

Teachers Attrition in Influencing Teachers' Decision Making: The View of Seven Early Career English Teachers

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Abstract. This study explored the complexity of the early career English teachers from teacher identity perspective involving a feature (teacher attrition) in influencing their decision making. The aim of this study is to investigate the early career teachers in influencing their career decision making in terms of the factors of teachers' attrition. The researchers formulated two research problems: (1) To what extent the factors of teachers' attrition influence teachers' career decision making? and (2) What factors will help the teachers to complete their determination becoming a teacher or changing their job? This study employed a qualitative approach. The participants of this study were seven early career English teachers. In order to collect the data, the researchers conducted an open-ended questionnaire. The results of this study indicated that there is no significant influence of six teacher attrition factors to the early career teacher decision making. Most of the participants assumed that actually they had face those factor of teacher attrition in teaching learning process, but they still had high determination in being a teacher.

Keywords: teacherattrition, early career teachers, career decision making.

1 Introduction

In the process of shaping the teacher identity, the teachers will face some difficulties with it especially for the early career teachers. Weasmer and Woods [1] identify that the beginning teachers tend to get shame to ask some questions and let administrators and other teachers who more know about a major issue for new teachers. On the other case, beginning teachers are frustrated because they cannot work with students in the ways they expected and they would experience decreasing of motivation [2]. Therefore, those difficulties in being a teacher influence the early career teacher on making a decision. According to Lerseth [3], teacher identity construction is important in influencing teachers' decision-making in terms of career decisions (p. 29).

As the results, some of the teachers will shift their teaching place even they also shift to the others job. This phenomenon is usually called attrition rate where teachers leave the profession; it also refers to as the separation of teachers from his or her occupation of teaching [4]. In terms of the case of teacher attrition, the increasing teacher attrition rates especially happened in the Unites States. Ingersoll [5] identified that after three years, twenty nine percent (29%) of all beginning teachers had left teaching and after five years, there was thirty nine percent (39%) who had left teaching (p. 6). Similarly, Quality Counts [6] estimated that about 30-50% of beginning teachers left teaching within their first five

years. In addition, in other Western countries, it was about 25-40% of the beginning teachers who left teaching [7]. Pillay, Doddard, and Wilss [8] also claimed that 25-40% of the beginning teachers in Western countries were either leaving their job or were burned out (p. 22). In this study, the teacher attrition defines as the phenomenon where the teachers decrease their determination to be a teacher.

In this study, the factors of teachers' attrition will be investigated in influencing the early career teachers' decision making. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the early career teachers in influencing their career decision making in terms of the factors of teachers' attrition. In order to reach that purpose, the researchers have two research questions: (1) To what extent the factors of teachers attrition influence teachers' career decision making? and (2) What factors will help the teachers to complete their determination becoming a teacher or changing their job?

2 Literature Review

In this section, the researchers are going to describe some theories used in this study. This study focuses on the teacher identity in the terms of the teacher career decision making and teacher attrition. Therefore, this section will divide into two parts. The first is the teacher identity and career decision making in the early career teacher, while the second is the conceptualization of teacher attrition.

2.1. Teacher Identity and Career Decision Making of the Early Career Teacher

According to Cardelle-Elawar, Irwan, &Sanz [9], the field of teacher identity is a relatively new field in educational research. They highlight that teacher identity indicates a dimension of the complex and life-long process of discovering oneself, a process for teachers to know themselves, their students, and the subject matter. Besides, they also define teacher identity as "the ability of the teacher to connect with all these elements so that they are all intertwined into one another" (p. 568). In the other words, it can be said that teacher identity is shaped by the way teachers perceive themselves and the images they have about "self" or "who I am?".

According to Salifu and Seyram [10], teacher identity is constantly being embedded in power relations, ideology, and culture (p. 62). It means that teacher identity is also shaped by internal (personal) and external (social). It is also supported by Tsui [11] who suggests that teacher identity is constructed in the experience gained as members of a teacher community as well as in engagement with classroom practice. In this case, the teacher community is vital constructs in understanding the meaning of being a teacher and professional identity. On the other study, Johnson [12] defines teacher identity as, "relational, constructed and altered by how I see others and how they see me in our shared experiences and negotiated interactions" (p. 788). In summary, teacher identity is simplified as "relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming and transitional" [13]. These processes refer to dynamic process rather than static process.

There are many research studies [14], [15] which highlight the importance of teachers' identity negotiation and being attentive to how beginning teachers create identities. Schaefer [16] begins his research by wondering what experiences shaped beginning teachers' careers.

Then, he finds some evidence which prove that there are many beginning teachers who leave their profession. This evidence is also found in some research studies [17] [18] [19] [20]. Based on those previous studies, the researchers believe that there is a relation between teacher identity and teacher career decision. According to Lerseth [3], teacher identity construction is important in influencing teachers' decision-making in terms of career decisions (p. 29). On the other studies, Flores and Day [21] focus on the challenges of beginning teachers faced as they reshaped their identities in the new school settings.

2.2. The Conceptualization of Teacher Attrition

This study considers about the early career teachers' attrition in influencing teacher career decision making. Attrition is the phenomenon where the teachers decrease their determination to be a teacher. Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin [20] formulated the early career teachers' attrition which can effect on teachers' decision to stay or leave their profession. For example is the study made by Guarino, Santibanez, and Deley [18] which states, "Very stable finding is that attrition is high for young teachers" (p. 10). In addition, there are some studies [4] [6] [7] [8] [16] [22] also investigate the teacher attrition.

In some literature about the attrition, there are two main ways that teacher attrition is conceptualized. The first is the way to frame the problems which focus on the individual teacher (person). The second is the way to frame the problems which focus on the organizational context of beginning teachers (context). In 2013 [16], Schaefer divided the concept of individual teacher (person) into three themes, such as burnout, teacher demographic and quality teacher. The concept of organizational context of beginning teachers (context) is divided into three themes, such as discourses of support, living with students, and other contextual conceptualizations. On the other hand, Clandinin, Long, Schaefer, Downey, Steeves, Pinnegar, McKenzie, and Wnuck [22] also argued that there were four themes in the concept of individual teacher (person). Those are burnout, resilience, demographic features, and family characteristics. They also divide contextual factors into seven themes. They are teacher support, salary, professional development, collaboration, the nature of context, student issues, and teacher education. In this research, the researchers will combine the conceptual framework of teacher attrition based on Schaefer [16] and Clandinin, Long, Schaefer, Downey, Steeves, Pinnegar, McKenzie, and Wnuck [22].

2.3. Individual Conceptualization

Individual conceptualization is centred on the individual of the teacher; or it focuses on the person itself [16]. In this study, individual conceptualization consists of three factors, such as burnout, teacher demographic, and quality of a teacher.

Based on Schaefer [16], "One prominent individual conceptualization is based on individual burnout (p. 265). Maslach [23] [24] highlighted burnout as a syndrome of bodily and mental exhaustion which could bring negative effect for individual itself and the others. There are many reasons for being burnout for the early career teacher, such as excessive paperwork, lack of administrative support, the role conflict, an unclear expectation [25] [26]. Furthermore, Hong [27] suggested that emotional burnout is the leading factor for dropout.

Teacher demographic is related to human's perspective in seeing a teacher based on age, gender, ethnic, background, and value. Guarino, Santibanez, and Deley [28] stated that higher rate of teacher attrition happened to younger teachers and less experienced teacher. Based on the value in being a teacher, Schaefer [16] states, "This may suggest today's teachers' values

differ from previous generations, just as today's students' values differ from previous generations" (p. 265). On the other side, gender also influences to the teacher attrition. It is supported by Borman and Dowling [17] who claimed that female teachers have a higher attrition rate rather than male teachers.

In this study, quality of teacher means the ability which the teachers have. It can be the other abilities outside of the teaching ability. In the study made by Guarino, Santibanez, and Deley [18], they noted that there were four research studies which claimed that the students who had higher ability would not choose to continue their study in the education field. Similarly, [28] [29] also suggested that the teachers who had higher academic ability were more likely to leave teaching careers early.

2.4. Contextual Conceptualization

Contextual conceptualization is centred on the organizational context of the beginning teacher; or it focuses on the context around the teacher [16]. In this study, contextual conceptualization consists of three factors, such as discourse support, student issue, and salary.

Lack of support is one of the factors which can cause the early career teacher attrition [18] [19] [21] [26] [30]. In this study, discourse support focuses on how the people around you and your environment support your decision in early career teachers' decision making. Some examples of discourse support which can cause the early career teacher attrition are a lack of administrative, family support, staff support, an environment [25]. Moreover, Kohler [31] also states, "This combination can result in a high attrition rate among this group who move out of teaching Indonesian because of the lack of sustained support" (p. 35).

In this context, students issue refers to the student discipline issues in the school. It can also become one of the factors of the early career teacher attrition [18] [19] [30]. On the other hand, Kutcy and Schulz [2] highlighted that the major frustration for early career teachers were the students' attitudes towards learning. It means that when the students have a negative attitude, it can cause the problems for the teachers, and vice versa. However, the early career teachers can learn quickly that how to prevent the problems deal with the students' discipline [26].

In this study, salary is one of the factors of the early career teacher attrition. Ingersoll [32] noted that the early career teachers would leave teaching because they were paid low salaries. Therefore, Guarino, Santibanez, and Deley [18] formulated that the way to prevent the teachers left their profession was giving them the higher salaries. It was also supported by Imazeki [33] who said that the increasing salary was needed to decrease the early career teacher attrition, and it was not about an economical solution.

3 Method

Considering the complexities in studying teacher identity, the researchers implemented a qualitative approach to explore the early career teachers' attrition in influencing their career decision making. Besides, the researchers also employed a narrative inquiry process. Johnson [24] suggested that some teacher identity studies used the narrative inquiry process. According to Clandinin and Connelly [34], the narrative inquiry is the way of understanding and inquiring into an experience through "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu" (p. 20). For instance,

some studies which studied about how teachers shift and shape identities used narrative responses [35] [36] [37].

In this study, the researchers used an open-ended questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to collect the demographic background of the participants, their experiences in teaching, and their reflection in teaching. The researchers utilized the Google Form to distribute the questionnaire because the participant separated in some areas in Indonesia.

3.1. Participants

The researchers used a method of purposive sampling by considering some criteria in choosing the participants [38]. As the results, there were seven early career English teachers from different grade levels in some areas in Indonesia being the participant of this study. The participants also graduated from Sanata Dharma University with the bachelor of education degrees. In addition, each of the participants experienced different placements, settings, and time limits in being a teacher. Since the targets of this study were the early career English teachers, the researchers just took the college students who graduated in 2015 till 2016. In this study, the participants were invited to participate voluntarily and the participants were assured that the information collected was confidential. The rule of confidentiality was conducted to ensure that the participants would share sensitive information. The name of the participants in this study is pseudonyms. A description of each participant is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the participants (7 early career English teachers)

Participant	Gender	Teaching experiences	School level	Area of School
Chacha	Female	6 months	Preliminary School	Urban
Silvia	Female	5 months	Preliminary School	Overseas
Laras	Female	24 months	Secondary School	Semi-urban
Vigo	Male	12 months	Secondary School	Rural
Avelino	Male	9 months	Secondary School	Urban
Kosa	Male	24 months	High school	Rural
Krisna	Male	21 months	Secondary School	Urban

3.2. Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data was based on a thematic approach and mainly involved critically examining individual responses. Then, the data was categorized. Finally, the data was defined into several themes. In order to analyse the open-ended questionnaire, the researchers examined the written responses gathered and then, the responses categorized into some themes according to the research questions. Afterward, those themes were formulated for the analysis and reported the findings. Finally, the results of the thematic analysis were correlated with the literature.

4 Findings and Discussions

In this section, the researchers wanted to show and discussed the results of this study. It would be divided into two parts. The first part focused on the first research problem which discussed the influence of the teacher attrition to the early career teacher. On the other hand,

the second part found out the factor of teacher attrition which was the most influential to the early career teacher and found out the career decision making of the early career teacher.

4.1. The Influence of Teacher Attrition to the Early Career Teacher

In this part, the researchers discussed the influence of the factors of teacher attrition on the early career teacher. In order to discuss it, the researchers used six factors of teacher attrition based on the combination of the conceptualization of teacher attrition made by Schaefer [16] and [22]. Those six factors were burnout, teacher demographic, quality of teacher, discourse support, student issue, and salary.

4.2. Burnout

The researchers asked participants whether or not they felt tired being a teacher. As the results, five participants indicated that they felt tired in being a teacher. Most of them said that teachers had some task to do, for examples:

[Silvia] *We need to prepare all the things, do all the things, and evaluate all the things.*

[Avelino] *Teachers have some task n being a teacher, such us: teaching, administration, lesson plan, correction, etc. It will spend many times for me as a novice teacher.*

However, there were two participants who enjoyed teaching but in some condition, they also would feel tired:

[Laras] *As long as I experienced the teaching, I am happy. I feel tired only in the class when I cannot manage the class.*

[Vigo] *I enjoy being a teacher because I can become relax in doing the task; there is no high pressure in being a teacher. Something that makes me tired is when I think about the salary. It can make me complain about being a teacher except being a civil servant teacher.*

In facing the burnout of being a teacher, the participants had their own ways to make them become relax. Basically, the researchers found five ways to reinforce themselves when they felt tired, such as caring for the students, having recreation, being grateful, doing interesting activity in the class, and remembering our goals or dreams. It was presented as follows:

[Chacha] *I just saw my students who smile and love me. I also tried to find me-time or hangout with my friends/boyfriend to relax my mind for a while.*

[Krisna] *I will have chit-chat with my students. Sometimes their cares make me stronger. Besides, whenever I feel so tired to be a teacher, I always remember my dream in being a teacher; it can also help me to achieve my dream.*

Based on those results, it indicated that burnout was one the problems for the early career teacher but they also had a resilience which stimulated them to always reinforce themselves. In addition, based on the linear scoring, only two out of seven participants who suggested that burnout could be the factor of teacher attrition. In this study, the researchers concluded that burnout just had a few effects to the teacher attrition of the early career teacher.

4.3. Teacher Demographic

In this study, there were something interesting results with their opinion about gender and being a teaching. When the researchers asked participant about their feeling and opinion of the fact that many teachers in Indonesia are female teachers [39], the female teacher agreed with that fact and gave their reasons:

[Silvia] *I think so because women also need to be independent. And usually, women are more patient in dealing with children.*

[Laras] *Yes, I agree with that fact. Female can understand more kids.*

However, it would be different with the opinion of the male teacher who did not agree with that fact:

[Kosa] *I think being a teacher does not relate with sex. If we work with our love and passion, we will definitely love our profession and we will feel comfortable.*

[Krisna] *Nothing. I think it is more depending on our own willingness.*

It indicated that gender could not be the reason for male and female teachers to decrease their determination in being a teacher.

On the other hand, this study also discussed the value of being a teacher. Schaefer [16] states, "This may suggest today's teachers' values differ from previous generations, just as today's students' values differ from previous generations" (p. 265). On the contrary, the results showed that all of the participants still argued that being a teacher is a precious job:

[Chacha] *Teacher is a wonderful job because the students won't forget you till the end of their lives and teachers should educate themselves in order to educate others.*

[Avelino] *I think a teacher is a glorious job because I can care, guide, and prepare my student to be better than me in the future. Teacher is also like an unsung hero (pahlawantanpatandajasa).*

[Krisna] *I want to help my students to be a better person than what they are now. The problems with their family and they often make them grow with the wrong thought which is so bad for their future.*

I don't want them to do the bad things like what I've done in my past.

In my opinion, by being their teacher I hope I can help them to be a better person, or at least better than me.

Based on those results, the phenomenon of gender, having less experiences, and the value in being a teacher did not bring the negative effect which could increase teacher attrition. In sum, most of them would not influence with the teacher demographic issue. They still wanted to be a teacher with facing some challenges. I was also supported by linear scoring where all of them gave positive responses about the factors related the teacher demographic.

4.4. Quality of Teacher

Teacher quality could bring determination to change what the teacher had been done. The teachers who had higher academic ability were more likely to leave teaching careers early [28] [29]. The data of this study found that six participants also had other interest outside of just being a teacher:

[Silvia] *I am interested in being translator. I want to be a translator so that I can learn about language more and deeper.*

[Kosa] *I want to be a counsellor or mentor for students who are considered problematic either because of their attitude or intellectual ... I want them to feel the success in their life.*

There was also a participant who had other interest. Then, he related it with the financial factor:

[Vigo] *I want to be a banker or coal mining admin. The salary of being them can support my life. Sometimes in a year, we can be paid 15-17x of the teacher salary. The life is guaranteed. It differentiates with the teachers.*

In sum, this study found that most of the participants had other interest to be explored but they still wanted to be a teacher and did it as a side job:

[Avelino] *I think I do not have that ability. I just can drive but sometimes I am also interested in the managerial thing. So, I want to do it as a side job in the future.*

4.5. Discourse Support

Some examples of discourse support which can cause the early career teacher attrition are a lack of administrative, family support, staff support, an environment [25]. The data presented that six out of seven participants got supports from their family:

[Chacha] *Of course they support me because my parents are also an educator. My mom is a teacher, headmaster of primary and kindergarten school. My dad is a lecturer; therefore, they always support and motivate me to be a teacher.*

However, a participant was not supported by her family but she still had strong determination to be a teacher:

[Laras] *Not really. Sometimes my father underestimates me because my dream is to be a teacher.*

On the other hand, the school environment was also one consideration of discourse support. The data showed that five out of seven participants got the supports from their colleagues and the facilities:

[Avelino] *My school has good enough facilities to teach.*

In addition, the other teachers are very welcome to me, they also always help me.

On the contrary, two participants felt that they were not comfortable to teach there:

[Chacha] *In the previous school, I think it was not. The teachers there were not really friendly and helpful. Perhaps they thought that I was only a substitute teacher.*

In sum, in this study, there were just a few experiences in the discourse support. However, when the participants faced the discourse support, they still had high determination to be a teacher. In the other word, the discourse support could not influence the participants' determination in being a teacher. It would still depend on them as a decision making.

4.6. Student Issue

In this study, students issue referred to the student discipline issues in the school. The results indicated that some participants assumed that student issue was not as a problem, but it was a challenge for them:

[Silvia] *I feel disappointed because sometimes, I feel like I fail to be a good teacher. But that is the challenge. The teacher must explore herself to find out the ways to manage her own class.*

[Krisna] *Sometimes, it makes me very tired. However, sometimes it also makes me stronger because it is the challenge for me to accomplish my mission of being a teacher.*

On the contrary, this study also found that some participant would feel tired and in doubt in being a teacher:

[Avelino] *Sometimes, when I felt tired and the condition of the class is not really good, so, I will think that can I be a good teacher? Should I change my job?*

Overall, student issue could be one of the factors of teacher attrition [18] [19] [30]. It was also presented in the results that a few of the participants would feel in doubt to become a teacher. It was also supported by the linear scoring which showed that there was a participant who assumed that the student issue referred to stimulate teacher attrition. However, in this study, most of the participants showed the student issue as a challenge rather than a factor of teacher attrition.

4.7. Salary

In the terms of salary, this study noted that three participants felt that they got enough salary and they did not see the salary as a job satisfaction:

[Silvia] *I think it is enough but sometimes I feel the work is more than the salary.*

[Kosa] *I really feel quite with my salary although I cannot be compared with my devotion. But I feel satisfied because all my efforts are not merely because of money.*

On the other hand, four participants felt that they did not get enough salary:

[Laras] *It is a cheap. But I have already realized that being a teacher will have cheap salary.*

[Krisna] *I think that the school should give its teachers the better salary and time so that the teachers can feel that their salaries are really useful to make their family and themselves happy.*

As the results, some of the participants also told their plan to have a side job in the future:

[Avelino] *For the future, I will find my side job when I have habitual being a teacher. Nowadays, money is also important especially when I have my own family in the future.*

[Krisna] *Because of that, besides being a teacher, I do another job.*

In sum, some participants had positive perspective in terms of salary. They thought that the value is being a teacher was more valuable than the salary. In contrast, some participants had negative perspective about the salary. They thought that they did not get enough salary and hope that it could be increased but they also had some plans to counter the lack of salary they got. According to Ingersoll [32], he noted that the early career teachers would leave teaching because they were paid low salaries. However, in this study, the researchers concluded that salary did not have strong influences in to the early career teacher attrition.

4.8. The Factor of Teacher Attrition and Career Decision Making

In order to investigate the factor which was the most influential to the early career teacher attrition, the researchers asked the participants about their perspective about which one the most factor of teacher attrition could influence early career teacher attrition. As the results, five out of seven participants stated that salary was the most influential factor for the early career teacher attrition. It could be proven, as follows:

[Chacha] *Salary is the crucial things for teacher, especially in Indonesia. People live for getting the salary and the groceries nowadays are expensive.*

[Laras] *The most influential factor is salary because it is related to my future plan. Hehe. I have to save money to my future plan.*

[Kosa] *In my opinion, there are still some teachers who teach based on the salary they get. This is very disappointing because if the salary does not match then the quality of service will decrease. It is not the characteristic of a true teacher.*

Based on those results, it indicated that salary became one of the considerations for those early career teachers. When they felt that they got enough money, they would stay with their profession as a teacher. It was supported by Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley [18] and Imazeki [33] who stated that the way to prevent the teachers left their profession was giving them the higher salaries. It is the same as what Krisna suggested to increase teachers' salary:

[Krisna] *I think that the school should give its teachers the better salary and time so that the teachers can feel that their salaries are really useful to make their family and themselves happy.*

However, when they did not get enough money, they did not also consider leaving their teaching because there were also other reasons to be considered, such as enjoying teaching, wanting to share their knowledge, inspired by their family, getting career clarity, wanting to develop their country, and getting valuable in being a teacher. It could be seen as follows:

[Laras] *I had experienced the great moment and the joy of teaching in PPL (pre-service teaching). I love teaching.*

[Silvia] *Teaching is one of the ways to share knowledge, experiences. Then, from teaching, I also can learn many things, from my students, workplace, and from what I teach.*

[Kosa] *I want to be like my father who is also an English teacher. When I was a kid, I often saw my father teaching in his class and I felt very happy to be like him.*

[Avelino] *I want to get career clarity and a better life, share my knowledge, help others, have holidays, continue what my parents did as a teacher, and build my country.*

[Vigo] *No other meaningful job other than being a teacher. Indeed, the salary is small, but being a teacher has a broad meaning. Our life is not just for our self, but our life is for others as well. I will never give up building my country.*

In sum, the participants showed that their reasons and motivations were stronger than the factors of attrition they faced. Based on the data, the researchers also found that all of the participants still wanted to be a teacher.

5 Conclusions

According to Lerseth [3], teacher identity construction is important in influencing teachers' decision-making in terms of career decisions (p. 29). The aim of this study is to investigate the early career teachers in influencing their career decision making in terms of the factors of teachers' attrition. In order to do this study, the researchers asked seven early career English teachers to be investigated their teacher career decision making which may be influenced by the factors of teacher attrition. Furthermore, the researchers used the compilation of the conceptual framework of teacher attrition based on Schaefer [16] and Clandinin, Long, Schaefer, Downey, Steeves, Pinnegar, McKenzie, and Wnuck [22]. As the results, in this study, there were six factors of teacher attrition which may influence the early career teacher in making a career decision.

The results showed that there is no significant influence of six teacher attrition factors to the early career teacher decision making. Most of the participants assumed that actually they had to face those factors of teacher attrition in teaching learning process, but they still had high determination in being a teacher. According to Baskin [40], he states, "... the number of teachers leaving their profession in Indonesia is low" (p. 103). Then, he claims, "The low attrition in teaching profession in Indonesia is firstly shown by the rare cases of teachers switching career, or teachers leaving their jobs" (p. 103). It means that this study also deny the assumption which stated that beginning teachers left teaching within their first five years [5] [6] [7] [8] [16] [17] [18] [22]. In addition, this study also found six reasons why teacher still wanted to be a teacher, such as enjoying teaching, wanting to share their knowledge, inspired by their family, getting career clarity, wanting to develop their country, and getting valuable in being a teacher.

There are also some limitations in conducting this study. This study is only examined seven participants in Indonesia, so this study cannot be generalized in Indonesia context.

Therefore, for the next study, the researchers hope that it will have a large participant which separate in various regions in Indonesia. The researchers also suggest that the future researchers can investigate teacher attrition rate in Indonesia using quantitative study in order to get more accurate results.

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