

Improving Service Delivery at Local Government by Enhancing Capacity

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Abstract: This paper intends to critique the service delivery at local government, identify strategies to improve and exacerbate sound financial status. The current weaknesses in local government interventions regarding poor service delivery and mismanagement of funds could be overcome through capacity building and Entrepreneurship approaches. Such tactics could lead to the formulation of areas of research, and training needs in local government to develop or capacitate Administrators and political office bearers. Training should be identified and provided as a tool to improve service delivery and decision making and not as an exit strategy when the term of office expires. Through literature review, the importance of skills audits prior appointment of managers and leadership in the local government level, capacity building, transparency, and active participation of stakeholders is analysed. People have spoken through ballot papers at the voting station thus deserve quality service delivery. Furthermore, communities are still speaking through memorandums and protests over lack of service delivery. Though weak management capacity, tension in the political administrative-interface, lack of proper skills and capacity, high turnover, and poor organisational design are still observed as public service constraints. State owned enterprises (SOEs) such as Eskom are negatively affected by the inability of local government to plan, monitor, manage and source funds appropriately. Skills development programme interventions should be designed to focus on the needs of the local government outputs. The paper further accentuates the need for a research that will monitor and evaluate the management of section 57 Administrators and Political office bearers' underperforming at the local government sphere.

Keywords: Administration, Capacity, Local government, Politics, Service delivery

1. Introduction

The local government is expected to deliver quality sustainable services that a society requires to maintain and improve its welfare. In order to realise that, they need to be capacitated. Capacity in this paper means made capable to deliver services, knowledgeable and skilled to perform duties, and or quality of implementing tasks with achievable results. For effective results, legislative frameworks are considered and analysed. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Act, 1996, affords the legal basis for political governance of the country, province, district/metropolitan or municipal level. At the local level, council is the political constituent responsible for supervising executive actions of officials in terms of discharging its legislative responsibilities which are provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and refuse removal etc. Councillors are expected to execute their duties as stipulated in the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) as amended which includes legislate; provision of essential services, significantly upgrade, extend or improve an existing municipal service, consult with citizens

on their development needs, possible solutions; and monitor government-funded development programmes. However, Asimo (2016) accentuates that the policy gives little regard to professional and academic abilities, resource availability and even experience yet these are critical for effective councils and committees. Effective councils, committees and policy implementers give birth to effective and efficient quality service delivery.

2. Method and Materials

This paper is descriptive in nature uses a qualitative approach. Government documents and scholarly publications on the role of local government as the focal point of public service delivery is analysed. Through literature review, capacity and capacity development are accentuated (National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government, 2012 to 2016, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, Municipal Systems Act 30 of 2000, Callahan & Kloby, 2009; Nzimakwe, 2012). The importance of appointing competent people in local government is argued (Zybrands, 2012; Booyesen, 2012; Fourie, 2012; Mosha, 2010; Makanyeza,

Kwandayi, & Ikobe, 2013). Furthermore, transparency, and active participation of stakeholders in local government are articulated (Madzivhandila & Asha, 2012; Mdlalose, 2016). Legislative frameworks which are Skills Development Act 81 of 1998, Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000, Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, and Batho Pele principles, 1997 are analysed. Service Delivery Improvement Plan (2012/2015), RU (2013) and Merriam-Webster (No date) describe public service and effectiveness. (Reddy, 2016; ANC, 2012; Reddy, 2010; Tshishonga, 2015) argue on politicization and how it affect service delivery in local government. According to Mangai (2017) this paper further arrays performance model, citizen satisfaction is a determinant of the kind of judgment citizens form of how local government is performing compared to their expectation of how local government should perform. The analysis is presented in thematic subheadings covering the lack of capacity, service delivery, community involvement, and finally, a discussion on strategies to improve service delivery by the government and other stakeholders.

3. Lack of Capacity

Capacity is a multi-dimensional concept with three inter-related core elements, i.e. individual capacity, institutional capacity and environmental capacity (National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government: 2012 to 2016). UN-Habitat describes capacity as comprising a combination of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes that individuals need to carry out what they consider to be their mission in their particular circumstances. Capacity is the quality of doing and acting as a function of expected aims, proposals and results. UN-Habitat prefers the term capacity development as compared to capacity building. They argue that capacity building implies that there is no capacity at all which is not possible. Though capacity building is a generic notion used for institutional strengthening, institutional development and organisational development. Callahan and Kloby (2009:219) emphasise on the following in order to ensure effective performance management towards effective governance:

- Recruiting the right people for the right job.
- Time and public funds not wasted in the process of policy execution.

- Public managers and political representatives' ability to render an account of their activities.

Habib (2015) asserts that when municipal leaders are challenged on service delivery issues, their most common response privately is 'look at the (poor) quality of the people that I have around me'. Hence, the local government need to make sure that their employees are capacitated in terms of quantity and quality. Nzimakwe (2012:139) highlights that local government is not only about provision of services but also developmental. He further asserts that in local government ensuring synergy between planning process and implementation is still a challenge. The Local Government Municipal Systems Act 30 of 2000 stipulates that human resource should be development to a level that enables it to perform its functions and exercise its powers in an economical, effective, efficient (EEEs) and accountable way. It further demands that the implementation must comply with the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 81 of 1998), and the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act 9 of 1999). The Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Local Government Sector Education Training Authority (LGSETA), South African Local Government Association (SALGA), South African Mine Workers' Union (SAMWU), and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU, 2010) avow that Local Government should aspire to building learning municipalities in which employees acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes from their daily experience, educational influences and resources in their environment. Hence, efforts to enhance capacity development and governance in local government require the active involvement of all stakeholders and the consideration of environmental factors staff capacity.

The Batho Pele principles emphasise good leadership. Good leaders inspire employees to learn. Subsequently, employees learning needs should be identified and addressed to achieve its vision, mission and strategic objectives and empower its employees to implement its Integrated Development Plan (IDP). Suitable courses and programmes are important to develop employees on relevant national policies and legislation. They also play a role in skill transfer and prepare suitably qualified candidates for higher positions at all levels particularly those whose promotion will promote employment equity and address scarce and critical skill shortages.

The lack of political and administrative management leadership will negatively affect recruitment and sound appointments, failure to hold effective council meetings, failure to pass municipal IDPs and budgets, inability to obtain qualified audits, and failure to communicate with local communities and address their needs at local level. Consequently, capacity building or development for both political office bearers and implementers should be enhanced to improve knowledge and insight, capability, competence, skills and gain expertise.

The inattention of the cadre deployment policy has, according to the African National Congress (ANC), contributed to the current challenges and weaknesses experienced at Local Government post-1994, and to this end, the ANC's 4th National Policy Conference reaffirmed that a 'contingent of cadres should be produced who are competent, committed, disciplined and conscientious' (ANC, 2012:3). This further influence party politics such as clicks, the exclusion of communities and people not belonging to the party exacerbates unfairness, favouritism, corruption and poor service delivery. Reddy (2010) and Tshishonga (2015) affirm that politicisation creates an opportunity for corruption in local government, which in turn impacts negatively on service delivery. Reddy (2016) avows that political infighting and related clashes between the political and management components in local government in South Africa have also adversely affected municipal service delivery. As a result, this forced three major cities in South Africa, which are Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Nelson Mandela Bay to form a coalition government. Consequently, it had a negative impact. Whereas working together is key to a successful coalition.

4. Legislative Frameworks

The Government of South Africa is cautious and leading its citizen especially on service delivery. Policies and strategic interventions were established to accelerate quality basic service delivery to its citizens. According to Section 154 of the Constitution, Provincial and National government are expected to strengthen the capacity of municipalities, provide monitoring and support of municipalities. The president of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Mr Cyril Ramaphosa expounds in the state of the nation address (SoNA, 2020:21) speech that the Provincial executive and National government will invoke Section 139 intervention if structured support

aimed to strengthen local government fails. He further enunciates that the local government have to achieve its developmental mandate of finding sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs of communities and improve the quality of their lives. Section 152(1)(b)(c) of chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (as amended) evidently affirms and defines the objects of the local government as to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner and to promote social and economic development. Some municipalities do not have enough capacity to deliver quality services. Consequently the president of SA, Cyril Ramaphosa in his SoNA of 2020 affirms that the district-based model (DBM) of development as an integrated approach to service delivery has been introduced and piloted in Mamusa Municipality in the North West. This DBM was effectively utilised to clear illegal dumping sites, refurbish pump stations to stop sewage spilling in the streets, build roads and lay water pipes, and provide water and toilets to local schools. The DBM will expand to other twenty-three (23) new districts, drawing on lessons learnt from the three (3) pilot districts which are OR Tambo, eThekweni and Waterberg District Municipalities. Although, Ndevu (2019) argues that lack of financial viability, serious infrastructure gaps, weak understanding of the powers and functions and role of the districts, staff capacity, lack of planning alignment among the three spheres of government, and weak financial systems made previous DBMs fail. According to Sebola (2015), most criticisms in relation to a district failing to assist local municipalities are centred on the scarcity of skills, which makes it difficult for districts to strengthen collaboration with local municipalities. Moeti (2019) affirms that District municipality (DM) does not have enough human and financial resources to implement resolutions taken at forums, and the implementation becomes dependent on the budgets of local municipalities. As a result, recommend that the district intergovernmental forums should sit more often so that collaboration between the district municipality and local municipalities can be strengthened.

Service delivery in government is a serious challenge. SoNA (2020:22) further elucidates that political office bearers will sign performance agreements to strengthen the capacity of the State and increase accountability. Freedom of speech, openness, accountability, and transparency are emphasised in the local government as enacted in

chapter 2 of the Constitution of the RSA, Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2 of 2000, and in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) 3 of 2000. As a result, the citizen should be consulted and informed on the type of service including the level of quality they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect as enacted in the Batho Pele principles. In addition, the principles emphasise that the officials should be capacitated on the handling of complaints or problems.

The local government is also responsible and accountable for the funds received and utilised. Consequently, imperative to accomplish according to the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) (2003:23) which is to secure sound and sustainable management of the fiscal and financial affairs of municipalities and its entities by establishing norms and standards and other requirements. These requirements include management of revenues and expenditures, assets and liabilities ensuring transparency, accountability and appropriate lines of responsibility. The MFMA is applicable to Municipalities, all municipal entities, National and Provincial organs of state to the extent of their financial dealings.

5. Service Delivery

RU (2013:1) describes public service as a product delivered or activity that is carried out that meets the needs of a wide section of users. A public service is a service which is provided by government to people living within its jurisdiction, either directly (through the public sector) or by financing private provision of services. Merriam-Webster (No date) describes public service as the business of supplying

a commodity (such as electricity or gas) or service (such as transportation) to any or all members of a community, and or a service rendered in the public interest. An effective public service is characterised by providing information, products and advice are tailored to the specific needs of the users. In modern democracies, public service is often performed by employees known as civil servants who are hired by elected officials /political office bearers.

The term service delivery is used to connote the distribution of basic communal needs and services, notably housing, water and sanitation, land, electricity and infrastructure, which local communities have taken for granted and become dependent on for their daily existence (Reddy, 2016:1). RU (2013:1) refers to a relationship between policy makers, service providers, and consumers of those services, and encompasses both services and their supporting systems. Municipal service delivery can be described as the services that the municipality in terms of powers and functions provides the community either internally or via a Service provider. However, in the South African context, these basic services have proved to be unreliable at times, greatly inconveniencing and endangering local communities. The local government is the sphere of government which is closest to the people and need to be transparent, fair and protective. Mbecke (2014) argues that the role of local government as the focal point of public service delivery is undeniable. As a result, more outputs or results in local government are tangible thus seem to be more public accountable than any other sphere of government level which are provincial or national. Hence, figure 1 reflects the recent protest on service delivery frustration in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN):

Figure 1: Protesters Dig up Tarred KZN Road as Service Delivery Frustrations Spill Over



Source: Matiwane, 2020

Sufficient funding has always been a problem for the majority of municipalities (Mbecke, 2014). Hence, municipalities with financial limitations cannot translate their IDPs to workable socio-economic programs (IDASA, 2010:7). RU (2013:1-2) argues that effective service delivery is about providing the services that meet the needs of the users in the most efficient and effective ways.

The local government is expected to appoint competent staff with expertise to be able to enhance quality service delivery to all citizens according to their roles and responsibilities. Booysen (2012), Reddy (2016) and Ndevu (2019) elucidate that appointment of inadequate municipal functionaries and unqualified team based on political patronage and nepotism is a constraint on the effective and efficient performance of local government. Cadre deployment without qualifications, competency, knowledge and insight on what out to be done compromises the recruitment of suitably qualified people to do the job. It further violates the essential principles of good local governance. Zybrands (2012:87) affirms the aforementioned conundrum and recommends that the appointment of competent and qualified staff and compliance with the laws, rules and regulations could realise positive impacts.

If the community is not happy with the service rendered, usually they raise concerns to ward councillors. Unfortunately, at times there is inadequate communication or lack of feedback which leads to public protests particularly when it leads to increasing unemployment, poverty and inequality, especially among black South Africans. In South Africa, service delivery protest originated during the apartheid era as a machinery to display discontent of services and or target racial structures. Service delivery protest is spurred by inadequate delivery of services by the local government. Makanyeza, Kwandayi & Ikobe (2013) indicate that poor service delivery major causes are corruption, lack of accountability, interference of councillors and political manipulation, poor human resource policy, lack of employee capacity, failure to manage change, and poor planning. They further assert that government institutions should acquire business structures and qualified employees who can commit to delivering the best services to the community. A government that cares about the welfare of its people provides quality and timely services, while a non-responsive government may not care

much about the quality and timeliness of the public services it provides (Makanyeza *et al.*, 2013). Fourie (2012) avows that public sector organisations are often criticized for being inefficient because they lack a business orientation. He further argues for public service mechanisms to be reconstructed into flatter hierarchal form that strive towards a minimal state.

6. Challenges of Municipal Finance in Africa

Local governments are viewed as custodians of public funds. They need supplementary financial leverage to sustain itself. Local governments should actually run like Entrepreneurs and not dependent on grants only from other spheres of government. Reddy (2010:82) affirms that the demarcation process has resulted in some municipalities not having an economic base and being financially viable. Local government need more resources and continuous capacity building to enable meaningful oversight over government's multi-billion development programmes.

According to Mosha (2010:13), most Municipalities do not have the right caliber of both managerial and technical staff to plan and implement project successfully. This is informed by professionals such as engineers, valuers, architects, and quantity surveyors etc. who are not offered attractive salaries. In Kenya, the level of capacity is mixed hence a community based participatory planning is used to deliver services, plan and implement projects. In Nigeria, the situation is highly variable. In Uganda, most decentralisation projects that have been undertaken have included capacity building components. In Malawi, Rwanda, and Botswana system has been weak due to historical central government control.

Most African local government experienced challenges in finance due to mismanagement of funds attributable to lack of managerial skills on the administrators, and mismanagement of resources allocated for development and for corrupt practices. Some projects were not implemented and others get started but funds siphoned by corrupt officials (either alone or connive with people in the private sector) (Mosha, 2010). Zybrands (2012) argues that unfunded or very little funded mandates such as housing, library services, tourism, welfare services and support for the Commission negatively impact on the service delivery.

Mosha (2010) argues that most local governments in Africa have limited revenue collection procedures or strategies. This is due to the central government, which insists on the prerogative of imposing taxes and determining tax rates. Even though property taxation is the substantial revenue source for local government, periodic reassessments to update property rates should be conducted appropriately. Revenue losses in local government are substantial due to lack or insufficient suitably qualified officials who are most of the time behind carrying out the reassessments. Mosha (2010) further contends that there is a low rate of tax collection in local government, however, this is difficult to prove as there are no portfolio of evidences (POEs) such as reliable records on revenue-collection performance. Hence most Local Governments receive disclaimers by the Auditor General (AG). Govender and Reddy (2012:71) elucidate facets of the 2008 local government budget and expenditure review argue that local government investment has not yielded the anticipated returns expected from the national economy. They further highlight that collectively, poor governance, inappropriate spatial planning, inadequate social infrastructure and massive service backlogs have emerged as constraints to poverty reduction and economic growth. Mosha (2010) further asserts that is obvious that municipal government in Africa needs substantial help and guidance in developing adequate local revenue system. In South Africa, some municipalities do have the collection procedures or strategies but unfortunately either not implemented accordingly or interrupted by other spheres of government such as electricity cut-offs.

7. Community Involvement

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 stipulates the need for community participation in planning for service delivery. Active participation of communities should be enhanced. Though, communities should take responsibilities by organising themselves into civil structures which represent their interest at local government planning processes. An integrated approach is important as it avoids duplication of tasks and promotes cooperative governance. Furthermore, an IDP forum, mayoral imbizos, ward committee meetings are platforms used for consultation, community-based planning, and decision making (Mdlalose, 2016). As a result, minimises the potential for institutional conflicts in community participation. It is imperative

for the consultative meetings to be held in accessible venues for the stakeholders and community at large to attend and air their views. This will promote ownership and council to take informed decisions.

Despite community engagements across provinces, the service delivery protests have continued unabated. This might be due to lack of proper feedback to the displeased communities. Mdlalose (2016:5) asserts that communication breakdown between citizens and government is the major underlying cause of service delivery protests. However, the citizen should be informed on the level of quality of services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect as enacted in the Batho Pele principles. In the local level of government, a culture of accountability, openness and transparency is a must as enacted in Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2 of 2000 and Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) 3 of 2000. The prerequisite for openness is provided for in section 4 of PAJA as the necessities of procedural fairness to the public help to inform the administrative process.

The Municipal Systems Act (2000) promotes community participation allowing the local community through mechanisms, processes and procedures established in terms of Chapter 4 to request review of service rendered especially by the service provider on behalf of the local government. RU (2013:5) accentuates holding service providers accountable by involving local citizens in monitoring contracts, appreciating of excelling contractors before the council meetings of local governments; and blacklisting non-performing firms. This will minimise non-performers and poor service delivery. In South Africa, words speak louder than actions when it comes to blacklisting non-performing firms. What is positive is that the Government emphasise that Service providers should be paid within 30 days after delivery of quality service.

8. Strategies to Improve Service Delivery

According to the Service Delivery Improvement Plan (2012/2015), municipalities countrywide are faced with increasing demands for improved services and competition for resources. RU (2013:2) suggests that for Local governments to improve service delivery as part of their responsibility to the people they should:

- Evaluate citizens' needs, priorities and decisions;
- Increase understanding and act upon socio-economic needs of the citizens in order to design appropriate service delivery mechanisms;
- Improve decision-making capacity of leaders at all levels;
- Continuously improve service delivery mechanisms to meet changing needs and demands of the citizens;
- Provide relevant, timely, cost-effective and useful services that are beneficial to the people;
- Increase collaboration and cooperation between local governments and central Government agencies;
- Define the outcome, effectiveness and relevance of each mechanism to be used;
- Effectively use performance management approaches, tools and methods to evaluate the services delivered;
- Ensure that the information received is acted upon;
- Increase participation of people in decision-making for service delivery;
- Learn from successful and unsuccessful outcomes; and
- Share responsibility with all actors engaged in local government service delivery.

Local government to succeed they need sovereignty. African countries have to decentralise their activities to local government. There seem to be limited autonomy in sub-national government. Mosha (2010:11-12) argues that countries are not the same hence depends on the political set up. Table 1 reflects autonomy status per respective country.

From the above, autonomy, powers and responsibility depends on the political set up of the sub-national governments. It is not a one size fits all. Efforts to raise their own funds vary as it depends on different factors. Sharing best practices leads to effective and efficient service designs

Table 1: Autonomy Status per Respective Country

Country	Autonomy status
Kenya	There is some autonomy but the ministerial approval is required for most of council decision made. No transfer of funds except for teachers' salaries grants for few municipalities which provides primary education and to needy council. Rely heavily on a property tax. Since 1980s rely on local authority service charge which is a combination of payroll and business charge rate.
Nigeria and Tanzania	The autonomy is strong
Botswana, Malawi and Rwanda	The autonomy has historically been weak due to capacity constraints.
Ethiopia	Rely on expenditures, but less than 10% of municipal expenditures on average, access to conditional transfers primarily for capital expenditure, shared percentages of central taxes, and have only a few modest independent sources.
Uganda	The autonomy is strong Funds transfer system is designed to provide three (3) types of grants which are block, equalization, and conditional. Have access to property tax though few use it because is significant in large cities.
South Africa	The autonomy is strong. Provided equitable share from National Treasury. Rely heavily on surpluses from trading services which is water and electricity. Road tax fees is collected, property tax in urban areas, and Regional Service Council levy in large metro council and districts which are productive though problematic payroll levy and turnover tax.

Source: Authors, 2020

and implementation (RU, 2013). Local government should conduct a skills audit aimed to establish the status of an individual's capacity/development needs of employees. The 3 areas of individual capacity are qualifications, experience, and competence. Individuals with their supervisor should agree on the training needs in a personal development plan (PDP). The Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) should, amongst other, use the gap skill and PDPs to complete the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP). The WSP should be agreed to by the municipality, representatives within the functional Training Committee, to ensure transparency, buy-in at all levels and be submitted to the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) (National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government: 2010:10).

The Local government service delivery can be improved by transforming leadership paradigms and organisational strategies to develop a culture of performance. Behn (1998) points out that public sector managers would not be able to fulfil their tasks without leadership. There should be no compromise when it comes to effective leadership. Induction on new officials, and ongoing capacity building which includes handling of complaints fast and efficiently, and employee motivation should be enhanced. Thus community complaints should be addressed on time and services should be adequately provided in an efficient way. The community participation such as *izimbizo* should be advertised across and conducted appropriately including on social media to enhance participation and freedom of speech. On the other hand, Service users should pay their bills on time and follow up defaulters vigorously to enable services to be accessed appropriately. Irrespective of reasons for poor services rendered, the community should not damage council assets. Administrative procedures should be simplified to avoid misinterpretation. Institutional structures to coordinate, evaluate and monitor community participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of integrated development plan (IDP) should be established or revised.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been observed from the aforementioned information that countrywide local governments are faced with increasing demand for improved services and competition for resources (Service

Delivery Improvement Plan, 2012/2015). To realise that politicians should be committed and play a role in influencing local government processes positively to organisational solutions and promote the institutionalisation of constitutional values and principles (Reddy, 2016). Furthermore, conduct a skills audit aimed to establish the status of an individual's capacity prior appointment or deployment of competent people, conduct capacity development on the gaps identified. This will minimise insufficient capacity-quality which leads to inadequate decision-making (Mosha, 2010; Reddy, 2016; Ndevu, 2019). Consequently, weak understanding of the powers and functions and role of the districts, scarcity of capacity, lack of planning alignment among the three spheres of government, and weak financial systems will be circumvented (Sebola, 2015; Ndevu, 2019). Thus, DM strengthens collaboration with local municipalities. In addition, active involvement of stakeholders from planning, implementation, decision making, monitoring and evaluation should be enhanced to diminish insufficient effective community consultation (Madzivhandila & Asha, 2012; Mdlalose, 2016). Moreover, continuously improve service delivery mechanisms to meet changing social media should also be utilised to enhance community participation and freedom of speech needs and demands of the citizens (Ndevu, 2019). Lastly, enough skilled people should be recruited and property valuations carried out more frequently in order to generate revenues (Mosha, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for a research that will monitor and evaluate the management of section 57 Administrators and Political office bearers' underperforming at the local government sphere.

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