TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AGAINST THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY

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SUMMARY

This article aims to reflect on the role of teaching in Higher Education in the face of contemporary challenges, considering that the teacher plays a fundamental role in the teaching and learning process, as well as in the formation of the student. In this sense, a qualitative bibliographic study was carried out, based on some authors, with the objective of reflecting on the role of the teacher in the process of student formation. The objective of which is to reflect on the work of the teacher in Higher Education through distance learning and the use of technologies, starting from the perception carried out through the studies during the research in a way that made possible the understanding of the formation of the young in this context. , since students need to fully develop in order to prepare to exercise their professionalism and, not only for that, but also need to obtain a good education.

Keywords: Teaching, Education and Contemporaneit

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the role of teaching in Higher Education in the face of the challenges of contemporaneity becomes essential, considering the technological advancements and their integration into current education. There is a discussion about how it would be if, in the field of education, these transformations that are already visible in universities were taken into account, considering all forms of teaching and seeking contributions from different media, which are still difficult to access, especially in remote areas of our country. It is also a reality that educators are transforming into facilitators of the teaching-learning process and knowledge through research, shaping students not to be mere repeaters of ideas, but rather discoverers of new ideas, thereby becoming citizens capable of understanding and constructing their own knowledge based on everything they can renew, expand, and produce.

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In distance education, interaction with the professor is indirect and needs to be mediated by a combination of the most suitable technical communication tools, which makes this mode of education much more dependent on mediation than conventional education. This highlights the significant importance of technological means. (BELLONI 2009, p. 54).

Theory always goes hand in hand with practice, but when it comes to Distance Learning, practice becomes a challenging activity that theory alone cannot sustain without a solid foundation. That is why theory is sought as a basis for resolving certain situations encountered throughout the academic journey. In this way, theory and practice complement and complete each other, and nothing is more important than practice for individuals to understand that they can only learn how to conduct themselves as professionals through hands-on experience. The experiences sought throughout life are essential for education to transform both the individual's environment and society as a whole. Educators need to be familiar with appropriate methods and techniques, acquiring knowledge to interact with students and guide their learning, while also respecting their individual ways of being, acting, and thinking. (HERMIDA, 2007).

Throughout this, the difficulties faced by higher education educators, as well as their achievements, will be addressed. Being a professor in higher education through E-learning, amidst numerous circumstances in the educational environment, means understanding the need to keep up with the pace of development imposed by the system and, why not, employing social media as a way to enhance knowledge. After all, social media is an integral part of students' daily lives and society in general.

TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The major difficulty faced by educators nowadays is precisely the fact that in universities, whether in distance learning or face-to-face mode, they receive students from various social backgrounds. Consequently, some of these students have no prior knowledge or experience in using new

technologies. They may not have access to these technologies at home, and in the university setting, these technologies contribute in some way to the students' growth. Sometimes, students face difficulties in using these technologies not due to a lack of knowledge but because they lack the necessary conditions. They may lack media resources at home, as well as access to a reliable internet connection. In the university, there may be a multimedia resource room that is not adequate to accommodate a considerable number of students, which is not enough but necessary to deliver a good lecture. It is worth noting that even the government does not have complete control over this technology, which could facilitate access both in universities and schools, as well as in society at large, free of charge.

> The incorporation of education into informatics is not merely due to the good intentions of individual educators or the progressive nature of a particular government. From a broader perspective, its use in education, as in other sectors of society, is part of an organizational project of a social class, namely its owner. It is this class that possesses all the technological apparatus of informatics and holds full mastery over its technology. (ALMEIDA, 2012, p.55).

The ease of using various technologies at home promotes in students the ability to communicate, expand their knowledge, and understand the real world. Some of them already live surrounded by media that, for many, would be beneficial to use in and outside the university. By incorporating these technologies in the classroom, teachers could effectively employ them for specific purposes in the pursuit of knowledge.

Another relevant issue, mainly in public universities, is the inadequacy of classroom spaces that can provide a minimum level of comfort to students. In addition to this, pedagogical materials are of utmost importance to promote quality teaching. In face-to-face education, a cozy and spacious environment is needed to offer a better quality of education. Likewise, in distance education, an interactive platform is required to enable closer interaction between teachers and students, despite private universities offering all these technological resources. However, when compared to public education, these universities do not provide the necessary conditions for using these

technologies to facilitate distance learning through research and content. It is essential for both universities and schools to have these resources available to facilitate the teaching and learning process. There are so many difficulties that, if listed, would be countless.

In this scenario, young people need to have a critical, creative, ethical, and aesthetic perspective, rather than just a technical one, on ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and their uses. They should be able to select, filter, comprehend, and produce meanings in a critical and creative manner in all areas of social life. To achieve this, it is necessary not only to enable students to explore technical interfaces (such as programming languages or various tools and apps for audio, video, image editing, augmented reality, game creation, gifs, memes, infographics, etc.) but also critical and ethical interfaces. These interfaces will allow them to not only curate and evaluate information but also to produce the new based on the existing. (BRASIL, 2017, p. 497).

> The process of professionalization is considered as important in a student's life as the process of literacy. Consequently, shaping a professional is one of the greatest responsibilities of a teacher. A good education provides the opportunity to truly engage with reality, and it is through this experience that the educator understands the significance and responsibility they will face upon assuming their role in any professional field. The student, in turn, also comes to understand that entering their chosen profession is not as easy as they may have imagined during their academic journey. Only through firsthand experience will they truly grasp the challenges and decide what they truly sought to achieve throughout their academic life.

When a teacher does not adopt this posture, they fail to assess their performance, do not reflect on their daily practice, and consequently lack the ability to recreate theories and adapt their teaching according to reality. Therefore, the role of the teacher as a researcher is essential for self-evaluation and reformulation of their practice. (JUSTINO, 2011, p. 67)

Faced with the challenges encountered in their teaching practice, the teacher not only needs to be an artist but also a constant researcher. Additionally, they must know how to handle emotions because being an

educator is not easy; it is one of the most difficult and rewarding tasks. Forming a future skilled professional is as important as teaching a child to take their first steps.

> In the educational process, the aim is for individuals to acquire knowledge, construct it through a reflective and questioning attitude. Alongside these knowledge-related aspects, the educational process also addresses the dimensions of emotions and affectivity. The individual not only learns through education but also develops their position in relation to facts and the reality that exists within and outside of them. (GRINSPUN, 2009, p. 39).

Being an excellent teacher is challenging, especially in today's world where technology has taken over society. It is undeniable that numerous possibilities have emerged with these technologies. Everything is constantly evolving, and students who were born in the technological era are already familiar with them and constantly seek new challenges. That is why educators must keep up with these advancements and acquire knowledge that will make a difference in their teaching practice.

Hence, the importance of working with practical activities that benefit and expand the knowledge of students who seek novelty and are constantly looking for something new to serve as a motivation to continue their academic journey in a sociable manner and to be able to share knowledge in a collaborative network, which is currently one of the primary roles experienced in education. This socialization occurs without the student feeling compelled to contribute to their own and others' learning.

> Teaching and learning today require much more temporal, personal, and group flexibility, with less fixed content and more open processes of research and communication. [...]. Learning also depends on the student, on their readiness and maturity to incorporate the true meaning that information holds for them, to embody it experientially and emotionally. [...]. The teacher is a researcher in action. They learn through practice and research, and teach based on what they have learned. (MORAN, 2012, p. 29-30).

The choice of what to learn and what to teach made by teachers and students is one of the forms of collaborative learning that is increasingly taking

over educational spaces. Through the use of research, videos, music, readings, films, stories, virtual reality objects (VR), and interactive platforms, the realization of both online and face-to-face classes is greatly facilitated. This approach is known as the flipped classroom, where students bring their prior knowledge before participating in class and come prepared with content that enhances the possibility of effective learning on the topic to be discussed in class. In this way, students feel comfortable participating in activities without the intervention of the classroom teacher, demonstrating that it is possible to learn on their own and take responsibility for their own education.

> Virtual learning communities, collaborative teaching, planetary connection, and the shifting roles of teachers and students in teaching-learning relationships are still situations that elude the current reality for the majority of individuals and the existing technological and cultural possibilities in the educational realm. (KENSKY, 2001 APUD BETTEGA, 2010, p. 30).

In this context, learning occurs as a continuation or progression derived from other experiences and is present in any circumstances of academic life through the continuity of teaching. This is crucial for the student, as with each experience and acquired knowledge, new competencies are gained that contribute to those already studied, leading to further development. Teaching manifests itself based on assumptions acquired throughout the school life.

> Contemporary times are strongly marked by technological development. Both computing and digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly present in everyone's lives, not only in offices or schools but also in our pockets, kitchens, cars, clothes, and so on. Furthermore, a significant amount of humanity's information is stored digitally. This demonstrates how much the productive world and daily life are being driven by digital technologies, a situation that is expected to become even more pronounced in the future.

It is common in higher education, both in face-to-face classes and in distance learning, for teachers to encounter difficulties in conveying knowledge, especially in higher education. Without a good education, the student will not achieve good future performance, which will impact the entire process of their education. Higher education is where the student takes not the final step in their academic life, but rather prepares for a professional

future. The teacher needs to have a focus on providing quality education so that the education received by the students can transform them into individuals capable of understanding and dealing with the reality they will face when practicing their profession.

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES OF TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Every citizen requires a good education, but the challenges are so many that in the globalized world, it is no longer possible to be a teacher without first understanding the real benefits of modernity and what it brings to complement the educator's knowledge. With this modernity, different teaching methods are incorporated and complemented by multimedia tools that are transforming society.

> One of the characteristics of globalization is the growing importance of certain types of competencies. This work is concerned with discussing the need to acquire these key competencies in order to participate in the new globalized society with greater possibilities for success. (VALENTE, 2007, p.17).

Education transforms society, and to be a professional capable of carrying out activities in a society dominated by modernity, it is necessary to have at least an awareness that knowledge is continuous. Keeping up with technological advancements and incorporating their use in the classroom is essential. It would be almost impossible to transform citizens capable of constructing their own knowledge without utilizing the numerous resources that are part of students' lives. Most students are already familiar with and have embraced these technological innovations, as they have become an integral part of their daily lives. However, it is necessary for teachers to know how to handle this array of technological novelties brought into education, in order to effectively utilize them and their significant contribution to the field of knowledge.

> The changes triggered by the knowledge society have challenged universities to provide an education that is compatible with the needs of this historical moment. The notion of terminality offered in undergraduate programs needs to be surpassed, as it has generated a significant crisis within academic circles. This crisis is fueled by the false idea that upon completing their studies, students are fully

> prepared to enter the workforce. The new challenge for universities is to equip students with the tools for a lifelong process of continuous education. In this perspective, teachers need to reconsider their pedagogical practices and become aware that they cannot absorb the entirety of information and simply pass it on to their students. (MORAN, 2012, p.70).

In higher education, these experiences are crucial for students because when professors embrace new educational processes, they instill in students the ability to express their ideas, knowledge, and experiences for their own benefit. This empowers students to become more than mere repeaters of knowledge; they become researchers capable of assuming a transformative role in society and inventing bold new projects.

The competitiveness of the contemporary world makes university students critical thinkers who can construct their own knowledge. In the past, this was only possible with the guidance of a teacher, but now these ideas emerge from the students themselves. These innovative projects put scientific knowledge to the test, and we can already witness this reality growing each day, with students being at the forefront of this process. Paulo Freire, by positioning himself as a learner through his own experience, draws attention to the teaching and learning process, stating that:

> The learner needs to assume their role as such, but assuming oneself as a learner means recognizing oneself as a subject capable of knowing what they want to know in relation to another subject equally capable of knowing, the educator, and between the two, enabling the task of both, the object of knowledge. Teaching and learning are thus moments of a larger process, that of knowing, which entails recognition. (FREIRE, 2003, p. 47)

Regarding the educational process in higher education, it is no different. Distance tutoring allows students to become individuals capable of producing their own knowledge, and this contact with technologies has enabled an education based on different forms of learning, which often puts the professor in challenging situations to resolve. Even the educator may not have access to the virtual world that students do, and if the teacher can integrate education and technology, as well as involve the student as a partner, they will be able to keep up with their students and easily adapt to handling equipment,

platforms, and various tools capable of promoting knowledge. These may still be obstacles for the teacher, perhaps because students are eager to discover the new and are always excited about something different, whereas the professor tends to seek training and information in order to provide the best for the learner. This, in a way, brings complexity in assuming their role in the face of changes in the way of teaching.

> In different face-to-face and virtual learning spaces, students have the opportunity to learn and teach, and so does the teacher. Certain communication and learning movements in bimodal education processes (combining in-person and distance learning) enable an understanding of how students learn, reflect, become aware of concepts, procedures, and attitudes in different areas of knowledge. (MENEZES, et al., 2009, p. 167)

In Distance Education, pedagogical practice should be motivated by concrete situations from the academic context, which are critically analyzed through dialogue in order to build new knowledge and transform reality. The relationship between educator and learner is horizontal, where everyone can think, express their ideas, contradict, and justify. No one possesses absolute knowledge or absolute ignorance; everyone is humble to teach and learn.

> Knowledge has a price. New knowledge is the result of slow, rigorous, and tiresome efforts of search, which presupposes not only a determined will to go through the entire process but also to be willing to retrace the steps that have already been taken. (GADOTTI, 1995. p. 63).

Pedagogical practice should also be based on diagnosing difficulties detected in a timely manner, and possible and necessary interventions should be carried out to ensure effective teaching. As the agent and mediator of learning, the teacher must plan and be creative and dynamic, seeking methods and approaches that facilitate student learning and contribute significantly to the discovery of new knowledge through curiosity, creativity, logical reasoning, motivation, and other factors. This is because humans are social, thinking beings capable of changing their thoughts at any moment, with transformations that vary according to their needs. In this sense, the curriculum adopted by the university should go beyond the linear and compartmentalized structure of disciplines. Instead, it seeks reciprocal and

collaborative relationships among various areas through a dialogical, cooperative, and ongoing approach, which are necessary for understanding the multiple relationships that constitute the world. Academics, tutors, and teachers, mediated by communication, organize and interact, constructing knowledge that goes beyond what is experienced in both face-to-face and online classrooms.

> Many technical professionals, designers, teachers, and researchers working with distance education have realized the importance of explaining the specificities of different languages to both teachers and students when they embrace communication technologies that, in turn, utilize other languages. (...). This aligns with one of the foundations of distance education, which is a proposal to use communication technologies to optimize meaningful learning. (CORTELAZZO, 2013, p. 133).

These diversified curricula constitute an important foundation for the application of knowledge, as the work developed tends to flow when the teacher presents students with challenges that enable greater interaction and commitment to their education. In this flipped classroom model, the student becomes an active agent who seeks knowledge, no longer presenting themselves as a passive being, but as a thinking, reflective, and knowledge-building individual capable of developing themselves not just as a mere student but as an active researcher. They actively seek and commit to revolutionizing education by participating, whether in the traditional classroom or in distance learning. This student collaborates and engages in seeking information and providing means to solve problems through experiments that can transform theory into an effective practice for all, including themselves and their peers. This is already possible through collaborative networks spread everywhere, facilitated by various media platforms.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORANEITY

We live in a society where "education is for life, not just for becoming something or having something." However, there is a certain difficulty regarding this mindset, as we inevitably live in a society imposed by capitalism

and individualism, which becomes a significant barrier when it comes to education.

Preparing young people to assume their role in contemporary society is an immense challenge, as universities, as agents of social transformation, must focus on preparing citizens capable of constructing their own knowledge, being independent, and transforming the society in which they live.

Transformation is being open to receiving changes, embracing the new and the unknown, and sharing such knowledge in a way that everyone can have access through active collaboration, aiming not only to transform the individual but also society as a whole. Committing to this new model of education requires, above all, a revolution in education so that everyone can understand that only through transformative and reflective education can students have access not only to ready-made and unfinished content but also to all resources that put their ability to create, recreate, contribute, and construct to the test in an educational process where everyone can collaborate for quality education, which is the responsibility of all.

For this to happen, it is necessary for schools, universities, and society to be engaged in this process and participate together in the future of education, always aiming for the common good. They should seek to incorporate, through their projects, the participation and interest of everyone in favor of education, based on new pedagogical trends that contribute to the students' learning.

> In this pedagogical approach, school activities should focus on discussions of social and political issues and concrete actions related to the immediate social reality. The teacher should act as a coordinator of activities, someone who organizes and works together with the students. (QUEIROZ; MOITA, 2007, p. 12)

Seeking new tools to enhance the teaching and learning process in the education of students involves the continuous professional development of instructors in higher education. It is through their efforts that it becomes possible to provide an education that encompasses knowledge that will make

a difference beyond the university setting. In this regard, it is necessary to assess the goals, objectives, and actions provided through the course content and even identify what needs to be learned in order to make adjustments regarding what is working well and what needs improvement. This evaluative process should involve the participation of all those involved in the educational process. From this perspective, instructors in higher education play a crucial role in the students' formation since it is through the foundation received in their academic journey that it becomes possible to shape a professional capable of realizing their potential beyond the university.

> [...] Only when this complexity is acknowledged can we make progress in more effective qualification processes. It requires specific knowledge that has a strong component of practical construction. However, it is a practice that does not repeat itself; it is always unique. As such, it requires the ability to handle unforeseen situations. (CUNHA, 2008, p.466).

The university, as an institution shaping opinions and disseminating knowledge, should strive for quality education based on democratic, political, economic, ethical, and social principles that support the academic development of individuals through research. Students should be prepared and open to acquiring new knowledge, while teachers should have the ability to engage in dialogue with their students to facilitate optimal learning. This aims to provide students with knowledge that extends beyond the classroom. In this way, education is realized when the school becomes integrated into the student's daily life and collaborates with society to continuously improve teaching. This requires the participation of all stakeholders, not only for the formation of future teachers but also for all other professions.

> Research in teacher education contributes to the growth of the profession as it provides opportunities for teachers to investigate their practice, allowing future educators to enhance their scientific and cultural knowledge in accordance with the rigor required in educational activities. By conducting research using the appropriate methodology, teachers can learn to reflect on education and strive to connect theory and practice to gain a deeper understanding of the educational context (JUSTINO, 2011, p.50).

In a society open to change, the university plays a fundamental role in generating innovative ideas that extend beyond its walls. In this context, there is a focus on integrating technologies in a way that enhances knowledge and attracts not only students but also teachers. After all, teachers are primarily responsible for educating individuals who are not only prepared to compete but also capable of taking action in the various situations imposed by society.

> Teaching work is an integral part of the broader educational process through which members of society are prepared for participation in social life. Education, or rather, the practice of education, is a social and universal phenomenon, being a necessary human activity for the existence and functioning of all societies. (...). There is no society without educational practice, and there is no educational practice without society. (LIBANEO, 2013. p.14-15)

The old outdated pedagogical practices, whose methodologies are no longer part of the current landscape, and dare I say are not suitable for the contemporary profile of academic learning, are no longer allowed in this new model of education. Retrograde thinking is no longer permitted. It is necessary for the university, in addition to providing education based on commitment, to also have the responsibility of keeping its team of teachers up-to-date in order to enhance their pedagogical practices, aiming to provide their students with the necessary conditions for their social, intellectual, cultural, and political development, among others.

> Technological education has never been as valued as it is now, when it has to face one of the most formidable challenges. The concepts of "school" as a place of learning, "teacher" as the source of knowledge, "student" as the object of learning, and "subjects" have never been so questioned. For this reason, the focus of technological education must encompass technological empowerment and the appreciation of the human being in the process. (GRINSPUN, 2009. p. 235)

One of the major challenges in universities in the midst of contemporaneity is precisely the fact that even though technology is accessible to everyone, especially in online education, some students lack access due to financial constraints. Another issue is the use of outdated teaching methodologies by some professors, sometimes due to a lack of access to these technologies at home, as the universities generally provide such resources but

with low-quality connectivity. Despite having good platforms, connectivity issues still cause disruptions for students.

> The resistance of many teachers to use new technologies in their personal research and in the classroom has a lot to do with the insecurity derived from the false fear of being surpassed, cognitively, by the instrumental resources of information technology. In this sense, mere training in device handling, no matter how important it may be, does not solve the problem. Therefore, it is extremely important to demonstrate that the function of a competent teacher is not only not threatened but also increases in importance. Their new role will no longer be that of transmitting supposedly ready-made knowledge, but rather that of mentors and active instigators of a new dynamic of research-based learning. (MERCADO, 2004, p. 13)

One of the major difficulties teachers face in using these ICTs is preparing their media materials to upload the lessons that will be available to students on the platform. This requires time and knowledge of video editing, as they need to be familiar with editing using programs that can help in preparing quality material. Many make excuses regarding the lack of time to plan at the university or at home. However, at the university, they can seek help from other professionals who are proficient in technology and could collaborate with each other. But it is precisely the fear of the unknown and the inability to adapt to the use of ICTs that is becoming one of the barriers in education.

> Technological education, in my belief, should be experienced in all levels of education, taking into account the specificities that the curriculum and student development provide. Within this perception, education can be committed to the training of professionals who are or will be working in the field of technology, as well as focused on the discussion and reflection of its unique aspects. (GRINSPUN, 2009. p. 92)

In reality, what is seen in theory is not the same as what is experienced in practice. There are so many needs that require universities and teachers to be engaged in seeking and providing the best in terms of the education of future professionals as well as educators. They should strive to propose continuous training programs that contribute to high-quality work and introduce new teaching methodologies that align with educational advancements in the modern era.

Partnership among all is crucial for education, as when everyone feels responsible for overcoming challenges and is committed to providing the best for students, going beyond the unknown to prioritize the learner, education can only benefit.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The current scenario of contemporary education undergoes daily transformations, and in this context, the university plays a crucial role in the formation of academics. As they enter the university, they bring with them knowledge from different lived experiences, which is given a new perspective, expanded, and adapted to their needs. The role of the educational institution as a shaper and transformer of knowledge is to provide academics with a quality education that aims for the well-being of all. It should also be open to acquiring new pedagogical practices that will become part of students' lives.

> Teaching work constitutes the professional practice of the teacher, and this is their primary commitment to society. Their responsibility is to prepare students to become active and engaged citizens in their families, workplaces, professional associations, cultural life, and politics. It is fundamentally a social activity because it contributes to the cultural and scientific development of the population, an essential task for other democratic achievements. (LIBANEO, 2013. p. 48).

Understanding and knowing the needs of distance education students is an important task for higher education teachers, as despite all of them being young adults, they still deserve greater attention and support to keep up with classes, complete activities, and interact with their peers. Another aspect worth highlighting is the pedagogical support in relation to the use of an accessible platform that meets the needs of all students. This is particularly important because it is through this platform that students will maintain dialogue with teachers and classmates. Making this access more aligned with reality is essential to carry out tasks without overwhelming both the teacher and the student, thus promoting greater independence.

In addressing the topic at hand, the use of media and how they are part of students' daily lives, it is important for educators to have access to and

understand the real benefits they bring to education. However, it is essential that everyone is committed to providing such support, not only to students but also to educators, enabling the use of ICTs in the classroom and multimedia rooms, as well as in the platforms that are already part of the university context.

It is observed that in distance education, the use of these technologies is essential for delivering knowledge to students, as it is through these platforms that content can be transmitted. In addition, these technologies are already part of students' lives, and classes through these media have made this mode of teaching possible, which is only expected to continue growing and gaining space. This promising development offers education with a crucial quality and a different approach, exceeding expectations. Proof of this lies in the fact that the ability to acquire new knowledge has surpassed expectations, and this has only been possible through the use of ICTs, with quality content readily available to students.

With the integration of media in education, the work of an online teacher has become interesting. The difficulties regarding its use will be overcome as the teacher becomes familiar with digital tools and incorporates them into their daily routine to enhance their teaching practices. The challenges faced by educators are seen as complex problems, but when they become agents of transformative change in complex realities, new horizons emerge.

Their role in society is so important that it extends beyond the confines of the classroom to a larger context, where their contribution is essential for the exercise of citizenship.

Teaching in higher education, in the face of contemporary challenges, should not be seen as an impossible task, but rather as something that requires support both in teacher training and pedagogical support, with a focus on the use of new methodologies that can complement the knowledge of

educators. This approach allows them to envision new horizons where education continues to be the driving force behind society.

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