

## Innovation in Preschool and Early School Education

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### Abstract

The importance of innovation in early childhood learning emphasizes the need for a responsive approach to local cultural riches and values. The local wisdom approach emerges as a promising paradigm, creating space for innovation that has a positive impact on learning management. The aim of this research is to describe, analyze and offer learning innovation solutions through a local wisdom approach in a management context. The research method used is literature study, through collecting library data originating from articles, journals, electronic books and relevant document data related to the research focus. The data analysis process was carried out using descriptive methods to analyze the material collected. The research results show that innovative learning with local wisdom creates an interesting learning environment and supports children's development by enriching their experience of local values and traditions. Innovative activities include learning methods, creative management, material development, and local community empowerment

**Keywords:** *Reasons, Definitions, Causes And Scope Of Innovation, Current Legislative Facilitations.*

**How to cite :** Milek, K. (2024). Innovation in Preschool and Early School Education. *Pedagogi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 24(1).  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24036/pedagogi.v24i1.2042>



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### INTRODUCTION

The political changes at the end of the 20th century brought many social and economic transformations. In Polish education, they brought a breath of alternative methodological and didactic solutions. This was related to moving away from the stagnation of the Polish People's Republic system and with the opportunity to get acquainted in practice with the diversity of systems in European countries. The developed systems of Freinet, Steiner and Montessori predominated there, and they appeared in numerous literature from the 1990s of the 20th century. The delight of innovation, practical solutions and their long-term use in other countries resulted in dynamic interest on the part of Polish teachers. Modernity in the undertaken modifications concerned integrated education, individualization of teaching, curriculum changes, increasing the effectiveness of the teaching process, searching for new textbooks and curricula. The needs of the teaching staff had not been met by the educational authorities, who were still guided by the centralization of education control (Anggreni, 2020). An obstacle for Polish innovators in the field of pedagogy was the lack of autonomy at work and unfavourable legal regulations, which strongly limit the possibilities of introducing changes in the educational process.

Early Childhood Education is a very important period in a child's development. At this time, children are experiencing a process of cognitive, psychomotor, social and emotional development (Aries, 2022). Therefore, learning carried out in early childhood must be directed at developing children's creativity and imagination. Innovation in early childhood learning is very

important (Afrianingsih, 2021). This innovation aims to develop children's abilities to think creatively and develop their imagination. Innovative learning will make children more interested and easier to understand the material being taught. One innovation in early childhood learning that can be implemented is the use of activity-based learning methods. Activity-based learning methods will make children more active in the learning process (Hadiansyah, 2015). Children not only sit in class and listen to the teacher teach, but are also directly involved in the learning process.

Innovation in early childhood learning can also be done by expanding children's experiences. Broad experience will make children more open to the world and broaden their horizons. This can be done by making visits to places that have educational value. For example, visits to playgrounds, animal parks, museums, or other places that can enrich children's experiences. Apart from that, teachers can also organize outdoor activities such as camping, picnics, or other activities that can involve children in physical activity (Fitria, 2021). Outdoor activities will make children more active and stimulate their physical and cognitive development. In innovation in early childhood learning, it is very important to involve parents in the child's learning process. Parents can play an active role in developing children's creativity and imagination. Teachers can invite parents to get involved in activities in class or hold joint activities outside the classroom.

In order to improve the quality of early childhood learning, this research aims to maintain positive values through the application of open materials. By providing positive cultural values, this research seeks to integrate the context of learning innovation, seeing it as a means to preserve and improve the quality of education. Apart from that, the research objectives focused on achieving optimal learning outcomes. The use of learning-based materials is not just a learning tool, but also an effort to achieve the effectiveness of sustainable learning, resulting in good learning achievements optimal for young children. Thus this research characterizes commitment to development of a holistic learning approach, incorporating the preservation of cultural values with efforts to achieve optimal learning outcomes for early childhood development.

Innovation is a process that includes activities related to the implementation of a new idea Bender (2016). This concept may apply to many areas of economic, scientific and cultural life. Recognizing innovative opportunities and analysing the chances of its success is the basic principle determining the definition of innovation. It refers to the process of creating the concept and the very perception of such a need, predicting the chances of success and effectiveness of the undertaken innovative action. Effective innovations begin with simple, small actions related to precisely defined facts (Drucker after Smak, 2014).

## **METHODS**

This research use descriptive qualitative approach. The qualitative descriptive research method uses literature review articles to be studied, allowing researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of innovation in early education and schools. This method includes observation, interviews, and content analysis. The research stage used case studies by selecting several teachers from different schools as research subjects. With this, researchers can observe the changes that occur in teachers in supporting children's positive metacognitive development. Data collection was collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and analysis of documents such as student progress records. Observations can include monitoring teacher and student interactions, learning strategies used, and the application of metacognitive methods. The data collected can be analyzed qualitatively through coding and thematically. Researchers can also use an action research approach to observe teacher transformation in supporting students. In this case, teachers and researchers can work together to develop strategies and measure their impact on student development. In this research, it is important to involve teachers, students and school officials in every step of the research to ensure the validity of the findings and relevance to the actual educational context.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Innovative learning becomes a type of learning that has attraction, fun, and is able to support children's development and needs, especially in the early childhood environment. Innovative learning based on local culture in early childhood aims to create a learning environment that enriches children's experiences with local values and traditions. In this approach, learning design to fit the cultural context in which the child finds itself, creating interconnectedness deeper connection between learning material and their daily reality. This provides an opportunity for children to identify themselves within learning, increase their sense of ownership, and enrich their understanding of local culture as a step to maintain the existence of local values in the center major influence of globalization. Learning materials are adapted to be relevant to everyday life and the environment around the child. Includes the use of local stories, songs regional, or traditional games as an integral part of the curriculum. In this way, children can experience more lively and touching learning directly with elements of their culture. This approach too enables educators to become facilitators of learning that inspire and support children's creative exploration.

Parent participation is an integral part of development materials learning. They can provide their personal insights and experiences, so that learning material becomes richer and more authentic. Besides that, The assessment method is designed to reflect the child's understanding of the based material culture, involving creative projects, presentations, or portfolio shows application of local values in children's activities. Therefore, Material development Local culture-based learning aims to create learning experiences which are unique, attractive, and appropriate to the local cultural context, so that children can experience meaningful and in-depth learning from an early age in an early childhood environment.

Józef Półtorzycki defined pedagogical innovation as a change in the area of education introduced in order to improve pedagogical activity (Devina, 2023). They include changes in the educational system, conditions, means, forms, educational methods, goals, content, teachers' work and students' activity. There are various reasons for introducing pedagogical innovations: (a) The need to prepare students for the inevitably changing reality; (b) The needs of creative teachers resulting from their searches and evaluations of educational reality; (c) Socio-cultural changes requiring radical modifications to education (Półtorzycki, 2002).

Wincenty Okoń defined pedagogical innovations as changes in the sphere of upbringing and education regarding the structure of the school system or its components, introduced in order to improve the system. They May concern: (a) Educational content; (b) inancial and social conditions; (c) Work of teachers and students.

He indicates the following types of innovations: (a) Organizational; (b) Methodical; (c) Curricular; (d) Systemic; (e) Political (Okoń, 2001).

In the 21st century it is difficult to agree with the statement that pedagogical innovation changes the school system, but it is certainly a factor in the search for a better quality of the system.

Teachers' great interest in creating innovations results from dissatisfaction with their current work and the existing state of education . Teachers are critical of the course and effects of their work, and they experience numerous obstacles and nuisances related to the activities of educational institutions. The professional aspirations of the teaching staff oppose disturbing phenomena and difficulties encountered in the educational field. The innovative approach of teachers is also the result of their self-improvement and nurturing their own aspirations and professional ambitions (Bender, 2016).

Stanisław Palka claimed that the reason for teachers' striving for innovative work is the nature of the work they perform. He believed that teachers see their pedagogical activity as an art that bypasses routine and formulaic nature. They are accompanied by creative anxiety and hence the need to improve work skills and search to combine theory with practice. The creative mood gives rise to innovative activities Palka (1992). It revealed the various inspirations of educators in terms of innovation: (a) By assimilating innovations from other schools and applying them within

the system of their educational institution; (b) Searching and implementing their own discoveries and ideas based on their own professional experience; (c) Implementing discoveries and pedagogical innovations into their own practice; (d) Evaluating solutions that meet the needs of students whose abilities, talents and competences require new, alternative educational activities; (e) Changes in the socio-cultural area requiring changes on the part of education.

We should support the statement that progress in the educational system in terms of innovative changes always results from the courage, creative talent of teachers, their ingenuity and the ability to critically observe reality Dudel (2014). Ewa Smak emphasized that pedagogical innovation is a denial of the traditional, old didactic and methodological order, it gives room to adapt to the new realities of education. According to the author, it is a creative, conscious way of introducing new solutions in the area of educational activities in order to change the current results of the educational process with the applicable methods, content, forms, means, and effort Smak (2014).

Dorota Bender lists the types of innovations that are created in connection with school tasks: (a) Educational - related to stimulating the development of students' personality, creating an educational atmosphere in the teaching and educational process, solving problems in the field of education; (b) Didactic-regarding the educational process and its elements-methods, forms, goals, content (Bender, 2016).

Beata Przyborowska distinguished improvement and cutting-edge innovations. The former expand and enrich pedagogical practice with new solutions, while the cutting-edge ones introduce uncompromising changes and novelties that gain scientific confirmation. There are also adopted and adapted innovations that differ in terms of authorship. The criterion of the source of change initiation divides innovations into the external and the internal one. A distinction is also made between functional innovations that concern changes involving the use of novelties regarding innovative forms, contents, methods and substantive innovations, which concern a single element of a pedagogical change Przyborowska (2013). The author emphasizes that innovations constitute an opportunity for a dialogue in the area of pedagogy. They cause clashes between traditional components of the educational process and alternative solutions.

The concept of innovation was indicated and defined by the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education, defining it as all innovative solutions regarding the organization, curricula and methods introduced to improve the quality of an educational institution. The Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 2002 indicated the types of activities that could be covered by innovative activities and imposed numerous formal requirements related to the introduction of changes to standard forms and methods. Currently, institutions have a decisive say in the implementation and the method of documenting innovations (Journal of Laws, 2019).

The types of innovation are: curricular, organizational, methodical and mixed. Changes in legislation were aimed at increasing teachers' activity by abolishing formal requirements. However, one should always bear in mind the features that innovations should have. Kwaśniewska provides the conditions for appropriate innovations. They should be creative, original, go beyond the standards of existing solutions, and have a theoretical explanation of the need for changes. They must be clearly specified, purposeful, meticulously planned, detailed in the description of stages, and predicting results. Predictions regarding the financial conditions and the staff implementing the innovation are important too. Each introduced change requires evaluation of the achievements of students and teachers, as well as the possibility of disseminating modified solutions (Kwaśniewska, 2014).

The changes introduced in the legislation triggered another wave of teachers' involvement in seeking change. Child development, especially at the stages of early preschool and school education, requires modification of educational standards. The changing social and technical reality places new demands on adapting the shape of education to the new requirements of the world. Preschool and early school teachers demonstrate particular sensitivity to children's individual needs and the challenges of reality. They show exceptional commitment to their work,

overcoming the feeling of lack of agency. They try to design innovations, create a new educational reality and popularize it among teaching staff.

The latest Regulation defining pedagogical innovations puts the practical implementation of innovations, their preparation, documentation and verification in the hands of the principal and the school (institution). The condition is that the student's entitlement to free education at school, obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to complete schooling in a given type of school, and the integrity of the type of a given school by innovative action must not be violated. There are currently many innovators among preschool and early school education teachers. This proves their unconventional approach to the teaching and upbringing process. They have an exceptional enthusiasm for work and change; they are characterized by the ability to critically approach their own work and perseverance in pursuing goals. The process of implementing innovations requires special creative talents, which leads to an increase in the quality of results in teaching and educational work Kotarba-Kańczugowska (2009). Teachers' involvement becomes a challenge for other colleagues, students' parents and for the students themselves, who are aware of the differences in their education.

Elementary education still generates much debate. Innovation introduced in kindergarten and the initial school grades is the result of projects that stimulate the child's activity and interests. They meet the changing social expectations towards school. Elżbieta Marek analyzed innovative curricula for early school education that stimulate scientific thinking, communicating in a foreign language, developing learning skills, and using ICT. The curricula provide individualized content for each student, adapting them to developmental needs. By developing students' competences, they significantly influence the development of teacher's competences. An important advantage of innovation is the increased role of parents in the process of institutional education and upbringing. Such radical innovative curricula are a testimony to the creativity of primary education teachers and their courage and determination to modernize educational processes and conditions Marek (2019). The wide spectrum of proposed innovations proves that the staff preparing children for schooling at higher levels of the system are substantively educated and has knowledge of the theoretical methodological and pedagogical foundations.

Issues regarding procedures for introducing innovations, which have been regulated for several years, and which involve eliminating unnecessary formalities, have an activating effect on teachers who meet the needs of children, their parents and their own requirements regarding their interests and professional work. The latest act introduces innovation as an integral element of school and kindergarten activities. It determines the need to introduce the basics of developing entrepreneurship and creativity, which will allow children and students to learn about the socio-economic world. The path to such education is innovative methodological, organizational and syllabus solutions. Innovative curricula must be based on the applicable core curriculum, which specifies the goals and achievements that a child should achieve in each kindergarten or primary school during early childhood education. Innovative activities are also included in the obligation contained in the statute of schools and kindergartens by recommending raising the standards and quality of work and its organization, enriching and developing methodological, teaching, caring, educational and innovative activities (Journal of Law, 2019).

Ultimately, each pedagogical innovation is a critique of the existing situation in a specific educational area and is a search for new improvements. It is a proposal to solve the educational situation in order to increase the quality of the process and improve the functioning of children in kindergarten and students at school. It is a novelty that improves the teaching and educational process and improves the child's development (Erviana, 2022). Therefore, it influences the development of the teacher's competences and the work of the entire teaching council, serving as an inspiration for other teachers, observing innovative activities, and inspiring the courage to take further steps in the field of progress in education. Ilona Kożuch claims that innovations in elementary education activate teachers, parents and their children. Teachers, who are passionate about their work, increasing their work skills, contribute to activities involving pedagogical progress that enrich activities in the field of education (Fajriati, 2020).

It can be concluded that the trend of innovative change in the field of education is currently one of the aspirations most hoped for by society. The teacher's willingness to innovate is on the one hand an attempt to pursue modernity, and on the other hand a balancing act, a kind of regulation between changing realities and the specific world of young and slightly older children, so that he can overcome developmental conflicts and bear the consequences of the smallest adaptation in social conditions and a new social economy was created. The still aging education system is a changing model due to ineffective legislation; they cannot remain silent about the actions of teachers who do not want to work according to patterns and only use conventional and outdated routes (Hadi, 2022). Edward Nečka describes pedagogical innovation as the best investment in education. Of course, this should not be understood as a mere financial investment. This is an investment in the child's development, who will develop into a competent person who is able to face personal and professional life. To plan and initiate innovation, teachers must know in depth the basics of children's growth and development and the regularity of learning, so that the innovation becomes a constructive solution that is beneficial for the development of preschool children and elementary school students.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, innovation in early childhood learning is very important in building children's creativity and imagination. Activity-based learning methods, the use of technology, the use of art, expanding children's experiences, and involving parents are some of the innovations that can be made in early childhood learning. Teachers also play an important role in developing innovative learning methods and paying attention to children's individual needs. With the right early childhood learning innovations, children can grow and develop well, developing extraordinary creativity and imagination.

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