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**NOVICE TEACHERS' READINESS FOR INNOVATIVE  
ACTIVITIES IN EDUCATION**

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***Abstract***

The role of the modern teacher has changed over the past years from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator and mentor. Professional activity of teachers cannot promote their self-development if it is based on outdated teaching practices and does not help exploit the opportunities aimed at improving academic outcomes. The article highlights the importance of innovative activities in education and their influence on professional and self-development of novice teachers. Taking into account that an innovative activity is based on self-reflection, we define it as a tool for new knowledge acquisition, mastering pedagogical skills, and transformation of educational process aimed at improving academic outcomes. The main features and characteristics of the innovative activity in education are discussed in connection with novice teachers' attitudes towards collaborative creative activity which helps develop professional competences and unlock the teaching potential. The article addresses the issues of novice teachers' adjustment to innovation processes in education. The final part of the article discusses methods and techniques of facing the challenges of adjustment as well as factors influencing readiness of novice teachers towards innovative activities in education.

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## 1. Introduction

The modern teacher needs to grow professionally and continuously develop professional and personal skills. Thus, the innovative activity can serve as a basis for teachers' professional self-development.

The innovative activity is based on self-reflection, that is, teachers' analysis of their pedagogical experience. The process of self-reflection can be described as a goal-oriented activity aimed at transforming educational practice, improving academic outcomes, acquiring new knowledge, and mastering pedagogical skills.

The main goals of the innovative activity can be summarized as follows:

- to promote scientific-pedagogical and scientific-research activities of teachers;
- to encourage innovative research activities of teachers, their desire to learn new teaching methods and methods of data analysis, and personal development;
- to conduct scientific research on topical issues in education related to professional, pedagogical, and managerial activity;
- to implement the results of research in pedagogical practice (Lukyanova, 2017).

## 2. Problem Statement

Innovations change established pedagogical practices in a particular educational institution. Furthermore, innovations require changes in teachers' pedagogical activity, thinking, and behavioral patterns. Novice teachers' readiness to participate in innovative activities depends on several factors, namely, (1) the level of their preparedness for it, and (2) a set of qualities, which can be:

- personal (performance in the workplace, readiness for creativity and personal development, ability to cope with stress);

- field-specific (understanding of modern educational technologies, a knowledge of different methodologies, the ability to identify problems and find creative solutions) (Lukyanova, 2017).

One cannot address the issue of novice teachers' readiness for innovative activities in isolation from changes taking place in society and education. A distinguishing feature of education is that it is ahead of the curve in terms of new technologies and innovations. Global societal developments cannot be successful unless they are rigorously prepared. Therefore, the effectiveness of reforms in education depends on the development of society as a whole.

## 3. Research Questions

How do novice teachers adjust to innovation processes in education?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The article highlights the importance of innovative activities in education and their influence on professional and self-development of novice teachers. Taking into account that an innovative activity is based on self-reflection, we define it as a tool for new knowledge acquisition, mastering pedagogical skills, and transformation of educational process aimed at improving academic outcomes. The article addresses the issues of novice teachers' adjustment to innovation processes in education.

## 5. Research Methods

The main method of this study is extensive critical literature analysis.

## 6. Findings

Experience suggests that the fundamentally conservative nature of education does not provide conditions for its rapid change (Balashov & Lukyanova, 1998). These slow changes take place on different levels, they relate to education content and methods of teaching. However, education system cannot be transformed easily. For instance, Ushinskiy (1989) states that one cannot change the system of education and upbringing without taking teachers' voices into account.

It should be mentioned here that despite the diversity of innovative approaches to the organization of the educational process, they have common features:

- students' participation in real-life situations, their collaboration, decision-making, responsibility, which have a higher priority than knowledge transfer from a teacher to the students. These activities help pupils gain real-world experience;

- understanding that the issue of education content is less important than that of educational environment which provides the basic conditions for education. The information presented during classes may fail to meet expectations of students, so that teachers need to ensure that pupils have the right to choose and change their educational path;

- innovative educational process is aimed at promoting students' personal growth, which is inconceivable without continuing professional development of teachers. This presupposes a fundamental change of relationship between participants of educational process, aimed at the development of collaboration skills, the improvement of creativity, and the promotion of communicative activities. This approach to the organization of the educational process is apparently opposite to the traditional approach, which is bound by the rules and thus limits students' educational potential.

Teachers' orientation towards collaborative creative activities and the development of relevant competences of students are key features of innovative activities in education. However, it is regrettable that the development of creative thinking and collaboration of students and teachers are not a top priority for novice teachers.

It is clear that teachers implement innovative approaches in teaching when they are dissatisfied with their pedagogical practice, its organization, and outcomes. At the initial stage, it is important to not only notionally understand the fundamental purpose of education, that is, knowledge acquisition and personal enhancement, but also to find innovative approaches to meet educational goals more effectively and solve the contradiction between diverse real-world experience and conservative education system within a traditional approach to education. In order to meet these challenges, teachers should reflect on their teaching practice, identify its strengths and weaknesses.

As is known, interpersonal relationships are influenced by changing socio-economic conditions. In the past, the development of collaborative skills and the ability to work in a team were prioritized over instilling the values of individualism. Nowadays, there has been a shift of emphasis in education from collective to individual values.

Training and education are at a different state of development in Russia. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, traditional educational institutions (children's and youth organizations, children's communities, etc.) were disestablished without contention. As a result, old ideals of collective education were consequently abandoned. The lack of well-organized collaboration between students and their interaction with the community may lead to the fact that students form informal organizations to confront the society. It is clear that this is one of the prerequisite for promoting values of individualism.

There are similar processes taking place in education. The gradual transition from traditional ways of organizing studies to innovative ones, the emergence of a variety of educational establishments, the opportunity given to each student to choose their educational path, collaboration between students and teachers contribute to the development of the student's personality. However, there can be other prerequisites for the promotion of individualism. For instance, although beginning teachers can make the wrong choice while selecting the field of study, schools, and mentors, they do not take responsibility for their choice.

Therefore, an attempt to analyze the organization of the educational process from novice teachers' perspective shows that ways of transforming education system often wrongly unify two different notions, namely, 'individualism' and 'individuality'. Individualism is 'a worldview that centralizes personal uniqueness and focuses on individual rights above communal duties' (Davydov, 1993). The content of the notion of individuality includes the uniqueness of personality; the combination of personal characteristics, thoughts, emotions, needs, desires, interests, habits, moods, feelings, perceptual processes, attitudes, abilities; IQ and EQ, etc. The comparison between individualism and individuality shows that the goal of innovative education is to ensure students' personal growth which contributes to the development of individuality (Balashov & Lukyanova, 1998).

Psychologists claim that individuality is not only a set of unique characteristics, but also a closed system with strongly connected elements. To form students' individuality is an impossible task for a teacher, as individuality is a self-regulatory and self-developing system. Instead, teacher should ensure flexibility and adaptability of students' individuality. The individualization of instruction does not only presuppose that different teaching methods are applied in accordance with individual characteristics of students. It is also crucial to address another issue, that is, to create conditions for the development of person's individuality. Attention should be paid not only to the content of education, but also to the organization of the innovative learning environment which plays a pivotal role in developing professional competences and unlocking the teaching potential of novice teachers (Balashov & Lukyanova, 1998).

How competent and confident do beginning teachers seem in organizing the innovative learning environment? Their confidence depends on how ready they are to transfer acquired knowledge. Standardized criteria for evaluating readiness of novice teachers for professional career are: satisfaction with management and overall job satisfaction. However, these criteria are incomplete, as their implementation may lead to disappointment of parents, school administration, and teachers. The main reason is that professional and personal experience of novice teachers does not coincide with that required for the organization of innovative learning environment.

It is impossible to ignore a contradiction between modern requirements for higher pedagogical education, articulated in new education standards, and an educational practice presupposing that lectures is the main source of information for students at universities. An independent work is often associated with

preparations for the seminars, during which students study pedagogical theories. A significant increase in hours devoted to independent work of students does not guarantee that it will be checked in the classroom. Existing pedagogical practice is not always effective in terms of the development of key professional competences among teachers, as it is often limited to traditional ways of organizing classes and educational activities. All these aspects should be undoubtedly included into the content of teacher education programs, however, novice teacher training for innovative practices should be variable, allowing them to choose teaching methods, study them in depth, and test them in the classroom. It is equally important to change relationship between teacher and students. Russian teachers often choose the authoritarian style of classroom management, although this tendency is slowly changing, and many teachers are encouraged to choose the new management style based on collaboration with students. Moreover, collaborative research activities would help teachers quickly adapt to new ways of organizing classroom interaction.

Unfortunately, organization of pedagogical education is not always focused on the encouragement of students' involvement in research-based projects. In many educational establishments in Russia, students do not have research supervisors. This may result in novice teachers' inability to conduct quality studies, analyze the collected data, and address issues in the classroom. Poor research activities at pedagogical institutions lead to the fact that novice teachers experience difficulties at the beginning of their professional career.

Issues beginning teachers' adjustment to innovation processes in education may be attributed to a number of causes, which are summarized as follows:

- the contradiction between outdated teacher education programs and the need to be prepared to work in innovative learning environment in order to become certified and grow professionally;
- the contradiction between the promotion of individual activities at universities, lack of group activities, and the need to collaborate with colleagues, communicate with them, set goals, and meet challenges, faced by the teaching staff or a group of teachers;
- the contradiction between the aspiration of novice teachers to use democratic management style in the classroom and the lack of understanding of students' perspective, which may thus lead to the change of management style from democratic to liberal.

In a situation when novice teachers feel unprepared to work in innovative learning environment, they need:

- to reflect on their practice which will help reduce a negative impact of conflicting situations on novice teachers; distance themselves from the situation; find ways to defeat negative feelings. In conflicting situations novice teachers tend to ignore unfavorable classroom conditions, they associate their discomfort with demanding school authorities. These issues generate reduced motivation and may lead to the failure to achieve education goals.
- to deliberately change their attitudes towards pedagogical practice; to build a positive relationship with school authorities; to reflect on their individual characteristics and opportunities; to define their professional interests, motives, wishes; to take responsibility for their own professional development by means of self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-actualization.

The second option is more useful in overcoming unpreparedness. It is important not only for novice teachers but also for educational institutions. Thus, an analysis of modern requirements for organization of educational process and the content of teacher education programs shows that the most important areas for

development in the field of education include beginning teachers' professional enrichment, emotional intelligence, communicative abilities, person-oriented communication, ability to choose relevant communicative styles, ability for internal dialogue by means of self-actualization, mobility, and self-reflection.

These diverse characteristics and are not likely to be developed in outdated learning environment. It is crucial to organize innovative learning environment in order to ensure self-development and personal enrichment of novice teachers. However, there are limited opportunities for self-development of novice teachers and increasing their readiness for innovative activities in education. Continuing professional education looks more promising as it would help beginning teachers develop necessary professional competences (Danilova, Shustova & Glebova, 2018, 1). First of all, this issue should be addressed to vocational education establishments. During the previous stages of pedagogical education, future teachers do not feel the need to develop professional competences due to the existing contradiction between their professional aspirations and opportunities to fulfill their potential in the classroom.

In our opinion, the development of psychological and pedagogical competences of novice teachers should be based on the following principles:

- the principle related to the ability to reflect on their pedagogical practice. To do so, teachers need to master skills of analysis, and avoid outdated teaching practices. It is also useful to organize beginning teachers' consultations with experienced psychologists. Joint elaboration of a reflexive approach to pedagogical practices of novice teachers, informed analysis of acquired knowledge and teaching methods, mastering new skills, self-assessment, receiving the feedback from students, colleagues, school management will help increase the level of professional competence of beginning teachers.

- the principle connected with shaping novice teachers' attitudes towards personal and shared pedagogical experience. These attitudes may help novice teachers evaluate their abilities, education practices, and effectively use them in the classroom.

- the holistic approach to the analysis of pedagogical issues. The main feature of pedagogical issues is that they involve many participants with different aspirations and attitudes. Thus, an attempt to address the issue does not seem possible without adopting the holistic approach.

- the principle of collaboration. This principle presupposes that novice teachers are able to address the issues collaboratively with students or colleagues. Collaborative approach to problem solving allows for the possibility to search for the best possible solutions not only by means of defending your own point of view but also by taking other viewpoints into account.

## **7. Conclusion**

Therefore, peculiarities of the development of readiness of novice teachers to innovative activities in education can be summarized as follows:

- attitudes towards the application of the aforementioned principles; the ability to learn from education practices;

- ability to work in collaborative learning environment; ability for self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-development;

- continuing professional development which ensures that teachers can choose their development path and shape their attitudes towards their profession.

Conditions provided for novice teachers at schools influence their readiness for innovative activities in education. Favorable conditions may include: promotion of collaborative activities at school, methodological assistance in implementing new technologies in education, good working conditions, and friendly creativity-inspiring atmosphere (Danilova, Shustova, & Glebova, 2018, 2)

What does depend on novice teachers in exploring innovative educational activities and developing their professional competences? They are required to:

- be interested in achieving progress in educational and innovative activity;
- be interested in the development of professional competences in order to meet new challenges, faced by the school, where they work;
- have an aspiration towards achieving social and professional success.

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