

Understanding Socio-Cultural Challenges and Reforms of Pre-Service Teacher Educators in India

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Abstract: *Teachers play a vital role in transmitting culture from one generation to the next, making their role in pre-service teacher education crucial. Future educators need more than just subject knowledge; they must also cultivate critical thinking, moral values, and empathy. These qualities are essential for effectively teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In India, where various social cultures and individuals with differing educational levels coexist, teachers face a range of challenges in the classroom. It is important for teachers to recognize and understand these challenges to work effectively with their students. This paper highlights the educational and sociocultural obstacles teachers face, as well as the proposed remedial strategies to address these issues. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights for policymakers to help them develop strategies and policies aimed at overcoming these challenges and improving the quality of education.*

Keywords: teacher education, cultural diversity, classroom challenges, remedial strategies, educational policy

1. Introduction

Education is a lifelong and dynamic process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions, beginning from early childhood and evolving across the lifespan. (Doharey, Verma, Verma, & Yadav, 2023). Culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, as cited in Saxena, 2018). So, we can say that sociocultural contexts, education functions not only as a means of intellectual advancement but also as a vital mechanism for transmitting cultural heritage, social norms, and collective identities.

Teachers are the medium of transmitting culture from one generation to another generation. So, it is very important in pre-service teacher education. Future teachers need more than just subject knowledge; they must also develop critical thinking, moral values, and empathy. These qualities help them work effectively in classrooms with students from different cultures and backgrounds. Through education, they learn how to understand and respect differences, solve problems together, and support the growth of a fair and caring society.

Communities that prioritise effective educational systems equip their citizens to handle today's issues. Citizens with higher levels of education are better able to participate in debates, make wise choices, and improve society. Ultimately, funding education benefits not just individuals but also the community by strengthening it and making it more adaptable and cohesive in a changing environment.

India is democratic country and all the Indian live together peacefully with varieties of disparity. Teacher is the point of departure to make the unite with various disparities. So, teachers play very essential in bringing them together. The foundation of India's educational system is teacher education and training, which gives teachers the abilities and information needed to influence future generations. It is essential for guaranteeing high-quality education,

encouraging creativity, and meeting the various demands of students nationwide. Pre-service teacher education follows the training that teachers get prior to beginning their careers as educators. Teaching practice is conducted along with theory paper learning during this phase of teacher education programs. The teacher education program needs to be greatly improved. The purpose of pre-service education is to prepare various kinds of instructors. Preparation for pre-service teachers consists of a variety of irrelevant courses and fieldwork.

Although it is crucial, creating a curriculum for pre-service teacher education that is grounded in research is still mostly unexecuted. A curriculum like this is essential for preparing aspiring educators for the cultural variety they would face in actual classroom environments. These programs can better equip instructors to deal with the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviours of their pupils by incorporating cultural knowledge and useful strategies into teacher training. When new teachers are sent to schools with different cultural norms, they learn from the customs and values of those communities in addition to applying their theoretical knowledge. A well-structured, research-informed curriculum would guide them in navigating these differences with confidence and sensitivity. Therefore, including cultural understanding as a core part of teacher preparation is key to building inclusive, respectful, and effective classrooms.

Teachers are supposed to gain more self-confidence and have their learning supported and improved by these programs. In this instance, the new teachers get knowledge from their work as well as from the customs and culture of the school environments in which they are employed and engage with these cultures. As is well known, several social cultures and individuals with varying educational levels coexist and prosper in India. Teachers need to be aware of the various difficulties they encounter when working with pupils. We were able to learn about the different educational and sociocultural obstacles they encounter in this paper, as well as the remedial strategies that have been proposed to address these obstacles. Additionally, this article also assists

policymakers in developing new policies to address these kinds of obstacles.

2. Review of Related literature

Johnson (2006) deal with *The Sociocultural Turn and Its Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education*, explores how L2 teacher education has evolved over four decades in response to changing sociopolitical contexts. The "sociocultural turn" represents a significant shift in how teacher knowledge and learning are understood, emphasizing that human cognition is shaped through participation in social and cultural activities. Johnson challenges the traditional cognitive view of teachers as passive recipients of knowledge, advocating instead for an understanding of teachers as active participants in knowledge construction. She identifies four main challenges introduced by the sociocultural perspective. (1) Johnson reframes the traditional separation of theory and practice as a need for *praxis*—a dynamic interplay between reflection and action within real teaching contexts. (2) Teachers' experiential, context-specific knowledge should be recognized as valid and integral to educational theory. This challenges top-down models and promotes reflective, inquiry-based learning. (3) Professional development should extend beyond formal settings to include informal networks, collaborative inquiry, and self-directed learning, promoting deeper, ongoing teacher learning. (4) L2 teacher education must be responsive to the sociopolitical and socioeconomic realities of local contexts, ensuring relevance, equity, and cultural responsiveness in teacher preparation. Her work contributes a transformative vision of L2 teacher education, one that positions teachers as reflective practitioners capable of shaping and responding to the complexities of their professional contexts.

Upadhyay (2014) This paper explores that socio-cultural impact of globalization in India, highlighting its profound influence on gender inequality, equal opportunities, family structures, and traditional values. It examines how globalization affects gender roles, social security, lifestyle changes, and cultural expressions in India. The study acknowledges the darker side of globalization, such as drug trafficking. While it provides a balanced perspective, further analysis of regional variations and policy implications could enhance its contribution.

Puhan, Malla, and Behera (2014) in their paper "*Current Ethical Issues in Teacher Education: A Critical Analysis on Pre-Service and In-Service Emerging Teachers*", explore the ethical challenges faced in teacher education. The study was conducted in a B. Ed college under Indra Prasta University and included in-service teachers from IGNOU. It looks closely at real-life ethical issues experienced by both pre-service and in-service teachers, with a strong focus on the teacher-student relationship and how ethical behaviour is practiced in everyday teaching. The researchers also examined how pre-service teachers understand ethics and what they expect from their professional responsibilities. Their findings show that the current B. Ed curriculum does not give enough attention to ethics, which they see as a serious gap. As a result, they argue for the inclusion of ethical training in teacher education programs. The paper stresses the importance of teaching ethical philosophy and creating a

formal code of conduct for teachers. According to the authors, these steps are vital not only to improve the quality of teaching but also to create better learning environments. If teachers are better prepared to deal with ethical issues, both they and their students can benefit from more thoughtful and respectful classroom experiences. Overall, the study calls for reforms in teacher education to make ethics a core part of professional development. This, the authors believe, will help shape more responsible, aware, and effective educators.

Chaudhry (2016) critically examines the state of research on teaching and teacher education in India, pointing out several key limitations and offering more thoughtful alternatives. The paper argues that much of the existing research tends to reduce teaching to a set of observable behaviours, ignoring the deeper cognitive, personal, and contextual aspects that influence how teachers teach and how students learn. This narrow focus misses the important mental and interpretative work done by both teachers and learners in the classroom. The study also critiques traditional teacher education programs in India, especially their dependence on lecture-based instruction. It argues that such methods limit teachers' ability to think critically, reflect on their practice, and adapt their teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs. Instead, Chaudhry advocates for preparing "interpretation teachers"—educators who interact actively with content and students, moving beyond simply delivering information. In addition, the paper highlights emerging research trends that pay attention to the lived experiences of novice teachers, particularly during their practicum. These studies aim to understand the real-life challenges and reflections of new teachers, adding depth to teacher education research. Chaudhry emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' varied backgrounds and learning styles, calling for a teaching approach that is more responsive and human-centered. The paper concludes by urging educational reforms that move beyond rigid teaching models and instead support a more reflective, adaptable, and student-focused pedagogy.

Mishra (2018) discusses multiculturalism in India, emphasizing the need to include diverse cultural backgrounds, histories, and perspectives in education to ensure equity and remove barriers for minority students. In India's multi-ethnic and multilingual society, classrooms should reflect this diversity and foster respect, self-esteem, and social harmony. The study highlights the teacher's role in promoting positive attitudes and creating inclusive environments. Effective learning, Mishra argues, requires collaboration and understanding of different perspectives. The paper concludes that incorporating multicultural principles in schools is essential for fostering unity in diversity and building an inclusive education system.

Shah (2019) examines teacher education in India as a continuous process involving both pre-service and in-service training, aimed at enhancing educational quality. The paper advocates for a transformative approach that encourages participatory knowledge-building between teachers and students, aiming to create inspiring and meaningful learning experiences. However, the current system faces serious challenges, including institutional inertia, unequal institutional standards, a widespread quality crisis, and a lack of qualified professionals. Additional problems include

outdated teaching methods, poor technological integration, fragmented skill development, and insufficient planning for scientific manpower. These issues hinder the preparation of effective educators. Shah concludes by calling for urgent, systemic reforms to improve teacher education and support national development through a stronger, more responsive education system.

Irfan (2020) examines socio-cultural and educational factors influencing English language learning in Pakistan. Key factors include family background, socio-economic status, and parental education, with English medium students showing greater parental involvement and exposure to global knowledge. The study highlights the need for curriculum alignment with students' cognitive levels and stresses the importance of parental and teacher support, along with effective communication, in enhancing student motivation and English learning success.

Sulistiyo et al. (2022) examined the emotional identity development of a pre-service EFL teacher during an international practicum in Indonesia. Using reflective diaries and interviews, the study explored how emotions shaped the teacher's professional identity, analyzed through Hargreaves' emotional geography framework. The findings revealed a mix of positive and negative emotions influenced by interactions with students, mentors, and cultural contexts. The research underscores the importance of addressing teachers' emotional experiences in educational settings, advocating for emotional preparedness and cultural sensitivity in teacher education programs.

Obiagu, A. (2022) examines the multifaceted challenges faced by preservice social education teachers in Nigeria, focusing on both their personal development into educators and their efforts to teach social education content. The research is rooted in a sociocultural theoretical framework, emphasizing the importance of contextual and cultural influences on the teacher-becoming process. Utilizing narrative inquiry and observational research methods, the study collects insights from 37 preservice teachers' personal accounts alongside a three-year observational study involving 110 preservice teachers during their teaching practicum across 12 schools. This comprehensive approach offers both depth and breadth in understanding the evolving professional identities and pedagogical challenges faced by the participants.

Masood, Siddiqui, and Arif (2022) explored the challenges faced by pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum, a crucial phase for bridging theory and practice in teacher education. The study highlights that while the practicum offers valuable opportunities for professional growth, many pre-service teachers encounter stress and anxiety due to exam-focused instruction, resistance to modern teaching methods, and a lack of open communication with mentors and administrators. These challenges can leave pre-service teachers feeling isolated and unsure about their future in education. The study aims to identify these barriers and provide recommendations for enhancing teacher training programs to better support and retain novice educators.

Sharma, Mittal, & Zayan (2023) analyse India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's teacher education reform approach, highlighting its inconsistent discourses and complexities. They examine the regulatory norms and standards of the NEP-recommended TE programme, emphasizing the need for a coherent approach to TE reform in India.

Choudhury, Joshi, and Kumar (2023) examine disparities in pre-primary education access in India using data from the 75th round of the National Statistical Office (NSO). The study identifies significant inequalities in preschool participation based on socioeconomic status, gender, caste, and rural-urban divides. Children from disadvantaged communities, particularly Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Muslim households, have lower enrolment rates. Economic conditions and the education level of household heads also influence preschool attendance. The study employs a logit regression model to quantify the impact of socioeconomic factors, and its use of a nationally representative dataset enhances the reliability of the findings. One key issue highlighted is the inadequate role of government-run Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in providing quality early childhood education, leading to increased reliance on private preschools. The research aligns with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which seeks universal pre-primary education by 2030. However, the exclusion of Anganwadi enrolment data may underestimate preschool attendance rates, and the study could benefit from integrating qualitative insights on parental perceptions and challenges in preschool selection. The study does not explore long-term learning outcomes of early childhood education but provides valuable policy recommendations, including increased public investment and improved training for Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), to improve access and equity. Future research should focus on the quality of education and its long-term impact.

Pakpahan, E. M. (2023) study explores the multifaceted challenges faced by English pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum, emphasizing both internal and external factors that affect their performance. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is identified as a demanding task, with pre-service teachers often unprepared for the realities of classroom instruction. Using data collected from three participants through personal diaries and mentor feedback, the research reveals that external challenges such as low student motivation and inadequate teaching facilities significantly impact teaching effectiveness. Simultaneously, internal difficulties, including limited classroom management skills and insufficient language proficiency, also hinder teaching performance. The study highlights the critical need for pre-service teachers to develop awareness of these potential barriers and underscores the importance of targeted preparation and support to improve their teaching readiness. Ultimately, the findings contribute to enhancing instructional practices and teacher education programs for EFL contexts.

Amiruddin (2023) discusses the need for reform in India's teacher education system, highlighting the importance of continuous professional development through both pre-service and in-service training. The paper emphasizes transformative learning, where teachers create environments

that foster active participation in knowledge construction for both students and educators. It identifies key challenges in the system, including institutional inertia, brand inequity, oversupply of institutions, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Other issues include poor integration of skills, mismatched pedagogy, inadequate use of technology, and lack of coordination among stakeholders. The paper concludes by advocating for systemic reforms to improve teacher education quality, emphasizing transformative learning approaches to better prepare teachers for modern classrooms.

Olutoyin, B. O. (2024) investigates that challenges encountered by student teachers during their teaching practice, utilizing a descriptive survey design and questionnaire-based data collection. The findings reveal a significant disconnect between the theoretical knowledge acquired in teacher education programs and its practical application in classroom settings. Student teachers often struggle to implement instructional strategies, manage classroom dynamics, and adapt to the realities of teaching. The research underscores the urgent need for enhanced support systems, including better mentorship, guidance, and practical training within teacher preparation programs. By identifying these core issues, the study aims to contribute to the improvement of teacher education by informing policies and strategies that better equip student teachers for professional success. Ultimately, the paper highlights the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure the effective development of competent and confident future educators.

Wiediantin, Triana, and Elyani (2024) explore the challenges faced by EFL pre-service teachers participating in the Asistencia Mengajar program, a crucial practicum for Indonesian teaching faculty students. The study addresses a gap in literature regarding the lived experiences of pre-service teachers, particularly amid recent curricular reforms aimed at enhancing professional readiness. Through qualitative analysis, the research identifies four major challenges (1) Difficulty in writing lesson plans, a key skill for effective teaching. (2) Struggles with classroom management, particularly with diverse student behaviours. (3) Emotional barriers, including a sense of unpreparedness and teaching-related anxiety. (4) Challenges in building positive relationships with mentor teachers and peers. The paper suggests the need for more structured support, including mentorship and targeted training, to better equip pre-service teachers. It concludes by recommending strengthened preparatory phases in teacher education to boost professional confidence and competence.

Serliana, Utami, and Kamil (n.d.) explore the classroom management challenges faced by pre-service English teachers during their teaching practice. Recognizing the critical role of classroom management in fostering a productive learning environment, the study emphasizes its importance in language education, where student motivation and participation are key. Using qualitative interviews with four English Education students, the study identifies three main challenges: student disrespect, lack of participation, and disruptive behavior. These issues hinder the teaching-learning process, with disrespectful students affecting teacher authority, low

engagement levels impeding comprehension checks, and disruptive behaviors like sleeping during class complicating lesson delivery.

The study highlights the need for enhanced training in both pedagogical knowledge and sociocultural competence to prepare pre-service teachers for the complexities of classroom dynamics and diverse social issues. The findings stress the importance of strengthening teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with practical classroom management strategies, ensuring they are better equipped to navigate challenges and teach effectively.

Rashid et al. (n.d.) examine the challenges faced by pre-service teachers as they transition from theoretical knowledge to practical teaching experiences during their practicum. The study reveals that while the excitement of entering the teaching profession is initially high, it is soon overshadowed by anxiety and difficulties encountered in the classroom. Using a qualitative case study design, the research involved four pre-service ESL teachers who were interviewed and observed twice during their teaching practice. The findings indicate that these teachers struggled significantly with various aspects of teaching, particularly in lesson planning and implementation. A key challenge was their difficulty in following mentor teachers' instructions, especially when it came to differentiating learning activities for students at various levels of proficiency (weak, average, and upper intermediate). The study highlights a crucial issue: the lack of understanding and knowledge in applying effective pedagogical strategies, which impacts their confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. The research emphasizes the need for better preparation and support for pre-service teachers, including stronger pedagogical training, to help them address the complexities of real-world teaching and improve their teaching skills.

Gay and Kirkland (n.d.) highlight the essential role of self-reflection and cultural critical consciousness in improving educational outcomes for students of colour. They argue that teachers must critically examine their beliefs, biases, and practices to foster inclusive, responsive classrooms. However, many teacher education programs fall short in equipping preservice teachers with the skills and experiences needed to engage meaningfully with issues of race and social justice. Prospective teachers often resist critical conversations, confuse culturally responsive teaching with lowered standards, and deflect accountability. To overcome these challenges, the authors advocate for teacher education environments that normalize reflection, encourage peer dialogue, and use experiential tools like role-playing and simulations. They emphasize the importance of instructors modelling multicultural principles and providing continuous support to help students translate reflection into classroom practice. Ultimately, the paper calls for experiential, guided learning to build the reflective and cultural competencies necessary for equitable and effective teaching in diverse classrooms.

Gulati, M., Jain, N., & Jain, M. (n.d.) explores that historical and contemporary policy discourse on teacher education, focusing on the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 for pre-service education. Teacher education in

India has colonial roots, influenced by English models. Established in 1793 by Danish missionaries, post-independence commissions emphasized training importance. The NCTE regulates teacher education, ensuring quality and standards since the 1990s. The JVC aims to improve regulatory mechanisms and emphasize program duration and quality. NEP 2020 recommends addressing disparities in public and private teacher education, implementing a four-year preparation program, empowering states, considering workloads and power dynamics, and fostering synergies.

Serliana, Utami, and Kamil (n.d.) investigate classroom management challenges faced by pre-service English teachers during their practicum, highlighting issues such as student disrespect, low participation, and disruptive behaviour. These challenges impact classroom dynamics and hinder effective teaching. Based on interviews with four English Education students, the study emphasizes the need for stronger teacher training programs that focus on practical classroom strategies. It concludes by calling for enhanced pedagogical and sociocultural training to prepare pre-service teachers for complex, diverse classroom environments and support the development of reflective and responsive educators.

Table 1: Systematic review-based summary for Identified issues in the Pre-service teacher educators

S.no	Research studied by	Dimension of research	Identified issues in the Pre-service teacher educators
1	Upadhyay (2014), Mishra (2018)	Gender Bias	The issue of gender inequality, lack of sensitivity in the curriculum, and limited focus on female perspectives are significant challenges.
2	Choudhury et al. (2023), Mishra (2018), Upadhyay (2014)	Caste & Religion	The issue of disparities in access and treatment of marginalized communities, such as SC/ST and Muslims, is causing exclusion from mainstream education.
3	Choudhury et al. (2023), Gulati et al. (n.d.)	Urban–Rural Bias	The issue of inequity in access to teacher education and early childhood education in rural areas is a significant concern.
4	Upadhyay (2014)	Social Security	The decline of traditional support structures and inadequate protections in educational environments are significant issues.
5	Upadhyay (2014), Mishra (2018)	Lifestyle Changes	The shift in family structures, westernization, and digital distractions are significantly influencing teacher identity and student behavior.
7	Irfan (2020), Obiagu (2022)	Parental Education	The lack of literacy and family support, coupled with a limited home learning environment, is a significant issue.
8	Irfan (2020)	Medium of Instruction	The English-medium policy is disproportionately affecting non-native speakers due to a lack of alignment with their student background.
9	Mishra (2018), Choudhury et al. (2023), Upadhyay (2014)	Equal Opportunity	The issue of inequity is rooted in the absence of inclusive pedagogy across various genders, castes, classes, and regions.
10	Chaudhry (2016), Shah (2019), Amiruddin (2023), Puan et al. (2014)	Curriculum	The curriculum is rigid, outdated, and neglects ethics, with an over-reliance on lectures and insufficient practical alignment.
11	Sulistiyo et al. (2022), Rashid et al. (n.d.), Pakpahan (2023), Wiediantin et al. (2024)	Practicum	Lesson planning difficulties, poor classroom management, weak mentor relationships, and low teaching readiness are common issues in education.
12	Johnson (2006), Gay & Kirkland (n.d.), Obiagu (2022)	Sociocultural	The lack of cultural competence, reflective practices, and integration of sociocultural realities in teaching are significant issues.
13	Sulistiyo et al. (2022), Wiediantin et al. (2024), Rashid et al. (n.d.)	Emotional	The text describes the experiences of individuals experiencing anxiety, emotional stress, and identity confusion during their teaching practice.
14	Puan et al. (2014), Chaudhry (2016)	Ethics	The lack of ethical philosophy and training in education leads to an unclear moral framework for teachers.
15	Sharma et al. (2023), Masood et al. (2022), Amiruddin (2023), Gulati et al. (n.d.)	Systemic	Policy inconsistency, outdated institutions, lack of coordination, and fragmented reforms are contributing factors to the current situation.

Based on a systematic review, some suggested strategies for reforming pre-service teacher education in India have been identified.

- According to Upadhyay (2014) and Mishra (2018), teacher education programs should incorporate gender sensitivity training prior to teaching in order to assist dispel preconceptions and advance equity in the classroom
- Mishra (2018) suggests encouraging an inclusive curriculum that includes female perspectives and a variety of gender experiences.
- Choudhury et al. (2023) and Mishra (2018) recommend designing inclusive teaching methods and content that acknowledge and value the real-life experiences of marginalized communities.
- Gulati et al. (n.d.) and Choudhury et al. (2023) emphasize the need to improve access to teacher education programs in remote and underrepresented areas.
- Choudhury et al. (2023) suggest strengthening public schools in rural areas by increasing investment and distributing resources more fairly, to reduce reliance on private education.
- Choudhury et al. (2023) recommend improving public schools in rural areas by investing more and ensuring better resource distribution, to lessen the need for private education.
- Gulati et al. (n.d.) highlight the importance of preparing teachers with rural immersion experiences and teaching methods that are sensitive to local contexts.
- Upadhyay (2014) suggests including psycho-social support in teacher training programs to help future teachers adjust to cultural changes and lifestyle challenges.

- 9) Mishra (2018) recommends adding life skills and values education to teacher training modules.
- 10) Pakpahan (2023) and Serliana et al. (n.d.) recommend providing enough teaching tools and digital resources during training to create realistic teaching experiences.
- 11) Rashid et al. (n.d.) suggest using technology-supported teaching modules to help address infrastructure challenges.
- 12) Irfan (2020) highlights the importance of involving communities and offering parental literacy programs to improve students' learning outside of school.
- 13) Obiagu (2022) recommends training teachers in using different teaching methods to meet the needs of students from households with limited support.
- 14) Irfan (2020) recommends using multilingual education strategies and encouraging bilingual teaching methods where possible. He also suggests training future teachers in second-language teaching to help overcome communication barriers.
- 15) Choudhury et al. (2023) and Mishra (2018) emphasize the need to establish inclusive policies and monitoring systems to ensure that disadvantaged groups have access to education, remain in school, and receive quality education.
- 16) Puhan et al. (2014) and Chaudhry (2016) suggest redesigning the teacher education curriculum to incorporate ethical training, cultural awareness, and reflective teaching practices.
- 17) Sulistiyo et al. (2022) and Rashid et al. (n.d.) recommend offering structured mentorship, regular feedback, and supervision during teaching practice to help reduce anxiety and build teaching competence.
- 18) Johnson (2006) and Gay & Kirkland (n.d.) suggest including modules on cultural awareness, bias, and equity in teacher training to prepare educators for diverse classroom environments.
- 19) Sulistiyo et al. (2022) recommend incorporating emotional literacy and well-being programs into teacher education to support teachers' personal development and emotional resilience.
- 20) Puhan et al. (2014) suggest introducing formal modules on code of conduct and ethics in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs to guide future teachers in professional behavior.
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