SHAPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article investigates the problem of shaping communicative competence among university students. We have carried out a theoretical analysis of academic, methodological and teaching literature on the shaping of the future teacher's communicative competence. We have specified the notion of "communicative competence" as a major component of professional competency of the student as a future teacher. A Model of shaping communicative competence among university students have been elaborated and put into practice. We have also identified educational conditions that foster efficient shaping of communicative competence of the student as a future teacher. The model of shaping communicative competence among university students is recommended for use when elaborating educational standards and programs in higher education.

Keywords: Communicative competences, student, university, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Methodological and theoretical aspects of the competence approach have been widely discussed by a number of researchers (Abu-Ras, A.S. (2002); Yessen B. Omarov, et. al., (2016); Chown A.(1994); Patima Makhashova, et. al., (2016). The competence approach is not completely new, since knowledge acquisition orientation, its practical applications and acquisition of generalized courses of action have been analyzed in the research studies by Berkimbaev, K.M. et. al., (2012); Sakenov, D.Zh. et. al., (2012); Gifford S. (1994); McClelland D.C. (1973) and their successors. Large-scale changes taking place in modern society demand that higher education institutions train highly educated and many-sided professionals who feel confident when it comes to choosing optimal ways of self-development and self-improvement, who are able to work in team, responsive, creative, flexible when facing life's collisions and able to acquire necessary knowledge and apply it in practice when meeting various challenges in all walks of life. Modern-day professionals are taught to think creatively and independently, to address problems and find ways to respond to them, to be creative, sociable, tolerable and able to come up with new ideas as well as to work on improving their own morality,

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intellect and general culture. As far as professional training is concerned, it is only possible to achieve such results by revising the content of education in terms of the competence approach. The educational paradigm shift that is now taking place in society determines the need for implementing the competence approach into the educational system. At the same time, change of beliefs and values shifts priorities from the adaptability principle to the competence principle in respect to university graduates. As of today, the teachers' qualifications do not yet meet the new socio-economical requirements and are not in line with the educational paradigm shift. Teacher training is fundamentally empirical and lacks proper scientific substantiation. Specialist training enabling students to become highly professional in their field along with efficiency increase in higher education are pressing goals. Research studies by Anara Zhumasheva et. al., (2016); Onalbek Zh. K. et. al., (2013); White, R.W. (1959), among others, suggests concepts revealing key aspects of and directions for improving the quality of higher professional education. Research by Ch. (1994); Sakenov, D.Zh. et. al., (2012); Vipin Kumar Sharma. (2015); McClelland D.C.(1973) and others have laid scientific foundations for fostering professional teacher training. The goals and outcomes of teacher training demonstrate that every person in this study program inevitably faces three of its factors: the content one, the personality one and the procedural (technological) one. In other words, professional training includes tackling tasks related to what the specialist is expected to know in terms of his responsibilities, how he or she intends to use his or her knowledge for the job, what personal qualities the specialist should have so that his or her knowledge and skills produce the best possible results. However, we consider communicative competence to be one of the key elements in teacher training, since it is an integral part of each teacher's professional competence and a crucial indicator of the individual's abilities in terms of personal fulfillment. The need to develop the student's communicative competence as a future teacher is due to the fact that the teacher's professional activity is directed at shaping human personality and, to this end, intense activity and meaningful communications are mandatory. It is of utmost importance not only to train future teachers to obtain relevant information, but also to think it over logically, evaluate it and share their views with others. The teacher maintains ongoing communication, which includes multidimensional relations with learners, their parents and colleagues. In this regard, the teacher, being a representative of the "person/person" occupational group, should have high communicative competence, that is, extensive communicative skills that are an integral part of his or her professional competence as a teacher.

Professional communicative competence has been discussed in a number of research studies, including Henner, E.K.(2004); Savignon, S. (1976); Alptekin, C. (2002); Nazari, A. (2007); Canale, M. & Swain M. (1980); Light, J.C. (1997); Celce-Murcia et. al., (1995); Kramsch, C. (2006); Hymes, D. (1972). According to these researchers, the notion of communicative competence refers to the need in

communication, intensity and breadth of communication; the ability to speak and listen, convince and respect the opinions of the interlocutor; the specific nature of the emotional response to the obtained information and to the interlocutor's personality; one's own well-being during the communication process; the ability to control oneself, to give an adequate self-evaluation and not only that of the communication partner. Communicative competence implies communication skills required to function within a specific professional team and an ability to produce and interpret professionally significant statements. In order to achieve this, the future specialist should master the specific features of professional communication in this or that sphere of activity along with language behavior norms ensuring efficiency with which he or she responds to the professional challenges. Communicative competence is exactly what young people and students need for successful self-determination in the world of work, of continuous education and of interpersonal social relationships, which highlight the significance and relevance of the present study.

Despite considerable theoretical and practical achievements in shaping communicative competence among future teachers, there can be no denying that special attention should be given to working out educational conditions for the shaping of communicative competence. This is essential, since a teacher's communicative competence is made manifest not only in tackling professional tasks, but also in how the individual perceives, assesses and understands the world beyond his or her profession. After all, it is the teacher who determines whether favorable and democratic environment will be created in the classroom, whether students will act as active participants and whether they will be able to live a full-fledged life. In teacher training programs, insufficient attention is, however, given to developing future teachers' ability to consciously build interaction with students, their parents and colleagues by using linguistic means; to distinguish, when communicating, one's own meanings and those of other people and to understand that these meanings may not be the same and that the art of communication consists exactly in the ability to coordinate various meanings, in other words, to foster mutual understanding. Teachers are not sufficiently ready to work systematically on shaping students' communicative skills through school subjects and, to explain this, point at the following factors: lack of necessary resource materials; difficulties in setting criteria for communication skills development; insufficient professional competence in this type of activity.

Our analysis of the current state of communicative competence development among students, university and school teachers testifies that both students and teachers highlight the importance of shaping communicative competence and the low level of communicative competence, which is to be developed while attending school. Taking into consideration the existing problem regarding the shaping of communicative competence of the future teacher, it would be beneficial to give special attention to the shaping of communicative competence among students

as future teachers who would speak fluently, choose independently the style of professional communication and activity and draw extensively, in their work, on the general pedagogical knowledge meeting the modern school requirements. Inadequate knowledge of the conditions emerging within the higher education system and contributing to the shaping of future teachers' communicative competence determines the relevance of the present study.

Consequently, despite the fact that high communicative competence is needed for successful self-determination and self-fulfillment in the future teaching activities and in efficient interpersonal and social relationships, contradictions still exist, in teacher training, between the following factors:

– An increased need in highly professional communication among teachers and a low level of their real communicative competence;

– The need for shaping communicative competence of students as future teachers and deficient educational conditions necessary for its achievement.

Based on the above-mentioned contradictions, we have defined our research project, its essence being the identification of educational conditions contributing to the shaping of communicative competence of students as future teachers. Once the problem has been defined, our research objective has been set as follows: to determine educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students.

METHODS

The following approaches have been adopted for our research on educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students: the holistic approach, the management approach, the activity approach, the competence approach in professional education, the personality-oriented approach, the context approach, the technological approach and various technologies in higher education.

The theoretical foundations for our research on educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students are as follows: professional education and specialist personal development theories, theories of the competence approach in education, theoretical foundations for the notions of "competence" and "communicative competence", the activity theory.

In order to achieve our objective, that is, to determine educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students, we have used the following research methods:

– Theoretical research methods: study and analysis of philosophical, sociological, educational and psychological studies on communicative competence; study and analysis of relevant notions and terminology and of

scholarly approaches to the subject under study (determining educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students); synthesis, comparison, summary;

– Empirical research methods: study and summary of previous research on determining educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students; discussions with students, university and school teachers; surveys, observations; independent reference summary method; method of mathematical and statistical data processing; modeling, teaching experiments on studying educational conditions for shaping communicative competences among university students.

RESULTS

Upgrading in the higher professional education system should be directed at providing students with high quality teacher education and at fostering their professional teacher competence for students to become highly qualified specialists boasting a high level of teaching excellence. Gifford (1994) puts competence into relation with various aspects typical of a specialist and distinguishes four types of professional competency: specialized, social, personality-oriented, individual:

1. Specialized, or activity-based, professional competency means mastering an activity at a highly professional level and comprises not only specialized knowledge, but also the skill to put it into practice.

2. Social professional competence means mastering joint professional activity and cooperation techniques adopted within a professional community for the purposes of professional communication.

3. Personality-oriented competence means mastering self-expression and self-development techniques and ways to oppose professional deformation. A specialist's ability to plan his or her professional activities, to make independent decisions and to look into problems also belongs to this category.

4. Individual professional competence means mastering self-regulation techniques, readiness for professional growth, resistance to professional aging and presence of steady professional motivation.

The key figure in the education system is the teacher, since he or she acts as a creator of the educational process and as a common and professional culture bearer. The issue relating to the teacher education upgrading thus emerges, which is important, since the teacher's communicative competence manifests itself not only in tackling professional tasks, but also in the manner how an individual perceives, assesses and understands the world beyond his or her professions. After all, it is

the teacher who determines whether graduates will act as active participants and whether they will live a full-fledged life.
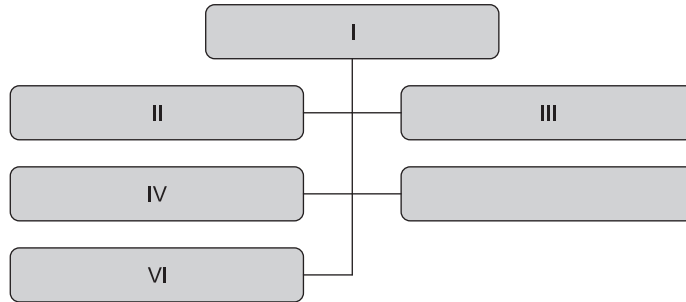
For our research purposes, we have carried out a system analysis of communicative competence based on integrating and correlating the notions "communicative" and "competence" and on investigating the following aspects.

1. Competence as an integral manifestation of professionalism; correlation of the notions "competence" and "qualification".

2. Competence as an integration of various aspects of knowledge and skills; correlation of the notions "competence" and "knowledge", "competence" and "skill".

3. Competence as an integral manifestation of professionalism and an indicator of professional development, a specialist's self-development. In other words, the following aspects are typical of competence:

   – Competence is defined as a phenomenon comprising a set of knowledge and skills, value orientations, activity rationales, emotional stability, accomplishment of professional tasks and attitudes towards one's own activity;

   – Competence includes parlance and culture of speech, precision in material presentation and listening skills;

   – Competence as a value-based attitude to one's profession, people and events; diversity of interests;

   – Competence refers to the level of theoretical knowledge, readiness to analyze practical work professionally and intelligently and to work on improving it;

   – Competence as life-long readiness for ongoing professional growth; high-quality and efficient practical applications;

The notion of "competence" is investigated within the context of this or that professional activity and represents a worker fulfilling his or her professional responsibilities efficiently. Thus, it can be stated that every area of activity proposes its own aspect in studying communicative competence as competence in communication, generally speaking. In reality, however, it is not communicative competence itself that is studied, but various aspects of communication. This is, without a doubt, of great importance for learning, in general. At the same time, the subject-oriented nature of communication results in the fact that, in the learner's mind, insights about various aspects and features of communication exist separately from each other and are not systematic, which makes it impossible for the learner to use them in real interaction.

As a result, communicative competence should be realized not only as a key competence enhancing all aspects of the individual's life and activities, but also as

an independent component of the specialist's overall professional competence and represents readiness for efficient communication and a significant development of communicative skills and personal qualities of students as future teachers that lead to creative responses to educational challenges emerging in the process of communication. Our research has resulted in the following model of shaping communicative competence among university students (Figure 1):

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Figure 1: Model of shaping communicative competence among university students

Note to Figure 1 Model of shaping communicative competence among university students. This Model of shaping communicative competence among university students shows relationships, main components and elements of the process of shaping communicative competences among university students:

I. process of shaping communicative competence among university students;

II. goal: shaping of communicative competence among university students as future teachers;

III. theoretical approaches: system approach, personality-oriented approach, activity approach;

IV. communicative competence: an individual's integrative quality implying knowledge and skills necessary for efficient social interaction aimed at transmitting and exchanging information, establishing contacts, managing a situation with verbal and non-verbal means;

V. educational conditions: set of active learning means and methods aimed at shaping communicative competence; using, during the training period, methods that contribute to the growth of professional independence; teaching practice organization featuring elements of professional planning; elaboration of a system of criteria for evaluation of communicative competence development levels;

VI. outcome: highly developed communicative competence among university students as future teachers.

Presence of pedagogical standards, norms and rules, to which the future specialist's communicative competence must conform, makes its measurement

possible. It may be realized as measurement of quality of activity by using expert evaluations, testing, surveying and other methods. At the same time, measurements of professional competence are related to criteria and indicators as well as the level of their development.

The choice of the most representative criteria for communicative competence, such as the development level of cognitive, motivational, linguistic and perceptive components, allow for explaining the level of its development: high, medium, low. Communicative competence is a necessary condition for successful personal fulfillment among university students as future teachers.

Different components of communicative competence (cognitive, motivational, linguistic and perceptive) reflect the students' level of professional and personal knowledge and practical skills enhanced by their motivation for activity in terms for communicative competence.

The cognitive component is related to personality-centered processes and to the shaping of specialized and common cultural knowledge and communicative skills necessary for professional activities. It comprises the coherence of the presented material, unity of style, expressiveness, excellent command of active teaching techniques. This component includes the ability to transmit information by verbal and non-verbal means of communication, verbal intelligence, the ability to convey ideas in a clear and concise manner, clarity and consistency of statements. This component also features a high level of communicative willingness to engage in a dialogue, quality of speech, rich and wide vocabulary, absence of factual errors and precision of expression.

The cognitive component is based on the individual's cognitive processes, the specific features of their development, the shaping of communicative knowledge for professional activities characterized by an adequate exchange of information taking into account the norms and patterns of communicative behavior.

The motivational component is a major factor in the shaping of communicative competence during professional training in higher education institutions. The motivational component fosters readiness for activity and regulates professional activity in teaching. If students are taught to show the need and motivation for communicative self-improvement, communicative training will result in students' realizing and classifying personal opportunities for creating space for future professional activities.

The motivational component is a decisive factor in shaping communicative competence for interaction and, in general, teaching purposes. It reflects actualization of professionally significant reasons for participating in professional activities, fosters knowledge acquisition and shows the extent to which the student needs to continuously improve his or her communication skills.

The linguistic component of communicative competence is characterized by exchange of information taking into account norms and patterns of communicative behavior, adequate communication goal setting, its efficient achievement as well as the ability to take a role position and to settle communication conflicts in a rational manner. This aspect reflects interaction between interlocutors taking into consideration available communicative insights and ways of organizing their joint action. The qualities constituting the linguistic component include adequate use of means of non-verbal communication, vividness of language, pleasant manners and trained voice, ability to enter into and keep up a conversation, use of verbal means of communication.

The perceptive component of communicative competence implies acquisition of knowledge by interlocutors due to the process of perception, correlation of detected characteristics with specific features of one's own personality, situation assessment and prediction of the interlocutor's upcoming actions based on this assessment.

The above-mentioned components are the key ones in the process of shaping communicative competence and reflect the specific nature of future teachers' professional training. They represent the totality of professionally important communicative personal qualities: tolerance, sociability, empathy, orderliness, etc.

Forms and methods of teacher training aimed at shaping the multifaceted personality of a student, as part of the educational process, may be traditional: elective courses, optional courses. An elective course on communication standards was given to the students in an experimental group. Hands-on training will be more efficient if it is done with elements of business role-playing and other kinds of exercises. Some other forms of extra-curricular teacher training include debates, quizzes, themed nights, exhibition stands, etc. Business role plays are plays imitating production or professional activity models and specific situations for the purposes of teaching, control, research, planning and accomplishment of various kinds of activities. In business role-playing, the participants' actions are determined by the requirements for the students' professional competence within the framework of an academic curriculum [195, 196]. Students get familiar with different roles taken from professional or family life through play conflicts. The easiest way to create it is as follows: a teacher states a problem and suggests its contradictory solution. The students are then divided into teams/groups taking opposite positions, and a contest starts between them. The team that gains its point in a better-argued manner wins. When the students have mastered their roles and gained experience in resolving play conflict situations, an educational game dedicated to specific topics would then take place. When playing or doing an exercise, students learn to find optimal solutions and to apply various methods and strategies under artificial conditions.

Having determined the approaches to shaping communicative competence and elaborated the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students, we have thus specified the essence of the experiment and the educational conditions for the model implementation. We understand, by educational conditions, organizational arrangements that facilitate the implementation of the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students.

Research Significance

As it has been exposed in the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students, the main criteria for developing communicative competence is the extent to which structural components have been shaped: cognitive, motivational, perceptional and linguistic ones. We have realized, on the basis of the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students, an initial distribution "segment" of students from the experimental group (EG, 17 students) and the control group (CG, 17 students) by adopting the level approach: high, medium and low. The description of every level has been given according to the extent to which the corresponding indicators for the above-mentioned criteria have manifested themselves (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: ORIGINAL LEVEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Criteria	*High level (%)*		*Medium level (%)*		*Low level (%)*	
	CG	*EG*	*CG*	*EG*	*CG*	*EG*
Level of cognitive component development	10	11	40	39	50	50
Level of motivational component development	56	54	30	32	14	12
Level of linguistic component development	10	11	35	37	55	52
Level of perceptive component development	12	10	37	41	51	49

Upon completion of the experiment, we have realized, on the basis of the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students, a final distribution "segment" of students from the experimental group (EG, 17 students) and the control group (CG, 17 students) by adopting the level approach: high, medium and low. The description of every level has been given according to the extent to which the corresponding indicators for the above-mentioned criteria have manifested themselves (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2: LEVEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
AFTER THE EXPERIMENT**

Criteria	High level (%)		Medium level (%)		Low level (%)	
	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG
Level of cognitive component development	12	38	41	51	47	11
Level of motivational component development	59	75	31	23	10	2
Level of linguistic component development	13	59	41	34	46	7
Level of perceptive component development	13	35	37	43	50	22

Tables 1 and 2 show that, before the start of the elective course on communication standards, almost the same percentage of students in the control and experimental groups (10% and 11%, respectively) showed extensive knowledge about all styles of communication and management, the ability to make the right choice depending on the situation. Upon completion of the elective course 38% of students in the experimental group showed a high level of professional communicative knowledge, characterized by adequate exchange of information taking into account norms and standards of communicative behavior, willingness to engage in a dialogue, quality of speech, rich vocabulary and precision of expression; this level remained relatively unchanged in the control group, at 12%. The percentage of student having partial and superficial communicative knowledge about communication styles, etc., insufficient mastery and ability to use some of them changed from 39% to 51%. The medium level indicator for these criteria in the groups that had not been taught communication skills, remained virtually the same, at 41%. Before the start of the elective course, 7% out of 52% of students showed complete absence of the ability to transmit information by verbal and non-verbal means of communication, verbal intelligence, ability to convey ideas in a clear and concise manner, clarity and consistency of statements. The percentage of students having a low level of appropriate knowledge in control groups has decreased by only 9%. The above-mentioned data suggest that, in terms of the level of need and motivation for communicative self-improvement, students feel the need to master means and styles of communications, to acquire skills necessary for their successful application and realize their importance (56% and 54% in the control and experimental groups, respectively); however, they enter university with a very low level of communicative preparation. This indicator has increased by almost 21% in the experimental group upon completion of the course. The motivational component is the decisive factor in shaping communicative competence in communication and teaching in general. It reflects the extent of the

need in ongoing self-improvement of the individual's communicative focus. Before taking the elective course, 12% of the students in the control groups and 10% of the students in the experimental groups were aware of the perceptive component of communicative competence and of the importance of perception in communication. Upon completion of the course, 35% of the learners showed extensive knowledge and skills regarding knowledge acquisition by interlocutors through perception, situation assessment and prediction of the interlocutor's upcoming actions based on this assessment. This indicator increased by 1% in the control group. The percentage of students having insufficient knowledge about the perception process increased to 51%. In terms of the perceptive component, 22% out of 49% of those surveyed before the start of the course maintained a low level, while this indicator changed by only 1% in the control group. Tables 1 and 2 also demonstrate that, before being taught communicative skills, 10% of the students in the control groups and 11% of the students in the experimental groups were aware of means and styles of communication, of how to take a role position and to settle communication conflicts in a rational manner. Upon completion of the course, 59% of the learners demonstrated full knowledge of the means of communication, of how to make the right choice of tools depending on the situation. This indicator increased by 3% in the control group.

Consequently, the elaborated Model of shaping communicative competence among university students shows a sample of the process of shaping communicative competence among university students. Each component in the process of shaping communicative competence among university students is responsible for a specific section of the educational objective, which is to shape communicative competence among university students.

DISCUSSION

In the modern system of higher professional education, students need to be trained as teachers having a high level of communicative competence. Training of students as future teachers is possible only if the specially elaborated methodology for separate development of each structural component of this kind of competence is put into practice. As part of this research, we have carried out a scientific assessment of shaping the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher. We have clarified the notion of "communicative competence" as an important part of the professional competence of the student as a future teacher. We have elaborated the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students. We have determined educational conditions for efficient shaping of the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher. We have designed the program for the elective course on shaping the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher; we have elaborated and implemented the Model of shaping

communicative competence among university students. We perceive the shaping of the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher as a target-oriented process and as a result of developing professional skills. We propose the amended definition of the term "communicative competence", which we perceive as a result of developing professional skills and abilities (ability to establish psychological contact with audience and to manage the communication process) and of the personal qualities of the student as a future teacher (tact, tolerance, objectivity, self-control, etc.). This result facilitates the resolution of educational tasks emerging during the communication process. These materials can be used in teaching by university, college and school teachers.

CONCLUSION

Our experimental work has established that the shaping of the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher is accomplished during teacher training through acquisition of common learning skills necessary for the shaping of communicative competence; through integrated courses; through the implementation of active learning methods by university teachers; through an exercise program requiring a combined application of knowledge on behalf of the student. We have analyzed and specified modern approaches to the shaping of communicative competence: competence, personality-oriented, activity. We have clarified the notion of the communicative competence of the student as a future teacher and identified the criteria for communicative competence, such as the extent of the cognitive component development; the extent of the motivational component development; the extent of the linguistic component development and the extent of the perceptive component development. We have developed and pilot tested the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students, based on the personality-oriented, activity and competence approached to the future teacher's professional training.

We have substantiated the necessary educational conditions for the implementation of the Model of shaping communicative competence among university students: connections among academic disciplines in the process of shaping communicative competence; use of active learning methods; implementation of elective courses in the process of shaping of the future teacher's communicative competence; realization of the activity approach in communication-oriented teaching practices. Practical experiments have led to the development of a set of educational materials including the curriculum, a set of diagnostic tools comprising surveys, tests on communication standards, exercises and various didactic aids.

Consequently, the results obtained from the theoretical analysis and experiments have revealed positive changes in the students' improving communicative competence, which confirms high efficiency of our Model of shaping communicative competence among university students.

Unlike the research carried out by Gifford S. (1994); Henner, E.K.(2004); Savignon, S. (1976); Alptekin, C. (2002); Nazari, A. (2007); Canale, M. & Swain M. (1980); Light, J.C. (1997); Celce-Murcia et. al., (1995); Kramsch, C. (2006) and Hymes, D. (1972), we have developed, in our research study, the Model of shaping communicative competence of university students, taking into account the requirements for updating teaching aids and recommendations, study programs, seminar courses, tutorials and labs that ensure the efficiency of the process of shaping communicative competence among university students. The developed Model of shaping communicative competence among university students is recommended for extensive hands-on application in universities and advanced training courses for university teachers.

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