Identifying the Elements of Sustainable Social Entrepreneurial Programs

that Support Educational Opportunities

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I. Abstract

It is quite evident that American education is in crises. Everyday, in all media, there are articles and commentaries that discuss and debate different issues such as educational standards, testing, lack of quality teachers, and curriculum. One issue in particular looms over all others and that is the extent to which the lack of resources and funding affecting the entire K-20 educational system. The consequences of this situation are evident in teacher lay-offs, reduced school hours, and program cuts (especially in the arts) that are disclosed everyday. These problems are not limited to formal learning environments, but also affect the informal learning environments such as museums and libraries. Despite such cutbacks, however, examples of successful educational programs actually exist, and they are often the result of entrepreneurial social programs that promote collaboration between different institutions, and often from different sectors of the society and the economy. It is therefore worthwhile and important to reassess the nature of educational collaboration, what it means and how it works. This paper examines the definition of collaboration, along with what it means to be a success, and how collaborative projects can be sustained over an extended period of time. Examples of several types of collaborations -- from multiple sectors -- will be presented in an effort to identify the elements and processes that go into a successful, multi-institutional collaborative project that promote educational opportunities. Understanding the principles of collaboration can provide models for partnerships than can provide essential educational programs for many schools and non-profit learning institutions.

II. Introduction

Across the United States education, education systems and educators are operating in crises mode. According to a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report, since 2008 budget major cuts have occurred in "K-12 education (34 states and the District of Columbia), higher education (43 states). States made these cuts because revenues from income taxes, sales taxes, and other revenue sources used to pay for these services declined due to the recession. At the same time, the need for these services did not decline and, in fact, rose as the number of families facing economic difficulties increased" (Johnson, Oliff, Williams. 2011). This is not a new problem. The authors of 1992 article about partnership structures in teacher education addressed reduced funding in education. They hinted at one possible solution, writing "Funding for education, whether teacher education or K-12 education is not increasing… a tight economy coupled with a shrinking educational dollar makes collaborative partnerships a vehicle for dealing with the fiscal morass confronting educator". (Lasley, Matczynski, Williams. 1992). It is critical to this paper to recognize this identification of collaborative partnerships as key to developing future educational policy. Collaboration provides a foundation and framework for identifying the key components of sustainable social entrepreneurial programs that support educational opportunities (SSEP). It is also important to note that although collaboration may be considered by many to be intuitive and second nature to human activity, its' application in education is not. There are several key elements necessary for trans-sector, multi-institutional collaboration that will be defined and explored in the following section, along with identifying meaning of two other important terms- sustainability and social entrepreneurial programs.

III. Literature review

Current literature about collaboration is as disparate as the projects described. The approach of most collaboration studies programs, such as the Human Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon and the European Organisation (sic) for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) focuses primarily on scientific collaboration and not on the broader issues and disciplines that are the subject of this paper. In fact, most of current literature comes from scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines spanning different sectors. David Maurrasse, a professor in the Schools of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University describes the importance of relationships between corporations and universities, specifically how they can teach and learn from each other about social responsibility, "The full universe in which major institutions and industries exist requires some degree of social conscience at every level. The corporate social responsibility movement has effectively fleshed out the corporate universe and injected a comprehensive sense of accountability—think before you dump, hire, fire, inspect, set prices, leave town, enter town, procure, speak, and so forth. The higher education community partnerships movement has only scratched the surface; it has not pushed higher education to see the interrelationship between its labor practices and its community relations, for example. The movement needs time to develop a comprehensive sense of social responsibility in higher education" (Maurrasse, 2002. p. 135).

But, before the question "what are sustainable social entrepreneurial programs that support educational opportunities?" can be asked, it is important to understand the key terms, actual as well as perceived. Since SSEP is essentially about collaboration, it is

important to understand the basic term. "Gronski and Pigg (2000) define collaboration as "an interactive process among individuals and organizations with diverse expertise and resources, joining together to devise and execute plans for common goals as well as to generate solutions for complex problems" Therefore, truly collaborative relationships between universities and communities are both mutually dependent on and beneficial to one another" (Miller & Hafner, 2007. p 67).

Some people consider collaborative activities to instinctive; almost second nature to the human experience. Yet SSEP is much more complex, "The value of—indeed, the need for—interdisciplinary collaboration is now firmly established in many disciplines. It has come about with the growing specialization, formalization, and professionalization of the various branches of knowledge, or disciplines. As knowledge has become more detailed in response to an increasingly complex world, the ideals of a unified science—the synthesis and integration of knowledge…Issues are now arising that are either of greater complexity and breadth than can be comprehended by one discipline alone, or of interest to more than one discipline" (Collin, 2009. p. 102).

It is also critical to understand that collaborations between disciplines and institutions are not one-size-fits-all initiatives. Three varieties of collaboration that are important to this paper: interdisciplinary, multidisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and. In her 2009 article, Dr. Collin, Professor Emeritus of Career Study at Leicester Business School of De Montfort University in the UK describes:

- "Multidisciplinarity- faculty and people working form different disciplines on different aspects of a common project (Klien, 1990; Slatin, et al 2004);
- Transdiscipilnarity- members of different disciplines using a "shared conceptual

framework" drawing together discipline-specific theories, concepts and approaches to address a common problem" (Lattuca, 2003);

- Interdiscipilnarity- members of different disciplines working together on the same project (Mallon & Burnton, 2005). Interdisciplinary collaboration, which is defined as the "deliberate integration of research questions, methods and skills from across disciplines to answer a complex problem and to build new knowledge" (University of Birmingham's Research and Commercial Services)"

We can extrapolate from Collin's definitions that these three types of collaboration require input from many sectors: K-20 schools; informal or free-choice learning institutions such as museums and libraries; and local community organizations and business. The competing goals from this sectorial mix may seem problematic and Babel-esque, but a closer examination reveals that they are really very complementary- each sector provides needed skills, knowledge and practice that inform an define the common goal. Although Collin acknowledges that the primary populations that she studied were "academics and professionals/practitioners", she also suggests that "their experiences of interdisciplinarity could be relevant to other disciplines", especially because "the collaborating disciplines have to integrate their cognitive and social aspects. There will be an overlap in the common knowledge base (knowledge, methods, values) which can be increased further (the cognitive aspect), and (the social) new infrastructures that develop to enable the integrating disciplines to communicate, and to collaborate in research, publication, and teaching; in the metaphysical notions rooted in their history, and in their visions for the future" (Collin, 2009. p. 104).

For the purpose of this study, social entrepreneurial programs are defined as initiatives created to provide a wide, holistic range of services to underserved communities, "Organizations jointly address challenges such as economic development, education, poverty alleviation, community capacity building and environmental sustainability" (Selsky and Parker. p. 850). Fast Company magazine editor Cheryl Dahl lists the 5 essential criteria that define social capitalists as: entrepreneurship (risk taking and initiative), innovation (new ideas), social impact (good for the individual, great for the community), aspiration (the dream and plan for growth) and sustainability (not being a one time short-term project, but rather a project that will be able to achieve a life of it's own).

The literature suggests that some sectors have been more actively involved in social programs than others. Examples of differences and similarities can be seen in partnerships between universities and corporate institutions, "Although universities and corporations are different types of institutions, are there lessons to be learned from the corporate social responsibility movement, which has been addressing institutional-community partnerships over a longer period of time? Furthermore, corporations tend to have more resources than institutions of higher education, enabling greater ongoing financial support for the development of the movement." (Maurrasse. 2001, p. 132).

Sustainability is another key component of SSEP. But, like collaboration, there is not one simple definition- current literature describes two types of sustainability: the length of the research studies and the length of the actual projects. This paper is concerned primarily with the latter (after all, it is easier to do a long study on a long project than a long study on a short project). Many of the collaborative programs describe specific

collaborative projects with a one to two year life cycle. In these examples, researchers describe the project, but are unable to evaluate growth and end results over time. There is a consensus though that SSEP projects need to be extended to at least five through ten-year cycles. This will enable researchers to better evaluate how collaborative projects fare over time, especially how they are impacted by political, economic, and social events. It is also understood that in any new program involving multi-institutional and multi-sector collaboration requires a period of discovery to allow participants to familiarize themselves with each other as well as identify processes and common goals. This period can take several months to a year, thereby skewing the data for evaluating the true sustainability of a program. Writing in Fast Company, Chuck Salter describes a the Durham Scholars program interdisciplinary university/K-12 project that received twenty years funding from a very generous supporter. Although Dr. James H. Johnson, the program director is a professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the program itself partners Duke University in Durham with a low-income area surrounding Duke. The program supports students attending 6-12 grade students from the low socio-economic bracket by offering after-school academic and social tutoring for three-hours a day, four days a week. Students who participate in the whole program and decide to continue on to college are provided with scholarships by the school. It will be interesting to observe if researchers take advantage of this unique twenty-year opportunity and gather meaningful data about both sustainability as well as the ability of a program to adjust and redefine itself to economic, social and community events.

Small-scale collaborations do not necessarily limit a program's ability to be innovative. Although many collaborative projects are based on traditional

multidisciplinary projects, such as committee-based projects within a specific institution, there are examples of interesting interdisciplinary programs. One such program is The Chicago Children's Choir, a "multiracial, multicultural choral music education organization, shaping the future by making a difference in the lives of children and youth through musical excellence…. enveloping 3,000 children in 73 neighborhood- and school-based choirs" (Overholt. 2001). To address a common problem of many, many non-profit educational institutions, a serious lack of funding, CEO Nancy Carstedt helped design a partnership with British Airways. During one BA corporate retreat, members of the choir were teamed up with 300 sales executives to share stories. The purpose of this event was to help executives gain practical experience as coaches to the children (given that as professionals, they were the "experts") an experience to train executives and managers in mentoring. But during the event, the BA executives soon earned that they were in a dialogue with the children, learning as much as they were teaching. These activities helped Carstedt realize that rather then a one-day fundraiser, this could be a model for a sustainable partnership and that a relationship with BA could help her to "create a self-sustaining organization" that would bridge the business and non-profit sectors. She understood that she could retain and build ongoing and sustainable relationships between the children and the individual executives. BA executives were provided with resources (financial and time) and were encouraged to continue to meet and communicate with choir members. The executives entered into the relationships feeling that they would be the mentors and coaches, but reported that they often felt as if they were being mentored and coached. The children received support and advice from professional adults, valuable experiences for their future. BA was happy because this

was not only a way to give back to the community and society, they found that the skills

that coaching and mentoring skills were having a positive effect on their employees.

Carstedt has continued this partnership as well as developed others and has succeeded in

reducing her dependence on public funding by 44% over a ten-year period, with a goal

reduce it even further. The Chicago Children's Choir meets all five of Dahl's essential

criteria for social capitalist: entrepreneurship (seeking ways to make the choir more

financially self-sufficient), innovation (partnering a local non-profit with a global

corporation), social impact (the little served community received both fiscal and physical

support), aspiration (Carstedt wants to increase the choirs outreach program) and

sustainability (the program is over 45 years old). Carstedt attributes the success of the

program by stating "It's powerful to bring all races and creeds together to create

something beautiful. It's a metaphor that we as society—as a world—should latch on to"

(Overholt. 2001).

An example of transdisciplinary project that utilizes technology as an integral

component is described by museum professional, Len Steinbach. Reporting on innovative

partnership between the Cleveland Art Museum, IBM and several retirement homes in

the Cleveland area he writes that this was "a project that has targeted an isolated and

impaired segment of our community, and, using advanced telecommunications

technology to bring to them the resources of diverse cultural organizations is trying to

demonstrate that art can make life measurably better and the innovative use of technology

can help " (Steinbach. 2001). CAM supplied the content, the residents of retirement

homes were the audience, and IBM supplied the technology with the expressed goal that

"broadband multicast technology over the public infrastructure to deliver high quality

video-on-demand and live interactive cultural programming, complemented by web-based resources, to older persons in assisted-living residence facilities, community-based centers, and disabled persons in their homes" (Steinbach. 2001). Social impact was primary attribute of this innovative, 2-year partnership between the three distinctly different sectors: an informal learning institution, a corporation and an isolated community. As to its success, Steinbach writes, "One study concluded that "interactive computing technology opens up access to levels of communication and personal control that impact directly on the quality of life for 'confined' individuals. Indeed, the term 'confined' loses much of its' meaning when the world is at one's fingertips" (Steinbach. 2001).

Not all of the literature is about collaborative programs and projects. Michael Tomasello, Co-Director, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany posits that the need for cooperation (cooperation being an essential component of collaboration) may actually a genetic trait. Tomasello led a multi-year research project that examined and compared cognitive and developmental behaviors and interactions of human babies and their parents with chimpanzees and theirs. One small but important example is in communication. The apes, Tomasello writes, "do not in either gesture or vocalizations intend to inform one another of things helpfully. Human infants on the other hand, not only inform others of things helpfully and accurately interpret informative intentions directed at them, they even understood imperatives in a cooperative fashion" (Tomasello. 2009. p. 19). He argues that the goal of collaborative activities is to create a community, "In shared cooperative activities, we have a joint goal that creates an interdependence among us–indeed, creates and "us"" (Tomasello. p. 41). Another crucial

idea that Tomasello promotes are the relationship that altruism and mutuality play in

collaboration, "I do not believe altruism s the process primarily responsible for human

cooperation in the larger sense of humans' tendency and ability to live and operate

together in institution-based cultural groups. In this story, altruism is only a bit player.

The star is mutualism in which we al benefit from our cooperation, but only if we work

together, what we may call collaboration" (Tomasello. p.52)

The idea that collaboration is a genetic trait is important to my research is because it

describes the importance of an individual's attitude towards collaboration. Followers of

the type individuality described by the author Ayn Rand often take a "me"-centric view

of the world. Granted that there is ample evidence of this type of behavior in human

history, but there is also evidence of the "we" nature of society. Even the most

individualistic of people require items and services of others, unless they choose to grow

their own food, raise their own cotton or sheep for clothing, and do not use any services

not produced with another individual with whom they can barter and trade. Every person

and every thing in society requires some sort of collaboration- basket makers, farmers,

transporters, and storekeepers. For this research project, the trick then becomes how to

communicate the benefit of full of collaborative activities that focus on the "we", and

then contextualize them for the more immediate and local needs of a community and

education.

One possible way to create collaborative partnerships is suggested by Jane

McGonigal in her book "Reality is Broken". Dr. McGonigal, the Director of Game

Research and Development at the Institute for the Future looks to the global community

of gamers for possible solutions to some of the problems facing the world today. Quoting

the philosopher Bernard Suits, McGonigal writes, "Playing a game is the voluntary

attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles" (McGonigal. 2011. p. 22). Whether the

obstacles found in facing society today (for example, reduced funding in social programs

such as education and healthcare) are unnecessary or not is really a rhetorical question-

they exist and need to be addressed. Nonetheless, McGonigal posits an interesting and

inspiring idea for tapping into an underutilized source of knowledge and experience-

gamers. She states that "teamwork, which emphasizes collaboration, cooperation and

contributions to a larger group" (McGonigal. 2011. p. 30). Gamers know how to

collaborate and work as a team to solve complicated puzzles and overcome obstacles

addresses the "need to build hybrid industries and uncongenial partnerships, so that game

researchers and game designers can policy makers and executives of all kinds to harness

the power of games" (McGonigal. 2011. p. 14). This idea of unconventional partnerships

echoes both Collin, "As knowledge has become more detailed in response to an

increasingly complex world, the ideal of a unified science- the synthesis and integration

of knowledge" (Collin, p. 102) collaborating disciplines have to integrate their cognitive

and social aspects. There will be an overlap in the common knowledge base (knowledge,

methods, values) which can be increased further (the cognitive aspect), and (the social)

new infrastructures that develop to enable the integrating disciplines to communicate, and

to collaborate in research, publication, and teaching; in the metaphysical notions rooted in

their history, and in their visions for the future (Collin, p. 104) as well as John Selsky and

Barbara Parker who write about the need for cross sector social-oriented partnerships, or

CSSPs because "CSSPs emerge from various disciplines such as organization studies,

public policy and administration, economics, nonprofit management, health care,

education, and the natural environment… these disciplines use different theories and

approaches. (John Selsky and Barbara Parker, 2005). I find it delightful that McGonigal

quotes the French author, Antoine de Saint Exupéry when she writes, "As for the goal of

the future, your task is not to see it, but to enable it" (McGonigal, p. 13). She follows this

with her own observation that, "Games, in the twenty-first century, will be a primary

platform for enabling the future (p. 13).

Although the literature surveyed focuses primarily on examples of collaborative

projects, several common themes pertaining to the processes and values the participants

employ and share that help their projects to succeed. Some of these themes seem

elementary, but nonetheless, it is important to recognize these ideas because they can

provide a doorway to understanding how collaborations actually work, for future

research. For example, Ed Catmull, president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios

writes about practical steps that the studio uses promote a collaborative atmosphere

between creative and technologists "What's equally tough, of course, is getting talented

people to work effectively with one another. That takes trust and respect, which we as

managers can't mandate; they must be earned over time. What we can do is construct an

environment that nurtures trusting and respectful relationships and unleashes everyone's

creativity. If we get that right, the result is a vibrant community where talented people are

loyal to one another and their collective work," (Catmull, 2008. p. 66). Other elements

include: regular meetings to insure transparency (Zeitlin, Bennet, Abrovitz, Lasley),

collaboration can be learned (Judd, Abrovitz), trust (Bennet, Longoria); flexibility and

dynamic roles of individuals and institutions (Longoria, Lasley, Bennet), program

coordinator associated with the program rather than any individual institution (Lasley,

Zeitlin).

III. Research Design

a. Introduction and Research Question

The literature surveyed illustrates that basic elements of collaboration and therefor

SSEP are understood. Yet there are four specific areas that have not been widely studied

(or at least reported).

1. My research up to this point has identified only two people (Steinbach and
   McGonigal) who employ digital technology as important and vital
   components of their work.

2. The literature examines programs that are relatively limited in size to two,
   perhaps 3 types of institutions.

3. The programs that are described are relatively limited in scope and are
   short term. For example, only one specific collaborative project for 1-2
   years. Only Johnson's work at Duke University (Salter. 2000), is sustained
   for an extended a period of time.

4. With the exception Freire (Peter & Hafner. 2008), no learning theorists are
   mentioned.

According to Peter Smagorinsky, the method that we choose for research and

evaluation is informed by our perspective on life and that it is important for researchers to

"acknowledge and account for social construction of their data" as well as to "explain

more about the context of the investigation: the social and cultural experiences of the participants; the physical, social, and political setting of the research, the assumptions at work in the environment the researcher's relationships and interactions with the participants; and much more" (Smagorinsky. 2008. p. 392). It is essential then for me then to comment on my own basic reasons for the importance for identifying elements of sustainable social entrepreneurial programs that support educational opportunities and require additional research. Over the past several years, I have become progressively aware of a long time interest in collaboration. In fact, many of my life decisions have related to collaborative activities (living on a kibbutz, working with a team of carpenters building houses, developing multimedia programs, etc.). Instinctively, I believe that innovative collaborations (as described by McGonigal and Selsky & Parker) contain many elements that can help solve some of society's problems (I am a realist with idealistic tendencies). But my intellectual curiosity drives my desire to understand how collaborations really work. As mentioned earlier, some view collaborative behavior as second nature. If we also consider Tomasello's theories about cooperative behaviors being genetic, then it would seem that there is not much to be learned. But, I believe that successful collaboration activities are made of skill sets that can (and should be learned).

My natural tendency in life is look at similarities in events, culture, society and communities. I see connections between semi-disparate events, process and communities. I am interested in whether learning theories in any way inform people involved in SSEP and collaborations and if so, which ones and how. Additionally, I am interested in the role of digital technologies in actual programs as well as tools for the participants. I see direct relations between the collaborative projects and programs described it the ideas of

Lave and Wenger (communities of practice), Papert (communities of learners), Gardner

(multiple intelligence), Sternberg (styles of thinking). Although these issues may seem to

be unrelated, each one is essential to identifying the elements of sustainable social

entrepreneurial programs that support educational opportunities and require additional

research.

<div align="center">b. Overview of the Design & Population</div>

Current literature speaks a lot about collaboration. But there are also issues that are

not addressed. As previously mentioned, data about the use of technology, large scale

collaborations, long-term projects and the influence of learning theories is relatively

scarce. Each of these potential data sets addresses different parts of the problem and

require specific types of surveys to analyze, thereby requiring mixed methods of data

acquisition from discreet, yet related populations.

Identifying people who use digital technology, how it is used, what is used and if it is

considered effective will best be addressed by a quantitative analysis of data harvested

from a closed survey, taken from a population of participants of past multi-institutional

collaborative projects. The sample group can be fairly general, including the directors,

managers, coordinators, facilitators and those involved in day-to-day operations of the

project.

Size, scope and project time lines will mixed-method analysis. It is important to

acquire data that examines the parameters of past projects- for example, quantifying the

number of participants, participating institutions and sectors, as well as length of the

project. After initial coding, the data can be processed for a qualitative analysis to enable

the researcher to determine relationships (if any) between these discreet elements. This

will help in establishing any set of rules to define successful collaborations. The method

used for this survey is similar to the previous- a closed survey by mail or online tool

(such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics). The population again will be those who have

participated in past collaborative projects, but the sample will be limited to directors,

managers and leaders because they were the individuals who would have determined the

scope and parameters of collaborative projects.

Acquiring data about the practical integration of learning theories in multi-

institutional collaborations is a more complex issue. The population is the same as the

previous, but the sample will be limited to project directors and designers. The very

nature of these individuals and their positions in an institution identifies them as experts

(they have the most experience and knowledge). Additionally, the quality of information

being researched is more open-ended then the previous surveys. For this reason, the

Delphi method will be utilized. The researcher is trying to understand if learning theories

were used, which ones, how they were integrated into the collaborative projects,

effectiveness of the theories to that models of collaboration can be designed to assist in

ongoing as well as future projects.

<p align="center">c. Constructs & Variables</p>

The very nature of multi-institutional collaboration declares that there will be numerous

variables and activities that will need to be considered and addressed in the coding.

Although there are similarities in the cultures in corporations, schools and non-profits,

they are different entities. For example time-based decisions in corporations generally are

more rapid than in a school, university or museum. Budgetary concerns are also different.

But this is also the crux of the issue of identifying the elements of sustainable social

entrepreneurial programs that support educational opportunities. Different institutions

have different types of cultures and respond to challenges in different ways. But, there are

similarities and it is up to the researcher to identify them. Also, as Collin writes, "their

experiences of interdisciplinarity could be relevant to other disciplines"- these groups can

assist each other. Other issues to be considered include actual size of collaborative

project, types of institutions involved and length of the project.

d. Data Collection Methods

The mixed method protocol that will be used requires different methods of collecting

data. For data quantitative open surveys will be distributed to subjects that self-identify as

having experience in a multi-institution collaborative projects. Subjects for the first three

surveys will be recruited via email requests from both personal contacts and professional

organizations (ACM, Museums 3.0, Educause, Museum Computer Network, etc.). The

final survey pertaining to learning theories will be from a more select population educator

colleagues as well as individuals identified through personal references and can be

identified as experts by way of having developed and directed a multi-institutional

collaboration. As my intent with this last group is to use the Delphi method, a secure

method of obtaining data while retaining the anonymity of the subjects will require a

method for using open-ended surveys that can be coded and analyzed. The online survey

application, Qualtrics, should fill these needs.

e. Analysis Plan

We are surrounded by examples of collaboration- many of which we take for

granted, such as the collaboration necessary for the distribution of food, from farm to

supermarket. We are daily confronted by an endless list of crises in society- global

warming, economy, education (just to name a few). The complexity of these problems

can be overwhelming, but as noted earlier, "knowledge has become more detailed in

response to an increasingly complex world, the ideals of a unified science—the synthesis

and integration of knowledge…Issues are now arising that are either of greater

complexity and breadth than can be comprehended by one discipline alone, or of interest

to more than one discipline" (Collin, 2009. p. 102). Solutions will be found only by

developing innovative, sustainable partnerships and collaborations supporting educational

opportunities in all disciplines. To assist in accomplishing this will require a variety of

professionals to not only understand the premises of multi-institutional collaboration as

well as practical actions that can be employed to achieve these type of collaborative

activities. It is my hope that some of my research will provide missing data that can then

be integrated in new and innovative multi-institutional programs that promote the

educational opportunities important and currently missing in schools.

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