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NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR SKILL ACQUISITION IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL) ASABA

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Abstract

The study was conducted to determine the needs and challenges of Vocational/ Technical Education Students for skill Acquisition in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba. One hundred and ten (110) 200 and 300 level students were used. A purposive sampling technique was used. Structured questionnaires with forty-one (41) items of 4 points scale, consisting of Strongly agreed (SA), Agree (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly disagreed (SD), a numerical weight score of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively was used to collect information from the students. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and a simple statistical mean. A decision rule was established where any item with a mean above 2.50 was accepted and items with a mean below 2.50 were rejected. The students agreed that One can be self-employed through VTE courses, that VTE courses equip students with entrepreneurial, manipulative, communication, and organizational skills, VTE courses are faced with a lot of challenges such as lack of facilities and materials for training students. Adequate resources should be allocated to Technical and Vocational Education. Inadequate funds affect the provision of essentials such as well–equipped laboratories and workshops. The government at all levels should also fund VTE in Nigeria. VTE institutes should ensure that practical lessons are effectively taught to achieve the anticipated result.

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INTRODUCTION

All over the country in Nigeria, individuals in the public and private sector have seen the need for Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) due to the startling rate of unemployment. The majority of the populace is living in abject poverty as a result of unemployment, as poverty appears a serious threat to sustainable development in many ways. The poor could easily misuse and impede the sustainability of the environment in an attempt to make a living; others could go into various forms of crime and anti-social activities that could also threaten lives and their environment, the major cause of poverty is unemployment and underemployment especially among the youth. (Anyakoha 2013)

In a more global sense, the author also added that poverty leads to the economic recession which has given rise to such problems as downsizing in various sectors increasing unemployment. Long before now, education in Nigeria has been shaped to prepare youths and adults for paid - employment which was mostly white-collar jobs (Anyakoha 2013)

In the past, would be graduates were interviewed and offered employment before graduation. Employers of labour in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s in Nigeria go to tertiary institutions to recruit youths in their final years in schools. Today it is no longer so, as employment opportunities are fast drying up as many graduates prepare for employment fail to be employed and swim in poverty, yet the educational system continues to prepare and produce youth for non-existence paid employment jobs. There is no need to prepare youths for paid employment and as job seekers but to prepare them as self-employers and job creators (Anyakoha, 2012). Tibi (2013) also saw the need to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit into our youth as a way of making them productive citizens, he is also of the opinion that when this is done, the nation would be on the path to a sustainable economy and national development, a truly sovereign nation-state with integrity in the nation and with competencies for self - employment. The inclusion of Vocational Education in the school curriculum stems from the issue of mass unemployment of the nation's graduates due to a lack of marketable skills. Vocational Technical/ Education is positioned to prepare the youths for self-employment to combat poverty, unemployment and promote sustainable economic development (Anyakoha 2013) Hence the provision of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in the National Policy on Education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 15 of the National Policy of Education (2007) explained the goals of Technical and Vocational Education as

- To provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology, business particularly as a craft, advanced craft technical levels.
- To provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial, and economic development.

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- Giving training and imparting the necessary skill to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2007) defines Vocational /Technical Education (VTE) as the education that allows the recipient an opportunity to acquire practical skills as well as some basic scientific knowledge and attitude required by a craft man and technician. Vocational Education is any form of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for employment in a recognized occupation.it provides the skill necessary for effective employment in a specific occupation (Salami 2013). It is a skilled-based program designed for skill acquisition at all levels of education (Okoye & Okwelle 2013b).

Vocational Technical/ Education (VTE) includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which there is a societal need, which must be appropriately done in school Okoye & Arimoun, (2016). They proclaimed that VTE is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupations from those requiring a relatively short period of specialized preparation such as clerks, typists to occupations requiring two or more years of specialization.

Vocational Education promotes talent to earn a living like Tailoring, Shoemaking, Plumbing, Hairdressing, Teaching, Cookery, Painting, among others. Technical Education, on the other hand, is the education given to people to make them develop talent in technology and become special in it to discover, invent new things in metal works, mechanics, engineering, electrical, electronics, among others (Oriazowalan,2007). Technical Education is a system of education which deals with the teaching of skills and also demands the professional use of hands. (Uwaifo 2008). Interestingly, opportunity abounds in the different Vocational, Technical courses for the acquisition of relevant skills peculiar to such vocation (Kukaye,2013).

Table 1: VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL COURSES TAUGHT AT FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (T) ASABA

Vocational/ Technical Courses and Occupational Opportunities

Fine and applied art	Sculpture, textile design, painting, tye & dye, graphics designers, paint markers, photographers, fashion designers, interior designers, videographers, etc
Agricultural education	Fishery, beekeeping, poultry, snailery, poultry, piggery, crop farming, insect farming, food science technology, etc
Home economics	Clothing and textile, cookery and confectionery, tie & dye, dieticians, childcare worker, Housing and interior decorators, food and Nutrition, Home Management, consumer Education. etc
Woodwork	Carpentry and joinery, furniture & cabinet making, door and window frames, scaffolds, upholstery, etc
Building technology	Drafting architectural design, plan drawing, wall building, bricklayer, plumbing, repairs and installation, tiling, etc

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Electrical and electronics	Radio and television repairs and installation houses wiring, etc
Automobile Education	Automotive mechanic, automotive electrician, motor vehicle parts technician.
Metalwork technology	Welding, brazing, case-harden, automobile bodywork, the building of boxes, cans, tankers, etc

Source, Fieldwork 2021

Vocational Training and Skill Acquisition

Vocational training is an all-inclusive educational process, which comprises the attainment of practical information and skills relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life (UNESCO, 2003). It also includes knowledge, attitude, and skill acquisition by the learner, in a formal way that is both theoretical and practical, under classroom, workshop, and field settings (Ezekiel & Ndimbita, 2009). On the other hand, vocational education covers the process of creating skilled manpower for solutions and enhancements of man's environmental encounters (Upongson, 2000). This type of education is envisioned to produce a classification of workers. Dike (2009) perceives vocational education as an intentional course and learning experience that begins with the investigation of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables the success of high academic standards, leadership, and preparation for industry-defined work.

The vocational education programs as acknowledged by NCCE minimum standard (2008) include but are not limited to Agricultural Science Education, Home Economics Education, Fine, and Applied Arts Education, Business Education, Wood, Metal, Electrical, and Electronics Works. These subject areas are intended to teach the individual the necessary skills, the right attitude and inculcate the habit or spirit of self-reliance. The skills in these vocational areas will empower and re-engineer wealth creation and contain the strength to pitch employment opportunities in the life of the trained individual, group, and society. Therefore, vocational education is a dependable tool in redesigning the weak and upcoming economy (Apagu & Andural, 2010). agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic developments.

Vocational education is tremendously significant for its prospects in harnessing a nation's workforce for sustainable development. The professed benefits and prospect of vocational education can be seen in the following ways:

1. It leads to the attainment of practical and applied skills desired for output thus, creating income and empowering people economically.
2. It is geared towards the establishment of trained manpower necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic developments.
3. It provides training that impacts the necessary skills for craftsmen and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant

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4. It provides the stand for individuals to have an empathetic of the increasing intricacy of the global business world.
5. It impacts positively on home productivity thereby helping to advance child welfare, especially in the rural areas.
6. It functions in the provision of competent and well-equipped personnel to apply vocational acquaintance to the enhancement and solution of environmental problems.
7. It educates people with relevant skills and competencies for occupations, careers, and vocations in life aimed at self-sustenance, self-employability, self-reliance, and self-actualization (Ebodili and Eze 2021)

Sustainable Development

This has been defined by many authors. Sustainable development **is** a kind of development that can be initiated and managed properly in such a way as to give attention to continuity and preservation as people explore explicitly available resources for the enlargement of their existence (Adebola 2007).

Kundan in (Ugoh 2008) saw sustainable development as a construct that envisions development as meeting the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation.

Vocational Education and Sustainable Development

Vocational education has been a basic part of national development strategies in many societies because of the effect on human resource development, productivity, and economic growth. To achieve sustainable development, attention should be paid to firming the bridge between education and schooling and preparation for the world of work with courtesy paid to improve vocational education training in Nigeria (Oguejiofor and Ezeabasili 2014). They opined that the technological development of a nation depends on the available technical know-how, the rudiment of which is a function of the quality and quantity of available vocational and technical training.

Statement of the Problem

Vocational and Technical Education has continued to thrive in most nations of the world because it was planned to offer people the opportunity of refining their talent, but in Nigeria, some people see Vocational/Technical Education as the training /education for those who cannot pay for quality education and this idea is very wrong because everyone needs to learn a valued handiwork or skill which provides means of income generation for sustainability.

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In Nigeria, the value system is questionable as many people place so much status on university education at the cost of skill-oriented /acquisition programs. To this end people who are slow in the cognitive domain force themselves into the university where manipulative skills are hardly acquired. Thereby neglecting the psychomotor domain where they truly belong. Whereas in other climes like the United States of America, there are a lot of successful entrepreneurs and skilled workers that are shaping and affecting the business world positively, such persons as Bill Gate, Steve Job, larry Page, Donald Trump, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford just to mention a few; these persons acquired Vocational/Technical Education skill that led them into designing technologies that provided solutions to a lot of the world's problems.

Vocational and Technical Education subjects are taught in most colleges, schools, universities educational systems of the world, but Nigeria educational institutions are handicapped and have not been able to satisfy their mandate to teach, research, and produce knowledge and skilled based education because of some of the following challenges

- Insufficient facilities: only about 40% of institutions have well-equipped laboratories and workshops (Oryem- Origa 2005).
- Inadequate qualified trained VTE personals: We need more qualified VTE educators who will play key roles in certifying that students enjoy and learn practical skills.
- Lack of training, retraining, and inducement on staff: training is a very vital aspect of education, and there is the need for training and retaining to create an opportunity for employees to increase their knowledge and enhance motivations, as well as incentives to perform well on the job.
- Apathy of political office holders: Technical and Vocational Educations has been abandoned in Nigeria. Technical educators have the greatest challenge of convincing lawmakers on the reasons why they should give urgent attention to the program in resource allocation. (Okoye and Arimoun 2016).
- Brain drain is also a challenge facing VTE in Nigeria as there is a movement of technical teachers and lecturers of technical education to other nations where they feel will offer them a better condition of service Bassi (2004) Vocational /Technical Education about 45% of all Nigerian professionals including technical educators have left Nigeria shores over the years, between 1997 and 2007 alone, Nigeria lost over 10,000 middle level and high- level managers to the western economics. About 500 lectures from Nigeria tertiary institutions have continued to drift each year, particularly to Europe, America, other African countries (Okoye and Arimoun 2016).

To reduce unemployment in Nigeria, there is the need to include skill acquisition as part of Vocational and Technical Education in our school's curriculum. Skill acquisition can be seen as the type of training by individuals or groups of individuals that can lead to the gaining of

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knowledge for self-sustenance. Donli (2002) is of the view that skill acquisition is the exhibition of ideas and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are allowed to acquire suitable skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further upholds that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Magbagbeola (2004) proposed that skills acquisition requires the gathering of different skills that enhance task performance through the incorporation of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. He listed the guidelines for the sustenance of skill acquisition program to include the followings;

- Provision of training that gives the trainees the opportunities to acquire skills that are suitable for preparation in a field of trade for gainful employment.
- Provision of positive skills that relate to each trade that makes one a professional in one field instead of the others.
- that training has to be done by competent, knowledgeable, and qualified instructors
- Skill acquisition requires much practice, patience, interest, ability, aptitude, and personality traits.
- Skill acquisition requires a conducive environment.
- Training requires beneficial human relationships, business skills, simulated and constructive ideas.
- The principles guiding training in a particular field in terms of attitude, customer-relationship, productivity, efficiency, supply, and demand needs to be appreciated

Benefits of Skill Acquisition

1) Self–employment: a skilled person is always self-employed and employs others, he or she never goes hungry.
2) Breaks away from a white-collar job: a skilled person does not depend on the white-collar job which is not available and the pay is always less compared to the effort put in.
3) Skilled people are self-reliant and independent: they do not depend on people's gifts, they cater for themselves and even sponsor their family members without borrowing from others.
4) Multiple job opportunities: some of them acquire many skills and have more chances of gaining more jobs from many establishments.
5) Generate employment: There will be a lot of jobs generated for the youths to make them busy.

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6) Reduced crime: through skill acquisition youths will be kept busy and have less time to think about engaging in dirty activities and feel comfortable. (uzochukwumike.hubspages.com/hub/importance of skill acquisition).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the students' needs and challenges in Vocational/Technical Education departments of the Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba for skill acquisition.

The specific objectives are

1) Identify students' perceptions of Vocational/Technical Education as a course of study in the college.
2) Identify the basic needs of Vocational/ Technical Education students in the college.
1. Identify the challenges of students of Vocational/ Technical Education Departments in the college.

Research Questions

1) What are the students' perceptions of Vocational-Technical Education as a course of study in the college?
2) What are the basic needs of Vocational/Technical Education students in the college?
3) What are the challenges of students in Vocational/ Technical Education Departments in the college?

Methodology

One hundred and ten (110) full time 200, and 300 level NCE students in the Fine and Applied Art, Agricultural Education, Home Economics, Automobile Technology, Woodwork Technology, Electrical Electronics, Building Technology, and Metalwork Technology departments that make up the school of Vocational and Technical Education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The choice of 200 and 300 level students is because they have pass-through VTE training for at least one year and can give an account of what the course is all about.

Research Instrument

A Structured questionnaire with forty-one (41) items of 4 points scale, consisting of Strongly agreed (SA), Agree (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly disagreed (SD), a numerical weight score of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively was used to collect information from the students. The structured questionnaire was designed in two sections, section A contains the demographic information of

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the respondents while the other section contains items based on the research questions and purpose of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and a simple statistical mean obtained from a 4point scale rating. A decision rule was established where any item with a mean above 2.50 was accepted and items with a mean below 2.50 were rejected.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Demographic information of the Respondents (Students)

S/N	ITEMS	VARIABLES	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	**Sex**	Male	34	30.91
		Female	76	69.09
		Total	**110**	**100**
2	Age	16-25	42	38.18
		26-45	65	59.09
		46-60	03	0.273
		Total	**110**	**100**
3	Department	Agric Education	24	21.82
		Automobile Education	08	7.27
		Building Technology	12	10.91
		Electrical and Electronics	15	13.64
		Fine and Applied Art Education	12	10.91
		Home Economics Education	19	17.27
		Metal Work Technology	10	09.09

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		Woodwork	10	09.09
		Total	**110**	**100**
4	Level of Study	200	48	43.64
		300	62	56.36
		Total	**110**	**100**

The result in Table 1 is the demographic information of the students in the School of Vocational and Technical Education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba. The results show that majority of the students are females which represents 69.09% of the study population while the males are 30.91%. Adebey (2010) discovered that there are more females than males in Nigeria. Samuel 2010 also revealed that parents from urban and rural zone encourage men to go into petty trading at a very early age to help their extended families. The majority of the students are within the age range of 26- 45 years of age (59.09%) which indicates that they are adults. The courses available in the school of Vocational and Technical Education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba are Agricultural Education, Fine and Applied art, Home Economics, Automobile Education, Electrical Electronics, Woodwork Education, Building Technology and Metalwork Technology with Agricultural Education having the highest number of students 21.82%. The students are well represented in their different levels of study 100- 300 levels.

Research Question 1: What are the Students' Perception of Vocational / Technical Education as a course of study in the College?

Table 2

S/N	VARIABLES	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	VTE. is a course for the unintelligent	1.86	1.10	Rejected
2	Students in VTE have low esteem	1.95	0.21	Rejected
3	They are boring courses	2.02	1.99	Rejected
4	They require the use of complicated tools /equipment	2.63	1.26	Rejected
5	It is a course for people with low cognitive ability	3.83	0.38	Accepted
6	One can be self-employed through these courses	3.72	0.75	Accepted
7	They equip students with managerial skills	3.10	1.75	Accepted
8	They help equip students with sufficient knowledge	2.93	1.11	Accepted
9	They involve the use of more muscles & brain	3.36	0.88	Accepted
10	The tools used are crude	3.84	0.38	Accepted

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11	VTE is more psychomotor than the cognitive domain of learning	3.79	0.66	Accepted
12	The equipment is very expensive	3.79	0.66	Accepted
13	Students engage in a lot of practical	3.25	1.04	Accepted
14	They require technical skills	3.25	0.97	Accepted
15	A lot of energy is required to manipulate the equipment	3.84	0.38	Accepted
16	Poor public attitude on vocational-technical education	3.18	0.54	Accepted
17	It brings about self-employment	3.83	0.38	Accepted
18	It brings about self-reliance	2.69	1.06	Accepted
19	Entrepreneurial skills are acquired through VTE	3.85	0.39	Accepted
20	VTE is more psychomotor than the cognitive domain of learning	3.79	0.66	Accepted

The results in Table 2 showed that items 5-20 rated above 2.50 of the acceptable mean value that most of the respondents agreed that vocational /Technical Education courses involve more of the use of muscles and brain, one can be self-employed through it, help students with sufficient knowledge, the courses are more practical and also some of the tools/equipment used is expensive, it is more of psychomotor than cognitive learning. This is in line with the views of Ogundu (2009) that Africa and indeed Nigeria needs, the problem solving and critical thinking approach that can be developed with the use of functional equipment in the workshop. Chinonso (2010) believed that vocational and technical education is the only alternative form of education that can guarantee entrepreneurship development and job creation for youth. While items 1-4 rated below 2.50 of the acceptable mean expressing students' disagreement to those statements that the courses are for unintelligent students, VTE students courses have low esteem, they are boring courses, and require the use of complicated tools.

Research Question 2: what are the basic needs of students enrolled in vocational / Technical Education in the College?

Table 3

S/N	VARIABLES	MEAN	SD	DECISION
21	Entrepreneurial skills	3.17	0.87	Accepted
22	Organizational skills	3.18	0.38	Accepted
23	Manipulative skills	3.18	0.98	Accepted
24	Technical needs	3.20	1.04	Accepted

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25	Accountability needs	2.92	1.11	Accepted
26	Adaptability needs	2.73	1.13	Accepted
27	Interpersonal skills	2.69	1.06	Accepted
28	Time management and organization skill	3.25	1.02	Accepted
29	Financial Management skill	3.27	0.88	Accepted
30	Communication skill	2.77	1.22	Accepted
31	Electricity skill	3.74	0.71	Accepted
32	Tools and Equipment	3.27	0.88	Accepted
33	Finance	4.00	1.02	Accepted
34	Infrastructure (Buildings, good road, water, hospitals, etc)	2.69	1.06	Accepted

Analysis of the result in Table 3 above revealed that all the items from nos. 21-34 rated above 2.50 of the accepted mean score which showed agreement with all the statements, by this analysis, students agreed that they need all the above-mentioned skills to excel in Vocational/Technical Education. This is in line with the works of Okolie and Ogbaekirigwe (2014) VTE that requires an incorporated approach and addresses the multidimensional aspect of employees ranging from enhancing technical and interpersonal skills to creative thinking and leadership.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges facing teaching and learning of Vocational /Technical Education in the College

Table 4

S/N	VARIABLES	MEAN	SD	DECISION
35	Lack of facilities and materials for training students	3.75	0.45	Accepted
36	Inadequate technical/ vocational teachers	1.43	0.75	Rejected

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37	Low-quality information and communication	1.76	1.00	Rejected
38	Poor funding of vocational and technical education	3.58	0.90	Accepted
39	Poor perception of vocational and technical education	3.18	0.54	Accepted
40	Lack of adequate time for practical	4.02	2.27	Accepted
41	The practical aspect of the courses are expensive	3.01	0.92	Accepted
42	The practical class are very tedious	3.17	0.87	Accepted

Data in Table 4 showed that most of the respondents agreed that numerous challenges are facing the teaching and learning of Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria such as lack of facilities and materials used for training the students, poor funding of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, old and crude tools, poor public attitude on VTE in Nigeria, lack of adequate time for practicals, cost of carrying out practicals is expensive and that the practical classes are very tedious with the following mean scores respectively 3.75.3.58,3.74.3.18.4.02,3.01,3.17 while some of the respondents believe that there are inadequate vocational /Technical Education teachers, low-quality information and communication and non-use of appropriate and approved methodology in teaching. This is in line with the findings of Ojimba (2012) and Okoye & Arimonu (2016) in their studies on the issues of technical and vocational education identified numerous challenges facing VTE in Nigeria and that there is a need for government intervention in VTE in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study is set to discover the needs and challenges of Vocational/ Technical Education Students of Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba for skill acquisition, the respondents unanimously agreed that One can be self-employed through VTE courses, that VTE courses equip students with managerial, entrepreneurial, manipulative, technical, communication, and organizational skills, that can help equip students with sufficient knowledge, the courses require a lot of practicals, and also it is faced with a lot of challenges such as, lack of facilities and materials for training students Poor perception on vocational-technical education, lack of adequate time for practical, the practical aspect of the courses are expensive and the practical classes are very tedious.

Recommendation

Adequate resources should be allocated to Technical and Vocational Education. Inadequate funds affect the provision of essentials such as well–equipped laboratories and workshops, relevant textbooks, and training manuals.

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The government at levels should also fund VTE in Nigeria. The technical institutes should ensure that practical lessons are effectively taught to achieve the anticipated result of teaching the practical skills necessary for the world of work. Government should sponsor VTE in Nigeria especially in the provision of the required tools and laboratories for studies. More time should be allocated to the practical aspect of VTE in our schools

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