



INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AS A MOTIVATION FACTOR FOR FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATION PEDAGOGICAL SPECIALISTS

M. Fyodorova-Radicheva*

Department for Pedagogy and Psychology, Department for Qualification and Professional
Development of the Pedagogical Specialists, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

The role of the innovative pedagogical practices has been discussed in many aspects, such as a factor in the improvement of the quality of education in general and educational support for children and students with special educational needs. This paper explores innovative pedagogical practices as a contributing factor in enhancing motivation of trainee teachers and special pedagogy students. The study is conducted through a questionnaire, providing the subjects with the opportunity to indicate the innovative pedagogical practices they are familiar with and to recognize their role in their work motivation. The results of 122 surveyed persons show that all recognized innovative pedagogical practices as a positive factor in the work of the pedagogical professional. Students found innovative pedagogical practices very useful in smoothing their work and adding originality and ease to their work, making their career choices more desirable.

Keywords: work attitude, pedagogical innovation, future pedagogical specialists

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic evolution of processes in modern society requires a continuous update of methods and models in any social structure. Innovative practices develop as a result of this need. Innovation is a change in which new methods, products or services are implemented, changing the existing situation in a particular field by using an invention or existing technological means in a new way. In an educational context, innovation refers to the introduction of anything new in "the aims, methods, technologies, forms, content and organization of teaching and learning." thereby creating a new type of educational product or an improvement in the educational activity process. (1, p.10)

Pedagogical innovations are oriented towards improving the overall qualitative aspects of education. Innovation can affect the efficiency, performance, equipment and quality of

education, and it impacts all stakeholders (players, actors) in the educational process - students, teachers, parents and the whole school environment. The innovation is not limited to introducing a new technology. Its meaning goes beyond the dry and arbitrary introduction of various new ICT technologies in education. Innovation can be introduced into any part of the educational process. It can be related to the content of education (e.g. curriculum changes, new subjects), methodologies technologies and methods (innovative teaching methods, various new learning concepts), interaction with parents (new events and communication channels), the leadership system (changes in management practices and styles), etc. (1) Implementing innovative pedagogical practices and embedding a high level of innovative culture improves the organizational climate and professional development of teachers by creating a positive learning environment that fosters sharing and collaborative culture (2) Innovative learning-teaching methods improve students' motivation to learn (3), create an engaging and effective learning environment, and lay the foundation for significant improvement in teaching and learning. (4) The introduction of ICT in education through

**Correspondence to: Maya B. Fyodorova-Radicheva, Department for Pedagogy and Psychology, Department for Qualification and Professional Development of the Pedagogical Specialists, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", Plovdiv, Bulgaria, Bul. "Bulgaria" 236, +359 32 261 791, maya.fyodorova@uni-plovdiv.bg*

innovative didactic models helps to meet the social demands for continuous quality improvement in all spheres of life that have emerged as a result of the transformation to an information society. (5) The creation of new multidisciplinary subjects, the incorporation of social and humanitarian contexts, and the active engagement of innovative practices in the education and qualification of educational professionals improves the quality of education by increasing the work motivation and career development of educational professionals. This in turn improves the overall quality of education. (6) Improving the learning environment and introducing innovative pedagogical practices that facilitate learning and inclusion are of particular importance to special educators. The application of innovative pedagogical methods and practices, such as Universal Design for Learning, significantly facilitate the inclusion of all children and students in inclusive education and are particularly important for improving the learning process and the work of special educators, speech therapists, resource teachers and psychologists. (7) The work of this type of professionals in the context of the inclusive education is inevitably closely linked to the use of non-traditional pedagogical approaches. Without the implementation of this type of methodology and toolkit, the work of the special educator is unavoidably hampered. In this context, the availability of such innovative pedagogical practices is a major factor for success and continuous improvement of inclusive learning environments created mainly by special educators in the educational system. The lack of such methodologies inevitably hinders the work of pedagogical specialists and reduces their overall motivation to work.

The work motivation of pedagogical specialists is a major factor determining the success of the whole development of the educational process. For the effective management of the educational organization's complex system, besides well-chosen goals, formulated tasks and correct solutions, it is necessary to ensure the performers' interest in their implementation, i.e. good motivation. Since management on the one hand appears to be the ability of "reaching a result through other people" (8, p. 143), a major component of it is directing the activities of team members towards the goals of the organization. Motivation is defined, as a form of active attitude of the subject to reality, aimed at achieving a consciously set goal and

FYODOROVA-RADICHEVA M.

associated with the creation of socially significant values and the acquisition of socially significant experience. (9) Motivation to work with innovative methods is an integral part of the successful and useful implementation of innovations in education. To a large extent it is a consequence of the attitude of pedagogical specialists towards educational innovations.

The values, standards and attitudes that form the behaviour of the participants in the innovative process are the main components of the innovative culture. (1, p.20) The study of the components of the established attitudes and stereotypes towards innovative pedagogical practices will help to identify their role in their future professional realization.

The core psychological construct bringing together the key aspects of these mechanisms is attitude. The American Psychological Association defines attitude as "relatively enduring and general evaluation of an object, person, group, issue, or concept on a dimension ranging from negative to positive. Attitudes provide summary evaluations of target objects and are often assumed to be derived from specific beliefs, emotions, and past behaviors associated with those objects." (10) *In this definition, emphasis is placed on the presence of relative constancy in a given predisposition formed by the three basic components of mental activity - thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The three-component model of attitudinal setup allows the role of attitudes in behavior to be fully examined and appreciated on its merits. The cognitive component includes cognition - certain or uncertain, thoughts and beliefs, about the attitude itself and the object (attitudinal object.). The affective component is related to the emotional appeal of the attitude, with the belief being sufficient to produce a strong emotional effect, under certain conditions. The third component, the behavioral component, concerns the predisposition to certain actions in relation to the attitudinal object. (11) It is the presence of the evaluative, emotional component that distinguishes attitude (attitudinal) from opinion. This component lends it resilience, as attitude change is much more difficult than simple opinion change (12, p. 154) This postulate once again highlights the importance of examining attitude shaping and adjustment in the successful implementation of innovative organizational development.*

Attitude formation occurs on the basis of a divergent perception of different sources of information through different channels. (13) In other words, the attitude itself contains divergent information, united by cognitive and emotional-evaluative activity. Once formed, the attitude determines the emergence of distinctive patterns in the mental activity of the cognitive subject. (14) These distinctive patterns determine the heuristics of the social attitude. Presence of a strong affective component in the heuristic implies the necessity of polarity of the stored evaluation itself, therefore this evaluation can be either favorable or unfavorable. Thus, attitudes can be either of a positive type, in which there is a manifestation of strategies of approving, valuing, defending, etc., or of a negative type, in which strategies are directed towards avoiding, harming, blaming, etc. (12, p. 182) These stereotyped patterns of thinking, affect, and behavior manifest as a strong element of human mental activity, especially in situations suggesting necessity of using heuristics. Stereotypical knowledge is mostly used in the absence of firm information, despite the fact that it also influences perception and judgment, in solving certain cognitive tasks related to the attitudinal object. (12, p. 188) For educational professionals (the individuals studied in this research), these situations occur frequently in the conditions of deprivation, which very often arise from chronic levels of stress. The presence of serious levels of stress contributes to the creation of a charged working environment (15), in which conditions are extremely suitable for the appearance of stereotyped thinking and realization of the prejudices (biases) formed in the structure of attitudes. The formation of the attitude takes time and experience, which implies the strong demand for focused activity in creating a positively charged environment among educational professionals. In some cases, for experienced educational professionals, persistent attitudes already exist and their change is extremely difficult and time consuming. At the same time, the dynamic change in the age structure of teachers and pedagogical specialists employed in the education system (16) suggests that there is a scope for a substantial modification of the overall innovative culture by introducing new comers to the education system as future pedagogical specialists currently studying in higher education institutions. This finding is also the main motivation for the present study,

FYODOROVA-RADICHEVA M.

whose key objective is to identify the motivations and attitudes of future education professionals towards innovative pedagogical practice.

Such a context once again highlights the importance of investigating the attitudes of educational professionals to the overall innovation culture of the organization. Knowing the attitudes and motivations of the educational professionals who are about to be infused into education enables an overall detailed picture of the environment for the development of innovative practices. Namely this fact determines the importance of the research reported in the present article.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present study was conducted through a short questionnaire containing 6 items. The questionnaire includes the following items:

1. Which innovative teaching approaches are familiar to you?
2. Which innovative teaching approaches are most effective in your opinion?
3. Does the opportunity to apply innovative pedagogical practices in your work boost your motivation to work in the field you are majoring in?
4. In your opinion, does the adoption of digital technology makes your career more attractive?
5. In your opinion, does the adoption of innovative pedagogical practices makes your career more attractive?
6. In your opinion, will the use of mentoring, coaching, and tutoring help the adaptation of newly hired teachers and education professionals?

Items 1 and 2 allow an open-ended response and all other items offer a 5-grade scale as a response option, respectively:

- 1 - no
- 2 - rather no
- 3 - can't decide
- 4 - rather yes
- 5 - yes

All respondents give their consent for their answers to be used for the purposes of the study. Data is anonymous and is not subject to evaluation by the respondents. All analysis and statistical hypothesis testing was performed using IBM SPSS 25 statistical software.

RESULTS

Research has been conducted in April and May 2025 and includes a total of 122 special education students from different degrees and courses of study. 97 of the respondents are studying in Bachelor's degree and 25 in Master's degree. The average age of the persons studied was 26.3 years, with a minimum age of 21 and a maximum age of 36.

In response to question #1: Which innovative teaching approaches are familiar to you? - 94 (83%) respondents indicated the practice of flipped classroom, 83 (74%) co-teaching, 19 (17%) universal design.

Regarding question #2: Which innovative teaching approaches are most effective in your opinion? - Co-teaching was mentioned by 41 (37%) respondents, universal design by 36 (32%) and 35 (31%) mentioned flipped classroom as most effective.

Responses to question #3: "Does the opportunity to apply innovative pedagogical practices in your work boost your motivation to work in the field you are majoring in?" show a clear positive trend and positive attitudes towards innovative pedagogical practices. All 100% of the respondents gave a positive answer to the question, with 81 (66%) giving a "yes" answer and the remaining 41 (34%) indicating a "rather yes" answer.

Regarding question No. 4: "In your opinion, does the adoption of digital technology makes your career more attractive?" the picture is similar, although not so clear-cut. 62 (51%) of the respondents answer this question extremely positively ("yes"), 36 (29%) with "rather yes", and 24 (20%) answer rather negatively with "rather no".

For question No. 5: "In your opinion, does the adoption of innovative pedagogical practices makes your career more attractive?" the majority of 83 (68%) respondents answered "yes", 18 (15%) - "I can not decide", and 21 (17%) gave a negative answer - "rather no".

On Question No. 6: "In your opinion, will the use of mentoring, coaching, and tutoring help the adaptation of newly hired teachers and education professionals?" There is a unified opinion with 122 (100%) of the respondents answering with an overwhelming "yes".

The test of statistical hypotheses, performed using statistical analyses Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis H Test with specialized statistical software IBM SPSS 25, with $\alpha=0.05$ showed no statistically significant differences between the subjects, by age, grade and stage of training of the subjects.

DISCUSSION

The presence of an ultimate consensus regarding the high motivational value of innovative pedagogical practices in the work of the special educator is unquestionably evident in the answers of the surveyed persons to the question centrally focused on the research problem - question No. 3. This shows unequivocally that there is an active positive attitudes towards innovations in education among future pedagogical specialists. It can be considered that the main hypothesis of the research concerning the high value of the innovative educational practices as a motivator for special educators is unequivocally confirmed. However, while prospective special educators are confident that innovative pedagogical practices enhance their own motivation to work, they are less certain about their role on the overall image of their profession. This once again confirms the existence of a specific positive attitudinal influence on the results obtained.

Positive trends can also be identified in attitudes towards digital technology, although almost a quarter of respondents felt that its use had a negative impact on the image of their profession. The lack of unanimous consensus on this issue reflects the controversial nature of the implementation of digital technologies in the teaching process.

Respondents' familiarity with innovative pedagogical practices was satisfactory, with the vast majority citing the flipped classroom as their first choice, probably due to their own familiarity with this practice, which is commonly used in their university studies. Interestingly, although the ratings were similar, the highest rating was not for this practice but for co-teaching, which involves some stronger support from the teacher. Nevertheless, the role of innovative pedagogical practices related to the improvement of the working environment in educational organizations is firmly positive. The high positive evaluation given by the respondents to the use of mentoring, tutoring and coaching to support newly employed

teaching professionals shows unequivocally that this type of innovative practice is unanimously accepted. The expectations and natural insecurities of newly appointed professionals find secure support in the face of these types of methodologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article was funded by project 2023-1-BG01-KA220-HED-000155494 "Improvement of digitalisation competences of recent and future teachers by development of advanced training on instructional design of digital training" of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

CONCLUSIONS

Innovative pedagogical practices appear to be strong positive motivational factor for the future special education specialists.

Innovative practices are also a strong motivational factor with positive attitudes not only towards the learning process but also towards the working environment of the pedagogical specialists. The use of mentoring, tutoring and coaching in the workplace are highly valued as factors for retention in the profession and working as a special pedagogue. It may be beneficial to strengthen and expand training in innovative practices at the University education.

Many benefits can be added with expand research in the field of the attitudes towards innovative pedagogical practices and their application in educational system. The detailed knowledge about the nature of the tree main components of the attitude will allow the creation of programs promoting development and innovation in education, which can increase the quality of education in general.

Recommendations for further research may include the need for further research in the area of monitoring the motivation and attitudes of working educational specialists. This would enable a more complete and coherent picture to be created of the attitudes and impact of innovative pedagogical practices in education.

REFERENCES

1. G. Tsokov, G. Ivanova, Y. Yanakiev, M. Bizova, D. Dimitrova, K. Ovcharova, L. Afrikanov, A. Angelov and N. Nikolov, *Inovatsii v deistvie. Nauchnoizsledovateliski analiz na obmena na inovatsiite v bulgarskoto obrazovanie i promyanata na*

FYODOROVA-RADICHEVA M.

uchilishtnata kultura., Plovdiv: Universitet'sko izdatelstvo "Paisii Khilendarski", 2020.

2. A. Paletta, G. Alimehmeti, G. Mazzetti and D. Guglielmi, "Leadership and innovative teaching practices: a polynomial regression and response surface analysis," *International Journal of Educational Management*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 897-908, 2021.
3. U. Kale and N. Shivane, "Study of Innovative Teaching Learning Practices and its Impact on Students Level of Learning," *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science Communication and Technology*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 557-560, 2024.
4. J. Vega, V. Bedoya and M. La Riva, "Beyond traditional teaching: a systematic review of innovative pedagogical practices in higher education," *F1000Research*, pp. 13-22, 2024.
5. G. Kozuharova and D. Ivanova, "Didactic models for applying ICT in education," *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, vol. 13, pp. 462-467, 2015.
6. N. Lytvynenko, H. Yuzkiv, K. Yanchytska, O. Nikolaieva, V. Nikolaiev and V. Kvitsynska, "Innovative practices in teaching social sciences and humanities as the basis of modern pedagogical discourse," *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, vol. 5, p. ss0510, 2023.
7. D. Levterova, G. Atanasova, G. Tsokov, Y. Takeva, I. Trichkov, V. Sivakova and I. Dushkova, *Priobshchashto obrazovanie*, Plovdiv: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Paisii Hilendarski", 2023.
8. A. Karpov, *Psikhologiya menedzhmenta*, Moskva: Gardariki, 2005.
9. L. Desev, *Rechnik po psikhologiya. Shesto popraveno i dopulneno izdanie.*, Sofia: Bulgarika, 2010.
10. American Psychological Association, "APA Dictionary," 23 07 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://dictionary.apa.org/attitude>.
11. T. Olufemi, "Theories of attitude," in *Psychology of attitude*, Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2012, pp. 61-78.
12. E. Arünsün, *Choveküt - sotsialno zhivotno.*, Sofia: Izdatelstvo "Damyan Yankov", 2009.
13. M. Manolov, "Sotsialni normi, pertsepsiya i formirane na atityudi pri bulgarite," in *Prilozhna psikhologiya i sotsialna praktika. XV Mezhdunarodna nauchna konferentsiya.*, Varna, 2016.

14. N. Tkachenko and P. Ivliyev, "Teoriya ustanovki D.N. Uznadze kak sistema poznaniya zakonomernostey psikhicheskoy aktivnosti cheloveka, yego soznaniya i deystviy.," *Prikladnaya yuridicheskaya psikhologiya*, vol. 2, no. 59, pp. 121-126, 2022.
15. Y. Yanakiev, Stress and mental health: Handbook for university students., Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Publishing House, 2021.
16. Natsionalen statisticheski institut, "Obshti dannii za obrazovaniето," 19 07 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nsi.bg/statistical-data/182>.