

MILESTONES IN TEACHER EDUCATION: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

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Abstract Anniversaries are occasions for reflection, and this is also the purpose of this paper. On the occasion of the venerable anniversary of the academic institution dedicated to teacher education, we shall reflect on the milestones that mark the journey so far and, on the other hand, on the main ideas, dilemmas and conceptual solutions that have accompanied this journey through several stages. Since the middle of the last century, two important milestones have been identified: the beginning of teacher education at the tertiary level in the early post-war period and then, just at the time of Slovenia's gradual independence, its full integration into the general framework of university studies. These two milestones mark the historical rise of the field of teacher education, which has been confronted with ever new challenges over the last three decades. As in the past, these challenges have been linked both to general societal changes and to the specific problems that these changes bring to the complexity of the field of education. Therefore, this paper will also focus on the challenges, questions and dilemmas in the midst of which we find ourselves today and to which we obviously do not yet have all the answers.

Keywords:

teacher education,
higher education,
Slovenia,
Pedagogical
Academy,
Faculty of
Education

1 Introduction

Anniversaries are an opportunity for reflection, and on this occasion, some of the findings of research on teacher education have been summarized (Zgaga, 2010; 2013; 2020a; 2020b). Firstly, the perspective from which this topic was approached, is explained. The predominant approaches are those that focus on processes centred on pedagogical, didactic, and psychological paradigms. The author's disciplinary roots are in philosophy and sociology, so this topic was approached somewhat differently. On the one hand, it could be called a history of educational policy ideas, and on the other hand, an analysis of teacher education from the perspective of contemporary interdisciplinary studies of higher education.

Since the arrival at the former Pedagogical Academy in Ljubljana in 1977, the author's interest in the study of teacher education has been strengthened by the realization that teacher education institutions are squeezed between the external demands of political institutions as well as the broader social environment – and the internal demands of academic institutions, especially the more prestigious faculties.

Teacher education is an important segment in higher education systems; according to international statistics, about 10% of all students are enrolled in this field, yet, in terms of academic power and influence, it remains a marginal sector (Zgaga, 2010, p. 176-177). For example, its share of international student and staff mobility is often quite low compared to the dominant faculties, and the salaries of graduates from this field are often lower than those of the more attractive academic professions, and so on. However, the research field in higher education studies, which has only developed in the last few decades, tends to focus on topics in dominant university settings, while teacher education – and some others, such as social work – remain overlooked. Regardless, schools for future teachers have gone through a gradual and rather difficult process of “universitisation” since the middle of the last century. For that reason, a devotion towards consideration of this phenomenon is necessary.

2 The “Universitisation” of Teacher Education

Among renowned scholars, there are a few who have recognised this blind spot. For example, in his iconic work on academic tribes and territories, Tony Becher (1989) points to the tension between “research excellence” and the supposedly routine

“ability to teach” as one of the fundamental contradictions of modern universities. The fact is that research is generally more valuable than teaching. But in the specific area of teacher education, this tension appears in several forms: as tension between the subject content and pedagogy, as controversy over a parallel or sequential system of teacher education, and so on. In educational reforms, these tensions are reflected in the conflicting demands to include either “more subject” or “more pedagogy” in the curriculum for future teachers, in the formal criteria for promotion of staff, and so on. All this defines the complex context in which the transition of teacher education to the tertiary level – in Slovenia as well as worldwide – has taken place since the middle of the last century.

With its universitisation, teacher education has found itself in a dilemma between two equally important functions: the traditional function of educating future teachers and the new academic, especially research, function. What should exist in an and - and relationship, unfortunately, is often viewed as an either - or relationship. Publish or perish. About twenty years ago, this was discussed in an interesting way by two Americans: John Goodlad, a distinguished researcher in teacher education, and Burton Clark, a doyen of studies of higher education.

Reflecting on the process of universitisation of teacher education, Goodlad (1999) notes that teacher education schools entered the university arena with an innate unease while this space received them inhospitably and full of scepticism about their academic fitness and worth. On the one hand, they were constrained by the disciplinary requirements of the humanities and natural sciences, i.e., the two dominant academic spheres that also have a hegemonic role in terms of the content of the school curriculum. As a result, once incorporated into universities, teacher education schools have been assigned a relatively marginal role with less autonomy than most other schools and faculties enjoy. Even at America’s research universities, these schools were out of luck, Goodlad argues; in that environment, they were better promoted academically, but the price was that they lost touch with primary and secondary schools – their natural laboratories. Goodlad concludes his reflections with a parallel between the study of medicine and the study of future teachers: the expansive scientification of medicine has led to its dehumanization – a trend that now threatens studies by future teachers as well.

In his reply to Goodlad, Burton Clark (1999) points out that all “professional schools”¹ at American universities are subject to certain constraints. They are constrained both by academic disciplines and by professional associations (or chambers) outside universities. However, teacher education schools are subject to specific constraints unique to the teaching profession. These schools prepare students to teach the subject, while the subject itself is in the hands of other, dominant, humanities and science departments at American universities. This is not the case in any other professional school, such as engineering.

The situation of teachers’ schools, however, is not hopeless, Clark comforts his readers. He draws on the theory of the “new production of knowledge” by Michael Gibbons (1994) and his group. Gibbons distinguishes between Mode 1 (disciplinary knowledge) and Mode 2 (transdisciplinary, applied knowledge), but Clark proposes an additional Mode 1½ that includes interdisciplinary knowledge. According to Clark, teacher education schools must build on all three modes: Mode 1 is disciplinary and includes (in his somewhat specifically American view) educational psychology and methodology in addition to the disciplines that provide school subject knowledge; Mode 1½ combines history, sociology, philosophy and similar broader views of education in an interdisciplinary way, while Mode 2 focuses on transdisciplinary work on key issues facing practitioners in schools.

Clark (1998) is best known as a theorist of university organization, so it is not surprising that he identifies the main problem facing teachers’ schools within universities as an organizational one: there are different streams of knowledge generated at the university, and the question is how best to connect all these streams in preparing future teachers and similar profiles. However, he points out that there is no magic formula on how to achieve this goal. He advises us to seek the path of “local experimentation”. Clark (1999) says that new patterns do not emerge overnight but can only be the result of “years of learning through trial and error”.

When we acknowledge local distinctiveness, all of this is generally true for our region as well. We, too, have had decades of “local experimentation”, of “learning by trial and error”. This now requires us to rethink the milestones we have reached. The journey of the universitisation of teacher education has gone through several phases.

¹ This term should not be confused with terms such as Fachhochschule in German or Visoka strokovna šola in Slovene.

The following two important milestones can be recognized in Slovenia: first, the beginnings of tertiary teacher education in the early post-war years, and then its full integration into the university system around 1990. We will try to rethink this process, which has lasted more than half a century, and to distinguish four phases.

3 Phase 1: From Higher Pedagogical School to Pedagogical Academy (1947 – 1961)

The field of education in the early post-war period was strongly marked by the terrible consequences of the four years of destruction. The renewal of the educational system was, therefore, initially characterised by lower standards (e.g., 7-years of primary school instead of 8 was conducted for a couple of years), but at the same time, the fundamental goal of the new state was to eliminate illiteracy and enrol all children in schools. An almost impossible demand – both for the teachers and for the teachers’ teachers. The training of primary school teachers continued to take place at upper secondary teacher training colleges (*učiteljsišča*). The University of Ljubljana (established in 1919), the only Slovenian university at the time, followed its traditionally elitist mission, paying no attention to the education of primary school teachers. Under these circumstances, in 1947, the government founded the Higher Pedagogical School in Ljubljana (*Višja pedagoška šola*)² as the first Slovenian institution of its kind at the tertiary level. An excellent study by Aleš Gabrič (2006) on the post-war educational reforms states that the university was “a staunch advocate of traditional academic principles. Therefore, it strongly opposed the proposals of the Higher Pedagogical School to join the University”, as it was “pedagogical rather than scientific in nature” (*ibid.*, p. 212). Gabrič also mentions the position of the Faculty of Philosophy (University of Ljubljana), which “felt it has nothing in common with the Higher Pedagogical School” (*ibid.*, p. 239).

Controversy also broke out within the national reform forums. The positions of the representatives of the different federal republics³ diverged, among other things, on the question of what kind of education the teachers of the renewed eight-year school should have. The Slovenian representatives were in favour of a four-year higher education degree (*visokošolska izobrazba*), but because of the unification of the system

² Odločba o ustanovitvi Višje pedagoške šole v Ljubljani [Decision on the establishment of the Higher Pedagogical School in Ljubljana]. Uradni list LRS, July 5, 1947.

³ The Yugoslav Federation (1945–1991) consisted of six *republics*.

throughout the Federation, a two-year degree was finally legalised (*višješolska izobrazba*). At the same time, the old Humboldtian concept of “impartial search for truth” was replaced by the concept of a “university meeting the needs of the development of a socialist society”. The old organisational framework of the university was fragmented: now, it was only a loose “association of higher education institutions” and the faculties became fairly independent units, but of course under careful political control. The great need to increase the number of graduates in the country was reflected in the division of traditional four-year degree programs into two stages (2 + 2-year system), and in the establishment of new self-standing colleges (*višje in visoke šole*; two- or four-year systems, respectively), especially in some industrial centres where they had not existed before. Such case in Slovenia was the city of Maribor. The reform of compulsory education should not be ignored: the abolition of lower grammar schools (*nižja gimnazija*) and the introduction of a comprehensive eight-year primary school. The external differentiation after 4th grade was thus abandoned, but the differentiation of teacher education remained: for *all* primary school *teachers* (such was their formal title), two years of tertiary education was only a promise in 1958, while for upper secondary school *professors* (formal title), four years of university education was already the traditionally accepted standard.

The reform of the late 1950s was in many ways problematic, contradictory, and ideologically charged, but in the case of teacher education, there is no denying that it reached a new level with this reform. The idea of a “*pedagogical academy*” (Dekleva, 1960) had now gradually taken hold even if its realization was not without complications and paradoxes. The idea had already existed: Gabrič (2006, p. 122) reports that in June 1954, the authorities took a “decision in principle on the establishment of teacher academies in Ljubljana and Maribor”; even a draft law on these academies was prepared, “which was postponed at the end of 1954 and then forgotten”. The main reason was the different cultural traditions and the uneven development of education within the “*multi-cult?*” federation.

By the 1950s, the Higher Pedagogical School in Ljubljana was in full operation. Its founding decree (1947)⁴ stated that it was to train qualified teachers for teaching in lower grammar schools or in the upper grades (5 – 8) of primary school, as well as

⁴ Odločba o ustanovitvi Višje pedagoške šole v Ljubljani [Decision on the establishment of the Higher Pedagogical School in Ljubljana]. Uradni list LRS, July 5, 1947.

educators for special schools and educational homes. At the *tertiary* level this was the novelty. However, teachers for the lower grades continued to be trained at the old *upper secondary* level colleges (*učiteljska*). When the entire educational system was reformed in the late 1950s, several questions arose about teachers. Documents from this period testify that a teacher with a secondary school degree was “increasingly treated as a semi-intellectual” (Dekleva, 1960, p. 61) by the public. *Učiteljska* became obsolete. At the same time, the Higher Pedagogical School, which had now been in existence for more than ten years, was accused of neglecting the pedagogical preparation of its graduates and emphasizing subject knowledge instead. In the eyes of the faculties, however, this subject knowledge was “far too weak” to enable these graduates to pursue a four-year university program.

In this situation, the idea of a *Pedagogical Academy* as a higher educational institution was reaffirmed, which should have taken care of strengthening all types of teachers, while the *učiteljska* and the Higher Pedagogical School should have been abolished or transformed. Considering the political efforts to establish new higher education centres throughout the Federation, it is easy to understand why the first Pedagogical Academy was established in Maribor in June 1961⁵. A new Slovenian higher education centre was gradually emerging in the city, and it was expected that a new institution of this kind would significantly promote its growth into the new, second Slovenian university. On the other hand, there was no university here (yet) that would hinder the development of such an institution with academic scepticism, as was the case in Ljubljana. The first steps of the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor were supported by the Higher Pedagogical School in Ljubljana, which was also transformed into a Pedagogical Academy a little later, in 1964.

4 Phase 2: From Pedagogical Academies to Pedagogical Faculties (1961-1991)

The establishment of two Pedagogical Academies completed the first phase of the transition of teacher education to the tertiary level. With the result achieved, of course, new questions soon arose, which continued into the 1980s. We cannot go into detail here, rather, our focus was on the mid-1980s and the transition to the 1990s, when decisive steps were taken in the second phase of the gradual

⁵ Zakon o ustanovitvi Pedagoške akademije v Mariboru [Act on the Establishment of the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor]. *Uradni list LRS*, June 29, 1961.

universitisation of teacher education in Slovenia. However, it is necessary to say that both pedagogical academies became *members of the universities*,⁶ the old one in Ljubljana and the new one, established in 1975, in Maribor.

The second phase was again closely connected to a major educational reform: the last and the most disputed in the framework of socialist Yugoslavia. It was a reform of *career-oriented education (usmerjeno izobraževanje)*, which was prepared in the Federation in the mid-1970s. In Slovenia, its implementation was delayed⁷ and accompanied by many dilemmas and open criticism (see Zgaga, 2021, p. 217-220). In a broader historical perspective, the criticism of this reform was one of the currents that led to the *Slovenian Spring* in the late 1980s, while in a more specific, educational perspective it also contributed to the development of teacher education.

The main criticism of this reform was that it completely subordinated the educational system to instrumental understanding, the opposite of concepts such as *Bildung*, and moreover, subjected it to even stricter ideological control than had previously been the case. The 1980s were the years of the awakening of civil society and pro-democratic “alternative movements” in Slovenia, which contributed to the fact that the system gradually underwent significant changes, both in the political and educational sense, as soon as after 1986. In this context, a decisive step was also taken in the universitisation of teacher education.

The concept of career-oriented education presupposed “educational verticals” between upper secondary and higher education: a student who started at an upper secondary mechanical school, for example, could in principle continue at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering as well as other faculties, depending on the entrance exam. The traditional *gimnazija* (grammar school) was abolished. All higher education study programs had to be adapted to this principle, and so a Pandora’s box of study programs was opened. First, there was a significant change in pre-school education: in 1984, both Pedagogical Academies introduced a two-year degree program in this field. So now the entire vertical of teacher education from kindergarten to the end of primary school was at the tertiary level. This raised the old question: Why is a four-year university degree required for secondary school teachers and only a two-year diploma for primary school teachers? Moreover, the policy of “educational

⁶ *Članica univerze* is a term typical for Slovenian university terminology.

⁷ Zakon o usmerjenem izobraževanju [Career-Oriented Education Act]. *Uradni list SRS*, May 7, 1980.

verticals” led to the gradual emergence of new subject programs at the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor that resembled the university programs at some faculties in Ljubljana, while some subject programs (e.g., Slovenian and foreign languages) at the Pedagogical Academy in Ljubljana were transferred to the Faculty of Arts. The result of this program shuffling was that the old demand to raise the education of *all teachers* to university level was finally accepted in the mid-1980s. At the same time, the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor was renamed Faculty (1986), as this was important for the development of the University of Maribor, but in Ljubljana this happened later, in May 1991, after long negotiations within the university and with the authorities.

This difference can be explained primarily by the attitude of a broader university understanding of the role of the “teacher training school”, if using a pejorative term. In Ljubljana, the Pedagogical Academy was a chick under the not always friendly protection of a hen (i.e., traditional faculties), while in Maribor, the Pedagogical Academy was a hen that hatched new disciplinary faculties⁸ and thus considerably strengthened the University itself. This is Clark’s “local experimentation” and “learning by trial and error” transferred to our environment. Two completely different contexts led to the same result. After the proclamation of the Republic of Slovenia in June 1991, there were two Faculties of Education at two universities licenced to award university diplomas to their graduates. Master’s programs were emerging; doctoral studies were still very limited. The major obstacle was research capacity and output. At this point, the second phase of the development I am talking about comes to an end.

5 Phase 3: Consolidation of Teacher Education Standards (1991-1999)

At the beginning of the 1990s, Slovenia fortunately avoided the storms of war that began to rage in the territories of the disintegrated Federation. The central task became the creation of new structures in an independent state, including the education system. A new Higher Education Act was passed in 1993⁹ and a package of laws regulating pre-tertiary education in 1996¹⁰. Among other things, nine-year

⁸ Two decades later, in 2006, the previous Faculty of Education was divided into three faculties: the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Natural sciences and Mathematics, and the Faculty of Education. See *Uradni list RS*, 6 April 2006.

⁹ Zakon o visokem šolstvu [Higher Education Act]. *Uradni list RS*, 17 December 1993.

¹⁰ Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja; Zakon o vrtcih; Zakon o osnovni šoli; Zakon o gimnazijah; Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju; Zakon o izobraževanju odraslih [Organisation and

primary education was introduced, which also had a major impact on teacher education.

The Higher Education Act, among other things, abolished the former two-year degree study programs and introduced three-year (the *professional degree*) and four-year (the *university degree*) programs. Both types of degree programs were run by university faculties. Thus, the pre-school education program had to be raised to a three-year program. But the question remained: should other teacher education programs be transformed into “professional” (3-year) or “university” (4-year) programs? Since 1986, they had been implemented as four-year programs. On the other hand, the act introduced a system of national accreditation for higher education, which, among other things, contributed to another important step – the phase of *consolidation of standards for teacher education*.

When the Pedagogical Academies became faculties and the study programs were extended to four years, a new systemic issue arose: the *formal status* of graduates of “pedagogical” (i.e., teacher education) programs was now the same – regardless of which faculty they came from, but the *structure and content* of their studies were not. In some faculties, where the education of future teachers was a marginal task and the main task a fundamental discipline, the pedagogical dimensions of the study program were neglected. The question of the relationship between the subject and the pedagogy in the programs at various faculties, which formally confer on graduates the licence to teach in schools, was again open. The lack of pedagogical skills among graduates of some faculties was increasingly pointed out by the primary and secondary schools themselves, which, with a thorough reform of the system, were faced with a new set of tasks for which they needed competent pedagogical staff. This, in short, is the context in which the initiative was implemented to define, within the general criteria for the accreditation of all higher education programs, a set of specific criteria that should apply to *all* teacher education programs.

Thus, in June 1995, the Council on Higher Education, the accrediting body in the country at the time, adopted “Criteria for Evaluation of Pedagogical Study Programmes”¹¹. In addition to meeting all other academic criteria, it specified that

Financing of Education Act; Act on Kindergartens; Basic School Act; Gimnazije Act; Vocational and Technical Education Act; Adult Education Act]. *Uradni list RS*, 29 February 1996.

¹¹ *Uradni list RS*, June 22, 1995.

“pedagogical programs” must include both “subject” and “pedagogy modules” – the latter lasting *at least one semester or more*. The aim was thus to formalize a *parallel model* of teacher education, irrespective of the faculty at which it takes place. The realization of this criterion for both Pedagogical Academies was not as much of a novelty as for other faculties. At the same time, shorter, initially one-semester pedagogical training programs were created for the graduates who had not received a “pedagogical package” during their studies, but who wanted to work as teachers (*sequential model*).

6 Phase 4: The Impact of Internationalization on Teacher Education (1999)

Adopting the new criterion was far from an easy task, but *growing international cooperation* also made an important contribution to its successful implementation. In consolidating standards for teacher education, the example of good practice from other EU countries was followed upon. In the 1990s, several EU TEMPUS programs in teacher education were carried out, in which colleagues from e.g., Finland also participated, which was particularly interesting for us (Hytönen et al., 1999). In general, the 1990s were marked by “Europeanisation” in the field of education. In 1999, Slovenia completed the pre-accession negotiations in the field of education for joining the European Union and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (concerning higher education in the European Region); it joined the ERASMUS program and signed the Bologna Declaration. All this indirectly shaped the processes in the field of teacher education to such an extent that one can speak of a *fourth* phase.

In the past, practically everywhere in the world, the field of teacher education was jealously confined to patriarchal domesticity, quite different from the classic university disciplines, where international openness and participation are considered an inevitable prerequisite for academic quality. However, by the end of the twentieth century, teacher education was also included in the process of European consolidation (Hudson & Zgaga, 2017). Joint projects were launched, such as the renowned Tuning Project (Wagenaar, 2019), the Green Paper on Teacher Education (Buchberger et al., 2000) was published, and the first, initially modest, exchanges of teacher education students and staff began (Zgaga, 2010). ERASMUS brought a tremendous change; teacher education broke away from patriarchal domesticity, the

process of getting to know each other and learning about good practice began to flourish, and all this also accelerated research in the field, which was a particularly important step. Not to mention that the question of a “European teacher” was raised (Schratz, 2014).

Europeanisation has led to a new national reform of higher education, popularly known as “Bologna”. What needs to be said here in this context is that this reform, like the reforms in the past, has opened space for new steps in teacher education. Among other things, undergraduate pedagogical programs – expanding now to 5 years (BA + MA) – have gained in prestige as a result of this reform, not least because international cooperation and research achievements in the field have been strengthened. Organizational innovations are also noticeable: the Faculty of Education in Maribor has multiplied, like a good hen hatching her chicks, creating new faculties, as has been established. In 2003, Slovenia gained its third Faculty of Education, this time in Koper (within the newly established University of Primorska)¹², founded on the basis of a previous branch of the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana. One could therefore say that the Ljubljana Faculty has also “multiplied”, albeit in a different way. It is worth highlighting that with this reform, doctoral studies in teacher education and educational sciences have finally been articulated and affirmed (2010). We are proud of the doctoral school in Ljubljana, where in recent years these studies have been carried out in both Slovenian and English language groups. So, these are the results of our “local experimentation” and “learning by trial and error”. This is the position from which we must now look forward.

7 Conclusion

After seventy-five years of the development of teacher education at the tertiary level (in this country) we have not, of course, arrived at a “millennial kingdom”. Nor will we ever reach it. There is no shortage of problems, questions and dilemmas regarding the way forward, and we will certainly have the opportunity to discuss this topic extensively. To the old issues, such as the relationship between subject and pedagogy, new ones are added, such as inclusion in education, the use and misuse

¹² Odlok o ustanovitvi Univerze na Primorskem [Decree on the Establishment of the University of Primorska]. *Uradni list RS*, February 7, 2003.

of ICT, sustainable development, the consequences of the recent pandemic in education, etc. Since it is impossible to address all these issues at this time, a few words that refer to a broad and general, but strategically no less important, topic can be drawn in conclusion.

The teaching profession is the heir of the Enlightenment – and it shares its destiny with that of the Enlightenment. Anthropocene, artificial intelligence, and similar modern concepts bring up difficult questions that we need to be able to articulate and answer very soon. On the other hand, the world in which we find ourselves today is the world in which we compete – not for the first time – with currents hostile to the spirit of Enlightenment. The language of *scholars* and *teachers* is being replaced by *Twitter* and *Instagram*. Argumentative debate is being replaced by populism. It is as though schools have taught people to read just so they can read the tabloids and fake news. “*There are no viruses!*” “*There is no global warming!*” “*The earth is flat again!*” So, what is the point of educating teachers? A world like this needs gurus, or a Caesar, or both. Not teachers.

The universities and the scientific community in general do not have entirely clean hands in this matter. They have strayed too far from these issues. And the fact is that the whole spirit of the Enlightenment – and by extension the sciences – face major challenges. Universities have to face these challenges: not only classical “Mode-1” faculties, but also faculties of education.

Recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of communicating and reporting sciences and arts to a wider audience. An important question is also how science today – and the spirit, the culture of the Enlightenment in general – can be communicated through the educational process. Here a broad field opens up in which faculties of education must work hand in hand with all other faculties. This action must be in the common interest. *As teacher education has universitised it has become an area for which the whole university should feel responsible.* Many of the challenges of the “risk society”, as defined by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1986), require thorough responses from *all disciplines*, in inter- and trans-disciplinary ways, and the culture and knowledge achieved must be communicated to a wider society if it is truly a “knowledge society” – and if universities are not just closed *ivory towers*. We need not just multiply – but *integrate*. We need to be able to bring new knowledge and a new culture, which provides answers to the challenges

of the *risk society*, into the entire educational vertical. And in this process, well-educated teachers at universities will remain one of the most important pillars.

Acknowledgments

The article is based on research work within the framework of the research program Systemic Aspects of Educational Strategies and Encouraging Social Inclusion in Education (P5-0126), financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

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