

## Briefings

Thought leadership for the independent schooling sector

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### CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

#### From the Executive Director

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) is celebrating its 50th anniversary marking the occasion with its 2018 Annual General Meeting and Dinner on the same day and month and at the same venue as the inaugural meeting of the Association on 18 July 1968 at Brisbane Grammar School<sup>1</sup>. It is a fitting opportunity to celebrate the success of independent schools and their significant contribution to Queensland education over many years.

To celebrate the history and achievements of Independent Schools Queensland, the sector and member schools, ISQ has developed a microsite which is available at [ISQ50.com](http://ISQ50.com) and via the ISQ website. Guests at the celebratory dinner will be the first to receive a 50 Year commemorative book, which provides an excellent historical perspective on the organisation and its humble beginnings. The Association of Independent Secondary Schools of Queensland was formed in 1968 principally in response to proposed changes to senior secondary curriculum and assessment and the recognition that independent schools needed a united voice. In 1969, it changed to the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland and in 2006 to its present, Independent Schools Queensland.

The original membership comprised 50 schools many of which were Catholic.

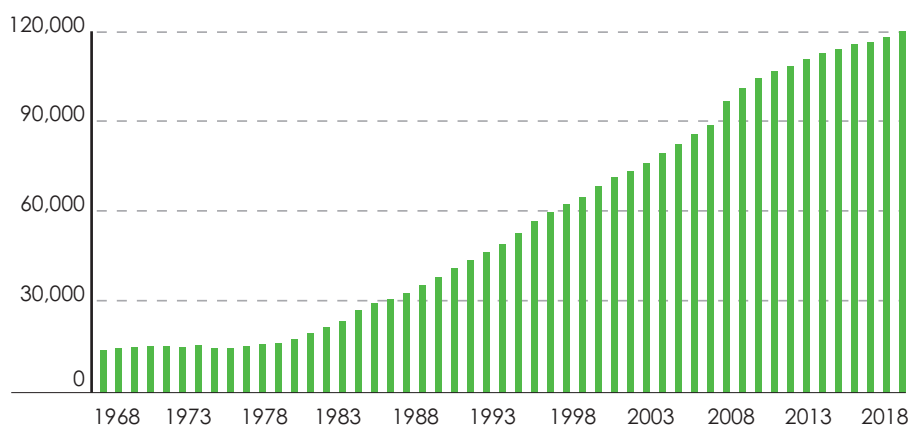
Today ISQ has a membership of over 200 schools illustrating that one of the key trends in independent schooling over the past 50 years has been its growth, both in size and diversity.

In 1968, there were 49 independent schools with 14,000 students; today nearly 121,000 are enrolled.

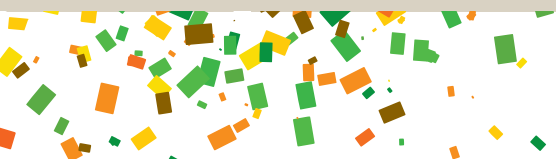
As outlined in Figure 1, the growth of the sector has been constant over the past 50 years.

Parents have clearly increasingly embraced school choice with the “golden” years for the sector commencing in the early 1980s on the back of the resolution of the bitter state aid debate and increased government funding, thus increasing community capacity to contribute to the costs of education and the demand for alternatives to secular state schooling. During this period there was an explosion in the number and type

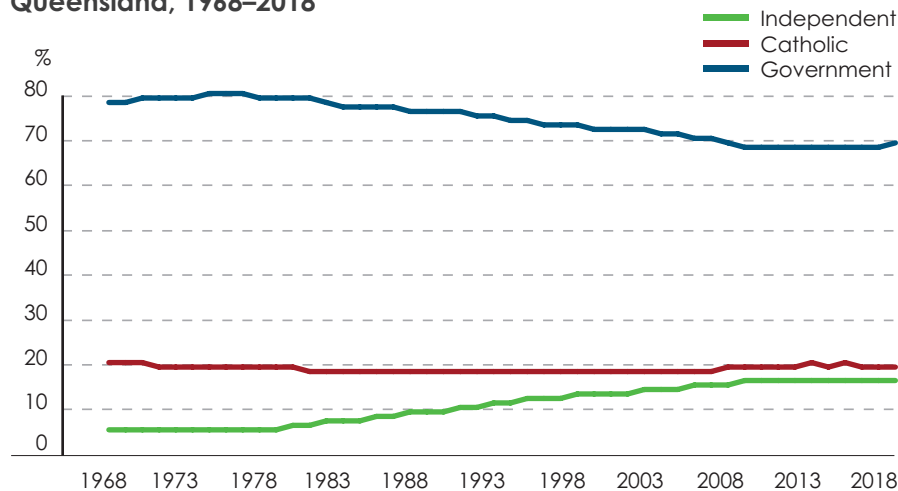
**Figure 1: Number of Students  
Queensland Independent Sector, 1968–2018**



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS



**Figure 2: Percentage of Students by School Sector Queensland, 1968–2018**



of low fee community-based schools driven largely by the establishment of Christian schools.

Much of the significant growth in the sector has occurred during periods when some governments attempted to restrict the expansion of the sector including the much-maligned Commonwealth New Schools Policy in the 80s and 90s and more recently the Queensland Government’s eligibility for government funding legislation.

The independent sector growth has

resulted in significant changes in the education landscape. As outlined in Figure 2, independent schools in 2018 enrolled 15% of all students compared to just 4% in 1968. It is the only sector of schooling to have had a significant increase in the percentage of students enrolled.

The growth of independent schooling has also changed the nature of non-government schooling. Whilst both the Catholic and independent sectors have grown over the past 50 years,

during this period the percentage of non-government school students attending independent schools has grown from 16% in 1968 to 45% in 2018 (see Figure 3).

There have been other significant trends in schooling over the past 50 years impacting on independent schools. In 1968, the retention of Year 10 students through to Year 12 was just 58%. Today over 85% of students complete Year 12. The feminisation of the teaching workforce is another trend that has been most notable over the period. In 1968, just under 50% of full-time teachers were male. Today, 75% of the teaching workforce in Queensland are female. Student-teacher ratios have continued to fall from over 14 secondary students per teacher in the early 1970s to just over 10 students per teacher today.

Perhaps the biggest change for the independent sector has been the expansion of the role of the Federal Government in the funding of schools. It is worth recalling that independent schools received no government funding prior to the mid-1960s. The Menzies government was the first to introduce funding for non-government schools in 1964 (through grants for science labs). The Federal Government today provides nearly \$12 billion in annual funding for non-government schools, including close to \$1 billion for independent schools in Queensland.

With this increased federal funding, there has been increased federal

**1968 was dominated by the Vietnam War. John Gorton was sworn in as Australian Prime Minister following the disappearance of Harold Holt.**

**Martin Luther King was assassinated.**

**The company Intel was founded.**

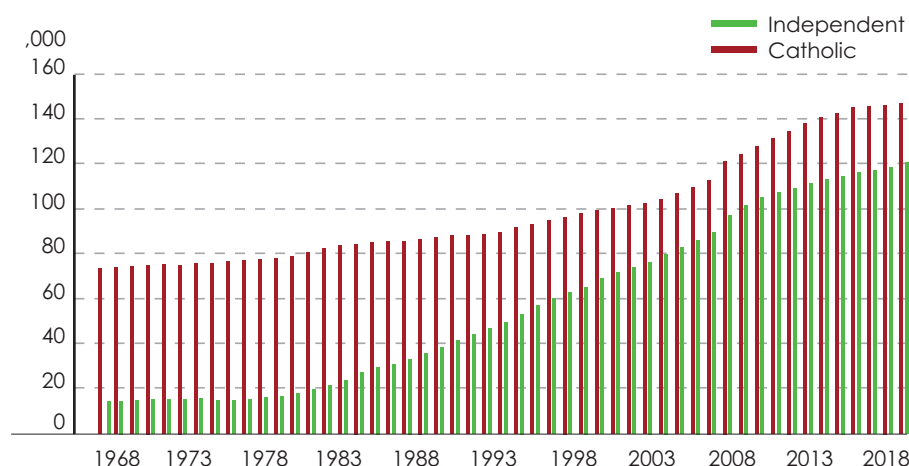
**The Olympics were held in Mexico City and Richard Nixon was elected President of the US.**

**Many will remember the school milk program which provided a third of a pint bottle of milk each day for primary students including in independent schools. It was introduced in 1953 and continued through to 1973 when it was abolished because of its dubious health value and concerns about unrefrigerated milk being consumed after sitting in the hot Queensland sun sometimes for hours. Students could attest to the somewhat unpleasant taste of the milk in such cases!**

**Identifying the first independent school to be established in Queensland results in much debate. Ipswich Grammar School (established 1863) is the oldest of the existing independent schools. However, the first Queensland school was established in 1826 by a Mrs Esther Roberts, under the control of the Anglican Church.**

**It closed in 1842.**

**Figure 3: The Changing Face of Non-Government Schooling Enrolments Queensland, 1968–2018**



intervention and leadership in schooling, including in recent years, the Australian Curriculum.

State Government per capita grants for non-state schools were first introduced in 1967. Today, the State Government provides close to \$800 million in funding assistance to non-state schools.

A recurring theme throughout the past 50 years has been curriculum and assessment, particularly at the senior secondary level. The Radford Report of 1970 saw the end of public examinations and the introduction of school-based assessment. The Viviani Report in 1990 was also a key juncture in a long list of changes and amendments to assessment at the secondary level. Tertiary Entrance (TE) Scores, Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT), Overall Achievement Position (OAP), Overall Position (OP), Queensland

Core Skills (QCS) and Australian Tertiary Entrance Rank (ATAR) will all be familiar to many long-standing school staff who have closely watched education over the past fifty years<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the changes in many aspects of schooling provision, there has been surprisingly little change to schools as institutions. Schools are still based around year levels, classes with a teacher instructing pupils, led by a Principal or Headmaster, and delivering lessons from around 9.00am to 3.00pm, Monday to Friday across four terms. Schools are located on discrete sites, and although now comprised of well-designed and modern facilities, are still based on General Learning Areas and specialist facilities such as libraries (resources centres) designated as primary or secondary.

**Over the past fifty years, Queensland has been served by 20 Education Ministers. In 1968, Alan Fletcher took over from the long serving Jack Pizzey (1957-68).**

**Only three females have served as Education Minister in Queensland's history – Anna Bligh (2001-05), Kate Jones (2015-17) and the current Minister Grace Grace.**

**The average term for Education Ministers has been just under three years. Some former Ministers have gone on to play an active role in independent schooling including Paul Brady (Minister from 1989-92) and later a long serving member of the Brisbane Grammar School Board of Trustees.**

There may be interactive whiteboards instead of blackboards, laptops and iPads instead of pencil and paper, however, the school routine has largely survived the past fifty years unchanged.

During a time of globalisation and rapid technological change, it would be hard to believe that schooling won't be impacted by massive disruption into the future. It will be interesting to reflect in 50 years – in 2068 – about the changes and trends from 2018 onwards. It will be today's Prep students who will be our leaders and senior community representatives at that time.

Or, is the resistance of schools as institutions to change an indication that they are perfectly designed and a fundamental and enduring aspect of our communities?

No matter the answer, the independent sector as a significant and important provider of education for so many young people, will no doubt always require an organisation to not only promote collegiality and best practice, but to present a united voice to governments and the community.

Expect Independent Schools Queensland to celebrate another 50 years in 2068!



**DAVID ROBERTSON**  
*Executive Director  
Independent Schools Queensland*

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent history of senior assessment and tertiary entrance changes in Queensland from 1964 to 1990, visit <http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/topics/assess.html>

## CAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS BENEFIT FROM GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS?



**JOSEPHINE WISE**  
*Director (Education Services)*

*In a time of slow growth and increased competition for enrolments between schools and schooling sectors, are there any benefits from greater collaboration between schools to meet the challenges of this current educational market?*

In a digitally networked, culturally and economically diverse educational ecosystem it seems conceivable that collaboration could be utilised more proactively to improve the enterprise of instructional delivery. Of course, central to the success of collaboration is absolute clarity of purpose and belief in a mutual benefit at every level of the endeavour.

The European Commission has recently established a task force to drive greater collaboration between schools and sectors to maximise system-wide improvement and minimise disadvantage and inequity. The Commission outlines its vision for a networked and collaborative education system in the following way,

“There is a keen interest in networks as a tool for better connectivity between stakeholders within and between different levels of the system to achieve defined educational goals and greater equity, efficiency and quality. Furthermore, networks can serve as an environment to explore and pilot new policies, pedagogical ideas and working methods. They can be permanent structures or function as temporary ‘experimental’ stages in policy development; formally or informally constituted; centrally managed and directed or operating on the basis of consensual decision-making across multiple stakeholders” (European Commission, 2017, p. 4).

Other education systems around the world are accelerating school improvement through policies focused on increasing collaboration between schools. The Communities of Learning (CoL) model in New Zealand is a whole system approach

to embedding Spirals of Inquiry as a process to respond more collectively to the educational and social needs of students. In China, the municipality of Shanghai has paired schools that are achieving excellent educational results with schools that are underperforming or cruising. Benefits flow to both schools: high performing staff have leadership opportunities; both schools develop and share teaching materials for differentiated learners; and the reputation of the school which has a high performing partner improves as student outcomes shift (Center for American Progress, 2013).

In both examples, schools are required to participate, and the processes and partnerships are monitored by an external agency. Successful collaborations are possible because schools accept that there are benefits for all within an improving collaborative network.

For independent schools, the idea of being directed by an external agency to collaborate with other schools would seem to be the antithesis of independent education. However, within independent schooling, there are smaller systems and networks of schools who share governance, administration and some professional development. Some schools link with another in a rural and remote community to establish a genuine exchange of culture, knowledge and understanding. Some schools partner with social and allied health agencies to improve the wellbeing and support of specific students or cohorts.

There are also clusters of educational collaborators who establish ad hoc and informal networks between

independent schools and schools from other sectors. Subject specialists may work on curriculum development or moderate student evidence and, because of their mutual engagement, they deepen their professional knowledge and understanding. However, informal networks are not able to hold participants to account for ongoing improved practice and have minimal quality control over professional dialogue and exemplars.

What would motivate independent schools to deepen, formalise or actively seek other schools as long-term educational partners? What would drive school-to-school collaboration that addresses student achievement through improved teaching practice? Would independent schools see advantages in working collaboratively to improve school outcomes for the benefit of the whole sector?

Recent literature is clear that while there are challenges when schools network, partner or cluster around a shared educational purpose both school and broader systemic advantages emerge.

## Collaboration or Coopetition

Some schools view other members of the independent and broader educational sector as direct competitors in a limited market. However, independent schools can look beyond education for examples of value-add that emerge from a collaboration between competitors.

"Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996 coined the term *co-opetition* to

describe situations in which firms simultaneously cooperate and compete with competitors" (Dana, Granata, Lasch & Carnaby, 2013, p. 42). They asserted that success required organisations to pursue both competitive and cooperative strategies and they argued that combinations of competition and cooperation are mutually beneficial. Australian and New Zealand wineries have been particularly successful at working in clusters and networks, sharing skills, products and services to enhance the overall quality of the winemaking, its marketing and distribution (Dana et al., 2013). Business networks and partnerships are "routinely part of... biotechnology, information technology, advanced manufacturing... where strategic co-operation and alliances [can drive] rapid innovation, productivity and growth" (Suggett, 2014, p. 3).

Shawn Boyer, founder and CEO of several social media platforms, states that "both for-profit and non-profit companies have recognised the value of collaborations. While profit-oriented organizations have long realized the many benefits that collaboration between organizations can give, non-profits are starting to learn a few benefits such as: saving costs through sharing administrative expenses; expanding value propositions; improving efficiency; strengthening programs; make use of compatible skills and abilities; and improve leadership skills" (Boyer, 2018, para. 1).

Ilissa Miller, CEO of iMiller Public Relations, states certain businesses gain an advantage by using a mixture

of cooperation with suppliers, customers and firms producing complementary or related products. Miller also states that industries thrive on coopetition. She suggests that "it's important to become cognizant and respectful of competitors, as they may also be your potential partners" (Miller, 2017, para. 6).

Independent schools interested in coopetition could identify 'educational alliance partners' who would engage in purposeful collaboration to improve the overall value of the educational experience in each school and raise the reputation and quality of all schools in the alliance. This might manifest as high achieving faculties from aligned schools supporting the development of teacher capacity, curriculum or assessment across all partners. Each school could take the lead for a curriculum area and drive the collaboration, leading teachers in both schools to design new curriculum and assessment and act as critical friends for planning and observers for teaching. Each school would be sharing expertise as well as being open to feedback about areas for development or improvement.

A Mitchell Institute research report states that collaboration is increasingly sought after in education because it offers, amongst other benefits, "authentic engagement and relationships built through voluntary, reciprocal action, which may moderate the fragmentation and isolation caused by intensive, silo-bound competition" (Bentley & Cazaly, 2015, p. 25). The report highlights the growth of interest in between school collaboration and highlights the role of a leading agency, like a university, in the establishment of effective collaborations. An example of this is The University of Melbourne Network of Schools (UMNOS). UMNOS is "a partnership designed to bring together schools who work to collectively impact on improving learning outcomes and experiences of students, through a structured program that focuses on

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*“This value is underpinned by an assumption that working together is more effective for all than working individually (even if the goals and methods are the same or similar) because of the opportunity to build on the knowledge and experience of others in a ‘learning culture’”* (European Commission, 2017, p. 7).

teaching and learning and to inform, build and use the evidence base of the University. UMNOS enables schools to achieve things together that they may not be able to achieve on their own” (University of Melbourne, 2018, para. 1). Currently, only one Queensland independent school is involved in this network.

British Columbia’s Networks of Inquiry and Innovation (NOII) is another example of network-based, school improvement strategy. NOII is a voluntary, inquiry-based network of schools in Canada, designed to improve the quality and equity of education through inquiry, teamwork across roles, schools and districts, as well as a focus on applying coaching forms of assessment to assist learners to take greater ownership of their learning.

These school-to-school collaborations are voluntary and have become ‘networks of choice’ for participating schools. They share a school-university partnership, have support from central authorities but are not directed by them and “have developed a rigorous and customised improvement methodology for collective professional learning that embodies reshaping of beliefs and practices” (Suggett, 2014, p. 10).

The European Commission states that “[t]here is an increased value placed on synergies, communication and collaboration within and between schools and between different elements of the school education system... [underpinning this is] an assumption that working together is more effective for all than working individually (even if the goals and methods are the same or similar) because of the opportunity to build on the knowledge and experience of others in a ‘learning culture’” (2017, p. 7).

Free from centralised direction around a process, independent schools are well positioned and equipped to create voluntary, purposeful and collaborative networks. Networks are not static structures. They are clearly defined communities where activity drives towards shared goals. The European Commission (2017) encourages school networks to make goal setting the starting point to inform the process and the supporting structure.

### Barriers and enablers to school collaboration

Independent schools seek and establish partnerships with universities to enhance workforce capacity or offer more diverse student pathways.

Schools partner with technology companies to advance a cohesive digital ecosystem. What then prevents schools from also partnering on other vital educational projects that link directly to improving student outcomes? How can an independent school that identifies a need for a strategic intervention in instructional delivery enlist another school as an educational partner to support the changes in practice required to accelerate improvement in all classrooms? What are the risks that lead schools to rarely partner formally on high impact educational activities? If commercial activity and educational research support inter-school collaboration as an approach to enhance learning outcomes, what are the features within and around schools that serve as barriers or enablers to focused networks and educational partnerships?

Suggett suggests that while networks can create the conditions for influencing teachers’ thinking and practices, actual change at the level of the school and classroom is not guaranteed. She identifies strong engagement in the network and consistent involvement in what it offers in professional learning and knowledge creation as vital. “While collaboration and relationship building are important factors it is the tangible joint work that challenges and changes thinking and practice” (Suggett, 2017, p. 7).

The European Commission has established eight core principles on networks in an education system. See Figure 1. These guide the expectations, practices and behaviours of the networks that are being drawn together to drive school improvement. The report makes clear however, that these principles alone do not ensure successful collaboration. It explicitly states that for an autonomous professional learning community and culture to thrive, all partners must demonstrate that they have the capacity and commitment to share, learn and make changes. There must be accountability, and the report

recognises that sharing notions of ‘measurement’ and ‘effectiveness’ can be difficult when navigating a network “inherently dependent on complex, shifting and social behaviours” (2017, p. 7).

In the UK when the collaborative schools’ movement was relatively new, two principals reflected on a “worry trend” in schools’ initial attempts to form collaborative networks. They found school leaders were facing “a stark choice: between genuine collaboration for self-improvement, in which schools strive to work with and for as many schools as possible, and a limited approach characterised by the self-interest of small groups of schools’ intent on protecting their privileged position at the expense of other less successful schools in the area” (Wheatley & Stone, 2013, para. 5).

They talk about like-minded principals “finding each other”. “We developed a radar for picking up on people who shared our philosophy. Heads who spoke about all children, working for communities and sharing were more likely to agree with our outlook on collaboration than the head who constantly referred to protecting their Ofsted grades and pupil funding” (Wheatley & Stone, 2013, para. 12).

The Victoria Education Department have identified five priorities to shape more effective and system-wide collaboration (see Figure 2). Despite these priorities being developed for a system-wide approach, they are key attributes that would underpin the establishment of educational alliances between schools.

They also reflect a considered response to the genuine challenges schools might face if they chose to collaborate. Some that may be particularly challenging for non-systemic schools are ‘sharing pools of data’ and ‘growing a community voice’ to ensure confidence that improvement through collaboration is of mutual as well as broader systemic benefit.

ISQ supports collaboration between schools; however, the challenge for schools is to see the value in leading and participating in educational collaborations. ISQ would be willing to broker and support the establishment of educational collaborations which have the potential to raise the quality and reputation of independent schools and education in Queensland more broadly.

**FIGURE 1: Guiding principles for policy development on the use of networks in school education systems**



## CAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS BENEFIT FROM GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS? CONTINUED

### FIGURE 2: Five priorities to shape more effective and system-wide collaboration

#### Priority 1: Identify learning need and grow collaboration as an economically efficient solution to those needs

Through their annual planning cycles, education departments and regions should identify the learning goals that are high priority and make them visible and public to encourage collaboration and exchange of lessons and solutions. System, local and regional leaders should continuously articulate, model and communicate these learning goals, supported by system architecture and data policies (see Priority 4).

#### Priority 2: Build platforms for professional collaboration

Professional learning should dramatically increase the opportunities for collaboration, empowering teachers to work together across different locations, and professionals from different fields to work together to solve common problems across education, health, business, families and community development (Meiers and Ingvarson, 2005). This includes crafting appropriate use of school-to-school and area-based networks supporting student transitions, clearly identified objectives for student learning impact, and shared service goals.

#### Priority 3: Grow community voice

Attitudes, relationships and decisions in the wider community also have a powerful influence on what students receive from their educational experience and which resources schools have access to. Building stronger relationships with the communities that surround schools leads to higher student achievement. Trialling and spreading the use of community engagement, dialogue and enquiry models to increase the commitment and participation of their surrounding communities is

essential. Funding dedicated cross-school community workers, whose roles intentionally span the boundaries of individual schools and encourage a shared approach to community development, is a potentially effective approach. Strengthening student voice in community dialogue and decision-making, as outlined above, is also essential.

#### Priority 4: Sharing pools of data

Collaboration relies on shared, trusted information. Systematic support for collaboration requires a revolution in sharing and using educational data. Teachers within schools and a wide range of partners working together around schools need data to support collaborative action, building robust and widely shared tools and repositories, is an important priority (Nesta, 2015).

#### Priority 5: Restructure governance around shared responsibilities for student learning

Finally, education systems need to reshape their own accountability structures and relationships to focus more strongly on learning outcomes and to build shared capacity for learning at a systemic level. This means moving further away from the vertical, functional structures that have dominated historically, and moving towards a new combination of network and place-based structures and processes that hold schools to account to each other and their communities. Such structures will include transparent public performance frameworks reporting on student progress and services in specific geographical areas, challenge-based funding to focus and incentivise collaborative innovation and opportunities for new forms of system leadership, such as local federations of schools, to flourish.

(Bentley & Savage, 2017, p. 256)

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