

Exploring Innovative Pedagogies: A collaborative study of master's students at Universitat Jaume I

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ABSTRACT: This research delves into the research of 45 students currently enrolled in the 'Teaching Innovation' subject within the master's program for teaching in Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching at the Universitat Jaume I (UJI). The participants, aged 23 to 25 years, specialize in Language and Literature and Language Teaching, focusing on English, Catalan, and Spanish. The task assigned to the students involves collaborative research on innovative education. Organized into 11 groups, participants explore key authors and scholars in the field. Subsequently, they craft their own definitions of innovative education, elucidating methodologies and exemplifying best practices. The results of this endeavour offer a nuanced understanding of innovative educational approaches such as gamification, task-based approach, the use of ICTs, active or cooperative learning and provide valuable insights for further exploration in the realm of education. The research unfolds on the Aula Virtual platform, the virtual teaching and learning application employed at UJI. This platform aligns with the pedagogical principles of social constructivism and accommodates diverse teaching and learning styles. The utilization of this platform enhances the collaborative and interactive aspects of the research, fostering an environment conducive to innovative educational exploration.

The findings from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on innovative education by offering a practitioner-focused perspective. They also underscore the significance of virtual platforms like Aula Virtual in facilitating collaborative research and enriching the educational experience.

KEYWORDS: *collaborative research, innovative education, master's degree students, educational approach, virtual platforms*

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational innovation encompasses a creative approach to teaching, emphasizing adaptability to societal challenges and a commitment to achieving effective and significant learning outcomes. Key themes include fostering creativity, addressing societal challenges, and ensuring impactful learning experiences. Additionally, educational innovation involves a comprehensive enhancement of the educational process, utilizing a wide array of tools and resources—both physical and digital—to enhance student motivation and critical thinking. This perspective transcends a teacher-centric model, emphasizing changes in student participation and engagement. Noteworthy elements encompass the strategic use of tools and resources, motivation, critical thinking, and active involvement of students in the learning process.

Furthermore, educational innovation entails a change process with an active student role, incorporating new methodologies, promoting the transversality of knowledge, and leveraging technology responsibly. The shift is marked by teachers evolving from authorities to guides, fostering collaboration among all stakeholders. Key components include the adoption of new methodologies, encouraging active student participation, promoting transversality of knowledge, and responsible technology use. This holistic view underscores the interconnectedness of innovative teaching practices with a dynamic and collaborative learning environment.

The subsequent sections delve into the outcomes of this collaborative endeavour, presenting a nuanced understanding of innovative educational approaches such as gamification, task-based methods, ICT utilization, and active or cooperative learning. The research unfolds on the Aula Virtual platform, a virtual teaching and learning application aligned with social constructivism principles. This platform not only details its integration within the study but also explores how it accommodates diverse teaching and learning styles, enhancing the collaborative and interactive aspects of the research. The analysis of findings underscores a practitioner-focused

perspective, contributing substantively to the ongoing discourse on innovative education. Moreover, it emphasizes the pivotal role of virtual platforms like Aula Virtual in facilitating collaborative research and enriching the overall educational experience. The conclusion succinctly summarizes key findings and offers insights into potential avenues for future research and exploration within the dynamic field of innovative education.

1. Theoretical background

Escudero (1988) posits that the core of innovation lies in challenging established norms, mechanical routines, and the formidable influence of existing facts and inertia. It demands a collective commitment to redefining what is considered desirable, nurturing creative imagination, and bringing about a transformative shift in the current situation. This approach involves the creation of a utopian breach within systems such as education, which often uphold tradition and perpetuate the past. Fundamentally, innovation must cultivate an environment across the entire educational system, encompassing administrators, teachers, and students alike, that promotes investigation, discovery, reflection, criticism, and, ultimately, change. According to Imbernón (1996), educational innovation involves actively seeking and engaging in the exploration of new ideas, collaborative propositions, and collective contributions with the goal of addressing practical challenges. This active pursuit leads to transformative changes within educational contexts and institutional practices. In contrast, Rimari (2000) outlines nine objectives for educational innovation that surpass the goal of improving the quality of education. These objectives encompass the promotion of positive attitudes, the creation of platforms for disseminating novel concepts, the formulation of adaptable curricular changes, and the implementation of relevant theories, processes, methods, and techniques aligned with institutional requirements. Furthermore, the objectives include the encouragement of research into the professional development of educators, the sharing of innovative educational experiences, and the establishment of a lasting framework where innovative practices become an integral cultural aspect of the organization.

Carbonell (2001) contended that innovation extends beyond mere technological advancements; it involves a fundamental shift in methodologies, social dynamics, work structures, and, ultimately, the entire societal fabric. Ortega et al (2007) asserted that educational innovation functions as a strategic approach to advancing institutional objectives. They underscored the contextual significance, emphasizing that innovation within one educational setting may not necessarily hold the same innovative value in another context. This recognition of contextual influence underscores the inherent nature of an innovative experience.

García (2015) contends that any educational reform should be approached comprehensively, considering the various components within the system to ensure a harmonious and balanced integration among them. Meanwhile, Fullan (2016) argues for the intentional and transparent nature of effective educational leadership, suggesting that it should be cultivated over an extended period. He underscores the imperative of fostering a culture of change anchored in a well-defined vision, common objectives, and collaborative innovation. Integrating cutting-edge resources and materials into the educational framework should equip institutions with the ability to offer a wide variety of comprehensive learning settings. These are classrooms designed for diverse needs; they are places where students can acquire the digital skills necessary to function in today's age of high technology. Incorporating the Internet provides one more runway for poor-performing students, dropping out or being expelled students. It also gives otherwise dull and monotonous work about half as much flair to liven up. Blended Learning, a pedagogy that combines traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning components, is an important direction in research. Robinson (2001) explored the creativity in education and played a crucial role in advocating for innovation in teaching and learning. Hattie (2009) offers valuable insights into effective teaching practices and the broader landscape of educational innovation. The objective of instilling confidence and motivation aligns seamlessly with the tenets of motivation theory, as advocated by scholars such as Deci and Ryan (2000), who underscore the pivotal roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in nurturing motivation. Not only do Bonk and Graham (2005) provide a vast mine of instructions for training and HR professionals working in the field of innovative Learning, but they also aim to give a thorough and detailed understanding of the Blended Learning methods. They can be seen from both global angles and practically designed details. In the same vein, Garrison and Kanuka (2004) investigate the revolutionary implications of Blended Learning in college contexts. Their research might reveal how when online learning elements are added to traditional face-to-face instruction, it brings forth new human scenarios. Similarly, Christensen et al. (2008) researched the impact of disruptive innovation on schools. They argue that today's economy demands what they term "disruptive" rather than incremental change.

In their study, Macanchí et al. (2020) elucidate the nuanced dimensions of the term "innovate," drawing connections with synonymous terms such as "change," "renovation," "transformation," and "reform." Their research underscores the pivotal role of a deliberate and calculated decision-making process as a critical element in fostering the integration of new knowledge, technology, and resources. The authors assert that innovation originates from the practical application of theoretical or scientific ideas, resulting in tangible advancements.

Their analysis is fortified by empirical research, which validates the importance of readiness, effective communication, collaboration, and organizational structure in facilitating teacher engagement within innovative processes. In this line, Olivé (2020) embarks on a quest for methodological innovation fuelled by a genuine aspiration to authentically transform his teaching approach. Reflecting on his pedagogical journey, he acknowledges the potential for unlocking greater capabilities in his students by sparking their inherent curiosity and fostering critical thinking. According to this author, the crux lies in attentive listening to his students and addressing their genuine educational needs. He advocates for the organic cultivation of the joy of learning, making it a naturally infectious experience rather than one imposed. Recognized for his adaptability, particularly in the realm of language and literature, he tailors his curriculum to resonate with the current realities and diverse backgrounds of his students. Moreover, the invaluable feedback from his students serves as an enduring wellspring of motivation, propelling him to stay informed and actively nurture a culture of critical thinking. The definitions provided by Macanchi et al. (2020) are intertwined in dialectic, revealing key concepts that we consider indispensable when discussing innovation in the education sector. Mosquera emphasizes "adaptation to circumstances," underscoring the importance of establishing connections with the team and students through emotional intelligence—being empathetic and constructive with others and oneself. Additionally, she highlights the significance of sharing knowledge and committing to continuous training. Imbernón aligns closely with these ideas, suggesting that innovation involves proposing changes based on a prior observation of problematic learning situations. This becomes crucial for engaging in the iterative process of continuous improvement: practicing, evaluating, and modifying. Finally, Macanchi et al. are referenced for their emphasis on teamwork to enhance organizational dynamism and the implementation of knowledge or technology. They stress that preceding implementation, there is a comprehensive body of research work on the part of the teacher.

In his work, Torres (2023) characterizes educational innovation as an all-encompassing integration of technology, didactics, pedagogy, processes, and individuals. This concept signifies a profound transformation in the teaching-learning process, requiring adjustments in materials, methods, content, and instructional settings. In contrast to Ingrid Mosquera's viewpoint (2019), Torres posits that although technologies may frequently contribute, they are not mandatory, as innovation encompasses a broader spectrum of elements. Mosquera (2023) emphasizes the misconception of conflating educational innovation solely with the integration of ICT resources in the classroom. According to her, the introduction of novelty through robotics, programming, or 3D printing does not inherently signify innovation by itself. Furthermore, she stresses that the implementation of methodologies such as the flipped classroom, gamification, or neuroeducation must be coherent and well-structured to qualify as innovative practices. Ingrid underscores the error of pursuing novelty for its own sake, cautioning against the superficial adoption of trending educational approaches. She highlights the critical role of adaptation, asserting its significance in the educational context as a fundamental element in effective teaching practices.

II. Method

2.1 Participants

The research is focused on a cohort of 45 students currently enrolled in the course SAP405 (Teaching Innovation and Introduction to Educational Research) within the master's program for teaching in Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching. These students are pursuing specializations in Language and Literature and Language Teaching. The student composition includes those specializing in English, Catalan, and Spanish. The students form groups of their choice, consisting of 4 to 6 people. The total number of groups is 11.

2.2 Research Task

In adherence to the academic directive, students are required to conduct online research to procure a definition of educational innovation for their respective groups. The chosen definition should be meticulously justified, elucidating the rationale behind its selection. Moreover, students are instructed to identify and document the names of the author or authors responsible for the provided definition. Subsequently, participants are encouraged to articulate their own interpretation of educational innovation, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, and contributing to a nuanced discourse within the academic context. This multifaceted task not only emphasizes the importance of critical analysis but also cultivates the students' capacity for independent thought and conceptualization.

2.3 Methodology

Students actively participate in collaborative endeavours, pooling their diverse perspectives and insights to explore the multifaceted meanings of 'educational innovation.' Throughout this collective exploration, they not only collaborate but also apply critical thinking skills to analyse and evaluate the various definitions they encounter. This process encourages a dynamic exchange of ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Following this collaborative investigation, students synthesize their insights and independently formulate their comprehensive definition of 'educational innovation' based on the amalgamation of research

findings and critical reflections. This dual emphasis on collaboration and critical thinking empowers students to cultivate a nuanced and informed perspective on the concept.

2.4 Based on the data we have collected as well as ensuing findings, 2 research questions emerge:

RQ1: To what extent are students' conceptualizations of 'educational innovation' correlated with prominent theories?

RQ2: What constitutes the practical part of educational innovation in terms of implementation?

III. RESULTS

These key ideas emphasize the multifaceted nature of educational innovation and its importance in adapting to the evolving needs of society and students.

1. Educational innovation is approaching teaching in a creative way and by the changing challenges of society, making learning the most effective and significant possible.
2. Educational innovation is the whole set of tools and resources (whether physical, digital, or teacher skills, such as the methodology used or communication skills) that enhance student motivation and encourage critical thinking to achieve maximum optimization and efficiency of the educational process. On the other hand, however, educational innovation does not consist only in renewing oneself as a teacher in terms of the methodologies and resources used, also it integrates changes that directly involve students and their way of participating and being active subjects in the classroom, through the development of active listening and participation.
3. Educational innovation is a process of change in which new methodologies are used that enhance the active role of students in their learning process, the transversality of knowledge, and the use of new technologies in a responsible way. In addition, the teacher becomes the guide of learning and not the authority of the class; being mandatory that the collaboration of the teacher, the students, and the educational institution itself is necessary.
4. We understand educational innovation as improving the E-A process by implementing new methodologies and resources to ensure inclusive access to learning. Do not forget the contemplation of the students as the main agent within the process. The importance of understanding them, listening to them and adapting to their needs, desires and interests, within this process. Finally, it is important not to confuse this term with innovation technological since this use does not guarantee educational innovation. Innovation is change and improvement. Therefore, it is necessary to improve teaching practice to favour and ensure change, to improve usual activities and adapt to situations, to do, in definitively, things that we could not do before, and that the context requires and needs.
5. Educational innovation is about identifying a problematic situation in the classroom, which you must analyse and know how to adapt. This innovation implies a change in the classroom. These changes can be methodological, among others. Therefore, the teacher must be in continuous training and improvement by applying different methodologies and ICTs depending on the context in which you find yourself.
6. The educational innovation goes far beyond the traditional conception attributed to the use of technology. Educational innovation is about reorienting the teaching of the contents according to the needs of the students to whom we are managing. By talking about the concept of reinventing teaching, we want to try to shed light on the reality that we are not in a moment where technologies are in their early stages of development. In this regard, we highlight the fact that innovation can be as simple as adapting to the profile of students we are addressing, such as teachers and how we can meet their needs in a training process from which everyone can feedback. In this process of integral transformation, all members of the community must be involved to ensure a consolidation of the objectives of the proposed. While teachers are the ones who detect, initiate, and coordinate this process, it is the students who receive in the first instance this process of pedagogical renewal, and whose results have an impact on their immediate environment and social level. In conclusion, the concept of educational innovation must go beyond the traditionally conceived as the use of technology.
7. Educational innovation is an approach that focuses its efforts on developing a plan. It is a common educational system, adapted to the social and cultural changes of educational agents, especially students. In addition, it is based on cooperation between students and teachers, as well as collaboration between teachers. It is necessary to understand educational innovation as an open and constant learning process, given that society is constantly changing.
8. Educational innovation is an approach that seeks to transform and improve the quality of teaching and learning in different educational contexts through the implementation of new pedagogical strategies and resources.

9. Educational innovation within the school environment is the set of ideas proposed, practices, methodologies, etc., which aims to improve the didactic quality of the educational community and to adapt to changes in society. At the same time, this implies that teachers must be able to select the appropriate strategies to improve the teaching and learning processes, considering not only the methodologies but also the personal and group characteristics of the students. Teachers must be creative people, with a critical capacity to be able to recognize when a strategy works and when a mistake has been made, with an interest in learning new methods and sharing with other colleagues.
10. We can define educational innovation – or, rather, teacher education due to the passive role that institutions have now taken in this area – in different ways. Innovation consists of the incorporation of new methodologies in the classroom that respect and critically evaluate the existing ones. We also believe that it is important for educational innovation to have specific objectives that are well defined for greater effectiveness in results and that it adapts to the social and cultural changes that surround the teaching-learning process. In other words, education never has to be far from society or everyday life and, therefore, teachers oversee bringing reality to the classroom, such as the implementation of ICT resources. Ultimately, the aim is to improve the quality and increase the degree of effectiveness of the education that the student receives.
11. Educational innovation and teaching innovation are complementary. However, it may be the teacher who directs this process and carries out this implementation on his own. Conveniently, the teaching staff has the support of the administration since it is the latter who regulates and facilitates the curriculum to be developed as well as the materials and resources available to carry it out. Therefore, innovation is an improvement, adaptation, attention to needs, motivation, dynamization, and creativity, avoiding associating "innovation" with the fact of making an abusive use of ICT.

The perspectives articulated by these students manifest a discerning engagement with the intricacies of the concept of educational innovation. Such insights exhibit a discernible nexus with extant research and established theoretical frameworks.

1. Creative Teaching for Changing Challenges:

It relates to the ideas of Robinson (2006), who emphasized the need for a creative and flexible approach to education to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

2. Comprehensive Enhancement of Educational Process:

It is consistent with the work of Vygotsky (1934), who emphasised the importance of social interaction and the use of tools (in this case, educational resources) in the learning process.

3. Change Process with New Methodologies:

It aligns with the ideas of Dewey (1938), a proponent of experiential learning and the importance of adapting education to the needs of the student.

4. Improving E-A Process for Inclusive Learning:

It reflects the inclusive educational philosophy of Freire (1968), who advocated for education as a means of empowering and recognising students as active participants in their learning.

5. Continuous Teacher Training and Adaptation:

It connects with the concept of lifelong learning, an idea supported by contemporary educational thinkers such as Fullan and Hargreaves (1991).

6. Beyond Technological Conception:

It relates to the sentiments of Papert (1980), who emphasized that technology should be a tool for learning rather than an end in itself.

7. Cooperative Approach and Open Learning Process:

It aligns with the socio-constructivist theories of Bandura (1977) and emphasises the importance of social interactions in the learning process.

8. Transformation for Quality Improvement:

It resonates with the educational change theories of Fullan (1993), who emphasizes the need for transformative change for sustained improvement.

9. Adaptation to Societal Changes:

It connects with the work of Darling-Hammond (2010), who advocates for teacher professionalism and the alignment of education with the needs of society.

10. Incorporation of New Methodologies with Defined Objectives:

It reflects the principles of outcomes-based education and the work of Bloom (1956), who emphasized setting clear educational goals for effective learning.

11. Complementary Nature of Educational and Teaching Innovation:

It supports the collaborative and systemic approach advocated by educational change theorists such as Senge (1990), which emphasizes the need for organizational learning.

While these connections are broad, they highlight the interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature of educational innovation, drawing on insights from various educational thinkers and researchers. The key points can be visually represented in a conceptual map for a succinct overview:



Figure 1: conceptual map summarising the students' insights

IV. DISCUSSION

The research undertaken focused on a cohort of 45 students enrolled in the course SAP405 (Teaching Innovation and Introduction to Educational Research) within the master's program for teaching in Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching. The participants, specializing in Language and Literature and Language Teaching, were organized into 11 groups with 4 to 6 members each.

The research task required participants to conduct online research to define educational innovation, justifying their choice and identifying the authors responsible for the definition. Additionally, students were encouraged to articulate their interpretation of educational innovation, fostering critical analysis and independent thought.

The methodology employed was collaborative, emphasizing collective exploration and critical evaluation of diverse definitions. This collaborative process aimed to deepen the students' understanding of educational innovation. Following the collective investigation, students synthesized their insights independently to formulate a comprehensive definition.

The data collected resulted in two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are students' conceptualizations of 'educational innovation' correlated with prominent theories?

The responses from the participants demonstrate a rich understanding of educational innovation, drawing on various theories and perspectives. Some definitions align with prominent educational theorists such as Dewey, Vygotsky, and Freire. For instance, the emphasis on experiential learning, social interaction, and empowerment aligns with Dewey's and Vygotsky's theories. The multifaceted nature of innovation, encompassing changes in methodology, active student involvement, and societal adaptation, resonates with Freire's philosophy.

RQ2: What constitutes the practical part of educational innovation in terms of implementation?

The participants' responses highlight diverse aspects of the practical implementation of educational innovation. These include creative teaching approaches, the integration of various tools and resources, continuous teacher training, and a focus on student-centered methodologies. The emphasis on understanding students' needs, active participation, and the responsible use of technology reflects a holistic approach to implementation.

The results underscore the multifaceted nature of educational innovation and its importance in adapting to the evolving needs of society and students. The conceptualizations provided by the participants align with both

theoretical foundations and practical considerations, emphasizing the dynamic and comprehensive nature of educational innovation.

V. Conclusion

The research successfully elicited nuanced perspectives from students, shedding light on the complex dimensions of educational innovation and its practical implications. The findings suggest a well-rounded understanding among participants, integrating both theoretical and practical aspects into their conceptualizations.

The methodology adopted emphasized a collective exploration where students actively participated in collaborative endeavors, applying critical thinking skills to analyze diverse definitions. This process encouraged a dynamic exchange of ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of educational innovation. Subsequently, students independently formulated comprehensive definitions based on their amalgamated research findings and critical reflections.

The results illuminated key ideas highlighting the diverse dimensions of educational innovation. From creative teaching approaches to inclusive learning processes, the participants' conceptualizations underscored the adaptability and responsiveness of educational practices to societal changes. The multifaceted nature of innovation, including technological, methodological, and social dimensions, was a recurring theme in their interpretations.

Addressing the research questions, the responses demonstrated a correlation between students' conceptualizations of educational innovation and prominent educational theories. Influences from Dewey, Vygotsky, and Freire were evident in the emphasis on experiential learning, social interaction, and empowerment within the participants' interpretations. Furthermore, the practical aspects of educational innovation were elucidated through diverse perspectives, encompassing creative teaching strategies, technological integration, and continuous professional development.

In conclusion, the research not only provided insights into students' nuanced understanding of educational innovation but also highlighted the interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature of the concept. The collaborative methodology fostered a rich discourse among students, empowering them to cultivate informed perspectives. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational innovation, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, creativity, and responsiveness in educational practices. This study encourages further exploration and dialogue on the evolving landscape of educational innovation in contemporary teaching and learning environments.

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