“Critical analysis of leadership governance and its implications in the universities: a case study of South African universities”

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ARTICLE INFO	Lulu Fortunate Jali and Lawrence Mpele Lekhanya (2017). Critical analysis of leadership governance and its implications in the universities: a case study of South African universities. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, *15*(3), 157-165. doi:10.21511/ppm.15(3).2017.13
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15(3).2017.13
RELEASED ON	Tuesday, 03 October 2017
RECEIVED ON	Monday, 23 January 2017
ACCEPTED ON	Thursday, 01 June 2017

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JOURNAL	"Problems and Perspectives in Management"
ISSN PRINT	1727-7051
ISSN ONLINE	1810-5467
PUBLISHER	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”
FOUNDER	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
34	0	4

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BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10, Sumy, 40022, Ukraine

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP GOVERNANCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

This paper focuses on exploring the leadership governance in universities. The leadership governance creates an environment which is transparent and it incorporates stakeholders that transform the university. The leadership governance faces visible and invisible challenges which calls for experts in different areas of leadership to be incorporated into the structures of the university in order to bring sustainability in the university. The primary data were collected from six traditional universities and three universities of technology in South Africa from the sample of 39 members of senate. The nature of the study is a quantitative study in which Survey Monkey was used for the distribution of questionnaires. The findings of the study indicate that there is a lack of involvement of stakeholders in the processes of reviewing policies and operational issues. The other findings was the use of university members in leadership to promote unity.

Keywords leadership, governance, change, unity, policies, operational issues, stakeholders, transparent, sustainability

JEL Classification M31

Received on: 23rd of January 2017
Accepted on: 1st of June 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Most definitions of leadership include the term 'influence' (Christie, 2010; DruguŞ & Landoy, 2014; Northouse, 2013) define leadership as the ability to motivate , inspire and influence others for the purpose of achieving organizational goals and bringing change to an environment. On the same note, Sart (2014) defines leadership slightly different from others, as it is defined as the process of accepting support from others which assist in the achievement of goals. Then Braun (2014) describes university as the center of disciplinary reproduction. Tjeldvoll (2011) asserts that change in production requires a change in organization, in this sense, a change in leadership will produce a complete change in the environment. Braun (2014) further note that universities have authority to set up institutional embodiment disciplines which have to be monitored by leadership. While on the other hand, governance is defined by Gilson and Daire (2011); Afgebua and Adejuwon (2012); Jackson and Stent (2014) as organizing the internal overall structures and processes through which institutional participants interact with and influence each other. The university and the organization, both need a strong leadership which will implement changes for the betterment of an environment.

Leadership in universities faces greater challenges which need a strong leadership to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in universities (Pavlenko & Bojan, 2014; Scott, 2011; Tjeldvoll, 2011).

1. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Herbst and Conradie (2011) notice that within universities there is a lack of leadership capability because leadership development has been given little attention in all higher educational institutions. The current university model has to change dramatically with the structures and practices that enhance global competitiveness (Basham, 2012; Harmsen, 2014). The strategic engagement of stakeholders in the leadership governance is promoted as it builds unity of purpose and is the capacity support (Drew, 2010; Latham, 2014). The emphasis of this paper is the transformational leadership with distribution of leadership governance within the university community.

2. PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The main purpose of this study is to assess and examine the critical leadership governance styles and identify contributing factors that might have impact on the leadership governance of all universities.

2.1. Objectives

- To assess and evaluate the role of leadership governance in the universities.
- To identify factors that influence the leadership governance of the universities.
- To suggest ways of improving leadership governance leadership governance styles in the universities.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership and governance are two independent concepts but they are interlinked. Both concepts are focusing on increasing efficiency and achieving group goals (Landis, Hill, & Harvey, 2014).

The theoretical framework for this paper follows Burn's theory which was developed in 1978, following Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which every individual feels a need to belong and self-actualization. Bush (2007) believes that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. Transformational leadership are action processes progressively which takes people to the next level with their performance. Leaders of any organization must be influential models of ethical guidance, communicate vision and be responsible for threats that prevent change in the organization (Aslam, Suleman, Zulfiqar, Shafaat, & Sadiq, 2014; Saxena & Awasthi, 2010; Verwey, van der Merwe, & du Plessis, 2012).

3.1. Literature

Gonos and Gallo (2013) define leadership styles as an explanation of personal qualities and characteristics, analysis of how leaders use their influence to others, analysis how leaders carry out their function according to which he/she operates and an explanation of morals. According to (Girma, 2016) institution's leadership refers to the leader's style of directing, couching and providing guidance to those whom he/she is in charge. Researchers believe that leadership styles do influence the success or failure of a university and the leaders do demonstrate variety of leadership styles. The following leadership styles are discussed below which are transformational and transactional.

3.2. Transformational leadership in the universities

Transformational leadership values human beings and it promotes excellency within them by influencing their aspirations and perception of situations and determine responses (García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2012). It is believed that transformational leadership has an ability to motivate employees to excel beyond their expectations. The transformational leadership is believed to change perceptions in different dimensions such as: intellectual simulation (encouraging independent and innovative thinking); individual consideration (acting as a mentor and responding to followers' needs and concerns in a supportive way); inspirational motivation (articulating attractive and appealing visions) and idealized attributes (acting as a role model and with it, instilling followers' trust) (Effelsberg et al., 2014; Furtner, Baldegger, & Rauthmann, 2013).

In a university set up, the leadership governance has the power to influence the university community and also get input which could be used to transform the university. It encourages team performance by helping each other to transform the current situation to a high level of performance and taking risks together.

3.3. Transactional leadership in the universities

Cross (2012) describes transactional leadership as model based on motivating people to perform according to their best abilities in exchange for specific rewards. Furtner, Baldegger, and Rauthmann (2013) note that transactional leadership comprises of three dimensions which are contingent reward - management establishes the expected rewards for the work performed, active management by exception – leader searches for deviations from rules and standards, passive management by exception – intervenes only if rules and standards are not met. It is more outcomes based.

3.4. Stakeholders' participation in the leadership of the university

The stakeholders of the university are those interested parties such as staff, students, alumni and members of the community or professional who play certain roles in the sustainability of the university. The incorporation of students to the leadership governance of universities have been recognized as democratization of the institutions (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011). On the same note, the incorporation of academics to leadership promotes academic freedom. Inclusive governance brings more ideas, values and behaviors that are shared and coordinated in the leadership governance (Shattock, 2013). The inclusion of students particularly, is encouraged as they are the recipients of decisions that take place in university set-up. Additionally, students are able to act on behalf of those with socio-economic issues and pedagogical issues. Kretek, Dragšić, and Kehm (2013) mention the high value added by stakeholders in leadership as they bring a new dimension to leadership. This assert that leadership governance has to consider the other members of the university in their decision process. This is asserted by Ngcamu and Teferra (2015) that the transformation initiatives and activities be known to all key stakeholders.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Design of research

Quantitative approach was used to collect the empirical data in order to achieve the set objectives. So, the quantitative data used cross-sectional research technique which examines the respondents once.

4.2. Target population of the study

The targeted population for this study was senate members of the traditional universities and universities of technology universities in South Africa.

4.3. Sampling method

The study used a stratified sampling method to choose the senate members from the selected universities. The choice of stratified sampling method was prompted by the nature of the targeted population for the survey.

4.4. Measuring instrument

Closed – ended questionnaire were used as the data collection instrument and were distributed to all selected universities in South Africa.

4.5. Data collection

The Registrar/Research office of each university was used to mediate the process of distributing the Survey Monkey link of the questionnaire to members of the senate since the researcher could not personally administer the process or use any other person due to the Protection of Personal Information's Act of 2013.

4.6. Data analysis

The completed questionnaires were analyzed and captured using the SPSS version 24.0. Due to the number of responses, the Kaiser-Mayer Olkin test and Barttlett's Approximate Chi-square, Fisher's Exact test which is acceptable at $p < 0.05$, and Factor Analysis which is acceptable at 0.5, were used to test the adequacy of sampling. Frequencies were done. The descriptive statistics were used to describe and analyze the data collected.

4.7. Validity and reliability

The questionnaire was given to 5 senate members to check its validity and reliability. Minor changes were made from the testing. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to test the reliability which is set at .70. The study met the requirements with the average of .743 which is acceptable.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Key summary of tested variables

The literature reviewed was used to develop research questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire variables included the university management, university policies, university community as well as operational issues. The details of analyzed variables are presented in the tables below.

Table 1 shows the responses of respondents from the traditional universities and universities of technology in respect of the questionnaire question with various variables. The frequencies that show the positive responses range between 3-18 (11.3%-69.2%) for traditional universities and 3-10 (23.1%-76.9%) for universities of technology.

The Fisher's exact test of independence was conducted on variables, based on the null hypothesis of observed frequencies which are all at $p = 2.262$, higher than the expected $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis is not rejected since there is no significance relationship. The Factor analysis for the majority of variables indicates correlations amongst the variables which are above the expected correlation of ≥ 0.5 ranging between 0.688-00.842, except for one variable with 0.447.

Table 2 indicates the responses of the respondents from the traditional universities and universities of technology in respect to the questionnaire question. The frequencies that indicate the positive responses range between 5-18 (19.2%-69.2%) from the traditional universities and 7-10 (53.8%-76.9%) from the universities of technology. The frequencies that indicate the negative responses for variable 2 (transparency of review procedures) were similar for both traditional universities and universities of technology at 30.8%.

Table 1. University management

Variables	Traditional universities			University of technology			Factor analysis	Fisher's exact test
	Responses frequency and percentage (%)			Responses frequency and percentage (%)				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		
University structure	14 (53.8%)	5 (26.2%)	1 (26.9%)	11 (84.6%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	0.842	0.252
University committees	12 (46.2%)	5 (19.2%)	9 (34.6%)	10 (76.9%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	0.812	0.167
Communities/ parents	3 (11.5%)	6 (23.1%)	17 (65.4%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	6 (46.2%)	0.447	0.453
Student in management	18 (69.2%)	3 (11.5%)	5 (19.2%)	10 (76.9%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	0.688	0.639
Student in decision making body	17 (65.4%)	6 (23.1%)	3 (11.5%)	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0.807	0.751

Table 2. University policies

Variables	Traditional universities			University of technology			Factor analysis	Fisher's exact test
	Responses frequency and percentage (%)			Responses frequency and percentage (%)				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		
Reviews of policies and procedures	5 (19.2%)	5 (19.2%)	16 (61.5)	8 (61.5%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (15.4%)	0.919	0.009*
Transparency of review procedures	14 (53.8%)	4 (15.2%)	8 (30.8%)	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0.919	0.062
Opportunities given to Stakeholders' comment	18 (69.2%)	3 (11.5%)	5 (19.2%)	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0.892	0.265
Contributions consideration	11 (42.3%)	8 (30.8%)	7 (26.9%)	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0.922	0.128
Administration policies	12 (46.2%)	7 (26.9%)	7 (26.9%)	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0.609	0.141

Table 3. University Community

Variables	Traditional universities			University of technology			Factor analysis	Fisher's exact test
	Responses frequency and percentage (%)			Responses frequency and percentage (%)				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		
Support to members' developmental initiatives	11 (42.3%)	6 (23.1%)	9 (34.6%)	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0.673	0.046**
Direction offered to members	13 (50.0%)	3 (11.5%)	10 (38.5%)	5 (38.5%)	8 (61.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0.882	0.001**
Mentoring to members	1 (3.8%)	11 (42.3%)	14 (53.8%)	3 (23.1%)	9 (69.2%)	1 (7.7%)	0.726	0.007*
Priority given to needs	10 (38.5%)	8 (30.8%)	8 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.7%)	0.899	0.239

The Fisher's exact test of independence was conducted, based on the null hypothesis that universities review and improve policies. Four out of five observed variables, resulted at [0.062 + 0.265 + 0.128 + 0.141 = 0.596], higher than the expected results of $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis was not rejected, whilst one of the observed variable resulted at $p = 0.009$, which is accepted. The Factor analysis for the majority of variables indicates correlations amongst all variables which are above the expected correlation of ≥ .5 which were ranging between 0.609-0.919.

Table 3 indicates the responses of the respondents from the traditional universities and universities of technology in respect to the questionnaire question. The frequencies that indicate the positive responses range between 1-11 (3.8%-42.3%) from the traditional universities and 3-9 (23.1%-69.2%) from the universities of technology. The frequencies that indicate the negative responses from the traditional universities were high, which were 9 (34.6%), 10 (38.5%), 14 (53.8%), 8 (30.8%) and 8 (30.8%) compared to those of the universities of technology which are 0 (0.0%), 0 (0.0%), 1 (7.7%) and 1 (7.7%).

The Fisher's exact test of independence was conducted to test the null hypothesis that universities' communities were considered in all aspects of leadership. The results of some observed variables were statistically significant at 0.046, 0.001 and 0.007. The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. The other observed variables' results at 0.239, which is higher than the expected $p<0.05$, therefore null hypothesis is not rejected. The Factor analysis for the majority of variables indicates correlations amongst all variables which are above the expected correlation of ≥ .5, ranging between 0.673-0.899.

Table 4 indicates the responses of the respondents from the traditional universities and universities of technology in respect to the questionnaire question. The frequencies that indicate the positive responses were very low for both the traditional universities and universities of technology ranging between 5-10 (19.2%-38.5%) and 2-6 (15.4%-46.2%) respectively. The frequencies of all variables that indicate the negative responses from the traditional universities were high, which were 15 (57.7%), 10 (38.5%), 12 (46.2%) and 17 (65.4%) compared to those of the universities of technology which were 5 (38.5%), 2 (15.4%), 2 (15.4%) and 5 (38.5%).

The Fisher's exact test of independence was conducted to test the null hypothesis that operational issues are leadership's responsibilities. The results of observed variables were not significance at [0.0 64 + 0.366 + 0.059 + 0.201 = 1.221, which is higher than the expected $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis is

Table 4. Operational Issues at university

Variables	Traditional universities			University of technology			Factor analysis	Fisher's exact test
	Responses frequency and percentage (%)			Responses frequency and percentage (%)				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		
Allocation and monitoring of financial resources	8 (30.8%)	3 (11.5%)	15 (57.7%)	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	5 (38.5%)	0.713	0.064
Familiarity to day-to day operations	8 (30.8%)	8 (30.8%)	10 (38.5%)	6 (46.2%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (15.4%)	0.854	0.366
Stakeholders participation	10 (38.5%)	4 (15.4%)	12 46.2	5 (38.5%)	6 (46.2%)	2 (15.4%)	0.841	0.059
Resolution of challenges	5 (19.2%)	4 (15.4%)	17 65.4	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	5 (38.5%)	0.709	0.201

not rejected. The factor analysis for the majority of variables indicates correlations amongst the variables which were above the expected correlation of ≥ 0.5, ranging between 0.709-0.854.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following discussion of the empirical findings with related literature indicates whether the objectives were achieved or not.

6.1. University structure

Table 1 showed various aspects of the university management. According to the results from respondents, the universities' committees was the only variable regarded as close to significance relationship, although still high. The literature promotes collaboration as a factor which encourages trust within the members (Verwey et al., 2012) and the empirical findings showed less support. The leadership governance has to develop informal and trustful relationship (Saxena & Awasthi, 2010) to produce excellent performance and provide direction for all in the organization. The role played by other members of university contributes immensely to the decisions which affect the university community. The lack of significance relationship, indicates the aspects that need to be closely reviewed by the leadership governance of universities.

6.2. University policies

Table 2 indicated various aspects of the university policies. Policies and procedures go hand in hand with the system of controls which assist in directing the members of an organization in order to be able to achieve the expected goals. The empirical findings indicate the high response on transparency in reviewing the policies and procedures which is supported by (Antonakis & House, 2014; Badshah, 2012; Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014) that innovating thinking and instilling trust within the organization will bring change. Being transparency makes leadership governance to be trusted by those who get into touch with (Caldwell, Hayes, & Long, 2010). The leadership governance has to open more opportunities for others to contribute and consider their contributions in building the sustainable institutions.

6.3. University community

Table 3 showed the aspects of university community. Different members are found in the university set-up and each has unique needs which need to be developed, for better performance. The empirical findings indicate a very low response of leadership governance encouraging the members to achieve their endevours. Leadership governance has to take the position of mentoring and respond to the needs of the members (Bayram & Dinç, 2015; Furtner et al., 2013). University community is supposed to be the eyes and ears of the leadership governance. Leadership governance has to prioritize those initiatives which will promote the goodwill of universities and improve performances.

6.4. University operational issues

Table 4 is for the university operational issues, of which are essential for the operation of a university. The leadership governance has the responsibility to maintain and sustain the institution by ensuring that no compromises of the core business of a university due to negligence of considering the operational issues. The empirical findings for this variable and its sub-variables had very low responses which inform the uncertainty about these issues. This aspect of operational issues involves every member of the university community, hence, its sensitivity, needs transparency accompanied with accountability. The literature encourages consultation by leadership governance (Girma, 2016) for effective decision making. Leadership governance is found in all levels of an organization, therefore, the sharing of ideas add value to an institution and promote unity. This view is supported by Ackermann and Eden (2011); Kretek et al. (2013), who encourage the incorporation of stakeholders for their unique input. Leadership governance needs not to receive praise alone but together with the members of a university for its successes, as well as be blamed collectively, for its failures.

7. LIMITATIONS

The greatest limitation for this study was obtaining gatekeepers' permissions from the targeted universities. Different universities' autonomy was

evidenced by the procedures that each university applied in the process of obtaining the permission. The other hurdle was to access the targeted sample after the permission had been granted. This inaccessibility of senate members caused a big challenge, as the researcher could not personally communicate with the members of the sample. Lastly, this process, impacted on response rate, since the researcher could not do any follow-ups to the respondents.

CONCLUSION

The study attempted to assess and evaluate the role played by the leadership governance in universities. The empirical findings showed aspects where universities' leadership is not encouraging the development of members within the universities and the contribution of stakeholders not being considered as they should be. The literature reviewed was utilized in support of empirical findings. It was found that transformational leadership influences others and could be practiced every day in order to bring the expected change in universities. The respondents showed little knowledge on leadership governance's involvement in operational issues as well as the participation of others in this aspect. The study also concludes that the leadership governance made all the reviews and improvements on policies and procedures to be transparent. This process is made in order to include all the university community with diverse expertise. The study concludes that the inclusion of subordinates in planning for a task in order to make them feel being part of the performance that is going to unfold. The findings of the study indicate that leadership governance at universities is open with processes that are taking place in order to bring change. The study revealed that the leadership governance requested contributions from stakeholders towards the policies and procedures. The findings discovered that less has been done to consider the contributions made by stakeholders. The leadership governance has to improve this aspect by including the contributions of stakeholders and analyze them for relevancy for the achievement of goals and the vision of a university. The humanistic values such as integrity, fairness, humanity and respect do become a challenge to university leadership. The study further indicated that the morals and ethics are a building block for any institutions and ethical leadership is able to bring good morals in the university. The findings indicated this aspect is to be well developed by leadership governance of both type of universities. The study found that the university structure influence leadership governance bodies at universities, since this governance needs to be entrenched at all levels of such institutions for reasons of sustainability. The empirical findings indicated that leadership governance bodies at universities guide the processes for reviewing policies and procedures, although contributions made by stakeholders in these bodies were not considered in these processes. This study further revealed that that the members of leadership governance structures were familiar with the day-to-day operations at institutions, although operational issues were found not to be resolved within short spaces of time. Challenges, such as issues of internal (from research and other initiatives) and external (primarily from government) finances, advancements in technology, and also socio-economic issues, were identified as factors which affected leadership governance bodies in their endeavours to achieve the visions and missions universities. The study finally concluded that the inclusion of students in the University of Management is supported by respondents as it promotes unity. As the leadership theories indicated that leadership drives changes in organizations, same as in universities. The inclusion of students in leadership governance is promoted as they have more information on the issues that affect them directly and also deepens democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The history and size of the university contribute to the direction to be taken by leadership governance. Other universities have more structural bodies which manage certain aspects in a university. The study recommends that the leadership governance should use different stakeholders in the structural bodies of universities as they add value into the processes of universities.

The contributions of the stakeholders in the leadership governance add value to universities especially in the reviewing and improvement of university's policies and procedures. The policies and procedures give clear direction to those who are assigned to perform certain responsibilities. Therefore, the study recommends that leadership governance should be transparent and incorporate stakeholders in the process of reviewing and the improvement of policies and procedures.

In a formal structured organization, the responsibilities should be shared, as no one man could accomplish everything by himself. The study recommends the inclusion of stakeholders who are staff (academics and non-academics), students and external people who have an interest in the university with expertise in different discipline, as they bring a different perspective to the process; moreover, they bring their experiences which are valuable for shaping the future of the institutions. Students, in particular, are the recipients of the core business in universities; therefore, their contributions will assist in the discussion of pedagogical matters and other matters which directly affect them. The study recommends that policies and procedures be transparent and also be regularly reviewed, especially where external forces place pressure on institutions to satisfy their needs. The study recommends that leadership governance bodies should therefore ensure that all stakeholders participate in the review and improvement of policies and procedures in order to achieve their better design. The study suggest that appropriate opportunities should be provided for university community to develop themselves, and that existing developmental initiatives and policies should be made accessible to all in order to promote equality. The study recommends that leadership governance bodies should implement coherent system that can be used to identify students who perform academically, but who are struggling financially, before it is late. The study recommends that leadership governance bodies should design and implement ethical cultures to include all members, especially members of leadership, since they are the true agents of change in universities. This can be effective if committees that work on institutional ethics frameworks exist. Ethical committees should contain members from across the entire spectrum of universities, since ethical practice is expected in all of their operations. This recommendation emanates from the investigation of styles of management at universities, which were adopted from corporates which must evaluate their systems on a continuous basis. Most universities used whistleblowing as a tool to identify inappropriate activities that could have taken place. This study suggests that this tool should be reviewed by these internal independent bodies to ensure that whatever risk which might cripple operational systems are eradicated before taking place.

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