



Change Management In Improving The Quality And Competitiveness Of Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract: Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, faces the challenges of modernization and globalization that demand improvement in quality and competitiveness. This research aims to analyze change management at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidhil Qur'an Sirojul 'Ulum Semanding Terte Pare and Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumber Sari Kencong Kepung in order to enhance quality and competitiveness. The research employs a qualitative approach with a multisite design. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies, and then analyzed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that change management in both pesantren encompasses four dimensions. First, visionary change policies: Sirojul 'Ulum integrates tahfidz education with formal institutions, while Darussalam implements a mu'adalah system and strengthens da'wah. Second, the implementation of changes is carried out participatively through curriculum innovation, learning methods, and community-based da'wah programs. Third, change control is managed through monitoring mechanisms, evaluation, as well as the use of technology and pesantren regulations. Fourth, improvement actions are conducted continuously through curriculum refinement, enhancement of teacher competencies, strengthening the economics of pesantren, and a more adaptive disciplinary approach. This study concludes that effective pesantren change management must integrate visionary policies, participatory implementation, technology and culture-based control, and continuous improvement actions. These findings have theoretical implications in the development of Islamic education management literature, as well as practical implications for pesantren managers and policymakers in supporting quality and competitive pesantren transformation.

Keywords: Change Management, Quality Of Education, Competitiveness, Islamic Boarding Schools, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

Change is an inevitability in every organization, including Islamic educational institutions like pesantren. Along with the pace of globalization and modernization, pesantren are required to maintain Islamic values while also being able to adapt to the changing times in order to remain



relevant and competitive. If changes are not managed properly, pesantren risk losing their appeal, both in terms of educational quality and competitive advantage among formal schools and other modern educational institutions (Mustopa 2020). In this context, change management becomes an urgent necessity to ensure that pesantren can survive and develop as a leading Islamic educational institution.

The quality of education and the competitiveness of Islamic boarding schools are two important interrelated indicators. The quality of education is related to the quality of the learning process and outcomes, from input, process, output, to outcome. Competitiveness, on the other hand, concerns the ability of Islamic boarding schools to provide a competitive edge compared to other educational institutions, both in curriculum implementation, graduate quality, and their contributions to society. Previous research has shown that quality without competitiveness will isolate institutions, while competitiveness without quality will lead to a loss of public trust (Hamalik, 2010; Mutohar, 2014). Therefore, the synergy of both is absolutely necessary for the existence of Islamic boarding schools in the modern era.

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have undergone a long dynamic evolution. As the oldest Islamic educational institution, pesantren were initially known for their traditional model based on the study of yellow books through methods such as bandongan, sorogan, and wetonan (Qomar, 2006). However, since the 1980s, many pesantren have begun to innovate by organizing formal madrasahs, strengthening integrative curricula, and developing management-based governance (Soebahar, 2013). This aligns with Abdurrahman Wahid's view that pesantren is a subculture, as it is capable of preserving its identity while also adapting to social changes (Shidiq, 2011). The modernization of pesantren is not a form of westernization, but rather an effort to contextualize Islamic values so that they remain relevant in responding to the increasingly complex needs of society. (Faruk 2023)

Nevertheless, there are not a few Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) that are experiencing stagnation or even regression. Some pesantren have seen a decline in the number of students, weak management, limited infrastructure, and low quality of human resources among the administrators. This phenomenon indicates a gap between the demands for change and the internal readiness of



the pesantren (Mustajib; Ansori 2021). In such conditions, a systematic change management strategy is necessary, rather than mere spontaneous renewal. Change management theories such as Kurt Lewin's Unfreeze–Change–Refreeze model, Tyagi's participatory orientation, and Mike Green's approach to collective leadership, offer conceptual frameworks that can be adopted to address the challenges faced by pesantren in Indonesia (Wibowo, 2020).

The dynamics are clearly visible in two major pesantrens in Kediri Regency, namely the Pondok Pesantren Tahfidhil Qur'an Sirojul 'Ulum Semanding Tertek Pare and the Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Summersari Kencong Kepung. Both have undergone different institutional transformations but have the same orientation: to improve the quality of education and strengthen competitiveness. Pondok Pesantren Sirojul 'Ulum has transformed from a tahfidz and classical study pesantren into a formal institution ranging from early childhood education to senior high school, with an integrative curriculum and foundation-based leadership. Meanwhile, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam has chosen a change path through the mu'adalah system, modernization of administration, and strengthening of da'wah programs and the pesantren's economic business units (Interview with Ismail, 2023; Observations at Darussalam, 2023).

Both models of change demonstrate that pesantren are no longer just centers of religious education, but also institutions that are required to be competitive in a global context. However, previous research has largely focused on the historical aspects of pesantren (Madjid, 1997), curriculum transformation (Soebahar, 2013), or the leadership of kiai (Anita et al., 2022), with very few examining change management comprehensively from the perspective of quality and competitiveness simultaneously. This is the research gap that this study aims to fill, namely how change management is applied in pesantren to enhance both quality and competitiveness concurrently.

This research is important both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature of Islamic educational management, particularly in developing the concept of change management based on the local wisdom of pesantren. Practically, the findings of this research can serve as a reference for caretakers and managers of pesantren in designing adaptive, participatory, and sustainable change strategies. Furthermore, this research can also provide input



for the government in formulating policies that support pesantren as modern Islamic educational institutions while still being rooted in tradition.

Thus, this research aims to deeply explore the implementation of change management at the Tahfidhil Qur'an Sirojul 'Ulum Islamic boarding school and the Darussalam Summersari Islamic boarding school. The research questions examined include: (1) how the change policies are implemented; (2) how the change processes are carried out; (3) how the change control is conducted; and (4) how corrective actions for change are undertaken to improve quality and competitiveness.

METHOD

The multisite design is used because the research is conducted at two pesantren with different characteristics, namely Pondok Pesantren Tahfidhil Qur'an Sirojul 'Ulum Semanding Tertek Pare and Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Summersari Kencong Kepung. The comparison between sites allows researchers to find similarities and differences in the implementation of change management, thus obtaining a more comprehensive picture. According to Miles and Huberman (2014), multisite design is effective in identifying general patterns as well as the specific context of each research location.

Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and strategies in implementing changes. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for broader exploration of the informants' responses. Second, participatory observation was conducted with the researcher present directly at the Islamic boarding school, following educational activities, religious studies, meetings, and daily activities of the students and administrators. This observation is important to capture real practices that may not be revealed through interviews (Spradley, 2007). Third, document studies were used to obtain written data such as curricula, regulations, financial reports, meeting minutes, preaching bulletins,



and other administrative documents. The combination of these three techniques provides triangulation validity to the data obtained.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Data reduction was performed by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the raw data from interviews, observations, and documents. Data presentation was done in the form of narratives, matrices, and comparison tables between sites. Conclusion drawing was carried out by identifying patterns, themes, and propositions that emerged from the data. Cross-site analysis was also conducted to find common patterns as well as the uniqueness of each pesantren.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the findings, this research employs data validity testing through four strategies, namely: (1) credibility or trustworthiness, conducted through source and method triangulation and member checks with informants; (2) transferability or applicability, achieved by providing detailed contextual descriptions so that the findings can be understood in other contexts; (3) dependability or consistency, maintained through an audit trail and research process documentation; and (4) confirmability or objectivity, conducted by involving discussions with peer researchers and promoters to reduce personal bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With this methodology, the research is expected to provide a valid and in-depth description of the implementation of change management in Islamic boarding schools to enhance quality and competitiveness. A multi-site study also allows for the identification of diverse approaches, thus providing more applicable recommendations for boarding school managers and policymakers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Policy Changes in Improving the Quality and Competitiveness of Islamic Boarding Schools



Research results show that the Tahfidhil Qur'an Sirojul 'Ulum Semanding Pare Islamic Boarding School has established a policy of change oriented towards the integration of Tahfidz education with formal education. Initially, this pesantren only focused on the memorization of the Qur'an and the study of classical texts. However, to meet community demands, the caretakers of the pesantren, together with the foundation, established formal educational institutions ranging from early childhood education (PAUD), kindergarten (RA), elementary school (MI), junior high school (MTs) to senior high school (MA). The integration of the curriculum applied combines the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum with the unique curriculum of pesantren. This was emphasized by Ismail, one of the teachers at MA Sirojul 'Ulum, who stated that "pesantren cannot only survive with traditional patterns. Society now wants institutions that can bridge religious and general education at the same time" (Interview, 03/09/2023).

In addition to curriculum policies, changes also occurred in leadership. Initially, the leadership pattern centered around the figure of the kiai, but it was then shifted to a collective-collegial model based on the foundation. This policy aims to enhance the professionalism of decision-making, encourage the participation of managers, and strengthen administrative transparency. The researcher's observation at the foundation's office shows a clear organizational structure, starting from the board of trustees, foundation managers, to education unit coordinators (Observation, 03/09/2023).

Unlike Sirojul 'Ulum, Darussalam Summersari Islamic Boarding School adopts a policy of change through the implementation of the mu'adalah madrasah system. With this system, graduates of the pesantren receive recognition equivalent to formal schools owned by the government. According to Agus H. Muiz, the head of the pesantren, 'the mu'adalah system is chosen so that alumni are not hindered in continuing their education to higher education or applying for formal jobs' (Interview, 19/02/2022).

Darussalam juga menetapkan kebijakan modernisasi administrasi, yang meliputi penggunaan teknologi seperti CCTV untuk mendukung disiplin santri dan penerapan sistem keuangan berbasis pembukuan terstruktur. Selain itu, pesantren ini memperkuat kebijakan di



bidang dakwah dengan membentuk Lembaga Dakwah Darussalam (LD) yang menerbitkan buletin MIFDA sebagai media komunikasi dengan masyarakat.

Dengan demikian, kebijakan perubahan di kedua pesantren menunjukkan arah yang sama, yaitu peningkatan mutu dan daya saing, meskipun strategi yang dipilih berbeda. Sirojul 'Ulum menekankan integrasi pendidikan formal, sementara Darussalam menekankan sistem mu'adalah dan penguatan dakwah.

The Implementation of Changes in Improving the Quality and Competitiveness of Islamic Boarding Schools

The implementation of changes at Pondok Pesantren Sirojul 'Ulum is evident from the integration of the curriculum and innovative learning methods. The bandongan method, which has long been a hallmark of traditional pesantren, is combined with classical and thematic methods. Observations in the MTs class show that the santri study the yellow book using the halaqah system in the afternoon, while they attend general subjects like mathematics and science in the morning to afternoon (Observation, 03/09/2023).

In the tahfidz program, the implementation of changes is carried out using the tahsin system as an initial stage before students participate in the full memorization program. The students' memorization is evaluated strictly through daily submissions supervised by a musyrif, as well as a structured tasmi' schedule every week. Internal documents of the pesantren record a minimum memorization standard for each level, for example, MA level students are required to master at least 15 juz (Documentation, 2023).

The implementation of changes in leadership is also evident from the routine meetings of the foundation. Researchers noted the existence of monthly meetings that discuss the evaluation of educational programs, finances, and the discipline of the students (Observation, 03/09/2023). With this system, decisions are not only made by the kiai but through joint deliberation with the management.

Meanwhile at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, the implementation of changes is focused on the application of the mu'adalah system. Classroom observations show that the yellow



book curriculum continues to be fully maintained but is supplemented with formal examinations and modern learning administration. Students follow a strict schedule of activities from dawn until night, including book learning, madrasah activities, and da'wah programs (Observation, 04/09/2023).

The implementation of the preaching program is strengthened by sending senior students as preachers to various regions through the Ramadan Safari. This activity is managed by LD Darussalam. In an interview, H. Suwarno, one of the senior alumni, stated that "preaching is a hallmark of Darussalam that distinguishes it from other Islamic boarding schools. Students not only study religious texts but are also accustomed to directly preaching in the community" (Interview, 10/24/2023).

Controlling Change in Improving the Quality and Competitiveness of Islamic Boarding Schools.

Control of changes at the Sirojul 'Ulum Islamic Boarding School is carried out through systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Supervision of student discipline, teacher attendance, and the tahfidz program is recorded in daily and monthly reports. The researcher found documents in the form of attendance records for teachers and students used as evaluation material in monthly meetings (Documentation, 2023). In addition, official leave is granted for students who are unable to attend, indicating the existence of a strict administrative control system.

To maintain the quality of formal education, Sirojul 'Ulum regularly holds monitoring and evaluation (monev) meetings in each educational unit, particularly at the MA level. These meetings involve the head of the madrasa, teachers, and representatives of the foundation. Observations during the monev meetings show discussions related to teacher attendance, learning outcomes, and challenges in the classroom (Observation, 03/09/2023).

On the other hand, change management at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School is carried out through technology-based monitoring and strict regulations. CCTV is installed in strategic areas to monitor the activities of the students, while the boarding school's regulations are outlined in a guidebook that must be followed by all students (Documentation, 2023). Learning evaluations



are conducted through equivalency madrasah examinations with standards set by the government, so that the results can be nationally recognized.

Control over the da'wah program is carried out through supervision by LD Darussalam, which monitors the da'wah safari activities of the students. The publication of the MIFDA bulletin is also supervised by the editorial team to ensure consistency and relevance of the content. With this system, Darussalam is able to maintain the continuity of the program while also improving the quality of its implementation.

Corrective Actions for Change in Improving the Quality and Competitiveness of Islamic Boarding Schools.

The corrective actions at Pondok Pesantren Sirojul 'Ulum are directed at strengthening the quality of the curriculum and the teaching human resources. For example, the integrative curriculum continues to be adjusted to meet community needs, including the addition of information technology-based subjects. Researchers found the implementation of ICT-based teaching modules that have started to be applied in MTs and MA (Documentation, 2023). In addition, teachers are recruited through a competency-based selection process and alignment with the Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah ideology.

Improvements are also made in the aspect of student discipline. The previous one-command system, which was considered too rigid, is being refined with a consultative approach between the supervisors and students. An interview with a senior high school student mentioned that "now the rules are more flexible, we are given space to express our opinions in student forums" (Interview, 03/09/2023).

At the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, corrective actions are taken by enhancing coordination among internal institutions. For example, LD Darussalam collaborates with BUMP (Pesantren-Owned Enterprises) to support da'wah activities through the publication of books and bulletins. In addition, routine evaluations of the mu'adalah program are used as a basis for improving learning modules to better align with national standards.

Improvements in the economic aspects of the pesantren are also made by developing printing and publishing business units. The researcher's observation in the printing unit shows the students'



involvement in the production process, allowing them to not only learn religion but also acquire entrepreneurial skills (Observation, 04/09/2023). Overall, the corrective actions in both pesantren demonstrate a continuous commitment to adapt to changes without abandoning the values of pesantren.

Discussion

Policy of Change: Integrating Traditional Values and the Demands of Modernity

The research results show that the policy changes at Pondok Pesantren Sirojul 'Ulum are aimed at integrating tahfidz education with formal institutions, while Pondok Pesantren Darussalam opts for a mu'adalah system and strengthening da'wah programs. Both demonstrate an awareness that pesantren cannot survive solely with traditional patterns, but must adapt to the needs of modern society.

This phenomenon is in line with Kurt Lewin's (1951) view in the Unfreeze – Change - Refreeze model. In the unfreeze stage, the pesantren realizes the need for change because the old system is no longer adequate to meet the needs of the community. Sirojul 'Ulum, for example, realizes that focusing solely on memorization and traditional texts is not enough to attract the interest of parents of students in the current era. Similarly, Darussalam recognizes the need for a mu'adalah system so that its alumni can continue their education to higher formal levels.

This policy also reflects a pattern of transformational leadership, where the caretakers of the pesantren lead change with a long-term vision, namely to produce graduates who are excellent both religiously and competitively in society (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership model allows the pesantren to undergo transformation without losing its traditional roots.

Previous research shows a similar pattern. Soebahar (2013) indicated that modern pesantren tend to integrate religious and general curricula, and implement leadership reforms from a centralized to a collective-collegial model. This is also evident in Sirojul 'Ulum which has transitioned to foundation leadership. Thus, the policy changes taken by both pesantren are not sporadic steps, but rather part of a larger trend of modernization of pesantren in Indonesia.

Implementation of Changes: Curriculum and Da'wah Program Implementation



The implementation of changes in both pesantren displays different adaptations. Sirojul 'Ulum emphasizes curriculum integration and innovative learning methods, while Darussalam maintains the teaching of the yellow book but adds a modern administrative system and outreach programs. In the perspective of change management theory according to Tyagi (in Uha, 2010), the implementation of change must involve the participation of all parties involved, not just the leadership. This is evident in the regular meeting mechanisms at Sirojul 'Ulum which involve teachers and foundation administrators. On the other hand, Darussalam emphasizes the internalization of da'wah values in the lives of students, which aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning approach, specifically learning based on direct experience.

The curriculum integration carried out by Sirojul 'Ulum can be understood through the curriculum development theory proposed by Tyler (1949). According to him, an effective curriculum must meet four components: objectives, learning experiences, organization of experiences, and evaluation. Sirojul 'Ulum aligns its curriculum objectives with community needs, organizes learning experiences through a combination of halaqah and classical methods, and conducts strict evaluations in the tahfidz program.

The preaching program in Darussalam can be linked to Putnam's (2000) social capital theory. Through Ramadan Safari and the publication of the MIFDA bulletin, the pesantren builds a social network that strengthens its position and reputation in the community. This also increases competitiveness because the pesantren is not only known as an educational institution but also as a center for social empowerment and preaching.

Anwar's research (2011) shows that pesantren that fail to implement changes are often caused by a lack of relevant curriculum implementation and weak community engagement. Therefore, the success of Sirojul 'Ulum and Darussalam in involving both internal and external stakeholders indicates a correspondence with other theories and empirical experiences.

Control of Changes: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Technology

The management of changes in both pesantrens shows different approaches but both are effective. Sirojul 'Ulum relies on routine monitoring and evaluation meetings and the recording of



attendance for teachers and students. Darussalam, on the other hand, uses CCTV technology and written regulations as control instruments.

In control system theory according to Anthony & Govindarajan (2007), organizational control can be carried out through three methods: results control, action control, and personnel/cultural control. Sirojul 'Ulum emphasizes results control through attendance recap and memorization achievement evaluation. Meanwhile, Darussalam utilizes action control through CCTV and regulations, as well as cultural control by emphasizing the value of discipline in the pesantren culture.

This strategy is also relevant to the theory of Bullock and Batten (1985) about the phases of planned change. In the implementation phase, organizations need control mechanisms to ensure that changes do not deviate from the goals. Both pesantren show that control is not only for maintaining discipline but also for ensuring that the quality of education is upheld.

The research by Anita et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of kiai leadership in maintaining the consistency of rules in pesantren. However, this study shows that control is not only based on the figure of the kiai, but has also been expanded through modern administrative instruments and technology. Thus, there is a shift from traditional patterns to modern patterns in the control mechanisms of pesantren.

Corrective Action: Continuous Improvement and Strengthening of Human Resources

The corrective actions taken by Sirojul 'Ulum focus on the enhancement of the integrative curriculum, improvement of teacher quality, and adjustment of disciplinary methods for students. Meanwhile, Darussalam is improving coordination between institutions, developing economic business units, and enhancing the quality of the mu'adalah program. In the perspective of continuous improvement (Deming, 1986), improvement actions are part of a continuous quality cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act). Sirojul 'Ulum demonstrates this cycle by continuously adjusting the curriculum and conducting competency-based teacher selection. Darussalam implements this cycle through the evaluation of mu'adalah modules and the development of the pesantren's economic enterprises.



Corrective actions in the leadership aspect demonstrate shared leadership practices. Pearce & Conger (2003) state that shared leadership allows organizations to be more adaptive to change because decisions are made collectively. This is evident in Sirojul 'Ulum which provides a forum for discussions among teachers and students, as well as in Darussalam which integrates LD and BUMP in support of da'wah.

Corrective actions can also be understood through the theory of organizational learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The pesantren learns from experience, reflecting on its weaknesses, and then making policy corrections. For example, the flexibility of the student rules at Sirojul 'Ulum arises from the reflection that a too rigid command system actually reduces the motivation of the students. Qomar's research (2006) emphasizes that pesantren capable of continuous renewal will remain existent despite facing the challenges of globalization. The findings of this study reinforce that view, as both Sirojul 'Ulum and Darussalam show commitment to continuous improvement.

Conceptual Proposition: The Model of Change Management in Islamic Boarding Schools

From the results of research and discussion, a conceptual proposition can be formulated: "Effective pesantren change management must integrate four dimensions: visionary policies, participatory implementation, technology and culture-based control, and continuous improvement actions." This proposition shows that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) should not only carry out policy reforms, but also ensure that implementation, control, and improvement proceed simultaneously. Thus, the quality and competitiveness of pesantren can continue to be enhanced without losing the identity of tradition.

This discussion shows that change management in pesantren can be understood through a combination of classical theories (Lewin, Tyler, Bullock & Batten) and modern theories (transformational leadership, continuous improvement, shared leadership). The research findings enrich the literature by demonstrating that pesantren are capable of adapting modern management theories within the context of local wisdom and Islamic values.

The Sirojul 'Ulum Islamic boarding school and Darussalam Islamic boarding school are examples that pesantren can change without losing their traditions. Curriculum integration, the mu'adalah system, the strengthening of da'wah, and administrative modernization are



manifestations of pesantren's adaptation in facing global challenges. Through strategies of policy, implementation, control, and continuous improvement, pesantren are able to enhance quality and competitiveness simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The policy changes in both boarding schools show an awareness of the importance of modernization without abandoning the roots of tradition. Sirojul 'Ulum establishes a policy of integrating Tahfidz education with formal institutions from early childhood education to senior high school, as well as a foundation-based leadership transformation. Meanwhile, Darussalam chooses a mu'adalah system policy to obtain formal recognition for graduates, modernize administration, and strengthen the da'wah program through the Darussalam Da'wah Institution. The implementation of changes is carried out with different strategies but with the same orientation, namely the improvement of educational quality. Sirojul 'Ulum emphasizes curriculum integration, innovative learning methods, and a strict memorization system. Meanwhile, Darussalam maintains the teaching of yellow books while complementing it with a modern administration system and da'wah practices through Ramadan Safaris.

Change management is carried out using different instruments. Sirojul 'Ulum uses a mechanism of routine monitoring and evaluation through monthly meetings, administrative reports, and supervision of the attendance of teachers and students. Darussalam employs CCTV technology, written regulations, and direct supervision of the preaching programs as well as the publication of the MIFDA bulletin. Corrective actions for changes are carried out continuously. Sirojul 'Ulum improves the integrative curriculum, enhances teacher competencies, and implements a more participative disciplinary approach. Darussalam strengthens coordination between institutions, improves the quality of the mu'adalah modules, and develops economic business units for the pesantren such as printing and publishing. This research formulates the conceptual proposition that effective pesantren change management must integrate visionary policies, participatory implementation, technology and culture-based control, and continuous



improvement actions. With this integration, pesantren can maintain their traditional identity while also improving quality and competitiveness in facing global challenges.

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International Journal of Education Management and Religion

Volume 2 No 2 July 2025

E-ISSN: 3090-3145

<https://journal.as-salafiyah.id/index.php/ijemr/index>

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