

ADOPTING HOWARD GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE THEORY (MIT) INTO THE 21ST CENTURY SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

¹ Timilehin Olayinka **OMONIYI** & ² Victor Olukayode **OMOYAJOWO**

¹Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education
University of Ibadan, Ibadan

²Ekiti State College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State

Abstract

Social Studies came as a corrective study with staunch commitment of grooming and repositioning citizens to acquire required knowledge, skills, attitude and values necessary for active participation in societal activities. The purpose of the Social Studies curriculum is to allow students become smart thinkers who proffer plausible solution to personal, community and world problems. Traditional Social Studies classroom is identified with concepts and themes like multidisciplinary field, learner as empty slate (tabula rasa), teacher-centered approach, convergent learning and so on. With the introduction and adoption of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory in the 21st century Social Studies classroom, the conventional means of teaching and learning will fizzle into oblivion. The resultant effect tends to be integrated approach of teaching-learning, learners as pathfinders, teachers as facilitators, and above all experiential learning. This study therefore advocates for modern Social Studies classroom which addresses core issues around human beings and places learners at the centre of all that transpires in classroom setting. Students should be shown the world, not just talk about it, but a restoration of joy of learning into the 21st century Social Studies classroom where there is curriculum of role plays, simulations, and demonstrations that can bring alive social dynamics within the classroom. Modern Social Studies classroom should be entrusted in the hands of professionally trained Social Studies educationists.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligence Theory, Cybercrime, Modern Social Studies Classroom, Learner's centre approach

Introduction

There is a general agreement that Social Studies is about grooming and repositioning citizens so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in societal activities. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) through the National Policy on Education asserts that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. However, what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available, methods of teaching, students' learning style, and host of other factors. Education in general and Social Studies in particular; depicts a process of moulding group of people or an individual towards the acquisition of specific values, attitudes, skills and knowledge for personal growth and societal development.

Hence, for any classroom to be called a Social studies classroom, it must be social, inviting and stimulating. However, what is obtainable now is the conventional ways of teaching and learning Social Studies in the present 21st century classroom which depicts judging a Social Studies student by his or her inability to "cram and pour" as what is in vogue is outdated and unethical.

It is a sure part to killing any child's skills, talents and potentials bearing that children are natural researchers and learn differently. Most important to Social Studies Education is the efforts geared towards bringing new meaning to citizenship participation in community and national development. The purpose of the Social Studies curriculum is to allow students to become thinkers that are capable of proffering plausible solution to personal, community and world problems. Social Studies draws its content from economics, politics, history,

sociology, psychology, civic education etc and changes that have affected the country, as well as the rest of the world (Awoyemi & Ndagunnu, 2005; AlbertaLearning, 2000; Ajiboye, 1999). The goal of Social Studies is to make learners become active and productive participants in the society using the knowledge gained to make informed decisions. With the introduction and adoption of Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT) into the Social Studies classroom, it is apparently clear that there would be different and positive results in the way students learn.

Over the past few decades, research in the field of learning has led to the discovery of the theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner. Howard Gardner is a developmental psychologist best-known for this theory of multiple intelligences. He was born on July 11, 1943 in Scranton, Pennsylvania and completed his post-secondary education at Harvard, earning his undergraduate degree in 1965 and his Ph.D. in 1971. After spending time working with two very different groups; normal and gifted children as well as brain-damaged adults, Gardner began developing a theory designed to synthesize his research and observations. In 1983, he published *Frames of Mind* which outlined his theory of multiple intelligences. He believed that the conventional concept of intelligence was too narrow and restrictive and that measures of IQ often miss out on other "intelligences" that an individual may possess. In Gardner's view, traditional types of intelligence, such as IQ, fail to fully explain cognitive ability (Asadollahfam, Salimi & Pashazadeh, 2012)

The theory states that each person has different ways of learning and different intelligences they use in their daily lives. While some can learn very well in a linguistically-based environment (reading and writing), others are better taught through mathematical-logic based learning. Still others benefit most from body-kinesthetic intelligence (learning by doing with the hands). Each person possesses different intelligence to an extent, but there is always a primary, or more dominant intelligence (Gardner, 2003). It becomes apparently clear that if students fail to learn the way teachers teach them, then, teachers should teach them the way they learn. Judging a fish by its inability to

swim or a duck by its inability to run will not only spell doom for such an individual but kill the innate tendencies and potentials of solving both personal and community problems. Hence, adapting Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory in the 21st century Social Studies classroom will bring out the best in learners and spur them to creativity by their own way and through their own means, hence, this study.

Concept of Social Studies

National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 1992/93) defines Social Studies as an integrated study of the Social Sciences and Humanities to promote civic competence which helps young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as citizens of culturally diverse, democratic society in an inter-dependent world. Social Studies can be explained as the amalgamation of all knowledge of Arts and Social Sciences discipline. Quarthey (1985) remarked that the protagonists of this view argue that knowledge is one and indivisible and it is only for convenience that it has been divided into subject compartments. Social Studies programmes have as a major purpose the promotion of civic competence which is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of students to be able to assume "the office of citizen" in our democratic republic (Jefferson, 1789). Social Studies curriculum integrates the concepts, processes and ways of thinking drawn from the diverse disciplines of the Social Sciences (including Economics, Geography, History, and Political science). It also draws from literature and the pure sciences; provides the multidisciplinary lens through which students examine issues affecting their lives from personal, state, national, and global perspectives.

Traditional Social Studies curriculum only ended up departmentalizing knowledge by selecting assortment of topics from the Social Sciences and Arts. Social Studies is essentially the studies of human relationship, like human to human, human to institutions, human to physical environment and human to value systems (Ajiboye, 1999). This implies that Social Studies is one that encourages attention to be given to the process of living and working

together, using of the environment to meet basic human needs, customs, institutions, values and life situations, cultural heritage and its dynamic on-going characteristics. It is study that equips the youth with tools necessary in solving personal and community related problems. Social Studies does not mainly aim at giving out knowledge, but lay emphasis on inculcating a certain distillate knowledge which will assist humans in acquiring the tools necessary for life which are knowledge, values, attitudes and skills. These tools are expected to assist learner in solving both personal and community related problems (Awoyemi, & Ndagunnu, 2005).

Social Studies curriculum provides opportunities for students to explore multiple approaches that may be used to analyse and interpret their own world and the world of others (Edutopia, 2013; Patrick 2011). Social Studies presents unique and particular ways for students to view the inter-relationships among the earth, its people, and its systems. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the Social Studies curriculum empower students to be informed, responsible citizens and the world, and to participate in the democratic process to improve society.

Traditional Social Studies Classroom

Social Studies came as a corrective study but the method, content and materials employed in teaching the discipline then was basically traditional with shades and adaptations which did not soothes the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the then learners. Some learners, myopic scholars and teachers have assessed Social Studies as traditional discipline of names, dates, places, and events that needs to be memorized and regurgitated for the test and examination (Eliss, 2007). The discipline was seen as piece of information which lacks retention but only suitable for immediate use such as cramming for quiz show or trivia contest. According to Mezieobi, Reggie-Fubara and Mezieobi (2008) some of the contents of traditional Social Studies includes:

i. The learning of the people's local and family history, myths, oral literature, proverbs and

- riddles, and the geography of the community and the adjoining neighbourhood;
- ii. Respect for elders, honesty and truthfulness, fear of the gods/goddesses, learning of family gods and goddesses;
- iii. Character, values and virtues development and inculcation which traditional religion encouraged and promoted;
- iv. Instruction on loyalty to the community, recognition of seniority, hospitality to people, cooperation in common tasks, respect for others.

Social Studies in indigenous Nigerian societies placed emphasis on values or affective learning. Mezieobi, et al. (2008) stated that the affective learning focused on:

- i. appropriate ways to greet elders and during occasions;
- ii. respect to elders, constituted authority and obedience to them;
- iii. respect to one's seniors and mutual respect;
- iv. loyalty to the family and the community;
- v. hospitality to people;
- vi. learning the myths and traditions of the people and appreciating the values therein;
- vii. avoidance of taboos;
- viii. unquestioning acceptance of the dictates of the elders;
- ix. familiarity with the people's culture, traditions; ethics, folklore and mores
- x. manifest respect to them and conformity to them;
- xi. acceptance of the community's beliefs, values and practices;
- xii. acquisition of knowledge tied to 'special' education i.e. secret societies, divination;
- xiii. learning the virtues of cooperation, perseverance or endurance, self-control or self-discipline; truthfulness, loyalty, patience, obedience, courage, bravery, kindness, dedication to duty, hard work or diligence, tolerance, love for others, fear of the gods and goddesses, mutual harmony and co-existence, and the recognition and pursuance of one's rights;
- xiv. knowledge of religious tenets, beliefs, practices as well as religious sanctions and

knowledge of the consequences for violating them i.e. incurring the wrath of the gods.

Features of Traditional Social Studies Classroom

Traditional Social Studies classroom reflects passivity, learners as *tabula rasa*, and teachers are being celebrated as the authority in classroom settings (Eliss, 2007). Early dimensions to Social Studies viewed it as portions of history, geography, civics, and other Social Sciences that are selected for use in teaching (Sofadekan, 2012; Adaralegbe, 1980). Again the varying professional backgrounds of the handling of the subject before now, have equally affected its definition, scope, methods and resources. This made teachers to teach Social Studies as one week of history, another week of geography and so on. Teachers who had this kind of perception taught the subject purely for knowledge acquisition sake, whereas the subject is supposed to be perceived as one that promotes as the domains of learning and not only the cognitive orientations of the subject. Little wonder that Social Scientists then saw the discipline as unwanted and unwarranted addition to school programme, and they did the best they could to frustrate it. However, this constitutes serious issues for learners, students, scholars, publishers, curriculum planners and government as a whole.

In the same vein, learners are seen as *tabula rasa*, an empty slate. *Tabula rasa* is the epistemological theory which states that individuals are born without built-in mental content and therefore all knowledge comes from experience or perception. This belief of *blank slates* theory, apparently reflect in the conventional Social Studies classroom. Learners are seen as products at the mercy of teachers at all times. They are seen reservoir that is technically empty and needs to be filled. This then push away frontier of creativity and originality and births, frontier of ignorance, feeding on archaic knowledge of others at the expense of their God-given talents, skills, innate tendencies, and capacity. Hence, emphasis now lie on read and pass syndrome, certification and half-bake personality.

Succinctly, convergent thinking or learning which is also called linear thinking depict learning facts, follow instructions, and solving problems with one right answer. Also, traditional Social Studies Classroom is well known for convergent learning where dates are crammed, events are memorized and history is chronicled. This can happen in Mathematics but not in Social Studies classroom. Teacher-centered approach is basically an approach taken too far with most extreme interpretation where teachers are the main authority figure in a teacher-centered instruction model (Eggen, and Kauchak, 2002) and students' learning are measured through objectively scored tests and assessments (Council For Education Policy, Research and Improvement, 2003). In summary, it is teacher dominated where the talking, explanation, note formulations, birth of new ideas, solutions to problems are purely the creation a teacher.

The Multiple Intelligence theory approach

Howard Gardner of Harvard University originally identified seven distinct intelligences but later expanded it. He proposed this model in his 1983 famous book- *Frames of Mind*. The theory which emerged from cognitive research documents the extent to which students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways. It differentiates intelligence into specific (primarily sensory) 'modalities', rather than seeing intelligence as dominated by a single general ability. Gardner (1999; 1983) submits that an intelligence must fulfill eight criteria which include; potential for brain isolation by brain damage, place in evolutionary history, presence of core operations, susceptibility to encoding (symbolic expression), a distinct developmental progression, the existence of savants, prodigies and other exceptional people, and support from experimental psychology and psychometric findings. Gardner chose eight abilities that he held to meet these criteria: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic."

- a. Visual-Spatial Intelligence:** Students who are strong in visual-spatial intelligence are good at visualizing things. These students are often good with directions as well as maps, charts, videos, and pictures. Some of their characteristics include; enjoy reading and writing; good at putting puzzles together; good at interpreting pictures, graphs, and charts; enjoy drawing, painting, and the visual arts; recognize patterns easily. If one discover a learner who is strong in visual-spatial intelligence, good career choices for him/her may become; architect, artist, engineer, etc
- b. Linguistic-Verbal Intelligence:** Students who are strong in linguistic-verbal intelligence are able to use words well, both when writing and speaking. These students are typically very good at writing stories, memorizing information, and reading. They have strengths in words, language, and writing. The following are some of their characteristics; good at remembering written and spoken information; enjoy reading and writing; good at debating or giving persuasive speeches; able to explain things well; often uses humor when telling stories. Students with this intelligence have potential career choices in becoming writers, journalists, lawyers, teachers, etc
- c. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:** Students who are strong in logical-mathematical intelligence are good at reasoning, recognizing patterns, and logically analyzing problems. These students tend to think conceptually about numbers, relationships, and patterns. Such learners have strength in analyzing problems and mathematical operations. The following are some of their characteristics; Excellent problem-solving skills; enjoys thinking about abstract ideas; likes conducting scientific experiments; good at solving complex computations etc. Such students can easily become Scientist, Mathematician, Computer programmer, Engineer, Accountant, etc
- d. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence:** Students who have high bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are said to be good at body movement, performing actions, and physical control. Students who are strong in this area tend to have excellent hand-eye coordination and dexterity. They exhibit strengths in physical movement, motor control and are characterized with; good at dancing and sports, enjoy creating things with his or her hands, excellent physical coordination, tend to remember by doing, rather than hearing or seeing etc. The following are potential career choices for such as learner; Dancer, Builder, Sculptor, Actor among others.
- e. Musical Intelligence:** These set of learners have strong musical intelligence are good at thinking in patterns, rhythms, music and sounds. They have a strong appreciation for music and are often good at musical composition and performance. The characteristics of musical intelligence learners include: enjoy singing and playing musical instruments; recognize musical patterns and tones easily; good at remembering songs and melodies; rich understanding of musical structure, rhythm, and notes etc. Such learners in future can find solace in career choices like; musicians, composers, singers, music teachers, instrumentalists, orchestra, conductors, etc.
- f. Inter-personal Intelligence:** Students who have strong interpersonal intelligence are good at understanding and interacting with other people. These individuals are skilled at assessing the emotions, motivations, desires, and intentions of those around them. They have understanding and relate well to other people. They are characterized with good verbal communication; skilled at non-verbal communication; see situations from different perspectives; create positive relationships with others; good at resolving conflict in groups. In their potential career choices, they are likely to become

psychologists, philosophers, counselor, salesperson, politician, director, manager, group leader among others.

g. Intra-personal Intelligence: Students who are strong in intra-personal intelligence are good at being aware of their own emotional states, feelings, and motivations. They tend to enjoy self-reflection and analysis, including daydreaming, exploring relationships with others, and assessing their personal strengths. They have strong flair for introspection and self-reflection. They are characterized with; good at analyzing his or her strengths and weaknesses; enjoy analyzing theories and ideas; excellent self-awareness; clearly understands the basis for his or her own motivations and feelings etc. Most times, they end up becoming philosopher, writer, theorist, scientist, etc.

h. Naturalistic Intelligence: Naturalistic is the most recent addition to Gardner's theory and has been met with more resistance than his original seven intelligences. According to Gardner, individuals who are high in this type of intelligence are more in tune with nature and are often interested in nurturing, exploring the environment, and learning about other species. These individuals are said to be highly aware of even subtle changes to their environments. They have strengths in finding patterns and relationships to nature. They are characterized with naturalistic intelligence include: interested in subjects such as Botany, Biology, and Zoology; good at categorizing and cataloging information easily; may enjoy camping, gardening, hiking, and exploring the outdoors; do not enjoy learning unfamiliar topics that have no connection to nature. In terms of potential career choices, they could become Biologist, Conservationist, Gardener, Farmer, etc.

Impacts of Howard Gardner' Multiple Intelligence on Social Studies classrooms

A typical modern Social Studies classroom is that which addresses the core issues around human beings and place learners at the centre of

all that transpires in classroom setting. Many scholars, teachers and researchers have posed series of questions on the observable changes that has taken place in the Social Studies education. Merryfield (1988, p.2) argued that indigenous national heritage needed to replace modern ones: *"Inherited History, Geography courses needed to be revised to emphasize national heritage and achievements, and thereby develop national pride and identity. He stated further that there was agreement concerning the need to develop materials concerning cultural, tradition and peoples to promote inter-tribal understanding, appreciation and national unity. He also emphasized the need to abandon traditional ways of teaching which emphasized skills of recall and he suggested new ways of learning which develop the skills of independent problem-solving and critical thinking"*. In the early 1960s, this new approach to Social Science contents, methods and objectives became known in Africa as 'Social Studies'.

It is modern because there has been a paradigm shift and role reversal in approaches employed in the teaching-learning process. Social Studies learning is becoming more holistic and integrative. Teachers are beginning to search for literature based alternatives to an empty curriculum that offers only contrived exercises with little meaning (Salaudeen, 2016). Teachers are starting to open up a whole new world of learning opportunities for students. In modern Social Studies classroom, new Social Studies teachers are reminded that the textbooks are not curriculum, only good ones are reflections of it. Modern Social Studies teachers rely on self, networks of critical teachers, non-profit publishers, and the communities they serve, as the sources of curriculum.

With the introduction of Howard Gardner multiple intelligence theory, modern Social Studies teaching-learning process is all about what matters and why it matters (Eliss, 2007). It entails that which excite students about the world, help them see the role they can play in making society more equal and just where they can express their ideas powerfully, learning passionately about real people's lives, events and about their relationship to one other and to nature (Mezieobi, Fubara, & Mezieobi, 2008). It

is the type which teachers see themselves as scholars, historians, activists, curricular artists and not inferiorly as subordinate to some official curriculum established far away from our classrooms by self-interested parties. With this theory in modern Social Studies classroom setting, teachers create happiness. The teaching and learning process is designed to create a lively, playful and experiential curriculum about things that matter which is more fun for learners as well as teachers. The more learners find meaning and joy in the Social Studies curriculum, the more vital learning takes place (Patrick 2011; Alberta Learning, 2000).

With MIT in Social Studies classroom, students are shown the world, not just talk about it (Eliss, 2007). Both teachers and students celebrate a curriculum of role plays, simulations, and demonstrations that brings social dynamics alive in the classroom, which is another reason for teachers, tutors, instructors etc should see themselves as curricular artist and not as a mere dispensers of information. It is worthy of note that, learner's life is also part of Social Studies, thereby bringing those lives into the curriculum activates mental learning which is bound to be retentive. Issues of race, class, culture, gender, language, and nationality all play out in the broader society, but also in learners' day-to-day experiences. Social Studies is not just about famous people and big events, it is about learners and choices they face every-day (Eliss, 2007). Hence a modern Social Studies classroom finds ways to blend their stories into the curriculum most especially these days in which to teach Social Studies requires teachers to push away archaic mentality, boundaries and rigidity that have traditionally confined the discipline.

Willis (2006) submits that in modern Social Studies classroom, atmosphere of exuberant discovery where students of all ages retain that kindergarten enthusiasm of embracing each day with the joy of learning. The Social Studies may be about chronicling events and memorizing dates, but modern Social Studies classroom is less about description, than about explanation. It is about questioning society, searching for patterns, and developing the tools to make the

world a better place (Eliss, 2007). Teaching Social Studies means showing how ordinary people have made a difference throughout history. In countless ways, teachers need to bring that activist sensibility to learners.

Features of Modern Social Studies Classroom

Modern Social Studies Classroom reflects integrated approach, divergent and constructivists learning in which learners are seen as pathfinders and problem solvers because they are solely placed at the centre of an experiential learning. Modern Social Studies classroom is an integrated curriculum for wholesome education. Hence, the process of turning these materials into useable forms is facilitated by the philosophy of integration. Quoting Lucan (1981), Adeyemi (1989) illustrates the philosophical and psychological bases for integration in Social Studies thus: *A child sees the world as one unit and naturally asks questions which cut across artificial subject divisions. An integrated approach to learning in Social Studies attempts to following the child's natural ways of learning, viewing the world as a whole, the teacher's role being to provide experiences and to assist the inquiry process by suggesting further lines which might be followed* (Adeyemi, 1989: p3). Hence, modern Social Studies classroom depicts core integrative knowledge acquisition approach rather one-way route as it is in the traditional Social Studies classroom.

Learners are also seen as pathfinder and creative experts. Creativity is a big deal in the 21st century classroom (Eliss, 2007). In this 21st century, people live in a world where increasingly complex problems require creative solutions and where individuals' lives can be enhanced by the greater sense of agency that comes with having opportunities to explore their own creativity. Every child is a natural researcher. They ask questions and seek answers to it immediately. In modern Social Studies classroom, every child is allow to access learning materials and stimulating environment to learn. They are allow to carry out performance-related activities, arts-based

model of creativity in their minds, such as playing a musical instrument, painting a picture, acting a part in a play, writing a unique song, poem or story and so on.

The role of teachers are then restricted to being a facilitator, motivator or guidance who provides resources, monitors progress and encourages students to solve problems.. Teacher are not seen as king who controls the activities of the learners but grants the learners some space to let spirits of creativity and innovation emerges. Learners are to get involve into an active participation that would be represented in argumentative discussions and teamwork activities, so that the process of learning becomes comprehensive. It is concerned with more concrete issues related to the learner and the learning context. Experiential learning is also one of the strands in modern Social Studies classroom, teachers are not delivering curriculum to a passive group of students but actively engaging student with ideas then guiding their thinking about those ideas. Learners are given the freedom to think, to question, to reflect, and to interact with ideas, objects, and others—in other words, to construct meaning (Fraenkel, 1973). Teachers reap benefits when they see how excited their students are about applying their knowledge to solve a problem. Second, facilitative learning requires that students do the work.

Conclusion

Social Studies has traversed several stages of reforms and improvements over the past decades before reaching the present state, being taught at universities and colleges of education for preparing teachers for teaching it in schools. Being a virile subject, is expected to assume more complexities in scope and dimension just as people's needs, yearnings, aspirations and problems have to be tackled and resolved. The ability of Social Studies teachers to identify in-built potentials and strengths of every child will propel the awakening of giants in them. Worthy of note is that there is a strong relationship between Social Studies education and human development. It is a realistic platform for the production of responsible citizens who will contribute positively towards solving personal and societal problems.

However, only if there is early identification of strengths in learners. Social Studies has the capacity to perform its mission of promoting and educating culture that stimulates civic competence, critical thinking skills as well as to articulate, analyze and proffer solutions to complex societal issues. Social studies represents educators' pedagogical paradigm shift which enhances thinking about what is expected in productive activities that would contribute to solving personal and societal problems, hence with the adoption of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory in practice and principle into 21st Social Studies classroom learning would become real, classroom will serve as platform for talent discovery which is the hallmark of creativity.

Recommendations

In the quest to repositioning Social Studies Education for human developmental in Nigeria through the adoption of multiple intelligence theory, the following become quite compelling.

- i. It is apparently clear that in order to promote creativity among learners, the teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian educational institutions should be entrusted in the hands of professionally trained Social Studies educationists who would utilize the appropriate methods, strategies, techniques and resources germane to effective Social Studies Education
- ii. Training programmes in Social Studies Education should emphasize competencies essential for effective Social Studies teaching and learning.
- iii. Teachers need to be given permission to innovate and improvise to develop creative learning environments for their students. This comprises both the physical and social classroom environment which liberates the activeness of students.
- iv. Students should be given an indirect control over their learning;
- v. There should be a balance between structure and freedom that's teachers and students relate well or perhaps "playful but not play away"; time is used flexibly with high

expectations, mutual respect, modeling of creative attitudes, and dialogue;

- vi. Students should be part of their assessment teams. They should work collaboratively and assess each other.

While each of these recommendations on its own might seem like a description of good teaching, it is the combination which creates environment that promote creativity and respect for individual differences.

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