
**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL
HEADTEACHERS IN AFIKPO EDUCATION
ZONE OF EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the financial management practices of headteachers of primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The study focused on the teacher and institutional – related financial management activities. In an attempt to focus the study, three research questions were answered and two null hypotheses were tested. A 20-item questionnaire was developed and administered to 453 classroom teachers of primary schools and 43 staff of Local Government Education Authorities in Afikpo Education Zone. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings of the study revealed, among other things, that headteachers had a number of revenue sources which aided their financial management practices. Again, it was revealed that their teacher-related and institutional-related financial management practices bordered on such areas as: sponsoring teachers for workshops and conferences, motivating teachers with financial rewards, repairs and maintenance of school buildings and facilities, provision of office furniture and instructional materials, purchase of sports facilities and recruitment of ad-hoc security staff. Accordingly, it was recommended, among other things, that headteachers should explore the various identified practices in their financial management operations.

Introduction

The success of education in any country depends largely on adequate financing, be it tertiary, secondary or primary education. Currently in Nigeria, the funding of education is a joint venture between the Federal State and Local Government with the Federal Government providing a greater percentage of the funds (FRN 2004). This is only the case in public educational institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary institutions). Incidentally, this arrangement is not for the private educational institutions which are not part of this study.

In realization of the importance of primary education in Nigeria as the bedrock of educational development, and in an attempt to solve the various problems facing that level of education, the Federal Government set up the National Primary Education Commission

(NPEC). Over the years, NPEC has been involved in maintaining standards at the primary level of education.

Good schools and educational programmes are more likely to succeed when sufficient funds are made available to them. They are also needed to ensure that adequate resources are provided for the benefit of both teachers and learners. Indeed, funds are very important in the implementation of educational programmes in Nigeria.

Concept of Financial Management

Roseberg (2010) defines financial management as the function of raising and providing funds for capital purchases. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (2007) defines financial management as the planning for acquiring and utilization of funds in order to maximize efficiency and value of an enterprise. Financial management within the drive context, can be seen as the controlling, planning, organizing and co-ordination of financial activities of an organization in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

Birgham (2000) in his own assertion, regards financial management as involving rational decision-making in financial matters. Birgham further maintains that the work of the financial manager is to raise money needed to purchase the required plants, equipment and inventories. One thing in financial management is to raise money, but the other is to ensure that the money raised is utilized judiciously in order to maximize efficiency. The school manager therefore requires a sound knowledge of financial management practices in order to realize set educational goals.

The financial management of educational institutions in Nigeria especially, the public institutions is based on agency theory. The agency theory implies that, one party called the agent makes decision and acts on behalf of another, called the principal. Agency relationships are common in the public educational system in Nigeria due to the nature, arrangement and management of the educational industry. For instance, when the head teacher manages the financial affairs of a primary school on behalf of the Local Government Authority, an agency relationship exists.

The financial management of public primary schools, like other educational institutions in Nigeria is the application of the general management principles to the financial resources of the schools. It involves the planning (budgeting), organizing, directing and controlling (auditing) of the financial activities such as procurement and utilization of funds (managementstudyguide.com,n.d). The study guide states that the objectives of financial management at any setting is to ensure; regular and adequate supply of funds; adequate returns to stakeholders (In case of primary schools in Nigeria, parents, government, pupils and teachers); optimum fund utilization, safety of investment and sound capital structure.

A school's financial management, according to Kaguri, Njati and Thiaine (2014), is the execution by a person in a position of authority all those management actions (regulated tasks) connected with financial aspects of the school for achieving the set educational objectives. Joubert and Bray (2007) also described School's financial management as the performance of management actions in connection with the financial resources and activities of the school. The management action involves the task of planning (budgeting); organizing

(coordinating), leading (communicating and motivating as well as controlling (auditing) (Clarke, 2007).

Financial management is a very important managerial duty of headteachers of primary schools in Nigeria because of the huge amount of funds invested by the stakeholders for the education of children in the schools. The stakeholders that invest in the primary school funds include government at all levels, parents/guardians, the host community and other philanthropic individuals and organizations in society. The financial management in the school system is an essential part of public finance which encompasses the sources of funding and utilization of the funds for the purchase of goods and services as well as to perform other functions of the school (Borokhovich, Bricker, Zivney and Sundaram, 1995;Adeyemo, 2011).

Unfortunately, the knowledge and skill in financial management is not considered when appointing personnel to the headteacher position. Adeyemi (2011) corroborated that non consideration of training or even having prior knowledge of financial management in the appointment to the position of principals for secondary schools and head teachers for primary schools tends to affect the effective performance of financial management duties in the schools. This situation is the same for the classroom teachers who are often used by the headteachers to collect the statutory levies from parents and also assist the headteachers in the day-to-day implementation of the financial management tasks.

It is pertinent to note that while some headteachers prefer to use female teachers in their financial management practices, others tend to use more of the male teachers. The classroom teachers also benefit from the teacher-related financial management tasks of the head teachers. Similarly, the involvement of the classroom teachers (male and female) in the actual collection and application of school funds, put them in a better position to know about the institutional-related financial management activities of the headteachers. The teachers are also aware of the various sources of funds to the school. Although financial management is an indispensable function of the headteachers of primary schools in Nigeria, how effectively they perform the task remains a worry to the stakeholders. Despite the various funds accruing to primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, the management of these funds has been a cause of worry to stakeholders of Education in the zone (Enyi, 2012).

According to Ogbonnaya (2007), the funds available to primary education have been dwindling over the years. The abolition of payment of school fees in primary schools in Nigeria, for example, has reduced drastically the funds available to the headteachers for the running of the schools. Part of the school fees which hitherto had been utilized by the headteachers for running the schools are no longer available since school fees were abolished all over the country in September 1976, as a result of the introduction of the UPE scheme. Again, the current decline in oil revenue in Nigeria, has also dwindled the funds to education, generally (Arinze, 2015). This downturn in oil revenue has therefore reduced the amount of financial and material subventions from government to the primary schools. The decline in revenue notwithstanding, whatever amount of money provided by the government, parents and stakeholders need to be carefully managed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of education. Good financial management practices can contribute to the efforts of government and other interested parties to raise the standard of primary education for the benefit of the entire society. Primary school pupils are in their formative years, which

is a cogent reason headteachers should therefore rise up to the challenges of managing the funds available to them to improve the lot of these future leaders. It is therefore an obligation for the headteachers to ensure accountability and prudence in the utilization of school funds (Adeyemi, 2011).

In schools, financial management involves the planning, mobilization and utilization of financial resources to achieve educational objectives. School headteachers therefore, should be duty bound to undertake various financial management practices in various areas of school activities as could be related to teachers, pupils, school plant, etc. The question therefore is: what are the financial management practices of headteachers of primary schools in Nigeria? Accordingly, this study was concerned with teachers' pupils' and institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Primary school education as the bedrock of educational development requires adequate funding to achieve its objectives. Efforts have been made by the various levels of government in Nigeria to provide funds to implement educational programmes. The importance of funds and indeed of school finance in the implementation of educational programmes cannot be over emphasized. School funds are used for buying school equipment, erecting new school buildings, renovating old ones, payment of staff salary and repair of old school equipment among others. This very important task is one of the headship functions of the headteachers while other staffs perform as assistants.

Unfortunately, most of the school buildings in primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State are dilapidated; the roofs of some school buildings blown off by wind have remained unrepaired for years and pupils and teachers are made to stay under open shades to teach and learn respectively. In some schools, there are virtually no instructional facilities for instructional delivery. Furthermore, as crucial as primary education is to the people and government of this country, it is observed that most of the primary schools in Nigeria, especially in Afikpo Education zone of Ebonyi State, are in deplorable condition. The classroom teachers in the zone are demoralized and disenchanted as they lack the necessary instructional materials and other facilities for instructional delivery. The teachers also teach the pupils in unkempt and dilapidated environments, even with irregular payment of salaries and allowances. These scenarios seem to imply that the financial resources that are available to the schools are not well managed by the headteachers who are charged with that responsibility. The pertinent question therefore is: what are the financial management practices adopted by the headteachers to effectively utilize the schools finance?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone. The study was specifically designed to:

- (1) Identify sources of funds for primary school headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone.
- (2) Determine the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone.

- (3) Find out the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone.

Research Questions

- (1) What are the sources of funds available to primary school headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone?
- (2) What are the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?
- (3) Which institutional-related financial management practices are carried out by headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Local Government Education Authority staff and headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone on the headteachers ($p < 0.05$).

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of LGEA staff and headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone on the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers ($p < 0.05$).

Research Method

The design for this study is a descriptive survey. According to Nworgu (2006) and Ali (1996) descriptive survey is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Descriptive survey design is considered suitable for this study because the opinions of LGEA staff and headteachers were surveyed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Ebonyi State. The state has three senatorial zones, namely: Ebonyi North, Ebonyi South and Ebonyi Central. This study was conducted in Afikpo Education Zone in Ebonyi South which has the following Local Government Areas: Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ohaozara, Onicha and Ivo.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is 9122 which is made up of the 43 senior staff of Local Education Authorities in Afikpo Education Zone, and all the 9079 classroom teachers in the 120 primary schools in the zone. The teachers are distributed as: Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone – 3863; Ebonyi Central Senatorial Zone – 2811 and Ebonyi South Senatorial Zone – 2405. The population of the study was obtained from the Statistics Unit of Ebonyi State Universal Basic Education Board (2016). The Local Education Authorities staff were included because Local Governments in Nigeria are generally responsible for financing and managing primary education. The classroom teachers, on the other hand, were included because they are in most cases used by the headteachers to implement the financial management activities in the schools.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size studied was 496. The sample size comprised all the 43 senior staff of the Local Government Education Authorities and 453 of the classroom teachers. The sample of 453 or 5% of the classroom teachers were randomly selected as follows: Ebonyi North – 192, Ebonyi Central – 141 and Ebonyi South – 120 (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

Instruments for Data Collection

The instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Headteachers Financial Management Practices Questionnaire, (HFMPQ).” The questionnaire was developed by the researchers and it had two parts. Part A sought for general bio-data of respondents. Part B comprised 20 items in three clusters; A, B and C. Cluster A focused on the sources of funds for the management of primary schools. Cluster B on the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers, and cluster C was on the institutional-related financial management practices. The items in the clusters were structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). They were weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was face-validated by two experts in the area of Educational Administration and Planning and one expert in the area of Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their comments, criticisms, suggestions and modifications were incorporated into relevant items that gave the instrument its final structure and content.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was trial-tested to determine the reliability of the instrument. This was carried out using 15 classroom teachers and 10 staff of Local Government Education Authorities in Abakaliki Education Zone. The Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The Alpha was 0.68, 0.72 and 0.74 for each of the clusters and 0.71 for all the clusters put together. These coefficients show that the instrument is highly reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher with the help of eight (8) trained research assistants visited the LGEA and the schools concerned to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. Copies of questionnaire were administered and collected back through direct delivery and retrieval method. This method ensured that all the administered copies of the questionnaire were returned without loss or much delay.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean score and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. Any response that attained a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as positive response (Agreement) while any one below it was seen as negative response (Disagreement). The t-test statistic was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 probability level. The null hypotheses were rejected when the t-calculated value was greater than t-critical value; otherwise the hypotheses were accepted and retained.

Results

The results of the data collected were analyzed, based on the three research questions and two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study.

Research Question One

What are the sources of funds available to primary school headteacher in Afikpo Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of LGEA Staff and classroom teachers on Sources of Funds for the Management of the Primary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Item	Staff of LGEAs			Classroom teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
1	Federal and Local Government	3.68	0.66	SA	3.75	0.58	SA
2	Ebonyi State Government	3.44	0.58	SA	3.65	0.93	SA
3	Parents Teachers Association	3.13	0.75	SA	3.33	0.89	SA
4	School fees paid by pupils in the school	1.04	0.99	SD	1.33	0.93	SD
5	Sales from Handicraft	3.11	0.81	SA	3.01	1.00	SA
6	Donations from the local communities	2.40	0.95	D	2.31	1.05	D
7	Examination levies	1.66	1.25	SD	1.45	1.04	SD
8	Sports fees	2.00	0.89	D	2.12	0.97	D

Table 1 presents the mean ratings of staff of the local government education authorities in Afikpo Education Zone with regard to the sources of funds for the management of their schools. Looking at the table, one can see that items 1, 2, 3 and 5 are rated 3.68, 3.44, 3.13 and 3.11 with standard deviation of 0.66, 0.58, 0.75 and 0.88 respectively, by staff of LGEAs. On the other hand, the teachers rated the same items 3.75, 3.65, 3.33 and 3.01, respectively.

It is therefore, the opinions of staff of the local government education authorities and primary schoolteachers in Afikpo Education Zone that the sources of funds for the management of primary schools include Federal and Local Government, Ebonyi State government, parents teachers association levies and sales from handicraft.

Research Question Two

What are the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone?

The data for providing answers to the above research question are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of LGEA Staff and classroom teachers on the Teacher-Related Financial Management Practices of Headteachers in the Primary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Staff of LGEAs			Classroom teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
9	Sponsors teachers for seminars, conferences and workshops.	3.44	0.63	SA	3.55	0.55	SA
10	Motivates teachers with financial rewards.	3.89	0.58	SA	3.79	0.53	SA
11	Provides financial support to organize school-based staff workshops.	2.86	0.92	A	2.77	0.98	A
12	Provides money for organizing orientation for new staff.	3.33	0.50	SA	3.13	0.65	SA
13	Gives financial assistance to staff in domestic needs.	2.11	0.71	D	2.01	0.68	D

Table 2 above presents the mean ratings of staff of the Local Government Education Authorities and primary school teachers. Data on the table shows that items 9, 10, 11, and 12, have mean values of 3.44, 3.89, 2.86 and 3.33 with standard deviations of 0.63, 0.58, 0.92 and 0.50 respectively for LGEA staff. The primary school teachers, on the other hand, rated the same items 3.55, 3.79, 2.77 and 3.13 respectively. Item 13, has mean scores of 2.11 and 2.01 that are below the cutoff point of 2.50.

It is therefore, the opinions of the staff of the Local Government Education Authorities in Afikpo Education Zone and primary school teachers that headteachers' financial management practices in teacher-related areas include: sponsoring teachers for conferences, motivating teachers with financial rewards, providing funds for school-based workshops and staff orientation.

Research Question Three

Which institutional-related financial management practices are carried out by headteachers in Afikpo Education Zone?

Data on Table 3 summarize the responses of LGEA official and primary school teachers on the practices of headteachers.

Table 3: Mean Ratings of LGEA Staff and classroom teachers on Institutional-Related Financial Management Practices of Headteachers

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Staff of LGEAs			Classroom teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
14	Undertakes repairs of school buildings.	2.87	0.73	A	3.01	0.64	A
15	Provides office furniture.	3.00	0.72	A	2.98	0.73	A
16	Provides instructional materials.	3.83	0.74	SA	3.73	0.68	SA
17	Keeps accurate financial records.	3.09	0.73	A	3.42	0.79	SA

18	Provides funds for proper maintenance of school facilities to avoid wastes.	3.17	0.62	SA	3.01	0.65	A
19	Purchases sports facilities						
20	Recruits ad-hoc security	3.02	0.69	A	3.26	0.71	SA

As could be seen from the data on Table 3, all the respondents rated all the items above the 2.50 mid-points, implying the acceptability of all the suggested financial management practices with regard to institutional-related matters. The LGEA staff mean ratings ranged from 2.87 to 3.83, while those of the primary school teachers, ranged from 2.98 to 3.73

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of LGEA staff and primary school teachers in Afikpo Education Zone on the teacher-related financial management practices of the headteachers.

To test the above null hypothesis, a t-test comparison of the difference between the mean scores of the Local Government Education Authority staff and the teachers was computed and the result as shown on Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis of the difference in Mean Ratings of Respondents on the teacher-related financial management practices of the headteachers

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Degrees of freedom	Level of significance	Cal t-value	Critical (taste) value	Dec
Classroom teachers	120	2.90	0.61	161	< 0.05	1.20	1.96	Ho ₁
Local government education authority staff	43	3.02	0.57					Accept

Table 4 presented a summary of the t-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and staff of the Local Government Education Authorities on the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers in primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone. Looking at the table, one can see that the calculated t-value of 1.20 at 161 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, is less than the table value of 1.96. The first null hypothesis of the study is therefore, accepted, implying that there is no significant difference between the opinions of staff of the Local Government Education Authority staff and classroom teachers on the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) between the mean ratings of Local Government Education Authorities staff and primary school teachers in Afikpo Education Zone on the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers.

To test the above null hypothesis, a t-test comparison for the difference between the mean scores of the local Government Education Authority staff and the headteachers of primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone was computed and the result is shown on Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of t-test Analysis of the difference in Mean Ratings of Respondents on the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Degrees of freedom	Level of significance	Cal t-value	Critical value (taste)	Dec
Local government staff	43	3.04	0.56	161	< 0.05	1.60	1.96	Ho ₂
Classroom teachers	1.20	2.88	0.66					Accepted

Table 5 presents a summary of the t-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of classroom teachers and staff of the local government education authorities on the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers in primary schools in Afikpo Education Zone.

From the table, one can see that the calculated t-value of 1.60 at 161 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, is less than the table value of 1.96. The null hypothesis of the study is therefore accepted implying that there is no significant difference between the opinions of staff of the local government education authorities and primary school teachers in Afikpo Education Zone.

Discussion

Primary school teachers and staff of the Local Government Education Authorities in Afikpo Education Zone agreed that the sources of funds for the management of primary schools include: Federal and local government sources, the Ebonyi State government, Parents' Teachers Associations, sales from handicraft and examination levies. The findings establish the case that headteachers actually have the financial support base, upon which their financial management practices could be determined. The findings could also be regarded as being in the right direction, because Amujiri (2010) had identified similar financial sources with regard to schools in Nsukka Education Zone. Enyi (2011) made similar findings with regard to community inputs into education. It is expected that any meaningful financial management practices, can only be predicated on predictable financial sources.

As regards the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers, the data analysis revealed that virtually all the suggested five (5) items except one, were highly rated by both LGEA staff and classroom teachers, with a mean range of 2.86 – 3.89 for LGEA staff and 2.77 – 3.79 for classroom teachers on a 4-point rating scale.

The item which received the highest mean rating from both respondents, showed that, "motivating teachers with financial rewards", was a major financial management practice of headteachers. Other highly rated practices related to: sponsoring teacher for seminars, providing financial support for school-based staff workshops and providing funds for organizing orientation for new staff.

When data were further subjected to t-test analysis at 0.05 significance level, results showed that there was no significant difference in the opinions of both LGEA staff and

classroom teachers on the related financial management practices of headteachers as they relate to teachers.

The findings are in relative agreement with those of Adasu (2011), who, on a study on correlates of effective principalship; associated effective principalship with ability of principals to spend school funds on such prizes and rewards for staff. The identified financial management practices in the present study could therefore be justifiably argued to be in the expected direction.

In the case of the institutional-related financial management practices of headteachers both LGEA staff and classroom teachers accepted all the suggested seven (7) items, since they were all related above the 2.50 mid-point.

Accordingly, both respondents indicated that headteachers undertook financial management practices in such institution-related area as: repairs of school buildings, provision of other sports facilities, and provision of funds for facility maintenance and recruitment of ad-hoc security.

When the opinions of respondents were subjected to inferential testing, it was found that there was statistically no significant difference between their opinions on the rated items. The study finding is in line with that of Ezebuilo (1997), who, using teachers and Accounting Officers in Nsukka LGEA found out that school heads spent available funds on such matters as: repairing of damaged school buildings, provision of office and classroom furniture, printing of question papers and traveling expenses. Although Ezebuilo's study was carried out in a different state (Enugu State), the similarity of results buttress the similarity of headteachers' financial management practices in different locations.

Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. That headteachers tend to rely on such sources of fund as: Federal, State and Local Government contributions, PTA levies, school fees and sales from handicrafts for their financial management practices.
2. That the teacher-related financial management practices of headteachers border on such areas as: sponsoring teachers for seminars, motivating teacher with financial rewards and providing financial support for school-based workshops and staff orientation.
3. That the headteachers' financial management practices in institutional-related matters focus on: undertaking repairs of school buildings, provision of office furniture and instructional materials, provision of funds for equipment maintenance and purchase of sports facilities and recruitment of ad-hoc security staff.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made, based on the conclusions of this study:

1. Headteachers, while exploring other sources of revenue, should continue to rely on such available revenue sources as: Federal, State and Local Government subventions, school fees, PTA contributions and sales from handicrafts, in order to enhance their financial management practices.
2. Given the identified teacher-related financial management practices, headteachers should explore the following practices in their financial management activities: sponsoring teachers for seminars, conferences and workshops, motivating teachers

- with financial rewards, providing funds for school-based teacher workshops and providing money for the orientation of staff, particularly the new ones.
3. As regards the institution-related financial management practices, headteachers should always undertake the following identified practices: repairs and maintenance of school buildings and facilities, provision of office furniture and instructional materials, purchase of sports facilities and recruitment of ad-hoc security staff for guarding school facilities.
 4. The various state Ministers of Education as well as state Primary Education Boards, should use the identified financial management practices as basis for organizing workshops, conferences, seminars and in-service courses for their headteachers.

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