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# Reviews

edited by Philip Barker

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**John Stephenson (ed.), *Teaching and Learning Online: Pedagogies for New Technologies*, Kogan Page, London, 2001. ISBN: 0-7494-3511-9. Softback, xi + 228 pages. £19.99.**

*Teaching and Learning Online* is a collection of seventeen papers divided into six sections. The papers have their origins in an 'expert' seminar held at the International Centre for Learner Managed Learning at Middlesex University, London. The seminar brought together a group of practitioners (academic, training and media) from around the world to consider progress to date and the future of learning and teaching online. For the purposes of the book 'online' is understood to include 'electronic means of distributing and engaging with learning' (ix) and only includes broadcast media to the degree that they overlap with 'the overall internet scenario' (ix). According to the book details of the original seminar are available from <http://www.iclml.mdx.ac.uk/TLonline>. Readers are invited to contribute to online discussion. However, at the time this review was written the Website was unavailable.

Before glancing at the contents of the each of the six sections, it should be noted that the standard of the contributions to this collection is extremely high and, accordingly, it is really impossible to acknowledge all of the valuable points made by the various contributors.

Each of the six sections addresses issues of online pedagogy from a different perspective. Each is preceded by a brief introduction from

the editor that very usefully encapsulates the arguments presented and makes it much easier for the reader to approach selectively the contents of the collection. The six sections are:

- 'From theory to practice: the academics'. This contains three papers primarily concerned with pedagogy. All three take a strongly situated view of the online learning experience as one that can increasingly empower the learner.
- 'Researchers'. This presents two reviews of current research literature on online learning. The first of these, 'Online learning' (Coomey and Stephenson), focuses on case studies while the second 'Making the right connections' (Jackson and Anagnostopoulou), is concerned with the growing body of literature related to online learning environments.
- 'Practitioners'. This is the largest section and contains five papers by well respected workers in the field each reporting on specific aspects of their own experience. These include papers on the role of the tutor in online learning, ('Finding the tutor in post-secondary online learning' (Bonk *et al.*)), issues in facilitating online learning, 'Effective facilitation of online learning' (Mason), and the development of critical skills ('Exploring the development of critical thinking skills through a Web-supported problem-based learning environment' (Oliver)).
- 'Transition'. The two papers in this section

concentrate on issues arising from integrating online learning with more conventional practice. Both papers emphasize the need for commitment and the careful management and structuring of the learning experience. In 'From conventional to distance education' Woodman *et al.* discuss the 'I CARE' system introduced at Middlesex University (p. 154). The acronym and the words it stands for – Introduction, Connect, Apply, Reflect, Extend – are indicative of this emphasis on both commitment and structure.

- 'Designers and producers'. These three papers reflect the concerns and interests of commercial producers with respect to the development of an economically viable online pedagogy. Given the financial pressures on higher education (at least in the UK), these papers provide a valuable perspective from which to view the problem of developing high quality, pedagogically sound learning resources within the prevailing economic constraints.
- 'The Vanguard'. The last two papers in the collection look towards a future in which television and the Internet have become merged in an interactive digital medium that can not only provide access to quality multimedia learning resources, but also give learners considerable power to manage their own learning. In 'Towards an androgogy for living in an information society' Dickinson and Stewart, for example, argue that 'we already have the technology to make e-learning "just for me, just in time"' (p. 205).

This emphasis on learner-managed learning is really the dominant theme of the book. Certainly the vision of the editor's endpiece is of a future in which the learner's independence is absolutely paramount. Although in the introduction Stephenson says that 'it is not assumed . . . that online learning will exist entirely without interaction between teachers and learners or between learners and learners', the vision presented in his conclusion is one in which the teacher, at least as presently understood, has, if not disappeared, certainly changed beyond all recognition. It is a view that for many will not be a welcome one; but, taking this collection as a whole, the case is one that academia should consider seriously. For even if Stephenson's particular view is perhaps a little extreme, it is clear that the future of teaching and learning online is

likely to call for a radically different conception of the roles of both teachers and learners.

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**Ian McGill and Liz Beaty, *Action Learning: A Guide for Professional, Management and Educational Development*, Kogan Page, London, 2001 (2nd edn). ISBN: 0-7494-3453-8. Softback, 262 pages, £22.50.**

*Action Learning* is a practical guide to action learning in continuing professional development, management development and higher education. Described by the authors as a 'how to' book, it aims to be both an introduction to action learning for new users and a manual for facilitators.

The book is organized into three parts: 'Doing action learning'; 'Developing action learning skills'; and 'The uses of action learning'. The reader is encouraged to take a route through the chapters appropriate to his or her needs – I chose the suggested route for 'course organizers and developers in higher education with little knowledge and experience of action learning'. This took me on a non-sequential tour through all the chapters in Parts 1 and 2 (except, interestingly, the chapter on being a facilitator), and directed me to the chapter specific to higher education in Part 3.

The style of this book is very much a guide: the writing is concise and easy to follow, sentences are short and explanations are clear. Personally I would have preferred the exploration of some of the issues presented in a little more depth, and it would have been useful to have more case studies and illustrative material to show the techniques described in practice and provide ideas and inspiration for my own implementation of action learning.

Action learning involves a four-stage cycle of experience, exploration and diagnosis, planning for improvement and the implementation of action for testing in a new environment. The authors see it firmly grounded in real issues and real world problems, and stress the link with experience throughout. Chapter 2 ('What is action learning?') provides clear definitions of the terminology and scope of action learning, and compares action learning 'sets' with other types of group. There is a brief attempt to place action learning within the wider context of experiential learning ideas. The authors' state

that 'belief in the power of the experiential learning cycle is at the heart of our investment in action learning' (p. 20). I felt that this belief warranted further exploration and justification. At the very least pointers to further sources of information on experiential learning might be useful for those 'new users' reading the book.

Chapter 3 ('How a set works') offers lots of very practical information useful for the complete beginner. Using the book as a manual, experienced facilitators might find some of the comments rather too obvious. For example: 'lecture rooms were sometimes found to have inappropriate furniture . . . and to be difficult to book' (p. 34) and 'a change of scene over lunch at least provides the opportunity to take a walk to refresh from the intensity of the set process as much as for physical comfort' (p. 32). There are a variety of comments in a similar style that do not really add much to the understanding of how a set works. This is a chapter where the use of case study material might have been particularly beneficial.

Chapter 4 on the presenter's role provides information that has wider relevance. Tutorials, one-to-one meeting with students and other small group encounters could all benefit from some of the advice offered here on active listening, effective questioning, support and the development of action plans.

Chapters 5 (being a facilitator) and 6 (types of action learning) continue the practical advice. These are followed with a useful description of a workshop that could be used to introduce action learning (Chapter 7) and two (perhaps unnecessarily split) chapters on the skills of group working, listening, reflecting, giving feedback and articulating action plans that are essential to the effective working of a set.

The review of action learning in higher education presented in Chapter 13 advocates the use of action learning as a student-centred technique, but, having raised the problem of large numbers of students in HE, fails to explain how action learning sets could be implemented within the constraints of limited tutor resources. However, the role of action learning in advanced level, management and vocational situations is clear. Action learning is identified as a technique that acknowledges the different starting points of learners and encourages reflection, and issues of assessment are usefully covered here.

As a distance and online learning tutor, I was

somewhat surprised to read 'distance education is beginning to be a reality beyond the elaborate mechanisms of the Open University' (p. 230). Having been involved with distance learning both within and outside the Open University for over a decade I (and I hope many of the students who have completed programmes of study) would argue that distance education IS a reality now and has been for quite some time! The authors go on to offer comments on active learning and technology – 'active learning can blend with new technologies in making more effective use of the contact time between student and teachers'. Again, it would have been nice to see some examples of this in practice to provide inspiration for implementation. The questions 'Is it possible to run a set through a virtual learning environment?' (p. 238) is asked. The authors consider that the answer is not clear, but that this is an area 'ripe for research'. It will be interesting to watch this particular aspect of action learning develop.

In summary, this is a practical 'how to' book, probably better for the 'new user' than the experienced 'facilitator'. It is easy to read, although enhanced use of case studies and examples would be useful to support and supplement the content. Other aspects of the book that deserve attention are the glossary (currently there are five entries!), and suggestions for sources of further information. As a 'new user' I felt that clearer pointers to further sources of information and examples (including Websites) were also lacking, but the book has certainly encouraged me to find out more about experiences with action learning and to explore some of its ideas in my own teaching. The authors caution that you can become 'hooked' on action learning. They are clearly enthusiasts with tremendous experience in the area, and there is advice in this book to benefit all considering or using action learning.

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Peter Jarvis (ed.), *The Age of Learning: Education and the Knowledge Society*, Kogan Page, London. 2001. ISBN: 0-7494-3412-0. Softback, 230 pages, £19.99.

Over recent years, 'learning' has moved to the forefront of the educational agendas of many countries of the world. Terms such as 'the learning organization', 'the learning society', 'the knowledge society', 'lifelong learning' and

so on are now familiar to most educators. Such terms tend to litter government policy and strategy papers and raise considerable debate within the academic literature. This book seeks to explore the issues surrounding these themes and provide a multidisciplinary analysis of the key features of learning in contemporary society.

The book is edited by Peter Jarvis who is professor of Continuing Education and convenor of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning at the University of Surrey, UK. The book has nine other contributing authors, all of whom are members of the same Centre.

The book contains a total of eighteen chapters that are logically organized into the following five broad sections:

1. The emergence of the learning society (Chapters 1 to 3).
2. Learning and the learning society (Chapters 4 to 6).
3. The mechanics of the learning society (Chapters 7 to 9).
4. Implications of the learning society (Chapters 10 to 14).
5. Reflections on the age of learning (Chapters 15 to 18).

Each chapter is individually referenced as one might expect from a text with multiple contributing authors. A detailed subject index is also included.

Chapter 1 presents a historical overview of the main developments of adult and vocational education in the twentieth century, and how these relate to the linked concepts of the learning society, lifelong learning and the learning age. This 'context setting' theme is continued in Chapter 2 which examines these concepts from social, economic and political perspectives. It looks at the consequences of globalization, the emergence of the new knowledge-based economy, and the effects of information and communication technology (ICT) on education, employment and the labour market. Chapter 3 concludes this first section of the book by examining various changes in educational theory and practice over the last three decades or so – paradigm shifts that have reshaped curricula design and delivery, the relationship between educator and learner, and society's views on the role of education. This first section succeeds in providing a comprehensive and informative

overview of the issues relating to the emergence of the learning society.

Part 2 of the book ('Learning and the learning society') begins by considering the implications of lifelong learning in terms of social, economic and political policy analysis. It goes on to examine strategies for lifelong learning in relation to culture, leisure and lifestyle, and concludes by arguing that education policy-making is being superseded by lifelong learning strategy-formation. Chapter 5 presents a philosophical analysis of the various definitions and models of the learning society that have emerged over the last few decades. In particular, it focuses upon the cultural values/humanistic model of Hutchins; the futurological/technological model developed by Husén; and Boshier's democracy/participation/citizenship model. This philosophical examination is continued in Chapter 6 where a distinction is drawn between lifelong learning and education. It adopts a person-centred view of lifelong learning that is concerned essentially with achieving self-fulfilment through one's own efforts. It argues that within today's consumer society, the resources of the Web bring significant advantage to the autonomous self-directed learner.

Chapter 7 opens the next section of the book ('The mechanics of the learning society') by considering how lifelong learning can be paid for. It rightly draws attention to the difficulties in doing so as a consequence of the diverse ways and reasons why post-initial education and training is currently funded. It asks the question 'who should pay?' and considers this from the perspective of the state, the employer and the individual. It looks at various government initiatives set in place over the last two decades to address this issue, and concludes by echoing the repeated call for a more coherent and consistent policy framework for funding lifelong learning. Chapter 8 examines the theme of work-related learning which, in relation to UK government policy, is an important element of the lifelong learning agenda. It highlights some of the problems in defining work-related learning and goes on to consider how contemporary ideas about it have emerged. Attention is also given to the notion of the 'learning organization' – a concept developed over the last 10–15 years. This leads on to a thought-provoking discussion on whether work-related learning can be viewed as a form of regulation and control. Chapter 9 closes this section of the book with a critical overview of

educational and vocational guidance services and their key role in facilitating access to learning. It draws attention to the relative scarcity of literature on the subject and suggests a number of emerging areas of research interest for the topic.

Part 4 of the book ('Implications of the learning society') begins by examining the implications of the learning society for education beyond school. It does so from the perspectives of the higher education sector, further education, and adult or continuing education. It suggests that the development of the learning society will demand the dissolution of the artificial barriers between these three sectors, and sees a prominent role for ICT in achieving this aim. Chapter 11 discusses what the 'age of learning' means for our systems of mass schooling and considers how schools shape the age of learning and vice versa. It asks to what extent lifelong learning might be considered compulsory and points to professionals such as lawyers, doctors and nurses for whom continuing professional development is a requirement to remain in practice. This discussion leads nicely into Chapter 12 where the focus of attention is on the role of corporations and professions in the learning age. It examines how the ongoing training requirements of the workforce in the new knowledge society have changed and points to the rise of the 'corporate university' as one of the means to address this. However, most of this discussion draws upon literature from the USA as there appears to be little published research on the topic in the UK. Chapter 13 considers the implications for the delivery of learning materials and, as one might expect, the role of ICT is the main focus of this debate. The discussion is nicely balanced between the potential of ICT and its likely limitations, and the key issues are addressed in a very pragmatic way. However, despite the wealth of published literature on some of these key topics, few references find their way into the discussion. Chapter 14 ends this section of the book by looking at the important issue of including the socially excluded in the learning age. Four main themes are addressed: adult basic education; European social policy and social exclusion; social capital and citizenship; education and social purpose. It rightly concludes that the issue is complex and one that remains a challenge for those who form policy.

The last section of the book ('Reflections on the age of learning') begins by examining the topic

of the public recognition of learning. It seeks to explore what it describes as the paradoxical relationship between the private nature of learning and that of public society. There is a stark warning evident here of the increasing emphasis on 'certificated learning' as 'real learning' – that the actual human process of learning is becoming regarded as less important than the achievement of the certificate that asserts it has taken place. Chapter 16, 'Questioning the learning society', draws upon the work of Illich and Verne to open the discussion. There are very clear social and moral messages in this chapter and it is one of the few that makes direct cross-reference with earlier chapters. Chapter 17 continues the social theme by exploring the relationship between learning and key concepts such as citizenship, civil society, democracy, community and social cohesion. It concludes that, even at the national level, our current understanding of the issues is still in its infancy and key questions remain unanswered. Chapter 18 ends the book by considering the future directions for the learning society. We return once again to the themes of globalization and the rise of the corporations. This chapter nicely pulls together many of the issues raised earlier in the book and leaves us with a thought-provoking vision of the future.

The scope of this book is very broad and seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the key issues of learning in contemporary society. At times I wondered whether its scope was, in fact, a little too broad as its critical examination moved from one perspective to another and I juggled with social, political, economic and philosophical themes. Whilst each chapter is undeniably informative, some had greater appeal than others and provided more stimulating and thought-provoking reading. Having said this, it is a text that will be of interest to many people and I would recommend it to anyone who seeks to understand better the issues that concern lifelong learning in today's society.

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**Sarah Gash, *Effective Literature Searching for Research*, Gower, Aldershot, 2000. ISBN: 0-566-08125-3. Softback, 133 pages, £12.95.**

For many of those just starting out, literature searching is a complex skill that can seem very jargon-filled, daunting and mysterious; even hardened searchers may have gained their skills

through 'on-the-job' experience and may not have a full knowledge of searching intricacies. This book aims to guide new researchers, including undergraduate and postgraduate students in academia and those involved in research and development organizations, through the techniques of planning a literature search, finding and using search tools, keeping records of search results, obtaining and evaluating the material found, and writing references for record and citing in written documents. The book builds on the first edition (published under the title *Effective Literature Searching for Students*), to include information on new resources such as online (including CD-ROM) and Internet search tools.

Chapter 1, 'Why search?', discusses what literature searching is in broad terms and why searching is useful in both academic and other industries. In addition to setting the scene and the philosophy of the book, the chapter describes how searchers can use libraries and library staff to help with searching and finding literature.

The main eight chapters of the book fall broadly into two sections. Chapters 2-5 are concerned with the mechanics of carrying out a literature search and gaining search results. Chapters 6-9 concentrate on what to do with the search results: how to record what search was carried out and what results were found, and how to obtain, evaluate, and reference the material for research purposes.

Within the chapters concerned with the mechanics of literature searching, 'Preparing the search' (Chapter 2) explains how to become conversant with common terms used within the search topic, describes common terminology used in literature searching (for example, treatises, monographs, electronic journals and theses), and how to write a search profile. 'Sources and tools' (Chapter 3) lists and describes six stages of literature searching using, in turn, library catalogues, book bibliographies, abstracting and indexing journals, current awareness services, special indexes (for example, indexes of patents, theses or official publications), and, finally, institutions and people. The type of documents that can be found in each stage are described and examples (with references) of the sources of information are given. Chapter 4, 'Electronic sources I - online searching', provides a history of the development of online information retrieval,

describes 'the modern online industry' and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of online searching (online here usually excludes Internet-based searches). This chapter also contains information on how online searches work, and how the databases are structured as either bibliographic, dictionary or inverted files. Probably most usefully, Chapter 4 includes information on combining search terms using Boolean or logical operators. Finally in this informal section, Chapter 5, 'Electronic sources II - the Internet', describes search tools and resources available over the Web. Here, Gash describes different types of search engines, such as automated search engines (including Altavista and Lycos), subject-specific gateways, and meta search engines. Useful tips for Internet searching are given and, at the end of the chapter, Gash provides a comparison of online versus Internet searching.

The final set of chapters (6 to 9) are concerned with how to use and record the results of a literature search. 'Keeping records' (Chapter 6), suggests how one might record the searches made and the references found. Gash compares the advantages and disadvantages of keeping paper or computer-based records and discusses how to organize photocopies of the material found. Chapter 7, 'Obtaining and evaluating material', covers issues such as locating and visiting other libraries, interlibrary loans, copying and copyright, and scanning material. This chapter also contains a short section on evaluating material for its usefulness and relevance to the search topic. In 'Writing references' (Chapter 8), Gash explains how there are many referencing styles used by different institutions. She then proceeds to give an example of how to write references (including those for books, journal articles, conference proceeding, patents, and electronic documents) using a style based on the British Standard 1692. The final chapter, 'Citing references in the text', is concerned with how material should be referred to where it is used in written documents. Different methods of citing references are described including footnotes, chronological and numerical methods, and the use of 'ibid.' and 'op. cit.'.

This is a very practical book and guides the new literature searcher through the pitfalls of searching in an informative and accessible way. Good practice tips are given throughout. Although I have carried out many literature searches myself, I felt I learned something from

the book and will be trying to incorporate some of the tips into my everyday practice. This book feels as if it is written by an expert enthusiast, wishing to impart her knowledge and love of the topic to her readers. Gash's book avoids over-specialization and is not aimed at any particular style or field of literature searching. Because of this, the general advice it offers will be of considerable use to new searchers from any discipline, student or worker, in academia or in industry.

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**Ann Hodgson (ed.), *Policies, Politics and the Future of Lifelong Learning*, Kogan Page, London, 2000. ISBN: 07494-3202-0. Softback, 210 pages, £19.99.**

The increasing linkage between the idea of a Learning Society and e-learning makes the issue of policy and politics an important focus of attention for everyone interested in learning technology. The idea of lifelong learning remains an idea that needs to be taken seriously. This book is a useful and accessible introduction to the contemporary political and policy landscapes in this area for *ALT-J* readers. The book introduces readers to the national and international context of policy in relation to lifelong learning but it can be read as an introduction to educational policy more broadly. Though largely UK-based, the chapters place national developments in a firmly European perspective.

The book is part of a series, 'The Future of Education from 14+', and begins with a short and very useful editor's preface. An introductory chapter written by the editor of the book sets the discussion in a historical as well as national context. Ann Hodgson argues that the approach adopted by New Labour, the Third Way positioned between free markets and state-led regulation, differs from the previous Conservative policies but remains distant from the social partnership model. The chapter periodizes the debates about lifelong learning into decades, becoming a focus of international debate in the 1970s, put on hold in the 1980s and re-emerging in the policy debates of the 1990s. I found the historical account very useful in clarifying my own thoughts, even when they differed from those of the author. I am sure readers of this journal will find the framework she offers equally useful for clarifying their thoughts on policy issues.

The remainder of the book is organized in three main sections that examine: 1. European context, 2. Challenges in the UK context, and 3. The policy focus under New Labour. In Part 1 Marc Ant (Chapter 2) examines vocational training and the developing European institutions. Anyone who has ever been bemused by the complexity of EU policy should read this chapter as it uses the example of vocational education to shed light on the general European policy terrain. Andy Green (Chapter 3) outlines three broad policy approaches to the Learning Society and lifelong learning; state-led (France), social partnership (Germany) and market drive (UK). Both chapters are informative though I did wonder how relevant national comparisons are at a time of increasing pressures towards a diminished role for the state and the global integration of capital. Given the European focus of the chapters and the role of the European Commission in promoting harmonization and convergence, perhaps a more forward-looking approach would abandon the elaboration of national policy types.

Part 2 deals with challenges in the UK context. It begins with a very timely chapter examining widening participation. Some of these issues are highly topical, both in terms of redrawing the HE map and in integrating more students in accredited courses who have previously not participated in education or training. The chapter notes the shift in policy towards blaming the individual for non-participation and exclusion and away from the effects of broader social trends and issues. Gareth Williams (Chapter 5) suggests individual funding for lifelong learning and specifically argues for the use of flexible learning packages using new technology. A potential problem with his approach is that he believes that significant efficiency gains can be obtained in this way. The recent history of learning technology would suggest that efficiency gains made in this way impoverish the experience of learning. An even more vain hope is expressed in this chapter when Williams explains that: 'In the long run, the market for learning will ensure that the Internet assumes its proper place.' I am tempted to follow Keynes in making the remark that in the long run we are all dead.

Louise Morley (Chapter 6) criticizes the bureaucracy and audit culture that pervade education and questions whether quality regimes adopted from industry are appropriate for the academy. This chapter is couched in the language of

discourse, which I find personally uncongenial. Nevertheless the issues covered by this chapter, audit culture, quality and equality are extremely important and the chapter is very thought-provoking. Michael Young (Chapter 7) argues that policies for lifelong learning need a concept of the curriculum and that central to that curriculum will be a sense of what people will need to know in the future. His argument is that the debate needs to shift from access and participation towards pedagogy and knowledge.

Part 3 examines the policy focus under New Labour. These chapters provide detailed accounts of several aspects of New Labour policy. Ken Spours examines the National Qualifications Framework and goes on to contrast the English approach with the examples set in Scotland and Wales. Simon James (Chapter 9) argues for a more regional approach, which he argues aligns more closely with the European context. Norman Lucas (Chapter 10) argues that further education colleges will need to focus more clearly on the needs of adult learners and specialized vocational education and training. The implication of this approach is that institutions for 16–19 year olds would need to concentrate on a more general education. Alison Fuller (Chapter 11) suggests that government should give increased emphasis and resourcing to part-time higher education provision. Greg Light (Chapter 12) is also concerned with higher education and comments on

the concept of professionalism that is developing around the Institute of Learning and Teaching.

The concluding chapter written by Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours is an appraisal of the current UK policy and an assessment of how far this approach might meet the challenge of the twenty-first century. In current policy terms lifelong learning is an umbrella term for post-compulsory education but this chapter questions the limits of current policy and its focus on learning after the age of 16. The idea of 'all throughness' is proposed as an additional focus for government policy. All throughness would envisage learning from an early age addressing barriers caused by social division and developing the personal capacity of individuals in a learning community. The debate about just what lifelong learning might mean has taken on an increased relevance in the UK as it appears that the government may redefine the FE/HE boundary to meet its own targets for participation rates (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26 October 2001). The link between student numbers and lifelong learning is also central to the current HEFCE consultation 01/62. Overall I found this book a very useful guide to the background of current policy for lifelong learning. I would recommend it to anyone with a need to develop an understanding of issues in this area.

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