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INNOVATION IN MANAGING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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Abstract

Instead of a common cultural perspective, university culture is experienced at three distinct levels: the enterprise, the profession and the cognate area. Each of them exerts a powerful influence on the ideology or systems of beliefs that characterize academics and academic institutions. Thus, many different dimensions should be assessed in order to indicate which of them can affect universities performance and decision-making regarding innovation. This paper concerns higher education in Greece, as applied today and in the forthcoming years and its aim is ternary; firstly, the study on the implementation of international innovation indicators in education, secondly the use of innovative teaching practices and finally the relationship between different organizations and its impact on innovative educational practices. The primary research contacted with the use of a questionnaire on a sample of 471 teachers all over Greece. The findings among others show that the higher the level of innovation regarding educational services, the higher also is the level of innovation on educational processes.

Keywords: *educational innovation, organizational culture, educational services*

JEL Codes: *I20, M10*

Introduction

Ideally, an innovation is the driving force behind the creation of a new learning cycle, the promotion of wider change and the continuous improvement of an organization. In education, although the aim is to develop students and prepare them for life, the pace of change is too slow or weak compared to other fields or systems (Thorsteinsson, 2014; Huda et al., 2019). It seems that schools, even many universities, have fundamentally changed their organization, curriculum structure, educational tools, pedagogical practices and evaluation methods. The majority of teachers are still based on traditional approaches, focusing on: a) the teaching content, where the subjects are presented to the pupils by the lecturer; b) the one-man educational manual; and c) the pupils' through

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conventional written competitions or tests. In the rapidly changing context of today's education, education is called upon to improve successful traditional practices and to bring forward new approaches that respond to today's realities of the 21st century, to the expectations and needs of students. New subjects, new educational tools and environments, new pedagogical approaches and innovative ideas seem to be very promising, for students and teachers, in terms of educational experiences and learning opportunities that they shape. In this context, the diffusion of educational innovations is now the first priority for education systems around the world (Hovne, Hovne & Schott, 2014; Huda et al., 2019). For example, Europe 2020 puts development as a top priority for turning the European Union into a competitive and cohesive society (European Commission, 2010). In addition, school environment is a bridge that helps pupils from different countries to become part of the local community (Krasteva R., Pantelis Ef., 2017). Growth should be sustainable and inclusive, inclusive. In addition, the EU aims at smart growth, based on improving performance (a) education, (b) research and innovation, and (c) digital society.

Educational dialogue is often limited to the technological characteristics of an innovation, as new-emerging technologies are shaping new directions and greatly influencing teaching and learning. There is often a misconception, which addresses Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), as such, as an innovation. This is not always expensive. Innovation only arises when teachers use the various ICT tools to organize new learning situations that do not reinforce traditional teaching practices but support open pedagogical approaches that expand and enhance learning (Barnard & Van der Merwe, 2016; Sharples et al., 2015). Innovative pedagogical practices with ICT encourage and promote participatory and student-centered approaches, exploratory learning, problem solving, collaboration and creativity, linking work to classroom with home and society, etc. For example, technologies and such as mobile learning, flipped classroom, gamification, mass-open digital lessons (MOOCs) etc., actually introduce innovative pedagogical elements and fundamentally change the wider teacher and learning environment.

In general, educational innovations are related to two axes: innovative pedagogical approaches and innovative uses of educational or technological media. In recent years, significant efforts have been made in our country to change and integrate new elements in education that have been initiated, basically, by state initiatives. Examples include recent New Study Programs (New School, 2011), the Digital School Action (2011), the National Educational Content Accumulator (Photodentro, 2012), the Teacher Training Program for the Use of ICT in Education, etc. At the same time, two major groups of innovative educational programs have been introduced in primary and secondary schools, in the form of parallel actions:

a) Interdisciplinary programs such as Environmental Education, Health Education, Cultural Issues, Students' Creative Games, Career Education and Young Entrepreneurship, etc.

b) European programs and partnerships supported by the European Union, such as Comenius, e-Twining, Teachers4Europe and others.

Although there are case studies showing encouraging results from the implementation of innovative programs in Greek (eg. Golikidou & Tzimogiannis, 2014, Hermans et al., 2008; Thorsteinsson, 2014), there are no systematic surveys in the literature that reflect the specific features of innovative programs, the effectiveness in learning, the changes they have brought about and their sustainability in the schools that have been implemented.

Educational innovation refers to the introduction or integration of new elements, situations, processes or persons into the educational work to modify, improve, replace or change part or all of the educational practice. The definition of Yamazumi (2008) expresses more precisely the delineation of educational innovations. Educational innovations are crucial nowadays, due to the explosion of knowledge and its devaluation in the short term. These trends require both the frequent updating and updating of school knowledge and the development of specific skills beyond traditional ones. For example, the memorandum function of the pupils and the transmission of knowledge by teachers are now considered traditional and obsolete. New skills have been proposed, such as "learning" students "how to learn", solving problematic situations, making decisions, and even more advanced cognitive and pedagogical functions. These skills have also added European Community skills related to literacy in mother tongue and foreign language, science, new technologies, and cultural awareness.

Any educational innovation, regardless of the level at which it is addressed, needs to be accepted and adopted by the teachers, but it also depends on their training and training to implement it. This position is supported by Sultana (2001), referring to case studies of twenty-four Euro-Mediterranean countries where educational innovations have been implemented at various levels (eg curriculum level, new forms of assessment, pre-school education, etc.). More specifically, it states that the implementation of educational innovation and the intended changes in national education systems require improved teacher training systems both in initial and in-service training ... but also in changing or modifying their attitudes towards sought innovation. This implies that teachers have to be properly trained during their university studies (Pigiaki, 2004; Deming et al., 2015) and that they are prepared to continue their training - pre-service, in-service - as well as their self-improvement and lifelong self-improvement. It is also known that teachers, in the context of their schooling experience, tend to "isolate" and not develop new perspectives, but to "defend the practices with which they

are already in operation" (Hovne, Hovne& Schott, 2014) their beliefs and attitudes act as "filters" to even control and block new ideas (Manning, 2017).What needs to be emphasized is that teachers are key persons and act as catalysts in the implementation of educational innovations. This is highlighted in many case studies on the implementation of educational innovations in the Euro-Mediterranean region, as the experts point out that "an educational innovation may be acceptable if the actors understand that they are better than previous practice" (Sultana, 2001).

It is widely supported that educational innovations cannot be realized without the consent, cooperation and even the enthusiasm of the teachers. This is because educational innovations, by definition, cause uncertainty as they project new works, question the many roles and challenge the professional identity of teachers (Sultana, 2001; Hovne, Hovne& Schott, 2014; Manning, 2017). It can also be noted that educational innovations have to adapt to the measures of teachers and the context of their work in order to be efficient and have chances of success. In fact, the chances of educational innovations being promoted when promoted by external factors are minimal. On the contrary, they will be accepted when the teachers who implement them will realize their value and the validity of the proposed idea or practice (Sultana, 2001).

These reasons make it imperative to explore the appropriate ways in which educational innovations should be channeled or promoted. According to Corlu et al. (2014) there are three ways of promoting educational innovations. One concerns the power / coercive strategies whereby educational innovations are top-down, but "pay or punishment" is provided. The second concerns "normative or re-educational strategies" that modify postures or "brainwashing" so that the people involved see the new situation differently. Finally, the third refers to "empirical - rationalist strategies" through which teachers themselves persuade themselves that they are in favor of adopting the proposed educational innovation. Typically, strategies are used in parallel ... since some of the educational innovations may be implemented with some of these strategies, while other innovations require alternative or complementary strategies.

Closely linked to education - teacher training and education is also the implementation of innovation at institutional or school level. There is a widespread view that teachers should not only have a broad understanding, positive attitude and consciousness in favor of the pursued innovation, but also have built a school culture with a common "vision" to realize the educational innovations sought at any level, particularly at institutional or school level. The common vision and cooperation between all the actors involved helps them to become aware of the "what", "how" and the "why" of school life, as well as the rationale of the applied innovation (Hovne, Hovne & Schott, 2014).

In order to facilitate the achievement of the goal of the common vision and the collective culture of the actors involved, the educational institutions must rebuild and reorganize the framework of their organization so as to form a learning community of all involved persons rather than being considered, as a central function, the transmission of information (Maritz et al., 2014). Wals (2014) also argues that schools have unique cultures, practices and traditions, and educational innovations or changes need to be adapted to the specific context of the school. The same view is expressed by Bradshaw and Hultquist (2016), who proposes that educational innovations should focus on the whole school unit in the context of collective decision-making and cooperative practices, harmonized by the leadership of a director. The holistic approach of the whole school approach is suggested by others, such as Riddell and Nino-Zarazua (2016), which it considers catalytic for the implementation of educational innovation by linking school practice with school improvement.

However, both classroom and school-based practices require a risk that teachers either do not want or cannot get (Corlu et al., 2014). Despite the unanimous proposals of specialists on the holistic approach of educational innovation for implementation in a particular institution or school units, there can be no concrete conclusions with universal effect that will be useful to the educators of educational policy. One factor that prevents unanimous proposals is the diversity and heterogeneity of school units. Universities are more complex than other organizations. Dill (1982) alludes to this veiled complexity in noting that academics are part of an academic community but also shape and manage academic organizations. Clarke (1983) refines this proposition of complexity by arguing that university culture is experienced at three distinct levels: the enterprise, the profession and the cognate area. Each exerts a powerful influence on the ideology or systems of beliefs that permeate academics and academic institutions. Universities also operate under a system of governance which is different and more complex than a traditional company managerial system operating under a board of directors (Corlu et al., 2014). In the latter, the lines of authority (and hence power), responsibility and accountability (control) tend to be straightforward and demand minimal interpretation, which tends not to be the case within university governance. Statutory authority within the university can reside with the Principal, the Senate and the Court. Yet policy is determined collegially and predicated upon common values and beliefs (Simoes, 2019). Power, authority and control between the Principal, the Senate and the Court will be fluid and in many cases unclear; the real challenge for the institutional leaders is in operating within such a complex context (Duong & Swierczek, 2019). In reality, universities can only work effectively if these three sources of authority recognize that ambiguities and complexities can contribute significantly to problems which can arise unless a good working relationship is negotiated between them (Sutanto, 2017). In order to get some sense of the ways in which

universities are distinctive, the author has in the following sections applied some of that apparatus (concepts, theories, strategies and so forth) from the general literature on organizational culture cited earlier, in order to bring some clarity to those questions which can be answered and recognize and bring to the fore those that remain unanswered.

Although organisational culture analysts have not necessarily assumed or discovered the existence of a harmonious, non-conflictual culture within industry. Manning (2017) hints at the notion of an overall university culture when she reminds us that universities are distinctive organizations, having their own set of characteristics which determine their culture. Drawing on the work of Bimbaum (1988) she acknowledges universities as heterogeneous communities with multiple objectives in terms of teaching, research, community, quality and internationalization, each co-existing in a state of mutual tension (Sutanto, 2017). They [universities] are required to meet a number of benchmarks and standards for example on quality, professional, educational and research (Bryan & Clegg, 2019; Sutanto, 2017) and they are predominately publicly funded, but increasingly less so than in previous years (Sutanto, 2017; Bryan & Clegg, 2019). In terms of classification within the sector, Sutanto (2017) points to some differences between the "two wings of higher education" - those within the "older" university sector and those in the "former polytechnic" sector - and highlights differences in staff-student ratios, decision making and management structures within each. In the current conditions of economic development, another important perspective comes to the fore - economic transformation. According to T. Karolova, economic transformation is a complex socio-economic phenomenon in which it is very difficult to identify clear and unambiguous causal links between individual phenomena, the actions of individual economic players and their results. (Karolova, 2017)

Her evidence suggests that: Structurally, universities comprise highly complex social conclaves generally based around cognate areas and are maintained and developed by the overt conduct of their members including academics, support staff and others (Hornsby & Osman, 2014). In the UK, higher education institutions typically adopt a hierarchical structure consisting of a Principal or Vice Chancellor at the head directly supported by a senior executive committee, beneath which would be Faculty Deans, Heads of School and Heads of Departments (Dill, 1982). These institutions also manifest organizational styles similar to those described by Handy (1976) in terms of power, role, task, and person raised earlier. In applying Handy's analysis to universities, role culture is apparent in those centralized functional departments having responsibility for finance, human resource management, teaching quality, student support and so forth. Task culture can be seen in project work, for example when developing new educational courses or when preparing for external quality audits

on teaching or research. The traditional liberal democratic or collegiate atmosphere is representative of person culture from Handy's model, and is particularly evident in the grouping of people into teaching or research clusters. Power is conferred on individuals who display competence in motivating, guiding, and integrating research and/or teaching teams. Due to the unique nature of the university, it is often difficult to disassociate power culture from role culture. In the former, power is derived from either expert knowledge or from status, as in the case of professorial title, and is often synonymous with leadership. In terms of this model, higher education institutions can generally be associated with the power/person hybrid culture particularly at faculty and departmental level. This is typically found where core expertise is embedded in a few key workers, as for example in legal and accounting practices. Handy maintained that these cultural forms have a significant effect on determining the environment for innovation to take place and do so in ways that influence morale, levels of motivation and propensity to adapt and change (Duong & Swierczek, 2019).

According to Bankova, a suitable innovative approach for improving the hybrid culture in educational institutions is the appropriate application of the techniques of transformational mediation. This would help to overcome contradictions of different nature and to reach agreements in a natural way and to define new models of relations, which are clear, understandable and observed by the participants in the educational process voluntarily, as they have reached their definition (Bankova, 2019).

Methodology

The appropriate research method was selected based on the literature review as well as to serve the objectives of the research. This primary research is characterized as quantitative and it is conducted using a questionnaire, a tool common to similar research efforts (Ghauri, Gronhaug& Strange, 2020). The overall aim of the research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of innovation in educational organizations. Based on the purpose of the research, the research design focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' views on innovation in educational services?

2. What are the teachers' views on innovation in the process of delivering educational services?

3. Is there a correlation between innovation levels at different levels of educational organizations?

4. Is there a correlation between the relationships of the educational organization and the levels of use of innovative practices in educational organizations?

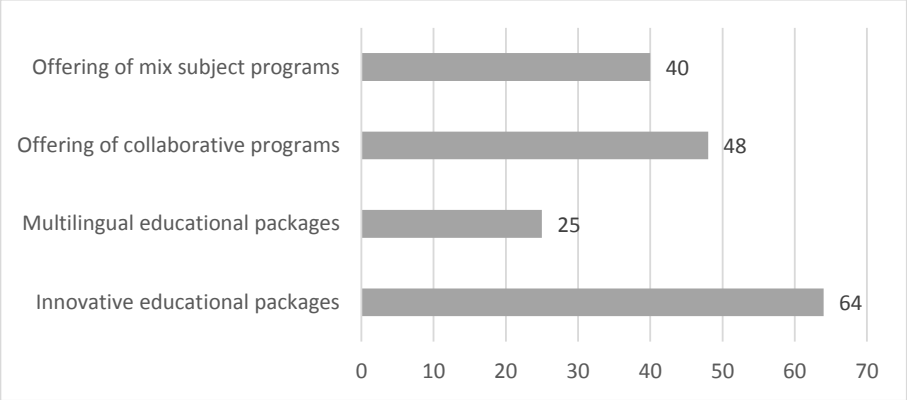
The questionnaire was selected as the research data collection tool. The selection of the questionnaire was based on the advantages it can offer in terms of research compared to other options such as interviews and focus groups. Specifically, the questionnaire was selected as it can lead to fast, accurate and as low cost as possible collection of research data (Ghauri, Gronhaug & Strange, 2020). The questionnaire was based on previous research on innovative educational programs in Greece, with the necessary additions and improvements in terms of questions to meet all research objectives. In particular, the questionnaire includes 10 sections, with questions and sub-questions and with the measurement of which to be done with different scales. Categorical as demographics, but also 7-point Likert scales (where 1 = None, 7 = Extremely high) to emphasize the intensity of the choices and to be able to compare them.

In the present study, the target population is teachers in the Greek education system and the research sample was a random sample of 471 individuals. Simple random sampling was selected to collect the sample, with individuals being randomly selected from a database of the Ministry of Education, which functioned as a sampling framework. This particular sampling method has advantages and disadvantages over other ways of selecting population units. In particular, it offers random data collection as the researcher essentially randomly selects without discrimination who to ask, but instead finds it difficult to collect data quickly (Ghauri, Gronhaug & Strange, 2020). Geographically, the survey was conducted with respondents in all regions of the country and the identification of respondents was carried out via the internet. Below is the composition of the research sample. Finally, the majority of the respondents were females (61.1%), 33.8% were from 31 to 45 years old, 91% hold a PhD while 47.8%of the respondents have less than 5 years of professional experience. The analysis of the data provided by the primary data analysis was performed using the SPSS 26.0 statistical analysis program. The One-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation parametric test were selected to verify statistically significant correlations at a = 0.05 level of significance.

Findings

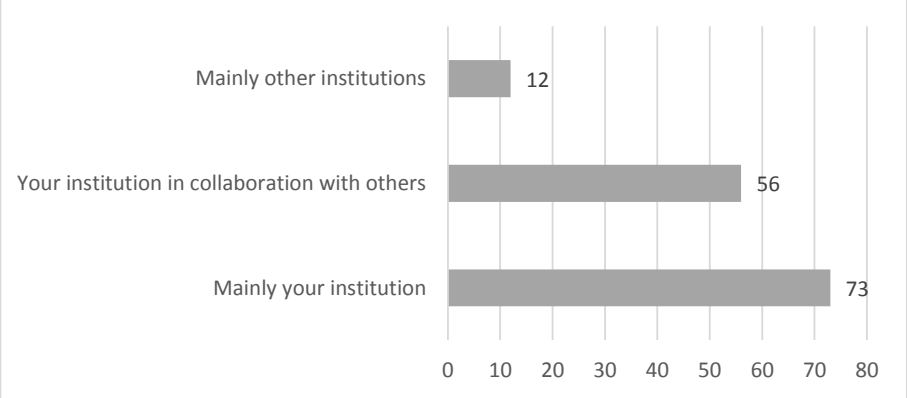
Regarding what are the teachers' views on innovation in educational services, the respondents state that innovative change is most important for new course formats following by new subject areas and new client groups. Moreover, 25.5% of respondents state that such innovation shave been successfully implemented and have achieved the expected benefits, 64% state that innovative educational packages are the most significant innovation concerning educational service since the last three years, following by offering collaborative programs (48%), and offering mix subject programs (40%) (Figure 1).

Figure № 1. Institution's most significant innovation concerning educational services



Moreover, the concepts for the innovation on educational services have been mostly developed by the institution (73%), following by institutions in collaboration with others (56%) and finally other institutions (12%).

Figure № 2. Development of the concepts for the innovation on educational services



Regarding what are the teachers' views on innovation in the process of delivering educational services, the respondents state that innovative change regarding educational delivery processes is most important for new learning resources or facilities (eg. virtual environments) following by new teaching and learning methods (eg. peer group reviews) and finally new approaches to student

monitoring or support (eg. measures to improve retention). Moreover, 41.4% of respondents state that such innovations have been successfully implemented and have achieved the expected benefits, while 81% state that the use of group meeting applications are the most significant innovation concerning educational delivery processes in the last three years, following by internet platforms (78%), and the use of innovative teaching software (68%) (Table 1).

Table № 1. Institution's most significant innovation concerning educational delivery processes in the last three years

Innovation concerning educational services	Percentage
Use of innovative teaching software	68
Use of internet platforms	78
Use of internet applications	53
Use of group meeting applications	81

Additionally, the concepts for the innovation on educational delivery processes have been mostly developed by the institutions in collaboration with others (61%), following by other institutions (58%) and finally respondents' institutions (24%).

Figure № 3. Development of the concepts for the innovation on educational delivery processes

Finally, the findings show that the higher the level of innovation regarding educational services, the higher also is the level of innovation on educational processes ($r = .890$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, the higher the level of innovation regarding educational services, the higher also is the level of innovation on business organization, and the higher the level of innovation regarding educational processes, the higher also is the level of innovation on business

organization (r = .559, p < 0.01). Moreover, the findings show that the higher the level of innovation regarding educational services, the higher also is the level of relationship with educational service providers and the level of relationship with government agencies. The level of innovation on educational processes presents a positive statistically significant relationship with the level of relationship with educational service providers (r = .393, p < 0.05) and the level of relationship with government agencies (r = .326, p < 0.01). Therefore, the higher the level of innovation regarding educational processes, the higher also is the level of relationship with educational service providers and the level of relationship with government agencies. Finally, the level of innovation on business organization presents a positive statistically significant relationship with the level of relationship with educational service providers (r = .382, p < 0.05) and the level of relationship with government agencies (r = .344, p < 0.01). Therefore, the higher the level of innovation regarding the business organization, the higher also is the level of relationship with educational service providers and the level of relationship with government agencies.

Table № 2. Correlations

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Level of innovation on educational services	1	.890**	.559**	.393*	.326*	.016
2.	Level of innovation on educational processes		1	.572**	.382*	.344*	.033
3.	Level of innovation on business organization			1	.356*	.387*	.062
4.	Relationships with educational service providers				1	.335*	.054
5.	Relationships with government agencies					1	.801**
6.	Relationships with professional networks						1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Conclusions

The policy that ultimately wants the promotion of the educational unit into an educational policy-making body presupposes a unified vision and goals for education, a common peer culture and a professional ethos that can emerge through decentralized administration, collective processes, school counseling

system in matters of planning and planning of the educational project, enrichment of the curricula and teaching methods, professional development of teachers to deal with particular social and school problems, evaluation of the implementation of changes, project report and connection of the educational unit with the local community. This policy respects the experience and knowledge of teachers and leaves them room for initiative, innovation and participation in decision-making and planning, contributing to the conscious choice of implementing change without forcibly moving away from the old methods, but also in its development. Cooperation and solidarity between them. Thus consultation, teamwork, participation and appropriate leadership guarantee productive education.

The Greek school, in order to meet the modern pedagogical and cultural requirements as well as technological developments, introduced a series of Innovative Programs / Actions, which cause cracks in the curriculum such as Environmental Education, Health Education, Student Groups in Standards and Schools. The Panhellenic student competitions, which operate optionally and outside the program schedule in secondary education. Characteristic of all Innovative Programs is the effort to approach knowledge through collaborative and experiential processes, applying alternative teaching methods and using new technologies as supervisory means, in order for the teacher to transform from a simple knowledge transponder into a knowledge-co-creator passive recipient to an active shareholder in the knowledge acquisition process, as a member of a team working collaboratively. The main reasons why these programs did not receive a wider response from teachers include their implementation after the end of the Program Schedule, students 'lack of free time due to their extracurricular obligations, teachers' reluctance to attend relevant training seminars, lack of funding and lack of appropriate equipment. In addition, the identified lack of a comprehensive evaluation and systematic investigation of the degree of achievement of the objectives of the Innovative Programs, does not allow the substantial evaluation of their role, in order to seek their wider integration in the educational process and its final quality upgrade.

However, looking for the deeper reasons that make teachers reluctant to implement innovative actions, we focus on the same structure of the Greek education system that has a highly centralized character, at least in terms of Secondary and Primary education resulting in minimal administrative responsibilities in the school unit, which assumes the role of executor of the central educational policy. As the educational unit is not involved in the process of shaping this policy, teachers are called upon in the case of introducing educational changes, which are planned and legislated centrally, to implement

them by adopting them largely indiscriminately and to understand them through reading circulars and attending training seminars.

The policy that ultimately wants the promotion of the educational unit into an educational policy-making body presupposes a unified vision and goals for education, a common peer culture and a professional ethos that can emerge through decentralized administration, collective processes, a school counseling system in issues of planning and scheduling of the educational project, enrichment of the curricula and teaching methods, professional development of teachers to deal with particular social and school problems, evaluation of the implementation of changes, project report and connection of the educational unit with the local community. This policy respects the experience and knowledge of teachers and leaves them room for initiative, innovation and participation in decision-making and planning, contributing to the conscious choice of implementing change without forcibly moving away from the old methods, but also in its development, cooperation and solidarity between them. Thus consultation, teamwork, participation and appropriate leadership guarantee efficient education.

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