



BUREAUCRATIC DEFICIENCY AND ORGANISATION'S GOAL-ATTAINMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN: BARNARDS COOPERATIVE SYSTEM AS A PANACEA

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ABSTRACT

The paper unraveled the inherent flaws of bureaucracy as a clog in the progress wheel of accomplishment in the University of Benin and outlining Chester Barnard's organisation's theory as a panacea for goal-attainment. The quest for efficient and effective organisational performance for goal-attainment, consumers satisfaction and service provision has occupied the nucleus of organisational discourse all over the world. While Max Weber's bureaucratic postulation was hitherto perceived as a unique blend of principles and efficiency to achieve this, the time past has proven that its concomitant nuances have rendered its potency archaic thereby accentuating the need for a new approach in organisational goal-attainment. The paper utilised the qualitative research design involving indepth interview of staff conveniently selected from the ICT and Security departments as well as few students in final year and the result was analysed on a thematic basics with five (5) different themes. Findings revealed that bureaucratic over reliance in the university has brought about institutional distrust, administrative bottleneck, communication breakdown, weak informal network and the need for cooperative leadership. Thus, the paper concludes that Weberian bureaucracy, while foundational, is insufficient in addressing contemporary organisational challenges as the interview revealed in the University of Benin. The paper recommends that management should strengthen interdepartmental communication by ensuring a simple and accessible channel of communication without undue interference. Also, the university management should imbibe the culture of incentives (monetary and non-monetary) for its workers outside the little stipends already provided by the government.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Deficiency, Goal-attainment, Co-operative system, Hierarchy

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic structures and their impacts on service delivery in public organisations and institutions are of huge interest to policy makers and public administrators, especially as it pertains to policy articulation. It represents an ideal form of public administration with a robust structure that facilitates the attainment of public goals, service rendition and citizens' satisfaction due to its overwhelming emphasis on fairness, rationality, discipline and equity in organisational governance. As Kali (2021) noted, bureaucracy represents the whole gamut of management system that emphasises structured organisation with well-defined authority and positions. That is why the concept is an important pillar in modern governance systems (Chimezie, Umo & Madu, 2024) as well as institutional management (Rom, Hidaka & Walker, 2022) and has historically provided the intellectual foundation for administrative systems in public organisations.

The bureaucratic model, as postulated by Max Weber, remains one of the most influential frameworks in the discourse of organisational theory due to the extreme formalism it exudes and its implications for organisational efficiency. Its emphasis on hierarchical authority, formal rules, and impersonality has shaped administrative structures in public institutions, including universities (Weber, 1947). However, contemporary organisational environments increasingly demand flexibility, collaboration, and innovation (qualities often constrained by rigid bureaucratic systems). Modern large-scale organisations have become outrightly complex, dynamic, and knowledge-driven and are no longer mere administrative entities but innovation hubs requiring collaboration, adaptability, and rapid decision-making.

In Nigeria, bureaucratic rigidity has been identified as a major impediment to effective service delivery in public institutions (Obiekwe, 2025). Extant literatures demonstrate that bureaucratic systems often stifle creativity, delay decision-making, and discourage initiative among employees as a result of its extreme mechanistic orientation, opaque formalisation of social relations, and the machination of the human elements. These challenges cut across the nucleus of the University of Benin's administrative and academic wall, but are however evidence in the ICT and Security departments, where strained relationships and poor cooperation between management and colleagues undermine operational efficiency thereby leading to the rendition of unsatisfactory services. This background necessitated the examination of the applicability of Chester Barnard's organisational approach of cooperative systems as an alternative pathway for enhancing organisational goal attainment in the University of Benin with reference to the ICT and the Security departments.

Democracy is regarded as one of the rational systems representing an indispensable tool in the effective management of any organisation, public or private, that has clearly defined objectives and goals to be achieved (Rasak, 2013)). Hence, bureaucracy is a key feature of educational institutions especially in tertiary institutions which are part of large-scale organisations. In this regard, Pius-Uwhubetiyi (2021) opined that bureaucracy has been an aspect in education that is indispensable in any organisation and has clearly defined objectives to be carried out whether private or public. Despite its positive orientation and utilization for efficient goal-attainment in the organisation, its rigid application has generated significant dysfunction in organisations, particularly the University of Benin's ICT and Security departments.

According to Kagera et al (2022), this vicious and hostile climate has cascading effects within departments, leading to poor interpersonal relationships, fragmented communication, and low morale. As a result, staff rely excessively on formal procedures as substitutes for trust-based collaboration thereby creating an environment for dishonesty, mutual suspicion and apprehension. It should be noted that while strict adherence to procedures and rules ensure compliance, they also create delays, inefficiencies, and resistance to innovation. This is why (Obiekwe, 2025) argued that bureaucratic systems in Nigerian organisations often produce "operational inefficiency" and discourage creativity among employees. Similarly, Yakubu (2025) resolved that bureaucratic bottlenecks hinder timely decision-making and effective policy implementation in university administration and governance. In the University of Benin, with reference to ICT and Security departments, the persistence of these challenges raises critical questions about the suitability of Weberian bureaucracy for contemporary university governance. There is therefore a need to explore alternative framework that prioritises cooperation, communication, and shared purpose.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to examine alternative approaches to organisational goal attainment beyond Weberian bureaucracy in the University of Benin. The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the impact of bureaucratic practices on employees' performance in the university of Benin;
- ii. evaluate the applicability of Chester Barnard's theory of organisation in boosting the performance of staff in the University of Benin; and
- iii. propose a framework and mechanisms for improving collaboration and efficiency to attain the university's goals

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been generated for the research:

- i. What are the impacts of bureaucratic practice on employees' performance in the university of Benin?
- ii. What is the applicability of Chester Barnard's theory of organisation in boosting the performance of in the university of Benin?
- iii. How can the university of Benin improve collaboration in order to achieve an efficient goal-attainment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bureaucracy and Organisation's Goal-attainment: A Conceptual Nexus

The concept of bureaucracy is most prominently associated with the works of Max Weber, who conceptualised it as a rational-legal form of organisation designed to ensure efficiency, predictability, and control in administrative processes (Weber, 1947). Weber identified bureaucracy as the most technically efficient form of organisation in modern societies due to its reliance on formalized rules and specialized roles. Since Weber's postulation, recent scholarship has refined its meaning beyond the classical theoretical formulations that centered on basically organisational principles and structures. According to Christensen & Lægheid (2025), bureaucracy is a formalized system of organisation characterized by hierarchical authority, standardized procedures, specialized roles, and rule-bound operations designed to ensure coordination and control. Other scholars of public administration emphasized that bureaucracy is not merely a rigid administrative structure but a governance logic that combines formalisation, accountability, and managerial control.

To this extent, Jugl (2025) noted that bureaucracy is a patterned administrative system grounded in institutional traditions and formal rules that shape how public organisations operate across contexts. For Woelert & Stensaker (2025), the term can be seen from two distinct perspectives which are: an organisational apparatus for implementing policies and achieving governmental objectives, and a normative institution guided by professionalism, merit, and legal-rational authority. Whichever way it is defined, the basic tenet is that bureaucracy is structured, rule-bound administrative system and the outcome is a mechanized, predictability and accountability oriented. Irrespective of whatever meaning that has been associated with bureaucracy; the concept remains essential and cannot be easily discarded or be swept under the carpet (Obiekwe, 2025).

Organisation goal-attainment on the other hand refers to the degree to which an organisation successfully realizes its stated objectives through coordinated actions, resource deployment, and strategic management processes. Recent literature situates this concept within performance management, strategic public management, and organisational behavior. According to Bryson, George, and Seo (2022), organisational goals are foundational components of strategic public management, and organisations are inherently goal-directed entities whose effectiveness depends on how well these goals are formulated, communicated, and implemented. Gibb, Billinger, & Haar (2026) expanded this view by linking goal-attainment to goal-setting processes, employee commitment, and autonomy, therefore, arguing that effective organisations are those that successfully align individual behaviors with organisational objectives to drive performance outcomes.

This is why Bryson et al (2022) argued that in applied contexts, especially in public sector organisations, goal-attainment is increasingly understood as a multidimensional construct involving effectiveness (achievement of stated objectives); efficiency (optimal use of resources); alignment (coherence between individual, department, and organisational goals) and accountability (measurable outcomes and performance standards). In this context and viewed from a multi-dimensional prism, organisational goal-attainment can be defined as the extent to which an organisation achieves its predefined objectives through effective coordination, strategic goal-setting, and alignment of resources and human efforts within a structured system.

Bureaucracy and organisation's goal-attainment are intricately linked to the extent that the latter represents the aim of the former when effectively utilised in an ideal situation. As Jugl (2025: 281) expressly opined, "bureaucracy is fundamentally an instrument for organisation's goal-attainment. In contemporary public administration theories and practices, bureaucratic systems are designed to translate political or managerial goals into actionable outcomes through formal structures and procedures. It must however be noted that modern perspectives also acknowledged paradoxically that while bureaucratic formalisation enhances predictability and accountability, excessive rigidity may

constrain innovation and reduce adaptive capacity thereby affecting goal-attainment in dynamic environments like the University of Benin.

Bureaucratic features/Ideals and manifestations in Complex Organisations

A robust distillation of the concept produces scholarly orientation that echoed Max Weber's original idea which have now been interpreted into numerous features, characteristics and manifestations. Accordingly, extant literatures (Tonwe, 2023; Sapru, 2013; Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2012 and Nnamdi, Offiong & Tonwe; 2009) outline key characteristics of bureaucratic organisations. These distinctive features of bureaucracy highlight the technicality of administration inherent in the ideal system and functioning of large-scale organisations and public institutions like the university.

Division of work: Bureaucratic systems divide tasks and responsibilities among specialised roles or positions. This division of labor allows for increased efficiency and expertise in specific areas thereby leading to specialization (Chimezie, Umoh & Madu, 2025).

Hierarchy: Bureaucratic organisations are structured hierarchically, with clear lines of authority and a defined chain of command. Each level of the hierarchy has its own set of responsibilities and authority, with lower levels reporting to higher ones (Sapru, 2013).

Extensive record keeping: Bureaucratic organisations, in Weber's view, are renowned for extensive inventory system that facilitates keeping records and proper filling of decisions, memorandum, instructions and written rules. Administration works based on records and as such, agreements, individual records, and other correspondences are adequately documented for reference purposes (Nnamdi, Offiong & Tonwe; 2009).

Institutionalization of rules and procedures: Bureaucratic organisations operate according to formalised rules, regulations, and procedures. These rules govern both the behavior of individuals within the organisation and the decision-making processes (Tonwe, 2023).

Expert training: Bureaucratic organisations value expertise, and as such they engage highly in training and development of workers. With individuals assigned to roles based on their specific skills and training, efficiency and effectiveness is increased in organisational output.

Impersonality of interpersonal relations: Bureaucratic systems strive for impersonality in interactions and decision-making. Decisions are based on objective criteria rather than personal preferences or biases, and individuals are treated equally according to established rules and procedures (Rom, Hidaka & Walker, 2022).

Merit system: Bureaucracies typically emphasise merit-based selection and promotion processes with adherent to discipline. Employment and advancement within the organisation are based on qualifications, skills, and performance rather than personal connections or favoritism. This ensures a rational system of personnel administration and decision-making (Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2012).

Career structure: bureaucratic organisations possess a career structure that defines a system of tenure of office. Career structure, in Weber's view, protects the office holder or the incumbent from arbitrary actions of the superior. As such, the removal of subordinates from office should follow due process and in accordance with the extant rules and regulations.

Bureaucracy represents an ideal form of public administration with a robust structure that enhances and facilitates organisational goal-attainment in large and complex organisations as discussed in the features above. In its ideal manifestation, bureaucracy emphasizes fairness, rationality, discipline and equity into public administration. As Kali (2021) argued, it is a management system that emphasises structured organisation with well-defined authority and positions. Despite playing immense role in the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness in tertiary institutions, bureaucracy has been trailed by several criticisms. These criticisms have been echoed as the factors that exude dysfunctionality and deficiency in the organisation thereby leading to poor attainment of organisational goals and objectives.

A review of literatures (Obiekwe, 2025; Yakubu, 2025; Chimezie, Umoh & Madu, 2024; Davies, Nsiegbe, & Elike, 2024; Rom et al, 2022 and Sulastin, Brahmasari & Ratih, 2019) outlines the inherent dysfunctionality and deficiency of bureaucracy which include: red tape (excessive and unnecessary delays and obstacles to decision-making and implementation; resistance to change (due to entrenched processes, hierarchical structures, and risk-averse cultures); fragmentation (departments or departments operating in isolation from one another); poor accountability (due to unclear lines of responsibility, inadequate performance measurement systems, or a culture of impdepartmenty);

resource Constraints (limited funding, staffing shortages, or outdated technology) and extreme rigidity (transforming workers to machine and programmed robots that ensures predictability).

CHESTER BARNARDS ORGANISATION'S THEORY: A THEORETICAL UNRAVELING

The classical theories of organisation created a mechanistic perception of the organisation that perceived the human being as economic elements whose motivation can only be monetary. As a philosophical revolution against the shortcomings of the human mechanisation orientation embedded in the structural theories, the neoclassical school of thought emerged to pacify the human beings in the organisation as crucial elements and partners in organisational growth and development. Thus, Barnard's organisational theory of cooperative system (developed in 1938) belongs to the neoclassical theories of organisation that de-emphasizes extreme focus on the structural aspect of the organisation and emphasizes humanistic tradition that sees humans as social animals that thrive on social interaction rather than simple economic and material incentives alone.

The theory sees the organisation as a system of consciously coordinated personal activities of two or more persons held together by the capacity to generate common purpose, by willingness on the part of its members to contribute to its processes, and by effective communication (Sharma, Sadana & Kaur (2012; Barnard, 1938)). Thus, the organisation generally a social system where the social environment of the job affects the people and communication is required for effective functioning and in expressing the feelings and sentiments of people working in it. This assertion highlights the key recognition of the roles the individuals play in organisational goal attainment.

Barnard's organisational theory is founded on key components or aspects which include: cooperative efforts, due to individual's limitation to achieve ends (Nnamdi, Offiong & Tonwe, 2009); informal organisation co-existing in a formal organisation, made up of group orientation and relationships not defined by formal structure (Levitt & March, 1995); the economy of incentives, that is hinged on the need for human inducement based on the principle of contribution-satisfaction equilibrium beyond monetary (Sapru, 2013); authority acceptance, in which the individual acceptance of authority is based on its consistency of the communication and compatibility with the organisation's interest (Gabor & Mahoney, 2010); communication, a defined communication channel that is made known and accessible to all, without having to jump the line in the process and must be man by skilled personnel (Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2012); and the executive functions, the existence of an executive (leader) to provide a coordinated system of communication, provide structure for cooperative efforts and formulate organisation's purposes for goal-attainment (Nnamdi, Offiong & Tonwe 2009).

The University of Benin represents a complex organisation inhibiting all aspect of bureaucratic attributes with the tendency to experience excessive delay in administrative processes leading to fragmentation due to absolute reliance on rules and regulations. The Security department and the ICT department are both crystalised in this web of structural absoluteness and mechanistic orientation. Due to the complex duties they perform in terms of technology for admission application, processing and online records management as well as the safety of lives and properties in the campus, the both departments need a wide array of framework that will drive cooperation between management and among staff of the institution. Thus, the roles of social interaction, mutual cooperation, effective communication, efficient leadership and incentives (both monetary and non-monetary) cannot be overstated in executing their tasks effectively for the overall interest of the staff and students in particular and the achievement of the school's goal in general.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts the qualitative design which involves a non-statistical method of data analysis using the interview method. This design has been found to be suitable for exploring complex organisational dynamics and interpersonal relationships. Beyond the adoption of the qualitative research design, the study area included the University of Benin, with special focusing on the duo departments of ICT and Security. The justification stems from the fact that both departments have direct links and interaction with both staff and students on the one hand, and with the management on the other hand. Also, the technological advancement of the school and the safety of its campus are both intertwined and are quite germane for the rendition of quality services by the institution.

There is therefore the need to maintain a constant balance between extreme bureaucracy and informal frameworks so as to have innovative minds exhibiting their tasks with satisfaction. A population of 30 respondents (made up of 12 ICT staff, 12 security officials and 6 students) were selected through a non-probability sampling technique of convenient sampling. The choice of the inclusion of the students results from the need to balance the responses due to the fact that they are mostly affected by this bureaucratic tendency in both ICT and Security departments. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to share experiences and perceptions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In analysing the results of the interview, the thematic analysis was used in accordance with the patterns and directions of the responses by the various respondents. The responses from the respondents followed a particular pattern, upon transcription, which were categorized into themes such as: institutional distrust, bureaucratic overdependence, communication breakdown, weak informal institution and the need for cooperative leadership.

Theme 1: Institutional Distrust between ICT, Security staff and management Findings from the analysis of interview responses revealed that the extreme adherence to formality has created a loophole of distrust between the management and staff of the various departments under study on the one hand and among fellow colleagues on the other hand. This opaque work place behaviour undermines cooperation, innovation and reinforces reliance on enmity. As one of the interviewees noted when asked to describe their relationship with the management staff, *"there is a very toxic relationship between our office and management because some people among us here go to gossip about things that did not happen to management so they present themselves as saints."* This pattern of response reoccurred among many of the respondents while nothing that the implication became a very difficult situation of distrust.

This finding aligns with the study done by Sulastin., Brahmasari. & Ratih (2019) where it was alluded to that bureaucratic culture can imbibe distrust in workers' performance due to the over bearing level of suspicion it portends and the concomitant poor social interaction. Two of the respondents argued that they were arrested by the state security forces on the suspicion of leaking information to a contractor. When distrust becomes the order of the day, every one becomes a suspect. This has impacted negatively on the students who responded that the communication between them and the security and the ICT staff is largely hostile without reproachment.

Theme 2: Bureaucratic Overdependence in the Institution

Participants in the interview process revealed that there is deep rooted overreliance or dependence on bureaucratic processes in the university leading to excessive paper work, delay in administrative processes and rigid attention to details. This aligns with one of the avalanches of criticisms levied against bureaucracy as postulated by Weber, red-tapism. As Ike (2018:15) noted, *"excessive bureaucracy and administrative procedures can impede efficiency and effectiveness by creating unnecessary delays in making decisions in the organisation."* Corroborating this assertion, Chimezie, Umoh & Madu (2024: 78) posited that *"one of the challenges to efficiency of bureaucracy in Nigeria is structural rigidity and resistance to change due to the excessive dependence on procedural paper work and the delay that comes with it."*

In the light of this, one of the interviewees in the ICT department reported an incident that had to do with the health of his close family member which necessitated him to request for two weeks leave. Due to the delay, he proceeded with the leave with the notion that it would be granted, upon returning, he was queried by his boss to explain why he went on leave without approval. Thus, bureaucratic delay, due to rigidity, has caused several issues to fester within an organisation.

Theme 3: Communication Breakdown in the University System

Responses from the interview revealed that the existence of distrust between management and the various departments and among colleagues within the same departments have created an ineffective channel of communication among them. This has led to a wholesale misunderstanding and most times, insurmountable conflict, bickering and other forms of internal wrangling. As some of the interviewees

in both departments unanimously posited, *“in this department, to your tent o Israel”* (translated to mean keeping to oneself due to distrust). As Bakare (2021:24) argued, strict adherence to rules and regulations and the robotic nature of bureaucratic practices may create a condition in which workers become fragmented, with departments or departments operating in isolation from one another. This can lead to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and communication breakdowns.

This is what Pius-Uwhubetiyi (2021) regarded as “Silos,” a situation in which organisational structures are fragmented with each department performing tasks without the desire to cooperate with the other. This tendency is quite detrimental to the attainment of the university’s goals which places the priorities of staff and students at the core of performance. Some of the students asserted that most times, the services are poor because no one among the ICT and security staff is willing to listen to complains when they observe that a particular student has personal relationship with another colleague who is not in their click.

Theme 4: Weak Informal Networks Among Staff

The study also revealed that the bureaucratic nature of the departments in particular, and the university at large has created a vacuum leading to the absence of a virile informal relationships or networks among staff of the institution. This situation has limited, to a large extent, collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing among staff of the two departments. The classical theories of organisation, which bureaucracy is part of, only provides room for formality and attempts to make the individual a predictable human machine. This against the humanistic postulation of the human relations school of thought that emphasis the role of social relations, social interactions and informal organisation. This weak informal structure stifles departmenty and togetherness in the university thereby making people to resist change.

This view is rooted on extant study by Yakubu (2025); Davies Nsiegbe Elike (2024) and Rasul & Rogger (2013). It is their contention that extreme bureaucratic practices may be resistant to change due to the high level of entrenched processes, hierarchical structures, and risk-averse cultures. This can hinder innovation and adaptation to changing circumstances as the study has revealed in the university of Benin. As some responses revealed, *“coming to the office and doing one job every day without social activities so boring and weaking morals, attempts to do new things is met with strict resistance.”* As tonwe (2023) opined, a very strong informal network can finetune the formal network for effective and efficient attainment of goals and objectives in the organisation. This is weak in the University of Benin as the study revealed.

Theme 5: The Need for Cooperative and Participatory framework in the ICT and Security Departments

Responding to the questions of how can collaboration be improved and what changes would enhance efficiency, respondents across both the ICT and Security departments, emphasised the urgent need for a participatory and inclusive decision-making processes to drive cooperation and boost morals of staff. Corroborating this finding, the participants in the ICT department made reference to a former director who operated a participatory model that led to effective utilization of staff with and prompt completion of tasks. One of them posited that “that period has been my best era in this school. According to Chimezie, Umoh & Madu (2025:79) “empowering employees to take ownership of their work and make decisions can increase motivation, engagement, and productivity”. Therefore, providing training and development oportdepartmenties, delegating decision-making authority, and creating a supportive environment for experimentation and learning are useful tools of management relations for effective goal-attainment in the University of Benin.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing has revealed that the challenges of bureaucratic practices in the institution have crippled efficient service delivery and consequently rendered organisational goal-attainment tenuous. The responses from the interview also revealed that the bureaucratisation has left staff more demoralized, unproductive and redundant. This account for why the study revealed that there is need to change approach in order to create a working environment that is sociable, magnifying, and with social relations. This will enable a situation of staff participation, innovation, interaction and trust. It is with

this regard that the Barnard's theory of organisation becomes a panacea. The study concludes that Weberian bureaucracy, while foundational, is insufficient in addressing contemporary organisational challenges as the interview revealed in the University of Benin where routinely immersed formality has contributed to distrust and inefficiency. A shift toward cooperative organisational systems is necessary for effective goal attainment because when people are given the leverage to socialise and cooperate, with commensurate incentive, effective communication channel and organic leadership framework, the potency for effective goal-attainment becomes inevitable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As revealed from the study, a shift towards a cooperate framework will increase the potency for productivity that is rooted in efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, the quest for optimum performance of duty in the university, especially in the Security and ICT departments can be achieved through the following recommendations:

The management of the university should adopt and encourage a more friendly approach that will enhance participatory governance structures in relating with the staff in the various departments. This will help to ensure inclusiveness thereby maintaining good social interaction among staff.

Also, the management of the school should strengthen interdepartmental communication, and coherence by ensuring a simple and accessible channel of communication without undue interference and considering effective communicator with the requisite skill-set to head the superior position and not just by paper qualifications.

Beyond that, management should promote trust-building initiatives by initiating programmes that can create bonds among staff of the institution. This trust-building van also be facilitated by rebuking gossips and having a reconsideration mindset about open rebuke of staff for minor error or offences.

Furthermore, the quest for effective goal-attainment in the university can be achieved by reducing procedural bottlenecks. Over reliance on paper work can cause excessive delay that is capable of escalating an issue before a decision is made. Administrative discretion should be allowed in some cases to shield the staff or students from the venom of problem elongation.

The Univserty Management should imbibe the culture of incentives (monetary and non-monetary) for its workers outside the little stipends already provided by the government. The study revealed that staff in the departments under study are overworked and are treated as machines without recourse to appreciation. This does not augur well for any organisation with the intention of goal-attainment.

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