



Actualization of Principal Instructional Leadership in the Implementation of Differentiated Learning to Realize Students' Well-Being

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Abstract: This study aims to reveal the actualization of the principal's instructional leadership in carrying out differentiated learning that embodies students' well-being. The method used in this study was qualitative, with the design of multi-case studies through constant comparative analysis using Nvivo Software. The informants in this study were the principal, vice principal, teachers, learners, and parents of students. Subjects were taken purposively consisting of the principal, vice principal, teachers, students, and parents and measured by interviews, observation, and documentation analysis. The study's findings revealed that the principal took several actions that reflected instructional leaders' behavior. It included communicating school objectives about implementing differentiated learning in the classroom, supervising, and evaluating related to learning, monitoring student progress, developing teacher professional abilities, and demonstrating concern for teachers and students. From the results, this research is expected to (1) contribute to developing the concept of instructional leadership, which places student well-being as the primary orientation in the learning process, (2) can foster the initiation of school principals in building strategies to maximize and empower school resources in supporting the implementation of differentiated learning, (3) increase the actualization of the teacher's role and function as a front of the liner in realizing differentiated learning in the classroom, and (4) build awareness about the importance students well-being for parents.

Article History

Received: 07-01-2023

Revised: 12-02-2023

Accepted: 23-02-2023

Published: 16-03-2023

Key Words:

Instructional Leadership;
Principals;
Differentiated Learning; Students' Well-Being.

How to Cite: Hariyati, N., Riyanto, Y., Sujarwanto, S., Suyatno, S., & Islamiah, N. (2023). Actualization of Principal Instructional Leadership in the Implementation of Differentiated Learning to Realize Students' Well-Being. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*, 9(1), 188-199. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i1.7002>



<https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i1.7002>

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Introduction

Curriculum policy reforms around the world in recent years have agreed to aim at creating a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of students and preparing them to face the uncertainties of social, environmental, technological, and economic change (Campbell et al., 2020). *Merdeka Belajar's* Policy, rolled out by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, supports the implementation of learning that suits the needs of students and is carried out in a pleasant, calm, and stress-free environment while still paying attention to the natural talents of students (Abidah et al., 2020).

Implementation of education in recent years, there is still a learning process that makes students uncomfortable. The results of the research by (Barseli et al., 2018) state that 15.1% of middle-level students experience academic stress due to pressure from several parties, such as parents, teachers, and peers, to achieve high achievements. In addition, the research results (Saqib & Rehman, 2018) show that 99% of students still feel academic stress due to pressure from teachers and parents. Academic stress can cause psychological pressure. Experts' opinion explains that psychological pressure occurs when individuals feel that the



surrounding environment demands tasks that exceed their adaptive capacity and can cause psychological disturbances (Jex, 1998).

These problems build awareness that students have different characteristics, especially in accepting the learning process. Determining a suitable learning model can be a solution to reduce students' academic stress levels. Differentiated learning can present a learning process by considering students' inherent characteristics, followed up with differentiation of content, processes, and learning products (Joseph et al., 2013; Tomlinson, 2001). Differentiated learning positions the teacher as a teacher who addresses all students' needs, monitor learning progress, and identifies and meets these needs according to the characteristics of each student (Mills et al., 2014). Such learning will be seen as providing students with well-being in carrying out learning. There will not be a condition that can make students feel pressured if the teacher can carry out learning according to the characteristics of students. The characteristics in question are readiness, interest, and learning profile in each learner, which are, of course, different from one another (Tomlinson, 2001). Teachers who can meet learning needs according to the characteristics of students support the realization of independent learning, which characterizes students' well-being.

Students' well-being can be interpreted from the meaning of well-being, namely life satisfaction, which supports self-development (Hidayat et al., 2022). It is a concept that interprets the interaction process between individuals and their environment, reflected through physical, mental, and other dimensions that make students feel comfortable, meaningful, and enjoyable (Myers, 1992; Nelson et al., 2015; Soutter et al., 2014). Students' well-being is an indicator that reflects the effectiveness of students in carrying out the learning process (Fraillon, 2004). Students' well-being concerns academic abilities and conditions where students genuinely feel prosperous (Muhammad & Rosiana, 2019). (Karyani et al., 2015)—refined this by suggesting that students' well-being is projected through several characteristics, namely (1) cognitively through good academic achievement, (2) physically through being physically healthy and fit, (3) psychologically through life satisfaction and (4) socially through harmonious relationships with parents, friends, and the community.

Hedonically, students' well-being is represented through positive emotional attitudes such as joy, enthusiasm, happiness, serenity, peace, satisfaction, and fullness of life. Students' well-being is interpreted through happiness, satisfaction, ability to manage emotions, good self-acceptance, positive relations with society, independence, dealing with environmental pressures, and having goals in life and personal growth (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998; Ryff, 1989). It shows that students' well-being represents how well the education management system is implemented in schools (Borgonovi & Pál, 2016). In this concept, students' well-being has significant implications for students at school. So, of course, teachers who can carry out the learning process by accommodating the needs of students are needed. In teaching and learning activities, the learning process is the main factor influencing the well-being of students at school (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Learning to realize students' well-being is necessary for the current Freedom to Learn (*Merdeka Belajar*) era. Learning that can represent teaching activities by paying attention to students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor qualities is an essential concern (Yusuf, 2017). Tomlinson introduces learning that teachers can implement in the Free Learning era, namely differentiated learning. Conceptually, differentiated learning is learning that is implemented by identifying and mapping the needs of students according to the interests, readiness, and learning profiles of students as outlined through content, processes, and learning products by implementing independent learning strategies (Amin, 2009; Marlina,



2019; Tomlinson, 2001). Systematically differentiated learning is carried out by (1) collecting information on the state of students, which includes readiness, interest, and learning profile; (2) designing differentiated learning by differentiating content, process, and product by referring to the results of the first step data; (3) the design results are applied in the learning process in the classroom (Joseph et al., 2013; Tomlinson, 2001).

Identifying learning readiness is the initial capital to determine how students are capable. Knowing students' readiness will make it easy for teachers to help relate the knowledge students have with new knowledge so that it will bring students to a higher level of thinking than before. In addition, identifying students' interests is also the main point in planning the implementation of differentiated learning to increase students' motivation, creativity, and productivity in the learning process. Meanwhile, the identification of students' learning profiles aims to determine social-emotional (language, culture, health, social relations in the surrounding environment) and students' learning styles (audio, visual, kinesthetic) (Andini et al., 2016).

Differentiated, complex learning builds awareness that professional teachers who can carry out dynamic and creative learning and are competent are needed to succeed in learning that creates students' well-being (Komalasari et al., 2020). However, forming professional teachers and ensuring a quality learning process continues to be a challenge school principals face (Day & Sammons, 2016). The principal, as a leader, must be able to encourage, guide, and foster teachers to achieve the goals that are expected together. In this case, a leader who supports and facilitates the teacher's ability to teach is needed.

Surabaya is one of the cities in East Java that pays great attention to students with special needs. Since 2009, Surabaya has started organizing inclusive education, and only two state senior high schools are implementing the inclusive program, namely SMAN 8 Surabaya and SMAN 10 Surabaya. Both are pilot schools in implementing differentiated learning as inclusive schools. The instructional leadership who manages the school with their respective characteristics influences the implementation of differentiated learning. From the perspective of instructional leadership, this research was conducted to determine the actualization of the principal's instructional leadership in both schools in designing a plan, implementing, and evaluating differentiated learning in realizing students' well-being.

Research Method

The research approach used was a qualitative approach with a multi-case study research design. The data analysis technique used constant comparative analysis with the help of Nvivo software. It aligns with the view (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) that constant comparative analysis is generally used in multi-case research. Qualitative research is an investigative process that builds a complex and holistic picture by analyzing words and reporting detailed views of informants in natural settings (Creswell, 1997). In line with this view, the researcher determined the source of information through words and actions from the primary and additional informants. The rest was additional data such as documents and others. Informants in this study included school principals, vice principals for curriculum, and teachers, who were determined through the snowball sampling technique. The informant demographic data is as follows.

Table 1. Informant Demographics

	F	%
Gender		
Male	6	20
Female	24	80
Age		



20-34th	7	23
35-44th	4	13
45-54th	10	33
55-64th	14	47
School Accreditation		
A	30	100
Education		
High School	1	3
S1 (Bachelor)	17	57
S2 (Master)	12	40
Certified Professional Educator		
Yes	22	73
No.	8	27
Range of Teaching with Certified Professional Educators		
0-2nd	11	37
3-5th	1	3
6-9th	3	10
>10th	15	50

The table shows that the overall research informants have a background as teachers, male (20%), female (80%). From all teacher informants, aged 55-64th (47%) dominated as the most informants, aged 45-54th (33%), aged 20-34th (23%) and 35-44th (13%). Both schools are accredited A, representing that both are excellent category schools. All informants have the lowest education in high school (3%), Bachelor (S1) (57%) and Master (S2) (40%) and have been certified professional educators (73%), but there are 27% who have not been certified professional educators. Length of teaching with certified professional educators is 50% over ten years, 37% between 0-2nd, 10% between 6th-9th and 3% between 3rd-5th. Based on demographic data, informants articulate that the informants are predominantly senior teachers who have been certified professional educators and the schools that are the object of research are schools with superior accreditation.

Interviews of such informants were conducted in a semi-structured manner. In addition, researchers also conducted focus group interviews with informants classified by researchers according to the involvement of roles in the implementation of differentiated learning. Researchers collected data through observation by observing events, behaviors, and activities that were relevant and related to the development of the implementation of differentiated learning, such as supervision by the principal and other activities. Meanwhile, documentation studies were carried out by identifying, analyzing, and abstracting documents relevant to the actualization of the principal in supporting differentiated learning, such as the curriculum and its learning tools, as well as other supporting documents, such as the principal's academic supervision document and school policy documents related to the implementation of differentiated learning. Single and cross-site data analysis were carried out referring to an interactive model where data analysis was carried out simultaneously in conjunction with the data collection process with the flow of the researcher's stages, including (1) data collection, (2) data condensation, (3) data organization, and (4) data collection or data verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis in this study was carried out during the research process and repeatedly to obtain findings until the end of research activities. The research findings were obtained from the results of data analysis. Then, they were checked for validity by the researcher. It refers to the criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Data credibility criteria are fulfilled by triangulation (sources and techniques/methods), member checks, and peer examinations through discussions with learning expert lecturers.

Results and Discussion



Figure 1. Wordcloud Data

Wordcloud in figure (1) is the output of data analysis using the Nvivo application. This figure interprets that principals at both sites are leaders who implement instructional leadership and support implementing differentiated learning. It is based on the largest size in the word cloud containing several words: students, learning, principal, school, differentiation, and learning. However, the analysis result through word cloud needs to visualize the results of implementing instructional leadership at the two sites. Based on the interviews and observations, information was obtained that the two principals focused on the input-process-output of education in schools. The principal's actions reflect the proper behavior in the school management process (Komariah & Triatna, 2016); a school is a system consisting of input-process-output that are interrelated and interconnected to achieve the goal of supporting the implementation of differentiated learning. So that effective leadership is leadership that can manage the school as an appropriate system.

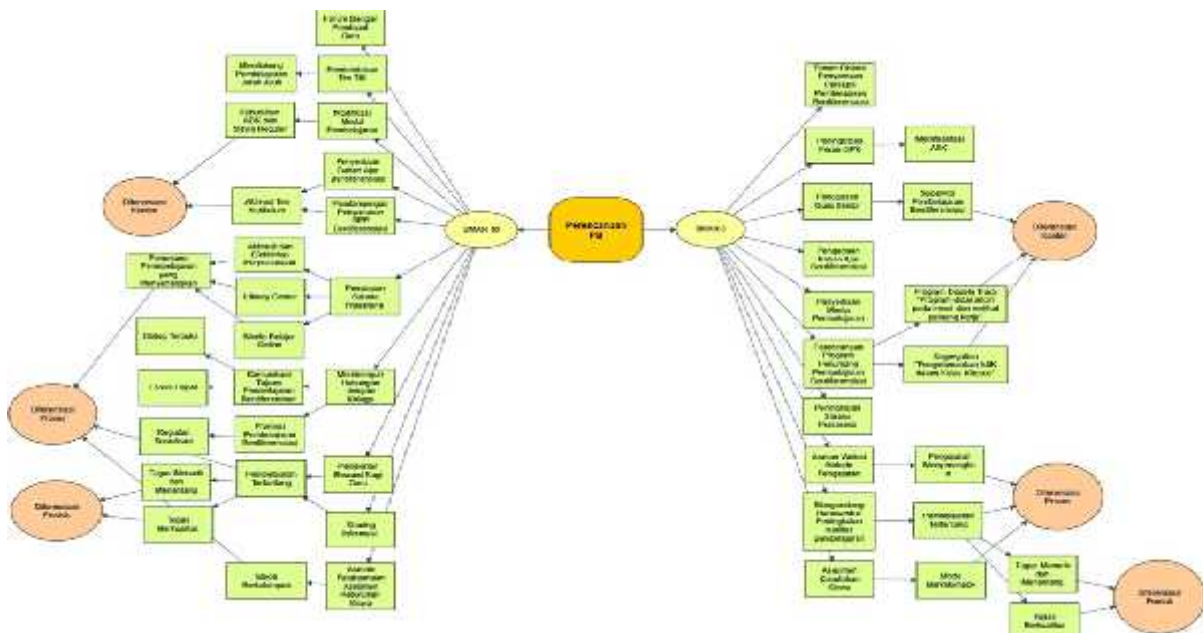


Figure 2. Results of Cross-Site Analysis of Differentiated Learning Planning

The concept map shows that the two principals successfully implement different strategies to implement differentiated learning. The head of SMAN 10 held a hearing forum with teachers and formed an ICT team to facilitate the implementation of distance learning. It



assisted in modifying modules and learning teaching materials tailored to student needs and in preparing Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) according to student needs. The actions taken by the head of SMAN 10 represent a leader who seeks to improve the quality of learning practices; such leaders are referred to as instructional leaders (Dou et al., 2016). On another concept, implementing activities carried out by the head of SMAN 10 accommodates the dimensions of management engineer and human engineer. *Management engineering* is a concept that allocates the formation of new management substances to maximize existing learning in an institution (Kusmintardjo, 2003). It was actualized in the formation of the ICT team at SMAN 10. Human engineers at SMAN 10, by the school principal, were realized in hearing forums that align with expert statements. Human engineers are represented at the bottom-up to design learning, not the top, which tends to stagnate learning development (Kusmintardjo, 2003). Other researchers also stated that to build quality-focused learning. People have to prioritize bottom-up rather than top-down because bottom-up practical needs that match the needs of subordinates and students will be fulfilled, thus creating a link and match between the learning concepts needed by students and what is designed by the institution (Damore & Rieckhoff, 2019; Disas, 2018; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015; Kariadi & Suprpto, 2018; Viac & Fraser, 2020). In this context, researchers can conclude that the principle of SMAN 10 has implicitly implemented instructional leadership through the management and human engineers.

The principal of SMAN 8 has a different strategy, namely focusing on assigning senior teachers to carry out learning supervision by paying attention to the principles of differentiated learning and planning programs that support differentiated learning, namely through double-track and segregation programs. The school principal initiates the double-track program by paying attention to students' interests and talents and looking at job opportunities from these talents of interest. To pay attention to the needs of students at school, the principal also pays attention to the needs of students in the future so that they can support their skills. Meanwhile, the segregation program is implemented at SMAN 8 by paying attention to students with special needs by facilitating special classes.

The actions taken by the two school principals implemented the characteristics of instructional leadership, namely managing learning programs, one of which was by carrying out supervision, coordination, and monitoring, which were entirely focused on curriculum development and learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These activities also reflect the differentiation of learning content shown by paying attention to the content of the material according to the needs of students in the learning process (Tomlinson, 2001). In the planning process, the two principals also pay attention to the differentiation of processes that support implementing differentiated learning. The actualization of the head of SMAN 10 is by preparing infrastructure to support the learning process, such as libraries, library corners, and online learning media. In addition to supporting the differentiated learning process, the principal carries out information-sharing activities about implementing challenging learning for students. This activity is one of the school's objectives; the principal communicates through coordination meetings, service meetings, and other non-formal forums. Communicating goals becomes the actions of a learning leader, which is part of the dimension of formulating a mission (Wahyudi et al., 2020).

The principal also provides directions for starting learning by assessing student needs so that the learning process can later be adapted to student needs. So, the principle of SMAN 10 supports process differentiation by focusing on (1) infrastructure, (2) teacher understanding, and (3) student needs. The actualization carried out by the head of SMAN 8 differs from that carried out by the head of SMAN 10. The head of SMAN 8 focuses on

carrying out several actions, namely (1) giving the teachers direction to vary teaching methods, implement fun learning, and conduct the assessment for student needs which provided student characteristics, (2) inviting resources person to broaden knowledge about challenging learning for students. Both school principals showed concern in trying to build a positive learning climate. These actions demonstrated the characteristics of instructional leadership, namely promoting and encouraging the creation of a positive learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Weber, 1987).

Planning and Implementation of Differentiated Learning

Good planning is followed up by implementing the plan as actualized by the two principals presented in the following concept map.

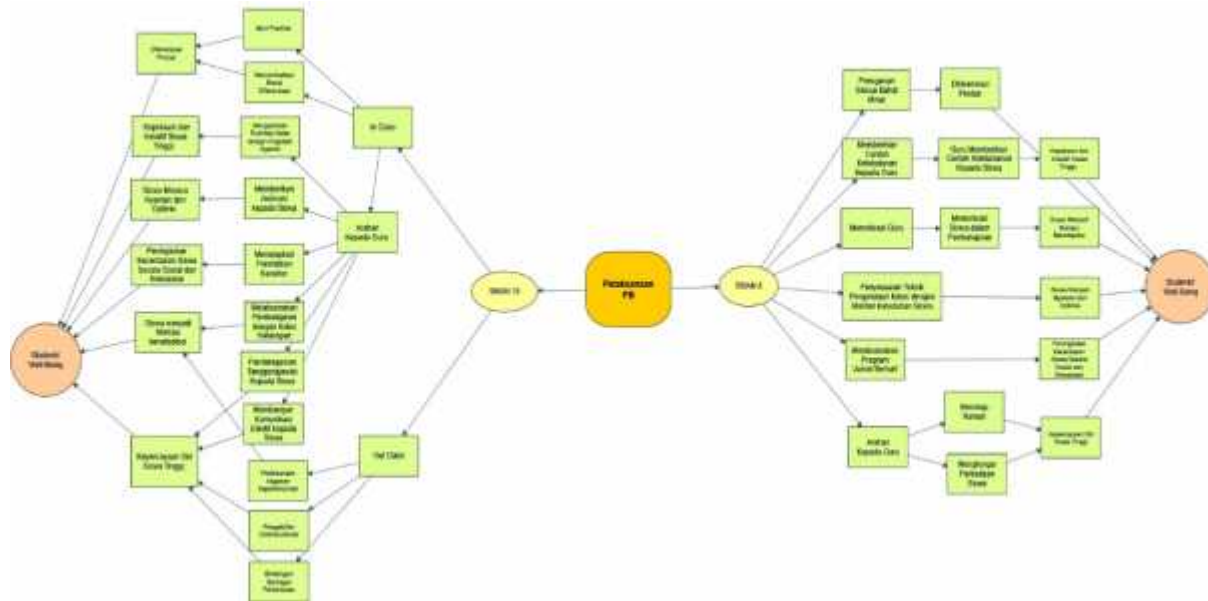


Figure 3. Results of Cross-Site Analysis of Differentiated Learning Implementation

At the implementation stage, the two principals had different strategies for supporting the implementation of differentiated learning. The principal of SMAN 10 focuses on learning inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, it was demonstrated by (1) providing examples of best practices and utilizing differentiated learning modules prepared by schools and those obtained from the government; these two actions aim to produce differentiated learning products (2) providing directions to teachers for 1) routine activities that are religious, 2) always motivate students, 3) integrate character education in each subject, 4) implement learning with heterogeneous students in each class, 4) build self-efficacy in students through delegating responsibilities on specific events that involve students. For activities outside the classroom, the principal focuses on non-academic activities, namely, leadership activities, supporting and activating extracurricular activities, and providing competition mentoring facilities. This construct, as already mentioned, leads to two aspects theoretically leading to servant leadership from teachers who can shape student perceptions of well-being. Servant leadership is a teacher dimension for teaching with an orientation to serve, which is represented through the creation of a learning community in the classroom, the integration of the positive character of students through the patience and example of the teacher, being able to develop individual student character to the fullest (Greenleaf, 2002). These various dimensions have been fulfilled by the instructional leadership of a school principal, as reflected in the first paragraph. However, the researcher wants to emphasize if the various characters and practical examples of the principal lead a teacher to be able to realize (1) the value of people, (2) develop people, and (3) building a learning community as



principal explores what is lacking in teachers, followed up with teacher professional development through internal and external training. The school principal also uses supervision activities to find achievements and achievements to be appreciated as a form of strengthening the teacher. Such actions show the principal's concern for developing teacher competencies to improve their well-being.

More complex, the head of SMAN 10 evaluates by focusing on 3 (three) actions, namely (1) academic supervision, (2) review of the implementation of learning, and (3) coordination meetings. Like the principal of SMAN 8, the principal of SMAN 10 uses academic supervision to improve teacher professionalism. Meanwhile, review activities focus on student competencies and facilities supporting learning. Coordination meeting activities are carried out as a follow-up action in conducting studies with stakeholders to evaluate the results of the implementation of class supervision and review. The output resulting from the coordination meeting is a school work plan document for the next semester.

This study's findings align with the results of a literature review which shows that supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of learning are actions that describe the dimensions of managing learning programs carried out by instructional leadership (Wahyudi et al., 2020). Overall, the findings of this study are in accordance with the results of other studies (Adegbemile, 2011) that the instructional leadership needed by school principals for effective education includes several things, namely (1) collaboration with teachers to realize school goals, (2) willing to facilitate infrastructure, (3) supervise lesson plans and teaching and learning activities, (4) evaluate curriculum plans and implementation. It shows that the determination and realization of school goals are crucial for the principal to provide direction and goals in implementing learning.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to developing the concept of instructional leadership, which places student well-being as the primary orientation in the learning process. In addition, the results of this study are expected to support Merdeka Belajar's policy through the instructional leadership profile of school principals that support differentiated learning. Practically, the results of this research can foster the initiation of school principals in building strategies to maximize and empower school resources in supporting the implementation of differentiated learning, increase the actualization of the teacher's role and function as a front of the liner in realizing differentiated learning in the classroom, and build awareness about the importance students well-being for parents.

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the principal took several actions that reflected instructional leader behavior, such as communicating school objectives about implementing differentiated learning in the classroom and supervising and evaluating learning. Besides, the principal also monitors student progress, develops teachers' professional abilities, and shows concern for teachers and students. From the results, this research is expected to (1) contribute to developing the concept of instructional leadership, which places student well-being as the primary orientation in the learning process, (2) can foster the initiation of school principals in building strategies to maximize and empower school resources in supporting the implementation of differentiated learning, (3) increase the actualization of the teacher's role and function as a front of the liner in realizing differentiated learning in the classroom, and (4) build awareness about the importance students well-being for parents.



Recommendation

Principals in both sites are advised to present their authentic leadership and achievements in managing schools oriented towards student well-being in a best practice that can impart experience to other school principals. Meanwhile, policymakers are expected to be able to provide policies that can increase the awareness of school principals to always do best practices, especially in realizing student well-being. Then, in the future, researchers should be able to research the same topic with other methods, such as quantitative with a multiple regression design, so that the realization of student well-being can study in detail through the levels and the level of influence of instructional leadership.

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgements to Universitas Negeri Surabaya for supporting the implementation of this research so that it can ultimately provide scientific benefits, especially in the realm of education management.

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