

Managing Teacher Competence in Islamic-Based Vocational Education: A Comparative Case Study

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Abstract: Teacher competence management is a critical factor in sustaining Islamic-based vocational education, particularly within diverse institutional contexts. This study explores and compares the management of teacher competence development at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa, two madrasahs with contrasting structural and contextual conditions. Employing a comparative qualitative approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving madrasah leaders, vocational teachers, and relevant stakeholders. The findings reveal distinctive management patterns. MAN 1 Samarinda applies a structured and systemic model supported by adequate infrastructure, strong industry and university partnerships, and government involvement, enabling continuous professional development and industry-aligned vocational learning. Conversely, MAN 1 Langsa faces limitations in facilities, training access, and industry collaboration; however, it sustains teacher competence development through strong Islamic value orientation, leadership commitment, social capital, and community engagement. Across both contexts, Islamic values function as a foundational framework that shapes leadership practices, curriculum implementation, and teacher professional growth. Key challenges include infrastructural constraints, limited certification opportunities, and uneven industry involvement. Nevertheless, enabling factors—such as visionary and transformational leadership, alumni networks, and university partnerships—mediate these constraints and support adaptive competence development. Based on these findings, this study proposes an integrative management framework that connects Islamic values, leadership, and contextual strategies in developing pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies of vocational teachers. This study contributes a value-based and context-sensitive perspective on Islamic vocational education management and provides practical implications for madrasah leaders and policymakers in aligning employability demands with ethical and spiritual foundations.

Keywords: Islamic-based vocational education; teacher competency management; educational management.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic-based vocational education in Madrasah Aliyah plays a strategic role in responding to the demands of an increasingly competitive labor market while preserving Islamic values in skills development. Madrasahs are not only responsible for strengthening students' religious understanding but also for equipping them with practical competencies aligned with industry and entrepreneurial needs (Azra, 2019). Through the integration of vocational skills and Islamic principles, graduates are expected to demonstrate both

professional competitiveness and strong moral character in the workplace (Siregar et al., 2024).

Despite its strategic importance, the implementation of vocational education in madrasahs continues to face substantial challenges. Previous studies highlight limitations in teacher competence, curriculum relevance, and industry collaboration as key obstacles to effective vocational learning (Salabi, 2020). Without systematic management of teacher competency development, madrasahs risk producing graduates who are insufficiently prepared to meet labor market expectations (Mudarris, 2022). These challenges indicate that teacher competence is not merely an instructional issue but a managerial concern that requires structured planning, implementation, and evaluation.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government has promoted vocational strengthening through the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning, 21st-century skills, and collaboration with industry partners (Mulyasa, 2023; Mardiaty et al., 2024). However, empirical evidence suggests that madrasahs continue to experience difficulties in aligning curriculum implementation with industry needs and vocational learning standards (Jannah et al., 2022; Sumarmi, 2023). This gap between policy intent and institutional practice highlights the need to examine how teacher competency development is managed at the madrasah level.

From a policy perspective, Islamic-based vocational education aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' vision to enhance madrasah quality by producing graduates who excel academically, spiritually, and professionally (Mastiyah & Lisyawati, 2022). Nevertheless, many madrasahs struggle with limited teacher training opportunities, insufficient curriculum support, and weak partnerships with industry, resulting in suboptimal vocational program outcomes (Rosyada, 2017). These conditions underscore the importance of effective education management in strengthening teacher competence through collaboration among madrasahs, universities, and industry stakeholders.

Although vocational education has been widely studied in the Indonesian context, existing research predominantly focuses on vocational high schools rather than Madrasah Aliyah (Suryati et al., 2023). Moreover, limited attention has been given to how vocational education grounded in Islamic values is managed, particularly in relation to teacher competency development. Comparative studies examining differences in management practices across regions also remain scarce, leaving an important empirical gap in the literature.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the management of teacher competency development in the implementation of Islamic-based vocational education through a comparative case study of MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is teacher competency development planned, implemented, and evaluated to support Islamic-based vocational education? (2) What similarities and differences exist in teacher competency management between the two madrasahs? (3) What factors support and hinder the improvement of teacher competence in this context?

This study contributes theoretically and empirically to the field of educational management. Theoretically, it extends discussions on teacher competency development by situating it within the framework of Islamic-based vocational education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Empirically, it provides comparative insights that can inform madrasah leaders, universities, and policymakers in designing context-sensitive teacher development models aligned with vocational and Islamic educational goals. The novelty of

this research lies in its comparative focus and its emphasis on management strategies that integrate Islamic values, vocational competencies, and multi-stakeholder collaboration in Madrasah Aliyah settings (Maulana, 2024; Unesco, 2020).

METHOD

This study is a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design to examine management strategies for enhancing teacher competence in implementing Islamic-based vocational education at MAN 1 Samarinda (East Kalimantan) and MAN 1 Langsa (Aceh) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of leadership practices, institutional policies, and external partnerships shaping teacher development within different socio-cultural and managerial contexts.

The two madrasahs were purposively selected based on their contrasting characteristics: MAN 1 Samarinda represents a vocational madrasah with strong collaboration with industry and universities, while MAN 1 Langsa reflects a model with deep integration of Islamic values but distinct challenges in aligning vocational programs with labor market demands. These differences provided a meaningful basis for comparative analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Participants consisted of 18 informants, including 2 madrasah principals, 10 vocational teachers, and 6 external stakeholders (industry partners and university representatives). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in vocational program management and teacher professional development. The study examined how teacher competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal, were planned, developed, and evaluated within each madrasah context (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Data collection employed multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data richness and triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017): 1) In-depth interviews explored leadership strategies, teacher training policies, and collaboration mechanisms. 2) Non-participant observations examined classroom practices, vocational training activities, and industry-linked learning. 3) Document analysis reviewed curricula, teacher development programs, policy documents, and institutional reports.

Data analysis followed a thematic and comparative procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014). First, data were condensed through coding and categorization based on key themes such as leadership, professional development, institutional support, and Islamic values integration. Second, data were displayed in comparative matrices to identify similarities and differences between the two madrasahs. Third, conclusions were drawn by interpreting recurring patterns and cross-case relationships that explained how management strategies influenced teacher competency development.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied data triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. An audit trail was maintained to document analytical decisions, enhancing the dependability and confirmability of the findings. The analysis was further informed by Islamic education management frameworks, including Total Quality Management (TQM), Human Resource Development (HRD), and Islamic leadership perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic-Based Vocational Education Management at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa

The results reveal clear differences in the management of Islamic-based vocational education at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa, particularly in curriculum implementation, partnership models, and institutional support systems. These findings are derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis.

At MAN 1 Samarinda, vocational education is managed through a structured curriculum aligned with industry standards. Teachers reported that vocational subjects such as catering, fashion, welding, automotive, and computer network engineering are supported by adequate facilities and continuous competency upgrading. One vocational teacher stated: “Our curriculum is regularly adjusted based on industry input. Teachers are also involved in training sessions with industry partners, so what we teach is not disconnected from real workplace needs (Teacher, MAN 1 Samarinda)”.

Observations confirmed the presence of industry-standard equipment and structured teaching schedules that integrate religious values with technical skills. Institutional documents also indicate regular collaboration programs with universities and industries, including internships and teacher certification initiatives.

In contrast, MAN 1 Langsa implements vocational education with a stronger emphasis on Islamic values and local relevance but faces limitations in infrastructure and external partnerships. Skills programs such as fashion, welding, and electronics are adapted to local market needs, yet teachers reported constraints related to facilities and training access. As noted by a school leader: “We rely heavily on internal capacity and community support. Industry collaboration is limited, but we emphasize discipline, work ethics, and Islamic values in vocational learning (Principal, MAN 1 Langsa)”. Field observations showed that vocational activities were conducted with modest equipment, and teacher development relied largely on internal workshops and peer learning.

Teacher Competencies in Implementing Islamic-Based Vocational Education

The findings indicate that teacher competencies in implementing Islamic-based vocational education at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa are manifested across four interrelated dimensions: pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. However, the form and intensity of these competencies differ according to institutional context and management support.

Pedagogical competence at MAN 1 Samarinda is reflected in the use of project-based learning that integrates vocational skills with Islamic values. Classroom observations in the catering program show that teachers explicitly embed concepts of *halāl* and *ṭayyib* in food preparation and assessment criteria. One teacher explained: “Students are not only assessed on taste and presentation, but also on whether their process follows halal standards and cleanliness as part of Islamic ethics (Vocational teacher, MAN 1 Samarinda)”.

At MAN 1 Langsa, pedagogical competence is demonstrated through hands-on instruction emphasizing work ethics such as patience and meticulousness. In the sewing program, teachers encourage students to complete products intended for social beneficiaries. As noted by one instructor: “We teach students that sewing is not just a skill but a form of service. That is why some products are donated to those in need (Vocational teacher, MAN 1 Langsa)”.

In terms of professional competence, teachers at MAN 1 Samarinda participate more frequently in industry-certified training and technical upskilling, particularly in

automotive and information technology programs. Institutional documents confirm regular certification programs supported by industry partners. Conversely, teachers at MAN 1 Langsa demonstrate strong mastery of basic vocational skills but limited exposure to digital technologies and industry-standard equipment.

Regarding social competence, teachers at MAN 1 Samarinda actively coordinate with industry partners to facilitate internships and joint training. Meanwhile, teachers at MAN 1 Langsa rely more on community-based collaboration, involving alumni and local religious organizations in vocational projects. Observations revealed strong teacher engagement in community-driven initiatives despite limited external institutional support.

Finally, personality competence is evident in both madrasahs through teachers' role modeling of integrity, responsibility, and discipline. Entrepreneurship programs in both schools emphasize ethical conduct and accountability, although MAN 1 Samarinda benefits from stronger institutional scaffolding for such initiatives.

Obstacles and Supporting Factors in Improving Teacher Competence in Islamic-Based Vocational Education

The findings reveal that efforts to improve teacher competence at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa are shaped by a combination of structural constraints and institutional support mechanisms. These factors operate differently across the two madrasahs due to disparities in resources, partnerships, and policy access.

Inhibiting factors are more pronounced at MAN 1 Langsa. Field data indicate that limited facilities and vocational equipment—particularly in sewing, welding, and electronics—restrict the scope of practical instruction and teacher skill development. One school leader noted: “Teachers often have to adjust learning targets because the available equipment does not match industry standards.” (Madrasah principal, MAN 1 Langsa)

In addition, several teachers reported limited access to continuous professional development, especially training related to digital technologies and industry certification. Document analysis confirms that teacher training at MAN 1 Langsa is largely internally funded and irregular. Limited industry involvement further constrains opportunities for teacher upskilling through workplace exposure.

At MAN 1 Samarinda, these constraints are less significant. Institutional records show stronger alignment between vocational programs and industry requirements, supported by better facilities and structured partnerships. Teachers regularly participate in certification programs and joint training with industry partners, which enhances both pedagogical confidence and technical competence.

Supporting factors in both madrasahs include leadership commitment, community engagement, and collaboration with higher education institutions. At MAN 1 Samarinda, leadership practices emphasize strategic planning, performance monitoring, and external collaboration. At MAN 1 Langsa, although resources are limited, strong community and alumni support compensate for institutional gaps. Alumni involvement in vocational projects provides practical learning spaces for both teachers and students.

Islamic-Based Vocational Education Management at MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa

The findings reveal distinct institutional management patterns between MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa in developing Islamic-based vocational education. MAN 1 Samarinda demonstrates a more structured and systemic approach, supported by curriculum alignment, strong industry partnerships, and government backing. This reflects

the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in education, where continuous evaluation, stakeholder feedback, and alignment with labor market needs become central to institutional effectiveness (Deming, 1986).

In contrast, MAN 1 Langsa operates under significant resource constraints yet sustains vocational education through strong Islamic values, internal leadership commitment, and community involvement. This condition aligns with Al-Attas (1980) conception of Islamic education, which emphasizes value-based competency development rooted in *adab* and moral responsibility rather than material abundance alone. The comparison suggests that while structural resources enhance program scalability, Islamic-based vocational education can remain resilient through value-driven management and social capital.

Curriculum leadership further differentiates both institutions. MAN 1 Samarinda aligns vocational curricula with industry needs through structured work-based learning models, supporting Apud's (2018) argument that school–industry–government collaboration strengthens vocational teacher competencies. Conversely, MAN 1 Langsa adopts a resource-driven curriculum innovation model, where religious values and internal capacities shape vocational learning, reflecting Putnam's (2000) social capital theory in educational management.

From a leadership perspective, professional development at MAN 1 Samarinda follows Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies emphasizing continuous training, certification, and mentoring (Ganihar & Nayak, 2007). Meanwhile, MAN 1 Langsa exemplifies transformational leadership, where principals motivate teachers to innovate despite infrastructural limitations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This confirms that leadership style significantly mediates the relationship between institutional capacity and teacher competence development.

Teacher Competencies in Implementing Islamic-Based Vocational Education

Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogical competence in both madrasahs reflects the integration of vocational skills and Islamic values. At MAN 1 Samarinda, project-based learning integrates *halal* and *tayyib* principles within catering and vocational programs, aligning with the Tarbiyah Model, which emphasizes holistic knowledge transmission encompassing skills, spirituality, and ethics (Makruf, 2017). This approach supports competency-based Islamic education models that nurture both technical expertise and moral consciousness.

At MAN 1 Langsa, competency-based education is implemented through hands-on vocational learning infused with Islamic work ethics such as *ṣabr* (patience), *diqqah* (precision), and *īṣār* (altruism). However, challenges in developing industry-relevant instructional materials indicate the need for pedagogical innovation through *ijtihād*. This finding resonates with transformational leadership theory, which encourages teachers to adapt and innovate in response to changing professional demands (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Professional Competence

Professional competence is evident in MAN 1 Samarinda through teacher participation in industry-certified training and technical certification programs, reflecting Islamic values such as *amānah*, *ṣidq*, and *ijtihād*. This aligns with structured competency development models in vocational education that emphasize professionalism grounded in ethical responsibility.

In contrast, MAN 1 Langsa faces gaps in digital literacy and emerging technologies. Addressing this requires continuous professional development (CPD) based on *khidmat al-ummah*, emphasizing service-oriented professionalism. AbdulRab's (2023) framework highlights the importance of peer mentoring and knowledge sharing in strengthening teacher competence, which complements Guskey's (2002) model emphasizing collaborative learning, action research, and industry engagement.

Social Competence

Teachers in both institutions exhibit strong social competence through engagement with industry partners and local communities. At MAN 1 Samarinda, collaboration with industries reflects participatory leadership grounded in *ukhuwwah Islāmiyah* and *tawāzun*, reinforcing stakeholder-driven vocational education governance. At MAN 1 Langsa, community-based vocational initiatives involving alumni align with *maṣlaḥah*-oriented education and Islamic community engagement models (Al-Attas, 1980).

Hallinger's (2011) leadership framework supports these findings, emphasizing the need for institutional networking models that enable teachers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to collaboratively design value-based vocational curricula.

Personality Competence

Personality competence emerges as a foundational element in Islamic-based vocational education. Teachers at MAN 1 Samarinda exemplify *uswah ḥasanah* through entrepreneurship-based learning, instilling *mujāhadah* and *ṣidq*. Similarly, MAN 1 Langsa emphasizes independence, responsibility, and *istiqāmah* through student-led business initiatives grounded in *tawakkal* and ethical consistency.

These practices align with servant and transformational leadership principles, where teachers act as moral exemplars and mentors (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Rahdiyanta & Asnawi (2018) further stress the importance of values-driven leadership training to strengthen teachers' roles as character educators in vocational contexts.

Obstacles and Supporting Factors in Improving Teacher Competence

The findings confirm that teacher competence development is shaped by structural and relational factors. Limited facilities, insufficient training, and weak industry involvement—particularly at MAN 1 Langsa—align with Prasetyo & Salabi (2023) assertion that inadequate investment constrains vocational education quality. Guskey (2002) further emphasizes that without sustained professional development, instructional improvement remains fragmented.

From a systems theory perspective, weak stakeholder collaboration undermines institutional sustainability (Bertalanffy, 1969). However, visionary leadership, alumni engagement, and higher education partnerships act as strong enablers. Grubb & Flessa (2006) highlight that visionary leadership fosters innovation and professional growth, while Fauzi (2017) confirms that university–madrasah collaboration enhances teacher competence and program quality.

Strategic Implications for Enhancing Teacher Competence

Synthesizing the findings, effective teacher competence development requires integrated policy strengthening, human resource development, partnership expansion, and infrastructure optimization. Regulatory alignment, Islamic-based certification, and

curriculum integration with industry needs support sustainable vocational education (Guskey, 2002; Suharno et al., 2020; Arinaitwe, 2021; Ubihatun et al., 2024).

Human resource strategies combining industry-based training and Islamic values-based programs reinforce technical and moral competence (Hambali et al., 2020). Institutional partnerships and teaching factories operationalize systems theory by linking madrasahs, universities, and industry (Bertalanffy, 1969; Fauzi, 2017). Finally, digital innovation and sharia-compliant infrastructure development address resource limitations while preserving Islamic educational identity (Mardiati et al., 2024; Sari & Salabi, 2022).

Concluding Synthesis

This discussion demonstrates that teacher competence development in Islamic-based vocational education emerges from the dynamic interaction of Islamic values, leadership practices, institutional management, and external partnerships. By integrating Islamic education theory, leadership models, and prior empirical studies, this research offers a contextually grounded framework for strengthening vocational education in madrasahs.

To clarify the study's novelty, the accompanying figure presents a conceptual model synthesizing empirical findings and relevant theories. Rather than a prescriptive framework, the model illustrates how teacher competence is managed through value-driven leadership and contextual strategies. Developed inductively from the comparative cases of MAN 1 Samarinda and MAN 1 Langsa, the model highlights how diverse institutional contexts shape management approaches while sustaining a shared Islamic value foundation.

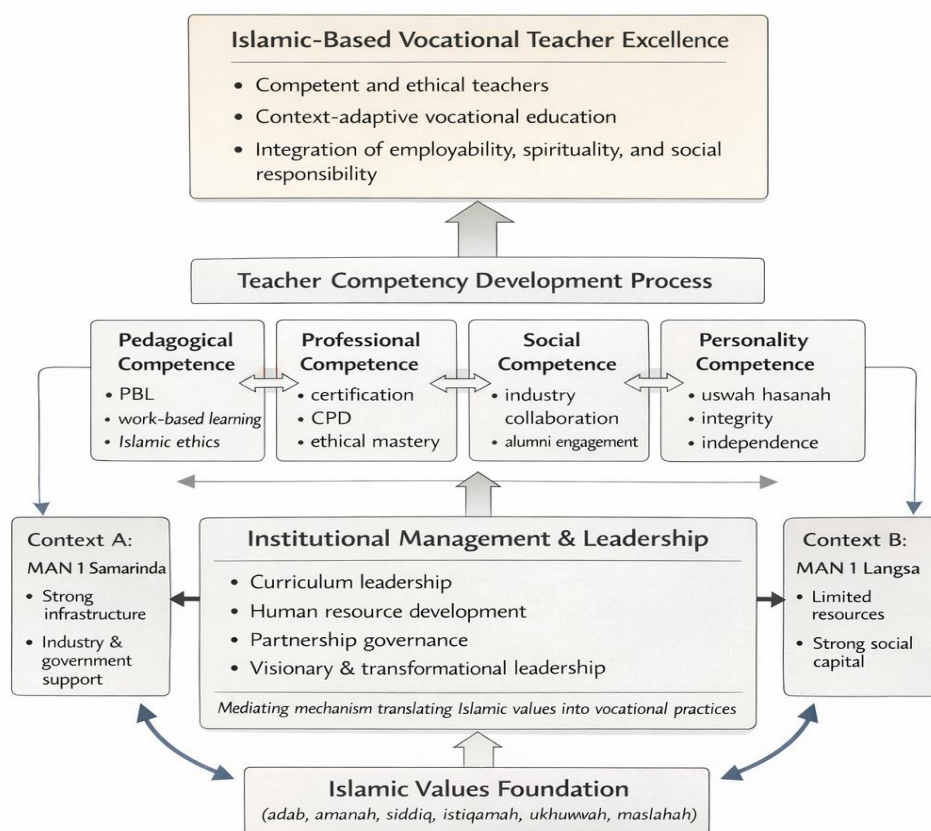


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Managing Teacher Competence in Islamic-Based Vocational Education

This figure illustrates the process of teacher competence development within Islamic-based vocational education, emphasizing the mediating role of institutional management and leadership. Islamic values function as the foundational layer that informs managerial decisions, leadership orientation, and professional practices. These values are translated into concrete strategies through curriculum leadership, human resource development, and partnership governance, which together support the development of pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies.

The model also highlights the importance of contextual differences, showing how variations in institutional resources and social capital influence management approaches without altering the core value framework. In this sense, teacher competence development is understood as a context-adaptive and value-driven process, producing not only technically competent teachers but also educators who integrate vocational expertise, ethical commitment, and social responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the management of teacher competence is a decisive element in sustaining and strengthening Islamic-based vocational education. Teacher competence development is not merely a technical or administrative process, but a value-driven managerial practice in which pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies are cultivated through the integration of Islamic values, institutional leadership, and contextual management strategies. Islamic principles—such as integrity, responsibility, justice, and Islamic work ethics—function as a foundational framework that guides vocational education toward producing graduates who are both professionally competent and ethically grounded. The comparative findings demonstrate that contextual conditions significantly shape management approaches without altering the core value orientation. MAN 1 Samarinda benefits from stronger infrastructure, extensive industry and university partnerships, and consistent government support, enabling a more structured and industry-aligned vocational system. In contrast, MAN 1 Langsa operates within more limited resources and weaker external collaboration, yet compensates through strong social capital, community engagement, and value-based leadership. These differences indicate that effective management of teacher competence does not rely solely on material resources, but also on leadership capacity, institutional commitment, and the ability to adapt strategies to local contexts. From a managerial perspective, the study identifies key challenges in developing teacher competence, including infrastructure constraints, limited access to industry-based training, and uneven partnership sustainability. Nevertheless, these challenges are counterbalanced by enabling factors such as visionary and transformational leadership, alumni networks, collaboration with higher education institutions, and community-based support systems. Madrasah leadership emerges as a central actor in translating Islamic values into operational policies, mobilizing resources, and fostering a culture of continuous professional development.

Based on these findings, the study proposes an integrative management approach that emphasizes: (1) policy alignment between Islamic values and vocational competency standards; (2) systematic human resource development through continuous training, mentoring, and certification; (3) strategic partnerships with industries, universities, and

professional bodies; and (4) adaptive optimization of infrastructure and learning resources according to institutional context.

Overall, this research contributes a conceptual understanding of how Islamic values, leadership, and contextual management interact in shaping teacher competence within vocational madrasahs. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, educational leaders, and madrasah administrators in designing context-sensitive and value-oriented management frameworks, enabling Islamic-based vocational education to respond effectively to workforce demands while maintaining its ethical and spiritual foundations.

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