THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Influence of Strategy in Achieving Institutional Performance in Secondary Schools of Selected Counties in Kenya

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Abstract:

This thesis objective was to find out the influence of strategy in achieving institutional performance in secondary schools of selected counties in Kenya. This was measured by school mean score in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. The researcher examined both secondary data from websites and journals with the primary data directly collected by closed ended questionnaire from the field. The key variable was the strategy as the independent variable and institutional performance as dependent variable. This was measured in terms of, school mean score in National examinations. The research adopted a cross sectional research design of survey type. Firsthand information from the respondents was obtained by use of questionnaire. The target population consisted of 350 respondents comprising of principals, deputy principals, and directors of studies and Heads of Department of mathematics, languages, humanities and sciences. However, 259 respondents were collected and response rate was therefore 74%. The validity was done to establish the influence of strategy in achieving institutional performance with Cronbach's alpha value of strategy having posted 0.795. The institutional performance variable was tested for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test and it was established to be normal since the p value of 0.141 was obtained. The strategy was regressed on institutional performance and the R-value was 0.581, the R square was 0.337 and the adjusted R square was 0.335 for strategy implying that strategy was able to explain 33.5 % of the variations in institutional performance. The correlation between strategy and institutional performance was 0.581 that was significant at $p = 0.000$ implying a strong positive relationship and therefore statistically significant influence of strategy on institutional performance. This study confirmed that the strategy had a significant influence on the performance of secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.

Keywords: Strategy, performance, formulation, competitive advantage

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Today many organizations are searching for high performance but not many organizations have been able to achieve this goal since the management lacks profound understanding of what it really means to have high performance. There are many non-profit organizations whose focus is on service delivery and their performances need to be measured and monitored. Results based management is a continuous process of improving individuals, team and organizational performance. It has been the core of all organizations since it gives strategic direction on how resources are going to be distributed towards the achievement of set goals and objectives Bussim (2012). Schools are non-profit organizations. According to Armstrong and Barron (2002) results-based management is a strategic integrated way to obtaining sustainable success in organizations by empowering the employees and teams through enhancing their skills. Strategies are formulated to achieve the organizational principles which include strategic interest, desired future state of the organization, goals strategy pursuits and strategic objectives.

According to Doyle (2000) strategy has to be a customer led, deep recognition, throughout the company, that achieving the strategic vision is hinged on satisfying the customer needs more effectively than competitors. The strategy is geared to applying the skills to what customers want and the systems can deliver fast, cost effective solutions. The

current study was on the influence of strategy on achieving academic performance in secondary schools of selected counties in Kenya.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are many strategies that have been devised by schools in order to address the low performance of the learners. Although these strategies were well formulated the greatest challenge lies on their implementations. Such strategies include developing school goals, action plans and availing resources to see through the implementation of the chosen strategies. The absence of clear plan of action has impacted negatively on the attainment of school goals and this has been noted with the low academic achievement of learners particularly at KCSE level. So many students perform dismally in KCSE examination. In the year 2017 schools' rankings there were many secondary schools that did not make it among the top quarter. In fact, some of the county schools and some private schools did better in K.C.S.E than many national schools. There were many students who performed dismally raising a big concern from stakeholders such as parents.

Hoyle (1986) argued that the purpose of starting a school was to impart knowledge and attain good performance.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to find out the influence of strategy in achieving institutional performance in secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives of the Study

- To determine the influences of school goals on institutional performances in secondary schools from selected counties in Kenya.
- To establish the influence of school actions plans on institutional performances in secondary schools from selected counties in Kenya.

1.4. Research Hypothesis

- H_{01} : School goals haveno statistically significant influence on institutional performance of secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.
- H_{02} : School actions plans have no significant influence on institutional performance secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

The theoretical literature provides a framework in which theories relevant to the study were hinged on. These theories are outlined in this section.

2.1.1. Institutional Theory

Institutions are those beliefs, roles, rules and symbolic elements which are of different nature capable of affecting organizations, and firms independent of resources flows and technical requirements. Scotts (2013). These comprises regulations enforced by law, normative enforced by a shared sense of what is appropriate or cognitive which are taken for granted mental models of how work should be done.

Meyer & Rowan (1977) argued that the appearance of legitimacy is an important resource for organizations specifically in highly regulated environments. In a regulated environments coercive isomorphism pressures occur where political forces tend to limit an organization behave in a certain way through legal methods. Dimaggio & Power (1983) It creates compliance through rules laws and sanctions. In fact institutions in a society share a common legal environment they have to follow defined rules and respect their obligations in a certain way .organizations that attempt to change from the others, legal dictates how they act towards institutions around them Institutions tend to copy and design their operations from those that are successful because they believe they overcame similar problems and found legitimate ways to deal with uncertain situations.

2.1.2. Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

This theory characterizes the organization as open system that depends on various challenges in its external environment. Salancik & Pfeffer (1978) argued that organizations indeed have to manage their relationships with external parties whom they depend directly or indirectly because uncertain actions of such external parties can be a threat to the success and the very survival of the concerned entity The open system approach pays attention to organizational environment with context on major mechanisms for understanding organizational actions and structures Katz& Kahn (1966).

In other words, the acquisition of valued resources enhances organization's success. In the system resource approach from the organization e.g. open system, the environment is thought as an important factor in the existence of the organization Scott & Davis (2003) besides the behavior of individuals for maximizing organizational efficiency on economic rationality Pfeffer & Salancik, (2003).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.2. Empirical Review on Strategy

Mintzberg, Lampel, Quin & Ghoshal (2012) define strategy in terms of five Ps namely, plan, ploy, pattern, position, perspective and their interrelationship. The company strategy is a blend of pro-active initiative to improve Institutional Performance and reactive adjustment to development and fresh market conditions (Thomson, Strickland & Gamble, 2007). Strategy is all about how or specific actions the business will take. It serves as a guide to managers in making decision on the priorities they make. It should fit the company's own situation and be different from strategies of other firms. Johnson & Scholes (1999) argue that the strategy of an organization is affected by environmental forces and available resources besides the values and expectation of those who have power in and around the organization. Thompson & Robison (2011) define competitive strategy as consisting of the business approach and initiatives the company undertake to attract customers and fulfill their expectation, withstand competitive pressure and strengthen marker position. Porter (1984) states that the strongest competitive force of the five forces determines the profitability of an industry and becomes most important to strategy formulation. A creative, distinctive strategy that sets a company apart from rivals and yield non-duplicable benefits from current and future such as earning above average profits Thompson, Strickland & Gamble (2007). When good strategy is formulated and implemented it can create competitive advantage.

The key focus is therefore on formulating good or winning strategy that yield a competitive edge. Competitive strategy also referred to as business strategy is the basis on which a strategic business unit might achieve competitive advantage on its market (Johnson & Scholes, 1999). The goal of competitive strategy is to find a position in industry where the company can best defend itself against competitive forces or influence them in its favor (Porter, 1980). It consists of the competitive moves that the firm has to yield superior returns on investment for the firm. Thompson, Strickland and Gamble (2007) depict that a company's strategy for competing can either be offensive which is a direct aggressive challenge to competitor's position or defensive where the firm aims to counter competitive moves by rivals. The manager identifies the competitive behavior in the market and applies this understanding to making specific strategic decisions.

Porter (1980) advocated for three potentially successful generic strategic approaches to outperform other firms in the industry. Competitive strategies are called generic because they can be pursued by any type or size of business, firm or organization. Hunt (2000) explains that the concept of competitive strategy contains two elements; it can be according to market scope (focused or abroad) or their source of competitive advantage (cost or differentiation). Overall cost, leadership involves adopting the lowest cost position through ensuring efficiency of operation and minimizing costs. It involves reducing cost aggressively in functional areas through pursuing economies of scale efficiencies in buying, use of experience curve, construction of efficient scale facilities, cost minimization in research and development, sales forces.

Differentiation is a strategy that involves creating and offering products and services that are perceived across the industry as unique. Achieving differentiation requires a perception of exclusivity as the firm will use several dimensions to distinguish itself. The firm will choose one or more attributes which buyers see as important and will uniquely position itself to meet those needs. Focus is a strategy whereby there is focus on particular buyer, segment of the product line geographical market and excluding others. Porter (1980) states that focus strategy is built around serving a particular target market very well. Ireland, Hoskisson & Hitt (2009) observes that the firm will not achieve a broader industry wide competitive advantage but competitive advantage in a specific niche or segment.

2.3. Measures of School Performance

A variety of ways to measure academic performance have been used which include report card grades grade point average (GPA) standardized test scores, teacher ratings other cognitive test scores, grade retention and drop- out rates. Burns & Darning (2002) and Hijazi & Nagvi (2006)

In this study, key performance indicators in school's excellence is the results obtained in a summative national examination. The mean grades obtained by the students range on a scale of 1 to 12 where 1 represent grade E and 12 represent grade A. Currently the minimum entry grade to University is pegged at C+. Excellence schools exhibit high academic achievement of their students. In this study the indicator used to measure performance was the school mean score.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

Ranjit Kumar (2005) defined a research design as a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively accurately and economically. A research design helps a researcher to conceptualize an operational plan to undertake the various procedures and tasks required to complete the study and to ensure that these procedures are adequate to obtain valid, objective and accurate answers to the research questions.

This study adopted a descriptive research design which was suitable for the study as it analyses different secondary schools in the country.

3.2. Population

According to Ngechu (2004), a population is a well-defined or set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households that are being investigated. There were 9000 secondary schools in Kenya.

3.3. Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a complete list of the units of analysis of interest from which the samples are selected Kothari, (2004). The researcher purposively picked only best two schools in 2017 K.C.S.E results from these categories of schools from selected counties in Kenya.

3.4. Sampling Technique

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to come up with the required sample of secondary schools from selected Counties. The best two schools in each category based on national rankings in 2017 examinations were purposely picked for this study. Likewise, the following major departments were also purposely selected, Mathematics, Languages, Science and Humanities and Technical (Business and Agriculture departments).

3.5. Sample Size

350 respondents constituted the sample population for the study. Accordingly, stratified sampling ensured inclusion of the various categories that other sampling methods would leave out. The best two schools were purposely picked in 2017 K.C.S.E ranking in national examinations.

Respondents	National	Extra County	County	Sub-County	Private	Total
Principals	10	10	10	10	10	50
Deputy Principals	10	10	10	10	10	50
Director of Studies	10	10	10	10	10	50
Head of Department Maths	10	10	10	10	10	50
Head of Department Languages	10	10	10	10	10	50
Head of Department Humanities	10	10	10	10	10	50
Head of Department Science	10	10	10	10	10	50
Total	70	70	70	70	70	350

Table 1: Sample Size of Top Best Two School of Each Category in KCSE Ranking 2017 in Five Counties

3.6. Instruments for Data Collection

The primary data source used 5 item questionnaires rated on 5-point Likert scale as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. Primary data collection involves self-administration of questionnaires.

3.7. Data Processing and Analysis

Quantitative data analysis techniques were used such as the use of Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 to present descriptive statistics data into frequencies distributions, tables and percentages.

3.8. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is the statistical method used to establish the level of association of two variables (Levin and Rubin, 1998). Pearson correlation coefficient was computed which measured how variables or orders were related. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a measure of linear association. The correlation coefficient value r ranges from +1 to -1 inclusive. Correlation of 0 shows there is no correlation between the two variables, while a correlation of ± 1.0 indicates a perfect positive or negative relationship (Hair *et al.*, (2010).

3.9. Research Model

In this study multiple regression analysis was done. Multiple regression analysis is a statistical method utilized to determine the influence of one dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Hair *et al.*, (2010).

The multiple Regression model for the study is: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$ where Y = institutional performance variable which is school mean score in KCSE as the response variable with explanatory variables as outlined hereunder.

X_1 – School Goals

β_1 – The independent variable coefficient

X_2 – Action Plan

β_2 – The independent variable coefficient

α – The constant of the regression

ε – The residual or error term.

4. Results and Discussion

The study utilized various statistical techniques to establish the influence of strategy in achieving institutional excellence in secondary schools of selected counties in Kenya. The Cronbach alphas were used to check whether there was internal consistency of the questionnaire thus making the instrument reliable or not Cronbach, (1987)

4.1. Demographic Information of the Respondents

4.1.1. Response Rate

A total of 350 teachers that comprised principals, deputy principal, director of studies and head of department of Mathematics, Sciences, Humanities, and Languages were purposively identified and questionnaires were hand delivered to them. Of the 350 questionnaires delivered 259 were completed and returned within the stipulated time. The response rate was therefore 74% which according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) was adequate for analysis. Cronbach's alpha scores established the internal consistency of the items Zikmund *et al.*, (2010).

4.1.2. Age of the Respondents

Table 2 Indicates that 49.8% were aged between 25-34 years, 39.3% were aged between 35 and 44 years, 8.2% were between 45 and 54 years old, 1.6% were below 25 years while 1.6% were over 55 years old. The highest percentage of respondents were between 25 and 44 years implying a longer working period before retirement and therefore more time to implement strategic plans to fruition.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	4	1.6
25- 34 years	128	49.8
35-44 years	102	39.3
45-54 years	21	8.2
Over 55 years	4	1.6
Total	259	100

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

4.1.3. Gender Distribution

The findings in table 3 indicates that 72% of the respondents were males. Therefore, most of the heads of departments in the selected schools were males. The gender distribution therefore represents an imbalance between the two genders which calls for gender mainstreaming efforts in gender balance.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	186	72
Female	73	28
Total	259	100

Table 3: Gender of the Respondents

4.1.4. Departments

The study sought to establish the departments from which the respondents were drawn. The Principals and their deputies belong to the administration department and represented 13% respectively, the other departments included the dean of studies, Mathematics and Humanities comprised all 15%, Languages department comprised 16% and sciences department comprised 13% as presented in table 4.

Department	Frequency	Percentage
Administration: Principals	34	13
Administration: Deputy Principal	34	13
Director of Studies	39	15
Mathematics	39	15
Humanities	39	15
Languages	40	16
Sciences	34	13
Total	259	100

Table 4: Departments

4.1.5. Work Experience

Table 5 shows 5% of the respondents had worked for less than 5 years in their present capacity, 39% had worked for between 1-3 years whereas 52% stated they worked for between 4 and 5 years. Only 3% had worked for over 11 years. The respondents therefore had sufficient work experience and were presumed knowledgeable enough to respond to questionnaire items.

Number of Years Worked	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	13	5
1-3 years	101	39
4-10 years	135	52
Over 11 years	104	
Total	259	100

Table 5: Work Experience

4.2. Diagnostic Test of the Variables

The Durbin-Watson test was used to test whether the observations made from the response variable were serially correlated.

4.2.1. Autocorrelation

The study used a linear model and as such the dependent variable ought to be independent. The observations should not be serially correlated since serial correlation affects the efficiency of the ordinary least square (OLS) estimator. The researcher subjected the response variable to a Durbin- Watson test whose outcome was indicated in table 6.

Durbin Watson test	p-value
1.2115	0.06483

Table 6: Durbin Watson Test

- H_0 : If $Y=0$, The Observations Have No Serial Correlation,
- H_1 : If $Y>0$, The Observations Are Interdependent And If P- Value > 0.05, Accept Null Hypothesis.

As indicated in table 6, the p-value of 0.06483 was greater than the p- critical of 0.05 implying that there was no serial correlation among the observations under study meaning that a linear model could be used.

4.2.2. Normality Test

Given H_0 and H_1 and $\alpha = 0.05$ such that H_0 is rejected if P value is less than α otherwise accept the H_0 . The institutional performance variable was tested for normality using the Kolmogorov- Smirnov test and it was established to be normal since the p value of 0.141 was obtained which was above 0.05 and therefore, failed to reject H_0 and concluded that data on institutional performance had a normal distribution, with the residuals too likely to have a normal distribution.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Institutional Performance	.141	259	.000	.915	259	.000

Table 7: Normality Test

4.3. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis on all the variables in the form of totals and percentages was done and presented in tables as shown in his section.

4.3.1. Descriptive Analysis of Strategy

In relation to the strategy aspect of the schools, whether the school goals guided the personnel development activities table 8 indicates that 50.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 42.5% agreed whereas 6% disagreed with 1%

strongly with the statement. This was an indication that the school goals were very crucial in aligning personnel efforts towards a common goal. Further, 58% strongly agreed that for schools to be successful a coherent course of action was required again to marshal and align all the personnel efforts towards a common goal, 32% agreed and 5% were neutral as well as 2% who disagreed 3% strongly. To achieve the success, enough resources needed to be allocated for personnel development programmes which were confirmed by 98.2 % of the respondents who agreed and strongly agreed. Organizational goals should be supported by financially sound decision making in schools. A high percentage of the respondent at 45.7% agreed, 44% strongly agreed while 5% were neutral 4% disagreed with 1.3% strongly disagreed. In addition, all schools had clear plan of action as indicated by 100% of respondents in agreement implying that this was important towards achieving academic excellence.

Strategy	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5
School goals guide the personnel development activities of our school	1%	6%	0%	42.5%	50.5%
If our school is to be successful a coherent course of action is required.	3%	2%	5%	32%	58%
Enough resources are set aside foremployees' progression programmes.	0%	1%	0%	67.2%	31.8%
School goals are supported financially	1.3%	4%	5%	45.7%	44%
Our school has a clear plan of action.	0%	0%	0%	43%	57%

Table 8 Descriptive Analysis on Strategy

4.4. Inferential Analysis

Regression analysis was done to determine any statistical significance effect of the predictor variables of internal success factors of strategy on the dependent variable which is institutional performance. Marshall and Rossman (2006) defined regression analysis as a statistical process used to estimate the influence of variables so as to formulate a function that shows the influence of such variables. Regression model summary, ANOVA and beta coefficient tables were used to present regression analysis

4.4.1. Regression Model of Strategy

The researcher regressed strategy against institutional performance. Table 10 shows that the adjusted R square was 0.335, the R square was 0.337 and R value was 0.581 at a significance level of 0.05. The adjusted R square indicates that 33.5 % of the variation on institutional performance is influenced by strategy. The correlation between strategy and institutional performance was 0.581 that was significant at $p = 0.000$ implying a strong positive relationship and therefore statistically significant influence of strategy on institutional performance.

		Institutional Performance	Strategy
Institutional Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.581**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.581**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	259	259
R		.581 ^a	
R Square		.337	
Adjusted R Square		.335	
Std. Error of the Estimate		.44262	

Table 9: Correlation of Strategy and Institutional Performance

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The analysis of variance shown in table 10 ascertains that since the F-value was 130.199 with a p-value of 0.000 that was less than 0.05, therefore the model fit is appropriate for the data and therefore there was a statistically significant linear influence of strategy on institutional performance. This study therefore rejects the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant influence of strategy on institutional performance hence confirming that indeed, strategy has a significant positive influence on the performance of secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	25.508	1	25.508	130.199	.000
Residual	50.155	258	.196		
Total	75.663	259			

Table 10: Analysis of Variance for Strategy

a. Dependent Variable: Institutional Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategy

The results further indicated that strategy had a positive statistically significant influence on institutional performance as presented in table 10. The fitted model Institutional Performance (IP) = $1.564 + 0.2581X_1$. Therefore, a unit change in strategy leads to 0.2581 change in institutional performance. When strategy was non-existent, institutional performance would be positive 1.564 implying that there were other factors which influenced institutional performance.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.564	.221		7.089	.000
	Strategy	.2581	.054	.581	11.410	.000

Table 11: Strategy and Institutional Performance
a. Dependent Variable: Institutional Performance

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. Strategy and Institutional Performance

On the strategy aspect of whether the school goals guided the personnel development activities, 50.5% strongly agreed, 42.5% agreed. This was an indication that the school goals were very crucial in aligning personnel efforts towards a common goal. Further, 58% strongly agreed that for schools to be successful a coherent course of action was required again to marshal and align all the personnel efforts towards a common goal, 32% agreed. To achieve the success, enough resources needed to be allocated for personnel development programmes which affirmed by 67.2% of the respondents agreed and 31% who strongly agreed. Organizational goals should be supported by financially sound decision making in schools. These findings corroborated with Thomson Strickland & Gamble (2008) who argued that strategy was a blend of pro-active initiatives to improve institutional performance and a well formulated strategy and well implemented can create competitive advantage

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Findings

5.1.1. Influence of Strategy on Institutional Performance

The researcher regressed strategy on institutional performance which established that the adjusted R square indicated that 33.5% of the variation on institutional performance was influenced by strategy. The correlation between strategy and institutional performance was 0.581 that was significant at $p = 0.000$ implying a strong positive relationship and therefore statistically significant influence of strategy on institutional performance. It was found that 93% of the respondents were in agreement that the schools goals guided the personnel development activities and therefore the setting up of smart goals was key to academic performance and that the course was crucial in aligning personnel efforts towards a common goal. In addition, for school to be successful, as affirmed by 90% of the respondents, a coherent course of action was required so as to align all the personnel efforts towards a common goal. To achieve success enough resources, need to be allocated in the school budget for personnel development programme as confirmed by 98.2% of the respondents. Financial support and sound decision making in schools with clear action plans would enhance academic performance. This confirmed that indeed, strategy had a significant positive influence on the performance of secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya.

5.2. Conclusions

5.2.1. Strategy and Institutional Performance

School strategy has a positive and significant influence on performance. The study established that strategy is systematic and comprehensive plan of action designed to ensure high, supportable and sustainable academic performance. The strategy must link with the mission and vision of the school. The mission and vision of the school must be clear, the goals and objectives must have ways through which they can be fulfilled and the strategic plans should bring learning activities closer to the goals.

5.3. Recommendations

It was found that strategy had a great influence on academic performance.

5.3.1. Strategy and Institutional Performance

From this study it was found that strategy contributed immensely on the in achieving institutional performance at 33.5% therefore it is recommended that schools develop a coherent plan of action by involving all the key stake holders particularly teachers. The school management to provide sufficient financial resources to support the chosen strategy with in built mechanisms for continuous evaluation and monitoring and the chosen strategy must be interwoven with the school vision and mission. School managers set school goals that are agreed upon by the teachers and other stakeholders to guide the school operations. 93% of the Respondents agreed that school goals contributed greatly in achieving high performance.

5.3.2. Recommendations for Further Studies

Despite the contributions made by this study, it had focused on a sample of schools in a few counties in Kenya. The schools in Kenya operate under diverse conditions and therefore subsequent studies should consider replicating this study in schools found in Arid and Semi-Arid regions of Kenya. Secondly, a similar study to be conducted in schools found in purely urban places where they have access to technology and other resources that may have influence on strategy implementation and academic performance.

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