

Free Night High School in a Private Catholic College: A Vehicle for Social Transformation

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Abstract - This paper provides a brief account on the contributions of La Consolacion College Bacolod-Free Night High School Program (LCCB-FNHSP) to social development through basic education in the city of Bacolod. The investigation looked into the impact of the program on the local government's thrust on accessible education, while the expected competencies and the holistic preparedness for higher education of the beneficiaries were specifically delved and explored. Descriptive evaluative research was used in this investigation. Primary source of data were the program implementers. In-depth interview was conducted with them. School records on academic performance of students and information sheets of alumni of the night high school program were used as secondary sources of data. Since its inception, the program has produced hundreds of graduates who have successfully gained employment in local, national and international enterprises. These beneficiaries have shown academic competence in their college education and have eventually acquired competitive skills for employment

and professional service. The program received the local government's "Banwahanon Award" for social development, is LCCB's concrete action for social transformation. Its FNHSP contested the statement that poverty is a strong predictor of illiteracy and unemployment.

Keywords – education, free education, secondary education

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education in the Philippines is geared mainly toward providing students with general academic education for college preparation, as well as vocational/technical training for employment preparation. After six years of elementary education, students are expected to move to the secondary education which provides four years of high school. In this level, students are aged 13-16 years old on the average (Jimenez, Paqueo and de Vera, 1988).

Public secondary schools nationwide are unable to accommodate the large number of elementary graduates. Statistics from the Department of Education show that for every 40 village primary schools, unfortunately, there are only eight municipal secondary schools. With the population projected to increase from 81.6 million in 2004 to 96.8 million in 2015, it is also projected that approximately 1 million new children join the education system each year (UNICEF, 2010).

Moreover, the increasing marginalization of the poor is evident which contributes to ever-increasing rate of the out-of-school youth. Lack of opportunity to acquire formal education, easily drags these out-of-school youths to commit crimes like murder, hold-up, rape and

other delinquencies when they become victims of drug addiction.

In the vicinity of La Consolacion College Bacolod (LCCB), surrounded by the depressed Puroks under Barangays 10 and 11, school dropouts roam around the city everyday which if not attended to, the number of whom would increase. While this problem keeps on increasing every year, there is a pressing need for catholic institutions like LCCB to respond to the call of evangelization in order to transform the community.

Cognizant of the plight of the less privilege sector of society, and true to its commitment of serving the people of Negros, specifically the poor, LCCB humbly offered this project – Free Night High School Program – as a gift to the less fortunate Negrenses in the celebration of its Diamond Jubilee Year in 1993. The program is also LCCB's concrete contribution to the attainment of DepEd's (formerly DECS) mission of providing quality basic education that is accessible to all and in laying the foundation of life-long learning and service for the common good (DepEd, 2011).

The program has been going on for 17 years, but no comprehensive study on its impact to the community has been done. Until this time, no formal tracer study of the night high school graduates has been conducted. The need for scientific studies on the impact of the program among its beneficiaries and the community it serves prompted the researchers to do this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study intended to look into the free night high school program of La Consolacion College Bacolod. Specifically, the study pursued the following objectives: to find out the number of beneficiaries served by the

program and have completed secondary education; to measure the level of academic performance of the student-beneficiaries of the program; to test the difference in the level of academic performance of the student beneficiaries of the program when they are grouped in terms of the academic year, year level and sex; to trace the [a] highest educational attainment, and [b] employment status of graduates of the program; and to determine the opportunities for improvement recommended by the students to better serve its beneficiaries.

FRAMEWORK

The conduct of this investigation is anchored on the Philippines Department of Education (DepEd) Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) policy action. BESRA seeks to create a basic education sector that is capable of attaining the country's 'Education for All' objectives by the year 2015. It also aims to improve the impact on outcomes from complementary early childhood education, alternative learning systems and private sector participation (DepEd-BESRA, 2005). One of the overall objectives of BESRA is to ensure that all children of school age are in school and to eliminate dropouts and repeaters. This implies that all six-year old Filipino children have to enter school, ready to learn and prepared to achieve the required competencies indicated in the curricular program. It is also expected that children in school shall have satisfactory achievement at every grade or year level. All children aged between eleven and twelve years old should have completed elementary education. All children aged twelve to fifteen should be on track to completing secondary schooling with similarly satisfactory achievement levels at every year.

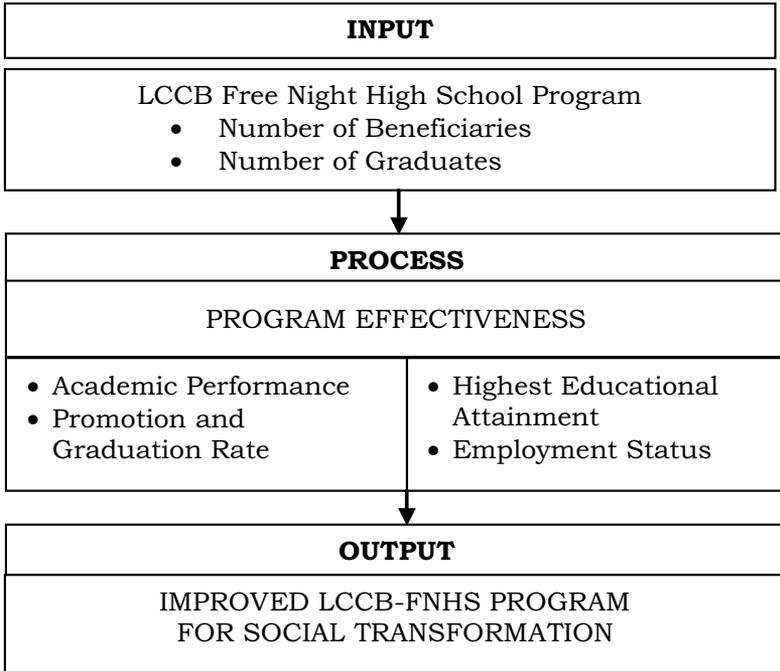
Moreover, the long-term vision of Dep-Ed Region VI affirms this with the statement that, by 2030, DepEd Region 6 shall be recognized for developing functionally literate (i.e., able to read, write, and do simple computation) Filipinos (DepEd, 2005). This shall lead to the development of their critical and analytical thinking skills and ultimately to people empowerment (DepEd, 2011).

The Philippines EFA 2000 Country Report served as the backbone of this investigation. Philippine Education for All (EFA) strategy which put efforts directed towards bringing basic education to the rural poor, the urban slums, cultural communities, refugees, women, disabled, and other educationally disadvantaged groups. EFA strategy is complemented by DepEd's Bureau of Secondary Education, which envisions that, by the third millennium, every Filipino youth shall further enjoy a better quality of life due to access quality secondary education, good spiritual and moral life, economic stability, relevant cultural values, comprehensive work skills, strong sense of national identity, and successful adjustment to his rapidly changing environment (NEDA, 2007).

This study also partly addresses the education issue on the quality of instruction which needs much improvement. Public education focuses on developing cognitive abilities but lack instruction for life skills and critical thinking that are relevant to the needs of most school-age children. Out of school youth cite “lack of interest in schooling”, and the need to work to augment family income as their main reasons for dropping out. Low scores in national achievement tests indicate low quality education (UNICEF, 2010).

The conduct of the study involved the graduates of the free night high school program, their parents and the implementers of the program is described in the

following schematic diagram:



From the results of this investigation, the researchers shall come up with recommendations for the improvement of the services and delivery of instruction in the FNHS Program.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in La Consolacion College Bacolod Integrated School. LCCB is one of the catholic schools situated in the heart of Bacolod City in Central Philippines. An in-depth interview was conducted with program implementers. Records of academic performance of students and information

gathered from alumni were also utilized in this investigation. Frequency, percentage, *t*-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze data. Qualitative data generated from the responses during the interview were described vividly by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Beneficiaries

From the program's inception in 1993 to present, there are a total of 474 beneficiaries. Enrolment in the first ten years of the program showed an increasing trend and reached its peak in AY 2006-2007. Thereafter, it had a decreasing trend until this academic year (2011-2012). The lack of classrooms and teacher volunteers were the reasons why classes were pegged to only one section per year level. Despite such limitation, the program's objective of providing free tuition secondary education to the poor but deserving students by preparing them for their role as responsible Christian citizens of the city was clearly attained (LCCB MRBCC Manual, 2007).

The beneficiaries of the program also form part of the reported slight increase in the nationwide simple literacy rate among 15-24 year old between 1990 and 1994. As early as 1994, the Philippines had already posted a substantial achievement in pushing universal literacy in this age bracket (UNESCO, 2000).

Four years after the start of the program (in 1997), the first batch of student-beneficiaries completed their secondary education. As of May 2011, a total of 369 graduates distributed to 15 batches are recorded. An average of 82% graduation rate is registered, with academic years 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2004-05

Table 1. LCCB Free Night High School Program.

School – Year	No. of Enrolees	No. of Graduates	Graduation Rate*
1993-1994	18	NA	
1994-1995	50	NA	
1995-1996	62	NA	
1996-1997	87	13	72%
1997-1998	94	18	53%
1998-1999	101	17	100%
1999-2000	115	28	100%
2000-2001	115	24	80%
2001-2002	117	27	73%
2002-2003	119	24	73%
2003-2004	121	31	97%
2004-2005	117	28	100%
2005-2006	127	26	72%
2006-2007	132	28	97%
2007-2008	128	23	79%
2008-2009	130	27	63%
2009-2010	123	29	85%
2010-2011	122	26	84%
2011-2012	105	-	-
TOTAL		369	

* Graduation rate is based on incoming first year and traced until they graduate four years later.

having 100% graduation rate. Lowest graduation rate is in the academic year 1997-98 at 53%.

The more than half turnover of the graduates as compared to the incoming freshmen students show an acceptable internal efficiency. This is consistent with BESRA goal of universal completion of the full cycle of education where all children aged 12 to 15 should be on track to completing secondary education (DepEd BESRA, 2005).

Level of Academic Performance of Beneficiaries

Student's academic performance for a ten-year period showed satisfactory rating in four subjects, namely, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies), Physical Education and Religion and moderately

Table 2. Students' academic performance per subject when they are taken as a whole

Subject	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Highest	Lowest	Interpretation
Filipino	86.48	4.77	98	70	Satisfactory
Araling Panlipunan	86.93	4.54	98	68	Satisfactory
Physical Education	88.54	4.79	98	70	Satisfactory
Religion	87.22	4.57	98	71	Satisfactory
English	85.91	5.21	97	70	Moderately Satisfactory
Science	83.28	5.45	98	70	Moderately Satisfactory
Mathematics	84.05	5.28	98	70	Moderately Satisfactory
THE	85.89	5.25	98	60	Moderately Satisfactory
Over-all	85.85	4.26	97.75	72.25	Moderately Satisfactory

satisfactory in English, Science, Mathematics and Technology and Home Economics (THE).

Science subject recorded the lowest average rating and the widely dispersed grades while Physical Education showed the highest average rating. The most cohesive or consistent grades are reflected in the subject Araling Panlipunan.

It is also worthy to note that while the highest grade given to a student is 98 the lowest grade received by a student is as low as 60. This indicate that just like any other public and private schools, there are a few students who fail to achieve the minimum competency required for the different subjects in each year level thus, they have to repeat the subject.

Table 2.A. Students' academic performance per subject when they are grouped per year level.

Subject	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Mean	SD	Interpretation	
		FIRST YEAR				SECOND YEAR	
Filipino	87.22	5.03	S	86.46	5.29	S	
Araling Panlipunan	86.49	4.00	S	81.90	4.43	MS	
Physical Education	89.84	5.51	S	87.29	4.30	S	
Religion	87.73	3.50	S	86.93	4.77	S	
English	86.44	4.35	S	85.82	4.60	MS	
Science	84.37	5.53	MS	84.94	4.28	MS	
Mathematics	82.99	5.14	MS	82.76	4.88	MS	
THE	86.43	4.60	S	84.68	6.07	MS	
Over-all	86.07	6.01	S	85.77	3.07	MS	
		THIRD YEAR				FOURTH YEAR	
Filipino	86.46	3.95	S	85.62	4.97	MS	
Araling Panlipunan	86.47	4.83	S	87.03	4.62	S	
Physical Education	88.71	4.65	S	88.20	4.18	S	
Religion	86.86	4.89	S	87.55	4.83	S	
English	86.16	5.93	S	84.93	5.48	MS	
Science	82.26	5.88	MS	81.51	5.01	MS	
Mathematics	83.99	5.11	MS	87.08	5.06	S	
THE	85.57	5.28	MS	87.25	4.41	S	
Over-all	85.68	3.74	MS	86.00	3.76	S	

Legend: S-Satisfactory; MS-Moderately Satisfactory

Jimenez, Paqueo and de Vera (1988) in their report to the World Bank stated that considering selectivity, the private schools have a significant edge over public schools in both English and Pilipino. However, public schools had a minimal advantage in mathematics.

Results indicate that academic performance of the student beneficiaries of the LCCB-FNHS program do not meet DepEd's BESRA aim that all children aged twelve to fifteen should be on track to completing secondary schooling with satisfactory achievement levels at every year.

An erratic trend is seen in the academic performance of the student beneficiaries when they are grouped according to year level, with the third year having the lowest overall mean rating. However, the most consistent grades are recorded in the first year level, with moderately satisfactory rating in only two subjects, namely Science and Mathematics while the remaining other subjects have satisfactory ratings. Moreover, the first year have the widest dispersion of grades as supported by a standard deviation of 6.01.

Results do not full fit the existing standard or criteria set by CARAGA Regional Science High School that the final average grade of a student in English, Science and Mathematics should be at least 85%. In the same subjects, they should not have a grade lower than 80% in any grading period. Students are also expected to have a final grade of at least 83% in other subjects. A student will be put under probation for a period of one year if he does not meet the latter requirement. Administrators have plans of increasing the cut-off grade from 85% to 88% in English, Mathematics and Science and from 83% to 85% for the rest of the subjects (CARAGA Regional Science High School, 2011).

When grouped according to sex, female students showed a better academic performance than their male counterparts. However, the male students recorded a more consistent academic rating. The male students got satisfactory ratings in only two subjects, Araling Panlipunan and Physical Education. On the other hand, the female students showed moderately satisfactory performance in only two subjects, namely, Science and Mathematics.

Lao (1980) explained the combined effect of several factors on academic performance. Exploring whether this effect was different for males and females, Lao found

Table 2.B. Students' academic performance per subject when they are grouped as to sex.

Subject	MALE			FEMALE		
	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Filipino	85.36	4.55	MS	86.96	4.79	S
Araling Panlipunan	86.05	4.36	S	87.31	4.57	S
Physical Education	87.78	5.13	S	88.86	4.61	S
Religion	85.81	4.51	MS	87.82	4.46	S
English	85.09	4.61	MS	86.26	5.41	S
Science	82.65	5.17	MS	83.54	5.54	MS
Mathematics	83.96	5.40	MS	84.10	5.23	MS
THE	85.38	4.75	MS	86.10	5.43	S
Over-all	85.17	3.48	MS	86.14	4.53	S

Legend: S-Satisfactory; MS-Moderately Satisfactory

out that the highly achievement motivated, internal, low dependent, female students had significantly higher grade and that some factors which influence achievement operate differently for males and females.

Table 2.C. Students' academic performance per school year.

SCHOOL YEAR	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1998-1999	83.47	3.09	Moderately Satisfactory
1999-2000	83.70	8.66	Moderately Satisfactory
2000-2001	85.87	3.50	Moderately Satisfactory
2001-2002	85.92	3.39	Moderately Satisfactory
2002-2003	85.66	2.87	Moderately Satisfactory
2003-2004	86.92	2.93	Satisfactory
2004-2005	87.08	2.71	Satisfactory
2005-2006	85.19	3.52	Moderately Satisfactory
2006-2007	87.38	2.40	Satisfactory
2007-2008	86.69	4.22	Satisfactory

Out of the ten-year school years, four reflected satisfactory academic performance while the other six years showed moderately satisfactory academic ratings. The Asian Development Bank Country Report

of the Philippines on education analysed the Learning Outcomes In Math And Science Among 13 Year Olds In The Philippines and revealed that there is a strong perception that the Philippines is lagging behind other Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Among the reasons given is the low quality of basic education in the country. The High School Readiness Test given to all grade six graduates in public elementary schools in May 2004 shows very low scores in science and mathematics. In the National Secondary Achievement Test given in year 2000, students gave correct answers to less than 50% of the questions in science and mathematics.

Table 3. Test of differences in the academic performance of student beneficiaries grouped according to academic year.

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	1869.617	9	207.7352	12.47321	0.00	1.887922
Within Groups	19352.54	1162	16.65451		SIGNIFICANT	
Total	21222.16	1171				

The academic performance of students significantly varies when these are compared per academic year. Clark (2004) cited a World Bank Report in 1999 stating that a study showed that scores of Filipino children between 9 and 14 in mathematics, science and reading were two standard deviations below the international mean. Not surprisingly, urban/rural differences were especially pronounced.

Table 3.A. Test of differences in the academic performance of student beneficiaries grouped according to year level.

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	32.00282	3	10.66761	0.587998	0.622928	2.612522
Within Groups	21190.16	1168	18.14226		NOT SIGNIFICANT	
Total	21222.16	1171				

The academic performance of the student beneficiaries do not significantly vary when these are compared according to their year level. Yvonne Beaumont Walters and Kola Soyibo(1998) as cited by Hijazi and Naqvi (2011)negate the result with their findings that students' academic performance is dependent on their grade or year level.

Table 3.B. *t*-test results on the differences in the academic performance of male and female student beneficiaries of the free night high school program.

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mean	85.17466	86.14466
Variance	11.796	20.55346
Observations	350	822
Pooled Variance	17.94119	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	1170	
t Stat	-3.58798	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000174	
t Critical one-tail	1.646157	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000347	Significant
t Critical two-tail	1.961994	

The academic performance of male students vary significantly when compared with those of their female counterpart. Female students, who are generally highly achievement motivated, had significantly higher grades than the male students (Lao, 1980; Menes and Viedor, unpublished data).

Table 4. Graduates with college education.

School Year	Number Of Graduates	Did Not Proceed To College	College Level	College Graduate
1996-1997	13	5	4	4
1997-1998	18	6	8	4
1998-1999	17	6	6	5
1999-2000	28	10	10	8
2000-2001	24	10	8	6
2001-2002	27	12	8	7
2002-2003	24	12	4	8
2003-2004	31	8	13	10
2004-2005	28	8	12	8
2005-2006	26	6	10	10
2006-2007	28	6	12	10
2007 – 2008	23	8	15	-
2008-2009	27	10	17	-
2009 -2010	29	6	23	-
2010-2011	26	4	22	-
TOTAL	369	117	172	80
	100%	32%	47%	22%

Three hundred sixty-nine have completed their secondary education under the LCCB-FNHS Program. Of the 369 graduates, 117 or 32% were not able to pursue college due to financial constraint, 172 or 47% have entered college. However, some were forced to quit due to financial incapacity; therefore, only 80 or 22% have completed their college education.

Across the board, when taken into account with other factors including ethnicity, socio-economic factors, and even education of parents--parental involvement is the single most influential factor in

academic success. Teens who have parents who are involved in their lives and know what's going on at school are more likely to proceed to college (Delp, 2006). Filipino parents, in general, aspire that their children would get a college education.

Table 5. Graduates' employment status and productive activities

School Year	NUMBER OF GRADUATES	NOT TRACKED DOWN	SELF-EMPLOYED AND/OR UNEMPLOYED	EMPLOYED IN BACOLOD	EMPLOYED OUTSIDE BACOLOD
1996-1997	13	5	3	3	2
1997-1998	18	6	4	5	3
1998-1999	17	8	3	4	2
1999-2000	28	12	6	6	4
2000-2001	24	11	9	4	5
2001-2002	27	12	6	6	3
2002-2003	24	10	4	4	6
2003-2004	31	16	6	5	4
2004-2005	28	14	3	6	5
2005-2006	26	14	3	5	4
2006-2007	28	9	8	6	5
2007-2008	23	8	6	5	4
2008-2009	27	7	8	6	6
2009-2010	29	11	10	4	4
2010-2011	26	14	4	5	3
TOTAL	369	157	78	74	60
	100%	43%	21%	20%	16%

From the total 369 graduates, 157 or 43% were not reached, tracked down or located by the researchers; 78 or 21% are either self employed or unemployed; 74 or 20% are gainfully employed in various establishments in Bacolod City and the remaining 60 or 16% are employed in other parts of the country or abroad.

Where are the graduates of the free night high school program? The 36% gainfully employed graduate of the program is an indicator of its contribution to the social welfare and economic goals of the city in particular and the country in general.

Opportunities for Improvement

In an interview conducted among selected participants, the graduates revealed that the program is successful in imparting the necessary knowledge and competencies expected from high school graduates. The students were prepared for a challenging college life. This is supported by four cum laudes who graduate college from academic institutions other than LCCB. The students are also proud upon knowing that the program has received the “Banwahanon Award” from the local government of Bacolod City. Graduates enrolled in the collegiate program in LCCB suggest if slots for scholarships or student assistantship given to graduates of the free night high school program can be increased.

In addition, graduates also recommend if the program can be shortened to four years. The same or similar instructional facilities be used in their classes just like those in the day classes. If it is possible, graduation be scheduled on March instead of summer (May) so that graduates can also meet the deadline for application for scholarship or working student in colleges and universities in Bacolod.

Responses in the interview are consistent with Mugabushaka's (2002) theory that tracer studies/surveys of graduates from institutions provide a systematic feedback from their former students, know their whereabouts, their working conditions, and make a retrospective assessment of their course of study.

One of BESRA's aim is to increase the levels of parents' and children's satisfaction with the quality of education they obtain. Another is improvement in learning outcomes such as completion rates. The night high school program has attained these, as indicated by 47% of graduates who proceeded to college.

IMPLICATIONS

LCCB's Free Night High School Program is a clear indicator of the strong support of LCCB to DepEd's educational goals. It has contributed in preparing the Filipino youth as responsible citizens of the country. It has afforded them quality education that hone the competencies and skills expected of them for employment.

The night high school program has attained its objectives of providing free tuition secondary education. It has prepared selected depressed Filipino youth for their role as responsible Christian citizens of the city and country. It has formed students according to the national goals of education and to the image of being a man for others because education shapes the responsibility of man's life.

Having received the local government's "Banwahanon Award" for social development, LCCB's FNHSP is a concrete action for social transformation and explicitly contested the statement that poverty is a strong predictor of illiteracy and unemployment.

CONCLUSIONS

Four hundred seventy-four student-beneficiaries have availed of the program with 369 having completed their secondary education, and 105 are still pursuing their high school under the program. This is an indicator of the school's support to DepEd's educational goals.

The overall academic performance of the student beneficiaries is moderately satisfactory. Four subjects, namely, English, Science, Mathematics, and Technology and Home Economics indicate a moderately satisfactory achievement. Academic performance of

students is satisfactory in Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, Physical Education, and Religion. This necessitates concrete evaluation of the various components of the curricular program, specifically on a per subject basis since students' academic performance does not meet DepEd's aim of satisfactory achievement levels at every year.

The academic performances of the students do not significantly differ when compared across year levels. However, their academic performances are significantly different when compared grouping the students according to their academic year and sex. This calls for the strengthening of the curricular program. The criteria for admission also need to be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite of the program's strengths, it is recommended that a formal graduates' tracer study be conducted, regular evaluation of the program's activities and delivery of instruction and other services be done.

Academic achievement of the beneficiaries and graduates can also be improved to bring them at par with graduates of other institutions in availing of scholarships and other opportunities.

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