Parents' Thoughts of Student Involvement and Parent Involvement in Individualized Transition Support Plans

Yumi MIZUTANI* and Yuji YANAGIMOTO

Abstract

We surveyed 108 Japanese parents of students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in special education high schools in Tokyo to understand their thoughts of individualized transition support plans (ITSP) and the level of student and parent involvement which they thought needed. The results showed that there were significant differences in the parents' thoughts in that, depending on the degree that they agreed with student or parent involvement, they valued different factors in ITSP. We particularly found that parents who strongly agreed with student involvement placed more importance on students' self-direction in terms of the goal setting process and filling in the employment domain of the ITSP, and that the less the parents agreed with them, the less importance they tended to place on them. There were also significant differences in the parents' thoughts depending on the level of the intellectual disabilities of their sons or daughters. Namely, the parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities disregarded the recreation domain in the ITSP than the other parents did, whilst the parents of students with moderate intellectual disabilities were more likely than the others in the hope that the students would have a chance to learn skills necessary for participating in the planning process. These results suggest that there are a variety of thoughts in the parents, and that the understanding of each of them may be important in order to develop the ITSP.

Key Words : parents' thoughts, student involvement, parent involvement, individualized transition support plans (ITSP), intellectual disabilities

Individualized transition support plans (ITSP or "kobetsu iko shien keikaku" in Japanese) were introduced at special high schools for students with intellectual disabilities in Tokyo and at some other special schools in the school year 2001. ITSP aims to facilitate a smooth transition of students from their school to the community, to promote the students' vocational independence,

and to encourage collaborative practice among schools, families, and local agencies (Japanese Association of Special Education Schools Principals, 2002; Mizutani & Yanagimoto, 2003). The introduction of ITSP occurred at the same time that Japanese social welfare was shifting its principle "from placement to selection," which means that consumers have started to select services that they need instead of receiving the services that public administration had selected for them (Matsuya, 2003). Parent participation is consid-

*Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Disability Sciences, the University of Tsukuba

ered a significant indicator in evaluating individualized educational practice (Kanno, 2000). Accountability of schools to families and communities as well as their informed consent to the families has become critical issues in Japanese special education (Ando, 2001; Kubota, 1999; Tokyo Department of Education, 1999). Mizutani, Hiruma and Yanagimoto (2002), however, found that in marked contrast to similar practices of individualized educational programs or transition plans in the United States, the Japanese special high school teachers developed "individualized instruction plans" (introduced in 1999 prior to the ITSP) with limited input from students and their parents. Ando (2001) also described that teachers were mainly responsible for developing the individualized instruction plans, and that Japanese parents did not have the right to participate in their planning, implementation and evaluation.

The purpose of the study is to understand the thoughts that parents of students with intellectual disabilities have. The understanding intends to be a primary step to search the ideal way of students and parents to participate in ITSP. In this study, we particularly focus on the questions whether the differences in parents' thoughts depend on (a) the degree that the parents agree with student or parent involvement, and (b) the level of intellectual disability that sons or daughters of the parents have.

Method

Participants

Parents of students who enrolled in 10 out of the 24 special high schools in Tokyo for students with intellectual disabilities were surveyed. These 10 schools were selected because they had already started to develop ITSP or were intending to develop the ITSP within the academic year 2002 when the survey was conducted. The principle author handed over between 20 to 50 copies of the questionnaire either directly or by mail to special high school teachers who were members of the Tokyo Public Special Schools for Intellectual Disabilities Research Association for Promoting Employment (or TPSSIDRAPE). The teachers were asked to give out the questionnaire with envelopes and to ask randomly selected parents to answer them and return them anonymously in sealed envelopes.

Questionnaire

First, the questionnaire was developed for the teachers' survey based on the questionnaire used in a previous teachers' survey (Mizutani, et al., 2002). The pilot study was conducted in special high schools in Tokyo and Hokkaido. Participants of the pilot study were 17 special education teachers and 4 parents of students with developmental disabilities such as intellectual disabilities and autism. The pilot study was carried out by interview, mail, email, or fax in May and June 2002. The interview sessions were held by the principle author with 2 teachers, and took approximately 1 to 1 hour and a half each time. The questionnaire of teachers' survey was revised for the present parents' survey. The revision was made in August 2002, based on discussions with special high school teachers who were the members of the second division of the TPSSIDRAPE.

For the parents' survey, 25 items were selected as well as 3 demographic items: (a) 5 items on their thoughts about ITSP (Table 1); (b) 10 items on their thoughts about career counseling (Table 2); (c) 10 items on their thoughts about student/parent involvement in the ITSP (Table 3); and (d) 3 demographic items (Table 4). The questionnaire items and descriptive statistics are presented in Tables 1 to 4, and also have been published in the official report (2003a) and "ITSP Q&A: Basic Manual" edited by the TPSSIDRAPE (2003b).

Table 1   Parents' Thoughts of Individualized Transition Support Plans (ITSP).

Items needed in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
     student's hopes=91% parents' hopes=82% goals/objectives for employment=62%
     evaluation from the job training=54% family life=43% post-school=53%
     recreation/community life=45% medical/health=46% other=6%
Persons who are responsible for deciding the goals for post-school (multiple responses accepted)
     teachers=45% parents=92% student=77% other=4%
Items referred to set the goals for the student's future (multiple responses accepted)
     performance at vocational evaluation/tests=33% performance at job training=71%
     student's hopes for the future=76% student's preferences for activities=59%
     parents' hopes for the student's future=54% student's evaluation during class/daily life at school=64%
     individualized plans from the past year and its evaluation=19% other=1%
Ways to include input from parents (multiple responses accepted)
     questionnaires to ask for parents' opinions=36% communication with students in daily life=78%
     telephone conversations=24% emails=5% note/letters=25%
     developing individualized plans together at career counseling meetings=73% other=1%
Ways to inform student & parent with regard to the ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
     hand over the plan as it is to the family=50% hand over a simplified plan to the family=15%
     show the plan as it is at the meeting=61% show a simplified plan at the meeting=17%
     explain orally at the meeting=44% other=3% do not need to present the plan=0%

Table 2   Parents' Thoughts of Career Counseling Meetings.

Items to be discussed at career counseling meetings (multiple responses accepted)
     student's hopes=82% parents' hopes=74% goals/objectives for employment=62%
     evaluation from the job training=81% family life=31% post-school=56%
     recreation/community life=22% medical/health=21% other=3%
The time to fill in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
     during the meeting=47% prior to the meeting=32% following the meeting=49% other=5%
Persons who should attend career counseling meeting (multiple responses accepted)
     classroom teacher=91% career guidance teacher=89% parents=91% student=78% other=7%
What parents would like to do to be actively involved in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
     express opinions about ITSP=83% listen to others' hopes/opinions=71% ask explanations=66%
     answer questionnaires regarding hopes about ITSP=48% lead the meeting=18% other=4%
What parents would like students actually to do to be actively involved in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
     express opinions about ITSP=78% listen to others' hopes/opinions=56% ask questions=51%
     answer questions=59% lead the meetings=16% other=6%
Persons who should attend the meetings other than school professionals (multiple responses accepted)
     medical professionals=15% social workers=59% vocational rehabilitation counselors=40%
     supervisors at job training=54% supervisors at post-school settings that students hope=65% other=6%
Persons whose schedule should be prioritized for the meeting (multiple responses accepted)
     classroom teacher=60% career guidance teacher=69% parents=81% students=45% other=32%
Thoughts of whether teachers-parents should talk about students' transition other than career counseling meetings
     needed=91% not needed=9%
Ways to talk about students' transition other than at career counseling meetings (multiple responses accepted)
     parents visit the school other than at the meetings=66% teachers visit home=18% telephone=45%
     email=10% letters/notes=37% other=6%
Ratio of utterance to be made by each member at career counseling meetings (arithmetic means)
     classroom teachers=27% (SD=10.0) career guidance teacher=27% (SD=12.7)
     parents=28% (SD=8.2) students=18% (SD=11.0)

Table 3 Parents' Thoughts of Student/Parent Involvement in ITSP.

Thoughts of parent involvement in ITSP
        strongly agree=30% agree=50% do not know=18% disagree=1% strongly disagree=1%
Image of an active parent related to the ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        express opinions about ITSP=54% ask explanations=81% ask results of the assessment=35%
        answer questionnaires to ask for hopes about ITSP=40% proposing the contents of ITSP=28%
        holding workshops about ITSP by PTA/parent group=41% ask for revisions=57%
        calling another meeting to discuss ITSP=47% lead the meeting for ITSP=4% other=2%
What schools can do to promote parent involvement in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        provide information of ITSP=83% listen to parents=60% answer the parents' questions politely=57%
        consider the way to make parents relax=30% consider parents as equal partners=47%
        propose options for contents of ITSP=43% prioritise parents' schedule for the meetings=18%
        communicate sufficiently with parents=58% explain clearly with easy words=72% other2%
What parents would like to actually do to be actively involved in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        express opinions about ITSP=50% ask explanations=63% ask results of the assessment=35%
        answer questionnaires to ask for hopes about ITSP=35% proposing the contents of ITSP=32%
        holding workshops about ITSP by PTA/parent group=44% ask for revisions=55%
        lead the meeting for ITSP=14% act as other parents who are actively involved=29%
        watch video introducing active parents=9% other=3%
Thoughts of student involvement in ITSP
        strongly agree=25% agree=46% do not know=25% disagree=3% strongly disagree=1%
Image of an active student related to the ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        express opinions about ITSP=44% ask explanations about ITSP=53% lead the meeting for ITSP=14%
        take lessons and learn how to develop ITSP=70% answer questionnaires about ITSP=34% other=3%
What schools can do to promote student involvement in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        provide information of ITSP=68% listen to students=64% answer the students' questions politely=56%
        consider the way to make parents relax=72% explain clearly with easy words=76%
        communication with students daily=69% prioritise parents' schedule for the meetings=16%
        allow students to lead meetings=9% offer classes to promote students involvement=63% other=3%
What parents would like students actually to do to be actively involved in ITSP (multiple responses accepted)
        express opinions about ITSP=49% ask explanations about ITSP=47%
        take lessons/learn how to develop ITSP=67% answer questionnaires asking hopes about ITSP=37%
        lead the meeting for ITSP=22% other=3%
Thoughts of ITP in the United States concerning equal participation for parents in the planning process
        we should regulate student/parent involvement too=46%
        we should start to implement gradually rather than regulating them=51% other=3%
Thoughts of an approach or program that aims to promote active student involvement in the United States
        we should teach student in the same way in class=85%
        we would like students to study outside the school=10% other=5%

Table 4 Demographics of Sons or Daughters of the Parents.

Grade in high school
        1st year=7% 2nd year=49% 3rd year=44%
Gender
        male=69% female=31%
Level of intellectual disability
        mild=51% moderate=24% severe=10% unspecified=15%

Note. Japanese high schools mostly accept students aged 15 to 18 for 3 years

For simplicity, open-ended questions asking the reasons for their answers to the multiple question items were excluded. We also deleted the questions asking about their thoughts on the appropriate roles of classroom or career guidance teachers, since we all thought that these might not be easy for the parents to answer. The wording of some questions was altered for the sake of being more polite and to give the parents a kind and easy impression about the questions. As for the demographic, three items were asked: students' ages, gender, and disabilities if the parents felt comfortable with answering them, but questions asking for parents' information were not included considering their privacy. Two parents who were actively involved in students' special education were asked to evaluate the items and all evaluators agreed with their appropriateness. The questionnaire was also submitted to the Tokyo Department of Education in order to examine whether the items were clearly stated and were in accordance with their guidelines, then it was approved. All of the procedures including the development of the questionnaire were conducted in standard Japanese.

Data Collection

For the parents' survey, we delivered: 10 packages including the cover letter to the principal, a cover letter to the teacher in charge of career guidance, a total of 380 copies of the questionnaire with the cover letter to parents explaining ITSP and a sample page of the ITSP, and 380 return envelopes to 10 teachers who were the members of TPSSIDRAPE in September 2002. The original due date of mid-October was extended to the end of November since there were only 83 effective answers returned by the deadline. The reason for the low response rate was probably because this type of survey was not familiar to these parents, so they were unable to

answer the questions even after the teachers' explanations at parents' conferences that were held prior to the distribution of the questionnaire. The effective response turned out to be 108 by the end of November. We selected all of them for analysis.

Data Analysis

For most question items in the questionnaire, we asked the respondents to check ○ if they thought it was "needed." In addition, we asked them to check a maximum of three sub-items in a question with a ◎ meaning "very needed." Unmarked sub-items were processed as "not needed."

Descriptive statistics of all items are presented in Tables 1 to 4 as well as in both the official report (2003a) and in the publication edited by the TPSSIDRAPE (2003b). In this paper, we further analyzed the data using chi-square test, the common method for analyzing categorical data.

The independent variables were (a) the degree that the parents agreed with student or parent involvement, and (b) the level of intellectual disabilities of their sons or daughters. The dependent variables were all the sub-items in the questionnaire. Contingency tables of 3×3 were developed in order to examine the three levels that parents agreed with parent involvement (strongly agreed, agreed, not agreed or not specified) and the three degrees of need recorded by the parents for all the questions' sub-items (very needed, needed, not needed).

Contingency tables of 2×3 were also developed in order to examine the relationship between students' intellectual disabilities and the degrees of need for the questions' sub-items (very needed, needed, not needed). Parents were asked to mark a level of intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe), and the positive or negative response in each level was categorized as 1 sub-item. The

Table 5　The Level that Parents Agreed with Parent(1)/Student Involvement(2-7) and Items with Significance.

		strongly agreed observed value	agreed observed value	not agreed observed value	chi-square value (df=4)
1. Daily Communication for Input (a)	very needed	14	7	6	
	needed	14	32	9	10.8*
	not needed	4	13	6	
2. Goals for Employment as Necessary Items (a)	very needed	12	5	5	
	needed	9	27	7	23.4**
	not needed	5	16	19	
3. Students' Hopes for Goal Setting (a)	very needed	10	15	3	
	needed	15	24	12	20.5**
	not needed	1	9	16	
4. Students to Be Responsible for Goal Setting (a)	very needed	14	16	6	
	needed	11	19	14	11.4*
	not needed	1	13	11	
5. Receiving the ITSP as It Is (a)	very needed	9	7	2	
	needed	7	19	9	10.1*
	not needed	10	22	20	
6. Students' Hopes to Be Discussed at the Mtg. (b)	very needed	10	11	4	
	needed	15	29	13	10.4*
	not needed	1	8	9	
7. Parents' Daily Visit at School (b)	very needed	3	11	4	
	needed	22	23	16	12.2*
	not needed	1	13	11	

Note. ** p<.01, *p<.05 　　　(a) & (b) correspond with component factors of the questionnaire

tables that demonstrated significance at the 1% or the 5% levels were further analyzed by residual analysis that Tables 5 and 6 presented. The tables that included a cell of 0 observed scores or 20% cells of less-than-5 expected scores were excluded from the analysis due to the limitation of chi-square test.

Results

Parents' Agreeableness with Parent Involvement or Student Involvement and Their Thoughts

Table 5 demonstrates sub-items with significant differences in parents' thoughts depending on the level that they agreed with parent or student involvement. Those who "strongly agreed" with parent involvement tended to think that daily communication with the teachers was "very needed" in order to input their opinions about ITSP (significance at the 1% level as the result of residual analysis), and parents who "agreed" with parent involvement thought that the daily communication was not "very needed" (significance at the 1% level) or "needed" (significance at the 5% level).

5% level).

The stronger the parents agreed with student involvement, the more they tended to agree that employment goals were necessary items in ITSP (significance at the 1% level). Also, the parents "strongly agreed" with student involvement tended to value the students' responsibility for the goal setting (significance at the 5% level). And they tended to "need" to receive ITSP in its original form, not simplified or modified by the teachers for the parents' use (significance at the 1% level). Parents who "strongly agreed" with student involvement did not mark the item "students' hopes" for the goal setting as "needed" or "very needed" (significance at the 1% level), whilst parents who "did not agree" with student involvement tended to think that it was "not needed" (significance at the 1% level).

In addition, parents who strongly agreed with student involvement tended to think that their daily visit to school to discuss transition issues was "needed" (significance at the 1% level), whereas those not in agreement with student

Table 6　Severity of Intellectual Disabilities of the Students and Items with Significance.

		mild observed value	moderate observed value	other observed value	chi-square value(df=2)
1. Daily Communication to Promote Student Involvement (c)	very needed	3	-	10	
	needed	28	-	31	9.2**
	not needed	22	-	9	
2. Recreation Domain in the ITSP (a)	very needed	1	-	9	
	needed	21	-	16	7.6*
	not needed	31	-	25	
3. Evaluation of Job Training as Reference for Goal Setting (a)	very needed	1	-	9	
	needed	34	-	28	7.7*
	not needed	18	-	13	
4. Students' Hope as Reference for Goal Setting (a)	very needed	11	-	16	
	needed	32	-	18	6.1*
	not needed	10	-	16	
5. Daily Communication to Promote Parent Involvement (c)	very needed	3	-	10	
	needed	23	-	25	7.2*
	not needed	27	-	15	
6. Receive the ITSP as It Is (a)	very needed	-	8	9	
	needed	-	8	27	7.0*
	not needed	-	8	43	
7. The Image of Actively Involved Student: Learn participation skills (c)	very needed	-	8	9	
	needed	-	12	42	7.2*
	not needed	-	4	27	
8. Daily Communication to Promote Student Involvement (c)	very needed	-	6	7	
	needed	-	15	44	7.2*
	not needed	-	3	28	

Note. ** p<.01, *p<.05　　(a) & (c) correspond with component factors of the questionnaire

Numbers in each level of disability: mild=53, moderate=25, severe=10, unspecified/non response=20

involvement tended to think that the daily visit was "not needed" (significance at the 5% level). Parents who strongly agreed with student involvement tended to think that students' hopes to be discussed at career counseling meeting was "very needed"(significant tendency at the 10% level) or "not needed"(significance at the 1% level), and those not agreeing with student involvement thought students' hopes were "not needed" to be discussed at the meeting (significance at the 1% level).

Severity of Students' Intellectual Disabilities and Parents' Thoughts

　　Table 6 demonstrates sub-items with significance in parents' thoughts depending on the severity of students' intellectual disabilities. Parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities tended to think that daily communication with the teachers would not promote either parent or stu-

dent involvement (significance at the 1% level as the result of residual analysis), whereas parents of students with more severe intellectual disabilities tended to think the daily communication was "very needed" (significance at the 5% level). Parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities tended to think the recreation domain (significance at the 1% level) or evaluation of job training as reference for goal setting was "not needed" in ITSP (significance at the 1% level), whilst parents of students with more severe intellectual disabilities tended to think the recreation domain (significance at the 1% level) or evaluation of job training was "very needed" (significance at the 1% level). In addition, parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities valued students' hopes as reference for goal setting in comparison with parents of students with severer intellectual disabilities (significance at the 5% level).

Parents of students with moderate intellectual disabilities tended to think that receiving ITSP as it is was "very needed" (significance at the 5% level), whilst parents of students with mild or severe intellectual disabilities tended to think that receiving the ITSP as it is was "not needed" (significance at the 5% level). Furthermore, parents of students with moderate intellectual disabilities tended to think that students' taking classes to learn about ITSP was "very needed" (significance at the 5% level), whilst parents of students with mild or severe intellectual disabilities tended to think it was "not needed" (significant tendency at the 10% level). Parents of students of moderate intellectual disabilities also tended to think that daily communication with the teachers to promote student involvement was "very needed" (significance at the 5% level), whilst parents of students with mild or severe intellectual disabilities tended to think that the daily communication was "not needed" (significance at the 5% level).

Discussion

Parents' thoughts of ITSP varied depending on their degree that they agreed with parent involvement or student involvement. Also, they depended on the level of intellectual disabilities of their sons or daughters. The severer the students' disabilities were, the more the parents appeared to value the daily communication with the teachers. And the parents who agreed with their own involvement in ITSP prioritized daily communication with teachers over other issues, probably to promote agreement between the parents themselves and the teachers with regard to the future vision of the students. And the parents who strongly agreed with student involvement wanted the students to play the central role in the goal setting process, and also they themselves wanted to be active participants. It was indicated

in the present survey that they would not mind visiting the schools daily to talk about the students' transition issues with the teachers.

Previous studies in the United States pointed out that the communication between teachers and parents were critical so as to enhance parent participation in the transition planning process as well as parent-professional partnership (deFur, Todd-Allen & Getzel, 2001; Salembier & Furney, 1997). Salembier and Furney (1997) also found the factors inhibiting parent participation in the transition planning process were: (a) unsatisfactory parent-professional relationships, (b) a sense that IEP/transition planning meetings are predetermined, and (c) barriers related to the language and legal aspects of IEP/transition planning. Furthermore, Geenen, Powers and Lopez-Basquez (2001) found the barriers to parent participation such as: (a) parental fatigue, (b) lack of parental knowledge regarding their rights, school procedures or policies, (c) logistical constraints, such as a lack of child care or transportation, (d) rigid or limited options for parent involvement in educational planning, and (e) language. Boone (1992) also suggested parents needed more knowledge of the transition planning process so as to participate in the planning meetings. And she proposed parent training. It might be better if Japanese parents will have access to such training using simple and understandable language so as to have a good knowledge of ITSP, and if they will maintain the quality communication with the teachers.

According to the results of the present study, the stronger the parents agreed with student involvement, the more they thought that students' goals for employment were necessary items in the ITSP, and that students should be responsible for the goal setting. Takeda and Tezuka (1991) emphasized the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities was the major issue of

their community-participation in Japan. Parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities might have thought that the students already spent time in fulfilled recreation. Possibly because of these thoughts, parents didn't place importance on the recreation domain of ITSP. Another possible reason would be that they might have disregarded the recreation because they tended to think that employment was more important.

Parents of students with moderate intellectual disabilities tended to think that the students' taking classes to learn about participation skills at the planning process were needed in contrast to the parents of students with mild or severe intellectual disabilities. These parents might have thought that participation was important to their sons or daughters, and that they had a good chance to learn the participation skills by attending the appropriate classes. In order for students with disabilities to actively participate in the transition planning process, instruction curriculums have been developed in the United States. Next S.T.E.P. (Halpern, Herr, Wolf, Doren, Johnson & Lawson, 1997) is one of them and the effect on high school students with mild disabilities was examined positively by an experimental study (Zhang, 2001), although the effect on students with moderate disabilities was left for future research.

The results of the present study suggest that there are a variety of thoughts in the parents, and that the understanding of each of them may be important in order to develop the ITSP. A limitation of the study, however, is that the parents who participated in this study were those who already participated greatly in the activities including our survey in regard to student involvement and parent involvement. It means perhaps that those who answered our questionnaire are the parents who have participated more actively in their sons or daughters' special education than those who did

not answer our questionnaire. The low response rate of our survey might reflect the low rate of parents who had participated greatly in the activities that might promote student and parent involvement. The thoughts of the parents who were not willing to participate in this study must be investigated in future research.

Acknowledgments

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個別移行支援計画における生徒と親の参加に関する親の考え

水谷　由美・柳本　雄次

　都内の養護学校高等部に在籍する知的障害生徒の親 108 名を対象に調査を実施し、個別移行支援計画における生徒と親の参加に関する考えと、親が必要と考える生徒と親の参加の程度について検討した。その結果、生徒あるいは親の参加に賛成する程度により、親が個別移行支援計画において重視する事柄は有意に異なっていた。特に、生徒の参加に大変賛成する親は、個別移行支援計画における目標設定や就労の領域を記入するにあたって生徒の主体性を重視し、賛成する程度が低まるに従ってそれを重視しない傾向が見られた。また、生徒の知的障害の程度により、その親の考えは有意に異なっていた。すなわち、軽度知的障害生徒の親はより重度な生徒の親と比較して個別移行支援計画における余暇の領域を軽視し、中度知的障害生徒の親は軽度あるいは重度知的障害生徒の親と比較して生徒が計画作成に参加するために必要なスキルを授業で学習する機会を望む傾向が見られた。本研究の結果から、親の考えの多様性、その各々を理解することの個別移行支援計画を作成していく上での重要性が示唆された。

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