Teacher Education in the Pacific Islands: A Preliminary Literature Review

C. F. Koya Vaka'uta

Policy Context

Teacher education in the Pacific is premised on the multiple realities and constraints of education in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Pacific region. This review is limited to Pacific scholarly writing from within the Pacific islands (PICs) in order to gauge the extent of Teacher Education (TE) Discourse taking place in the islands. Similar to other SIDS, PICs are heavily dependent on educational aid and are beleaguered with issues of smallness, islandness, remoteness and scatteredness. Differentially however, a regional approach to educational development and planning guides educational efforts in Forum member countries since 2001.

An inaugural Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEDMM) was held in Auckland, NZ in 2001 resulting in the first regional policy plan 'Forum Basic Education Action Plan' (FBEAP). The impetus for this initial adhoc meeting was the realization of the critical role of education to regional development[1]. Despite an initial primary emphases on economic growth and developmental issues focusing solely on "human resource development" (PIFS 2001FEDA.03, p3), the ensuing vision for Pacific education was drafted in line with the *Dakar World Education for All Framework for Action* and stressed education as a basic human right. It was informed by the UNDP Pacific Human Development Report, 1999 which highlighted 'poverty of opportunity' as the overarching regional concern and stressed the need to improve basic education in the islands. Consequently, FBEAP articulates the following goals: *"To achieve universal and equitable educational participation and achievement* [and] *ensure access and equity and improve quality and outcomes"* (2001, p2).

Among other issues and challenges discussed at the first FEDMM, teacher training, quality of teaching and teacher conditions were deliberated. Specific issues related to shortage of teachers and teaching materials (PIFS 2001FEDA.03, p5); pre- and in-service teacher education and training, and conditions of service (p10); availability and quality of teachers (p11, 15); and teacher competencies (p18)[2]. Similar sentiments are echoed in the Pacific Education for Sustainable Development Framework (PESDF), 2006 and the Pacific Education and Development Framework[3] (PEDF) 2009 – 2015.

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[1] Forum Leaders Meeting held in Palau 1999
[2] These issues were reiterated in the subsequent FBEAP reviews of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.
[3] The 2007 FBEAP review led to the drafting and endorsement of the PEDF in 2998 and replaced FBEAP in 2009.

Pacific Teacher Education Discourse

The concern with teacher training and quality of teaching has been central to the discourse on Pacific education since the 1970s. The 1969 – 1975 UNDP/UNESCO Curriculum Development project devoted much of its focus to the development of curricula and the training of upper primary and secondary school teachers to implement the new curriculum. Similarly in the 1980s and 1990s the Basic Education Management and Teacher Upgrading Project (BEMTUP) project prioritized the development of upper primary teachers[4] in the teaching of English, Social Science, Maths and Science (USP, 1997; Lingam, 1999). Likewise, the Basic Education and Life skills programme[5] (BELS) initiated in 1992 targeted the development of teacher skills in teaching and assessment at the primary school level, as well as, improving sector planning and stakeholder engagement (UNESCO, 1993). The 1999 UNDP Pacific Human Development Report[6] stressed the lack of *capacity building* opportunities in the region highlighting the need to improve the quality of basic education as well as non-formal training. Citing a number of country reports, that review indicated a general shortage of adequately trained teachers, poor infrastructure, large teacher-student ratios and low teacher salaries. The findings of this review were used as a primary source that informed the development of the FBEAP in 2001.

FBEAP reviews[7] indicate that despite an increase in educational investment 'quality education' remains elusive and concerns about the teacher component of quality education are paramount. This is reflected in the two related regional policy frameworks that have emerged post-2005. The PESDF (2006) calls for teacher capacity building (p7); and, the PEDF (2008) identifies 'Teacher Development' as a priority area (p13). The PEDF which is the current primary guiding regional policy framework makes the first real attempt to qualify what it means by 'quality' teachers underscoring competence and commitment of teachers and school heads as critical attributes of quality teachers (p8).

> There is a substantial body of research internationally which affirms that quality education is not possible without quality teaching. Teachers are at the heart of every education system, and plans and strategies for the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers are central elements of the process and dynamic of achieving goals and targets relating to quality, access and equity in education (Ibid, p13).

While FBEAP had previously alluded to the need for quality teachers, it made generic reference to 'ideal' rather than 'quality' teachers (PIFS 2001FEDA.03) stating that

> Ideal teachers are competent and confident in the content and methodology of their subject, are positive in their attitudes towards themselves, their students, their profession and community, and can communicate with students effectively in the language of instruction. This ideal - which

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[4] Classes 7 and 8 Teachers were the target beneficiaries of this project.
[5] See http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/home.html for country reports on EFA beginning with BELS in the 1990s.
[6] See Chapter 3 *Broadening Opportunities for Development and Training*
[7] Annual reviews were conducted over the 2002 – 2007 period. The 2008 review resulted in the drafting and endorsement of a new look regional policy 'Pacific Education and Development Framework' 2009 – 2015.

requires a high standard of appropriate training - is based on the belief that teachers are the most important factor in the provision of quality and meaningful education (p18).

Noticeable in the PEDF is a significant change in language from 'this ideal' to a more purposeful goal-oriented approach to 'investing' in the development of 'quality' teachers. In addition to a general call for investment to improve teacher quality through in-service and pre-service education at all levels of education (p13), there is specific concern about the training and education, and remuneration of early childhood care givers and teachers (p6); deployment and retention of teachers in rural areas (p7). Also recommended is the conceptualization of both Pacific Teacher Education Models and Pacific pedagogies given that *"Teacher education is still heavily influenced by colonial mindsets. Pacific pedagogies need to be developed and encouraged. Aid dependency is still very strong in the pre service training of teachers* (p13). Further to this, fourteen strategic approaches are emphasized as key to improving the quality of teaching in PICs.

1. Upgrading of pre-service training programmes, staffing and resources at national and regional training institutions;
2. Formalization of induction for beginning teachers;
3. Upgrading programmes for partially trained teachers;
4. Development of sustainable programmes of in-service education based on country needs Analyses;
5. Development of innovative pedagogic strategies using ICT and distance learning;
6. Enhancing the professional status of teaching;
7. Further development of professional standards of practice;
8. More selective recruitment of teacher trainees;
9. Development of viable Pacific teacher education models that link theory, practice and research;
10. Development of initiatives to incorporate indigenous approaches to teacher education;
11. Strengthening of existing national data bases to generate teacher supply and demand projections;
12. Planning and prioritization of sector wide programs for the training of all untrained teachers;
13. Improved coordination and communication between ministries of education and teacher training institutions; and, the,
14. Development of regional protocol for teacher recruitment (Adapted from PEDF 2008, p14).

Selected Scholarly Writing on Teacher Education 1990 - 2010

Much of the scholarly Pacific writing on education in the 1980s and 1990s focused on the resourcing of education, the need to decolonize education systems and the over-emphasis on content-full and examination-driven examination systems[8]. While there has been much discussion on the need to develop and *sustain* 'relevant' education systems and teacher training in the Pacific, the context of 'colonial mindsets' and the politics of Aid-relationships (Baba, 1987; Nabobo, 2001; Thaman 1990, 1991) of the

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[8] See for example the works of Konai HeluThaman, 'Ana MauiTaufeu'ungaki, Francis Mangubhai, Tupeni L. Baba, Akhila N. Sharma, Teweiariki Teaero, Unaisi Nabobo, M. Bray, R. Murray Thomas and others.

prevalent post-colonial reality has emerged as an ongoing challenge. In an early work, Taufe'ulungaki lamented that the will for change was strong but limited by the recognition that,

> ... to revolutionize our entire system from its structure, to its administration, to its curricular, to its training, to its goals requires capital and professional expertise; neither of which was [is] available in any of the small countries in the region [Pacific]. To continue to maintain colonial practices was emotionally abhorrent, but any major change was equally unaffordable (pp. 88–9).

In 1990, a comparative review of teacher education in fifteen countries within the Asia-Pacific region found that quality education and teacher preparation had been a frequent topic of discussion at all levels of education (APEID, 1990). Teacher Education defined in that review as comprising *"both pre-service and in-service programmes which adopt both formal and/or non-formal approaches. It is a continuing process which focuses on teacher career development"* (p2). Worthy of note is the distinction of the changing role of teachers highlighting a necessary shift from *'traditional teacher'* (emphasizing older philosophies of teaching, learning and education) against the *'modern teacher'* (cognizant of teachers as change agents, futures-thinking, globalization, ICT and the like).[9] That review echoes the central role of professional training of teachers and support services through both non-formal and in-formal education methods and distance education in order to bring about career-long professional development of teachers (p21).

Around the same time Singh (1991) presented an insightful link between the *'will-to-change'* and teacher quality in education reform for the 21st Century in the Asia-Pacific region. He further highlighted the critical role of teachers in reorienting education. The latter is notably missing in the Pacific education discourse at that time which was focused on more basic national driven reform for system-based curriculum change from a colonial model to a locally driven Pacific model of education in the region. Interestingly, the conversation about the critical role of focused national efforts to improve teacher quality and conditions were also on-going in New Zealand evidenced in the 1998 New Zealand Education Forum that was critical of government intervention and its inability to address teacher quality, teacher supply, teacher shortages, remuneration and conditions. It highlighted the need to revisit national objectives for teacher education and teacher recruitment.

In the region around that time, primary concerns in education mirrored development and economic growth human resource capacities in the pre-FBEAP period. Similarly, in other parts of the world discussions about the importance of sharing teacher narratives emerged around this time[10] but it was not until 2008 that a publication titled 'Pacific Educational Journeys' attempted to document trainee teachers,

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[9] De La Cruz & Paik 1988, in APEID 1990, p18.
[10] See for example Riggs & Serafin. 1998 'Classroom based Narrative'

teachers and teacher educators educational stories and teaching philosophies (Nabobo-Baba, Houma & Veramu, 2008). Nabobo (2008) provides a useful summary of Pacific educational discourse coining what she terms the 'relevance movement' (p205) which is defined as that shift in thinking

> …when Pacific Island countries began relooking at their curriculum in schools in an attempt to make education more relevant to local contexts. At the same time ideological colleges in the region were talking about 'a coconut theology' based on the same philosophical underpinnings – a de-colonising agenda (p220).

In a review of secondary teacher education in Fiji, Tuinamuana (2002) presented a troubling picture of teacher education at the University of the South Pacific. She found that there was a general absence of a teacher education philosophy arguing that documents articulated"… *vague references to quality* [but] *TE programs at USP appear*[ed] *to exist without an overarching, articulated philosophy"* (In Tuinamuana et.al 2006, p327). A teacher educator at the University is cited in that study*: "We have little things written in our handbook. I think the same kind of thing we also do – prepare quality teachers, but we do not know what we mean by quality teachers"* (p328). This was seen as problematic given that USP through the School of Education began offering training of secondary school teachers when it first opened in 1968 in the form of a three year diploma followed by an in-service Bachelor of Education in 1975 for Diploma holders. Over this period, distance teacher education via print mode was initiated to service students in rural and remote areas and more specifically in-service, in-country students (Tuinamuana et.al, 2006; Sharma, 2009). Despite much discussion on Pacific educational needs and challenges apparent in the writing that had emerged over the 1970s – 1990s, Tuinamuana's findings suggested that thirty years of focused teacher education had not evolved into an overarching philosophy of teacher education at USP. In a later study, she reiterates the mimicry of 'western' models of education and schooling and the dominance of the *techno-rational paradigm* in teacher education of what she calls *"routinized practice"* (Tuinamuana 2007, p119). In this perspective, the teacher as implementer rather than agent-of-change is relegated to going through the motions of monotonous rote learning classrooms and the teaching role is diminished to that of mechanized 'technician'.

Reflective thinking about Teacher Education emerged more significantly through the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) which began in 2004 on the recommendation of FBEAP. Funded by the European Union and New Zealand Aid the project was designed to facilitate in-country reform to improve the quality of basic education. Teacher training and development was a critical component of this initiative. In December 2005, a PRIDE Pre-service teacher education workshop was held in Apia, Samoa bringing together teacher educators and representatives from the various teacher training institutions in the region. That workshop provides a number of valuable considerations including the need to consider post-colonial and post-modern theory to address the evident tensions between the

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global push in teacher education and local needs. Participants highlighted the critical need to revisit indigenous ideas and knowledges in the teacher education discourse and were mindful of the fact that the over-emphasis of global perspectives perpetuated the 'othering' of Pacific voices in both educational theorizing and more specifically in teacher education. Ten issues were highlighted at that workshop[11].

1. Need for values-based, futures-thinking TE utilizing a problem-solving approach;
2. Refocusing on students learning needs and changing contexts i.e. teachers need to "catch up" to the ICT savvy of their students;
3. Local knowledge and wisdom should be reflected in content and pedagogy;
4. Emphasis on the training of Teacher Educators to provide quality TE;
5. Need to reconceptualise pre-service TE models;
6. Improving quality delivery of TE;
7. Importance of managing in-service TE nationally;
8. General need for reform to improve the quality of TE;
9. Need to improve research capacity of teacher educators; and,
10. The importance of transformative research and theorizing of education and TE.

Nabobo-Baba (2006) summarizes the key questions raised by teacher educators at that workshop.

- *How can and how should we respond to elements of economic and cultural globalisation in these 'new times'?*
- *What local ways can we use to critique, debate, examine, question, reflect upon and engage with global/transnational/regional and North–South/East–West flows of capital, knowledge, personal expertise and discourses?*
- *How can we as Pacific communities, educators and teacher educators engage in a strategic repositioning to meet the challenges of 'new times' head on?*
- *Further questions may include:*
- *What are we changing and for whom?*
- *Who are making the decisions?*
- *Where are we getting our ideas from?*
- *We may need IT, but of what type and for what purpose?*
- *How much IT can we really afford?*
- *Who is in control?*
- *Who is setting the pace for reform?*
- *What are we doing with our languages and cultures? (pp.77-8).*

That same year similar views emerged from a Fiji based case-study on *'Teacher Education for the Future'* (Tuinamuana, Burnett, Dorovolomo & Koya Vaka'uta, 2006). That study examined in-service teachers' perceptions of the challenges in teacher education in Fiji with an emphasis on the aims of

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[11] See Nabobo-Baba, 2006 'Teacher Education for New Times: Reconceptualizing Pedagogy and Learning in the Pacific'

education, teacher practice and futures-thinking in Teacher preparation. The three main findings were that (1) teacher education needs to be more responsive to globalisation and change; (2) a general view that more holistic values-based approaches was critical; and, (3) differing perceptions of the 'child' were apparent highlighting *"tensions between younger and older teachers, new graduates and head teachers/principals"* (p335).

Puamau (2007) reflects on the PRIDE project and reiterates the post-colonial reality of education and teacher education in PICs. She argues that there is a prevalence of 'copycat' mentality in which PICS attempt to 'mimic' educational systems in metropolitan countries from *"curricula, pedagogies, approaches, assessment methods continue to be derived from the west, to the extent that western theories of learning and teaching, psychology and assessment permeate teacher education institutions in the Pacific"* (p82). The tenacious nature of Aid relations is seen as a double edged sword providing critical financing of education while maintaining a hegemonic Western education system that marginalizes indigenous knowledge systems. She argues *"Teacher education institutions and schools have not valued indigenous epistemologies or the culture and value systems of Pacific children…The need for a culture sensitive pedagogy in teacher education programmes is critical"* (Ibid).

The most comprehensive study on teacher education conducted in the region was a desktop review on 'Teachers and Education' jointly funded by the Asia Development Bank and AusAid (Manu, Fua & Tagivakatini, 2008). Eleven core findings are presented to stimulate further informed discussion to better *"understand the significant relationship between teachers and education in the Pacific"* (p83). The authors argue that despite efforts in educational reform, *"much work remains in developing teacher education curriculum, pedagogy, programs, staff capacity and support resources for teacher education"* (ibid).

1. Need to identify practices and understandings that will best inform policies to improve the performance of teachers;
2. A research-based approach to developing evidence-based policies specific to teachers;
3. The quality of teachers in terms of (a) in-service and pre-service training; (b) untrained and uncertified teachers; and (c) improving the capacity of national teacher training institutions;
4. Inadequate Teacher supply and teacher: student rations;
5. Lack of up-to-date accessible data to forecast the demand for teachers;
6. The need to revisit language policies and in particular to re-value Pacific languages as a medium of instruction;
7. Lack of teaching resources and teacher-aid materials;
8. Strengthening of stakeholder approaches and soliciting community support at the school level;
9. Teacher recruitment and the need for quality teacher trainees;
10. Teacher salary and work conditions; and,

11. Disparate proportion of gender in the teaching profession with as much as 70% female teachers at the primary school level in some PICs (Adapted from Manu et.al, pp82-3).

Futures-thinking Teacher Education

The beginning of the 21st Century heralded the call for a rethinking of teacher education in the Pacific spurred on in particular by the FBEAP, 2001, PRIDE Project 2004 – 2010 and the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative *for* and *by* Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP). RPEIPP[12] stands out as the single anti-colonial voice which demands Pacific educators take a more reflective and responsive approach to re-thinking, reflecting, researching and praxis. It calls for the development of critical mass towards a new conscientization (Friere, 1970) in which Pacific peoples stopped looking to the outside for solutions and instead reassessed their own responsibility and commitment to educational reform.

If Pacific educators are inclined towards a futures-thinking teacher education, it follows that serious critical reflection and theorizing is necessary. Thaman (2004) provides her vision of education and alludes to her position on Pacific pedagogical components of teacher education.

> My vision of a responsible Pacific society therefore is one in which Pacific people are able to learn and benefit from their own cultural values and beliefs, knowledge and understandings, and wisdom; where teachers use culturally appropriate methods of teaching, including teaching in a language that students can understand, and recognizing the importance of context specific learning (Thaman 2004, p11).

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In a later work, she posits a number of key assumptions that are significant to this critical reflection and theorizing and provide the context in which such deliberations take place. The somewhat disheartening reality of teacher education in the islands is premised on her observations spanning over forty years of experience in the field.

1. The lack of competence of prospective teachers;
2. Low levels of intellectual and academic skills of teacher trainees;
3. An over-emphasis on content of the school curriculum, in many teacher education programs;
4. Teacher education replicates secondary school education in its emphasis on subjects;
5. General failure of teacher education to develop teachers' pedagogical skills;
6. Poor teacher motivation often translates into teacher absences, indifferent classroom practices; and early departure from the profession (Adapted from Thaman 2007, p2).

She argues that *"increasing globalization of the workforce"* (p6) had led to a 'brain drain' of qualified Pacific teachers and further acknowledges that although many countries recognize *"the need to develop competency frameworks for the accrediting of teacher education programs"* (p5), that *"the provision of*

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[12] RPEIPP was founded in 2000 by Professor Konai Helu Thaman, UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education and Culture; Dr. Kabini Sanga New Zealand Based Solomon Island Academic, and Dr. 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki the then Director of Institute of Education, USP and now Minister for Education, Women and Culture, Tonga.

pedagogic training for higher education personnel is a relatively new development in most countries" (p4). This highlights the need for wider awareness on teacher education philosophy as highlighted by Tuinamuana (2002) and pedagogical content of teacher education. In one futures-thinking approach Sharma (2009) emphasizes the importance of teacher via distance mode using a blended approach taking into consideration ICT resources and challenges in targeted USP member countries. He is cognizant of the growing ICT access and literacies of the 21st Century and argues for an *"ICT-driven flexible learning"* (p13) and calls for the development of ICT pedagogies.

Pacific Teacher Standards for the 21st Century

Seven years after the endorsement of the first regional education policy, talks had moved to the need for standards and in 2008, the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment presented the UK Teacher Standards Policy to FEDMM. Education ministers tasked the SPBEA working group to collaborate with the UNESCO Pacific Office to consult with countries and to draft regional standards in line with regional and international Practice (PIFS (09) FEDMN.11, p3). While the meeting paper suggests that the ensuing recommended standards were developed on the basis of region wide consultation which required ministries of education to rank a list of standard descriptors, the submission indicates otherwise. The report presented shows an overwhelming 98% similarity to the UK (2007) *'Professional Standards for Teachers: Why Sit still in your career?'* The 2% differential is due to the addition of 22 words[13] inserted primarily for grammatical flow rather than content differentiation. Additionally, where the original document refers to '*learners and young people',* this is replaced with *'students'* in 14 instances in the SPBEA document (Koya, 2012). Also significant is the blatant disregard and disconnect to the FBEAP and the PEDF which provide the vision for Pacific Education assumed to be the guiding documents for any such teacher standards framework. The two policy documents provide a strong basis for the development of Pacific teacher standards calling in to question the decision to replicate the UK standards.

FBEAP 2001 Meeting papers (PIFS 2001FEDA.03, pp23-4) comprises the *Report Of The Technical/Vocational Taskforce on Education And Training in the Pacific Region* (PIFS(01)FEDA.13). Subsection 12.6 of states:

> 12.6 Towards Enhancing Professionalism in Teaching that enhances professionalism in teaching, whereby the profession is guided by the ethos, standards and ethics of the profession itself, be promoted as a long-term goal for enhancing teachers' capacity for managing changes and their identity as teachers (p24).

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[13] 22 of a total of 1223 (2%)

It is therefore disconcerting to find that nowhere in the SPBEA Teacher standards document is there an indication of who a 'Pacific' Teacher ought to be and or, reference to Pacific teacher philosophy or Pacific pedagogies which are emphasized in the PEDF that calls for the *"development of viable Pacific teacher education models that link theory, practice and research…* [and] *initiatives to incorporate indigenous approaches to teacher education"* (p13).

In the following FEDMM held in 2010, SPBEA presented *'An update on the development and implementation of teacher and principal standards'* (PIFS (10) FEDMM.06) attempting to link the *'proposed'* standards to PEDF. The 2010 update maintains that the original 2009 version (duplicated on the UK standards) as the foundational guide.

> The Pacific Regional Standards for Teachers adopted at the FEdMM in 2009 was used as the working document for the workshop focusing on developing a set of key performance indicators for each standard statement (expectation) which would help in the monitoring of teachers" performance in each standard (p3).

What is problematic is that the template for assessing and monitoring teacher performance is similarly disconnected from 'Pacific' and 'Indigenous' knowledges and contexts in that if read in isolation, holds no signpost that indicate this is a regional Pacific document and could just as easily be a set of guiding principles for any region or state in the world. This further exemplifies the prevalant 'copycat' mentality (Puamanu, 2007; Tuinamuana, 2007). Most recently at the 2012 FEDMM held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, the UNESCO presented *'Pacific professional standards for School Principals'* (PIFS (12) FEdMM.04). It is not surprising that the same issues of de-contextualization are evidenced in the suggested standards for principals.

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Where to from here?

The future of Pacific education and teacher education is fraught with internal challenges of vulnerability and limited resources exacerbated by ongoing post-colonial power-relations with Aid agencies and colonial mindsets. Coupled with the innate desire to keep up with the global trends in education and the quest for comparability, the need for research-based, futures-thinking sustainability-driven educational reform is critical. As Thaman (2007) aptly surmises,

> A lot remains to be done in relation to improving teacher education and development in PINs. One of the obstacles to our work relates to the lack of timely information about the status of teachers and teacher education in many PINs. There is currently a move by those responsible for teacher education and development in the region, to plan a major research project for possible funding by donors, address some of the gaps in our knowledge of teachers, their status and training as well as Pacific communities perceptions of teachers and their work in schools and communities. This should go a long way towards improving teacher policies and ultimately the quality of education in Pacific schools (p10-11).

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