

Investigating educational innovations in Iranian schools

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Abstract

The traditional instructional system has been forced to undergo some modifications by various factors such as information revolution and the increasing developments of technologies. The inefficiency of the previous memory-oriented system in an era which the amount of scientific information is doubled every 5 year, has urged the teaching methods to shift from the traditional approach to a problem-solving approach. Therefore, a thorough study of the educational innovations in Iran (such as changes in educational systems, educational content, changes resulting in the transformation of educational organization, and new educational technologies) is considered as highly vital.

To this end, initially, the main innovations all over the world were studied and explained in this study. Then, based on the accumulated data, a questionnaire was developed and the realization of aforementioned innovations were studied in a sample comprising 1316 male and female junior and senior high school teachers across 14 provinces.

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The results depicted the educational innovations currently applied in Iranian schools as well as the ones the teachers and the executive educational innovators have contrived to apply.

Keywords: Educational innovations, New technologies, Male and female teachers, Traditional approach, Problem-solving approach.

Introduction

The world-wide experiences show that educational innovations in the field of educational innovation have taken place. For this reason, without doubt it is essential to be aware of such developments and try to investigate the possibility to expand and deepen them, and to make these methods native across Iran.

Considering the importance of educational innovations, the following questions have been put to study in the research of this article's subject:

1. Which of the educational innovations have the middle school and high school teachers experienced in their educational environment?
2. Which field of educational innovations do the middle school and high school teachers find more essential for more attention and investing on?

At one point, educational innovations were considered a matter of chance and accident and innovations were often seen only in the fields of study content and the teaching methods. However, by the expansion and deepening of the educational innovations, this matter was firstly looked upon as a non-accidental and organized matter. Secondly the educational innovation was not limited to study content; rather the education system included the study content, the teacher, the principle, the school strategy, as well as the entire education organization in the country. In this case it is natural that the possibility for innovation exists in all areas and that its importance is felt.

According to Koo(4) and Harlin(5), there is a shift in the current era and the global stage from traditional teaching methods toward non-traditional methods (2001).

In the article “From innovative programs to organized educational modifications”, Desalvator (15), Goldburger (16), and Steinberg (17) have stated that the innovative, organized, 5-year long, educational modification that was assembled from year 1994 in five Western countries came to these fundamental results after the plan being conducted: The students who take advantage of educational innovations in the education process have a higher scientific level in comparison with other students who have not had this chance. (2000).

Other researches indicated that the conducted researches have shown that there is positive relationship between the expanded services schools offer that provide for more learning opportunities for students and the success the students achieve (Kraych (18), Kaser (19), 2000, Madan (20) and Slavin (21), (2005).

In the conducted research in the field of utilizing educational innovation, in teaching individuals who have some sort of inability, Govarino (22) and Chambers (23) (2001) conclude that using educational innovation has positive and significant impact on their increase in learning.

Educational innovations have had considerable results in the fields of study content, teaching methodology method, students' assessment and evaluation, teachers' training and update, and school and education organization's strategy in its greatest form.

Research methodology

This research is descriptive (non-pilot). The project answerers have been male and female middle school/high school teachers. The research sample has been 1200 teachers of the ministry of education in 14 provinces (in each province 80). The provinces to conduct the research in random way (144) were selected from among half of the provinces in the country (and in each province in

two cities). The research sampling has also been random. The male and female teachers participating in the project were selected from the cities of 14 provinces in the random method from boy and girl middle schools and high schools. The provinces were: Fars, Tehran, Markazi, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khorasan-e Shomali, Khorasan-e Jonubi, Kermanshah, Semnan, Chahar-Mahal-va-Bakhtiari, Ghom, Eelaam, Ghazvin, and Gorgan.

In this research, a researcher-made questionnaire in the field of educational innovations was used.

This latest questionnaire, which is based on collected information from the research literature, is a quantitative questionnaire investigating the attitude of responders about educational innovations.

Investigating the research data

The gathered priorities in the male and female teachers' answers in the realistic-view questions of the research questionnaire were as follows:

Emphasis and circulation of participative or group learning in the class, animating the teaching environment, strengthening the relationship between the school and the student's family, attracting people's charitable assistance for schools, Try for increasing the students' study-wise motivations, making special arrangements for students with difficulty at school, getting the students' participation in advancing the school goals, giving relative independence to teachers in teaching courses, preparing study material based on needs and social issues, creating the possibility for teachers' exchange of experiences, expanding the teachers' knowledge and information, training creative students, following active teaching in schools, effort for changing the teacher-centered method to student-centered method and personalizing education, taking advantage of new technology in the education process, stating the superior scientific, cultural, social models for students, making the school rules and regulations more flexible, circulating creative and innovative management in schools and educational regions,

supporting the teachers and innovative persons in the education system, encouraging teachers to research, popularizing friends and peer evaluation, training and attracting creative and innovative teachers, qualitative evaluation of students instead of quantitative evaluation, inter-disciplinary teaching, collaboration of school with social structures for fulfilling sense of philanthropy among students, combining practical and theoretical education at school, educating handicap students in regular schools, creating the possibility for interchanging university experiences for students, utilizing art in the teaching process, compiling the content of school books based on students' native needs.

The gathered priorities from the male and female teachers answers about the future-oriented viewing questions which have focused on investigating the importance of the mentioned educational innovations in the research questionnaire is as follows:

Training creative students, effort for increasing the students' study motivations, expanding teachers' knowledge and information, encouraging teachers to research, training and attracting creative and innovative teachers, compiling the study content based on needs and social issues, performing active teaching in schools, taking advantage of modern technology in the teaching process, introducing the superior scientific, cultural, and social models for students, compiling the content of text books based on students' native needs, circulating creative and innovative management at schools and educational regions, circulating participative or group learning in the classroom, supporting the teachers and innovative persons in the education system, combining theoretical and scientific education at school, effort for changing the teacher-centered method to student-centered method and personalization of education, creating the possibility for teachers' experiences exchange, animating the teaching environment, stabilizing the the relationship between the school staff and students' families, students qualitative evaluation instead of quantitative evaluation, giving relative independence to teachers in teaching courses, utilizing art in the teaching process, making the school rules and regulations flexible, creating university experiences for students, attracting people's charitable support for schools, attracting the

students' collaboration in advancing the school goals, making special arrangements for school students with problems, interdisciplinary teaching, school collaboration with social structures for fulfilling the students' right of philanthropy, popularizing peers and classmates' evaluation of the student, teaching the handicap students in regular schools.

In general it can be said that the expansion of educational innovations depends on the education system's serious investment in the field of human and financial resources.

Conclusion

Considering what was mentioned in investigating the literature of educational innovations, it can be said as a summary that upon serious attention to the issue of educational innovation, education system development in the following approaches and solutions will be expected:

- Change of the traditional approach and memory-centered educational system to the problem-solving approach,
- Inclination of the education system toward personalization of education,
 - Educating students with motivation and morality,
 - Making the school books native and compiling study content based on needs and social issues,
 - Shortening the educational periods and combining the practical and theoretical education at school,
 - Attracting innovative and creative teachers and changing the teacher-centered method to student-centered method,
 - Attracting the collaboration of students in advancement of school goals and attracting the collaboration of families in the educational curriculum-planning process and pulling in people support for the education system,

- Creating university experiences for students and mutual collaboration of schools with social foundation,
- Taking advantage of diverse evaluations in the education system,
- Making arrangements for students with problems.

Noting the results gained from analyzing the teachers' opinions in the field of educational system, it can be said the most emphasis by the answerers has been in the following fields:

- serious revision on “the goals by school, teachers, principles, and the school-home relationships”;
- revision on “reteaching teachers and creating development in teaching methods, their evaluation and their relationship with students”;
- serious revision on “the educational content”, and finally,
- revision by the educational system of “the way the school treats students, their parents, and the people in the society.

By comparative aspect of the program investigation of the realist and realist questions of the current research, it has been clarified that the necessity for serious investment by the education system, creation of the necessary cultural ground in relation to accepting the educational innovations has significantly increased.

At the end it can be concluded that fulfilling the educational innovations across the education system, not only depends on changes in some of the existing strategies in the education system and allocation of the necessary investments, but also demands the creation of necessary cultural grounds as well for acceptance of innovations. This latter has, if not as much importance, the same amount of value as the equipment investments. In the same way that it is mentioned in the literature of global research, there will be groups of persons who will resist the innovations, which can cause the investments to be wasted. These groups include a set of higher rank managers in the education system, school principles, teachers,

students' parents, and even the students themselves. For this reason, while it is essential for the education system to seriously invest on hardware and preparing the primary equipment necessary for expansion of educational innovation, it is required also that this organization invests from the software point of view which completes the previous investment. The expansion and deepening of the educational innovations is possible by investment through with culture-building, understanding resistances, and efforts for overcoming these resistances.

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