NATIONAL EDUCATION REFORMS

From the Executive Director

There has been considerable focus at the national level on what the new federal funding model for schooling will look like from 2018. To date, to the frustration of schools and school systems, no details on the Australian Government's (AG) future schools funding arrangements have been released. However, funding reform is not the only change on the Turnbull Government's agenda. The Government has also committed to a wide range of changes to school education that could potentially be implemented from 2018. These deserve our serious attention and consideration.

Federal governments, no matter their political persuasion, have linked education reforms to schools funding for over three decades. Most commonly, state and territory governments and non-government schooling authorities have been required to implement a range of policies and initiatives as a condition of receiving AG funding.

The Federal Government's ability to reform what happens in schools is somewhat limited given it does not own or operate any schools, nor does it directly employ any school staff.

Its power to impose reforms and initiatives solely arises from its funding role which over many years has become more dominant. The Commonwealth has utilised both legislation and agreements with states/territories and non-government authorities to achieve policy directions in schooling.

For independent schools, it is almost an accepted fact that there will be an increasingly long list of conditions and compliance requirements in return for receipt of AG funding.

Given that the Commonwealth will be providing some $20 billion per annum towards the cost of schooling by the end of the current forward estimates period, its power to impose conditions is considerable.

There is a strong argument for nationally driven schooling reforms given Australia's place in a global society and our relatively small population (with eight different state/territory schooling systems). However, there remains serious doubts that federal conditions associated with funding often result in considerable duplication of state/territory requirements and an additional layer of unnecessary red tape.

In addition, far too frequently federal and state/territory requirements for schools are constructed on political grounds, leaving schools subject to frequent changes in policy directions. This has become particularly prevalent in the more recent volatile political climate.

For 2018, the AG is proposing a relatively modest suite of reforms and initiatives. These are outlined in the Coalition's *Quality Schools Quality Outcomes*[1] which was released in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election.

The proposed reforms outlined in Quality Schools Quality Outcomes are under five broad areas:

- boosting literacy, numeracy and STEM performance
- teaching and school leadership
- preparing our students for a globalised world
- focusing on what matters most and those who need it most
- accountability through transparency.

[1] See https://www.education.gov.au/quality-schools-quality-outcomes for details.

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A key reform proposed from 2018 is a national principal certification process with the objective that all aspiring principals would need to achieve certification before they are eligible for permanent appointment in a government or non-government school. The certification would be based on the Australian Professional Standards for Principals[2].

The Commonwealth is also seeking a stronger and more consistent process for national teacher registration aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers[3].

Extensive media coverage has already been given to the Commonwealth's proposed national diagnostic tool to assess the performance of Year 1 students in reading, phonics and numeracy. The Federal Education Minister, Senator Simon Birmingham has already established a working party to progress this initiative which is being chaired by Dr Jennifer Buckingham[4].

Another initiative will be the development of nationally consistent standards for annual reports to parents in Prep to Year 10 showing a child's progress and relative achievement in reading, writing and numeracy (it is unclear how this differs to the current AG requirement for reports to parents twice a year).

Students will need to meet national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy prior to receiving a Year 12 certificate under the Government's proposed reforms (in Queensland, students must already achieve a literacy standard

to be awarded a QCE and under the new Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance systems to be implemented from 2019, students will need to pass a Year 12 English subject in order to be eligible for an ATAR).

The Government also proposes a national framework for assessing students' 21st century skills to allow measurement and tracking of students' progress in skills such as collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and innovation. Online formative assessments across learning areas and general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum will also be developed.

The Commonwealth wants the states and territories to agree to a new and contemporary National Career Education Strategy.

Enhancements to *My School* are planned to improve the availability of financial, performance and workforce information at a school level, along with a national unique student identifier to support the development of a better evidence base.

A National Research Strategy and a National Schooling Information Agreement are planned.

The Commonwealth is also proposing uniform regulatory requirements for non-government schools across States and Territories in order to provide a common platform of assurance for public funding of schools, to reduce regulatory duplication and to assist in managing complex cases of non-compliance and fraud in schools.

Not surprisingly, given the political make-up of the states/territories, some of the proposed Commonwealth reforms have already met strong resistance and the Australian Government will need to negotiate implementation details with schooling authorities during the remainder of 2017.

The Commonwealth reforms are most likely to be effected through a new national agreement on schooling to replace the existing National Education Reform Agreement that was signed with the states and territories in 2013. This might include replacement of the Melbourne Declaration on the Goals of Schooling[5] which is now more than ten years old.

In addition to a national education agreement, the Commonwealth is expected to seek to negotiate bilateral reform agreements with individual states and territories. These might include specific targets taking into account individual state/territory circumstances e.g. student attendance targets, increasing the number of students learning languages.

It is unclear, and will be an important consideration, as to whether independent schools will be included in bilateral agreements. Independent schools are impacted by national reform agreements which are signed by federal and state education ministers often with little input from the non-government sector.

Most of the Commonwealth proposed reforms will not be a surprise to schools. They build on reforms and directions which have been well embedded into our schooling system over the past decade. Many have been on the national agenda for some time or have been attempted previously. Consistent regulatory arrangements for non-government schools have been on the agenda of previous federal governments with little

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2 See http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standard-for-principals for details.
3 See http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers for details.
4 See https://www.education.gov.au/national-year-1-literacy-and-numeracy-check-year-1-check for details.
5 See http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf for the Declaration.

Extensive media coverage has already been given to the Commonwealth's proposed national diagnostic tool to assess the performance of Year 1 students in reading, phonics and numeracy.

implementation success pointing to the resistance of the states/territories to hand over regulatory or reform powers to the Commonwealth.

Expect a vigorous and robust round of negotiations between the states/territories and the Commonwealth in relation to proposed national reforms between now and the end of 2017. With the change of Government in Western Australia earlier this month, the Federal Education Minister will now have to convince six state/territory education ministers from the opposing political party that the federal reforms are in the best interests of their schooling system. Based on the state/territory constitutional responsibility for schooling, state ministers have strongly defended their responsibility

for determining reform directions at the State level and 2017 is not likely to be any different.

However, at the end of the day, the Commonwealth has the funds for schooling, resources that the states/territories cannot do without. Perhaps the need for national consistency and national reforms might prevail in a new spirit of co-operation to address Australia's flatlining education outcomes.

DAVID ROBERTSON
Executive Director

WHEN BEST-LAID PLANS GO AWRY
CHANGE FATIGUE: SYMPTOMS AND SOLUTIONS

LEIGH WILLIAMS
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*The best-laid plans
of mice and men often
go awry.*

Robert Burns,
To a Mouse.

*Change is a complex
business. It can lead
to innovation and
evolution or it can
create an implosion
that some organisations
never recover from.*

All industries are affected by change, some more rapidly than others, so it is imperative that the change process in organisations is carefully and thoughtfully considered (Thompson, et al., 2014).

In education, change is a constant. Every year there are new students entering the school gates, new policies or agendas, and new parent expectations. The education sector has had to adapt and respond to multiple change agendas in the last 10 years at the national, state and individual school levels.

At the national level, over the last decade educators have adapted to changes in the Australian Curriculum, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the National Assessment Program, including a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which is set for further change with the transition to NAPLAN Online this year.

State-based initiatives such as Curriculum to Classroom (C2C) and reforms in Senior Assessment models are already impacting teaching practice. There are more thorough regulations for child protection and safety, and student adjustment programs for students with specific learning needs.

At the individual school level, there are change initiatives around innovative classrooms, technology integration, STEM strategies to name just a few.

Through these change initiatives, no matter how well planned, there will be points of fatigue for groups and individuals who are either overwhelmed with the pace of change, or the sheer number of change initiatives that have been implemented.

How can leaders read the signs of change fatigue and implement strategies to make sure their plans for change don't go awry?

The nature of change

Many researchers have studied the phenomenon of fatigue in the change process and how it can impede the rate of change. To unpack this, it is firstly important to discuss the types of change that schools experience. Whilst many papers could be written on the nature of change itself, some of the major areas of change are beneficial to consider when analysing fatigue resulting from changes.

Change in businesses and organisations essentially refers to the adoption of a new idea or behaviour (Noe, et al., 2014). Technology, workforce, regulations, globalisation and competition are generally the most predominant influences that require an organisation to change.

As Dufour and Fullan (2013) highlight, the two major types of change are structural and cultural, with some changes including characteristics of both.

Structural change involves changes in policies and programs. Structural change is attractive as it can be mandated and is normally easier to track and measure.

Cultural change "requires altering long-held assumptions, beliefs, expectations and habits that represent the norm for people in the organisation" (Dufour & Fullan, 2013, p. 2). These are harder to measure and can involve a series of smaller change processes in order to achieve a cultural change goal. As Dufour and Fullan summarises "it is absolutely doable, but it is also undeniably difficult" (p.6).

The emergence of fatigue

Cultural and structural changes may need to be implemented throughout any change initiative and at the forefront are leaders who can drive the change and measure its success. However, as Beaudan (2006) discovered in a study of over 80 directors and organisational leaders, most well-planned initiatives fail to account for t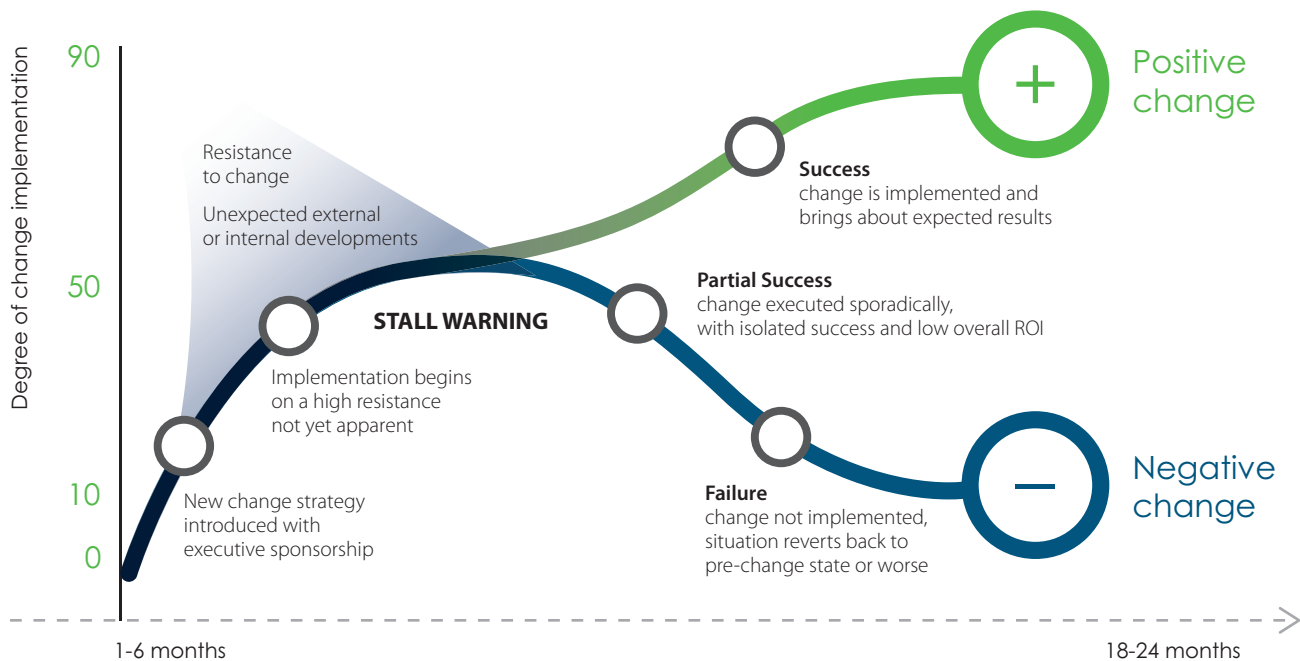he emotional and behavioural impact of change on employees and neglect to provide plans on how to manage and guide people through the change. In this sense, the National Institute for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ) (2017) describes change fatigue as emotionally charged and can lead to an initiative failing.

Change fatigue is a loss of focus, energy and willingness in leaders and employees constantly impacted by organisational change. Change fatigue symptoms include stress and high levels of fear, people not working to capacity and distracted leadership. Without intervention, change fatigue can cause initiatives to stall and fail. (p.2)

Beaudan's research found there to be six common signs of change fatigue (see Table 1). During a change initiative, there are generally three phases: launch, mid-course and completion.

It is in the mid-course phase where fatigue generally tends to occur (see Figure 1). The mid-course phase typically occurs between 30 and 90 days following the initiative launch when the initial excitement and energy directed at the change has begun to wane. It is then that the resistors of the change start to become more vocal, lobbying the potentially destructive allegiance of those around them.

Table 1: The 6 signs of change fatigue

1	Employees increasingly questioning the value/objectives of the change effort
2	Change effort leaders are highly stressed or resigning
3	The is a reluctance to share or comment on data about the effort
4	Budget and resources begin to be diverted to other strategic initiatives
5	Customer (student and/or parent) impatience with the duration of the change effort
6	Key leaders not attending progress meetings

Figure 1: Typical change implementation curve

Source: adapted from Beaudan (2006)

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Figure 2: The expectation-performance gap
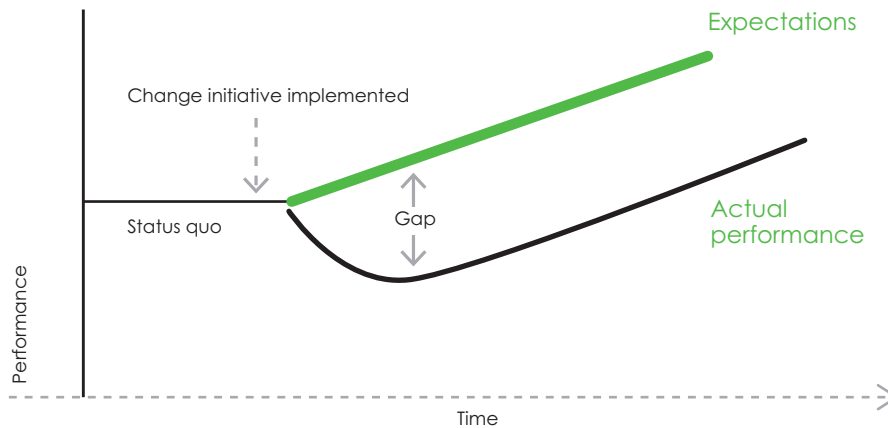
Source: adapted from Hughes et al (2006)

Table 2: Common types of loss in change and leader responses

LOSS OF	POSSIBLE LEADER ACTIONS
Power	Demonstrate empathy, good listening skills and discuss new ways to build power
Competence	Offer coaching, mentoring, job aids or resources
Relationships	Help employees build new relationships prior to change initiative or immediately after
Rewards	Review current and changed rewards (both tangible and intangible) and clearly communicate new reward opportunities that will exist
Identity	Demonstrate empathy and emphasize the individual's value in the success of the change initiative

Source: adapted from Krile et al (2006)

Resistance and change fatigue

While the signs of fatigue may be visible during the mid-course of a change initiative, the development of resistance normally stems at the launch phase (Beaudan, 2006). It remains invisible, or in a passive resistance form, from the beginning but can easily go unnoticed by change leaders. According to Beaudan, it is here that leaders can acknowledge the possibility of fatigue, and put strategies in place that will either shorten or remove the fatigue movement.

The building resistance, according to Hughes et al. (2014), has often stemmed from unrealised benefits in the change process. It can take time (sometimes longer than a year) for the benefits of a change initiative to be easily seen among employees. Because of this, during the launch phase, when many new behaviours and processes are being learnt, a drop in performance may occur before the expected benefits emerge. This is commonly known as the expectation-performance gap (see Figure 2) and can be a frustrating time for both employees and leaders. If not managed appropriately, it can cause resistance and usually results in employees reverting to old behaviours and systems to get things done (i.e. passive resistance) (Curphy & Hogan, 2012; Hirschhorn, 2002).

Leaders need to be savvy in their change management actions. As Larsen (2010) highlights, resistance and conflict can be functional in some stages of a change process. Hughes et al., (2014) also agree that resistance and fatigue are inevitable in a change process and that it can highlight unforeseen issues that need to be addressed, or cause an appropriate directional change in the entire process. Whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional is determined by whether it has the potential to positively change the outcome of the initiative, not necessarily how the person/people feel during the disagreement. A leader will need to manage both types of conflict accordingly, but never assume that they will not occur in a change initiative (Larsen, 2010).

Overcoming the fatigue

Leading change is perhaps the most difficult challenge facing any leader, yet this skill may be the best differentiator of managers from leaders and of mediocre from exceptional leaders (Hughes, et al., 2014, p. 570).

It is critical to understand the competitive and cooperative forces in an industry and its ability to cause or affect change (Thompson, et al., 2014). Equally, it is critical to know the intensity of such forces are fluid and have the ability to alter quickly. Therefore, strategies deployed by leaders will need to be considered against a dynamic and shifting environment which can affect the planned objectives and the reality of new environments merging throughout the change causing a needed shift in the original objectives.

Many strategies exist for overcoming change fatigue, and while a single "silver bullet" may not exist, learning and planning for change fatigue can build a good repertoire of strategies to draw from when needed.

Fear of Loss

Krile et. al (2006) suggest that resistance and fatigue actually stems from a fear of loss. They describe this fear through the types of loss an employee may experience or perceive to be in jeopardy, including loss of power, close relationships with colleagues, rewards or identity. By identifying the source of fatigue, a leader can more adequately resolve the issue for the individual. The possible resolutions discussed in Krile et al.'s research are summarised in Table 2.

Cultural Change

As discussed earlier, change can be predominantly either structural or cultural (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). The strategies to overcome fatigue from cultural change are extensively researched across industries, but have a central theme of acknowledging and concentrating the focus on the desired cultural state, as opposed to the operations and processes of change.

One study that extended over five years across a range of teachers experiencing the change of technology in classrooms, found that culture was the key to success (Orlando, 2014). By examining the processes put in place by leaders and the responses from participants, it was evident that leaders who focused on the desired cultural state of a technologically-enabled school, yielded better success in the change process than those who focused on the operational and content-related elements of the change. Participants experiencing change fatigue and knowledge insecurity most often commented on the stress of cultural and political factors. The researchers concluded that extended professional learning focusing on culture should increase success and reduce the timeframe of fatigue being experienced.

When instituting cultural change, usually the desired state is that of an adaptive culture (Thompson, et al., 2014). An adaptive culture is evident when employees have a willingness to initiate and lead change even with known challenges. There is a shared confidence that the organisation can handle any threats or opportunities that arise as well as being receptive to risk-taking, experimentation and innovation. Alongside this, the organisation takes a proactive approach to identifying issues, evaluates options and moves swiftly with feasible solutions. Thompson et al. (2014) highlight that for an organisation to have an adaptive culture, there are two key conditions that must exist:

1. changes in operating practices and behaviours must not compromise core values and long-standing business principles (since they are at the root of the culture), and

2. changes that are instituted must satisfy the legitimate interests of key constituencies - students, staff and the communities where the school operates. (p.352)

The sustainability of an adaptive culture is maintained when staff see the change efforts of leaders as 'legitimate', that is, in keeping with the organisation's core values and in the overall best interests of all stakeholders.

Further to visioning the desired cultural state, Dufour and Fullan (2013) elaborate on their research on the difficulties and complexities of cultural change in schooling that can cause slowing points through the change process. They summarise the following as being key factors that can either fulfil or destruct change efforts:

- It requires changes to traditional schooling practices that have endured for over a century. In particular, it changes the way that just about everyone relates to each other in the school and across schools and the system.

- It is certain to create conflict.

- It is multifaceted. Leaders do not have the luxury of focusing on a single aspect of the organisation that requires attention.

- It is a heuristic process of trial and error. There is no formula to be followed that guarantees the desired outcomes. Much of cultural changes involves working through complexity by finding out what is working and what isn't, and by making adjustments based on the findings. The good news is that there are clear ideas for guiding the process.

...and while a single "silver bullet" may not exist, learning and planning for change fatigue can build a good repertoire of strategies to draw from when needed.

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Conclusion

With so many recent and current change initiatives from the local, state and national level affecting schools, as well as many implementation models for change, it is not surprising that educators find themselves in a cycle of change fatigue.

This has implications for leaders instigating change. Strategies need to be in place for when the initial excitement of the change wanes, and fatigue begins to appear. By steering through the mid-course of the change implementation phases with a toolkit of actions, leaders will more likely reinvigorate the change effort and its desired success.

Great change leaders recognise that they need to get on the balcony to be seen and heard. They anticipate the weariness and resistance that distracts people's attention and inject the right amount of substance and passion to keep change alive (Beaudan, 2006, p. 2).

Well-intentioned leaders will have less success in change processes if they do not have a deep, shared understanding of the conditions they are attempting to create (Buckingham, 2005). Leaders should give importance to clarity in communication of goals, expectations and how they will overcome the identified obstacles.

As highlighted by the research throughout this article, change is inevitable, and so is fatigue. But how leaders plan for, and steer their teams through the fatigue will be the critical catalyst for the eventual success of the change itself.

Table 3: Core questions to 'get back on track'

1. RETHINK CHANGE GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS
- Were your initial goals too ambitious, vague or unrealistic?
- Did you design the right success measures and metrics?
- Was your initial assessment of the change's impact on students or teachers off target?
- Have new developments blown a hole in your initial case for change?

2. CHANGE SPEEDS
- Have you been too slow in implementing change, or, conversely, did you put the pedal to the metal and leave people behind?
- Have you taken the time to learn and assess what's working and not working?
- Do you have clear milestones?

3. CHANGE THE MIX OF PEOPLE
- Were your initial goals too ambitious, vague or unrealistic?
- Did you design the right success measures and metrics?
- Was your initial assessment of the change's impact on students or teachers off target?
- Have new developments blown a hole in your initial case for change?

4. ADD EXCITEMENT
- Is the change effort public enough or have people forgotten about it, or choosing to ignore it?
- Are the stakes high enough? Are the benefits for individuals or teams engaged in driving the change immediate and visible?
- Has a sense of crisis been communicated (i.e. that without this change, your school will inevitably be doing a disservice to the students)? What critical data do you have to create a greater sense of urgency?
- Is there a way to make the change more fun, gamified or challenge-based to engage staff?

Source: adapted from Beaudan (2006)

- It never ends. Creating the commitment to continuous improvement means you never "arrive" (pp. 2-3).

With these factors considered, it is understandable that fatigue can develop among staff. Leaders will need to utilise some of the strategies discussed above to ensure the maintenance of cultural change remains a strategic priority for the school.

Shifting Gears During Change

While the best-laid plans can still create change fatigue, when organisations are sensing fatigue on the horizon, there are shifting strategies that can support the employees through the fatigue at an accelerated rate. Beaudan (2006), through extensive consulting and research, has found that a core set of questions prompt the leader(s) to recognise and address the issues, recalibrate their course and continue towards successful change implementation. These core questions are provided in Table 3, adapted for educational environments.

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Courses for change

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) offers a range of support services to leaders that implement a research-based process to deliver sustainable change for their school's strategic vision and goals.

ISQ member schools can engage in self-paced online courses that focus on change practice.

Thriving Through Change

4 x 45-minute modules

Delivered as four short modules, this course explores research-based change management processes and how they can be used to approach and manage change. The course will guide you to support individuals through the change process and plan for change with a team.

Fostering Innovation in Organisations

1 x 1 hour module

This course enables participants to lead schools in the creation of innovative cultures and processes. Participants will learn about system and organisational constrains and enablers related to innovation. The course will assist participants to establish attitudes and processes that underpin continuous improvement and bring about positive outcomes for students.

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