

**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF HOMEWORK
PROVISION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF MAKETE DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the assessment of the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance in Tanzania, a case of Makete District council in Njombe region. The study employed qualitative approach using an exploratory design. The study was conducted in eight secondary schools in Njombe region, particularly in Makete district council. The sample involved was 46 participants. The data were collected through interview and documentary review, the researcher employed thematic analysis with observation of all trustworthiness aspects such as credibility, transferability and conformability of the study. The study found that, homework provision has positive contribution to secondary school students on academic performance for instance in form four national examinations whereby students were found doing well in those examinations as results of the contribution of homework provision. The study sought to know other factors which contribute to student's academic performance out of homework including enough teachers and availability of adequate teaching and learning materials. Moreover, the study found that parents are not aware on their responsibilities towards the provided homework to their children. Finally, the study recommends that, the number of homework assignment should not be tiresome to the students also there is a need of formulation of national policy concerning homework provision to secondary school students and the government should establish the boarding secondary schools in rural areas.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Homework, Secondary Schools

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cooper & Valentine, (2001) point out that homework has potential contribution in increasing understanding of the subject matter, through homework provision students will enjoy doing classroom activities while in their home environment or during non-classroom hours in the

absence of teachers for the aim of finding more materials concerning with what they have taught in the class hence increasing their academic performance. According to Muijs & Reynolds, (2011), homework is used to assess students on how they have mastered what they have been taught in the classroom environment to be applied in their examinations. Daily provision of homework assignments helps in raising students' academic performance, through homework the students will have a tendency of practicing lesson matters through questions provided to them by their teachers hence to develop their academic performance by doing well their examinations (Latif & Miles, 2011). Moreover, parental homework involvement is known as autonomy support shows the greatest positive contribution on general student's examination grades where by students who involve parents in their given homework assignment seem to raise their performance grades in examinations (Gonida & Cortina, 2014; O'Sullivan, Chen & Fish, 2014).

In Britain, students are given more homework than in any other country in Europe, they almost spend the average of five hours per subject in every week doing homework this enhances further understanding of subject matter which leads to the raise of their academic performance (Coughlan 2014). The results of homework provision vary basing on various factors such as the age of learners, where by the learner's age will determine the purpose of a particular given homework which mostly intend to measure the academic performance of learners, pupils, or students. In the study conducted by Cooper, Robinson and Petall, (2006) their findings show that among learners who were given more homework assignments to do, were seem to have higher test scores in their examinations than those students who spend only few hours in doing homework assignments.

In the United States of America (USA), homework has been a part of students' lives since the beginning of formal schooling by considering its contribution to students learning, that homework encourages students to use their time effectively for concentrating on what is taught in the school to be done outside the school environment or during free time whereby through homework provision there is improvement on students' academic performance (US Department of education, 1987). The practice of homework in United States of America, vary very widely whereby some teachers make brilliant assignments that combine learning and pleasure, others use homework as routine to provide students with additional practice on what the students learnt in the class but the main concern is to make students more competent and then raise their academic performance.

Moreover, homework has been a mainstay of American education for good reasons that it extends the available time for learning and teaching. Students who spend more time in homework perform better in their examinations (Nancy, Perkinson, & Kathy, 1995). The U.S. Department of education (1987) insists the provision of homework for bringing together parents, children and teachers in improving the student's academic performance; they add that, the benefits of homework begin at schools where by students who complete their homework successfully has a great chance to do better in their studies and examinations.

In additional, the relationship between homework and academic performance has been widely observed in Latin America, European countries, and Asia whereby the made homework policies produced the expected results on the relationship between homework provisions and raising student's academic performance whereby homework enhances student's engagement

in learning hence raise their academic performance (Tokarski 2011). Also, Fernandez & Muniz, (2019) they state that homework provision contributes in improving academic performance whereby homework assignments helps students to find more knowledge on what they have learnt in the class through doing more homework assignments hence improve their academic performance. Most of the schools which had a tendency of providing homework assignments, their academic performance seemed to be high compared to schools which they didn't provide homework at all to their students (Hag, Shakil & Din (2020).

In South Africa, in 2005, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) was formed to make sure that homework in all schools are effectively managed and supervised by all education stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the link between home and schools so that parents will know what is going on in their child's school and be responsible towards the given homework to their children for the aim of making students master subject matter which could contribute the improvement in their academic performance (Felix, Dornbrack & Scheckle, 2008). This also happened in Kenya where by Ndegwa & Mengish, (2007) recommend on the formulation of homework policy in Kenya so that all schools to be guided by the central homework policy, and they add that, punishment have to be provided to all schools which fail to adhere with the made homework policy they insist that, students fails their examinations because of remaining idle with no homework assignments to do they believe on homework provision as an additional means of raising student's academic performance. They add that, the parental willingness to be involved in their children homework is very high; most of parents want their children to be kept busy by doing homework while they are at home or during their free time, they believe that homework assignment is a key agent of good academic performance.

Therefore, the above information from others countries indicates the necessity of providing homework to students for their good educational progress. As it shows that homework provision to students contributes a lot in their academic performance

Many African countries recognizing the merits of involving parents in their children's education for the betterment in raising academic performance, for example, Echaune, Ndiku & Sang (2015) in their study, reported that, some African countries including Uganda, Burundi and South Africa have set their policy which support parental involvement in their children's education for the aim of making students responsible toward what they have taught in their schools hence raise their academic performance. This facilitates the implementation of homework provision program, in most countries and schools in East Africa and Africa in general, whereby homework assignments is being provided as a means of keeping students busy engaging with what they have learnt in their schools while at home or during non-schooling time with the intentions of making them master subject matters hence to improve their academic performance (Ndengwa & Mengish 2007).

In Tanzania, Maganga (2016) states that, despite of the factors which contribute to the students' academic performance such as the availability of enough teachers, the presence of enough teaching and learning materials, remedial programs, hostels, food programs to students especially to the day schools and enough science laboratories and classrooms but still students lost many hours doing non-academic activities like charting on emails, smartphones, engaging with sexual relation behaviours and poor connection between home and school this made

students to have poor concentration in their studies hence lower their academic performance. Thus, through homework provision students will concentrate more in doing many homework assignments and will have little or lack time of doing other non-academic activities hence improve their academic performance.

Currently, the academic performance in most secondary schools in both government and non-government schools in Tanzania, especially in national examinations the results are not satisfying. This is because either students are left idle with no homework assignment to do which cause them to engage more in non-academic issues rather than academic issues or there is no clear policy which dedicating homework provision program to secondary school students in Tanzania, the present of homework provision policy could force all schools in Tanzania to engage with homework provision program as an additional contributor to the student's academic performance, therefore through homework provision student will concentrate on academic issues by doing more homework assignments which could make students spend most of their time in doing academic activities hence rise their academic performance. For instance, according to the United Republic of Tanzania education sector performance report (2019) states that, only 14.9% scored division one and 219.3% scored division four, this shows that only few students have an access to score division one while the majority falling in division four in national examinations. This approves that the general performance in secondary school is not stable so, it needs some improvement.

1.1 Literature Review

The study conducted by Palletier, & Normore (2007), and Cooper (1998), their studies involved different grade levels and they found that homework can be useful to the older students in raising the understanding of what is taught in the classroom by their teachers. Also, the centre for Public Education (2007b) in their study they founded that homework provides more academic benefits to the students in all level of student's classes, although it can be useless to the younger children because they always not having habit of learning and they are not grown enough to study hard and spend more time for doing assignment outside the school environments (Cooper,2008).

Also, Cooper, (2004) reviewed 20 studies that compared the achievements of students whose were given homework and students whose were not given homework, where by fourteen students their results favoured homework and only six students their resultsfavoured no homework so this proves that, homework provision has significant potential on student's academic performance because most of students whose were provided with homework seemed to have distinction performance in their test score. Turvey (1986) in his study which conducted in Sweden, founded that, daily provision of homework to students increases their scores in their examinations, he adds that, if homework are highly provided and marked by their teachers, the average of performance of students will increase compared to students whose are not given homework assignment.

Fernandez & Muniz (2019) in their study in Spain about homework to students, they founded that, students whose were given homework in Mathematics and Science they scored higher in their standardized tests. Also, Balli, Demo & Wedmain (1998). In their research work they founded that, homework helps parents to find out any learning disabilities to their children and

hence to find out the solution of their children's problems with teachers for further student academic achievements.

Epstein & Voorhis (2001), in their study argues that, homework practices start with teachers, who have to select the themes and contents of homework assignment to make students meet a particular learning goal, therefore the role of teacher, is not only to allocate homework assignment but also to design the modality of homework, so teachers are required to consider the purpose, format and schedule of homework to reflect the teacher's classroom activities and the need of a particular teaching and learning curriculum. Galloway & Conner Pope (2013) in their study, they are recommending that, teachers must be well knowledgeable about homework and its dimension. The school administrators they have to agree on a clear goal of homework provision and the modality of managing it.

Foyle, & Bailey's, (1988) they conducted research in Chicago on teacher's attitudes toward provision of homework to their students, in their study they founded that 95.1% of teachers had good feelings towards homework and all of them believed that, homework help students to learn effective and it increases learner's engagement in school, so homework should not be left behind by teachers.

Also, Metlife's, (2007) Survey of the American Teachers, they conducted a study on homework implementations to the public school Teachers, in their study they found that, Teachers were frequently assigning homework to their students. They argued that, they provide homework to their students for the aim of developing working habit and motivating students to learn. Many schools have start ordering teachers to conduct meetings for the aim of coordinating homework provision to their students.

In Zimbabwe, the ministry of Primary and Secondary Education set a law/policy which guide every head of school to supervise the provision of homework in their schools, for making sure that, all teachers provide homework assignments to their students and they mark and provide feedback to students for further understanding, in addition teachers have to plan and monitor homework of their students (Nyakupanda, 2009). Also in South Africa, The National Department of Education introduces homework provision to students, it orders all Heads of Schools to make sure that, homework are provided and supervised effectively (Kunene, 2016). This made teachers to see homework as remedial program to the areas where students didn't cover well in the class (Tam, & Chan, 2016). Moreover, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) of South Africa emphasize on homework provision to students every day, and the school administrators have to make sure that, the homework program is well implemented and monitored properly. (Motchekga, 2011).

In Zambia, the government under the Ministry of General Education (MOGE), It requires homework provision to all Zambian schools both primary and secondary schools, it introduces homework policy as an extension of school works to enables teachers and students to have more time of concentrating in teaching and learning. The policy orders the school administrators to insist teachers to work hard and ensuring that homework policy is effective implemented in their schools in country wise (MOGE, 2015).

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study applied qualitative research approach, which helped a researcher in the whole process of gathering and analyzing the respondent's opinion, feelings and recommendations while in their natural environments. Furthermore, qualitative approach guided the study because it relies on research strategies which is flexible, interactive and reliable hence facilitated the obtaining of research data through opinions, thoughts and suggestions from the research respondents. Also, the study applied documentary review, open ended questions and in-depth interview in obtaining of the research data on the assessment of the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance in Tanzania a case study of Makete district in Njombe region, whereby purposive sampling technique was applied in obtaining the area of the study. The study involved 46 respondents in which 10 were heads of schools, 10 were teachers, 20 were students and 6 were parents from eight secondary schools including both public and private secondary schools. The research information was analyzed thematically following familiarization of data, reading and re-reading of data, coding, generation of initial themes, reviewing themes and defining the names of themes.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 Contribution of Homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance

The study sought to know the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance. Whereby the heads of schools, teachers, students and parents were interviewed to identify the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance. The participants positively responded to the questions and were able to identify the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance.

The findings revealed that homework provision has positive contribution to secondary school students on academic performance, for instance in form four national examinations (CSEE), the findings revealed that they do well as a result of the contribution of homework provision. However, it was found that there other factors which contribute to students' academic performance such as the presence of enough teachers, good environment of teaching and learning, adequate teaching and learning materials, and science laboratories but homework provision enhances students' concentrations in their studies that keep them being busy doing homework assignments, hence raise their academic performance such as in their national examinations. This was confirmed in the interview session with one of the heads of schools who reported that;

Having good environment for teaching and learning, enough teachers and food program especially to day students are not the only factors for raising their academic performance, but homework provision remains as an additional tool for students to concentrate in their studies by doing more exercises hence perform well in their terminal and final examinations such as form four national examinations. (Interviewed HS 4, May 2023)

The researcher further reviewed various documents relating to secondary school student academic performance as a result of contribution of homework provision whereby five (5) secondary schools were sampled by using anonymous S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 for schools. In the

sample of schools, two (2) were private schools and three (3) were public secondary schools, for the aim of passing through their national examination performance results (CSEE) from 2017 to 2021 (five years), the study found that, average of 85.78% students passed their examinations, only 14.22% failed their examination. This is confirmed in table 1 below.

Table 1; Form Four National Examination Results from five secondary schools from 2017 to 2021

YEARS	SAMPLE OF SCHOOL	SAT	DIVISIONS					PERCENTAGE OF PERFORMANCE
			I	II	III	IV	O	
2017	S1	41	0	7	9	21	4	90.24
	S2	116	0	4	10	76	26	77.58
	S3	57	0	1	5	30	21	63.15
	S4	33	0	8	16	9	-	100
	S5	32	1	2	10	13	6	81.25
2018	S1	52	0	5	14	32	1	98.07
	S2	129	0	8	21	77	23	82.17
	S3	53	0	3	8	26	16	69.81
	S4	27	1	9	10	7	-	100
	S5	49	1	1	5	21	21	57.14
2019	S1	50	1	8	11	29	1	98
	S2	115	0	6	18	77	14	87.82
	S3	53	1	5	10	32	5	90.5
	S4	32	4	13	13	1	1	96.87
	S5	37	0	6	5	22	4	89.18
2020	S1	23	0	2	4	17	0	100
	S2	145	3	17	21	27	77	46.89
	S3	83	0	8	9	59	7	92.77
	S4	33	6	8	16	3	-	100
	S5	72	0	0	7	29	36	50
2021	S1	24	1	4	4	15	0	100
	S2	140	1	10	35	90	4	97.14
	S3	68	0	3	11	50	4	94.11
	S4	41	4	21	15	1	-	100
	S5	33	0	5	5	18	5	84.84

Source; Field data May 2023

From the table above, shows a large number of divisions zero in 2020 in S2, in which 77 students failed the examination, this is due to the Covid 19 pandemic whereby all schools closed for almost three months, so students were left with no homework to do hence their academic performance declined.

Also, the reviewed document concerning CSEE performance report of 2019, which started with district and municipalities rank in form four national examination shows that Makete district had only 118 students who scored division zero out of 911 students who sat for CSEE in 2019 (CSEE report, 2019). This confirms that, out of the other factors that contribute to secondary

school students' academic performance, but also homework provision contributes much in raising students' academic performance especially through doing more exercises as homework assignments. As interviewed HS 6 explains;

Homework involves the provision of many exercises which makes students to have enough preparation toward the coming national examinations (NECTA) hence, they become confident during their examinations. (Interviewed HS 6, May 2023)

This was also confirmed in the interview session with one of the heads of schools who reported that;

Before 2000s years, the issue of homework provision was not seen to be potential in raising students' academic performance as it is now (current years). We see today the academic performance is increasing because our students spend most of their time doing classroom activities as named homework tasks, this leads to the improvement of both student's academic performance and their discipline. (Interviewed HS 1, May 2023)

On the same line, another head of school had this to report,

Currently, the school without homework provision, that school might experience poor academic performance because of the nature of our students, who need close assistant and supervision from their teachers for them to perform well in their examinations. Homework provision keeps our students busy concentrating in their studies hence it raises their academic performance. (Interviewed HS 2, May 2023)

Furthermore, another head of school said that,

Homework provision today remains as an engine of good academic performance to our students in secondary schools. Because if students are kept busy with homework assignments, these students or school will reduce some of improper behaviours which could lead them into poor academic performance, even though we don't have clear policy which dedicate homework provision to our students, but homework provision remain a means for raising student's academic performance. (Interviewed HS 3, May 2023)

The quotations above reveal how much homework provision contributes to secondary school students on academic performance. That homework provision to the students facilitates the advancement of academic performance to students. In the same aspect the researcher interviewed the school teachers and the findings found that teachers also acknowledge the provision of homework as one of the factors which contribute academic performance to secondary school students. Through homework provision students are being kept busy focusing to their given homework assignments this enhances understanding of a particular subject which leads to good academic performance. This was confirmed in the interview session with one of the teachers, who commented that,

we use homework assignments as a tool for deleting or reducing failure performance in our teaching subjects as it is an order from our educational leaders to make sure there is no failure results to our subjects we teach, so through homework provision the issue of student failure in examination highly reduced. (Interviewed T A1, May 2023)

Another interviewed T B2 reported that,

homework is a basis of teaching and learning, we use homework to make our students master properly what is taught in the class, and positive fruits of homework provision to our students is being observed, even though its implementations sometimes faces with some barriers to our students such as poor support of parents to their child and lack of electricity to some student's residents although those barriers didn't hinder homework provision to our students. (Interviewed T B2, May 2023)

Furthermore another interviewed T B3 had the following opinion,

If you teach students without providing homework assignments to them expect to have massive failure in your subject you teach, because today students learn and understand subject matter through questions, means without homework tasks students will not concentrate in school activities. So we as teachers we use homework in assessing students efforts in learning and always through homework provision the students' academic performance is raised. (Interviewed T B3, May 2023)

In regard to above explanations, it implies that, teachers are aware that homework provision contributes to good academic performance to the students. Through it, they keep homework provision as part of their daily responsibilities of teaching and learning.

In the same aspect, the researcher interviewed students and the findings showed that, they also acknowledge the contribution of homework provision in raising their academic performance but they don't have conducive environment to do homework properly especially to the day students due to the absence of electricity in their residents and being overworked by their parents after school hours. This made them not to do homework properly. As confirmed in the interview session with one of the students who reported that,

Homework is good to us in raising our performance academically because through homework provision it makes us busy concentrating with our studies not to engage with improper behaviour like prostitutions behaviour and unnecessary movements in our streets. However, the problem is in our home environment, that our parents are not giving us enough time to do homework, they give us many domestic activities which cause us to do our homework assignment while we are tired.(Interviewed STS 1, May 2023)

Another student reported that,

when we were in primary school there was no homework provision but our teachers gave us exercises at the end of period and was marked by our teachers inside the class,

this was not much helpful as it is here in secondary school whereby our teachers teach and then give us homework to do in our time and to be collected next day. This enhances our freedom of finding more materials relating to the given homework which leads us to improve understand of subject matter. (Interviewed STS 2, May 2023)

Furthermore, another interviewed student said that,

it is a habit of most of students do not prefer many class exercises because of adolescence stage we are passing in, that we are not matured enough to know what is good or bad, but homework provision plays a very significant contribution in raising our academic performance because homework guide us to read and find answers of the given assignment, without doing so we will be punished by our teachers, we think if we couldn't have homework our academic performance could be very worse. (Interviewed STS 3, May 2023)

The findings above show that students realise the contribution of homework provision in raising their academic performance. However, the issues of adolescences and poor home environments don't encourage them to do homework properly especially to the day students, despite of those challenges students use midnight time for doing their homework assignments. But they still thank their teachers for providing and supervising the provided homework to them.

The researcher also found that parents appreciate the provision of homework to their children in raising their academic performance. But they are not happy to see their child busy doing homework assignments rather than helping them doing some domestic activities after school hours. This is because of poor connection between school and home that parents are not involved by their teachers concerning the issue of homework provision so that parents can assign time their child to do their given homework assignments. Parents who's their children are in boarding schools are not aware concerning the issue of homework whether are provided or not. This was confirmed in the interview session with one of the parents below,

we always see our children busy writing after coming from school once we ask them what are they writing they tells us that they are doing homework. Thus, this make us see our children as useless at home since they can't even help us doing some petty domestic tasks, but their academic results are satisfactory, the problem is that their teachers don't involve us on the on-going homework provision program. (Interviewed PRT A, May 2023)

In additional, another interviewed parent said that;

The school without homework is helpless to our child, because out of failing in their examinations our child might engage with improper behaviour which will lead them not to fulfil their dreams of becoming somebody for future. So we thank our teachers for providing homework to our child, through homework provision our child becomes busy concentrating in their studies this minimises even unnecessary movements in the streets, (Interviewed PRT B, May 2023).

Furthermore, the researcher interviewed PRT C who had the same view and he commented as follows;

We as parents we are happy to see our children busy at school likewise at home. The only way to make our students busy is through providing them with much homework assignment to do. Through it we thank our teachers as they always provide homework to our children that is why their academic are somehow good compared to the time when homework was not serious provided as it is today. (Interviewed PRT C, May 2023)

The above explanations reveal that, homework provision has positive contribution to secondary school students on academic performance, through homework provision students spend most of their time concentrating in their studies which accelerates to high performance in their examinations.

4.0 CHALLENGES FACING HOMEWORK PROVISION TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS

The researcher findings revealed that, homework provision program facing with various challenges which hinders its effective implementations.

4.1 Remoteness of Students Residents

The findings revealed that, most of student's residents are located in remote areas where there is no electricity energy or solar power energy to enable them do their homework assignments during night, this made students to have limited time for doing their homework assignment hence reduce its efficiency toward student's academic achievements and the effective of homework itself because students they do homework while they are tired. This confirmed in interview session with STD 18 who said;

Despite of having many homework to do but we have limited time to accomplish doing the given homework because most our residents lacks electricity power to allow us do our homework even during night now we are forced to do our homework before the sun set. (Field Data, May 2023).

4.2 Miscommunication between Home and school on Homework Provision to Secondary School Students.

The findings of this study found that, parents are not well involved on the issue of homework provision program to their child, so that they can pay attention as parents in making sure their child do their homework, parents are blinded on their roles towards their child's homework. This confirmed in the interview session with PRT D, who said,

We as parents we don't know our responsibilities on what to do to our child homework, this made sometimes not to make follow up to our child to see whether they are doing their given homework or not, we are poor on the general system of homework provision to our child. (Field data, May 2023)

4.3 Lack of National Policy Dedicating Homework Provision to Secondary School Students.

The study findings found that, there is no clear policy which dedicating the provision of homework to secondary school students, homework is being implemented as school policy notnational policy; this made the homework program to lack uniformity in its implementations. This notion supported by HS 6 who explained as follows;

Currently we don't have national policy concerning homework provision to secondary school students, it is our policy as school which is supported by region and district educational officers but there are no formal directions from central government.

(Field data, May 2023)

With reference to above quotation, it reveals that it is a time now of having a national policy concerning homework provision in our secondary schools which will provide uniform guidelines on how homework program have to be implemented in the country.

4.4 Conclusions and Recommendation for Action

The researcher recommended the strategies which should be taken into consideration so as to improve homework provision to the secondary school students.

The number of homework assignments should not be tiresome to the students so as to enhance its efficiency. Overworking students with large number homework will make students bored and hence dislike school; the researcher recommended an average of two homework assignments per day. While waiting for a formulation of national policy concerning homework provision to the secondary school students, the district educational officers in cooperation with the heads of school they have to set up uniform instructions and guidelines to guide homework provision to the students in their districts. The government should increase its efforts in supplying electricity in rural areas through REA (Rural Energy Agency) so that students can have good environment for doing their homework assignment while at home especially to the day secondary schools. The issue of homework provision to secondary school students should remain an agenda in all school-parental meetings so that, both teachers and parents to be able to discuss all matters concerning homework provision to the students and to find out ways of improving it. Moreover, the government should establish boarding secondary schools with solar panels system especially in rural areas where there is unsupportive environment for homework to be done efficiently.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study recommends for the study in the following research areas the present study focused only on the contribution of homework provision to secondary school students on academic performance. Therefore, it is recommended that studies that focus on the impact of homework provision in primary school students on academic performance to be carried out. Furthermore, the study recommends investigation on the impacts of student's home environment towards implementation of homework provision program in any district in Njombe region

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