to the workshop's topic, such as the practical construction of teaching aids for enhancing reading skills.

**Self-monitoring:** The systematic approach of observing, evaluating and managing one's own behaviors in order to achieve a better understanding and control over the behaviors is known as self-monitoring. The teacher as a self monitor realizes to the fact that whether there is anything to be changed, corrected and improved in his/her way of teaching. According to Richards and Farrell (2008), "self-monitoring of a sample of one's lessons is often a good starting point in planning personal professional development, because it can be used to identify issues that might later be further explored through peer coaching, action research, or in a support group". Self-monitoring is equally important to the learners in the learning process.

**Teacher support group:** A teacher support group is also known as study groups, learning circle, teacher networks or teacher professional networks. It can be defined as two or more teachers collaborating to achieve either their individual or shared goals. In the words of Richards and Farrell (2008), "teacher support groups offer a forum where teachers can discuss issues that are important to them, while at the same time getting support, advice and help from other like-minded teachers in a non-threatening environment". Similarly, in the words of Liberman and Grolnick (1998 as cited in Awasthi, 2003), teacher support groups play a significant role in offering opportunities for teachers to validate both their knowledge and their inquiries into teaching practices. Unlike formal staff meetings or structured in-service workshops, a teacher support group is an informal gathering where educators meet to discuss goals, concerns, problems, and experiences. This approach fosters a collaborative culture within an institution, allowing teachers

with varying levels of training and experience to engage in shared learning. Through these groups, educators can work together to explore issues and collaboratively find solutions.

**Journal writing:** Journal writing is a process of enhancing reflective teaching as well as thinking and it develops awareness about language teaching and learning, forms the habits of self-inquiry for the better understanding of the situation and leads to teacher learning and professional development. Similarly, Richards and Farrell (2008) mention, “journal writing enables teachers to document teaching experiences and use the process of writing about them as means of reflecting on teaching. Journal entries also provide information that can trigger useful conversations with peers and supervisors”. Acheson and Gall (1997, as cited in Sharma et. al., 2014) also advocate journal writing is an “effective supervisory technique for encouraging the development of reflectivity in teachers”. While the procedures for journal writing are relatively simple, the effective implementation of this practice demands thoughtful consideration of its focus and the time commitments it imposes on both writers and readers. Journal writing serves as a valuable tool for teachers to maintain a record of classroom events and observations.

**Peer observation:** Peer observation is a way of learning from each others. It refers to a teacher or other observer closely watching and monitoring a part of a lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning, or classroom interaction. Richards and Farrell (2008) assert that, peer observation is one of the effective methods of teacher training and learning. It refers to watching and monitoring the language class taught by fellow teachers observers in order to gain understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning or classroom interaction. It can also help teachers become more aware of the issues they confront in the classroom and how these can be resolved. Observing other teachers may develop reflections about one’s own teaching. Thus, peer observation is one of the most common and valid way of teacher learning which can be used free of cost creating a situation of understanding among the teachers in a school.

**Teaching portfolio:** A teaching portfolio is a deliberate compilation of various elements showcasing a teacher's work, providing a comprehensive narrative of their efforts, skills, abilities, achievements, and contributions. The contents of the portfolio reflect the teacher's impact on students, colleagues, the institution, academic discipline, and the community. The primary purpose is to expand and enhance the teacher's personal insights and contribute to ongoing professional development. Richards and Farrell (2008) have defined it as “A collection of documents and other items that provides information about different aspects of teacher’s work”. They further describe, “compiling a teaching portfolio provides a teacher with an opportunity to document his/her strengths, skills and accomplishments as a teacher and can also provide a rationale for undertaking some of the other activities such as self-monitoring, journal writing, videotaping a lesson, and peer observation”. In the same way, stressing the multidimensional aspects of portfolio, Evans (1995 as cited in Richards and Farrell 2008) a professional portfolio, as defined by (the individual or source not provided), is a continually evolving compilation of carefully chosen or crafted professional thoughts, goals, and experiences interwoven with reflection and assessment. It serves as a representation of one's identity, actions, motivations, journey, current position, future aspirations, and the strategies planned for achieving them. Constructing a teaching portfolio is deemed the most effective method for contemplating one's teaching activities and behaviors, facilitating positive changes in teaching methods to yield fruitful results. This process encourages self-appraisal, aiming to enhance both the academic performance of students and the professional development of teachers. Essentially, a teaching portfolio functions as an activity for teacher professional development.

**Analyzing critical incidence:** According to Richards and Farrell (2008), “a critical incident is an unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspects of teaching and learning”. A critical incident produced by the students in the classroom causes teacher’s critical thinking with critical lenses towards students’ expectations. It can serve as a form of reflective inquiry and helps to create a greater level of self-awareness.

**Case analysis:** Case analysis is also known as case study that refers to an intensive and detailed investigation, exploration and providing some useful suggestions in the light of the exploration for the betterment or improvement of existing situation of investigated case. Richards and Farrell (2008) mention that, “case analysis in the teacher education involves collecting information to help better understand the situation and derive principles from it”. Thus case analysis helps better understand the existing problematic situation of case/cases. The findings of it help to improve the classroom environment and case’s academic progress.

**Peer-coaching:** Peer-coaching is a form of collaboration and collegiability of teacher professional development, school change and improvement, and finally educational reform. Hargreaves (1994, p.204 as cited in Sharma et al. 2014) argues that while definitions and interpretations of peer-coaching vary, it normally consists of a structured process for teachers to work together, usually in pairs to improve practice. Similarly, Richards and Farrell (2008) mention, peer coaching is a collaborative form of teacher interaction wherein one teacher takes on the role of a coach, guiding a peer through a specific teaching activity. This collaborative approach yields benefits for all involved parties. Peer coaching can manifest in various forms, including technical coaching, collegial coaching, or challenge coaching. It is crucial to establish clear roles for both the coach and the teacher from the outset, fostering a culture of trust early in the collaboration. When institutions decide to implement peer coaching, it is essential to involve teachers in discussions about their roles and the institutional structure. Adequate time must be allocated by the institution to facilitate effective peer coaching. Consequently, peer coaching creates opportunities for two teachers to collaboratively address teaching challenges, devise potential solutions, and, in turn, contribute to their professional development.

**Team teaching:** Team teaching refers to a process in which two or more teachers share the responsibilities for teaching a class. In team teaching, a group of teachers, working together, plan conduct, and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of students. In this regard Richards and Farrell (2008) describe team teaching is characterized by a collaborative and shared approach to planning, developing, teaching, and evaluating lessons. It is essential for both team members to equally share responsibilities at each stage of this process. The collaborative learning that results from shared planning, decision-making, teaching, and reviewing contributes significantly to the effectiveness of team teaching. Successful implementation of team teaching requires mutual confidence between the teachers involved. Coordination and monitoring are crucial to ensuring that team teaching is well-executed, with lessons appearing seamless to students. Following the lessons, the team should conduct a thorough review of the process, evaluating what was learned not just by the students but also by the teachers. This evaluation helps all parties involved decide whether to continue with these collaborative lessons or explore alternative approaches. Thus, team teaching which is also known as collaborative approach among the team members is based on the belief that “two heads are better than one” and it is very useful for the teachers’ professional development.

**Action research:** Action research stands as an effective teacher learning strategy, providing continuous opportunities for teachers to enhance their professional knowledge. It serves as a

powerful method for language teachers to independently explore and examine their own classroom teaching practices. Typically undertaken with the aim of improving a teacher's classroom techniques, action research encourages a reflective and iterative approach to professional development. Top of Form

In the words of Richards and Farrell (2008), action research refers to “a systematic approach to carrying out investigations and collecting information that is designed to illuminate an issue or problem and to expand and improve classroom practices”. In essence, action research is a form of classroom research conducted by teachers to address and resolve practical teaching issues and problems. This process involves a cyclic series of activities that begin with identifying a problem or issue, followed by collecting information about the identified concern, devising a strategy to address it, and observing the effects of the implemented strategy. The aim is to actively engage teachers in a systematic and reflective approach to improve their teaching practices.

### **Teacher Learning**

In a conference paper by Heller (2022), it is emphasized that in the ever-evolving field of education, particularly in the realm of educational technology, it is crucial for teachers to adopt the mindset of lifelong learners. The author underscores the importance of professional learning being not only relevant but also engaging and enjoyable, avoiding overwhelming and unpleasant experiences for educators. This perspective highlights the need for a positive and constructive approach to continuous professional development in the dynamic landscape of education. Top of Form

The teachers though they are supposed to be teaching. But in fact they are always be learning about the students, their capabilities, their cultural situation and tendency towards learning, their own teaching methodologies and techniques applied in teaching different kinds of subject matter and most importantly their experiences on the success or failure in using the presentation techniques and instructional materials they use. The teachers learn a lot while teaching various things which helps them to be professionally developed as well. Thus we can say that teacher learning is the way to educate a teacher professionally with the help of various methods formally or informally. Teacher learning is also known as teacher education. It is an important and continuous process which goes on and on throughout teaching career. Richards and Farrell (2008) have provided a number of conceptualizations regarding the teacher learning which are given in the following ways:

**Teacher learning as skill learning:** Teaching is no more a by birth art but a package of different skills. Teaching can be broken down into discrete skills that can be mastered one at a time. A teacher throughout his/her professional career goes on adding some new skills, strategies, and principles of language teaching. This ongoing process of enhancing skills and knowledge is only possible when the teachers get opportunity for teacher learning.

**Teacher learning as a cognitive process:** This approach to teacher learning perceives teaching as a multifaceted cognitive endeavor. It centers on understanding the maxims, beliefs, and thinking processes of teachers and how these factors shape their approach to teaching and learning. The framework underscores that teachers are engaged in active cognition and decision-making, crafting instructional choices by leveraging intricate, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs. This approach advocates for teachers to delve into their own beliefs and thought processes, examining their impact on classroom practices.

Activities such as self-monitoring, journal writing, and the analysis of critical incidents play a vital role in facilitating this reflective exploration.

**Teacher learning as personal construction:** This philosophical view is based on the belief that knowledge is actively constructed by the learners and cannot be passively received. In fact the knowledge is constructed in an individual in certain situation. Learning is seen as the continuous process of reorganization and reconstruction of existing knowledge. New learning, therefore, is the result of the teacher's reflection, interaction, discussion, feedback, etc.

**Teacher learning as reflective practice:** The fundamental idea that every teacher should engage in reflection as a practice is considered a basic concept. Teachers are encouraged to be reflective practitioners, operating under the assumption that learning occurs through focused reflection on the nature and meaning of teaching experiences. Teacher reflection is deemed an invaluable effort in the process of professional development. Three core investigative questions are identified as the foundation for theorizing reflective action: "What do I do?", "How do I do it?", and "What does this mean for me and those I work with and for?" (Burton, 2006, as cited in Richards and Burns, 2009). This approach underscores the importance of teachers critically examining their teaching practices to enhance their understanding and effectiveness in the educational context. Top of Form

Reflective teaching triggers teachers to critically analyze, rethink, reorganize, reconstruct, and consolidate the existing knowledge. Thus, reflective practice is also a way of teacher learning.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is as a survey of what teachers think about their learning while teaching and their views regarding the professional development with teacher trainings they attend. The study was accomplished with the aim of finding out the teachers' views regarding their ideas of what and how they can learn while they teach and the benefits of teacher trainings for their professional development which leads to transfer of trainings in the classroom practices and helps improving the poor ELT situation in Nepal. For this a questionnaire was developed and distributed to the 30 secondary level English teachers teaching in the different kinds of schools of Rupandehi and the sampling was purposive for the selection of the English teachers. The ideas provided by the teachers were tabulated and analysed and the results of the study are presented in this paper.

### Teaching and Learning of Teachers

As it is the general concept that the teaching is a dynamic and reciprocal process that not only facilitates the students' learning and imparts knowledge to students but also significantly contributes to a teacher's own learning and professional development. Though most of the teachers are not much aware of the ways teaching help their own learning, their various views are listed below.

1. Most of the teachers i.e. 27 teachers out of 30 were found to be in the view that the teaching deepens the knowledge on what we teach. While teaching a subject it requires a thorough understanding of the content. Explaining the concepts to students, answering their questions, and addressing misunderstandings compel teachers to study deeper into their subject matter, reinforcing and expanding their own knowledge.
2. The teachers also described that the teaching compels them for continuous learning. Education is an evolving field, and teaching requires the general knowledge of research, teaching methods, and educational trends. All the teachers were in the view that they were compelled to

- update their knowledge almost every day which is beneficial for their professional development.
3. The English teachers in Nepal are blamed to be weak in using English as the medium of teaching English and the general public blames that English is taught in Nepali in schools and colleges. Fifty percent of the teachers were found to be accepting the fact that they were less competent in teaching English well. Twenty four teachers responded that their communication skills in English have been improved by teaching English. As effective teaching demands clear communication, the teachers continuously are compelled to refine their communication skills to convey complex ideas in a comprehensible manner, fostering better understanding among students.
  4. During teaching English and other subjects the teachers are compelled to evaluate themselves and they have to reflect on their own classroom practices. As successful teaching involves reflection on classroom practices, the teachers assess what worked well, what didn't, and how they can improve. This reflective process enhances self-awareness, prompting continuous self-assessment and growth. In the present study only eight teachers replied that they reflected on their classroom practices and try to improve the teaching. Most of the teachers were not found to be aware of the benefits of reflective practices for their professional learning.
  5. By teaching English to the students with varieties of cultural background and varieties of levels of understanding, the teachers learn the adaptability skills for their professional development and social adjustment. Every class is unique, and every student is different. Teaching encourages adaptability as educators tailor their approaches to meet the diverse needs of students. This adaptability is a valuable skill that extends beyond the classroom into various professional scenarios and social adjustment as a member of the society. Thirteen teachers teaching English in different kinds of private secondary schools responded that they learnt different kinds of social behaviours and learnt to face and support any kind of the students in their schools. But five teachers were in the view that they trained the students to adjust in the school environment by teaching them English.
  6. Twenty eight teachers in the study accepted that their interpersonal skills were improved by teaching English for some years. During their classroom practices, the teachers need to interact with the students from different cultural backgrounds and with varying abilities which fosters strong interpersonal skills. Understanding the diverse needs of students helps teachers develop a compassionate and inclusive teaching approach.
  7. Classroom practices of the English teachers continuously engage them in the problem solving, innovative ways to address different issues, and adapt to unexpected situations. These experiences and practices develop successful problem solving skills in the teachers. Twenty one teachers in the present study responded that the teaching develops their problem solving skills which they use in their day to day life outside their schools as well.
  8. Twenty five teachers in the present study were found to be in the view that the teaching of English has developed their time management skills. The teachers have to manage time for various activities in the class and the skill of manage appropriate time for different activities of the classroom not only helps their teaching skill development and professional development but also for their life outside their classrooms and school territory.
  9. Teaching English is not only teaching a foreign language but the teachers transfer the culture with language. The teachers work hard to become good and successful teachers of English.



This enables the teachers to be good learners and the habit of learning make them the continuous learners for lifelong. Seventeen teachers in the study responded that they developed the habit of learning as they started working as an English teacher.

### **Teacher Training and Professional Development**

Teacher training is a critical component of ongoing professional development and plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' skills, knowledge, and effectiveness. In Nepal the government has been investing a significant amount in training the teachers and different kinds of teacher training programs have been launched for the teachers for their professional development with the aim of improve the teaching learning situation. The English teachers are benefited more among other teachers as there are many NGOs and INGOs as well as professional organizations like NELTA for training the English teachers. The teachers have different opportunities for their professional development in the following areas:

**Pedagogical knowledge:** Training sessions provide teachers with opportunities to deepen their understanding of pedagogical theories and principles. Workshops and seminars often focus on evidence-based teaching strategies, educational research, and best practices, enabling teachers to refine their instructional methods and incorporate the latest educational theories into their classrooms.

**Skill development:** Training programs target specific teaching skills and techniques. Teachers may receive guidance on effective classroom management, differentiated instruction, technology integration, assessment strategies, and other essential skills. Practical, hands-on training allows teachers to practice and refine these skills in a supportive environment.

**Content mastery:** Many training programs aim to enhance teachers' content knowledge in their subject areas. This content-focused training ensures that educators have a solid grasp of the material they are teaching, enabling them to provide accurate and in-depth explanations to students and address questions effectively.

**Technology integration:** In an era of advancing technology, training helps teachers incorporate digital tools and resources into their instruction. Workshops on educational technology equip teachers with the skills to use digital platforms, interactive tools, and multimedia resources, enhancing their ability to engage students and facilitate interactive learning experiences.

**Innovative teaching approaches:** Training exposes teachers to innovative teaching approaches and methodologies. This exposure encourages educators to experiment with new ideas, adopt creative instructional techniques, and take risks in their teaching. Embracing innovation fosters a dynamic learning environment that benefits both teachers and students.

**Reflective practice:** Many teacher training programs emphasize the importance of reflective practice. Teachers are encouraged to critically examine their teaching methods, assess the impact on student learning, and identify areas for improvement. Reflective practice enhances self-awareness and encourages a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation.

**Adaptation to educational trends:** Training keeps teachers informed about current educational trends, policy changes, and research findings. Staying updated allows educators to adapt their teaching practices to align with evolving educational standards and expectations top of form.

Thus, there are various benefits of teacher training for the professional learning of the teachers of English and they have been benefiting from the trainings. Almost all the teachers accepted on the views presented here and they were found to be accepting that the training can

really support their professional learning and classroom practices. But while talking about their unwillingness to train themselves for their professional development most of them were in the view that training skills cannot be transferred in the classroom situations as there are various kinds of barriers in the school environment. The teachers teaching in the government aided schools blame the students as well as the lack of resources in the schools whereas the teachers teaching in the private schools complain the school management for not providing appropriate trainings for them so that they can become effective and successful English teachers.

In this way, there are various strategies for teachers' learning which will ultimately result in the professional development of the teachers. Many teachers are not aware of their benefits for their career and professional development. Those who are deprived of the facilities of training and development and those who are unaware of the benefits of the facilities of training and professional learning need to be trained first about the benefits of learning and getting trained for teaching so that they can start to learn while teaching and this can lead their professional development. Then only we can expect an English teacher practising other means of professional learning and implementing the various skills learnt during the trainings in their classroom practices of teaching English so that the ELT situation can be improved.

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