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**INTEGRATIVE APPROACH IN RUSSIA AND BULGARIA: THE  
RELEVANCE OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE**

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***Abstract***

The necessity of the search for solutions to the problems of the education of the post-industrial age which are related, in particular, to the integrative approach implementation requires deep intellectual reflection on the processes of educational practice at the following levels: (firstly) the quality of the content of school subjects, (secondly) pedagogical activity, (thirdly) learning activity of the students, (fourthly) educational process provision.

The authors have substantiated the relevance of the integrative approach to teaching modern school students and have provided a review of the methods of implementation of the integrative approach in the practice of educational institutions in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria. The different aspects of the term integrativeness in the pedagogical scientific literature published in Russia and abroad have been considered: intersubjectivity, interdisciplinarity, meta-subjectivity, transdisciplinarity. The article states fast-growing tendency towards integration in modern education and gives explanation of the reasons for such process.

The most widely spread forms of integration in practice of school education are integrative lessons; systematization and modeling of the educational content within the framework of separate school subjects; individual and group activity on project activity; integrative school educational day; integrative block; integrative school educational week; integrative course, etc.

It describes the advantages of the integrative approach and the problems related to its implementation. It particularly highlights the relevance and significance of intersubjectivity in school education of the Russian Federation. The fragment of educational practice with the implementation of integrative approach has been presented.

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**Keywords:** Integration; intersubjectivity; interdisciplinarity; transdisciplinarity; integrative lesson.



## 1. Introduction

The new post-industrial age requires “integration of sciences, the reflection on any problem in its integrity whatever aspects the problem may conclude whether they are biological aspects or these of materials science, energetic or medical ones” (Novikov, 2011). The development and creation of new socio-economic conditions has a significant impact on the content of the educational process which should undergo substantial changes to provide high-quality professionals to the society: these new socio-economic environment and market challenges have made substantial contribution to creating certain strong grounds for educating personalities with great breadth of vision and mind, capable of effectively processing information flows, analyzing a situation from different viewpoints and positions provided that by doing so the person perceives and properly monitors the integrity of the processes themselves. One of the leading educational strategies should become a strategy of mastering project management activity by specialists at all levels of the system of education: it is the science of project management for the administration, it is the pedagogical project management concerning teachers – pedagogical projection, it is learning project management for students who should project their studies and research activities. The project management as a method and form of the organization of educational activity allows for the students to develop skills, to determine and formulate a concrete problem, to take decisions and bear responsibility for them, to acquire abilities, acting independently, to establish and achieve goals, to develop team work skills, to delegate powers, etc.

The pedagogical projection approach is closely connected with the idea of integration. If the pedagogical projection approach allows to determine the boundaries of the educational process, for instance, at a school and class level, to have awareness of them, to monitor the above processes and hold the level of its integrity taking into consideration all cause-and-effect relationships and a particular method of activity organization, the integrative approach reflects the essence of all these relationships, integrative characteristics of the activity subjects and the school subject content realized by the activity subjects (administration, teachers, students, etc.). At present the issue of integration has been strictly put forward within the framework of educational policy. It is guided by the pursuit of departure from the idea of “subject-focused” methodology in education where the teaching process is grounded strictly on a disciplinary principle: school subjects are taught as autonomous educational systems. In view of the above there have arisen the problems of fragmentation of the knowledge being obtained by students and the deficiency of full comprehension of the relationships and interactions of the processes and phenomena which are intrinsic to the real world (Lazebnikova et al., 2017). Another reason for especial relevance for the integrative approach is the necessity of realization of a strategy of “integrative growth” (Birman, 2010) which allows the integration of relations between the activity subjects (administration, teachers, students, etc.) who take vivid and significant part in the educational project.

At the official level the issues of pedagogical projection and integration in education have been reflected in the Federal State Educational Standard of General Education (the FSESGE) (Federalnyy..., 2012). The concept of integration has also been provided in educational systems of foreign countries. Thus, for example, according to the novels of the Bulgarian Law on preschool and school education the focus has been made on the realization of the interdisciplinary idea, i.e. not only on the teaching methodology within the definite preschool or school subject, but also on the implementation of integrative forms of teaching,

such as interdisciplinary courses, integrative lessons, complex teaching modules for advanced and supplementary education of students (Tsvetanov-Churakova, 2016).

However, a large number of problems have to be currently solved at the level theory and practice development in the educational systems of both Russia and Bulgaria.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The strategy of the renewal of the Russian education aims at developing a creative personality capable of deep reflection in contrast to a “non-creative” personality capable of executing only narrow, strictly determined functions at work. However, according to (Novikov, 2011) on the whole “such non-creative persons “prevail in the contemporary society of the Russian Federation, and it is still difficult for them to change their mind in new socio-economic conditions, find new social roles and move“ from the position of a state enterprise employee to the position of an active subject effective in the labour market”. In school education there also prevail traditional positions where a teacher has a leading role who transmits knowledge to students, controls and assesses their attainments, and students have a particular role of listening to the teacher and doing the exercises of the teacher. The educational goals are determined and controlled by the teacher. Consequently, the teacher fully bears responsibility for the results of the education while the students are in a passive position. The FSESGE based on the system-activity approach presupposes a shift in the position of students: the change of their role from “listeners” to “active subjects” of the educational process. The structure of the results comprises three categories: subjective, personal, meta-subjective. The content of subjective and personal results are well understood by a teacher for the reason that the fundamental ground for these two categories of the educational system have been determined by the previous educational standards. It should be noted that Russian teachers has met the theory and practice of meta-subjectivity for the first time. Teachers have to master meta-subjectivity in a current operating mode: analyze and reflect on its conceptual construct and definitions and the essence of its components, including, among others, intersubjective terms and universal educational actions (Federalnyy..., 2012) the methods of realization. Implementing the integrative approach at the next, more advanced stage of the mastery of integration will demand new level of pedagogical projection of educational process determined namely as a process of realization of educational activity of the students (Novikov, 2011) where a student activity is principal and a teacher exercises a managerial activity of the educational process and a teacher’s role is ‘subordinate’ (Novikov, 2011) while the students accept responsibility for their results and attainments of the educational process. In the light of the above the teacher needs definite innovative technologies as well as renewed textbooks, specific methodological manuals, didactic materials. For the time being, all these educational processes are at an early stage of development, rather independent of each other, while it is required that right now adequate modern professional work conditions should be provided to the teacher in order that the students should achieve solid educational results, in accordance with the FSSGE.

Bulgarian teachers tend to meet problems of the same kind in their work. According to (Tsvetanova-Churukova, 2016) the existing educational practice in Bulgaria can be determined as “subject-focused”.

In view of the above- mentioned phenomena and processes, the topic of the integrative approach to the educational practice both in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria requires further careful professional consideration and reflection.

### **3. Research Questions**

The necessity of the search for solutions to the problems of the education of the post-industrial age which are related, in particular, to the integrative approach implementation requires deep intellectual reflection on the processes of educational practice at the following levels: (firstly) the quality of the content of school subjects, (secondly) pedagogical activity, (thirdly) learning activity of the students, (fourthly) educational process provision. The answers to the following questions are required to be found:

- What is the terminological scope of the term “integration”?
- What is the method of integration of the content of different school subjects? How is the integrative content of different school subjects co-related with the educational working programmes (curricula) based on the system of sciences, didactic goals and the overall educational system of a school?
- In what way are the educational attempts of the activity subjects (administration, teachers, students, etc.) organized and integrated?
- What kind of programme-methodological, scientific and information material provides the process of implementation of integrative strategies?
- What are the possibilities of the introduction and implementation of international educational experience in Russian schools?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

At present the second stage of the Study is being carried out. During its first stage (2015-2016) the meta-subjective aspect of the integrative approach was investigated. The second stage of the Study (2017-2019) is devoted to the question of theory and practice of intersubjective interaction and relationships in school education. The purpose of the Study is the investigation and analysis of the idea of the intersubjective integration in the pedagogical theory in the educational systems of the Russian Federation and foreign countries, the practice of intersubjective approach implementation in the teacher’s activity and also elaboration of the recommendations for teachers in relation to effective implementation of the integrative approach in practice.

### **5. Research Methods**

At the first stage of the Study the specialized didactic and methodological tools and instruments were elaborated in the form of exercises of meta-subjective quality for the students, a specialized expert map, a teacher’s instructions, a Google-form for the processing and fixing of the results, types of questionnaires. For the realization of the second stage of the Study it is planned to elaborate a specialized web-resource allowing communication to the participants of the Study and stipulation of the results. On the one hand, the Web-resource presents a Google-form like that at the first stage of the Study, and, on the other hand, a virtual room on a Skype-platform.

At present the main research methods are as follows: the study of dissertations and books on the topic of the Study; comparative analysis of the pedagogical psychological literature; interpretation; observation; a questionnaire survey.

## 6. Findings

The results of the first stage of the Study (2015-2016) have been presented in numerous scientific publications, books, manuals. For instance, a collection of meta-subjective exercises and tasks (Ambarczumova etc., 2018) and meta-subjective course “Learning and Cognitive Activity” have been published (Koval etc., 2017). The intermediate results of the Study of the second stage of the Study can be regarded as the initial review of the pedagogical scientific literature on the problem of the Study in part of integrative approach realization in the education of the Russian Federation and foreign countries including Bulgaria and also stipulation in a number of scientific publications of the facts of the educational practice established in the course of the Study.

Some methods of the integrative approach realization in the educational systems of Russia and Bulgaria have been analyzed and examined, the existing interpretations of the term integrativeness in Russian and foreign pedagogical scientific literature have been explored. The practical aspect of pedagogical experience have been partially described. We are to present more detailed results of the Study below.

### The educational system of the Russian Federation

As a result of the analysis of the existing interpretations of the term integrativeness in the Russian pedagogical scientific literature it has been proved that the term integration is considered in numerous aspects: intersubjectivity, interdisciplinarity, meta-subjectivity, transdisciplinarity.

The term intersubjectivity is construed as a sphere of overlapping and correlation of two and more school subjects and as a principle of education on the basis of which there exists the interaction at the level of integration of knowledge and skills. All the above terms collectively have led to the emergence of the term intersubjective relationships which has over 30 definitions. The authors of the present Study have agreed to accept as fundamental the following definition of the term intersubjective relationships stated by I.D. Zverev. “Intersubjective relationships are complex interdependencies, inherent links and coordination of the educational fields of knowledge of different school subjects on a mutual basis of which there contains the common ground between definite school subjects both in the content and in the methods of teaching and educational process” (Metodika..., 2016).

The theory and practice of intersubjectivity is increasingly relevant to school education of the Russian Federation considering the obligation to execute the Federal State Educational Standard of General Education in part of achievement of meta-subjective results of the acquisition of the Basic Educational Curriculum (programme) by school students and, as stated above, the main problems of its realization.

Firstly, the term meta-subjectivity is characterized by special method of presentation of the school subject material and special method of its content integration with the other school subjects. Secondly, it is featured by “even higher level of integration – it lies not only outside the framework of a definite school subject, separate actions and educational curriculum, but also outside a school itself – in the perspective and in terms of a real, unpredictable life” (Metodika..., 2016). While realizing both theory and practice of

meta-subjectivity and creating intersubjective relationships the teachers meet the problems of the same kind.

The term interdisciplinarity also has more than one definition in the pedagogical scientific literature, so in the process of its realization teachers tend to meet similar problems as to those upon the implementation of meta-subjective and intersubjective approaches. In total, the term interdisciplinarity is understood as a strategy of interpenetration and convergence of content of different school subjects and creation of aggregate, comprehensive educational space having great cohesive and coherent potential of development. It is possible to achieve a goal by introducing innovative pedagogical and didactic methods, special organizational forms of teaching and forming student competences. Interdisciplinarity is more often regarded in the context of higher education system. Sometimes the term intersubjectivity and interdisciplinarity are defined as synonymous insofar as the terms educational subject and educational discipline are synonyms.

The term transdisciplinarity is evident as a means of evolutionary objective movement of the scientific knowledge outside the framework of a single science in the course of global synthesis of forms of the cognition of the world (Kolesnikova, 2014). Therefore, intersubjectivity, interdisciplinarity, meta-subjectivity, transdisciplinarity are forms of demonstration and the performance of the integration process.

Despite the ambiguity of these terms, a considerable number of professional books, manuals, pedagogical projects on the methodology of integrative lessons and courses have been elaborated in the Russian educational practice. To illustrate this point, we are to give a fragment of an integrative lesson in the 4th form on the topic: "The acquaintance with the Russian folklore" - created by a teacher in one of Moscow schools (the fragment follows below). A fragment of an integrative lesson has been described from the position of a pedagogical activity of a teacher.

The teacher regards an integrative lesson as a form of organization of educational process for primary school students; the methodology of the integrative lessons in course of the whole educational process allows to lay the ground for forming a multifaceted intellectual creative personality. The following aspects of the Federal State Educational Standard of General Education concerning primary school education have been reflected in the goals of the integrative lesson:

- Personal, i.e. inclusion of children and their further acquaintance with the origins of folk culture; formation of socially significant position of a personality of a student by the method of a student's self-expression in creativity;
- Subjective, i.e. enrichment and systematization of knowledge of students about Russian folklore by the methods of integration of subjective knowledge of a number of disciplines;
- Meta-subjective, i.e. a creative experiment on the basis of poly-artistic interaction of different forms of student activities.

It is presupposed to develop students' abilities to express their thoughts precisely and explicitly, to properly interpret the goal in view of the tasks to which the solutions are to be found to a number of concrete practical problems, choose the most reasonable methods of the problem solutions. The structure of the integrative lesson provides seven stages. They are as follows:

1. Self-identification in relation to the activity. The teacher motivates the school students to creative observation, establishes favourable conditions for emerging the atmosphere of the Russian old times.

2. Actualization of knowledge, stimulation of interest to the activity. The teacher creates a speech situation of “immersion” of the school students into the atmosphere of the Russian old times on the basis of the material on Russian folklore (riddles, puzzles, folklore slogans, proverbs).

3. The statement of educational tasks. The teacher utilizes the integrative educational material (sound, music, symbols of the Russian folklore of the old times, costumes, visual images).

4. The construction of the problem field of the lesson. The teacher uses proverbs, Russian folklore slogans, structuring the problem context of the lesson. The teacher organizes observation and discussion of the students on the research of the problem situation.

5. Initial revision. The teacher suggests the students demonstrate the knowledge obtained during the integrative lesson, their understanding of its features in mini-scenes, deploys computer presentations.

6. The organization of the activity on application of new knowledge. The teacher coordinates utterances of the students, structuring the problem field of the lesson; uses noise instruments of the Russian folklore, button accordion, Russian costumes, and also the pieces of texts on the theme prepared by the students beforehand, prior to the event: this is the material for knowledge exchange between the students. (in form of a presentation). The teacher organizes students’ finding the solution to the text tasks. This is an example of such a task.

“Dmitry in his presentation has mentioned bast shoes and has given us the fact that in old times Russian peasants made bast shoes of the bark of linden and birch trees. Let us think in terms of figures. In order to make a single pair of bast shoes it was necessary to peel off the bark of three trees. Yearly one peasant wore 42 pairs of bast shoes. And the question is: How many trees was it necessary for a peasant to peel off in order to have footwear during a year and not to walk barefoot?

1 pair – 3 trees.

42 pairs – ? trees.

$3 \cdot 42 = 126$  (trees)

Answer: 126 trees.

We have to take into account the fact that there used to be a considerable number of children in Russian families in the old times.

How many trees had to be peeled off yearly by a peasant to provide footwear of bast shoes to all members of his family which usually consisted of 5, 7 or 10 persons?

$126 \div 5 = 630$  (trees.)

$126 \div 7 = 882$  (trees.)

$126 \div 10 = 1260$  (trees.)».

7. The organization of the process of reflection. The teacher uses a cluster illustrating systematization of the knowledge obtained collectively in the course of the lesson. The teacher organizes the process of students’ self-assessment of their own learning activity, comparing the goals and achievements, the rate of correspondence between these two criteria.

As a result, the unification of various components of knowledge, the combination of rational and sensitive forms of perception, reflection leads to harmonious development of a primary school student. The teacher believes that such an approach should be built on an expressive educational potential of the arts synthesis, on the one hand, and on cohesive relations between the spheres of knowledge of artistic and

natural sciences, on the other hand. In addition, the teacher employs school students' curiosity and openness towards all new phenomena with the purpose of forming a strong, coherent system of scientific terms and definitions about interrelations of phenomena, processes, events of the objective reality. The language of symbols is considered to be a linking element between the sphere of sensitive images and precise logical thinking, that is why the teacher seeks to inspire the school students' interest towards the phenomena of the world. This leads objectively to stimulating the school students to train and strengthen their abilities: develop insight into the objects and phenomena of the world from different viewpoints, to transform the images into notions and concepts, terms and definitions, to understand the language of science and arts.

The educational system of foreign countries

In the pedagogical scientific literature of foreign countries there exist the following terms: polydisciplinary/multidisciplinary, intersubjective/interdisciplinary, transdisciplinarity (C. Broersma, L. Duerr, I. Kleinberg, J. Holbrook. D. Youngblood, etc.)

Considering the level of awareness and understanding, interpretations of all these terms in the Russian pedagogical professional discourse, the aforementioned terms more often obtain different shades of one and the same meaning depending on its translation.

The term multidisciplinary/polydisciplinary concludes the essence of the summarized/generalized picture of the subject of the research, in relation to which the pictures of separate disciplinary fields of knowledge are considered as its parts (Holbrook, 2000).

The term transdisciplinarity from the position of modern scientific knowledge means meta-methodology or synthesis of methodologies when the knowledge is studied simultaneously at the global or local levels. In that case the educational system receives modern instrument of the study of the picture of the world (Broersma, 2014).

As the results of the Study have shown, the intersubjective approach has been carried out on the ground of thematic and parallel principles: the educational theme in question has been studied at different school subjects within the one and the same definite time period (in parallel mode) ( Jackson & Davis, 2000). The integrative approach can also be realized on the basis of a combined, consolidated integrative curriculum (Beane, 1997) where the content of the problem to be discussed lies outside the framework of one particular school subject. (Paterson, 2007). This approach bears resemblance to the meta-subjective approach in the system of education of the Russian Federation. Besides integrative plans, there are intersubjective courses and programmes stimulating students' motivation to study (Kleinberg, 2008; Bellisario etc., 2012).

The theory and practice of "Cooperative Learning" is regarded as one of the methodological strategies of integration (Adams, 2013; Slavin, 2011; etc.). On implementation of such educational strategies we integrate the potential of different school subjects. The cooperation allows to combine the potential of all participants of educational process. The responsibility for the results of the educational process are shared by all the participants. According to the studies of foreign researchers, any kind of interdisciplinary activity of teachers and students either similar to that mentioned above or another type of it is a pedagogical advantage in the educational system (Youngblood, 2007; Duerr, 2008; Taylor, 2008).

The theory and practice of "Cooperative Learning" is regarded as one of the methodological strategies of integration (Adams, 2013; Slavin, 2011; etc.).

According to the researchers (Tsvetanov-Churakova, 2016), the existing educational practice in Bulgaria can be determined as school subject-focused. However, the modern educational process in its content is gradually changing its characteristics and turning into interdisciplinary one. The most widely spread forms of integration in practice of school education are integrative lessons; systematization and modeling of the educational content within the framework of separate school subjects; individual and group activity on project activity; integrative school educational day; integrative block; integrative school educational week; integrative course, etc.

The pedagogical projection approach is regarded as one of the effective forms of education. At present educational projects are of more and more relevance in the pedagogical practice of Bulgaria. The realization of interdisciplinary approach is usually related to structural-logical modeling of the educational content, to creation of integrative structures of terms and definitions, objective reasoning, ideas, approaches, methods, skills, with different extent of synthesis of knowledge (concrete scientific, inter-scientific, philosophical). The implementation of the theory and practice of integration presupposes the agreement of the spheres of the terms and definitions, levels of understanding of different educational courses, different school subjects. It is fundamentally important to maximize vast educational and cognitive potential of development of both each lesson and the employment of the interdisciplinary forms of the pedagogic activity. The distinctive characteristics of such combined lessons are as follows:

- They have been pedagogically projected on the basis of educational content of a number of school subjects;

- They presume agreement and unifying the two spheres of the definite school subjects: firstly, the sphere of terms and definitions, and, secondly, the areas of text information, agreement of the methods of perception and cognition, which deepen the level of awareness and inner, inherent relations between the elements of the target educational material to be acquired by the students;

- Integration of the material of definite school subjects, multi-aspect consideration and reflection on its integrative content develop theoretical thinking of the students, allow them to argue, give reasoning, making discourse, summarize and generalize different phenomena and processes of objective reality, generate the insights of processes, events, phenomena, give various implications and findings, conclusions and inferences, successfully solve different practical tasks;

- Practical integrative lessons and pedagogical projection have made their significant contribution to uniting both school and non-school experience of a student.

The Bulgarian researchers have come to the conclusion that integrative lessons presuppose interdependence and correlation of the main components of the educational system (the components of content, process-technological, etc.). The integrative lessons are distinct from traditional ones and characterized by special hierarchy of the educational content. The integrative lessons are created on the basis of construction, implementation and further acquisition of intersubjective synthesis of knowledge and skills of students (Tsvetanov-Churakova, 2016).

Meanwhile, Bulgarian colleagues emphasize certain problems in realizing the integrative approach. We are to give some examples of them. So, 25.73 % of teachers taking part in the Study, have reported about complexity and labour intensity at the stage of preparation for integrative lessons, 21.14% of the teachers have indicated the existence of a definite level of separateness and non-interaction of the content

of school subjects, which leads to low degree of intersubjective integration, 18.17% of them have made an emphasis on the complications of coordination of the teachers' activity, integration of efforts of the teachers involved in the concrete project on integration on the certain educational topic.

It is worth underlying that American researchers have also stated the problems of that kind in the educational practice. We can refer to the publications by (Boehm etc., 2003) where they have recognized the fact of complexity for the teachers of Geography and History to "hold" the level of content integration, which has an effect on the quality of perception and acquisition of the educational material by the students.

Bulgarian teachers have established the same problem of the deficiency of programme-methodological material as the Russian teachers have. "There is a shortage of tasks and exercises of the appropriate quality standards with the integrative character in the book, educational manuals and workbooks. The teachers have to find the materials on their own in the Internet, which requires much time and effort on the part of teachers (Tsvetanova-Churukova, 2016). Nevertheless, Bulgarian colleagues consider as necessary to implement the potential of the integrative approach as the school students need to take an active part independently, on their own, in the process of finding solutions to different standard or non-standard creative tasks. With the support of specialized educational programs it is significant to do pedagogical projection and develop the intellectual logical skills, multi-faceted abilities of students in a systematic and goal-oriented way.

## 7. Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the second stage of the Study we can state multifaceted, multi-aspect, complex character of the integrative approach in educational systems of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria which is reflected in three categories:

- integrative processes in a subjective/disciplinary content;
- integrative processes in the activity of the subjects of educational system (administration, teachers, students, etc.), organizational forms and technologies being applied;
- processes aiming at scientific methodological support of the realization of the first two categories.

The researchers of the processes of integration in the education of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria have highlighted that only two of these three categories of the direction of the Study have been worked out at a rather productive level. The characteristics of intersubjective relationships and interdisciplinary content have been described. The forms of meta-subjective integration and technology of effective implementation of integrative approach in educational systems of schools and institutions of higher education have been assessed and approbated. On the one hand, the existing multi-aspect character of the term integration allows supplement, widening and deepening terminological context, but, on the other hand, gives ground to different interpretations of its essential characteristics and features, which presents some obstacles to clear scientific wording of the above term. These factors stated above can be considered as positive, but along with that, as negative ones.

The analysis of the results of the Study in the Russian Federation and in the Republic of Bulgaria has presented evidence about immanent great potential of the integrative approach in pedagogical practice which is to be revealed regarding technologies of productive organization of the system of education of the students. There have been established the factors relating to integrative approach realization which have

negative impact on the educational process. One of the most important of them is the factor of a low level motivation of the teachers on the part of the State to implement integrative approach in practice which requires substantial concentration of efforts.

Other very important factor is the lagging of the pedagogical studies behind the demands of the school education in the sphere of integrative forms of education. The above problems have been diagnosed and stipulated but have not been resolved and are to be managed and settled.

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