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Methodological Support of the Innovative Training of Special Education Teachers to the Education of Disabled Children

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Abstract.

The purpose of the study was the scientific justification and development of pedagogical technology to form professional competence in students in the framework of implementing requirements of the federal state educational standards for disabled children.

Research methods: theoretical approaches include analysis, comparison and systematization, classification, generalization of theoretical evidences and experimental data. Empirical methods include questioning, testing, observation, sociometry, pedagogical experiment, collection of anamnestic data, study of medical and psycho-pedagogical documentation, as well as mathematical statistics methods for processing the obtained results.

Basic results: the article identifies the content of professional competence of future special education teachers in the framework of implementation of requirements of the federal state educational standards for disabled children, as the projected education outcomes, which include a set of diagnostic knowledge and organization of social experience of pupils, as well as content, forms and methods of tutorship in the course of child's socialization in the conditions of inclusive education. The article also considers skills and abilities of practical and operational application of acquired knowledge when solving specific correctional pedagogical tasks, as well as the use of best practices based on acquired knowledge, skills and abilities in educational and professional activities. The article defines the structure of the professional competencies presented as a combination of cognitive, activity and reflexive components, and suggests developed modular pedagogical technology to form necessary competences, which includes informational, operational, and result bearing structural components, featuring by a specially selected content and sequence of implementation at three stages, namely theoretical, practice-oriented, as well as educational and occupational ones.

Conclusions based on the formative stage of the pedagogical experiment allowed proving that the implementation of modular pedagogical technology to form professional competences in the framework of implementation of requirements of federal state educational standards for disabled children provided a significant increase in the level of formation of these competences in future special education teachers. Scientific novelty of the research consists in the following. The article has determined main tasks of professional activity of special education teacher on tutorship during the education and socialization of the child with disabilities in the context of inclusive education; the authors have justified component composition and developed the content of professional competence of future special education teachers, which are presented as a set of cognitive, activity and reflexive components; have scientifically proved a modular pedagogical technology of formation of professional competence in future special education teachers, developed and verified in the framework of the implementation of requirements of federal state education.

Key words: professional training of special education teachers, socialization of disabled children, professional competences, inclusive education, tutorship, modular pedagogical technology.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the political, socio-economic, and cultural life in contemporary Russia are reflected in all spheres of Russian education, including general, special (correctional) and vocational education. State social policy in the field of education of disabled children is focused on improving the quality of correctional and pedagogical assistance provided to this contingent of children, as well as their effective socialization and integration into society. Federal documents in the field of education, namely the Federal law “On education in the Russian Federation” (article 79), Federal state educational standards (FSES) for pupils with health limitations regulate requirements for the content, conditions and education outcomes [1;2;3]. Analysis of these documents enables highlighting three key areas to which today’s special education teacher must be professionally trained.

First area concernы socializing dominant of education outcomes with respect to disabled children, namely the need to ensure personal results, which together with subject results, represent the mastery of pupil’s life competence [2]. This exactly should provide to a child “the ability to solve practical problems in everyday life, the formation and development of his social relationships with others, as well as formation of informative and educational motivation” [1,].

Second area concerns the provision of an opportunity for a disabled child to acquire an education in conditions of inclusion [1]. At that, the success and impact of the child’s achievements will depend, on the one hand, on a methodically correct organization of the educational process and the correctional and pedagogical support, and on the other hand, on the consistency and the adequacy of corrective-developing influences of all participants in the educational process, the quality of psychological and pedagogical support of pupils and their parents, as well as the professional competence of specialists [4;5;6].

Third area concerns the achievement by disabled child of educational outcomes in conditions of inclusion. It involves almost individual tutorship of the child by educator in a correctional and educational process [4;7;8]. The process of individualization in this case represents the search for individual way to quality education for a specific child, fixing and developing his "selfness". Scope of activity of the tutor in work with disabled children consists in the construction of individualized educational environment, expanding child's own capabilities based on his real life [1;6]. The tutor acts as a central subject coordinating the main tasks and actions of all participants of psychological-medical-pedagogical support in overcoming the disadvantages in the development of the disabled child [8;9].

The relevance and significance of the challenges facing the special (correctional) education is directly related to issues of competence-oriented professional training of future special education teachers, capable of effective implementation of FSES requirements for disabled children. Among the innovative components inherent in contemporary model of professional training of the future special education teachers, formation of professional competence in the field of socialization of disabled children, inclusive education technologies, and tutorship acquire special significance [6; 10; 11].

Analytical review of the philosophical, social, and psycho-pedagogical studies in the field of innovative training of future special education teachers has allowed identifying the researchers dealing with these issues.

Thus, the training of teachers in solving specific and multifaceted problems of the disabled child's socialization are considered in the works of R.O. Agavelyan, L.I., Akatov, A. S. Belkin, A.D. Ganeev, A.V. Moskvina, N.M. Nazarova, L.I. Plaksina, I.A. Filatova, and I.M. Yakovleva.

Issues of mastering inclusive education technologies are reflected in the studies of Russian scientists M.S. Artemieva, E.A. Yekzhanova, L.M. Kobrina, A.N. Konopleva, E.I. Leongard, E.V. Reznikova, E.A. Strebeleva, L.M. Shipitsyna, L.E. Shevchuk, N.D. Shmatko, etc., as well as in the studies of foreign researchers T. Brandon, J. Charlton, and J.-R. Kim.

The essence of training of special education teacher for tutorship is investigated in the works of N.V. Borisova, S.V. Dudchik, T.M. Kovaleva, G.D. Kosheleva, N.V. Rybalkina, P.N. Osipova, A.N. Pshenichnova, T.Yu. Surnina, S.A. Shchennikova, etc. Scientific researches of foreign authors are reflected in the works of B. Jr. Roge, Bonney, C. Warren; Miller, and K. Theodore.

Findings of analysis of theoretical sources and the pedagogical reality in the context of the concerned study has revealed a mismatch between:

- increasing demands of society and the state with respect to the outcomes of education and socialization of disabled children, and the existing practice of vocational training of future special education teachers, which does not fully ensure the implementation of this requirement;
- methodological approaches to professional competence formation of future teachers, developed in the pedagogical science, and the lack of described content of the professional competence of the special education teacher, which would ensure implementation of requirements of FSES for disabled children;
- demand by the pedagogical science in effective pedagogical technologies forming professional competence of future special education teachers in their work towards implementing the requirements of FSES for disabled children, and the insufficient development of their scientific and methodological support in the educational practice.

Based on the identified inconsistencies, generalizations of the theoretical research in this area, we have identified the research problem, which involves searching for and justification of scientific and methodical support of pedagogical technology of professional competences formation in future special education teachers when implementing the requirements of FSES for disabled children.

METHODS

Theoretical approaches include analysis of scientific outcomes and normative legal documents, analysis and generalization of practical experience of teachers involved in practical work with disabled children, and analysis of products of educational activities of disabled schoolchildren and students. Empirical methods include questionnaires, testing, observation, interview, sociometry, pedagogical experiment, and collection of anamnestic data of school-age disabled children. Mathematical statistics methods for processing the obtained experimental data include determining the sampling population size depending on the total population size, calculating the sampling mean, and applying the Chi-square Pearson test (χ^2). To check the significance of differences and identify the level of statistical significance criteria we used t-test and Fischer criterion (F- criterion).

The reliability and validity of the obtained results is assured by methodological validity of the research, its comprehensiveness, the relevance of the research methods and approaches with respect to goals and objectives, as well as representativeness of the obtained data, the comprehensiveness of analysis of the obtained results, and singling out particular and general regularities.

The study was conducted on the basis of the South-Ural State University of Humanities (see Note 1). The research involved 431 students of the inclusive and special needs' education department (see Note 2); 117 teachers, including 98 teachers of special (correctional) educational institutions, and 19 teachers of general education schools implementing inclusive education; 102 pupils of the contingent of disabled children of primary school age (with varying degrees of mental deficiency), 13 children with normal psychophysical development, including 71 pupils studying at special (correctional) schools, 44 children involved in inclusive education as well as parents of these children.

RESULTS

At the theoretical stage of the study we carried out analysis of the state of the research problem in the pedagogical theory and practice, considering the main concepts of the study, and theoretical and methodological approaches to the solution of problems related to formation of professional competence of future special education teachers in their activities towards implementing the requirements of FSES with respect to disabled children. We also justified component composition and the content of the relevant professional competencies, as well as substantiated and developed the modular pedagogical technology of their formation.

Professional competencies represent the projected outcomes of education that characterize new socio-professional approaches in the cognitive, activity, and practical as well as personal components, conditioned by the goals and functions of professional activity. This conclusion served the basis for the accentuation of special professional competence of the special education teacher in a specific area of professional activity, namely the tutorship of the socialization process of disabled children in conditions of inclusive education. Based on the scientific approaches of A.S. Belkin, I.A. Zimniya, and A.I. Subetto, we have identified cognitive, activity, and reflexive components in the professional competences of the special education teacher. The cognitive component constitutes of a set of theoretical knowledge about the content and methods of professional activity towards implementing pedagogical tasks in a certain area. The activity component characterizes skills of professional activity. The reflexive component represents the generalized experience of application and evaluation of own knowledge and skills in educational and professional activities. It provides self-regulation of professional approaches and professional behavior based on reflection of own activity, its perfecting and restructuring in accordance with the operational pedagogical objectives, as well as contributes to the design of their own professional development. In the course of research, we selected criteria to assess professional competences, namely awareness, mastery, and criticality, as well as considered low, medium, and high level of their formation. Levels were assessed by arbitrarily imposed quantitative indicators (1 point corresponded to a low level; 2 points – to a medium level; 3 points – to a high level), while a generalized result was determined on the basis of A.A. Kyveryalga technique.

During the experimental stage we implemented and verified the developed modular pedagogical technology in the course of the formative experiment, analyzed obtained data, and carried out approbation of research outcomes.

In the course of the ascertaining experiment, we solved problems of determining diagnosis methods, that allowed 1) assessing objectively the initial level of the formation of professional competences of future special education teachers in their work on socialization and tutoring of disabled children; 2) finding out the relationship between the level of professional training of practicing teachers when working on socialization of children with intellectual disabilities and the results of the socialization of this category of children; and 3) identifying how effective was psychological-pedagogical support of disabled children in the conditions of inclusive education implemented in secondary school.

Comparative analysis of professional competences development in students and teachers based on the generalized criterion has revealed that indicators characterizing teachers' level of formation are by 10.3% higher than those in students. Analysis of the formation of the component composition of professional competences has shown that the cognitive component in students is formed slightly better, namely by 2.9%. Significant differences were found in the formation of the action component. This component in teachers was above the average by 17.3%. Indicators of action component formation in teachers were higher on average by 16.7%.

Summarized results of survey conducted to determine level of preparedness of future special education teachers for tutorship revealed low indicator in the majority of respondents, which was 47.1%. A basic level of preparedness was noted in 29.8% of testees, while high level was shown by 23.1% of respondents. Given that in dominant part of the students (76.9%) the level of preparedness was not high enough, their professional preparedness could not be considered satisfactory.

The study of the socialization of children with intellectual disabilities included: 1) study of interpersonal cohesion of a group of children as a basic property of the group, ensuring its effectiveness in shaping social experience and personal development; 2) analysis of the peculiarities of the ambivalent motives in pupils' choice as an indicator of value-semantic relations in the group; 3) analysis of the peculiarities of value orientations as a behavior and activity regulator. Diagnostic tools included pedagogical sociometric study of pupils' team (according to G.A. Karpova methodology), expert evaluations method, and survey.

Comparative analysis of the average indicators of diagnostics allowed identifying trends characterizing the results of socialization in children with intellectual disabilities, educated by teachers with different levels of professional competence formation. The groups of pupils, educated by teachers with high level of professional competence formation, manifested highly prosperous status structure of the group, positive social wellbeing in the majority of children (59.8%), and positive sociometric status in a significant proportion of children (19.65%). The value-semantic relations of pupils were based on friendly attitudes towards each other 58.75%), common intra-group interests (46.85%), maturity of social norms in the relationship (43.75%), and socially-acceptable behavior in the gaming activities (14.3%).

Groups of pupils, educated by teachers with medium and low level of professional competences development identified lower results for the same criteria.

In consequence of study of the effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical support of disabled children in conditions of inclusive education, it has been proved statistically that the level of anxiety in children from

inclusive classes is lower than that in their disabled peers from special (correctional) classes. Anxiety in disabled pupils depends on emotional and psychological contact that has been established between the teacher and the pupils, while the level of school motivation depends on difficulties in establishing new social contacts and accessibility of learning material.

Analysis of questionnaire surveys of school teachers has shown that they are aware of the children with health limitations, and realize that inclusive education is an inevitable process of reforming the school education system. Most of the interviewed teachers are ready to understand and accept this category of children to their classes, and rebuild their professional approach. They understand that inclusive training can be hardly exercised without psychological-medical-pedagogical support.

Correlations, revealed in consequence of an ascertaining experiment, have determined the content of the formative experiment toward implementing modular technology of professional competence formation in future special education teachers in terms of meeting the requirements of FSES for disabled children. Modular pedagogical technology is aimed at achieving an adequate level of professional competence formation in students. Formative experiment was conducted in natural conditions of educational process, involving three groups of students with a total number of 95 people. The organization of learning process in groups differed on a number of indicators. The first theoretical stage of the modular pedagogical technology was implemented in the experimental group EG-1. The first, i.e. theoretical, and the second practice-oriented stage were implemented in the experimental group EG-2. All three stages, theoretical, practice-oriented, as well as educational and educational-occupational stages were tested in the experimental group EG-3. Education in the control group (CG) was conducted in accordance with traditional university methodology with application of certain elements of our technology without its purposeful implementation.

Further we present the characteristics of modular pedagogical technology. Pedagogical technologies based on a modular approach, are recognized to be among the most effective in professional education (N.B. Lavrent'eva, N.P. Ryabinina, Yu.F. Timofeeva, O.Yu. Shamaeva, T.I. Shamova, V.V. Shevtsova, M.A. Choshanov, and P.A. Yutsavicene, etc.). A modular approach, according to the UNESCO thesaurus, is interpreted as the design of training material and procedures in the form of complete units, taking into account attributive characteristics. The module represents a kind of independent part in a particular system of educational process, has a specific functional purpose, and includes professional and cognitive components [12; 13]. The set of module characteristics is reflected in its structural components, which include informational (cognitive) and activity (educational and professional) components [14; 15]. Based on the above provisions, we have developed pedagogical technology, aimed at formation of professional competences in students implementing the requirements of FSES for disabled children. Modular technology is implemented through three interrelated stages – theoretical, practice-oriented (quasi-professional), and educational and occupational stages. Each stage has certain goals, content and action sequence.

Theoretical stage is focused on the development of cognitive component of competences formed in students. Future teachers master knowledge about professional activity content and methods. At the practice-oriented stage the students work on formation of the activity component of competences, which includes the mastery of professional skills and abilities (by methods of professional activity) in the studied area of professional activity. Quasi-professional activity of students is carried out under conditions that simulate professional activities. At the educational and occupational stage, the work is carried out on formation of the reflexive component of competences, which provides the future teacher the ability to act under changing conditions of the educational process. The work is aimed at the actualization and implementation of the set of knowledge acquired by the students, as well as the ways of professional activity in the conditions of actual pedagogical process in educational organization.

The content of pedagogical technology is designed and structured in the form of a special course program "Pedagogical technologies in the implementation of FSES for disabled children". The program includes three modules, the content of which is associated with the stages of educational modular technology and is represented by the following content:

– Socialization features of the pupils with health limitations as a basis for the development of personal education outcomes;
– Inclusive approach in education of disabled children;
– Professional tutoring in the implementation of FSES for disabled children.

When designing the structure of the module we relied on a scientific approach of P.A. Yutsyavichene, which was further developed in studies of N.P. Ryabinina and N.M. Yakovleva [3]. The module contains dedicated smaller structural components and concept lists bearing a unified meaning of a module, as well as training elements that represent completed activity unit. Educational elements make up the content of the information, operating, and result bearing subcomponents. The information component of the module consists of two subcomponents. The first one is the information-theoretical subcomponent, which includes a set of theoretical information of the concept list of the module. The second one is the information-methodical subcomponent carrying theoretical information about the ways of professional activity of special education teacher with the studied objects. The operating component of the module includes a subcomponent of independent work, which contains tasks for classroom and independent work, as well as requirements for the organization of educational interaction of students in the course of their execution. Another resource component includes training materials to tasks.

The result bearing component of the module contains reflexive and control subcomponents. Reflexive subcomponent contains tasks for independent non-audit work aiming at monitoring and evaluating the work.

Control subcomponent contains the control and measuring materials to assess the quality of the module.

The formative experiment involved three experimental groups and one control group of students, in total of 95 people.

At the theoretical stage, in accordance with the special course modular program, updating and refinement of the knowledge and perceptions of students concerning studying objects were provided by the information and the operation components of the module in the course of classroom sessions. Resource support was provided through the manuals developed for each content module by the authors of the present research. Implementation of the result bearing component in the course of students' independent work (individual and group) provided the conceptualization of knowledge, as well as establishment of linkages and relations between concepts.

At the practice-oriented stage, students mastered methods of professional activity in conditions imitating professional activities. Students' activities included work with the educational models in the context of solving tasks of professional activity. Quasi-professional activity of students was organized by modeling of individual situations, fragments of the pedagogical process, relations of educational process participants, and educational environment. Organization of students' independent work provided consistent complication of their activity at reproductive, reconstructive, heuristic, and research levels. Resource support of students' quasi-professional activities included the means (carriers) of contextual content of professional activities and guidelines for the organization of educational interaction of students in the course of assignments fulfillment. The design activity of students was organized in accordance with the level of students' preparedness to its fulfillment, their research interests and capabilities. Students performed different types of design activities, such as adaptation and reconstruction of projects as well as design of new projects. The projects were considered to be completed after their approbation in a group of classmates.

The educational and occupational stage of modular pedagogical technology included practical activities of students in educational institutions during their involvement in teaching practicum, pedagogical expeditions, and visiting scientific sessions. During teaching practicum, the students implemented the projects on the social experience formation in disabled children, as well as conducted functional diagnostics of the peculiarities of the social experience of this category of children, including the development of diagnostic programs and the adaptation of diagnostic tools. On visiting scientific sessions at educational institutions, the students were introducing to practitioners the results of their research studies on the problems of the studied module, receiving from them critical evaluation of the practical relevance and methodological elaboration of the projects. In educational expeditions students had been working on implementing research outcomes in practical work with disabled children in educational institutions.

In consequence of the conducted experimental work in groups EG-1, EG-2, EG-3, and CG, different in terms of implemented stages of pedagogical technology, we noted different changes in the levels of professional competences formation in future special education teachers. Thus, the number of students with high level of competence had increased in the EG-1 by 29.2%, in the EG-2 – by 32.0%, in the EG-3 – by 68.2%, while in the CG group – by 16.7%. A significant decrease in the number of students with low level of professional competences formation was noted in all experimental groups, namely, by 37.5% in the EG-1, by 48,0% – in the EG-2, by 54,5% – in the EG-3, and by 20.83% – in the CG.

To confirm the interdependence between the level of professional competences formation in special education teachers when working on implementation of FSES requirements for disabled children, and the results of the socialization of children, we conducted a control experiment to study the characteristics of the social experience of this category of children. The experiment was conducted at the completion of the educational and occupational stages of pedagogical technology in which students developed and implemented pedagogical research projects.

In all experimental groups of children we noted a positive change in status structure of the group, which was characterized as highly favorable. The number of children with low sociometric status decreased by an average of 28.6%. The number of children with positive sociometric status increased by an average of 18.7% in 80% of groups. We noted positive character of social well-being of most children in all groups. In the value-semantic relations of children, the role of socially significant qualities of the personality of classmates increased on average by 15.4%. We noted also increase in the formation of social norms of relationships by 11.7% and socially-approved behavior in gaming activities – by 12.3%.

Qualitative assessment of changes in intra-group processes was identified based on the analysis of expert estimations of teachers of educational institutions working with these children. All groups of pupils manifested the interest of children in the affairs of each other; the desire to participate in common class activities, emotional unity of the group, the desire for joint leisure time, tolerance in relations with each other, increasing the responsibility towards the assigned cases, and the tendency to build friendly relations with classmates.

Successful adaptation and socialization of disabled pupils, who were involved in inclusion education, was evidenced by changes in the average indicators of the level of anxiety. Comparative analysis of data obtained in ascertaining and control experiments revealed a trend of decrease in indicators of anxiety in children of experimental group from 41.9 to 38.44%. The characteristics of disabled children, who were involved in inclusive education, showed positive changes in behavior, communication with classmates, social and cognitive activity. The results of a survey of the parents of these children showed an improvement in their willingness to cooperate with teachers and school specialists in providing

psychological and pedagogical assistance to their child, understanding of personal responsibility for his development and education, greater focus on family values in the upbringing of the child, and greater openness in the interaction with the parents of classmates of their child.

Therefore, task-oriented formation of professional competence in future special education teachers through consistent implementation of the modular pedagogical technology has positively affected the dynamics of the results of the implementation of requirements of FSES for disabled children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research outcomes have been put into practice: 1) when training special education teachers at the Department of inclusive and special needs education of South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University (hereinafter YuUrGGPU); 2) when upgrading training courses in the system of additional vocational education at YuUrGGPU; 3) in special need schools in Tyubuk village of the Chelyabinsk Region, school No. 57 and general education schools No. 73 and No. 33 implementing inclusive education in the city of Chelyabinsk.

The research outcomes were discussed at the Department of special pedagogy, psychology and subject methods, as well as the Department of pedagogy and psychology of YuUrGGPU, and at international and national scientific conferences. The main research provisions and outcomes have been published in conference proceedings and journals issued in Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Germany.

CONCLUSION

The validity and reliability of the research outcomes are provided by reliance on the methodological and theoretical basis of contemporary psychology and pedagogy; use of combination of methods, adequate to the goals and objectives of the research; reproducibility of experimental results; the variability of the experiment; the representativeness of the sample size; the use of the mathematical statistics methods when processing the experimental results; as well as personal involvement of the authors at all stages of the study.

The main professional tasks of special education teacher in his activity towards meeting requirements of FSES for disabled children, when providing tutorship in the course of their socialization during inclusive education, have been defined.

The authors have clarified the fundamental concept of this study, namely professional competences of future special education teachers in implementation of FSES requirements for disabled children, as well as defined the structure and developed the content of the professional competencies, which are represented as a set of cognitive, activity and reflexive components. The cognitive component includes a set of theoretical knowledge about peculiarities and methods of professional activity in the sphere of socialization, tutoring, and inclusive education technologies of disabled children. Active component includes skills and abilities for professional activity in this field. Reflexive component represents experience in applying and evaluating one's own knowledge, skills and abilities.

The authors have also defined the most productive theoretical and methodological approaches to the development of modular pedagogical technology for professional competences formation, namely system, personality-activity, and competency-based approaches. Developed authorial modular pedagogical technology, enabling professional competences formation in future special education teachers in the implementation of the requirements of FSES for disabled children, has modular structure which includes informational, operational, and result bearing structural components. These components are characterized by specially selected contents and sequence of implementation in three stages: theoretical, practice-oriented, as well as educational and occupational, providing their targeted effective formation.

The results of the ascertaining stage of experiment have shown insufficient level of professional competence formation in future special education teachers and practitioners. They revealed relationship between the level of professional training of special education teachers in their work on socialization and tutorship of disabled children, including that in the conditions of inclusive education, and the results of socialization of this category of children. The study also revealed the need to develop and implement modular pedagogical technology necessary for professional competences formation.

In general, the study helped to fill the gaps in inclusive education and education of children with intellectual disabilities in general education classes, as well as to answer some questions related to the content and directions of training of special education teachers, ensuring their successful functioning, effective tutorship of disabled children in the course of their education and socialization.

Analysis of the outcomes of formative stage of the experiment conducted using the methods of mathematical statistics has allowed proving that the implementation of modular pedagogical technology of professional competences formation in the course of the implementation of the requirements of FSES for disabled children provides a significant increase in the level of competence formation in future special education teachers.

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NOTES

1. South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University (YuUrGGPU) is a former Chelyabinsk State Pedagogical University (ChSPU) renamed in 2016.
2. The Department of inclusive and special needs education is a former Department of special needs education, renamed in 2016.

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