

Critical Analysis of the Education Reforms undertaken since 1990 in Research Teachers in Metropolitan Lima

Análisis crítico de las reformas educativas emprendidas desde 1990 en docentes investigadores de Lima Metropolitana

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Summary

The objective of this research was to generate a theory about the Neoliberal Education Reform, undertaken since 1990 and developed with different aspects in the governmental periods, from Fujimori to Ollanta Humala. This study was developed within the qualitative paradigm, with grounded theory methodology and description of the phenomenal situation. The sample consisted of six informants, who provided the data through the in-depth interview technique. As a result, it was found that there was no explanatory theory that reveals the background of this Education Reform as well as teachers who do not identify with this reform, the successes and failures of it. The contributions broaden the reflexive theoretical universe of society, which has to do with Peruvian education.

Keywords: Education Reforms; Neoliberalism; Grounded Theory.

Resumen

La presente investigación tuvo como objetivo generar una teoría acerca de la Reforma Educativa Neoliberal, emprendida desde 1990 y desarrollada con distintos matices en los periodos gubernamentales, desde Fujimori hasta Ollanta Humala. Este estudio se desarrolló dentro del paradigma cualitativo, con metodología de teoría fundamentada y descripción de la situación fenoménica. La muestra estuvo conformada por seis informantes, quienes proporcionaron los datos a través de la técnica de la entrevista a profundidad. Como resultado, se halló la carencia de una teoría explicativa que desvele el trasfondo de esta Reforma Educativa, además de docentes que no se identifican con dicha reforma, los aciertos y desaciertos de la misma. Los aportes amplían el universo teórico reflexivo de la sociedad, que tiene que ver con la educación peruana.

Palabras clave: Reformas educativas; neoliberalismo; teoría fundamentada.

Introduction

Historically, education has been a major issue since ancient Greece. In *The Republic*, Plato stated that "the education of warriors and children was of great relevance for the development of society, since education teaches what is good and beneficial: educated and wise people do not allow corruption, pride or greed" (p.12). This position reflected the intention to have a correctly developing society.

Taking into account the above, educational policies in Latin America and the world, in the last decades of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, are being experienced as a phenomenon consubstantial with Capitalism, known as globalization. This concept defines a series of changes and transformations of a political, cultural, social, economic and technological nature that influence the life of our nations. Behind this set of dynamics, measures and actions, there is a fundamental philosophy known as neoliberalism. This term synthesizes all this set of manifestations of development or progress, or whatever you want to call it. In other words, any analysis of a social nature will be related to the neoliberalism.

As stated by Brunner and Uribe (2007), the neoliberalism in education revolves around five lines that simultaneously act as educational policies in the world: a) decentralization, b) privatization, c) control or reorientation of the curriculum, d) credentialism and e) development of discursive lines around individualism, psychologism, naturalism and innatism (in response to policies of renewal and concentration of capital).

On the other hand, the events that marked some turning points in today's world were the Cold War (after the Second World War between the US and USSR superpowers) and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Both events brought a new face to the world scene. Undoubtedly, today we are

witnessing the development of science (the emergence of genetic engineering), technology and communication. For example, the Internet, robotics, the emergence of economic policies that open borders between countries, neoliberalism, globalization, as well as increased poverty, hunger, malnutrition, wars, among other things in most countries of the world. The fact is that society was not prepared for such an accelerated change in such a short time.

Within the neoliberal economic policies, the educational field has not been very successful in Latin America, starting with Chile, which was the first country that served as a laboratory, and also Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, among others. On the contrary, it has stopped being a mechanism of social inclusion to become a public resource or mechanism of exclusion. In addition, there has been a significant increase in schooling rates, accompanied by a process of becoming elitist of educational services between the wealthy and the less wealthy sectors of society. In this regard, in recent years, private educational institutions have increased exponentially both in the capital city and in the different provinces of the country.

It should be noted that, despite the changes and evolution occurred, there is no education reform in the world that does not have the active participation of teachers as a fundamental agent of this social process. As a professional in education, the teacher's participation should be not merely considered as a sound obedience action in the development of this process, but also as a contribution, by means of proposals for reflection and critical awareness. This barrier is still a challenge for the Peruvian Teachers' Union, which is socially discredited and pointed out as the only one responsible for the Peruvian education crisis. However, it is erroneous to place the teacher in this unfair position; therefore, the challenge lies in overcoming this false perception of the intervening sectors.

First Measures of Neoliberal Education Reform

The Peruvian education reform was not based on an explicit model but on a measures sequence, which were implemented in a coherent manner only in August-September 1997. We cannot propose effective policies for a change without understanding the complexity of the factors and cultures that interact in education systems and in school life (Pérez, 2001).

In the relationship between the central government and educational institutions, the reform model means a continuity and a sequence anchored in the operating instances of mediation.

On the explicitly neoliberal measures, Chiroque (quoted in Morillo, 2004) referred:

- Formal reduction of the Ministry of Education (Minedu): Minedu state workers decreased to a minimum.
- Competency-based curriculum: A competency-based approach is adopted.
- Enabling educational privatization: in 1992 with Law No. 699 which established the "concession of use".
- Since 1995, each school became an educational project for carrying out activities aimed at earning their own income (D.S. 48-94-ED). Law 26549 encourages the private sector.
- Outsourcing of teacher training.
- Promotion of a fragmented and pragmatic educational management.
- It is argued that basic learning is enough for poor people.
- The Chilean model of education municipalization was intended to be implemented.
- Control of the Peruvian Teachers' Union (SUTEP), and counterinsurgency measures.
- Measures were promoted to reduce the nutritional impact caused by the fujishock (former president Fujimori's enactment of wide-ranging neoliberal reforms) in the early 90's.
- School premises were built under the label of "Education Modernization".

- The salary of the rural teacher in 1991 had a certain equivalence with the graduated or non-graduated urban teachers.
- School textbooks are proposed.
- The sequence of the curricula of the initial level with the primary level was established by means of the so-called “articulation”.
- Beginning of evaluations for recruitment and appointment of teachers.
- The international baccalaureate is implemented in secondary school.

Ministry of Education completely unaware of Reality

There were some serious criticisms about the Ministry of Education, which contributed to the reduction of employees and the increase of administrative burdens. According to Piscocya (1984) “the Ministry of Education with a bureaucratic and patronage system which is disconnected from the academic world, from universities, professional colleges, scientific societies and international production centers of science and technology” (p. 102).

Despite the Sutep's efforts, the objective was to comply with the World Bank's opinions regarding formulas in education. In such a way that the government in office spends less on education, which is its constitutional responsibility.

Mercantilism and Human Capital

Pedagogical institutes and education faculties produce mediocre professionals, because most of these institutions profit from education. Such non-state-controlled institutions offer a large number of vacancies; actions that are completely out of context from reality, misused autonomies and lack of regulations. This, within the faculties of education and pedagogy, has created real factories of teachers. This is due to the State' disregard for teacher training and letting the market operate as it deems best.

As José Antonio Encinas Franco mentioned when he was a congressman for Puno; his neighbors used to ask him “work for their children, even it was as teachers”. As for the teachers professionalization policy, he stated that Peru “has lived eighty-four years of republican life without the benefits of a scientifically prepared teachers' union. Neither their schools nor their universities were able to leave the circle in which empiricism had locked them” (Encinas, 1989, p. 21).

Since the beginning of the education massification, many characteristics of our society have influenced for the deficient development of the educational system including the higher education. The lack of familiarity with reading in a primarily oral cultures, the authoritarian lags of an oligarchic and estamental society, the use of knowledge as a tool of power and social segregation, and the fact of being a society in which correctly spoken and written Spanish is seen as the privilege of a few people, has made it difficult for the school system and higher education to fulfill their role of integrating all those who benefit from this service in conditions of equality.

Privatization and Business Sense

The Government proposes education reforms brought from abroad extemporaneously, without considering the necessary money to be invested per student, the children's health and the teachers' derisory salary which is not enough for them to take training or improvement studies.

It is worth mentioning that some years ago Taiwan and Korea were as poor as Peru; however, they found a way to give their children a quality education. As a result, they have a per capita income three times higher than the average of Latin American countries.

At the national level, a great progress has been made in recent years. Teachers have a more flexible curriculum and the opportunity to be autonomous, enabling them to join the teachers' union which allows them to obtain better salaries and free training.

Lack of Financing and Impairment of Educational Quality

By the mid-1980s, the region's education systems were going through a crisis. Neoliberal reforms deepened old problems such as education inequity and the process of becoming elitist. The neoliberal model argues that the education policies of large school systems are inefficient, inequitable, and of low quality. The solutions, proposed by the neoliberal model, worsened the human situation rather than improving the education system.

The neoliberalism relied on the generalized defeated impression of the progressive field to disqualify the demo-liberal educational strategies, consider the traditional educational system finished, and eradicate from our memory the innumerable educational experiences (alternatives occurred between the 60's and 80's).

Attempt to Municipalize Education

Supreme Decree 26011 established the total handing over of schools to municipalities, through the Comuned (Municipal Council of Education). This municipalization tried to copy what Pinochet did in the 80's in Chile. But the rejection of teachers, parents and mayors forced its repeal in 1993-1994.

This municipalization was again proposed in the speech of July 28, 1997. Faced with this, the Sutep and workers of the Health sector promoted again a rejection movement. However, two failed experiences of education municipalization had already occurred in Republican Peru.

On the other hand, the World Bank supported Peru's decentralization. However, it was not only about administrative issues but also about the economic issues, cutting the education budget and leaving it in the hands of the municipalities. This was done in order for the central government to save more resources and to be able to pay the external debt.

The attempt of municipalization was to adorn speeches to be accepted as something new. There were speeches such as: "The municipality is closer to the people" or "Finland and Cuba have a high level of education because it has been municipalized".

Attempt to Incorporate Changes in Education

In the transitional government of Valentín Paniagua, an education project called the "*Acuerdo Nacional por la Educación*" (National Agreement for Education) was developed. This document was only published during the government of Alejandro Toledo, who later presented his proposal called "*Lineamientos del Plan Educativo 2001-2006*" (Guidelines for the Educational Plan 2001-2006").

This project outlines curricular and educational administration guidelines, reassuring the shared financing of education between the State, the community and the private sector; according to what was initially proposed by the World Bank during the Fujimori government.

The only positive result of these changes was the opening to dialogue with the Sutep, allowing the restitution of some union rights. In spite of this, the neoliberal program continued restricting the budgetary expenditure and, therefore, the teachers' salaries.

The Government and Congress had some proposals such as:

- Raise the budget for education to 6% of GDP.
- Doubling the teacher's salary in 2006.
- The Huascarán Plan and Emergency Education Policies.

The proposal to increase Education from 0.25% per year to 6% of GDP was a lie, considering the annual inflation, the population increase and that the minimum education budget was 8% of GDP. The teachers' salaries were another lie, since they barely reached one thousand soles in 2001 and with the aggravating factor that they were not pensionable. The emergency education policy, according to Law No. 28044, only reaffirmed the Fujimori neoliberal policy.

Inclusive education was an initiative of the World Bank that, under the deception of including the disabled in normal schools, only sought to reduce budgetary expenditure so that the foreign debt could be paid, instead of being an act of the education's democratization and universalization (Gallego & Ortega, 2014, 2016). The Huascarán Plan failed from the beginning, because beyond innovations, there was no an integrated teaching process but only a mere demagoguery and a low budget. Thus, the APRA government found this reality through quantitative data on illiteracy, repeating, dropping out ratings, and the absence of almost two million school-age children; and teachers working double daily to survive.

Bilingual Intercultural Education - (EIB from its Spanish initials)

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Peru is one of the countries with the largest indigenous population, after Bolivia and Guatemala, being in a favorable situation for indigenous people in recent decades. This important process and the indigenous peoples of Peru seek the historical recognition of inclusion in the Nation-State but with different characteristics of the colony or republican stage. Here, it is sought the defense of indigenous peoples and their territory, their identity as a people, and their right to receive an education with cultural and linguistic relevance for them.

According to the World Bank, eight million Peruvians are indigenous. It also reports that only 27% of the rural bilingual and school-age population has received bilingual intercultural education. The most underprivileged regions are those in rural areas and have bilingual populations. In terms of regulations on indigenous peoples, Peru is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest regulations on the promotion and protection of the Andean and Amazonian rights, but little has been done to implement these regulations and laws.

Bilingual Education (EB from its Spanish initials) or Bilingual Intercultural Education (**EIB**) went through several processes in history. A closer precedent of bilingual education is found in the "Mesa redonda sobre monolingüismo Quechua, Aymara y la educación en el Perú" (Round table on Quechua, Aymara monolingualism, and education in Peru), called in 1963 by José María Arguedas, then director of the "Casa de la Cultura" (House of Culture). The recommendations were implemented in the first National Bilingual Education Policy issued in 1972. This was the first policy in the South American region to respond to the country's cultural and linguistic diversity.

The concept of interculturality emerged 20 years later. It sought to avoid the imposition of an exclusive model of culture and to revalue the cultural dynamics of the country in terms of equality. The 1989 policy on Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) and the 1991 National Policy on Intercultural Education and Bilingual Intercultural Education incorporated the concept of interculturality.

Pragmatism in the Neoliberal Education Reform

Unlike previous efforts, the achievements in education are not as promising. These include progress in terms of social programs, and scholarship programs aimed at students and teachers.

The increase of investment in the education sector and the budget of 4% in relation to GDP was another achievement that took place at the end of the government of Ollanta Humala. However, the threat persists due to the misuse of resources where millions and millions are spent on a frequently inefficient system, which could lead to its failure. Public Financing in education has significantly increased, but it is not sufficient because according to the National Education Project (PEN from its Spanish initials), investment in education must be higher.

Table 1.

Variation Table of Public Expenditure on Education per Student and Educational Levels.

	2000	2013	Growth 2000-2013
Early Education	663	1 898	286%
Primary Education	697	2 057	295%
Secondary Education	935	2 170	232%
Alternative Basic Education	808	1 612	200%
Special Education	2 433	7 438	306%
Productive Technical education	693	1 326	191%
Non-university Higher Education	1 131	3 825	338%
University Higher Education	2 368	6 036	255%

Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance - Public Sector Financial Administration System (SIAF from its Spanish initials) Minedu - School Census.

Deficiencies are evident. This is because there is an installed bureaucracy along a ineffective teacher level. At the level of the state bureaucracy, we could name the results of the researchs carried out:

- The trainings and specializations provided so far by the Minedu are neither of good quality nor effective to reverse the crisis.
- The teacher performance level in public schools is very low. The teachers performance needs to be improved in methodological, instrumental and academic aspects.
- The State's vision towards teachers is one of mere paternalism as a worker in education, but not a fully-fledged professional.
- Lack of investment in infrastructure and equipment. As a result of a low budget, (most) educational institutions have a very poor infrastructure.
- There are serious deficiencies in professional offers at the higher education level. University programs do not respond to the country's development nor are they connected to the productive process.

There are other relevant measures that are being implemented in the education field:

- Scholarships such as “Beca 18” and others.
- New National Curricular Framework.
- Teachers' Trade Union Reform Law.
- Curricular Reform.
- University Reform (New University Law).

- High Performance Schools (COAR from its Spanish initials).

Method

The research was developed within the qualitative approach, interpretative or naturalistic paradigm. According to the creators of the grounded theory, Glasser and Strauss (1967), it would contribute to closing the gap between theory and empirical research by relying on the symbolic interactionism and qualitative sociology. In addition, it would contribute as an alternative to the functionalist and structuralist theories that in this context enjoyed a great deal of prestige in American society.

On the basis of the grounded and phenomenological theory approach, the study was carried out with a non-experimental design, since the information was gathered from the experience and facts of the teachers' lives in Metropolitan Lima.

The interviewees were chosen because of their knowledge about the education reform. For this purpose, teachers from Metropolitan Lima, from the basic and high education levels participated. There were also some teachers from the Sutep leadership. On the other hand, a Vice-Minister of Education was interviewed in order to further investigate teachers' organizations policies. Therefore, the sources are reliable so that the information is collected and analyzed in its real dimension, according to the research protocols.

The participants were public school teachers, who represent the National Teachers' Union. Some are leaders of the Sutep, a teachers' association that has a lot to do with this qualitative study.

Results

Neoliberal Education Reform as an Emerging Theory - Reform, Education and Neoliberalism Relationship

According to the critical historical analysis, since 1990 to date, almost 28 years of application of this type of policies in our country, and we find greater arguments about the social role, its goals or objectives for society. Throughout the exploratory work of the sources and theoretical investigations, it has been possible to notice a variety of concepts, points of view, perceptions and definitions that do not keep certain homogeneity in the understanding of the term neoliberalism. On the intellectual level, there is a variety of points of view from pragmatic, sociological to political. On the other hand, there are much elaborated concepts in bibliographic texts, journals and Internet sources; concepts do not differ from this disparity of meanings. To the following questions: what is neoliberalism? Is it a theory of development? Is it doctrine? Is it ideology? Is it philosophy? The interviewees replied:

Well, strictly as an analyst, I will begin with practical experiences: neoliberalism is a policy of imposition that destroys consciences in countries like ours, it is not a theory of development. DI02

Neoliberalism is a political, economic and social doctrine, it is the renewal of liberalism with strong emphasis on modernity, based on individual success. DI03

I am not at all clear about this: I can just say that it is a policy exercised by the capitalists to loot the wealth of third world countries. DI01

The first answer attributes to it a political-type conception of imposition that is exercised by the developed countries on the poor countries, in terms of economics and politics. However, this way of exercising policies by powerful countries on developing countries is nothing new, it has always been present. In the second answer, it is understood as a doctrine that encompasses several aspects of social development, that contradicts the previous answer and acknowledges it

as a theory of development with strong emphasis on modernity. Finally, it hesitantly argues that it is a theory of looting exercised by developed countries.

According to Zaccagnini (2004), to talk about reforms in education is to try to carry out major structural and/or organizational changes in the education system. Since 1980 such processes were aimed at expanding the education coverage. This is understood as "outward reforms". Since 1990, the second generation of reforms were promoted, directed by supranational bodies and based on a quality and equity philosophy. These reforms are called "inward reforms" and the third generation of reforms would be designed to give more autonomy to schools. In general terms, one of the interviewees said the following about the reforms:

The fundamental aspect of a reform is a change of purpose and objective of an education system; and based on the change of purpose or objective of an education system, I have to change the rest of the components, inputs and processes that lead me to fulfill that purpose or objective. DIO3.

Finally, based on the preceding argumentative elements, the reforms propose interaction spaces among all the high, intermediate and initial levels of the educational institutions. Therefore, different points of view are proposed, with which one can agree or disagree, or stand aside.

Conceptualization of the Neoliberal Education Reform

In traditional capitalism, education is conceived as use value, but in the last years, it is conceived as an exchange value, as a product that is bought and sold.

Marx somehow analyzed this when he stated that in capitalism, work was no longer to work for oneself in order to develop oneself, but rather work was simply a means to..., thus this comparison is important in order to achieve this substantive change in the neoliberal model. DIO3

The fundamental purposes change in the neoliberal model. Therefore, an education that aims for development is no longer conceived under this humanist vision. In accordance with this, Peñaloza (2003) talked about an education to humanize people, which served as an end because our capacities develop as we learn. This kind of education falls through the cracks. Based on previous events in this country, one of the interviewees took it back 25 years ago. That is why he expressed the following:

There were no such changes in the neoliberal proposal as there were in the Education Reform of Velasco, a very clear point in the educational field that consisted in assigning to education this new role in the neoliberal model of society, but in practice, this change was gradually made. In the 1990s, Fujimori and the technical people who had to reformulate that curriculum (what they now call the New Pedagogical Approach) were altering one of the components based on a non-explicit purpose. But, the neoliberal purpose of education was not only human development, but simply a means for human development, to conceptualize education no longer as a right but as a service, to initiate an intensive process of education privatization, to seek that education is not a right. So, neoliberalism, the individualization of education in terms of the individuals, the education concept as a commodity that leads me to the privatization of education and this to the deregulation of teachers' work, etc. DIO3

The global model of society is which is going to determine a formative change in people's behaviour. For example, in the case of neoliberalism, until the end of the decade from 1990 to 2000, the media existed but they were not so massive in the decade of the 1990s. The Washington

Consensus had analyzed the world context, mainly the Latin American context, and observed that capitalism was generating revolts across the world. During the 1970s, the reformist attempts of Velasco Alvarado took place in Peru, and as for Latin America: the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Montoneros in Argentina, the Nielsquese in Chile, and the FARC in Colombia. There was an effervescence over the change of the global capitalist model. It was a model that made the poor poorer and the richer and richer. In the face of this, we had to look for solutions by looking for historical information as how to change this; consequently, we have the following interviewee, who confirms what was expressed:

The global model of society is what will determine a formative change in people's behavior. It is not determined by the schools, nor by social and cultural institutions, but it is fundamentally the global model, capitalism in its neoliberalist phase, where the gaps between the poor and the rich are increasingly more pronounced. DI03

One of the closest precedents is the Education Reform of Velasco, which was a different situation. To a certain extent, there was a response from civil society, from teachers and students, who were looking for a certain hope. So far, we remember the benefits of such an important event. The following interviewee was directly involved in this reform; he nostalgically recalls what happened and said the following:

This change of purpose is going to lead me to change in terms of teacher training in three great dimensions. There was a change in the ideology of the reform's purposes approach, followed by the change of contents to be taught and the methodological strategies. Then, there were three major changes in the concepts of training: ideological-political, thematic content and everything related to methodology. So this happens when there is a change of purpose in the role of education in society, that's when we're going to have a reform. DI03.

Nowadays, we cannot talk about reform if we do not talk about education or education without reform, and about the strong attachment of these processes. Processes that are intimately interconnected with the term neoliberalism, since it is about the macro-policy in which the entire society is immersed, comparing these terms at a conceptual level.

In short, we could synthesize that this reform is a partial reform, fundamentally oriented to the economic process. We can confirm this assertion through the statements made by our interviewee and co-participants in this process; those who expressed in this regard, "a reform is not a specific innovation, but a systemic change of a set of systems, beginning with the change of the purpose and the ends". DI03

Discussion

The administration of Alberto Fujimori brought with it the implementation of a new neoliberal economic model, under the guidance of the World Bank. It should be noted that this entity's contribution consists of advising governments on the development of their educational policies. In this context, Supreme Decree 882 was promulgated in 1996, allowing the private sector to enter the higher education market. This caused the proliferation of private and national universities, without technical or scientific criteria, only with a business interest.

However, in view of the different reforms sought, there has been a great change in the purposes, structures, beneficiaries and other elements that the education sector may include. This could be seen from the Velasco's reform, taking into account the hope generated in society, especially in the teachers. These changes can also be seen in the guide of the *Rutas del Aprendizaje* (Learning Pathways) offered by the Ministry of Education, in which the Minister of Education, Patricia Salas, expresses her desire to improve the working conditions and professional practice

of teachers. It is based on the idea that the teacher is the driver of a change towards a better society, promoting a movement in which the entire educational community is involved. Throughout the different sections of the guide, the teachers' role and their importance in society are highlighted, emphasizing their role with and for citizens.

Documents of this nature have been the starting point for teachers to contribute by exercising their profession with the desired quality, and by taking responsibility for the students' right to receive a quality education.

Despite all this, full effectiveness has not yet been demonstrated in an education reform that benefits both teachers and students, which involves civil society. The precedents show that there have been countless changes and proposals, but most of them have political and economic foundations, without taking into account a proper plan, evaluation of the gaps and indispensable processes for the implementation of reforms. There are several studies that show that teaching practice has improved in Metropolitan Lima over the years. There are also researches that raise the need of teachers and students in order to achieve success within the framework of the proposed educational system. Through reports such as that of MINUDE (2016), related to the Educational Quality Statistics Unit, it is concluded that "Metropolitan Lima has presented an important evolution at the economic level, which has been effectively translated into the social sphere". (p.37). In this way, it is established that the work teams identify the problems arising years ago so that the improvement of learning can be achieved through the teacher's daily practice. As proposed by MINUDE (2015D) "the analysis can also show which pedagogical or institutional practices have been positive in achieving learning. With this information it will be possible to continue doing and improving what has been effective". (p. 5).

Indeed, many challenges still need to be emphasized in order to optimize global education in general, and Latin American and specifically the Peruvian education system. One of the greatest challenges, as some authors have pointed out (cf. Gallego & Rodríguez, 2014), is the universal education for all students within contexts of resource equity and democratization. An education system that guarantees meeting all the educational needs of students, including special needs (Rodríguez, 2015), which is a phenomenon known as inclusive education.

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