

**Turning crisis into opportunity and the empowering role
of educational leadership: A case study of K V IIT Guwahati**

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Genesis of the Project- Bridging the gap

Adaptation to change and unforeseen circumstances and periodically reviewing and re-structuring teaching learning strategies in view of the fast changing social scenario, to achieve learning outcomes, is the pre requisite in any educational set up. The teaching-learning process is a dynamic one and must keep pace with the changes in the society.

As the whole world came under the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic, the educational setup in India as well as world was faced with an unprecedented crisis- **shutdown of schools.** **However, shutdown of schools did not imply that learning had to stop.** The challenge was to ensure meaningful and joyful learning even in these challenging times and to transform this challenge into an opportunity to learn and grow. The situation demanded new ways of designing the learning experiences.

This sudden and massive disruption in the normal school routine triggered the genesis of the project. The need of the hour was to adapt effectively to the extraordinary situation that faced us. There could be no compromise on ensuring qualitative and child –centred joyful learning experiences for the students. The most important issue was to select a medium to **connect with the students and parents and reach out to them.**

The home of the child was the new classroom.

As parents and children were confined to their home and were spending much more time together than ever before, the learning experiences had to be designed in a manner so as to draw upon this parent-child interaction. A major concern was to ensure the emotional and mental well being of the children, as the lockdowns necessitated due to the pandemic were bound to take a toll on their psychological and emotional well being.

My objective was crystal clear- I was determined that child centred learning experiences had to be incorporated with active and positive collaboration or engagement with the parents and learning should not remain confined to textual content. **The online mode of**

learning was a new challenge and but I decided to take this challenge head on and turn it into a meaningful , effective medium to facilitate learning. Regular interaction with the parents was imperative for the success of this approach.

Child- centred learning implies that the child's experiences form the basis of construction of knowledge. The child is actively and creatively involved in the learning process. The idea is to draw upon the immediate environment of the child and design and facilitate appropriate learning activities.

For this particular project, the child was at home, with parents and not in the normal classroom setup. Therefore, new ways of reaching out to the parents and children had to be planned and implemented.

The salient features of the project are as follows-

Ensuring joyful learning beyond school, through child- centred learning activities, keeping in mind the fact that the child is at home.

Use of a combination of digital media platforms to connect and to get regular feedback.

Positive engagement with the parents of students.

Target student group involved in the project were the students of Classes II-V.

Preparatory Work – The first steps.

We were in this unique situation together. The sudden closure of schools necessitated a prompt reassurance to the stakeholders that there would be no disruption in the teaching learning process. It was important to connect to all the parents. As the Headmistress, it was my prime responsibility to address the concerns of the parents. The need of the hour was online learning.

The basic preparatory works may be summarised below-

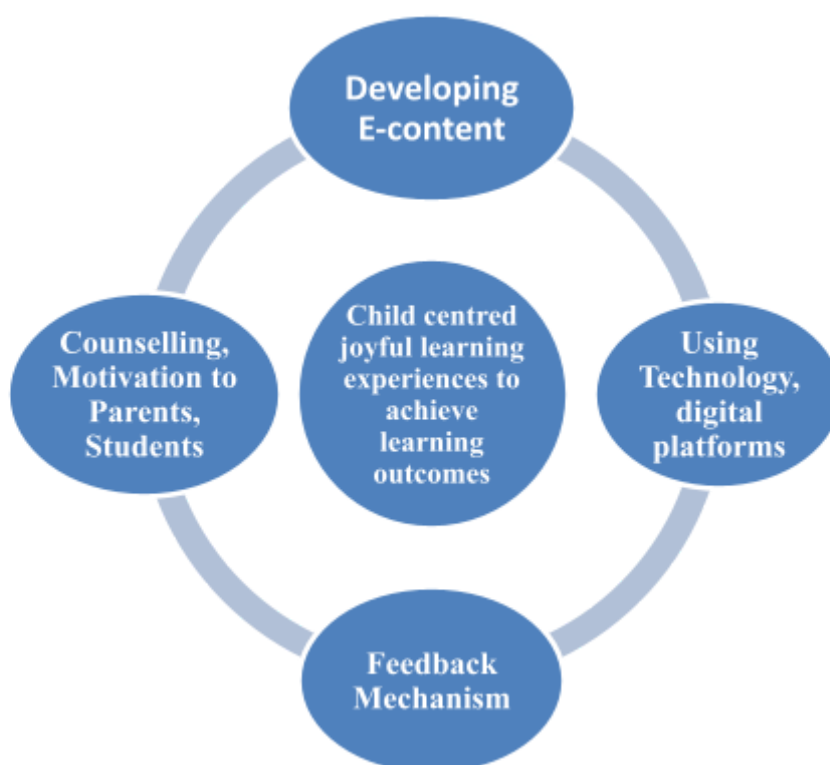
- Detailed discussion and planning with respected Principal Sir.

- Enlisting the objectives of the project.
- Letter to the parents to motivate them and to orient them to the sudden change in circumstances.
- Selecting a suitable digital platform to reach out to all and for transaction of the teaching learning process.
- Connecting with all the parents by creating class wise groups on platforms like Whatsapp. Even the parents who did not have smartphone were connected by sms, phone call.
- Motivating the teachers and orienting them to become equipped with new technology.
- Strategies to address mental well being of students and regular interaction with the parents and students in this regard.
- Identifying broad based targeted learning outcomes.
- Designing appropriate joyful child – centred learning activities for curricular and co-curricular subject areas.
- Regular sharing of explanatory videos with students, parents and teachers.
- Developing e-content.
- Monitoring and feedback mechanism to share the activities of the students.

Objectives of the Project-

- To ensure responsible and judicious use of the online medium.
- To connect learning to real life situations at home during closure of schools
- To facilitate joyful learning through child-centred activities.
- To develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- To develop creativity among the students.
- To provide opportunity for self expression by the students.
- To ensure mental well being of the students.
- To ensure positive and active engagement with the parents.

To sum up, the project was based on the following-



Execution of the Project- The distance brought us closer

The physical distance between school and the learners was bridged by the technological and digital connection. The project was executed through the online medium. The project was implemented in the following ways-

- **Counselling and Orientation of Parents**

Right at the beginning, an open letter to the parents was sent. This was also uploaded on the school website. The letter reassured the parents that we were with them at every step in ensuring learning for their child. The letter also outlined some activities which could be carried out at home regularly by involving the children. The children were also missing school and friends, hence the children had to be supported with love and care.

Stress was laid on involving students in simple chores at home.

We kept all channels of communication open with the parents- phone call, sms, Whatsapp. The parents were encouraged to share freely any doubt or difficulty, any other concern or feedback for improvement. Short audio clips and messages were sent to motivate them. **These measures brought the parents and school in close collaboration.**

- **Conducting activities to ensure active participation of students**

The following activities were conducted with the help of parents to ensure the participation of the students. These activities aimed at creating a sense of bonding among the students with their classmates and also to make them feel connected with school and their friends.

- **Vidyalaya Prayer** – The day begins with the Vidyalaya Prayer which binds us all. Videos were compiled and shared.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXhZJdXzRCo&t=88s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heaSUyjaYM8>
- **Art and Craft Activities-** Students were regularly engaged in art and craft activities. They shared their videos and art & craft works in the class groups and this motivated other students too. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXkDPjn3rOI>
- **One Student, One Plant initiative-** Even though school was closed, values like caring for the environment, planting saplings were fostered through plantation activity. The students and their parents participated whole heartedly. One student of class III also learned to work on the fields from his grandfather who is a farmer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwTRvn9hjBk&t=12s>
- **Child-centred joyful learning activities connected to real life situation at home-** As a teacher of English in Class III and V, I designed simple projects to develop listening, speaking, reading, writing , imagination and creative expression in the students. Effort was put in to involve the children with special needs in the activities being conducted, with the help of their parents. I personally interacted regularly with them.

The first project was to **record audio clips of chirping of birds in the morning** for students of Class III. The second project was to **prepare a feeding corner for birds and take care of birds. They took photographs and also shared videos of the birds coming to the feeding corner.**

The third project was to **make bird puppets and do puppet shows of birds. Salad making was the fourth activity and the students of class III shared pictures and videos of their salad making activity. This also helped to sensitise the students in the gender roles- boys should also work in the kitchen.**

The students of class V carried out storytelling with the help of puppets. The students were encouraged to **send audio clips regularly, narrating a story or**

reciting a poem. Another activity for Class V was cooking without fire. The students prepared simple dishes without the use of fire and explained the recipe.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI_j3kJz4FE

- **Developing and sharing e-content**

I prepared e-content for English which was in the form of explanatory videos and shared with the students. The e-content was based on English lessons of class 3, 5 as well some basic topics which are essential to develop the understanding of the students in English.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cERv3rVTJ10>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C9ID23AAPM&t=4s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKbiyYwnL2Y&t=1s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsqbtVgGDOg>

- **Effective feedback mechanism for students**

The students were encouraged to regularly share photographs, audio clips and short videos of their activities. Audio clips of poem recitation, story telling activity, songs, etc were shared by the students and their efforts appreciated and recognised. This helped them to connect with each other. Watching the video of their friends or listening to their voice made all the students feel as if they are in school. **It helped to close in the distance.**

- **Balanced activity schedule**

The emphasis was on learning beyond textual content. So there was a balanced time schedule comprising of curricular and co-curricular activities. This helped to ease the stress of the students and reduced the burden. Moreover the activity oriented approach also helped to connect to all the students.

- **Kids against Corona Campaign**

Awareness of the message ‘Stay Home Stay Safe’ and to take all precautionary measures was spread with the help of **Poster Making activities. Students also recorded short videos appealing to everyone to stay safe.**

Conclusions- the key takeaway from the Project

The activities elicited massive and active participation by the students. The parents co-operated with the school to ensure the smooth conduct of the activities. In case of any difficult or doubt, they clarified the doubts without any hesitation. The channels of communication were open throughout.

The activities helped the students to learn and grow. This was evident in the quality and extent of student participation during the period of online learning. **The challenge of online learning had been transformed into an opportunity to bring about a positive difference in the students and to ensure joyful learning.**

Further, a survey (**Enclosure 2**) was conducted among the parents to get a feedback about the activities conducted during this period of online learning. This helped to provide an objective and valid basis to the conclusions from the project. The survey was **conducted on a 5 point scale-** neutral, okay, good, very good and excellent.

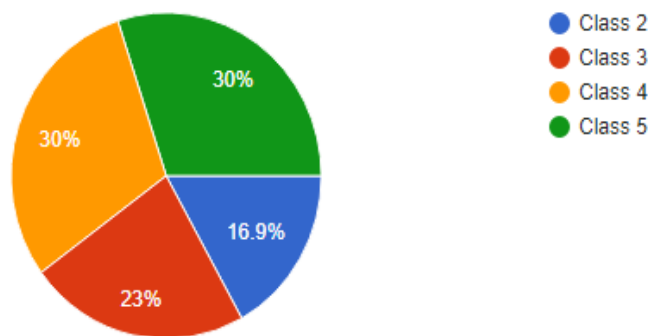
Results of the survey-

- **Parents of 213 students responded out of a total of 322 students in the primary section. 66.15% of parents participated.**

This is the class wise breakup of the parents.

Please select the class in which your child studies.

213 responses



- The feedback form comprised of statements under four headings-

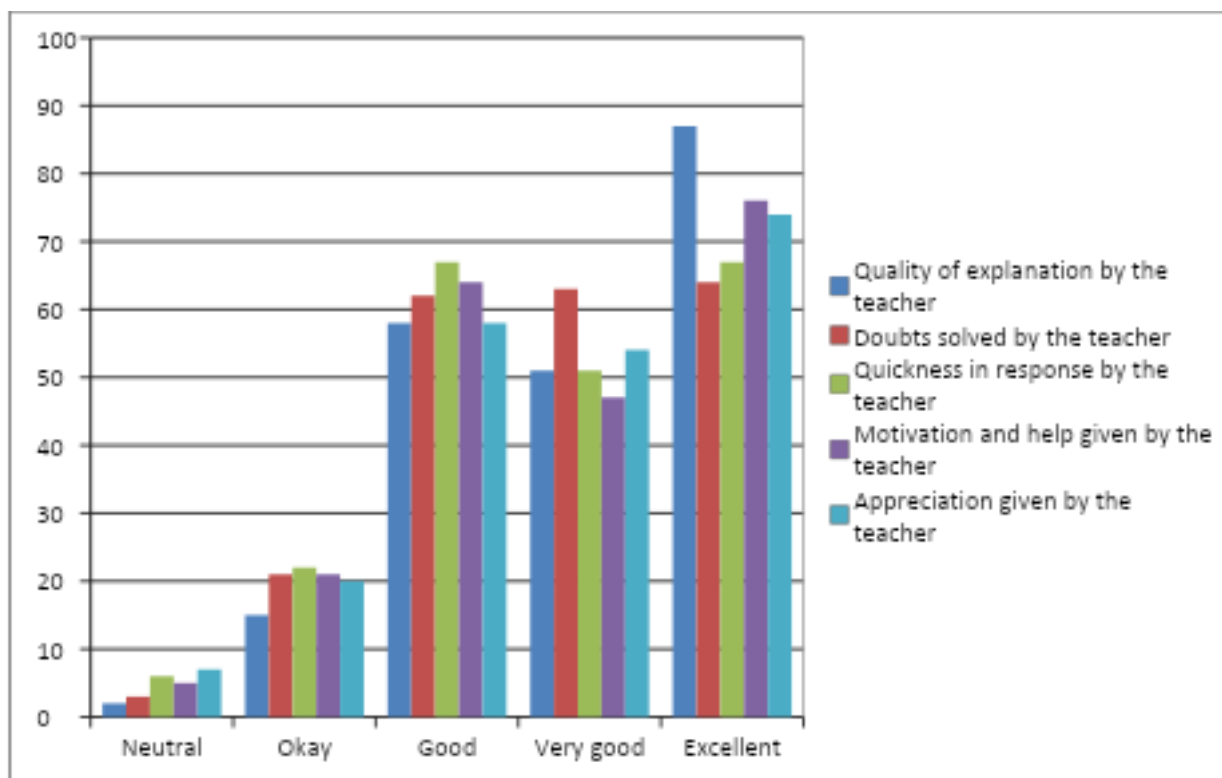
- Regarding support from the teacher
- Regarding the participation by your child
- Regarding participation by Parent
- Few lines about their overall experience (optional)

- **Regarding support from the teacher, the results of the survey are as follows-**

Statements	Neutral	Okay	Good	Very good	Excellent
Quality of explanation by the teacher	2	15	58	51	87

Doubts solved by the teacher	3	21	62	63	64
Quickness in response by the teacher	6	22	67	51	67
Motivation and help given by the teacher	5	21	64	47	76
Appreciation given by the teacher	7	20	58	54	74

Support from the teacher, graphical representation

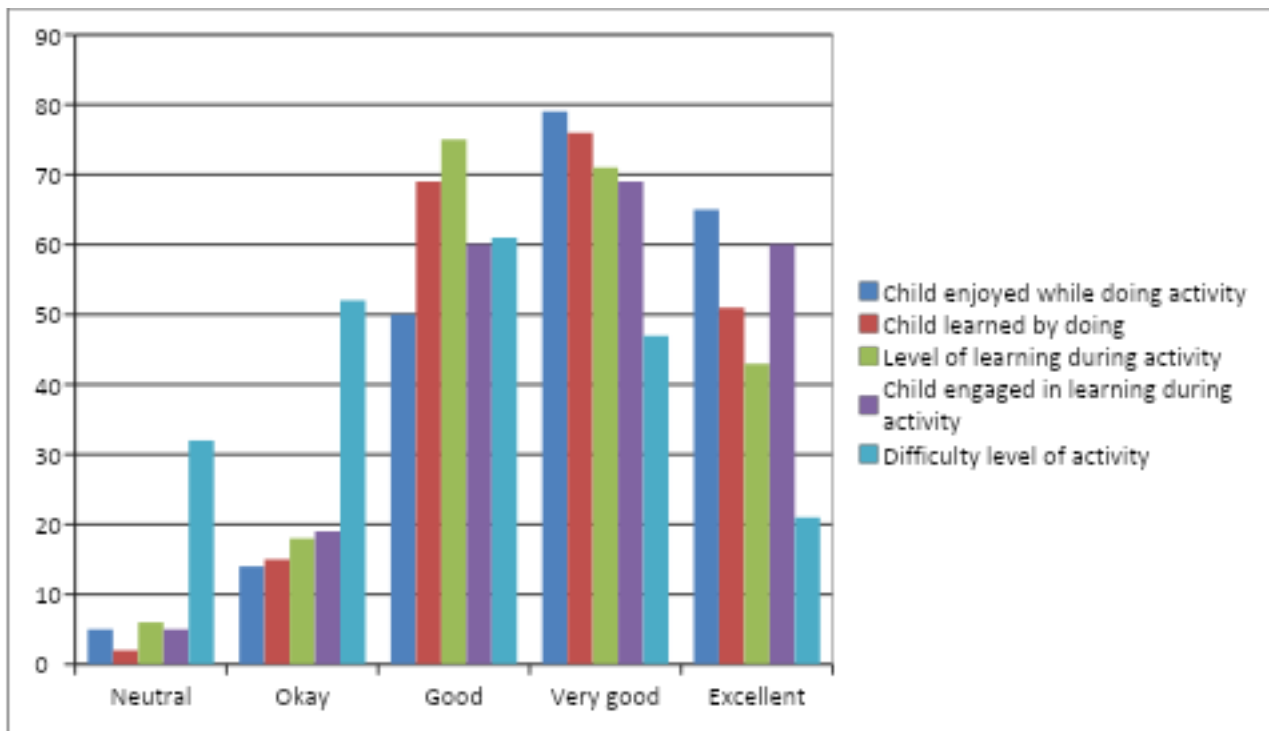


- Regarding participation by your child, the results are as follows-

Statements	Neutral	Okay	Good	Very good	Excellent
Child enjoyed while doing activity	5	14	50	79	65
Child learned by doing	2	15	69	76	51
Level of learning during activity	6	18	75	71	43

Child engaged in learning during activity	5	19	60	69	60
Difficulty level of activity	32	52	61	47	21

Participation by the child, a graphical representation

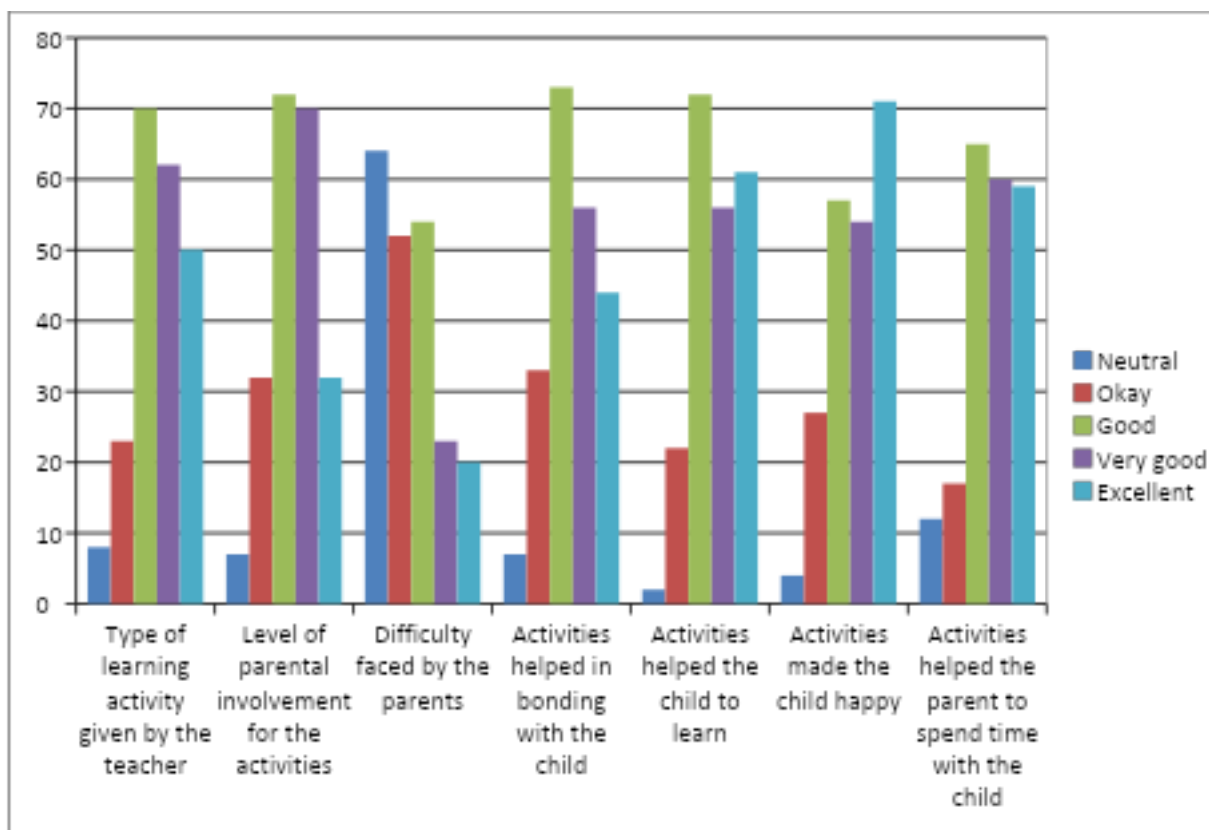


- Regarding participation by Parent, results of the survey are as follows-

Statements	Neutral	Okay	Good	Very good	Excellent

Type of learning activity given by the teacher	8	23	70	62	50
Level of parental involvement for the activities	7	32	72	70	32
Difficulty faced by the parents	64	52	54	23	20
Activities helped in bonding with the child	7	33	73	56	44
Activities helped the child to learn	2	22	72	56	61
Activities made the child happy	4	27	57	54	71
Activities helped the parent to spend time with the child	12	17	65	60	59

Participation by Parent, a graphical representation



- **The fourth part was descriptive response type and I kept it optional in order to simplify the feedback form.**

73 parents responded in this section and the analysis of the responses reveal a positive feedback. The parents appreciated the activities being conducted. I tried to involve the children with special needs in these activities, with the active co-operation of the parents. The parents had concerns like the time limits for submissions and so on. Flexibility in time schedules ensured that they participated in the activities without stress and this was acknowledged by the parents.

Implications of the Project

The project helped to reiterate the importance of joyful and activity oriented learning. The special context was online learning in the wake of the pandemic situation but I firmly believe that the implications and benefits are valid for classroom learning situations too.

The project establishes the fact once again that children learn best when they are happy and when they are involved meaningfully beyond textual content.

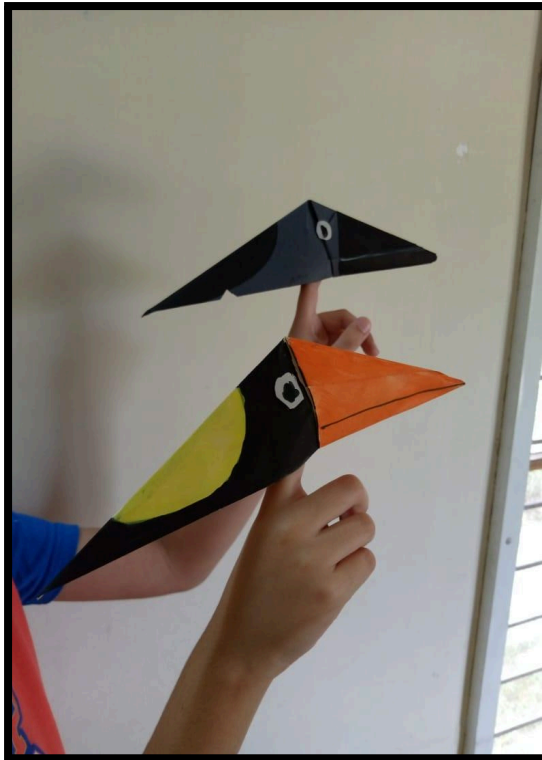
Any challenge can be transformed into an opportunity, if we have the vision and the best interests of the child as our aim.

The whole process has been an exceptional learning experience for me. The survey results are encouraging. But they also highlight the areas where more work needs to be done.

Even though the project has been enriching one, there is no limit to the creative ways in which we can help to realise the potential of every child. The efforts must continue in this direction.

Photo Gallery







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