



CURRENT STATE OF THE FORMATION OF INNOVATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF PEDAGOGICAL HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes the current state of innovative competence formation in the practice of pedagogical higher education. Issues regarding the preparation of future educators for innovative activity, the application of modern pedagogical technologies, and the development of creative and critical thinking skills are highlighted. Additionally, educational methods serving the formation of innovative competence in higher education institutions, the possibilities of using information and communication technologies, as well as existing problems and their solutions, are analyzed. The results of the study serve to improve the quality of pedagogical education and develop the professional competence of future teachers.

Keywords: innovative competence, pedagogical higher education, professional competence, innovative activity, pedagogical technologies, digital education, quality of education, future teacher, competency-based approach, innovative education.

Introduction

The processes of globalization occurring in the world today, as well as the rapid development of science and technology, pose new tasks for the education system. In modern society, the training of competitive, creative, independent-thinking, and innovative specialists is of great importance. From this perspective, the formation of the innovative competence of future teachers in pedagogical higher educational institutions is one of the most pressing issues.

Innovative competence represents the teacher's ability to effectively apply new ideas and technologies in the educational process, take a creative approach to pedagogical problems, use modern information and communication tools, and carry out activities aimed at improving the quality of education. This competence is considered one of the important factors determining the professional training and pedagogical skills of future teachers.

Large-scale reforms are being implemented in our country to modernize the education system, improve the quality of higher education, and train personnel in accordance with international educational standards. In this process, pedagogical higher educational institutions are tasked with training specialists who think innovatively and are capable of implementing modern pedagogical technologies into practice. Therefore, studying the current state of innovative competence formation in the educational process, assessing its effectiveness, and identifying ways to improve it are of great scientific and practical importance.

The aim of this study is to analyze the current state of innovative competence formation in the practice of pedagogical higher education, identify factors influencing this process, and develop scientifically grounded proposals and recommendations for its development. The study examines the essence and content of innovative competence, its structural components, the pedagogical conditions for its formation, and its current state in practice.

Although theoretical and regulatory frameworks sufficiently demonstrate the necessity of forming innovative competence, in practice, this process is often fragmented. There are

positive trends in the development of innovative competence in pedagogical universities: digital platforms are being introduced, interactive methods are being applied in methodological disciplines, micro-learning elements are expanding, the content of pedagogical practice is being updated, and interest in working with projects and portfolios is growing. In some institutions, cluster relations with the school, mentoring, master classes and acceleration formats have also been established. However, these positive shifts are not uniform everywhere in terms of systematicity and consistency.

When analyzing the practical situation, the structure of the curriculum first comes to mind. Although there are blocks of theoretical disciplines, methodological disciplines, and practice in many pedagogical fields, the integration between them is often insufficiently designed. The student will learn about pedagogical technologies within one discipline, about digital tools in another course, about assessment in the third course, and practical experience in a separate format. As a result, these blocks are not combined into a single innovative mechanism in his thinking. He knows individual elements but finds it difficult to develop a holistic solution to a particular educational problem. Thus, one of the main features of the current situation is the problem of integration.

The second important aspect is the scale and quality of the practice. Although laws and resolutions indicate the need to strengthen the practical component and increase integration with the real school environment, the content of practice in some cases is limited to observation and reporting. The student enters the classroom, observes the lesson, conducts several sessions, and submits a report. However, if such stages as problem diagnosis, testing of innovative lesson design, measurement of student activity or results based on criteria, and analysis with a mentor are not sufficiently established there, true development of innovative competence will not occur. Practice becomes more of an organizational phenomenon rather than a developing mechanism.

The third aspect is the culture of assessment. Although the formation of innovative competence is discussed, student assessment methods are often aimed at verifying reproductive knowledge. It is difficult to determine a student's true innovative readiness through tests, oral questionnaires, or the repetition of ready-made theoretical definitions. How he finds a solution to a problem in the lesson, how he activates the student, why he chooses which tool, how he analyzes the result - these are not fully visible in traditional forms of assessment. Consequently, in the current situation, there is a discrepancy between the assessment and the expected competence.

The fourth aspect is the level and quality of use of digital tools. In recent years, the use of various platforms, LMS systems, and video conferencing services has expanded in pedagogical universities and practice centers. This is a positive situation. However, in some cases, digital tools are used not as a didactic resource serving the lesson content, but as a sign of "modernity". A student may know how to create a presentation or test, but they cannot provide evidence that these tools enhance the student's thinking, cooperation, problem-solving activity, and reflection. Therefore, in the formation of innovative competence, the main indicator remains not digital literacy itself, but its integration with pedagogical and didactic literacy.

The fifth aspect is the level of mentorship and the professional community. International experience demonstrates the importance of mentorship, peer observation, and collective reflection in initial training. In practice, however, the future teacher is often occupied with

individual assignments; their work is not universally supported by continuous, profound, evidence-based mentoring. Meanwhile, innovative activity matures through the exchange of ideas, support, and constructive criticism. The development of innovative competence is stabilized only when the mentor becomes a companion who accelerates professional growth rather than a supervisor who punishes the student's mistakes.

The sixth aspect is the problem of academic integrity and independence. As the digital environment expands, it has become easier to find ready-made materials, presentations, developments, and even lesson scenarios on the internet. Artificial intelligence tools are also accelerating content creation. This increases both the convenience and the risk: the student may master the finished product and submit it without adapting it to solve a real pedagogical problem. In such conditions, the external appearance of innovative competence appears, but the internal mechanism is not formed. Therefore, when analyzing the current situation, it is necessary to consider academic integrity and independent thinking as the main factors.

The seventh aspect is the gap between educational programs and school practice. The methods studied at the university and the real school conditions are not always the same: factors such as class size, resource shortages, time, assessment culture, communication with parents, school internal regulations, and paperwork can limit the future teacher's innovative initiative. If university preparation does not take these real constraints into account, the student will know "ideal lesson" scenarios but will not be able to adapt them in real conditions. For this reason, when assessing the current state of innovative competence formation, the distance between the "ideal model" and the "real conditions" must also be taken into account.

Thus, the current situation is complex and contradictory. On the one hand, the regulatory framework is being updated, digital and interactive approaches are expanding, and the focus is on the practical component. On the other hand, problems of integration, evaluation, mentorship, academic integrity, the continuity of theory and practice, and the targeted use of resources remain. These conclusions indicate that the mechanism for forming innovative competence should not be in the form of "another separate discipline", but rather a mechanism that interconnects the entire training system.

Summarizing the current situation, the following diagnostic features can be identified:

- innovative activity is often manifested in an episodic form;
- there is a discrepancy between assessment methods and expected competencies;
- the student's initiative is not equally encouraged everywhere;
- The integration of theory and practice is insufficiently systematized;
- digital tools are often used without didactic analysis;
- Reflection and evidence-based monitoring are weak.

This analysis indicates the need for a more precise definition of the criteria and levels of innovative competence in the next section.

Some typical scenarios of the educational process can be considered to reveal the current situation more deeply. For example, in a methodology lesson, students are given a list of interactive methods, but they do not try to choose which of these methods in which didactic situation through a situational task. Alternatively, a student undergoing pedagogical internship observes a mentor's lesson, but is not provided with the task of entering the observation result into a diagnostic table or analyzing student activity indicators and assessment methods.

Alternatively, a student is given the task of preparing an "innovative lesson plan," but it is not required to show how its effectiveness was evaluated after the lesson. Such scenarios have a form of innovation but lack a full cycle of innovative competence.

Furthermore, the culture of self-assessment among students is not always sufficiently formed. Many students take one of two extreme positions regarding their performance: either overestimate themselves or underestimate themselves and avoid initiative. The development of innovative competence requires realistic reflection. The student must constantly work with questions such as "what did I succeed in?", "what did I do wrong?", "why did I get such a result?", and "which parameters should I change next time?" Consequently, the analysis of the current situation includes not only organizational problems but also the state of reflexive culture.

Another important issue is the coordination between subject teachers and methodologists. If the formation of innovative competence in a future teacher becomes the sole task of the department of pedagogy or methodology, there will be a break between general professional training and subject-specific training. In fact, the subject teacher should also show the student how to explain the content of their subject in an innovative way, on which topic to use research and project formats, and on which topic a digital tool would be appropriate. In the current situation, innovative activity often remains within the framework of a "methodological seminar".

External factors affecting student motivation also complicate the situation. For some students, the fact that teaching is not their first professional choice, material and social stereotypes in educational institutions, views on workload and prestige can negatively affect innovative initiative. OECD materials emphasize the importance of status, autonomy, and professional growth opportunities in enhancing teacher professionalism. Thus, the formation of the future teacher's innovative competence is not only a methodological issue but also a matter of professional identification.

Resource-related factors cannot be ignored either. Digital devices, internet quality, the availability of textbooks and methodological materials, the condition of practice base schools, and classroom equipment-all of this directly affects the opportunities for innovative activity. However, the resource problem is sometimes exaggerated and used to justify methodological passivity. An innovative competent teacher must be able to find an appropriate, adapted solution even under limited resource conditions. Therefore, when assessing the current situation, in addition to the conclusion that "there is a lack of resources", it is necessary to ask the question: "What is the level of the culture of using available resources?"

The above analysis shows that there is potential for the formation of innovative competence in the practice of pedagogical higher education, but it has often not become a systemic mechanism. For this reason, in the following sections, it becomes necessary to diagnose this competence based on specific criteria and indicators, and then propose a holistic mechanism for their development.

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