A gender-specific evaluation framework for the leadership development of women in local government

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ABSTRACT

Municipalities have put in place gender policies and frameworks to facilitate the participation and engagement of women in local government affairs. Although women have been given the opportunity for self-development through leadership development programmes, they feel marginalised when it comes to decision-making. One may ask why this is the case, given the role played by South Africa's ratification of the multiple international conventions and declarations on women's rights. This article argues that even though South Africa's advancement towards gender equity is held as an example across the world, municipalities find it challenging to recognise gender as an important factor in, specifically, the evaluation of leadership development of women councillors. The argument for a gender-specific evaluation framework is presented to ensure that efforts towards gender equity cascade to leadership development evaluation. The proposed gender-specific evaluation framework considers gender at every step in the evaluation process. The evaluation framework aims at incorporating women's experiences in evaluation in order to ensure that gender equality is achieved in all facets of life, including leadership development.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is an international case in point with regard to its efforts in the promotion of gender equality. Women however, still feel marginalised when it comes to decision-making. This should not be the case given that women currently constitute 38% of councillors in local government of the workforce in South Africa and gender policies and frameworks have been instituted to facilitate the participation and engagement of women in local government.

"Gender refers to the socially determined and evaluated identities and roles of men and women, and is usually distinguished from their biological or sex differences. Gender identities and roles vary from society to society, but are usually based on the unequal status of men and women, and their roles in society" (Local Government Gender Policy Framework 2006:15). There is a misconception that gender refers only to women. However, gender refers to the roles that are assigned to men and women by society. Service delivery in local government has a bearing on the lives of women owing to their roles in society. Women are generally responsible for duties such as cooking and cleaning activities in families. Women's needs in relation to municipal services in particular are different from those of men. Bentley, Cherry and Maphunye (2002:7) assert women and men have different needs regarding the use of municipal services such as water and electricity. Women are care givers, responsible for families and will therefore consider their knowledge and expertise when making decisions in municipalities. The roles that women occupy in society dictate that service delivery has a direct effect on women in local government. Women are the primary users of municipal services; and it is imperative that they participate in taking decisions in matters of local government. Even though women participate in leadership development programmes, the impact that gender has on the evaluation of these programmes is not considered.

This article argues for a gender specific leadership development evaluation framework based on empirical evidence gathered through a largely qualitative approach to the research. Specific reference is made to the Municipal Leadership Development Programme offered by the Department of Cooperative Governance under the Local Government Leadership Academy (LOGOLA).

The conceptual study was supplemented with a focus group and one-on-one telephone interviews held with women participants, facilitators and the developers of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme. 22 Women councillors from the Gert Sibande, Greater Sekhukhune and Sedibeng District municipalities participated in the research. The article describes the current evaluation framework and proposes a gender specific framework for the evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme for leadership development evaluation.

CONTEXUALISING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

According to Brache (1983:120) leadership is the process of defining current situations and articulating goals for the future, making the decisions necessary to resolve the situation or achieve the goals, gaining the commitment from those who have implemented these decisions. For the purpose of this article leadership in local government refers to the role of councillors who have the duty of making decisions and instituting actions whilst motivating others to implement these decisions. Leadership development focuses on enhancing the capacity of those in leadership roles to be able to carry out their roles and achieve improved organisational performance (Hannum 2004:5). Leadership development, in the context of this article, refers to the development and improvement of leadership competence to ensure that councillors can effectively carry out their leadership role.

It is vital, given the role that women and women councillors have in local government, to consider the importance of the leadership role of women in local government. The increased representation of women in political structures is an indication of the government's intention to empower women. This intention must be consolidated by capacitating these women leaders so that they are able to identify and deal with service delivery challenges. Leadership development serves important purposes, which include growing the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals to be effective leaders (Hannum, Martineau and Reinelt 2007:6).

The aim of leadership development is to create a pool of leaders that can fast-track change in local government in order to resolve key issues and also to strengthen the capacity of teams to improve organisational outcomes.

This research is based on the premise that men and women have differences that go beyond the purely biological and that in developing the leadership competence of women and men it is important that these differences be considered. The focus of this article is the evaluation of leadership development programmes for women in local government with a specific focus on gender-based perspective to evaluation. McClaren (2000:ix) asserts that a gender-based perspective to evaluation builds in gender-sensitive considerations at every step and uses gender-based enquiry as an important component in evaluation. "Gender sensitive refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, such as the different needs men and women have, and using to this knowledge to recognise and understand the issues arising from these differences and to act with a purpose of addressing them" (Local Government Gender Policy Framework 2006:20).

The aim of a gender-based evaluation framework is to incorporate a gender-based perspective into programme evaluation. The argument supported throughout the article is that if evaluation does not take gender differences

into account, the empowerment of women through leadership development cannot be fully promoted.

It is important to note the difference in learning styles of women and men. The extent to which gender impacts on adult learning must be taken into account in the leadership development of women. When leadership skills are developed through a programme such as the Municipal Leadership Development Programme, which is developed based on adult learning theories, it is vital that evaluation assesses the extent to which these theories consider the different gender needs and the manner in which women and men learn. The importance of this assessment is to ensure that there are no underlying ways of discrimination that benefit one gender and disadvantage the other. Evaluation which builds in gender at every aspect will ensure that the existence of different learning styles is taken into account when evaluating leadership development programmes.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986:5) state that "the preconceptions of knowledge and truth that are accepted and articulated today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated majority culture. Modes of learning that are common, if not specific, to women have been devalued". Leadership development programmes for women must ensure the inclusion of gender-based evaluation. McClaren (2000:54) asserts that not only are the aims and agendas of existing traditions filled with gender-blind ways of handling evaluation, the methodologies they utilise may be inappropriate. It becomes important then to develop appropriate approaches that meet gender-specific needs and provide gender-sensitive programme evaluation. The current percentage of women councillors in local government implies that the evaluation of programmes in which both women and men participate, should acknowledge the differences brought about by gender. The Local Government Gender Policy Framework, 2006, acknowledges these differences and further aims to mainstream gender in all aspects of local government including human resource development. Women in South Africa have emphasised the need to ensure a gendered approach in all spheres of government responsibility: legislative, policy and planning activities (Naidoo 2002:49). In this regard, specific gender-based evaluation becomes significant to ensure that gender is not only taken into account in representation but that the human resource initiatives that are aimed at supporting the representation of women and the evaluation thereof reflect gender awareness in every aspect.

Municipal councils complain that they spend large amounts of money on training but see little if any improvement in the performance of their staff (DBSA 2004:46). This statement highlights the need for evaluation that improves the effectiveness of training and development programmes in order to show improvement in the performance of municipalities and their councils. This research article argues that a gender-based evaluation framework will improve the effectiveness in leadership development programmes and will lead to an

increase in the performance of women and men who participate in leadership development programmes.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS APPLICABLE TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The article makes a case that evaluation that does not build in gender considerations results in programmes that are gender blind and do not effectively evaluate the impact of leadership development programmes on women. Leadership development does not take place in isolation and consideration should be given to the different environments which impact on the leadership development of women in local government.

The political environment

A gender evaluation can be contextualised in the political environment by focusing on the political obligations placed on local government which require that in achieving its developmental role, local government has to incorporate the inclusion of women in all aspects. This requirement means that women should not be discriminated against on the basis of gender. The representation of women in local government is legislated by the *White Paper on Local Government,* 1998, as well as the Local *Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998).* Representation of women in local government political structures should be supported by human resource development practices, such as leadership development of councillors in local government.

However, the value of leadership development programmes can only be ascertained through evaluation. There is a need for a gender-based perspective leadership development evaluation, given the differences in leadership and learning styles of women and men, as well as the need for gender equality in all aspects of political life, which necessitates the need for women and men to benefit equally from development. The reason for this is that gender evaluation that builds in gender at every aspect empowers women and promotes gender equality, which is a core principle entrenched in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,* 1996, and which also cascades to other pieces of local government legislation and policies.

Societal factors influencing leadership development evaluation

Leadership development evaluation is not only influenced by legislation, it is also affected by social factors. For the purpose of this article the focus is on impact of traditions and the masculine model of politics.

Impact of traditions and the masculine model of politics

Alexandra (2004:6) states that in Africa the place of women is in the kitchen and not amongst men in a discussion or debating and creating political decisions. This article presents the argument that tradition impacts on the effectiveness of women in their leadership roles. This was pointed out by a woman councillor from Sekhukhune District Municipality who asserts that during the kgoro which is a traditional meeting between chiefs, community leaders and councillors, some men still feel that women should not participate. These women councillors receive resistance from men and this impact on their leadership effectiveness.

Another factor that impacts on the active participation of women in local government is the opposition or ridicule from male co-workers who feel threatened by the presence of women in council. This hostility is reflected by women councillors who were interviewed who stated that their capabilities are often not recognised, that they have to confront sexist attitudes and behaviour, and that they are often not given the same legitimacy and credibility as their male counterparts. The attitudes of society towards women are that they are subordinate to men therefore when women enter politics; the attitudes of their male colleagues tend to be negative towards them. The above is supported by interviews for this study with women councillors who participated in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme. Their responses revealed specific barriers and challenges that they as women councillors faced in carrying out their duties as leaders in local government. Among these are the following:

- Women sometimes feel intimidated when attending public meetings where men are present and there is resistance from men who do not want to listen to a woman speak. One councillor made an example of a public meeting where a man attended a public meeting for the first time and saw a woman councillor addressing the community. He started making comments that attending the meeting was not worth it because he did not come to listen to a woman speak.
- Serving in a mayoral committee with men and having a woman chair the meeting is at times met with some resistance from the men. The competence of women has been questioned, which has had a negative impact on service delivery.

The views from focus group participants reflected the following:
- "As a woman in a man's world you don't get assistance" (referring to the resistance and intimidation women receive from men in council meetings).
- Due to the resistance that women receive from men in council meetings, women form a women caucus before the council meeting to not be *blown out of the water* during council meetings.
- Men feel that they are better at debating than women and during the council meetings do not allow women to express themselves.

Rutherford (2001:329) asserts that women are evaluated in a negative way when they exhibit leadership characteristics that are typically associated with men, such as, being task oriented, directive or displaying autocratic behaviours, which are characteristics that are seen as unsuitable for women. When women behave in a way similar to men, they are often criticised as masculine. "When women are evaluated as competent in a male sex-typed role; they are disliked more than their male colleagues. These perceptions may contribute to the under-evaluation of women and delay the recognition they are entitled to receive, particularly when women perform well in domains that are seen as male oriented" (Eagly 2007:4).

There is a need to build gender considerations into the Municipal Leadership Development Programme in order to ensure that women councillors who participate in this Programme are not under evaluated. While political and societal factors in the environment impact the leadership development of women, their own motivation, knowledge and skills will also have a determining effect on the success of leadership development programmes.

Motivation, knowledge and skills

Motivation is a vital component of human resource development and by extension leadership development. Councillors should not only undergo training because training is good, they should undergo training because there is a genuine need for training and that because participants identify the need for training as part of their growth and development. Women councillors who view that their gender barriers are not considered will not be motivated to participate in leadership development programme evaluation. Through evaluation, the growth and development of participants in training can be determined; it is in this regard this study aims to propose a gender-based perspective to the evaluation of leadership development programmes for women in local government.

An important aspect of leadership is the perception of task competence (Bierna and Fuegen 2001:707). A general perception is that men are more competent than women in leadership roles. This stereotype affects the evaluations of individual women. Heilman (2001:657) states that the supposed incompatibility between stereotyped attributes associated with women (e.g. kindness, caring and relationship-oriented) and the attributes ascribed to men (e.g. tough, forceful and achievement-oriented) thought to be necessary for success at jobs and positions that are regarded as "male gender-type" jobs, gives rise to expectations that women will not perform well in these positions; and the greater the perceived lack of fit, the more negative the expectations. Of importance is the need to consider the existence of negative attitudes associated with women in leadership positions, attitudes that are gender-specific. This

article argues that a gender-specific framework for the evaluation of leadership development will consider, acknowledge and build in the presence of such attitudes into leadership development evaluation.

The environment in which leadership development of women in local government is implemented creates a context for a gender-based evaluation framework.

THE MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The leadership development programme that forms the central focus of this research conducted for the article is the Municipal Leadership Development Programme offered by the Local Government Leadership Academy (LOGOLA) as part of the Department of Co-Operative Governance (COG). The Municipal Leadership Development Programme consists of four skills modules equalling 38 credits, namely emotional intelligence (8 credits), effective communication (10 credits), problem-solving and analytical thinking (12 credits) and communal knowledge management (12 credits). The skills programme constitutes the core of what is registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as the National Certificate in Leadership Development. The Certificate is positioned at the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4, which is equivalent to a high school grade 12 certificate. This qualification aims to develop skills, knowledge and abilities to function effectively as leaders in municipalities (SAQA 2010:2).

The aim of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme is to develop leadership skills of men and women councillors. This research is motivated by the need to acknowledge gender differences in leadership and leadership development. The impact assessment and evaluation of the result brought about by leadership development have to be gender-specific in order to enable the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes that are not gender-blind but bring a gender perspective into every aspect of leadership development. Gender-blind describes programmes, policies, actions, perceptions and processes that do not take women's needs or gender inequalities into account. A gender perspective identifies and informs actions to address disparities that stem from gender or the inequalities regarding power relationships between men and women and the effect of these imbalances on how men and women lead (Local Government Gender Policy Framework 2006:79).

Seventeen district municipalities have participated in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme since its launch in 2007. Fourteen of these municipalities participated in the first phase of the programme, which is regarded as the pilot phase of the programme. This phase provided leadership

skills development programme's to men and women who were elected and appointed in local government. Three district municipalities participated in the second phase of the programme; this phase of the programme had a specific focus on women in local government. The second phase of the Programme was implemented in collaboration with the Municipal Transformation Programme (CMTP) and various other stakeholders (LOGOLA 2008:1). The distinction between the two phases is that the second phase was aimed specifically at women councillors. With regard to the three district municipalities that were selected for this research, the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality participated in the second phase whereas the Sedibeng District Municipality as well as the Gert Sibande District Municipality participated in the first phase. The results from the research revealed that there was no difference in the content, assessment and evaluation of the Programme in both phases.

A GENDER EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The following section outlines the steps of a gender evaluation framework and provides recommendations for the implementation of this framework in the evaluation framework of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme.

Step 1: Engage stakeholders

The first step in the evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme was a needs assessment to assess the feasibility of a leadership development programme in local government. According to the LOGOLA (2004:7) the former Department of Provincial and Local Government, currently COG, compiled viability reports on municipalities which revealed human capacity challenges such as a lack of skilled and competent staff, councillors' lack of interest and commitment, poor community relations and political interference. The lack of an assessment of the specific individual challenges that women councillors face is a shortcoming in the evaluation framework of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme.

Stakeholders are people who care about what will be learned from the evaluation and what will be done with the knowledge gained (Baker 1995:17). Stakeholders have a vested interest in the evaluation and are in a position to do something with the results. The first step in the implementation of a gender evaluation framework is to engage stakeholders. The views of women councillors who participate in a leadership development programme and who devote their time and energy in the hope to take out useful knowledge, skills,

methods, tools and behaviours have to be taken into consideration specifically to outline the barriers relating to gender. The above did not take place during the development of the Programme. Had the women councillors been engaged, the following would have been heard (as was articulated by councillors who participated in the study):

One woman councillor who participated in the second phase of the programme states as an expectation prior to attending the Programme that she expected the Programme to teach her how to exercise her power as a woman both in the community and at home.

Another participant in the Programme stated that she expected the module on emotional intelligence to help woman councillors' deal with social difficulties.

From the above can be deduced that the engagement of stakeholders do not only ensure that proper attention is paid to expectations regarding content, but that the different needs of men and women be equally considered in the development of content.

Step 2: Conduct the structural evaluation

The structural evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme refers to the evaluation of the programme prior to its implementation. Important elements in the structural evaluation include the need for and feasibility of the Programme, the development of the Programme content as well as the assessments. Following the needs assessment, a design indaba consisting of design experts on leadership, serving councillors and managers was held in order to develop the programme content. The focus of the indaba was generic leadership training and there was no specific emphasis on gender (COG 2010). A recommendation made to the LOGOLA is to ensure that the content of a programme reflects the needs identified in the needs assessment and that the content is indicative of gender specific challenges that women councillors face. The aim of this is to ensure that the content of a programme is based not only on the needs of the municipalities and individuals but also reflects a gender perspective that is required by the external and internal environment governing leadership development.

According to the LOGOLA (2008:4), provincially and locally based facilitators were chosen to implement the Municipal Leadership Development Programme and to ensure that the facilitators would have an understanding of the municipal context to deliver the programme. This is a positive aspect of the current evaluation framework which takes into consideration the language barriers; all women councillors are not fluent in English. A shortcoming in the selection of facilitators is the lack of consideration for the facilitation preferences of women councillors.

- A recommendation is made that the facilitation of leadership development programmes incorporate a gender focus. This recommendation is aligned with the following views of councillors:
- A woman councillor remarked that she "preferred a woman facilitator in facilitating the programme because women are more understanding of the experiences and views of women as opposed to men".

Another councillor also stated that she was more comfortable with a woman facilitator than with a man.

Several methods for assessing participation and competency were used in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme; formative assessment which was done to demonstrate the participants' understanding during each skills module. This was followed by the summative assessment of written assignments as well as portfolios containing evidence of tasks that are specific to the work contexts of the councillors (COG 2010).

The assessment procedures used in the evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme utilised important elements in assessing the extent to which the intended competency levels of councillors were demonstrated. Group activities were used to assess the participants' understanding during the programme and in addition, the participants were given tasks to be completed within their specific work contexts. This enabled women councillors have to point out any challenges that they might have encountered in their leadership roles.

The extent to which gender considerations were incorporated into the assessment criteria for evaluating the competence levels of councillors is questionable. The reality is that, according to COG (2010), after having submitted the portfolios of evidence, assessments were not completed. Thus, the reality is that the desired competence levels of councillors are unclear and the extent to which gender considerations are recognised remains a mystery.

This gender evaluation framework builds on the strengths of the assessment procedures currently in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme, however, recommends an inclusion of tasks that are specifically linked to the gender challenges and barriers that women in local government face. The significance of this is to assess the extent of how the contents of what the councillors have been taught in the Programme assists them in meeting the gender-specific challenges that they face as women in leadership positions in local government.

Step 3: Develop a data collection design

After each of the skills programmes in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme, the participants completed a course evaluation form, the purpose of

which was to determine the participants' perspectives on the programme (COG 2010). The course evaluation forms focused on the content of the programme, the facilitation of the programme, and the weaknesses and strengths of the programme.

The course evaluation forms were designed to learn what had worked and what had not and to determine the immediate reactions of the participants. The facilitators completed a facilitator's feedback report in which they described their experiences with the participants in the programme. The facilitator's feedback report comprises an outline of the objectives of the programme, the participants' expectations regarding the programme as well as the learning points at the end of the training session.

According to COG (2010), a third stakeholder participating in the evaluation of the programme was the representatives of the LOGOLA, who compiled observation reports. The observation report would serve as a third perspective regarding the programme and its impact and the extent to which the programme goals had been met. One of the main challenges is that course evaluation forms, facilitator's feedback reports as well as observation reports that were collected have not been analysed and reviewed in order to learn what had worked and what had not in the implementation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme. Due to the challenges regarding the lack of funding for the Municipal Leadership Development Programme, the evaluation of the Programme could not be continued.

When evaluating skill levels in the beginning of the process and in assessing the extent to which an individual has changed at the end of the process, funders, facilitators, programme developers, and programme participants might have different views (Hannum and Martineau 2008:37). The perspectives of all stakeholders are important to consider all in order to gain the full picture of the Programme's effectiveness. In order to solve this shortcoming, the LOGOLA should conduct interviews with the different Programme stakeholders (Programme sponsors, Programme coordinators, Programme facilitators and the Programme participants) in order to ensure that the goals identified at the start of the evaluation have been met. The interviews should take into account the factor of gender as an element in analysing the effectiveness of the Programme. The importance of this recommendation is also in assisting the evaluations ascertain the extent to which the Programme is effective in assisting women to better handle gender barriers that they face in leadership roles.

Step 4: Conduct the data collection

The evaluation framework of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme indicates two shortcomings in terms of data collection; the data

collection design was limited in that all the stakeholders did not provide feedback regarding their views of the Programme effectiveness, during and after the Programme. The data collection design needs to make provision for all stakeholders to provide input regarding the programme. The data collection designs take into consideration not only the short term but also the long term reactions of the stakeholders. Lastly, the data collection design provides timely, reliable and accurate information. Baker (1995:47) states that the data collection should focus on two factors, quality and quantity.

Step 5: Analyse the data using a gender lens

This article recommends that the LOGOLA analyse the data collected through a gender lens. This means that the data collected be separated and analysed based on gender. Gender-disaggregated data is data that is separated and analysed by gender. The purpose of analysing the data through a gender lens is to ensure that programmes fully incorporate the needs, roles and participation and impact of the Programme on women. This step enables evaluators to ascertain the value of the Programme to women and the impact of the Programme on women. The data collection instruments used in the evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme did not make provision for gender disaggregated data. Gender-disaggregated data and the lack of evaluating the views of the stakeholders using a gender lens means that an assessment of whether women and men perceived the value equally or whether there were differences were not made. The extent to which gender played a role in the determination of the value and whether there were differences regarding the impact are important in order to inform future programmes provided to elected women in local government. There is a need to assess the extent to which gender considerations were built into this stage.

There has to be an analysis of the impact that the Programme has had on women specifically. This entails an analysis of the extent to which women perceive their participation in the Programme as valuable, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme as perceived by the women.

Step 6: Develop Recommendations

A challenge in the evaluation framework of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme is the lack of proper recommendations due to incomplete evaluation. One of the purposes of evaluation is to provide a learning role; this means that the evaluation must provide lessons as to what worked and what didn't in order to inform future leadership development programmes and to ensure that the challenges experienced in the Municipal Leadership Development Programme are not duplicated. After the data is

analysed and separated by gender the findings of the evaluation must be developed and recommendations to municipalities, facilitators, Programme sponsors and Programme participants be identified. The LOGOLA should also develop recommendations for their own evaluation purposes stemming from the data collected from all other stakeholders.

Step 7: Disseminate evaluation results

Due to incomplete evaluation, the results of the Municipal Leadership Development Programme could not be ascertained and disseminated. In this regard the article recommends that the final step in the evaluation of leadership development programmes offered to women in local government should be the dissemination of the research results. Baker (1995:62) states that dissemination is the process of communicating evaluation procedures and lessons learnt to relevant audiences, in a timely, unbiased and consistent manner. The goal of which is to achieve full disclosure and impartial reporting. Dissemination of evaluation results provides a full picture of the views of all Programme stakeholders and the impact and value (if any) it has had on the various stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This article proposed a gender evaluation framework for the leadership development of women in local government was proposed in an effort to improve leadership development programmes. The research made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in terms of the current challenges in leadership development evaluation. The article highlights the importance of promoting gender equality, not only through the employment and election of women in leadership positions but also through the evaluation of programmes aimed at leadership development. Gaps to be filled by future research in this field include an assessment of the implementation of a gender evaluation framework in local government in practice, as well as an investigation into the challenges faced by women in provincial and national spheres of government in terms of their participation and experiences in leadership development programmes.

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