



Perceived Educational Quality of a Municipal School Sports Programme

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Cite this article

Lobo-de-Diego, F. E., Manrique-Arribas, J. C., & Pérez-Brunicardi, D. (2022). Perceived Educational Quality of a Municipal School Sports Programme. *Apunts Educación Física y Deportes*, 150, 28-35. [https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.\(2022/4\).150.04](https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.(2022/4).150.04)

Abstract

This study analysed the educational quality of an extracurricular municipal school sport programme based on the perception of the people involved in its development and its participating schoolchildren. For this purpose, qualitative research was carried out in which in-depth interviews were conducted after the question guides had been approved by experts in the field of school sport. Interviews were conducted with 83 informants, including schoolchildren and their family members, instructors and programme coordinators. The information obtained was used to carry out a content analysis based on three dimensions of analysis: 1) Participation, social relations and attitudes of the participants, 2) Sport learning and promotion of healthy habits and active lifestyles, and 3) Transfer to other contexts, by means of the software Atlas.ti. The results demonstrated that participation and equality of participants was promoted; education in values was developed; schoolchildren were integrated and social interactions were positive; habits of regular physical activity were promoted; learning was developed; and what was acquired in the programme was transferable to other contexts. It was concluded that the educational quality of the programme is underpinned by the satisfaction of its participants in line with the achievement of its aims and its coherence with school physical education.

Keywords: educational sport, extra-curricular activities, integral development, quality.

Publisher:

© Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de la Presidència
Institut Nacional d'Educació
Física de Catalunya (INEFC)

ISSN: 2014-0983

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Section:

Physical Education

Original language:

Spanish

Received:

December 7, 2021

Accepted:

May 11, 2022

Published:

October 1, 2022

Cover:

INEFC Lleida Gymnasium
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Introduction

The structure, scheduling and implementation of extracurricular school sport programmes with an emphasis on physical education (PE) can directly influence participation and the benefits of physical activity (Bean et al., 2021a; González-Calvo et al., 2018). Despite the educational potential of such programmes, both the positive and negative effects that an extracurricular sports programme can generate are conditioned by the degree of educational quality they offer. That is, the potential of the activity or programme to generate learning and contribute to comprehensive training in its cognitive, motor, emotional and social elements, allowing for education in values and enabling people to exercise active and democratic citizenship (Lobo, 2017). Therefore, the characteristics of the programme, as well as those that are in charge of its development, are a fundamental part of ensuring the success of the expected actions (Manrique et al., 2011).

In recent decades, research on this topic has focused on the educational outcomes obtained by people who participate in physical-sports programmes or interventions (Kirk, 2013). These have focused on models that develop life skills and positive development (Hemphill et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2017; Jacobs & Wright, 2021), on the promotion of healthy habits and increased levels of physical activity (De Meester et al., 2016), on the development of values (Koh et al., 2017) or on the development of emotional and/or social benefits (Gordon et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2020), but few studies have looked at the educational quality of the programmes developed. Specifically, the study by Lobo (2017) investigated the educational value of an educational school sport programme based on comprehensive and global models that put tactics before technique in sports learning, with a multi-sport character, in which students learn a multitude of sports during the academic year, and in line with the pedagogical principles that govern PE, and found that the learning, values and health habits transmitted contribute to the integral development of the individuals who participate in it. In the same study, they concluded that there is no difference between a school sport model focused on participatory discourse and one with a federated sport model. On the other hand, Lobo et al. (2020) examined the perception of the educational quality of the same programme from the point of view of the sports instructors, and found that the programme encourages respectful attitudes; promotes healthy habits and an active lifestyle; seeks maximum participation and equal opportunities for participants; has a positive relationship to studies; and the learning has a transferability to other contexts.

Zhang et al. (2016) found that sports programmes with an educational and training-oriented curriculum and service influence participants' perceived experience and quality, and directly influence programme satisfaction and loyalty to the programme. In the same vein, Lara et al. (2021) showed that the application of pedagogical models, such as sports education, has a great educational potential to contribute to the integral development of the participants, but that the success in its development depends on the teaching action. Meanwhile, Bean et al. (2020) found that those young athletes who had the perception of having high quality experiences in their sport practice and appreciated that the programme responded to their basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relationship with others) had high satisfaction with it and a high perception of its quality, while in the work of Bean et al. (2021b) found that there are usually no differences in the quality of programmes with a more competitive or recreational orientation, but they did find differences in the quality of the programme based on the sports instructors' number of years of experience, as well as on the degree of ethnicity in the participants' group composition.

Wilson & Millar's (2021) study found that the outcomes (health benefits, learning and emotional well-being) obtained by participants and the quality of the programme are related to lower dropout and higher satisfaction with the programme. In this vein, Côté & Hancock (2016) proposed an inclusive structure of sport programmes in order to pursue performance, participation and personal development, thus avoiding early dropout, favouring intrinsic motivation of participants and maximising participation in various sport activities.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the perception of the educational quality of an extracurricular municipal school sport programme through the perspective of the people involved and participating in it. More specifically, we studied the participation, social relations and attitudes of the schoolchildren involved in the programme; their ability to acquire sporting knowledge; the way they promote healthy habits and active lifestyles; and the transferability of what they have learnt and acquired in the programme to other practice contexts.

Methodology

A qualitative study was conducted through a retrospective design of a phenomenological nature with the intention of describing, explaining and interpreting a phenomenon based on the discourse of the participants and the meanings they attribute to it (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Context

The Integral School Sports Programme of the Municipality of Segovia (PIDEMSG) was an alternative school sport project to the exigent and traditional model that had been practised. It was implemented between 2011 and 2018 in a city of about 50,000 inhabitants. It is a programme that has been extensively studied and for which more detailed information can be found in the work of Jiménez et al. (2019), Lobo (2017), Lobo et al. (2020), Manrique et al. (2011) and Pérez-Brunicardi et al. (2018). Its main characteristics were: 1) It was based on the use of comprehensive and global models for teaching sport, 2) It was considered a complement to PE and pursued the integral development of participants, 3) It was multi-sport and mixed, 4) There were no results or rankings, and 5) It was oriented towards a participatory discourse (Pérez-Brunicardi et al., 2018).

Participants

For this study, interviews were conducted with 83 key respondents, of which 20 were conducted in the 2016/17 academic year and seven during the 2017/18 school year. Nine interviews with schoolchildren were group interviews and the other 18 were individual interviews. Three programme coordinators with more than three years of experience in the programme were interviewed; four contracted sports instructors with three or more years of experience in the programme; four other instructors with a scholarship with between one and five years of

experience in the programme; 35 primary school children aged between 6 and 12 from low-middle and middle socio-economic levels, and from urban and rural public schools; 28 secondary schoolchildren aged between 13 and 15 from public and public secondary schools and with a medium-high socio-economic level; three relatives of infant schoolchildren and another 6 primary school children (Table 1) with medium socio-economic levels. The selection of these participants was done by means of a non-intentional probability sampling by convenience and accessibility, seeking to select those who were able to provide relevant and meaningful information on the basis of the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

For the schoolchildren group, the inclusion criteria were: 1) Be a participant in the Programme during the academic year, 2) Be a primary or secondary school student, and 3) Have regular attendance at the Programme sessions and/or meetings. The exclusion criteria were: 1) Not attending the Programme on a regular basis, and 2) Not being a primary or secondary school student. For the family members group, the inclusion criterion was: 1) Having children enrolled in the Programme in the academic year, while the exclusion criteria were: 1) Not having children enrolled in the Programme. For Programme professionals, the inclusion criteria were: 1) Knowledge of the Programme, 2) Being an active Programme professional during the academic year, 3) Years of experience as a coordinator or instructor in the Programme. The exclusion criteria were: 1) Not being an active professional of the Programme.

Table 1
Distribution of informants.

Representatives	Type of Participant	Number of Participants	
		Men	Women
PIDEMSG Professionals	PIDEMSG Coordinators	1	2
	Contracted Sports Instructors	2	2
	Sports Instructors with Scholarships	3	1
Schoolchildren	Primary School	22	13
	Secondary School	0	28
Family Members	Family Members of Infant Schoolchildren	0	3
	Family Members of Primary School Children	3	3
Total by Sex		31	52
TOTAL		83	

Materials

The tool used for the collection of information was the interview. According to Kvale (2011), interviews allow exploration of people's interpretations and understanding of their world, providing unique access to participants' views of their situations and experiences. In this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted following the script developed and validated by Lobo (2017) to study the educational value of PIDEMSG. The composition of the dimensions and questions was made *a priori* by the researchers on the basis of the Programme's documentation and scientific literature. They were then validated through consultation with school sport experts to filter and discard questions according to the purpose of the study. The final script was composed of questions adapted to each group on eight dimensions (respect for rules, participation and equal opportunities, healthy habits, multi-sport character, integration, motor self-perception, relationship with studies and transfer for life) that referred to the intentions of the Programme and are in line with the aims of PE.

Procedure

For the interviews, access to the field was requested and carried out through the Programme coordinators. Once permission to access the field was obtained, the coordinators facilitated contact with the monitors and groups of schoolchildren, as well as the Friday training and match schedules. For the interviews with coordinators, instructors and pupils, one of the researchers initially contacted them to find out if they were willing to participate. This was followed by an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the research, assuring anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the intention to use and publish the information collected

in academic and scientific papers, and providing the right to leave or stop the interview at any time. After receiving the informants' consent, a date and place for the meeting was agreed upon. The researcher in charge of the project would contact them two days before the agreed date to remind them and confirm their participation. At the outset, the objectives of the research were explained and any possible questions from the interviewees were answered. To ensure the reliability of the study, the conversation was then recorded with a tape recorder and a mobile phone so as not to lose any of the information provided by the interviewees. The interviews were carried out in the sports facilities where the Friday training sessions or matches took place, ensuring that the context was familiar and not too hostile. Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed into a word processor (Rapley, 2014). Some interviews with schoolchildren were group interviews, with the aim of facilitating everyone's participation. Interviews with family members were conducted during the Friday meetings, following the same protocol as above. In all interviews the researcher adopted a friendly attitude and it was emphasised that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed as outlined in the informed consent.

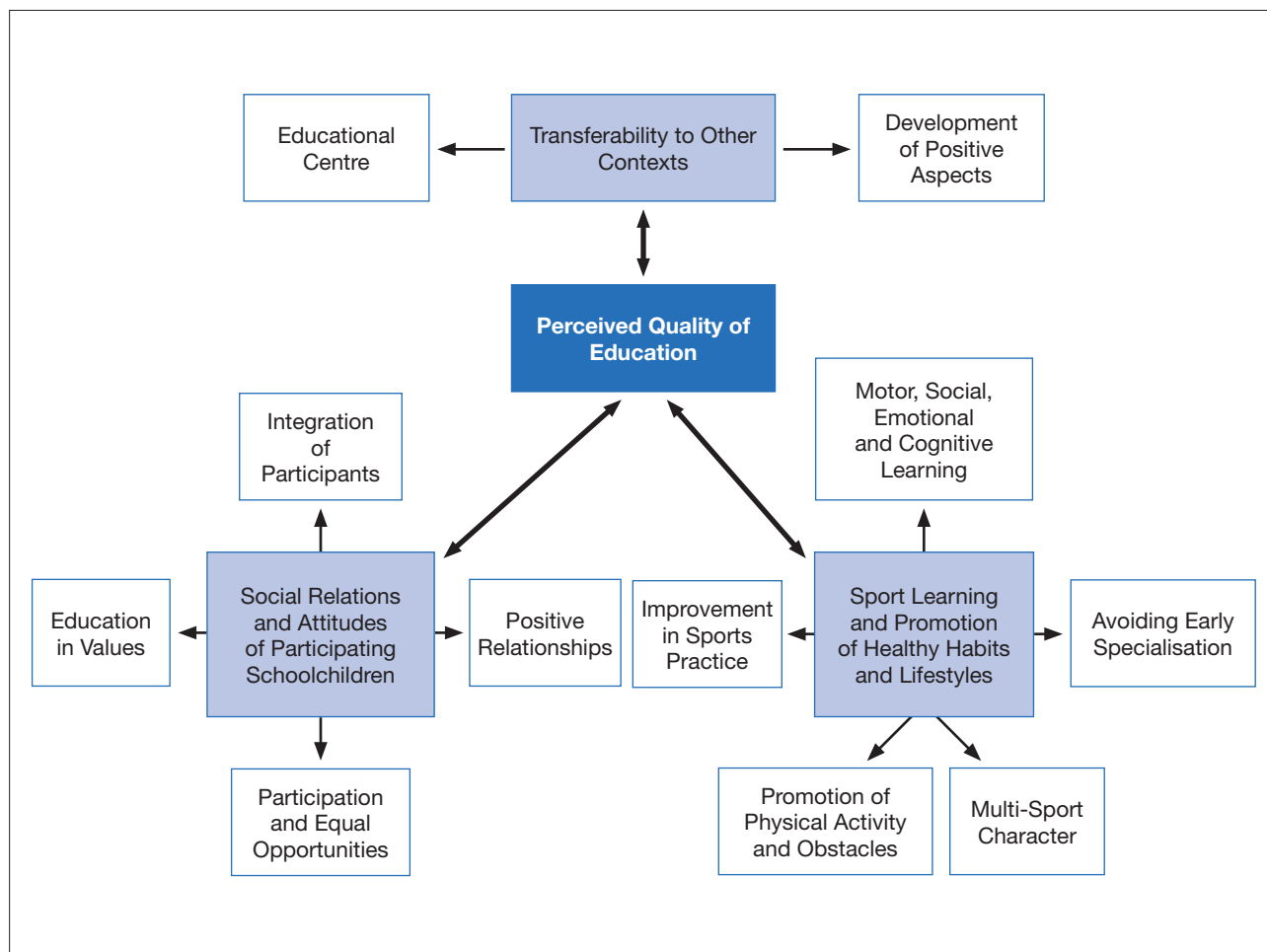
Analysis of Data

The information collected was subjected to content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Through this type of analysis, information was identified, reduced and grouped around inductive coding and categorisation (Table 2). This process was carried out with the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti version 7.5.4., which enabled the establishment of networks between the different categories in order to carry out a convenient discourse analysis.

Table 2

Dimensions of analysis and categories for the analysis of information.

Dimension of Analysis	Category
Participation, Social Relations and Participants' Attitudes	Equal Opportunities
	Respect for the Rules
	Integration
Sport Learning and Promotion of Healthy Habits and Active Lifestyles	Improvement in Sports Practice
	Multi-sport Character of PIDEMSG
	Physical Activity Outside School Sport
Transferability to Other Contexts	Usefulness of Learning Acquired in Other Contexts

**Figure 1**

Educational quality perceived by the participants of the school sport programme.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the educational quality of an extracurricular school sport programme based on the perception of the people involved and participating in it. The analysis of the interviews yielded a total of 11 codes resulting from three main categories (Figure 1).

Social Relations and Attitudes of Participating Schoolchildren

One of the key objectives of the programme was to achieve participation and equal opportunities for schoolchildren. In this variable, a great diversity of opinions was found among the interviewees. Six informants from PIDEMSG professionals stated that schoolchildren in PIDEMSG did not participate equally and that there was greater participation of boys than girls, as one interviewee stated: "the intention is that but [...] what I have experienced in different schools is that boys tend to take up a lot of space, sometimes

monopolise a lot of space or be very protagonist in the activities" (ENIMO27, p. 3). On the other hand, five of the family members and seven of the pupils felt that they all participated equally and, if this was not the case, the instructors were usually the ones in charge of dealing with it in order to prevent some pupils from participating more than others. Specifically, one of the measures to encourage schoolchildren's participation was that "we play fairly because what we do is take turns serving, one player serves and when they score, the one who was playing comes off for the player who was not playing, and we all play equally" (ENGES11, p. 3). These findings are consistent with Lobo et al. (2020), as maximum participation is promoted in this programme, although it was found that some schoolchildren participate more than others. It also corresponds with Côté & Hancock (2016) in terms of quality, given that in this case one of the ways of facilitating participation is by having all the schoolchildren play in attacking and defensive positions for their tactical and participatory enrichment. For this reason,

it follows that it is important that maximum participation in such approaches is sought in order to avoid early dropout due to lack of involvement and opportunities.

All the interviewees agreed on the need to develop rules agreed between the pupils and the instructors. They expressed the importance of giving schoolchildren a space to intervene in the elaboration and consensus of rules and thus generate a positive environment of coexistence. However, the instructors, coordinators and family members pointed out that these rules did not need to be agreed with the infant schoolchildren and that they should be elaborated and facilitated by the instructors: "Obviously, depending on the age of the children, they are given a more guided orientation to establish these rules" (ENICO13, p. 2). These findings are consistent with Lobo et al. (2020) and stresses the importance of giving a voice to schoolchildren to develop rules that promote respectful attitudes and values towards schoolchildren and instructors, facilities and sports equipment. In this sense, it is worth noting the importance of the role, experience and training that the instructors of this type of programme have and receive so that their actions can achieve the educational goals pursued (Manrique et al., 2011), in a positive atmosphere and environment of coexistence in which the instructors are aware of the values they transmit (Koh et al., 2017). In addition, it should be noted that the sports instructors are an essential element that influences the educational quality of the Programme.

Interviewees agreed that schoolchildren tended to be accepted, respected and integrated into their groups. In order to achieve this, the instructors usually emphasised respect for the established rules, the work on positive relationships between participants and the development of an education in values that would enable a positive atmosphere in the training sessions and Friday matches. However, they also noted that there were often isolated cases of students who were not integrated or who excluded themselves for reasons unrelated to the programme, such as ethnicity:

They are the ones who segregate themselves, who set themselves apart. For example, there are groups of Moroccan students, and there are groups of Dominican students. They are the ones who decide to distance themselves, but specifically that happens in one school, in the rest of the schools they are integrated. (ENICO12, p. 5)

This apparent segregation may have been more along friendship lines. These results seem to be in line with Bean et al. (2021b), as most of the school groups were composed of people of different ethnic backgrounds, which had an impact on the interaction and development experience of the participants, and thus on the educational quality of the

programme. Furthermore, these results seem to support the findings of Gordon et al. (2016) and Wright et al. (2020), highlighting the ideal context that extra-curricular sports programmes form for participants' social and emotional learning. In turn, this idea is related to that expressed by Bean et al. (2021b), as in this programme there was a safe and supportive environment where opportunities for interaction with people from other schools or ethnicities were rich, especially in the Friday sports matches, thus satisfying the possible basic psychological needs for positive affection and relationship with other people. Therefore, teaching actions must be coherent and formative in extracurricular sport programmes in order to ensure a high quality of education (Lara et al., 2021).

Sports Learning and Promotion of Healthy Habits and Active Lifestyles

The interviewees expressed that this Programme helped to improve sport practice, especially tactically, due to the use of comprehensive and global approaches. In addition, it helped them to improve the development of their basic motor skills, helping them to become more aware of their possibilities and limits. Likewise, the interviewees were of the opinion that in PIDEMSG special emphasis was placed on the development of values, given that "obviously what is practical helps, but it is two days a week and what I think is most encouraged is participation and the values that we have said" (ENIFA18, p. 2). The acquisition and improvement of sport learning is likely due to the progression and schedule followed by the programme to provide a high quality educational service, as pointed out by Zhang et al. (2016). In this sense, Wilson & Millar (2021) expressed that learning, health benefits or emotional well-being are directly related to programme quality, participant satisfaction and lower dropout rates. In this regard, the motor, social and cognitive learning that participants acquired in this programme is part of the positive development that is pursued in these types of extracurricular projects (Holt et al., 2017).

Although the multi-sport nature of this Programme did not allow for the deepening of specific motor skills of a particular sport, working on them in a general way contributed to the transferability of their knowledge to the large number of sports that they practised in the PIDEMSG. Thus, the multi-sport character was highly valued by the interviewees, as they preferred to learn and practice a multitude of sporting specialities rather than focusing on just one. The multi-sport nature of this programme is an indicator of high programme quality, according to Côté & Hancock (2016), and prevents early specialisation.

Pérez-Brunnicardi et al. (2018) explained that, although each sport was worked on for a short time, the horizontal teaching approach allowed for the connection and transfer of learning in sports that have a similar learning logic. Therefore, after-school sports programmes should focus on playing a variety of sports, not aiming for selection and therefore avoiding early specialisation, employing healthy competition but not emphasising results, understanding children's needs, encouraging all schoolchildren to play in all attacking and defensive positions, promoting meaningful play, and designing activities that focus on fun and short-term rewards (Côté & Hancock, 2016).

On the other hand, the interviewees considered that the Programme achieved the promotion of healthy habits and an active lifestyle, since the schoolchildren carried out physical activity in their free time without it being organised by any institution or company: "in some cases I know the children who then go out to the neighbourhood, I see them play, and I see them on occasion doing activities that are not usual, such as football, for example" (ENIMO27, p. 3). Moreover, informants felt that they put into practice the sports they learnt in this Programme, adapting them to their materials and available sports facilities. As in De Meester et al. (2016), these results corroborate that extracurricular sports programmes can contribute to increase levels of physical activity and promote healthy habits and active lifestyles in participants. It is therefore necessary that the programmes have the necessary material equipment and adequate sports areas, which affect the quality of the programme. In this sense, the study by Jiménez et al. (2019) found that the PIDEMSG's sports facilities and equipment were suitable for sports practice.

However, some interviewees expressed some of the obstacles that prevented schoolchildren from doing physical activity in their free time, such as the lack of sports infrastructures, given that "right now in the street there are no facilities prepared to encourage these types of games or work" (ENIFA18, p. 2) or the overload of other extracurricular activities (remedial classes, English classes). As such, the responsibility that extracurricular programmes must assume in facilitating access to opportunities to improve and increase the practice of sport among young people became evident (González-Calvo et al., 2018).

Transferability to Other Contexts

The interviewees expressed that the sport learning, cognitive learning, social relations and interactions, or values acquired in this Programme were transferred to other contexts, with the place of transfer par excellence being the PE class, given

that "the content that we are developing in the Programme is totally aligned and closely linked in the way we work with the area of Physical Education" (ENIMO27, p. 6). Moreover, the interviewees were of the opinion that what was acquired in this Programme was mostly positive, as a family member pointed out: "so I don't know if there are negative things such as excessive competition, there may be discrimination among the kids, but as far as I can see there are not, and those who are participating all play happily" (ENIFA18, p. 3). The educational context turned out to be the main place of transfer of knowledge, learning and values acquired in this programme, a result that coincides with the findings of Hemphill et al. (2019) and Lobo et al. (2020). In this sense, Jacobs & Wright (2018) pointed out that for transfer to occur, a cognitive bridge connecting learning to its application is necessary.

Conclusions

The educational quality of an extracurricular sports programme is an element to be taken into consideration for the appropriate development of the Programme. This quality is corroborated through the satisfaction of its participants in line with the achievement of the aims of the Programme, in coherence with the aims of the PE. These aims are oriented towards the positive learning and values acquired by the participants; the usefulness and transferability of what they have learnt; the promotion of a positive social interaction environment; the promotion of healthy habits; and the facilitation of access to physical-sports practice with equal opportunities, regardless of their motor skills. It is a programme that has improved because it has been evaluated on an annual basis, and as a result, approaches that were not proving successful have been redirected. It is therefore important that those responsible for the design and implementation of educational programmes have a clear training and educational approach to achieve the objectives.

Based on the findings of this work, the lines of future work are the collection of information on the Programme from external agents: PE teachers, technicians from the Municipal Sports Institute, politicians, etc. on the implementation, development and educational quality achieved by this model of school sport.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport for funding the research project in which this study is included, through a grant for University Teacher Training (FPU). Reference FPU17/00771.

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Conflict of Interests: No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.



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