

**Analysis of literacy environments within the families at San Agustín, San Luis Potosí, México**

**Análisis de los ambientes de alfabetización dentro de las familias en San Agustín, San Luis Potosí, México**

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***Abstract***

Literacy environments creation in Mexico has become an important core in Preschool Education growth; this is one of the biggest concerns of educators and parents, due to the society necessities and demands. As a consequence of this demands, literacy environments

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have been the root cause of several researches. This literacy process has so far been over all the teachers, as they have primary responsibility to teach activities, strategies and closer ways to introduce them into the Reading and writing world. There are some parents, who are interested to support their children with activities to promote reading and writing process at home, sometimes they ask for help to teachers, nevertheless they not always are willing to help them either, for this reason parents teach and do the knowledge transfer to their children in the manner in which they were taught. Under the above, emerge the necessity of conduct a study to analyse the context in which the participants (mothers), operate to encourage or create literacy environments at their homes, which are fundamental for competencies and skills development for the future reading and writing process. Discursive Textual Analysis was used as a data analysis technique.

Keywords: Literacy environment, participation of mothers, reading and writing

### ***Introduction***

Reading and writing in our country have been terms that were used constantly throughout the political periods (six years) when we talk about Literacy, and how to end with illiteracy, but has this goal really been achieved? Today, several national surveys (National Survey of reading in Mexico conducted by INEGI<sup>2</sup>, and National Survey of Reading and Writing, carried out by CONACULTA<sup>3</sup>) that have been applied in our country, throw some important data: 80.8% of the population has read Some text last year, those who do not read argue that it is due to lack of time (48.5%), and lack of interest (22.4%), likewise there is a total of 38 minutes of continuous reading; The stimuli for the joy for reading are generated in childhood.

If we take up this information, we should focus on the early years of our children, especially what happens within families, in terms of reading and writing, from this context is the first literacy environment that the child has access to, so becomes the ideal context to start the taste for reading and writing. However, as we all know, the fundamental role of the family in the education of their children has been left aside, relegating responsibility only to school.

Considering this information, it is important to take into account that it is a literacy environment, which is the propitious means to generate in our students a joy for reading and writing. This document is a recapitulation of the study carried out during four years, as a result of a Doctoral Thesis in the community of San Agustín, of the municipality of Villa de Arriaga, in the state of San Luis Potosí; where characteristics were analyzed within 18 households, identifying in this way that it facilitates and inhibits both the family context and the social context, the generation of this literacy environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Survey conducted in February 2016 by the National Institute of Geography and Information Statistics to a Mexican population aged 18 and up.

<sup>3</sup> National Survey conducted in 2015 by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, to a population of 12 years or more living in the Mexican territory.

## ***I. Theoretical Reference***

As we mentioned earlier, reading and writing are extremely important skills for our daily lives. Reading is seen as a competence and an instrument of learning; who learns to read efficiently and constantly, develops own thinking. Thus becoming a transcendental learning for schooling and the intellectual growth of the person (UNESCO, 2016, p.16).

To be able to approach to knowledge, we use reading to participate actively in society. The language that the child uses daily has a social and communicative function, where he/she modifies the oral language from the situation in which he/she is (Kucer, 2009), it is important to mention that this is not generated by an explicit teaching but by the participation of the child in real situations of his daily life (Larson and Marsh, 2005).

Writing helps us to satisfy needs in different areas in which we develop, helps us to gather, preserve and transmit all information, is a tool that helps us to express our ideas, to develop creativity, to communicate with other people (UNESCO, 2016).

Reading and writing, seen from literacy, is considered as a social practice, which involves working with reading and writing as linguistic and psychological processes, and as socio-cultural practices. Which must occur in a contextualized cultural and social environment (UNESCO, 2016). Nowadays, Reading and writing of children must be focused so that they can develop in the literate world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Several authors argue that children acquire knowledge from the context and experiences they have in their home, since as we know the family is the first literacy agent (Strickland and Taylor, 1989, Dahl and Freepon, 1995; Luquero, 2014; Vega and Macotela, 2015). It is important to mention that not all family contexts are equal, and therefore, children have different contact with oral and written language. Since the literacy environments are different in each family. Vega and Macotela, (2015) affirm that:

“A child initiates his literacy long before entering school as the development of this literacy is highly influenced by the quality and quantity of the activities related to the written language that the child makes at home, as well as by the grade in who gets involved in them” (p.19).

Reading habits are based on the quality of the family environment that children have in their childhood. When a child shows greater reading competence, it is because he has parents with a good attitude toward reading, who spend time weekly to this activity (Gil, 2009, Strommen and Mates, 2004). When the first stories read were made in an emotional and cheerful atmosphere, future readers are formed (Salazar, 2006).

Most parents have home-related reading materials in their homes, and encourage their children to read during the school year as part of a homework assignment; however, they do not see reading as an activity that can be enjoyed. When parents do not read, or do so out of obligation, children see reading only as a school obligation (Moreno 2001).

If we consider the aforementioned information, we can affirm that nowadays, literacy spaces can not be defined in a single or standardized way since each family, and each context, is different. UNESCO recommends creating favourable environments for reading and writing, considering the local culture. Create a "literate" environment, it is difficult because you must combine the materiality, and artifacts, with the people who will take care of and inhabit, and the rules or interactions that will occur. Dus, it is not only a space (library, home, classroom), it is something that is created and that depends on the interactions of people, together with the materials that are there.

Chhetri and Baker, (2005) argue that creating a literacy environment is creating a social, political and cultural environment that values and nurtures all forms of literacy. "However, a rich literate environment does not occur overnight. It evolves over time and its creation requires commitment and collaboration between different stakeholders or stakeholders "(UNESCO, 2011, p.16)

On the other hand, the literacy environment according to the Center of Excellence for the Training of Teachers of Peru (2004) is:

... the "literacy environment" is one that lets the literate world within reach of the child, that is, it is the context that allows the child to interact in a meaningful way with many types of texts (magazines, journals, books, notes, letters ...) and other auxiliary objects (paper, pencil, envelope, rubber, pencil sharpener, bookmark ...) Furthermore, it is maintained that in the setting of a literacy environment, the child

has the opportunity to observe adults using natural reading and writing to achieve a specific purpose, thus receiving the stimulus and the necessary model to interact freely and productively with the written language (p.3).

A child who reads, converses at an early age, has contact with books and literacy experiences, acquires a joy for reading; The acquisition of reading skills begins in childhood and continues throughout the life of the child according to Roberts, Jurgens and Burchinal, (2005) if a child is a good reader in school, it will continue to be as it grows. On the other hand, if a child struggles with reading, he will have problems for the rest of his school years. Trelease (2001) states that "knowledge of almost all subjects in the school flows from reading" and "reading is the most important social factor in life today" (p.24). When a student has difficulties with reading, tends to be less social, to participate to a lesser degree in extracurricular activities, or not to finish their education (Hall and Moats, 1999).

If we want to stimulate the interest of the child and develop reading and writing skills in them, it is essential to have a literacy environment in the home. According to Hill-Clark (2005), there are many facets of a literacy environment at home, in which parents and / or caregivers must perform certain actions such as:

- Start reading to children at an early age.
- Use meaningful communication with children.
- Read aloud often to your children.
- Have plenty of books inside the house.
- Give the example.
- Set time for reading activities.
- Visit the library with your children.

## **II. Methodology**

A qualitative methodology was used, with two types of approaches; the first one that was used was the exploratory approach, in which the reality of the context was documented, in order to analyze and plan how the rest of the research would be carried out. In this approach, questionnaires were conducted with the participants, and from the information that was retrieved, the Interview Guide was planned, which would be used later. In addition, an observation guide was used, as well as photographic records, in order to reconstruct and contextualize the reality of the participants. With this information a greater familiarization and approximation with the reality that was intended to analyze was achieved.

For the analysis of the information the Discursive Textual Analysis DTA was used, Moraes and Galliazzi (2007) maintain that: "... the textual analysis of the discourse can be understood as an organized process of the construction of new meanings for certain objects, of textual materials related to these phenomena "(p 45).

The DTA is a process where new knowledge is generated which is generated by making a triangulation of information that is retrieved from the research participants, this process consists of three stages (Dismantling the texts, establishing relationships and obtaining the new one).

Moraes and Galliazzi (2006) mention that it is a data analysis approach, based on two types of analysis in qualitative research, which are: content analysis and discourse analysis. They also mention that it is a process in which texts are divided into units, which can generate other types of groupings; It is an open process.

Moraes (2003) as well as Viola and Dalto (2012) tell us about a series of phases or moments that have to be followed: the first phase is "Dismantling of texts", it is characterized by a careful and exhaustive reading of the data, which will be trimmed, of built, according to the interpretative capacities of the researcher, this phase is divided at the same time in other moments, the first one is the Reading and signification (where there is a multiplicity of reading, based on the theoretical perspective); the second step is the deconstruction of the texts and the unitarization, where the texts are dismantled to achieve units of analysis of greater or lesser extent; the third is Involvement and impregnation, where the information of

the analyzed texts is intensely involved; the second phase is "establishment of relationships", a process that consists of comparing the units defined in the initial process of the analysis, to take them to groups of similar elements; to finally "obtain a new emergent" where analytical metatext are constructed that consist of the description and interpretation.

According to Moraes and Galliazzi, (2007), categories can be generated from three methods; Deductive, inductive and intuitive. The deductive method is a movement that goes from the general to the particular, that is, it implies the construction of a priori categories, those that arise from the theoretical knowledge that the researcher has, establishing units of analysis in pre-established boxes. This can be presented even before examining the corpus.

In contrast, the inductive process involves the categories of the particular and the general, as well as the units of analysis constructed from the "corpus", these categories are known as emerging. "The emerging categories are the theoretical constructs that the researcher develops from the corpus" (Moraes and Galiazzi, 2007, p.25).

For the present study, four categories were used four categories were used, which in turn were divided into subcategories, emphasizing the facilitators and inhibitors; the categories refer to what happens within families (family context), what happens in the specific context, the relationships between family and school, and finally what is in the home to read and write.

#### ***IV. Results nd Discussion***

This work, as mentioned above, was carried out with 18 participants, their ages ranging from 27 to 47 years of age. 63% of the participants have three children, 13% have two children, and those who have four, five, six and seven children have a percentage of 6% each. The children of the participants range from 9 months to 20 years of age. See figure 1



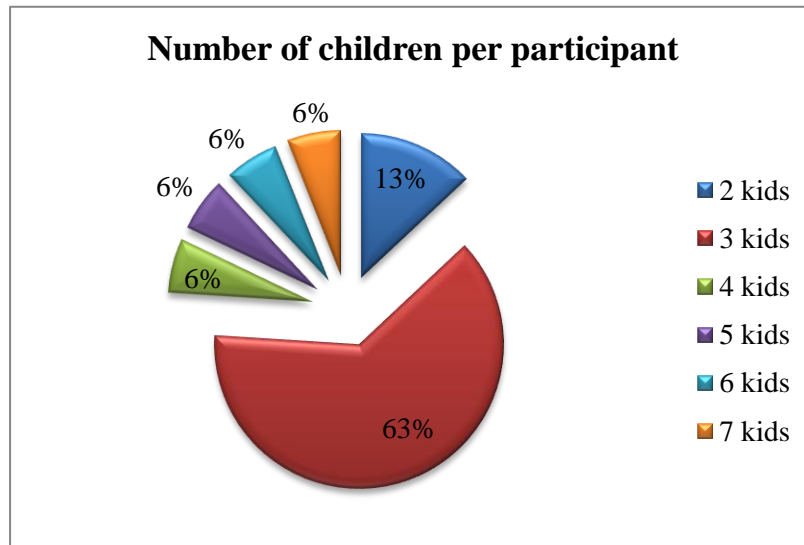


Figure 1. Graph of number of children per participant. Own elaboration

About figure 2.- 73% know how to read and write, only 7% mentioned they do not know. Schooling: 36% have completed primary school, 36% have completed secondary (regular), 21% have completed secondary (open) and 7% have primary truncated.

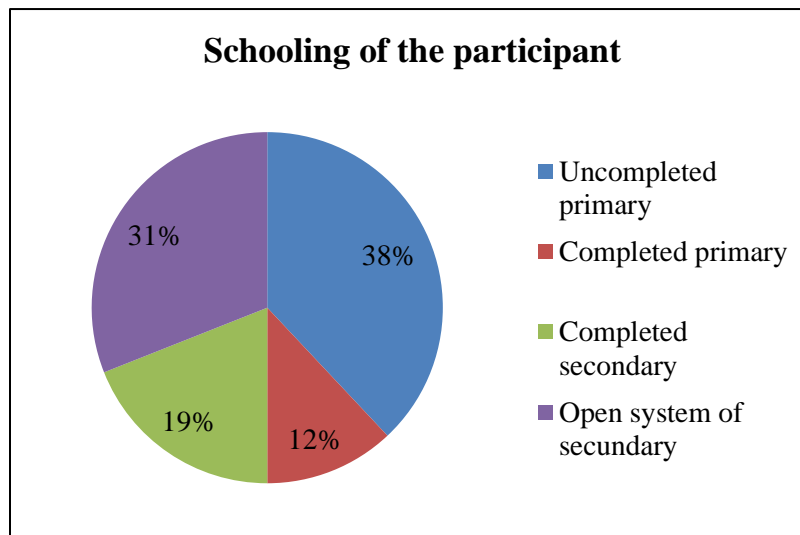


Figure 2. Graph of schooling of the participants. Own elaboration.

In the participants homes: 80% have books, within this percentage: 35% are primary books, 32% stories, 21% others (magazines, catalogs, cookbooks, coloring books) and 12% secondary books. Seeing that most had free textbooks were questioned, how many books were in the home that were not of this type: 36% have between 1 and 5 books at home, 36% have between 6 and 10, 14% have between 11 and 15, 7% have between 11 and 15 and 7% have more than 20.

Referring to the texts that can be read at home: 100% have a calendar, dictionaries, personal documents, 78% stories, 71% said they have booklets of stores, 64% said they have newspapers and magazines, 28% said they have letters and recipes, and 0% said to have encyclopedias as can be seen in figure 3.

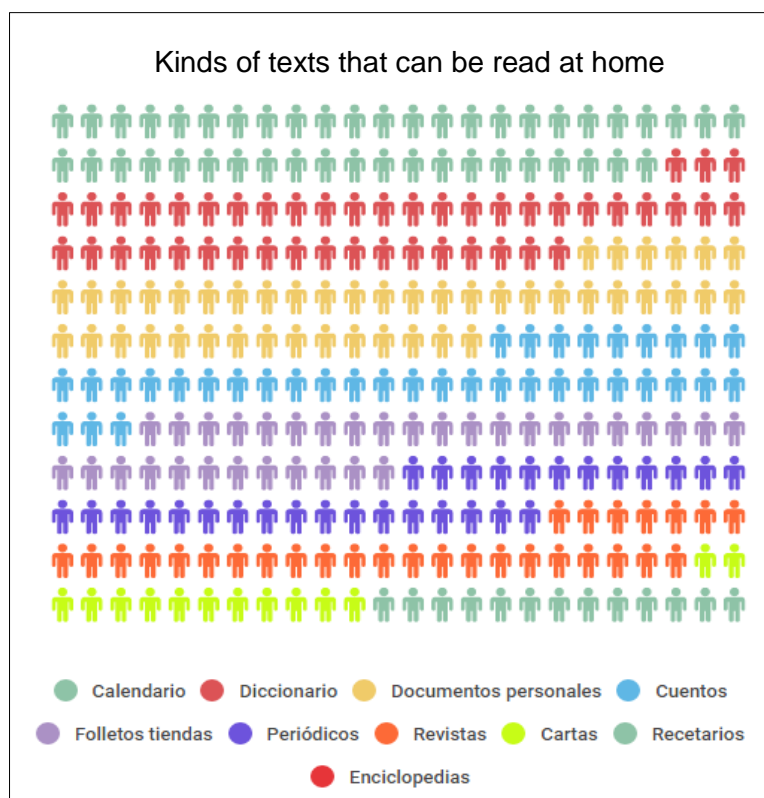


Figure 3. Number of books in the house without counting the free text.

As for the materials that are in house for children: 100% has notebook, pencil, rubber, pencil sharpener, colors, 86% has paper at home other than the notebook, as striped sheets, colored, box, 71% has crayons.

The results obtained from the analysis of the categories mentioned above are divided into four categories, the first of which emphasizes the family context found in the facilitators that:

- There is little reading and writing by the participants, which we know should be given as a pleasant activity on their part and on a constant basis. They know the importance of giving an example to their children, it was observed that children who have bigger siblings have a natural taste for reading, because their moms read them stories (preschool) or primary books that are his reach, his brothers, serving as a role model both the mother of the family and the older brothers. Hill-Clark (2005); Payne, Whitehurst and Angell, (1994); Burgess, (1997); Mannig, (1998); Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, (1998); they affirm that reading aloud to children by parents influences the development of language and literacy in the child, generates a positive atmosphere in the home, and promotes closeness between parents and children. "The parental practice of reading stories to children is generally recognized as having a powerful influence on their language development, emerging literacy and their reading achievement" (Lawson, 2012, p 257).
- They know the importance of reading for the development of the imagination as well as the comprehension of new topics, and some mention that they would have liked their mothers to read them when they were little. At home they also ask their children to do certain activities related to reading and writing: they read a story and ask them what they understood; put them to write and copy texts to improve the letter, separates the words properly. These activities are based on the experience they had and what they did when they were girls. Senechal, et.al., (1998), affirms that there are informal and formal activities that take place in the home; the first include activities that do not involve the teaching of letters, but the use of texts, such as reading a story; the formal ones involve the teaching of printed words, or the name or sound of the letter, to read letters, or to write them.

- There is support in carrying out tasks at home, providing advice when requested. In all households, family members talk at home either at lunchtime, or at dinner or at some time when they are all together. They talk about how the community was founded, the kindergarten, the school; how it went in the day at school, at work; and some families that have adolescent girls talk with them about their bodies, as well as how they should care for themselves, and behave. Hill-Clark (2005) tells us about the importance of meaningful oral communication, which plays an important role in the literacy process, since it exposes the child to words that he does not know.
- There are texts available to children, as we can see in figure 1, the texts to which they have access. In the same way there are materials to write within reach: the materials for writing are the same as the children used in school, or materials left over from past school cycles. Córdoba, Quijano and Cadavid, (2013) sustain that "the presence of this type of resources in the home has been associated with a greater vocabulary and development of pre-reading oral skills in children" (pp. 55).

From the first category we will return the inhibitors of the family context, the following information was found:

- There is a lack of knowledge of certain issues, especially when children reach primary school, generating that mothers stop supporting or advising them on school work. In the same way, there is "pain" on the part of the participants when they read to their elementary school children, since sometimes their children make fun of their pronunciation or the choppy reading.
- Within the home there is a lack of time on the part of the participants, due to the activities of the household they perform, cleaning the home, taking care of the youngest children, preparing food for the different members of the family. From their perspective there is a lack of materials, in terms of books they consider that those who have access are not enough for their children or for them, they also mention that in elementary school textbooks they sometimes ask them to research on the Internet, and therefore they do not have a computer or Internet service to complement the tasks, and there is no cyber in the community. Córdoba, Quijano and Cadavid, (2013) argue that materials in homes are

fundamental for the appropriation and reinforcement of reading and writing, helping to increase vocabulary and develop social skills.

- There are certain health issues of the participants that make it difficult for them to support their children are health issues, among them the tired sight that prevents reading to their children, as well as a depression issue, which generates that the mother of the family wanted to sleep most of the day.
- Inadequate spaces for reading regularly in the room in bed, while they are resting for a while, it is important to mention that most have television in the same space, which is another inhibitor.

Category two emphasizes the context in which they operate, in the same way the facilitators were retaken, being these:

- There is a story purchase by some participants; these stories are small and simple. Likewise, the participants make an effort to have printed texts for their children to read them, from books, stories, magazines, newspapers, catalogs of stores. They, as well as husbands, look for different spaces. There must be an abundance of books in home, so that children can manipulate and read them. (Hill-Clark, 2005, Early Literacy Learning Center: Center for Early Literacy Learning, 2010). "The most important factor that influences a child's early school success is an introduction to books and reading at home before beginning school" (Arnold and Colburn, 2006, p.31).
- There is a loan of books by kindergarten teachers, every Friday and they have to return on Monday, in order to be read at home. The participants affirm that the children are extremely interested in reading them and sometimes they ask to be read on various occasions.

Regarding the inhibitors of the context, it was found that:

- There are no bookstores in the community or in the municipal seat. In the community there is no public library, to which the participants and their families could have access, the closest one is in the Municipal Header, however the transfer to it generates a cost and

time that sometimes they do not have. In addition, the loan of the books is for a period of three days.

- The loan of primary books is non-existent, they are only lent to those who request it, who are not all, it is a minority. The participants do not agree that they should not be lent because they consider that it is the only space where children can have access to books and stories, and if they do not lend them there is no other space for children to have contact with the printed texts.
- It was found that the stories they buy in the stationery stores are not expensive from the perspective of the participants, since they range from \$ 15 to \$ 45 pesos, however, not all of them can buy stories on a regular basis, since it finally involves an expense extra that is not planned.
- Considering the aforementioned aspects, the participants consider that the access they have to the books as well as their children is very difficult. They would like their children to have more books at home, that they would also be borrowed from the schools specifically from the primary school, minimum three times a week so that the children have to read, and that it is of interest that they leave some type of knowledge. That they are not stories with more drawings than letters. "The most important factor that influences a child's early school success is an introduction to books and reading at home before beginning school" (Arnold and Colburn, 2006, p.31).

Category three refers to the relationships that exist between the participants and the teachers of the schools, certain facilitators are observed:

- There is a weekly loan of books by the preschool teachers. However, very few participants maintain that the primary teacher lends books to children, it should be emphasized that this is due to the interest that the child has. Some of the participants claim to have a good relationship with the primary school teacher, and that they have the confidence to approach her to ask her some doubts they have.

It is important to maintain that there are more inhibitors because of the relationships established between teachers and participants:

- It was found that most of the participants do not have a good relationship or have no relationship with the primary school teacher, some have had problems with her due to grades, the treatment they give to children by not explaining certain topics and ask them later for tasks, etc. It was observed that most do not have the confidence to approach the teacher to ask what is happening, and the one that did ended up in discussion for a documentation for the scholarship that her daughter needed. It can be said that the relationship is fractured on both sides.
- Another aspect is the constant change of primary school teachers, generating an ignorance of the way of working and of the teacher in general, in addition to the different ways of working, generating that the students lower the grades considerably, generating the annoyance of the mothers of family. They claim that children can not move forward with so much change.

#### ***V. By way of conclusion***

With the information previously described, it can be concluded that in this specific context in which the participants develop, if there is a literacy environment with the limitations that exist, as well as with the effort that each one of them makes, however, as we have seen in the theoretical part (Hill-Clark, 2005) a literacy environment implies several activities that must be carried out by parents, and some are not been done as the theory mentions.

It will be fundamental firstly to train the participants in topics of interest to continue with the reading by them to their children, and try to reduce little by little the inhibitors of the family context that influence this literacy environment of the home. It will be important to carry out an investigation to recover the information that preschool and primary school teachers throw at us, as well as what parents and other family members think, since we have observed that the activities that are carried out are not only by mom, but often by siblings and parents.

All this with the purpose of being able to subsequently design an supervising and guide proposal, to work with all the members of the family. This proposal should have several strategies, if we take up the information that this investigation showed us; first of all it will be fundamental to raise awareness and involve little by little the parents (men), as well as the

older siblings, about the importance of certain activities that must be carried out at home, to encourage reading and writing ; later it will be important to train mothers interested in certain subjects of primary education, so that they continue to support their children as the years go by.

It will be essential to work with them in the same way certain strategies aimed at the own reading and writing that they have to favor it and promote it beyond what is already done to date. At the same time these strategies are in place, it will be important to generate or create a library for the community in general, so that all children, young people and adults can access different types of printed texts; that will not only generate a library, but also have part of the interpersonal relationships within it, in order to achieve a good performance of the project.

UNESCO (2011) argues that to generate a literate environment there must be: literacy materials and activities, a physical environment, a socio-cultural environment, political environment, evaluation and relationships. The first two elements will facilitate the establishment of a literacy environment, while the other four will help sustain them. When the materials are authentic and real, the students want to read them and apply what they read in their daily lives (UNESCO, 2008).



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