



Integration of creative learning through arts and culture education in primary schools

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ABSTRACT

Learning in schools needs to support student development, especially critical and innovative thinking skills. This research focuses on the integration of creative learning through cultural arts subjects in primary schools. Barriers, curriculum inflexibility and limited resources are the background of this research. A holistic and in-depth discussion of the analysis results was conducted using a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The results show that the practice of making damar kurung, exploring dance movements, performing drama art, and arranging simple songs, effectively supports student development, including cognitive dimensions, innovation, and problem solving.

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1. Introduction

Creative learning is becoming increasingly important in the current era, where critical and innovative thinking are essential skills for the younger generation. In the era of globalization and technological development, creativity is a very important skill for students. The development of creativity is a key for students in training students to think critically and innovatively to face challenges in life. This skill will be optimal if trained since entering elementary school age where at this level students will get basic education to form a good personal character. Basic education is a crucial foundation for developing these skills, where the integration of creative learning can help students think critically and innovatively. Student skill development can be fostered through academic and non-academic activities. However, in practice, basic education does not highlight creative skills such as problem-solving, collaborative and innovation. Based on research by Brown, L., & Thompson, R. 2021. The Impact of Arts Integration on Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. Educational Research Review, the integration of arts and culture only focuses on students' social-emotional problems (Brown, L., & Thompson 2021). This research is still limited to social-emotional problems so there is a need for a broader review of integrating creative skills. This research aims to present a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of creative learning through cultural arts subjects at the primary school level. In addition, this research will highlight the practices, experiences and perceptions of teachers and students related to the implementation.

The development of student skills requires learning methods that are able to increase student engagement, creativity and understanding in the context of basic education. In this case one of the subjects that can support the existence of such learning activities is the subject of Cultural Arts. As stated by Brown and Thompson, art has a significant positive impact on



student learning outcomes, especially in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Brown, L., & Thompson 2021). Cultural Arts subjects naturally facilitate creative expression and cultural understanding, and support students' cognitive and emotional development. The focus of creative learning is on educational approaches that encourage students to have the ability to think innovatively, reflectively and originally through experimental and exploratory activities. This is in line with the Arts and Culture curriculum which offers great opportunities for students to explore ideas, as well as express or express ideas through music, dance, theater and visual arts. These activities allow students to combine academic concepts with in-depth creative experiences, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Arts and culture subjects have unique characteristics and provide wider opportunities for student self-exploration than other subjects. These advantages are strong reasons for making arts and culture subjects as an alternative to developing students' creative abilities through integrating their characteristics in learning. This process helps them connect theory with practice, improve their understanding of various subjects, and enrich their cultural insights. Moreover, involvement in cultural arts also plays an important role in the development of social and emotional skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and self-confidence, which are essential for students' holistic growth. Thus, cultural arts not only enrich students' learning experience but also contribute to providing a new approach in integrating creative learning that includes cognitive, innovation and problem-solving dimensions. This study expands the focus of research previously limited to social-emotional by offering an exploration of holistic insights to enhance students' creative learning in basic education. The integration of creative learning through the Arts and Culture subject in Elementary Schools/*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* will indirectly ensure that the learning process is targeted and achieves the desired outcomes. Creative learning through Arts and Culture can enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Students involved in creative learning tend to demonstrate a deeper understanding and the ability to apply knowledge in broader contexts (Duma and Silverstein 2018). Duma's statement substantiates that the choice of Arts and Culture as a subject is appropriate for the integration of creative learning in Elementary Schools/*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*.

In practice, the integration of creative learning in the Arts and Culture subject faces various challenges, such as inadequate professional support, limited resources, and insufficient understanding among teachers regarding methods and their impacts. These challenges are often exacerbated by a lack of adequate training for teachers, resulting in their lack of confidence in implementing creative learning strategies in the classroom. Additionally, budgetary constraints in schools are a significant barrier, hindering the provision of necessary tools and materials to support meaningful Arts and Culture activities. On the other hand, inadequate educational policies and low appreciation for the value of the Arts and Culture subject in the curriculum further complicate the implementation of this integration. Therefore, more systematic and targeted efforts are needed to address these barriers. This could include continuous teacher training, provision of adequate resources, and adjustments in educational policies to allow for greater scope for creative learning. Consequently, the integration of Arts and Culture can be effectively implemented in elementary schools or *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, providing significant positive impacts on students' cognitive, emotional, and social development. Based on the above discussion, the implementation of creative learning through Arts and Culture still faces various challenges, such as insufficient professional support for teachers, limited resources, and a lack of understanding of how to effectively measure the impact of this integration. This article aims to explore the process of integrating creative learning through Arts and Culture in elementary schools and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, and to provide recommendations for the development of more effective and comprehensive teaching practices. The article can serve as a guide to ensure that creative learning is implemented in a manner that positively impacts student development.

2. Method

The writing of this article uses a library research method with a descriptive approach in presenting the results of the analysis. The qualitative method with a descriptive approach was chosen to understand and describe in depth how cultural arts lessons are integrated in the creative learning process in elementary schools. This qualitative descriptive approach is very suitable for the study of art education because it aims to provide a clear description of participants' experiences in their natural context without requiring complex interpretations or in-depth theory development (Ayton 2023). This method allows the researcher to focus on the 'what' aspect of the phenomenon, making it effective in providing insight into the implementation of creative learning integration through cultural arts lessons. Using this approach, this research aims to present a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of creative learning through cultural arts subjects at the primary school level. In addition, this research will highlight the practices, experiences and perceptions of teachers and students regarding the implementation. Data collection techniques in writing this article include participatory observation and document analysis. Participatory observation is conducted by directly observing how arts and culture integration is implemented in creative learning in the classroom. This process involves observing the interaction between teachers and students, the use of creative media and tools, and students' responses to cultural arts activities. During the learning process, the researcher will analyze group dynamics, such as collaboration between friends, student achievement, and the level of student creativity in doing the assigned tasks. Data collection from observations was carried out using field notes and some documentation obtained. Meanwhile, document analysis is conducted by reviewing various relevant documents to understand how cultural arts are integrated into the curriculum, how the process of planning and implementing learning is carried out, and how student achievement is measured. Document analysis is an invaluable research tool as it allows tracking changes and developments over time. This technique is also important for capturing historical and contemporary data on phenomena or situations that may be difficult to observe directly (O'leary and Hunt 2014). In addition, data processing was done by transcribing the observations. Thus, the combination of participatory observation and document analysis will provide a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of integrating cultural arts into creative learning.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Teachers' Understanding of Creative Learning

Most teachers understand the concept of creative learning as an approach that allows students to be more active, innovative, and engaged in the learning process. They recognize that this approach not only enriches students' learning experiences but also helps develop critical and creative thinking skills that are essential for their future. However, there is variation in how teachers apply this approach in the classroom, influenced by various factors such as personal understanding, educational background, and availability of resources. Some teachers are already accustomed to integrating creative elements such as visual arts projects, dance, music, and drama into their teaching. They tend to be more confident in providing students with the space to explore, experiment, and find creative solutions to the problems they encounter. These teachers often utilize innovative methods such as project-based learning or thematic learning that integrates the arts with other subjects. Such innovative methods have proven successful in enhancing student engagement and inspiring teachers to adapt to more flexible and interactive teaching approaches (Garcia, M., & Phillips 2023).

However, there are still teachers who tend to adhere to traditional teaching methods that are more teacher-centered, where the teaching process is dominated by lectures and more structured activities. These teachers may feel uncomfortable with the uncertainties often associated with creative learning, such as more dynamic classroom management or unpredictable learning outcomes. They may also face challenges in designing and

implementing effective creative activities, especially if they have not received adequate training in creative teaching methods (Johnson, K., & Mitchell 2021). As a result, the integration of creative learning in the classroom becomes uneven, and students in these classes may not receive learning experiences that fully harness their potential. Therefore, it is crucial for schools and educational institutions to support these teachers with the necessary training, resources, and support to develop their skills and confidence in effectively implementing creative teaching approaches. Creating an engaging learning environment is important for teachers. Their attitudes and methods can significantly influence students' interest in the arts and promote skills that enhance creativity. A supportive atmosphere encourages students to explore artistic expression and cultural heritage (Maria 2015).

3.2. Creative Learning Integration Practices

The integration of Arts and Culture into creative learning is carried out through various activities designed to blend artistic elements with local cultural heritage, creating rich and meaningful learning experiences for students. For example, students may be invited to create artwork based on local cultural themes, such as drawing traditional batik patterns from their region or crafting simple carvings inspired by traditional art. Additionally, in the field of dance, students are encouraged to experiment by combining modern dance movements with elements of traditional dance, resulting in performances that not only showcase their creativity but also preserve the cultural values passed down through generations.

Drama performances adapted from folktales also play a crucial role in this approach, where students not only practice acting skills but also learn to understand and convey the moral messages embedded in these stories. Through these activities, students are introduced to the richness of local culture while being encouraged to think critically and creatively, solve problems, and collaborate with their peers to produce meaningful work. They learn to connect academic knowledge with artistic expression, making the learning experience more comprehensive and profound.

However, there are significant gaps in the implementation of this method. Some teachers find it challenging to manage a more dynamic and interactive classroom, especially if they are not accustomed to more open and flexible approaches. They may lack confidence in guiding students through the creative process or face difficulties in maintaining classroom discipline when students are given freedom to express themselves. Additionally, a lack of adequate resources, such as art materials or traditional musical instruments, can also be a barrier to effectively implementing creative learning. This aligns with the statement by Roberts and Green, who note that limitations such as inadequate resources, lack of teacher training, and pressure from a dense curriculum can hinder the implementation of creative learning processes (Roberts, D., & Green 2020). These challenges highlight the need for greater support for teachers, including training, resources, and pedagogical guidance, so that they are better prepared and capable of integrating Arts and Culture into creative learning more effectively and comprehensively.

3.3. Implementation of Creative Learning Integration through Arts and Culture Lessons in Learning in Primary Schools/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Arts and Culture education has proven effective in fostering student creativity. This model allows students to directly engage in solving real-world problems, integrating new knowledge through experiential learning (Fujiawati, Permana, and Roekmana 2020). The implementation of integrating creative learning through the Arts and Culture subject in Elementary Schools/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah involves four main areas: visual arts, drama, music, and dance. The following is a description of the implementation process.

- Fine Art; In the implementation of integrating creative learning through fine art, students can create a works of art painting on lampion namely *Damar kurung*. The stages are as follows.

- At this stage, the teacher introduces students to the visual arts activity of creating *damar kurung*. The lesson begins with an introduction to the history and origins of *damar kurung*. Students are also invited to discuss the cultural significance and traditions associated with the use of *damar kurung* in Gresik, East Java, Indonesia. Subsequently, students are divided into small groups and begin preparing the various media required to create simple *damar kurung*.
- Basic Skills Development, at this stage, the teacher explains how to create *damar kurung* to the students. This explanation is accompanied by a video showing the process of making *damar kurung*. Afterward, the teacher guides the students in starting the construction of the basic framework for *damar kurung* using ice cream sticks or bamboo. The process begins with measuring and cutting the ice cream sticks and then assembling them to ensure proper proportions.
- Guided Practice, next, students begin decorating the *damar kurung* covers by drawing scenes from folktales, daily life, or festive celebrations. At this stage, students are given the freedom to express themselves in decorating the *damar kurung* and incorporating various story ideas onto the paper, with ongoing guidance from the teacher. Students may also be encouraged to create a digital presentation about the *damar kurung* creation process, including photos and short videos that capture the different stages of production
- Exhibition, once the *damar kurung* is completed, a mini exhibition is held in the classroom or school environment. Students also have the opportunity to present their *damar kurung* directly to the school community, explaining the artwork they have created and the stories or meanings behind it.
- Explanation of the Implementation Process, the activity of creating *damar kurung* serves as a vital educational tool aimed at introducing students to the importance of preserving and valuing local culture. Through this creative endeavor, students are provided with the opportunity to delve into local traditions and heritage, fostering an understanding and appreciation of these cultural elements. During the design phase of the *damar kurung* framework, which is integral to the overall creation of the artwork, students are introduced to the significance of precision in measurement. This aspect of the process not only contributes to the production of high-quality work but also underscores the interdisciplinary nature of art, demonstrating that proficiency in areas such as mathematics is essential for successful artistic creation. Furthermore, the detailed process of drawing on the *damar kurung* cover plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' motor skills, critical thinking, and creative abilities. Engaging in activities such as drawing, coloring, and cutting paper for the *damar kurung* not only improves hand-eye coordination—an essential skill for writing and other daily tasks—but also cultivates students' ability to express their ideas, emotions, and imagination through visual art. This experience encourages students to consider the messages they wish to convey through their artwork, prompting them to reflect on how their images can tell a story or communicate a specific narrative or idea. The integration of these creative tasks within the curriculum thus supports the holistic development of students, equipping them with both the technical skills and the expressive capacities necessary for their academic and personal growth.

3.4. Drama

In the implementation of integrating creative learning through drama, students can create a mini-drama based on local folktales. The stages are as follows.

- Determination of Learning Activity Themes, this activity begins with the teacher introducing several local folktales relevant to the area, such as "*Timun Emas*" or "*Malin Kundang*." Subsequently, the students are divided into groups, with each group selecting one folktale to present.
- Development of Basic Skills, this stage introduces students to basic acting skills, specifically expressing sadness and happiness. Afterward, the students are assigned to

portray characters from the story. They then practice acting out their assigned characters with guidance from the teacher.

- **Guided Practice**, at this stage, students rehearse in groups according to their respective stories, with the process being guided by the teacher. **Performance**: In this stage, students perform a mini-drama that has undergone rehearsal and guidance from the teacher. During the performance, the teacher also conducts individual and group assessments.
- **Explanation of the Implementation Process**, this drama learning activity is meticulously designed to engage students in an immersive and active manner throughout the entire creative process, beginning with the selection of the story and culminating in the final performance. By participating in drama, students are provided with a dynamic platform to explore and learn about folktales and local culture, while simultaneously developing a range of essential skills that extend beyond the classroom. These skills include public speaking, which enhances their ability to articulate thoughts clearly and confidently; teamwork, which fosters collaboration and a sense of shared responsibility; and creative self-expression, which allows them to convey their ideas and emotions in a unique and impactful way.

The stages of script development and role assignment are particularly crucial, as they challenge students to engage in both critical and creative thinking. These stages require students to adapt the chosen story into a format that is not only engaging but also relevant to their experiences, thereby deepening their connection to the material. Through dialogue practice and character development, students gain a profound understanding of the nuances of verbal and non-verbal communication. They learn how tone, body language, and facial expressions can significantly influence the delivery of a message or the portrayal of an emotion, which is a valuable lesson in the power of communication. The drama performance serves as the culmination of this comprehensive learning activity, offering students a platform to showcase the results of their dedication, creativity, and hard work. This final stage is not only a moment of achievement but also an opportunity for students to receive constructive feedback, which is essential for their ongoing growth and development. Through this process, students are able to refine their academic and social skills in a supportive and interactive environment. Moreover, this activity enriches their understanding of art and culture by providing a hands-on experience that connects theoretical knowledge with practical application. In addition to the core components of drama, the integration of creative visual arts within this activity plays a significant role in boosting students' confidence. As they see the tangible results of their creative thinking and artistic skills, students gain a greater sense of self-efficacy and accomplishment. This not only enhances their overall learning experience but also encourages them to continue exploring and developing their creative potential in future endeavors. The holistic nature of this drama learning activity thus serves to nurture well-rounded individuals who are equipped with the cognitive, social, and emotional skills necessary for success in both academic and real-world contexts.

3.5. Music

Implementation of Integrating Creative Music Learning: In integrating creative music learning, students can create a simple music arrangement. The stages are as follows.

- **Theme of the Learning Activity**, at the initial stage, the teacher introduces students to different types of music, including traditional and modern music. For example, the teacher can play the song "*Gundul-Gundul Pacul*" as an example of traditional music, and "*Balonku*" as an example of modern music. Subsequently, students are divided into groups, and each group chooses one type of traditional or modern song from the ones presented earlier.
- **Development of Basic Skills**, in this stage, the teacher introduces a simple method of arranging a song. This involves replacing the lyrics of the song "*Balonku*" with original lyrics created by the students, based on the subject matter theme. For example, the lyrics

"Balonku ada lima, rupa-rupa warnanya, hijau kuning kelabu" might be replaced with *"Suku bangsa di Indonesia, banyak sekali jumlahnya, Papua Jawa Madura,"* and so on. Students are then asked to compose lyrics that fit the melody of the previously selected song and practice singing them together as a group.

- Guided Practice, this phase involves rehearsing a song based on its arrangement until it is committed to memory, complemented by coordinated movements that correspond with the lyrics. This practice is facilitated under the supervision of an instructor.
- Performance: The subsequent stage involves the presentation of each group's work, with assessment conducted by the instructor based on the creativity demonstrated in the arrangement of the song lyrics.
- Explanation of the Implementation Process, the implementation process for integrating creative learning through simple musical arrangements aims to actively engage students in every stage of the music learning experience. The process begins with an introduction to basic types of music, which is crucial for ensuring that students have a sufficient understanding of the musical elements they will arrange. Choosing familiar songs helps students feel more comfortable and confident in completing the task. The division of responsibilities in arranging also teaches students the importance of teamwork. Each group learns to work collaboratively while respecting the ideas and contributions of every team member. Finally, the performance of the arrangements and the post-performance reflection session not only reinforce the students' learning outcomes but also build their confidence in presenting their work to others. Reflection helps students to contemplate their experiences, identify successes and areas for improvement, and extract lessons that will be useful for future learning. The integration of creative learning through the creation of simple musical arrangements enriches students' understanding of music and also develops essential skills such as creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving, which are invaluable for their overall development

3.6. Dance

In the implementation of integrating creative learning in music through the exploration of simple dance movements, the following stages are involved.

- Learning Activity Theme, in the initial stage, students are introduced to simple traditional dances with an animal theme, such as "Ant Dance." Following this, students are divided into groups and select a dance with an animal theme. Each group chooses an animal to portray in their dance.
- Development of Basic Skills, in this stage, the teacher introduces students to dance counts ranging from 1 to 8. The teacher also demonstrates how to explore dance movements based on animals, using a duck as an example. The teacher performs a duck walk with hands on hips and hips swaying from counts 1 to 8. After this, students explore movements with their groups according to the animal they have chosen. Each group must explore at least five distinct movements
- Guided Practice, in this stage, each group practices the movements derived from their exploration of the chosen animal, with guidance and support from the teacher.
- Performance: In this stage, each group presents their explored movements, which are then evaluated by the teacher based on creativity and group cohesion.
- Explanation of the Implementation Process, the implementation process of integrating creative learning in dance with the theme "Exploring Simple Dance Movements" aims to engage students in a creative and expressive dance experience. From the introduction of the theme to the performance, each stage is designed to support the development of dance skills while promoting creativity and collaboration. At the initial stage, the introduction of the theme and discussions provide a solid foundation for students to understand the objectives of the activity. Introducing basic movements equips them with the skills necessary for further experimentation. Movement exploration and creation allow

students the freedom to apply and modify the movements they have learned, stimulating their imagination and innovation. This exploration helps students organize their movements into a coherent form, teaching them about structure and expression in dance. The performance stage provides practical experience and enables students to experience the results of their efforts. Finally, reflection allows students to contemplate their experiences, receive constructive feedback, and celebrate their achievements. Overall, this activity not only develops technical skills in dance but also builds essential skills such as creativity, cooperation, and communication. This integration enriches dance education in an enjoyable and educational way, offering valuable experiences for the holistic development of students.

3.7. Challenges and Implementation

The integration of creative learning through arts and culture in elementary schools (SD/MI) has a significant impact on enriching students' learning experiences and developing essential 21st-century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. However, its implementation requires well-thought-out strategies, appropriate resource support, and active participation from various stakeholders, including teachers, schools, communities, and cultural stakeholders. A key aspect of this implementation is teacher motivation. Some teachers feel less creative, which leads to inadequate training for developing engaging teaching media and methods. They often face challenges in understanding how to adapt their creative approaches to different learning situations, especially in environments that do not fully support creative exploration. These teachers are frequently overwhelmed by dense curricula and academic goals, making it difficult to find time for creative activities. The pressure to meet high academic standards can limit the flexibility of scheduling and space for activities designed to foster students' creativity. This presents a dilemma for educators who wish to promote more innovative learning but are constrained by time limitations and rigid curriculum requirements. Therefore, it is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate arts and culture into the curriculum. Professional development for teachers is a crucial initial step to ensure they can integrate arts and culture with core subjects such as mathematics, science, and language. Eisner argues that this type of training should not only provide teachers with a theoretical understanding of the arts but also equip them with practical skills to implement creative and innovative teaching methods in the classroom (Eisner 2003). Such training supports teachers in fostering creative and effective learning. It is also important to recognize that implementing creative learning integration requires teachers to manage their time efficiently to avoid difficulties in completing their tasks.

In addition to teacher training, providing supportive resources is also a key element in the successful implementation of arts integration. Schools must ensure the availability of adequate facilities, such as art rooms, musical instruments, art supplies, and other media for use in educational activities (Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin 2013) note that efforts to integrate arts and culture into elementary education will be difficult to implement effectively without adequate infrastructure support. These facilities not only provide students with opportunities for creative expression but also help them develop technical skills across various art forms. Arts and culture integration also requires community support and partnerships with cultural institutions. By collaborating with local artists, museums, theaters, and other cultural organizations, we can enrich the curriculum and provide students with more realistic and contextual learning experiences (Corbisiero-Drakos et al. 2021). Davis *et al* found that community involvement in arts education not only deepens students' understanding of their local culture but also connects them with their broader cultural heritage, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and cultural diversity (Gardner 2011). However, this implementation also presents various challenges. One of the greatest challenges is the limited time within an already packed curriculum. Arts and culture integration is often viewed as an add-on that can reduce the time allocated to core subjects such as mathematics and science. To address this, we need

to develop a holistic approach that integrates arts and culture into other subjects, not only enriching the learning experience but also reinforcing students' understanding of the core material. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are also crucial to ensure that the implementation aligns with the established objectives. In addition to academic performance, this evaluation should also include assessments of students' development in creative, social, and emotional skills. asserts that comprehensive assessment tools are necessary to measure the impact of integrating arts and culture, both in terms of academic performance and the development of 21st-century skills. Overall, the implementation of creative learning integration through arts and culture in elementary schools can significantly contribute to students' overall growth. However, success heavily relies on the support of all stakeholders, including the provision of appropriate training and resources, as well as the application of innovative approaches to curriculum design and implementation. Therefore, the integration of arts and culture can be a vital element in creating a stimulating learning environment that supports the development of students' character and capabilities

4. Conclusion

The results of this study show that exploring the process of integrating creative learning through cultural arts in primary schools, as well as developing more effective and thorough learning practices, has proven effective in supporting students' development. This research also has great potential to increase students' engagement and motivation in learning, as well as enriching students' educational experience with a deeper understanding of local culture through the practice of making *damar kurung*, dance movement exploration, drama art performance, and simple song arrangement. However, to achieve optimal results, greater support is needed in terms of teacher readiness, resources, time and curriculum adjustments. Continuous evaluation is essential to monitor students' progress against the applied methods. This monitoring can be obtained through feedback between students and teachers on the arts and cultural activities carried out. The implementation of creative learning integration through cultural arts lessons also requires external support from both the school and the government. This support is needed to provide curriculum flexibility in including arts and cultural elements in lessons, support for art resources and facilities, teacher training, and so on. This integration not only enriches arts and culture education but also contributes to the development of 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration and problem solving among primary school students. In addition, the results of writing this article are expected to be a reference for teachers related to creative learning for elementary school students. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct a deepening of teacher competence in creative learning as well as long-term evaluation of students.

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