

A critical evaluation and the Word count (or Equivalent to 5000 identification of next teaching equivalent): words. and learning steps focusing on a case study of an individual learner or a group of learners, based on an observed critical incident.

Introduction

The aim of this assignment is to critically assess a critical incident that occurred during the bridging experience and therefore, to analyse what can be learnt from it for my own teaching practice. Critical incidents are predominantly unplanned events that take place within the classroom and do not necessarily have to be a negative experience (Tripp, 1993). According to Tripp's critical incident methodology, an incident is only deemed critical once analysis of the underlying concepts of the situation has taken place and therefore, can be used as a form of reflection to aid the teaching practice and support development in the classroom (Tripp, 1993). Throughout this essay, I will discuss a critical incident using Tripp's methodology that I witnessed during the bridging experience and analyse how closely it links with Donaldson's four purposes such as 'ambitious capable learners' and 'enterprising creative contributors' (Donaldson, 2015). Furthermore, I will critically analyse two key areas that require further research from the critical incident observed, consisting of the use of classical conditioning techniques within the classroom to encourage and discourage behaviour, as well as considering other behaviour management techniques used to control behaviour within the classroom.

The Role of Critical Reflection

The process of critical reflection has been underpinned by many theorists who have created frameworks to provide clear definitions of critical reflection and reflective practice. Examples of these frameworks can be seen in work done by David Kolb (1984), Graham Gibbs (1988), and Stephen Brookfield (1995). Kolb's reflective model is based on our personal experiences which are then reviewed and analysed in a further three stages within the cycle to prepare for the next cycle (Kolb, 1984). However, Gibbs uses a different reflective model framework in his analysis of critical reflection as he features their emotional state in his model. Gibbs model is separated into six clear stages involving both descriptions of the event itself, as well as a conclusion with points to consider in their future (Gibbs, 1988). On the other hand, Brookfield's four lenses model indicates that to be critically reflective teachers must consider other views such as the students and other colleagues in their network (Brookfield, 1995). It is clear from the variety of reflective models shown that the process of critical reflection is a key part of improving our teaching practice, as well as others.

The role of critical reflection is a vital, active process in understanding and adapting classroom practices, which in turn allows teachers to look at their practice with a holistic approach rather than having an isolated vision of their practice (Furlong, 2021). Critical

reflection allows teachers to reflect on their teaching practice, which allows them to adapt how they teach and how their pupils will continue to learn in future lessons. This has been substantiated by Phyllis Blumberg as she accurately argues that critical reflection allows learner-centred teaching to take place (Blumberg, 2015). As a result, teachers can critically reflect by looking at past lessons in areas such as behaviour management, assessment for learning, and the structure of their lesson to critically assess how to improve their teaching practice within the classroom. It is important to note that a key part of critical reflection is assessing both effective and ineffective areas of the teaching practice, rather than solely focusing on the areas that require further development.

Furthermore, the important role of critical reflection can be seen in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the curriculum reform in Wales. The reform of the curriculum has subsequently resulted in changes to the way ITE programmes are structured in Wales to implement the new curriculum effectively (John Furlong, 2021). Furlong has highlighted how the flexibility of the new Welsh curriculum allows teachers to be 'active agents' in how they teach and therefore, the ITE programme had to be adapted to make both universities and schools work closely together to thoroughly train future educators (2021, p.64-65). This clearly shows how crucial the separate development of the ITE reform was to aid the Welsh curriculum, as student teachers then enter their teaching practice fully equipped for the ambitious new curriculum.

Additionally, Katrina Liu has discussed in her work the importance of critical reflection in training prospective teachers for their own teaching practice using methods such as a personal portfolio (Liu, 2015). Liu has accurately argued that critical reflection is a crucial element of understanding the teaching practice as it can lead to students feeling 'indoctrinated rather than educated' (2015, p.248). This argument has been solidified by the ITE and curriculum reform as it aims to diminish the idea of indoctrination, by giving more freedom within the curriculum.

The role of reflection can also be seen in the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards that must be met by students on the ITE programme. As part of achieving the QTS standards, student teachers must critically reflect on their professional experiences to link them to the desired QTS standards using the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) tool. The role of critical reflection is particularly apparent in the pedagogy QTS standard, as it states critical reflection provides further development in proving authentic contexts, progression in learning, and cross-curricular themes (Hwb, 2019). It is clear that the role of critical reflection is embedded in the QTS standards, which creates a solid base for their teaching practice.

Observation

This essay will be in line with the BERA guidelines to ensure that the anonymity of the school remains intact, along with its pupils and staff (BERA, 2018). Furthermore, by being compliant with the BERA guidelines, the research will be ethical and therefore of higher validity. For the purpose of this essay, I will refer to the school in question as 'School X', the Year 2 teacher as 'Teacher X', and the pupils as 'Pupil A' etc.

Therefore, using Tripp's methodology the critical incident observed took place in a Year 2 classroom inside School X which is located in the county of Neath Port Talbot in South Wales. According to the student handbook provided by the school upon arrival, there are 184 pupils including the nursery class in the school (Student Handbook, 2020). The most recent Estyn report for School X suggests that only 6% of the pupil are eligible for free school meals (Estyn, 2018), which is significantly low in comparison to the current national average of 20.8% (Gov, 2021). This indicates that the school is not predominantly affected by the demand for free school meals, which suggests that the majority of students do not come from low-income households. The Estyn report highlights that only 10% of the students are considered to have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) which is deemed low in comparison to the national average of 22% (2018).

In relation to the Year 2 class, the class size is slightly over the national average of 26.6 pupils per class as there are 27 pupils in Year 2 (Gov, 2021). Inside the Year 2 classroom, Teacher X has divided the class into four groups for most of their learning based on their academic ability. Teacher X has described group purple as sometimes requiring work at a higher level, group orange and blue predominantly do the work set for the ability of Year 2, and finally, group yellow who usually require extra help academically.

Critical Incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

The critical incident that is the basis of this essay occurred at 9:20am on the 23rd of September 2021 inside a Year 2 classroom in School X, as shown in Appendix 3. Every morning between 8:50 and 9:20 the pupils do 'busy boxes' which consist of focused tasks that aid their learning and progression, such as handwriting and spelling. On this particular morning, Teacher X had placed themselves with a group of pupils focussing on practicing their handwriting. It is worth noting that the group Teacher X placed themselves with consisted mainly of pupils from group yellow, including one pupil with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and a further three pupils that have suspected ALN. Teacher X had spent the last thirty minutes working with those pupils, who were all engaged and eager to gain Teacher X's praise for their

handwriting that morning, which in turn led to the critical incident that followed. As a result, as they began packing up their books, Teacher X told the group that because of their hard work, and clear improvement in their handwriting, they were all given a house point to add to the wall. The announcement was met by many smiles from the entire group, particularly from Pupil 'A' who seemed especially satisfied as they ran straight over to the points chart on the wall. The point system relates to 'Golden Time' that happens every Friday, where the house with the most points get to decide what they do for the last half an hour of the school day. Therefore, I have chosen the point system in place inside the Year 2 classroom, alongside the reaction of the pupils, to be the critical incident focused on in this essay.

The critical incident clearly links to the 'four purposes' expressed by Graham Donaldson in his report to the Welsh Government in 2015, where he suggested that reform was needed within the Welsh Curriculum underpinned by his four main purposes (Donaldson, 2015). In particular, the critical incident links closely with Donaldson's 'Ambitious, capable learners...' purpose as the use of the point system will allow the students to aim for higher standards by thriving off the challenge (Donaldson, 2015). The critical incident also links with the 'Enterprising, creative contributors...' purpose as the point system encourages students to rise to the challenge and be creative in the way in which they gain points both academically and in other ways such as being kind to other classmates (Donaldson, 2015). The critical incident also emphasises the 'Healthy, confident individuals...' purpose as it encourages pupils to have the confidence to participate in activities that highlight their performance at certain tasks such as tasks focused on handwriting (Donaldson, 2015). It is clear that the critical incident observed closely links with several of the 'four purposes' proposed by Donaldson.

Therefore, based off the critical incident witnessed I will be looking at two main themes in the literature review. The first theme will be focussed on the use of classical conditioning techniques, as a point system is a form of classical conditioning that can be used to encourage good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour. The second theme will predominantly focus on alternative behaviour management techniques used inside a school setting, as schools use a variety of behaviour management methods other than reward systems.

Literature Review

The first theme that requires further research is the use of classical conditioning techniques in the classroom. B. F. Skinner's learning theory (1953) is a form of classical conditioning technique; however, it is far less predictable than other forms of classical

conditioning (Gray & McBlain, 2012, p.60). Skinner's learning theory involves methods of reinforcement through operant conditioning techniques that associate a behaviour with a consequence through reinforcement in pigeons and rats (Skinner, 1953). According to Skinner (1953), positive behaviours can be reinforced through positive reinforcement that encourages the repetition of good behaviour through rewards. This suggests that we can utilise operant conditioning within the classroom to encourage good behaviour through rewards such as using points systems and nominating a pupil every day to be the class helper.

However, behaviourist methods of conditioning such as operant conditioning have been critiqued by other psychologists such as Albert Bandura. Bandura (1977) has indicated that whilst he agrees with methods of classical conditioning, he argues that behaviour is learnt through motivated observations as well (Gray & McBlain, 2012, p.126). Bandura has previously demonstrated this in his Bobo Doll experiment in 1961, where he proved that children pay attention to models in their life and imitate their behaviour (Bandura, 1961). This evidence contradicts the methods put forward by Skinner (1953), as it suggests that positive behaviour can be learnt through observation which in turn reduces the need for a reward. However, Bandura (1977) has not eliminated the benefits of classical conditioning techniques from his theory such as using rewards to encourage good behaviour.

However, education systems still commonly use reward systems to encourage positive behaviour within the classroom. Aisha Rafi et al have investigated the use of positive reinforcement strategies in the classroom and have found in their scoping review that Skinner's operant learning theory was effective at increasing desired behaviour as even praising students encourages self-motivation (Rafi, 2020, p.17) This accurately shows that positive reinforcement using classical conditioning techniques is effective within a classroom setting as it encourages good behaviour.

Ruth Payne has suggested that reward systems such as 'stamps' are particularly effective in Primary School aged pupils, however, the reward system seems to lose impact in a Secondary School setting as in the students in her study associated the system with good behaviour rather than hard work (Payne, 2015, p.499). This is valuable as it suggests that younger pupils associate a reward system with a combination of both good behaviour and hard work, whereas older pupils tend to associate it solely with good behaviour. The clear distinction made between good behaviour and hard work has been discussed previously by Payne (Payne-Wooldridge 2010). Payne has suggested that there is a clear distinction between the words and facial output used by teachers when praising them for their good behaviour in comparison to praising them for their good work (Payne-Wooldridge, 2010, p.168). This argues that the use of positive reinforcement through praise is less effective at

encouraging good work in the students, which indicates that methods of classical conditioning are not completely effective but still remain to be a technique used by teachers in forms such as a class points system.

The analysis by Payne highlights how classical conditioning methods can be used for pupils to associate sanctions with bad behaviour in the classroom as well as the use of rewards to encourage good behaviour. Gray has solidified this in her work as she highlights how Skinner's (1953) use of operant conditioning suggests that behaviour is 'shaped and maintained' by the consequences of their actions (Gray and McBlain, 2012, p.60). This has been discussed further by McBlain as he suggests that examples of negative reinforcement such as 'time outs' are frequently used by teachers to discourage a child who is displaying bad behaviours (McBlain, 2014, p.36). This contributes to the argument that operant conditioning techniques are an effective form of behaviour management that are frequently used inside the classroom in methods such as class point systems, both to encourage and discourage behaviour.

In summary, there are many benefits to using classic conditioning techniques in the classroom such as Skinner's (1953) operant conditioning method. This has been shown through evidence from Payne (2015) as she has suggested that positive reinforcement is especially effective in primary schools. Furthermore, evidence from McBlain highlights how operant conditioning is effective at managing bad behaviour as well as good. Therefore, it is clear that operant conditioning is a technique that can be used in a variety of ways such as utilising a points system as a type of reward within the classroom.

The second theme that requires further research is alternative behaviour management techniques that are used in the classroom by teachers. Way (2011) has indicated that her findings have shown that pupil's behaviour is dependent on how fair they perceive the rules to be in the classroom and therefore, suggests that there is a relationship between positive feelings towards teachers and the pupil's perception of the rules (2011, p. 363). Way (2011) has continued further by suggesting that the use of 'deterrents' do not necessarily result in pupil conformity to the rules, as intense punishments can lead to more defiance from the students (2011, p.363-364). This has been solidified further by Reid et al (2010) who has put an emphasis on the importance of positive pupil and teacher relationships within the classroom as he has found that pupils disliked being shouted at as they stated it 'rarely worked' (Reid, 2010, p.105). This accurately argues that methods of behaviour management that cause raised voices, are not always effective as pupils having a positive relationship with their teacher is far more efficient for behaviour management.

However, there is evidence to support the concept of logical consequences being an effective form of behaviour management within the classroom. Rudolph Dreikurs (1957) established a social method of classroom management that placed value on logical consequences rather than strong punishment (Kapur, 2018, p.30). Dr. Kapur suggests that Dreikurs method logical consequences indicate that classroom management should be democratic so that teachers are approachable but remain in charge (Kapur, 2018, p.30-31). Fariba Soheili et al (2015) have suggested that Dreikurs method of logical consequences allows teachers to create a safe space in their classroom where students experience less anxiety and more feelings of safety and belonging (Soheili et al, 2015, p.452). This accurately highlights the impact logical consequences can have on the dynamic of a classroom as a behaviour management technique as it weakens the likelihood of bad behaviour.

This has been solidified further by Nelson (1985) who implied that logical consequences need to be related, respectful and reasonable in relation to the negative behaviour taking place (Nelson, 1985, pp.161-165). This accurately suggests that the consequence must be clearly related to the negative behaviour so the child can connect them together, furthermore, the teacher needs to use a respectful tone otherwise the child will hyper-focus on the tone rather than their behaviour and finally, the severity of the consequence needs to be reasonable in comparison to the bad behaviour (Nelson, 1985). Furthermore, there is very little evidence that disagrees with the use of logical consequences based on Dreikurs (1957) and Nelson (1985) which suggests that this form of behaviour management is highly effective.

Another method of behaviour management that requires further research is methods of restorative practice. The restorative practice has allowed an alternative form of behaviour management to evolve in the classroom that is considered to be more effective at making positive changes to behaviour in the classroom rather than solely using consequences (O'Reilly, 2019,p.159). Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010) have suggested that restorative practice is different from other methods of behaviour management as it has a focus on care and of restoring a relationship rather than finding a short-term resolution (2010, p.102). This indicates that restorative justice is beneficial to the students as it allows them to fully appreciate the extent of their actions, rather than suffering a consequence.

However, the benefits of restorative practice have also been researched by O'Reilly, who indicates that the use of the restorative practice in combination with other methods of behaviour management such as 'proactive and preventative' methods will result in an effective behaviour correction in the pupils (O'Reilly, 2019, p.159). This accurately argues that the educational system will benefit from using a variety of behaviour management techniques

together such as classical conditioning, logical consequences, and restorative practice, rather than solely focusing on using one method alone.

In summary, there are numerous alternative behaviour management techniques that can be used instead of or in combination with classical conditioning methods. This has been shown through Way's (2011) belief that a pupil's perception of the school rules dramatically impacts how they respond to the rules. Furthermore, Soheili's (2015) analysis of Dreikurs' (1957) concept of logical consequences as a form of behaviour management has shown the impact the classroom dynamic can have on the student's behaviour. Moreover, O'Reilly (2019) has highlighted how a combination of many behaviour management methods is crucial to maintain order within the classroom rather than just using one. This highlights how the combination of various behaviour management techniques such as classic conditioning through rewards and a restorative practice system, will be a far more efficient approach for teachers in the classroom.

Reflection/Evaluation & Next Steps

As a result of the literature review, I have learnt that methods of classic conditioning such as the point system used in the critical incident discussed, are a highly valuable tool used by teachers in the education system. This is due to the fact that operant conditioning methods can simultaneously both encourage the repetition of good behaviour and also discourage bad behaviour inside the classroom. On reflection, I have learnt that whilst classic conditioning methods are effective, there are many other types of behaviour management techniques that are valuable to classroom behaviour management such as restorative practice and the use of logical consequences. As discussed by O'Reilly, on reflection it is clear that a set of effective methods used in combination are far more effective than relying entirely on one method alone (O'Reilly, 2019). As a result, the literature review based on the critical incident observed has developed my understanding of the types of behaviour management used inside the classroom, which in turn has influenced the next steps of my own teaching practice.

Whilst I intend to use methods of classic conditioning similar to what I observed in the critical incident, I believe on reflection that methods of the restorative procedure will also aid my teaching practice. This is due to restorative practice being effective at both simultaneously managing behaviour, and also allowing students to get to the root of the problem of their behaviour rather than a short-term consequence that will not work for all students in the classroom. Therefore, as a result in the next stages of my own teaching practice, I intend to take forward a variety of behaviour management methods, rather than solely using classic conditioning methods as I observed in the critical incident. Furthermore, in the next step of my teaching practice, I aim to be more understanding using a method of logical consequences

when disciplining a student's behaviour as discussed by Soheili as it creates an effective classroom dynamic that allows students to feel safe (Soheili,2015). I will also use methods of restorative practice to be more understanding of the behaviour in the classroom. Additionally, I intend to encourage students to aim for good behaviour using reward-based operant conditioning methods similar to the one used in the critical incident observed as it was clearly very effective based on the reaction of the pupils involved in the incident, which was further solidified in the work by Rafi et al (2020).

On reflection, after looking more closely at the critical incident observed, I find Tripp's critical incident methodology (1993) to be very effective at deepening our understanding of the classroom and developing the classroom itself. Tripp's two-stage method allows teachers to delve deeper into why incidents take place in the classroom, rather than looking at it from a baseline level (see Appendix 3). On reflection, after using his method to understand the critical incident observed I have gained a valuable insight into both the classroom dynamic, as well as why classic conditioning techniques are used in a classroom setting. This in turn has led to further research into behaviour management techniques that will in turn aid my teaching practice.

The use of Gibbs (1988) critical reflection model has been particularly beneficial in the context of my own experience during bridging as it mirrors a similar formula to that of Tripp's methodology (1993). Therefore, I have found it useful to use alongside Tripp as it has encouraged the process of critical reflection when analysing the critical incident, I observed during the bridging experience. I have found Gibbs' critical reflection model (1988) to be particularly beneficial when drawing conclusions of the findings in the critical incident, as well as when making consideration for my future teaching practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that by using Tripp's critical incident methodology, the observed incident has given an insight into many different aspects of behaviour management techniques used inside a classroom, primarily in a foundation phase setting. The approach I have used based on the critical incident observed has primarily focused on the use of classical conditioning techniques in the classroom, whilst also deepening my understanding of other effective behaviour management techniques that would be beneficial to use in my own teaching practice. The essay has concluded that using other methods of behaviour management alongside classic conditioning, such as restorative practice and logical consequences, will be more beneficial to the teaching practice. The approach used throughout this essay has also highlighted the benefits of using critical reflection as a reflective practitioner in the education system, on a personal and classroom-based level. Furthermore, it has shown

the clear link between the pedagogical professional teaching standards and the role of critical reflection in the teaching practice.

Appendixes

1.

Record 1

Date and time, year group: 9:20 am 22/09/21 Year 6
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context General classroom with no ALN that I was aware of. The teacher of the class had to step out of the classroom due to other commitments in the school, so another member of staff had taken over her class in the meantime so acted as a cover teacher. I believe the cover teacher taught the year 6 pupils every Thursday, so they were well acquainted and comfortable with each other. The cover teacher had been in the classroom whilst they finished their daily tasks and then instructed them to get ready to go outside for 5 minutes of exercise. The teacher then realised that year 3 were still in the yard so asked them to wait patiently for year 3 to finish up before going outside.
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) The students were waiting to go outside for their 5 minutes of morning exercise to release energy before starting their lessons that they do every morning. As the children were excited, they began to get overly loud and disruptive, so the teacher clapped a rhythm to get their attention which was then repeated by the students. This gained control of the class and got the noise down to a lower level. The teacher then spoke to the class about their noise level and said that year 3 would only be a few more minutes and to be patient. The class continued to speak afterwards but at a lower level that did not disrupt the class, as they waited patiently.
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? - I think the students sleep and amount consumed for breakfast needs to be considered. - As well as considering why the students were so excited to go outside for 5 minutes. - I would also like to look at why this attention signal is used in the year 6 classroom, compared to other attention signals.
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) - Their teacher pointed out how covid had greatly impacted the academic progress of the year 6 pupils across the board. Specifically in Welsh. - Their teacher also disclosed that as a class they are not as ‘academically driven’ as previous years which could contribute to their excitement to being out of the classroom.

2.

Record 2

Date and time, year group:

10:30am 22/09/21 Year 6

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context

The year 6 class were doing an English lesson on a short story that had been read in a previous lesson. The lesson was based on improving the pupil's ability to spot when verbs, nouns, adjectives etc were being used in texts. Their teacher had set them the task of creating a colour key to highlight when they were being used in the text.

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher suggested that students put in the air an item that was green if they understood, orange if they were unsure and could do with more work on it or red if they completely did not understand the lesson. As the teacher called out the colours, the students put up an item to show how they felt about the lesson to the teacher. The majority of the students put up a green item, with a small number putting up an orange item. The teacher seemed to then take mental note of those who had put up something orange.

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- As the teacher had previously mentioned, covid had affected how the students had developed over the last two years and therefore as a result some of the students were behind academically whereas others were at a similar level as they should be. This made me think about how the level of home schooling performed by parents could have impacted their children's progression, or whether the child's own interests led to less interest in areas such as English.
- I found it particularly interesting as I noticed the students who had required extra attention during the English lesson, were not necessarily the same students who later required help in maths.
- I would like to consider how useful this method is at analysing how much the students have understood, on reflection.

Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here)

- Their teacher had made it apparent that she was not expecting everyone in the class to know all the items in the task, as the class had been affected by covid.

3.

Record 3

Date and time, year group:

23/09/21 9:20am Year 2

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context

General classroom with 1 child on a I.E.P and 3 with suspected ALN. Every morning between 8:50am and 9:20am the pupils do 'busy boxes' that are based on tasks that will aid their academic progress such as handwriting and reading workshops. The class are split into 4 groups, where one group are supervised by the teaching assistant, and one is observed by the class teacher whilst the other two groups work mainly independently on their task. The group placed with the class teacher included several pupils from group yellow including the student with an I.E.P, as well as the other three pupils with suspected ALN.

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

The class teacher had spent the majority of 'busy box' time with the group whilst focusing on improving their handwriting. All the pupils in the group remained engaged and seemed keen to get praise from their teacher. As they began to pack up their books etc the teacher told the students that because of their hard work in the busy box that morning, they could all add a point to the house points on the wall. The entire group were visually happy, especially pupil A who ran straight over to add his point to the chart.

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents?

What avenues of research could you consider?

- Look more detail into the use of classical conditioning techniques in the classroom.
- Look at other forms of behaviour management in the classroom other than reward systems
- Look at ALN inclusive classroom strategies

Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here)

- Busy classroom including one teacher, one teaching assistant and two student teachers observing.
- Class split into four groups when completing the majority of school work: yellow (require support), purple (sometimes need to be academically challenged further), blue and orange (both usually work at the level expected in year 2)
- Point system = Golden Time (choice of what they do during the last 30 minutes of the school day on Fridays)

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