Summary of the Teaching of Philosophy in Australia

Philosophy in the National goals of Education

Since 1994 the main body for education has been the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), but the main constitutional and financial responsibility lies with the state and territory governments. The federal government's influence is limited, but it does cooperate with State, Territory and non-government school authorities in the development of national priorities and strategies for the implementation of the agreed upon programs. Due to significant devolution, individual schools have more decision power in several significant areas like teaching approaches and methods of assessment. Through the MCEETYA the government and the Territories have agreed on several curriculum areas like values education, civics and citizenship, environmental education and science (Australia’s National Report on the Development of Education, 2004).

The Federal government’s main objectives for schooling are

- “a strengthening in the educational foundations of Australia’s democratic society”
- “ensure that school education does all it can to prepare young Australians for a satisfying life and for careers in a challenging and competitive world environment.”

Population: 21.730.261¹

Gross Enrolment Ratio²

Primary: 105% (2006)
Secondary: 150% (2006)

Percentage of GDP invested in education: 4.8% (2005)³

Percentage of government expenditure invested in education: 13.3% (2000)⁴

Compulsory Education: 6-15 (6-16 in Tasmania) ⁵

³The GER is used in the education sector and by the UN. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics the definition of the GER is the “total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year.” Its purpose is “to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. It can also be a complementary indicator to net enrolment rate (NER) by indicating the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment.” It is calculated by dividing “the number of pupils (or students) enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age by the population of the age group which officially corresponds to the given level of education, and multiply the result by 100.”
⁵Ibid.
⁶http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/Countries/WDE/2006/ASIA_and_the_PACIFIC/Australia/Australia.pdf
⁷Ibid.
In December 2008 the State, Territory and Federal Ministers of Education, met in Melbourne and endorsed the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians\(^8\). Two main goals were included in the Declaration\(^9\):

- To promote equity and excellence in education
- To stimulate the development of
  - successful learners
  - confident and creative individuals
  - active and informed citizens

The goals are further explained with sets of subgoals\(^10\).

**Equity & Excellence**

- All students have access to high quality schooling free from discrimination
- Use local cultural knowledge and Indigenous students’ experience
- Work in cooperation with the local community
- Improve Indigenous students learning outcomes
- Diminish the influence of socioeconomic disadvantages and other disadvantages on educational outcomes
- Education contributes to a socially cohesive society, which respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity
- Encourage everybody to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes
- Promoting a culture of excellence by helping schools to provide challenging, stimulating learning experiences and opportunities
- Personalised learning

**Successful learners**

- Capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- Have essential skills in literacy and numeracy
- Creative and productive users of technology
- Think deeply and logically
- Obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined matter
- Creative, innovative, resourceful and are inter-disciplinary problem solvers
- Independent activity planning, cooperation skills, able to work in teams and communicate ideas
- Making sense of the world and “think about how things gave become the way they are” (p. 8)
- Continued success in the future and able to make informed decisions about employment and learning
- Motivated to reach their potential

**Confident and Creative individuals**

- Sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity
  - Enabling them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical well-being
- Sense of optimism about life
- Enterprising, showing initiative and using their creative abilities

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\(^10\) Ibid. p. 8-9
• Developing personal values and attributes like honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
• Have the necessary knowledge, skills, understanding and values to lead a healthy and satisfying life
• Confidence and capability to pursue post-secondary degrees and qualifications to ensure rewarding and productive employment
• Relate well to others
• Forming and maintaining healthy relationships
• Good family, community and workforce members
• Embracing opportunities
• Rational and informed decision-making about their own lives
• Accepting responsibility for their own actions

Active and Informed Citizens

• Acting with moral and ethical integrity
• Appreciate Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity
• Understand Australia’s system of government history and culture
• Understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
• Dedicated to national values of democracy, equity and justice
• Participate in Australia’s civic life
• Able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
• Work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
• Responsible citizens at the global and local level

In 1997 the Australian Government initiated the Discovering Democracy Programme that was based on civics and citizenship education. In 2004 its name was changed to Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE). The programme covers primary and secondary education. New curriculum materials and learning resources were created for the programme and distributed to all Australian schools. The Civics and Citizenship Education syllabus has the following philosophy related goals:

• an understanding of, and commitment to, Australia’s democratic system of government, law and civic life
• the capacity to clarify and critically examine values and principles that underpin Australia’s democracy and the ways in which these contribute to a fair and just society and a sustainable future
• the knowledge, skills and values that support active citizenship and the capacity to act as informed and responsible citizens

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11 The resources were distributed among primary and secondary schools between 1997 and 2004. They included teaching and learning materials, posters, readers, CD-ROMs and a supporting website with extra materials.
• an appreciation of the local, state, national, regional and global rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic life

• an appreciation of the experiences and heritage of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their influence on Australian civic identity and society

• an appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of Australia as a multicultural society and a commitment to supporting intercultural understandings within the context of Australian democracy

• an understanding of the ways in which citizens and governments contribute to environmental sustainability in local to global contexts and a commitment to adopting values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future

• an appreciation of the influence of media and information and communication technologies on the views and actions of citizens and governments

• an understanding of historical perspectives on Australia’s development as a democratic nation

• an understanding of the ways in which governance structures from other countries are similar to or differ from democracy in Australia.

The Values Education syllabus includes the following philosophy related goals:

• Care and compassion: care for self and others

• Doing your best: Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence

• Fair go: pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society

• Freedom: Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others

• Honesty and trustworthiness: Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

• Integrity: Act in concordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds

• Respect: Treat other with consideration and regard, respect another person’s point of view

• Responsibility: Be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and civic life, take care of the environment

• Understanding, tolerance and inclusion: Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others
Primary education

The MCEETYA has developed national statements and profiles in eight key learning areas covering primary and secondary education. These provide a national framework for reporting student progress. During the compulsory years of schooling, the curriculum is based on this framework. It is divided into three strands including student outcomes, the curriculum and social justice.

Student outcomes:

- have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others;
- have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members;
- have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions;
- be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia’s system of government and civic life;
- be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society;
- have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development;

Curriculum:

No goals directly related to philosophy.

Socially just:

- all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally;

South Australian Curriculum

With the previously mentioned framework in mind, the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) describes the development and education of learners from birth to age 12 with several philosophy related goals:

- Futures: whereby learners develop the flexibility to respond to change, recognize connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures.
• **Identities:** whereby learners develop a positive sense of self and group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group differences.

• **Interdependence:** whereby learners develop the ability to work in harmony with others and for common purposes, within and across cultures.

• **Thinking:** whereby learners become independent and critical thinkers with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions.

• **Communication:** whereby learners develop their abilities to communicate powerfully using literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies.

For the primary years the SACSA has specific learning objective related to the essential learning areas.

1. **FUTURES:** developing perspectives to critically reflect upon and contribute to creating preferred futures, including:
   - recognising patterns and connections within systems
   - identifying, researching and analysing challenges for the future
   - understanding world views and how they are constructed and manifested
   - taking ethical action to affect personal and social change.

2. **IDENTITY:** critically understanding and developing personal identity, group identity, and relationships, and acting to shape these, including:
   - understanding and engaging with diversity
   - developing self-awareness and understanding with a strong sense of self-worth
   - making changes to those values and practices that are harmful
   - developing understanding that identities are constructed around personal and social values, ethics, systems and practices
   - negotiating ways of relating to others in a range of learning, social and working contexts.

3. **INTERDEPENDENCE:** developing a sense of connectedness with other people, and systems, reflecting on and taking action to shape local and global communities, including:
   - understanding that all living things are connected and interdependent
   - understanding needs, feelings, capabilities and interests of others
   - identifying how human actions have had a positive or negative impact on other living systems or things
   - contributing as a member of a team to achieve individual and shared goals
   - taking action to achieve preferred social and physical environments.

4. **THINKING:** developing creativity, enterprise, wisdom and the capability to evaluate and generate ideas and solutions, including:
   - understanding and using metacognition (knowing oneself as a thinker and a learner)
   - recognising patterns in language, number, shapes and quantities
   - taking risks in thinking using creative and imaginative processes
   - using enterprising attributes to identify areas for change, growth, innovation or future development
   - exploring and responding to questions.

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13 [www.ibe.unesco.org](http://www.ibe.unesco.org)
5. COMMUNICATION: developing knowledge, skills and dispositions required to construct and deconstruct meaning, and to critically understand and use the power of communication and its technologies, including:

- using different forms of communication and adapting and selecting communication for different people and contexts
- developing a confident interpersonal style based on open, respectful communication
- being able to receive and share meaning through texts, numbers and symbols; and visual, auditory, tactile and movement forms
- being able to use effective communication to solve problems when working individually or with others
- using technology and appropriate tools and resources to research, collect, plan, analyse
- and organise information and share findings with others.\(^\text{14}\)

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) curriculum emphasizes cross-curriculum perspectives regarding equity and inclusivity. The Queensland Year 1-10 Studies of Society and Environment syllabus sets out core learning outcomes drawn from a range of disciplines and studies including history, geography, civics, environmental education, cultural studies, legal studies, business education and futures. The key values of the syllabus are democratic processes, social justice, ecological and economic sustainability, and peace and principles of equity are evident in the way in which the document meets the needs of students from all cultural, social and linguistic groups and in all locations. Most States and Territories have retained the eight key learning areas agreed to in the National Goals, although with some modification. New South Wales, for example, now has six key learning areas in the primary years and there have been minor name changes and other re-arrangements in some of the other States and Territories.

**Assessment**

Nearly all States and Territories have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, system-wide assessments to capture a snapshot of overall achievement in key learning areas. There are, however, assessment tasks presented for use by the curriculum corporation. As can be seen on the website, “the assessment tasks are not learning and teaching units, but they do suggest, in broad terms, what learning needs to have taken place before students undertake the provided assessment tasks. Teachers make professional decisions about whether or not a particular task is suitable for their students.

For each assessment task, the following details are provided:

- its relevance to state or territory curriculum statements
- necessary prior learning

\(^{14}\) South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. Primary Years Band, p.6
- a series of scaffolding activities for establishing the context within which the task can be undertaken
- resources for students and teachers to assist in the completion of the task
- assessment rubrics for both teachers and students
- annotated work samples
- suggested follow-up teaching and learning activities.\textsuperscript{15}

Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Identified courses called “philosophy” in schools

Brunswick East Primary School teaches P4C to all its pupils. It is “a literacy based program designed to develop thinking skills.”\textsuperscript{16}

Philosophy is an integral part of the program at Buranda State School in inner Brisbane, where it has been taught to all students since 1997. “All children participate in one hour a week of philosophical discussions, concept development activities, and activities designed to improve their reasoning and inquiry skills. These lessons are taken by the classroom teachers, all of whom have undertaken training in this field.”\textsuperscript{17}

Pemberton District High School in Western Australia caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 10, and is “renowned for its whole school approach to the teaching of Philosophy for Children.”\textsuperscript{18} According to the school’s 2007 report, “Philosophy for Children classes (are) conducted for at least 60 minutes a week by classroom teachers in every year level.”

Philosophy is being progressively introduced to Stanmore Public School in Sydney, and is already well-established in Years 5 and 6. The school’s philosophy program has recently attracted a good deal of media attention.\textsuperscript{19}

Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Philosophy related teaching in schools

Not available at the moment.

\textsuperscript{16} http://www.beps.vic.edu.au/philosophy.html
\textsuperscript{17} http://burandass.eq.edu.au/wcmss/index.php/Curriculum.html
\textsuperscript{18} http://www2.eddept.wa.edu.au/schoolprofile/main_page.do
\textsuperscript{19} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk_B32HtnWg and http://www.abc.net.au/rn/philosopherszone/stories/2008/2435042.htm
Secondary education

For the middle years the SACSA has specific learning objective related to the essential learning areas:

1. **FUTURES**: developing perspectives to critically reflect upon and contribute to creating preferred futures, including:
   - understanding connections, continuity and change in past, present and future contexts
   - understanding the critical connection between natural and social environments
   - challenging assumptions about the past, present and future
   - critically examining diverse world views, ways of living, ways of working, relationships and values
   - creating new knowledge from insights of the past, understandings of the present and foresights of the future and applying this in building future scenarios.

2. **IDENTITY**: critically understanding and developing personal identity, group identity, and relationships, and acting to shape these, including:
   - understanding and critiquing key ways in which groups, cultures and social constructs contribute to forming identities
   - developing self-awareness and understanding with a strong sense of self-worth in social and working contexts
   - confidently choosing and understanding the effects and consequences of choices made about identity
   - identifying actions taken individually or structurally to address issues round identity (e.g., harassment, racism, sexism, homophobia, employment/unemployment)
   - understanding group dynamics and acting appropriately with and in relation to others.

3. **INTERDEPENDENCE**: developing a sense of connectedness with other people, and systems, reflecting on and taking action to shape local and global communities, including:
   - demonstrating respect for difference in cultural, social and vocational practices
   - developing personal skills and abilities to create and maintain rewarding and effective relationships with individuals and groups
   - identifying changes which would benefit community development and takes appropriate action
   - engaging in social action in powerful and constructive ways.

4. **THINKING**: developing creativity, enterprise, wisdom and the capability to evaluate and generate ideas and solutions, including:
   - understanding how to create personal relevance through reflection and metacognition (knowing oneself as a thinker and learner)
   - developing habits of mind that use incisive and critical thinking
   - using a range of thinking modes and styles to recognise and develop connections among ideas
   - applying creative and enterprising thinking to the generation of ideas and solutions.

5. **COMMUNICATION**: developing knowledge, skills and dispositions required to construct and deconstruct meaning and to critically understand and use the power of communication and technologies, including:
   - evaluating language use, with awareness of the power of language, technologies and the media
   - receiving and sharing meaning through different forms of communication (e.g., dance, dramatic performances, media modes, chat lines)
   - thinking critically about communication, recognising multiple interpretations, challenging assumptions and providing alternative possibilities.
• using a variety of media and modifying communication for different audiences and contexts
• being able to effectively use a range of communication modes to solve problems when working individually or with others.\(^{20}\)

For the senior years the SACSA has specific learning objectives related to the essential learning areas:

1. FUTURES: developing perspectives to critically reflect upon and contribute to creating preferred futures, including:
   • understanding the fundamental aspects of change and using this political awareness to effect change
   • transferring and transforming knowledge and building future scenarios based on insights of the past and present
   • identifying, researching and analysing challenges for the future through a diverse range of world views
   • acting in ways that show an understanding of the impact of those views for the future.

2. IDENTITY: critically understanding and developing personal identity, group identity, and relationships, and acting to shape these, including:
   • developing a critical awareness of self and others with an understanding of aspects of personal and group identity (e.g. cultural, behavioural, social, emotional, political and intellectual)
   • understanding and critiquing social and cultural constructs to identify issues of power, justice and injustice and identifying examples of ways in which groups can be advantaged or disadvantaged
   • taking individual or collective action to counter issues such as racism, homophobia, discrimination, harassment
   • relating and working productively with a diverse range of people.

3. INTERDEPENDENCE: developing a sense of connectedness with other people and systems, reflecting on and taking action to shape local and global communities, including:
   • understanding issues of human and community wellbeing and identifying action that supports global and local wellbeing
   • understanding the paradoxical nature of globalisation - the positive benefits and the potential tensions between national, regional and global interests and identities
   • synthesising data and analysing trends to contribute to planning, organising and taking action for future social, ecological, economic and cultural environments
   • fostering partnerships with employers, schools, local communities and agencies.

4. THINKING: developing creativity, enterprise, wisdom and the capability to evaluate and generate ideas and solutions, including:
   • developing metacognitive awareness, and appreciating multiple ways of thinking, knowing and relating from a range of times and cultures
   • using multiple ways of thinking to discover, construct and deconstruct meaning
   • actively processing complex and competing sets of information
   • extending the complexity of connections among ideas in technological, social, economic, political and cultural environments

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\(^{20}\) South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. Secondary Years Band, p.6

This draft country briefing was prepared for comment by RUSHSAP, UNESCO Bangkok. Comments are welcome to rushap.bgk@unesco.org
• generating new personal understandings and knowledge, recognising opportunities and experimenting creatively to achieve innovative solutions.

5. COMMUNICATION: developing knowledge, skills and dispositions required to construct and deconstruct meaning, and to critically understand and use the power of communication and its technologies, including:
• receiving and sharing meaning through a range of increasingly complex and extended modes of communication in formal and informal contexts
• communicating abstract ideas and concepts
• developing arguments; understanding position, bias, alternative meanings
• increasing metalinguistic* awareness and use
  • understanding the relationship between language and power
  • communicating powerfully and persuasively in a range of contexts.

*C the investigation of the relations between language and its cultural context

Assessment

Nearly all States and Territories have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, system-wide assessments to capture a snapshot of overall achievement in key learning areas.

Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Identified courses called ”philosophy” in schools

Philosophy is available in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), which is an internationally recognised certificate signifying the successful completion of secondary school within Victoria. Some schools in Victoria also offer philosophy in earlier years. For example, Alia College in Melbourne offers philosophy in Years 9 and 10 and as part of unit 1, 2, 3 and 4 at the Victorian Certificate Education (VCE) level. Canterbury Girls’ Secondary College offers philosophy in Year 10 as an elective within the humanities department. The course and its tasks are presented in the textbox. Carey Baptist Grammar School offers an elective course on philosophy in Year 8.

A Philosophy and Ethics course is available in the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). Philosophy is also a Distinction Course in the Higher School Certificate in New South Wales, in Years 11

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21 South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. Secondary Years Band, p.6
22 A list of secondary schools offering VCE philosophy can be found at http://vaps.vic.edu.au/philosophyschools.htm
26 Details of the course are available at http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Courses/Philosophy_and_Ethics/
and 12 as a subject in the South Australian Certificate of Education, and Philosophy and Reason is available in Years 11 and 12 in Queensland.  

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Philosophy related teaching in schools**

Various indigenous cases used in primary and secondary education show the practical implementation of these goals. Consider for example the 'Rights and Wrongs: Indigenous Australians and the Democratic System' program at the Centenary State High School (year 9) in Brisbane. The program is part of the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) curriculum as proposed by the national government and is based on student inquiry. This inquiry includes:

- defining the scope of the inquiry;
- examining sources;
- investigating backgrounds, changes and continuities, motives and causes;
- examining the major effects, interests and arguments;
- reflecting.

The goals of the program are to:

- examine the social, economic and political effects of historical events on Indigenous Australians;
- evaluate Australia’s democracy from the perspective of Indigenous Australians;
- examine the roles of prominent Indigenous Australians in political life and in the wider community;
- engage students in reflecting on what they have learnt and how this study has influenced their personal development.

The program deals with the relationship between the indigenous people of Australia and the democratic system. It aims to incorporate the key values from the SOSE syllabus including democratic process, social justice, ecological and economic sustainability and peace combined with the processes of investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting.

The learning outcomes deal with:

- understanding the past within its relevant culture,;
- identifying the values underlying the contributions by diverse individuals and group in Australian and Asian environments;
- producing arguments related to the causes of change or continuity in environments, media or gender roles;
- the inhibition or promotion of cultural diversity across societies;
- describing stances of cultural change resulting from government policies that affected cultural groups;
- a country's response to internal dissent or cultural diversity;
- understanding of social justice and democratic process to suggest ways of improving access to economic and political power.

All the programs mentioned on the Civics and Citizenship Education website under indigenous case studies aim to develop an inquisitive mind among its students and teach them to understand differences between people and how they can lead to problems. This in turn will aid them in their decision-making processes in the future.

Identified programmes to provide teaching materials in philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Inquiry questions</th>
<th>Learning activities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 hours | Examining the major effects, interests and arguments | TCC 6.3 TCC 6.4 CI D6.4 SRP 6.5 | -View videos for background information.  
-Discussions regarding perspectives and reliability of sources.  
-Archie Roach, They Took the Children Away, CD-ROM (music).  
-Way-Erweer, sections on people and culture.  
| 2 hours | Reflecting | TCC 6.3 TCC 6.4 CI D6.4 SRP 6.5 | -What have I learnt from this inquiry?  
-Did my own views influence my research?  
-How significant have the contributions of Indigenous Australians been?  
-Has my perspective changed? |  |

### Links


Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC), (2006). *Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship*. Curriculum Corporation; Australia

South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. Secondary Years Band

http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au/
http://www.fapsa.org.au/
http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/Countries/WDE/2006/ASIA_and_the_PACIFI C/Australia/Australia.pdf

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