

Innovative practices in teaching social sciences and humanities as the basis of modern pedagogical discourse



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Abstract Innovation in education is of paramount importance, as it facilitates the continual enhancement of educational content value and quality. This article aims to present the implementation of an "innovative environment" within university education as a significant element of pedagogical discourse. It remains pertinent to explore strategies for incorporating innovative practices into the teaching of social sciences and humanities within the realm of higher education. The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the effectiveness of innovative practices in the instruction of social sciences and humanities, while also determining students' perceptions regarding the necessity of integrating innovative practices, resources, and instructional techniques within the modern educational process. Given the nature of the study's objective, an integrated approach to methodology is required. The primary methodology employed in this study is the pedagogical experiment. Additionally, the research utilized methods such as questioning, observation, and the descriptive approach. The principal hypothesis posits that incorporating disciplines with social and humanitarian content that actively employ innovative practices is imperative for the education and training of professionals across various fields. The inclusion of such practices is expected to enhance the quality of education by fostering motivation to learn, facilitating career advancement, and improving the overall efficiency of the educational process, among other outcomes. The findings of this study provide evidence supporting the value of innovative practices in teaching humanities disciplines, serving as a foundation for pedagogical discourse within university education. Furthermore, the integration of innovative approaches in the instruction of social sciences and humanities establishes the groundwork for future reflection and the development of pedagogical tools, facilitating the successful application of acquired knowledge in practical contexts.

Keywords: social sciences, pedagogical discourse, innovative practice, higher education, innovative educational environment

1. Introduction

Efforts aimed at the modernization and advancement of university education necessitate the establishment of an efficient innovative environment. Key components of this endeavor include the modernization, support, and implementation of innovative practices, as well as the integration of information technologies into the educational process. An important topic within contemporary pedagogical discourse is the verbalization of human cognitive processes and their role in self-organizing the educational framework. This subject is frequently explored as an integral part of educational technologies, reflecting its relevance to current pedagogical considerations.

The corpus of social sciences and humanities poses a considerable subject of debate within European education. The presence of longstanding university traditions and a firmly established body of compulsory educational components in the humanities necessitate a continuous process of updating methodological tools and revising educational programs in alignment with labor market demands and the advancements of modern science. This ongoing need for adaptation is driven by the imperative to maintain relevance in the face of evolving societal needs and the ever-expanding frontiers of knowledge.

The social sciences typically encompass the body of economic and sociological disciplines, along with educational components of law and political science (Khomyak et al 2022; Hapsari and Wirawan 2018). The primary focus of study within these social disciplines revolves around human society, often referred to as "society."

The humanities encompass a range of disciplines, including linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and history. These fields primarily focus on the moral, intellectual, cultural, and social aspects of individual and societal activities (do Rosário



Santoro Franco 2017). The composition of social sciences and humanities can vary depending on different perspectives on the development of university education. For instance, in the British classification, disciplines such as language, religion, and music are included within the humanities, while in Central Asian universities, the humanities also encompass culture and art (Khomyak et al 2022; Hutsoliak 2012).

The application of innovative practices is of great significance in the realm of humanities disciplines. It is crucial to consistently incorporate and draw upon the experiences and advancements in recent procedures and methods developed by The Institute of Cognitive Behavior (2021).

The program is designed as a comprehensive set of teaching methods that leverage innovation, digitalization, and a democratic approach to foster effective learning in the social sciences and humanities. Emphasizing the development of positive thinking, communication skills, the ability to provide verbalized assessments, self-directed learning, and proficiency in managing crises and problem-solving, this methodology serves as a foundation for learning. Furthermore, it entails the introduction of new integrated disciplines during the initial years of study to cultivate a range of skills. In our pedagogical experiment, this is exemplified by the discipline "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice," specifically designed for first-year students during the first (bachelor's) semester.

Studies of this nature are closely intertwined with the degree to which innovative practices are implemented within the educational domain. The effectiveness and positive impact of these innovations can be examined through quality criteria and evaluated based on the perspectives of both educators and students (Iyobe and Umeda 2014). The successful implementation of innovations in teaching social sciences and humanities is contingent upon the attitudes and assessments of all participants in the educational process. Nevertheless, introducing innovative practices into these disciplines presents challenges due to the vast array of program materials available, the requirement for educators to possess advanced methodological skills and digital literacy, the need for adequate funding, and a willingness to embrace change, among other factors.

2. Literature review

Numerous studies have investigated the classification of social sciences and humanities, as well as the progressive development of a novel pedagogical discourse characterized by its innovative nature (Vilaça and Dias 2014). The research focuses on experimental interventions and their outcomes concerning the integration of innovations within university education, particularly within the domain of humanities instruction (Salgur 2013). The exploration encompasses the utilization of emerging technologies, such as social networks, software applications, cloud messengers, quizzes, and educational games, to enhance the educational experience (Karpushyna 2019).

Several noteworthy studies have explored innovative methodologies within the realm of linguistics, highlighting their effectiveness (Noon-ura 2008; Ko et al 2013; Rababah 2020). Additionally, research has been conducted on the specificities of employing innovative approaches in the psychological domain (Damian et al 2017) and within technical disciplines (Kiki-Papadakis and Chaimala 2016; Khomyak 2022). Furthermore, investigations have examined the potential utilization of media, social platforms, networks, and messengers as innovative components within the contemporary pedagogical discourse, thereby harnessing their educational capacities (Sim and Pop 2014).

Research efforts related to this issue span various domains, encompassing the linguistic and didactic aspects of the effectiveness and practical relevance of studying social sciences and humanities (Kostikova et al 2019). Additionally, investigations explore the role of the humanitarian component in fostering the development of civic engagement among future professionals, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking within the realm of professional communication (Cavus and Ibrahim 2017; Severino and Tavares 2020). Furthermore, innovative teaching practices are examined, focusing on the application algorithms and distinctive features of lexicon approaches, graph-based approaches, and quiz methods (Malik 2016).

Significant emphasis is placed on the exploration of innovative teaching practices, with certain scholars associating this matter with the concept of an "innovative climate." Central to this concept is the encouragement of creative endeavors, fostering students' research initiatives, promoting legal awareness and information literacy, and, most importantly, cultivating a comprehensive comprehension and effective application of the acquired knowledge and skills within practical contexts.

Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of integrating innovative practices into the teaching of social sciences and humanities, resulting in the development of highly skilled and competitive professionals capable of undertaking complex research, professional, applied, and creative tasks (Synorub and Medynska 2019; Kryshchanovych et al 2022). Consequently, this research area has garnered significant attention from scholars in the field of pedagogy (Bondar et al 2020).

Various scholarly works, such as those by Araújo da Silva and Rabelo (2021), delve into the modernization of education within the framework of a "flexible" university, where postmodern discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping pedagogical practices (Mason 2006). These studies primarily examine the potential prospects and forthcoming directions for innovation within pedagogical discourse, with a particular emphasis on developing novel approaches to enhance the efficacy

of personality development in the context of university education. Furthermore, it is advisable to explore the experiences of implementing innovative practices within the educational sphere to inform future endeavors.

3. Aims

The research objective of assessing the effectiveness of innovative practices in teaching the corpus of social sciences and humanities entails several specific tasks:

1. Presenting a comprehensive collection of innovative educational approaches for integrating social sciences and humanities into the course structure.
2. Evaluating the degree of success observed in the experimental groups during various stages of the experiment.
3. Investigating the students' assessment of the thematic and methodological relevance associated with the introduction of innovative practices, learning aids, and teaching techniques as fundamental components of the contemporary educational process.

4. Materials and methods

The study was conducted from September 2022 to May 2023, taking place at two institutions: Kamianets-Podilsky Ivan Ohienko National University, specifically within the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Economics, and Khmelnytsky National University, within the Faculty of Information Technology. Both institutions are located in Ukraine.

The experimental group consisted of a total of 82 first-year (bachelor's) students. Specifically, 24 individuals were enrolled in law specialties within the field of economics at Kamianets-Podilsky Ivan Ohienko National University. Additionally, there were 58 first-year (bachelor's) students studying in departments of telecommunications, cybersecurity, media, and intellectual technologies at Khmelnytsky National University.

All participants voluntarily consented to take part in the experiment. The participants were divided into four distinct groups. The curriculum encompassed the incorporation of a novel course. In the first semester, the discipline "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice" was made available to these groups. This course was included as part of a selective block of disciplines, offering students the choice to enroll. The primary objective of the course was to assist first-year students in adapting to the academic environment, acquainting them with practical principles of communication, establishing the guidelines for successful functioning within higher education institutions, encouraging active participation in student self-governance, and fostering the development of ethical behavior among future specialists in the economic, legal, and digital sectors. The course primarily focused on abstract concepts that necessitated the cultivation of a public stance and the activation of communicative elements, forming the foundation of the curriculum.

The research encompasses three distinct stages. The initial stage is characterized as preparatory and organizational. During this phase, the research team obtained the necessary approvals from the university administration and secured the participants' consent to partake in the study. Additionally, after the first stage, the respondents' overall grade point average was assessed, questionnaires were distributed, and a survey was conducted to gather personal data and determine the participants' attitudes toward the proposed discipline. It is important to note that students provided their answers voluntarily, and the research team ensured the confidentiality of all collected information. No personal information obtained from the respondents will be disclosed by the research team.

Both at the end of the first stage and the subsequent second stage (at the end of the semester), each group underwent testing to assess their knowledge and skills, enabling the analysis of the participants' overall performance. During the first stage, several innovative practices were employed, including business simulations (role-playing), the modeling method, and brainstorming.

During the second stage, the research employed observation and survey methods to gather relevant data, which will subsequently be utilized to address the research inquiries. The research team diligently collected and analyzed this data to derive meaningful insights.

Moving on to the third and final stage, a concluding survey was conducted to assess the respondents' evaluation of the newly implemented training course. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of the results was performed, ensuring that the gathered data was meticulously processed, utilized, and made publicly available. This information forms the foundation for evaluating the efficacy of the experiment and addressing the research questions at hand.

During the second stage, the research team employed various methodological approaches and theoretical studies to address the research questions posed in the study. The obtained results are presented descriptively, encompassing statistical analyses along with the consideration of survey data.

The study encountered certain challenges, including the relatively limited duration of the experiment (spanning a single academic year) and the constraints on conducting in-depth qualitative research to delve into the underlying motivations behind respondents' decision-making processes.

5. Results

In our perspective, a crucial phase in the study involves determining the content and significance of innovative practices within the structure and methodological framework of humanities courses. It is essential to explore their relationship with career orientation and the developmental impact on all participants engaged in the educational process. The utilization of innovative practices by teachers should be grounded in a comprehensive set of educational approaches, which form the foundation of such courses.

The objective of the "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice" course, implemented in the experiment, aimed to equip incoming students with the necessary foundations in humanities. This course sought to foster their understanding and engagement with the theoretical aspects and practical applications of the humanities disciplines (Figure 1).

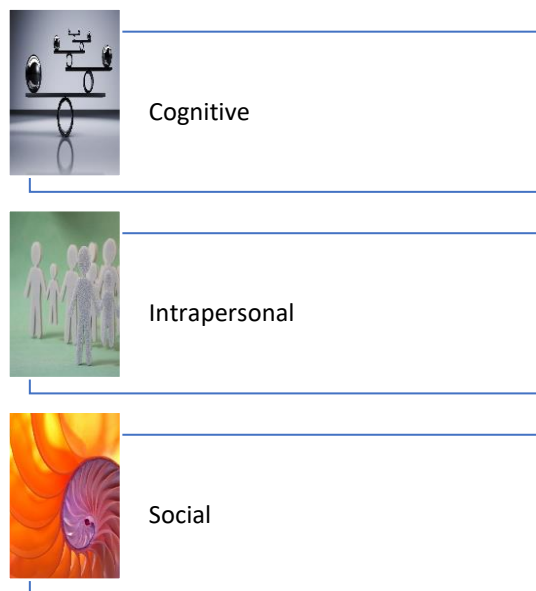


Figure 1 Complex of innovative educational approaches to teaching social sciences and humanities (compiled by the authors).

These approaches encompass intrapersonal (self-regulation, emotional background), social (interpersonal), and cognitive (ability to navigate non-standard crises, metacognition, critical thinking) dimensions (Reed 2020).

At the initial stage of the experiment (Stage I), the research team conducted an assessment of the existing educational program and evaluated the potential for its modernization concerning the introduction of the new course, "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice." Collaborating with the participating teaching staff, the research team developed teaching and methodological recommendations for the course and prepared instructional materials. Additionally, preliminary training sessions were conducted for the participants and technical staff to familiarize them with the use of advanced technologies in the learning process.

After the first stage of the experiment, which aligned with the conclusion of the 1st semester, the participants' knowledge was assessed and their overall performance was analyzed. This evaluation was carried out through the implementation of various techniques such as quizzes, tests, simulations, and the development and analysis of practical cases.

The performance of the groups, upon completing half of the course, indicates a relatively high level with an average score of 50% (good and excellent grades). The highest proportion of positive grades was observed in EG-1, where 59% of the participants achieved favorable results, followed closely by EG-3 with 53% (Table 1).

Table 1 Assessment of the level of success in the experimental groups (hereinafter EG) at the end of Stage 1 (compiled by the authors).

	Failed	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
EG-1	6 %	35 %	42 %	17%
EG-2	12 %	40%	40%	10 %
EG-3	6 %	41 %	40 %	13 %
EG-4	10 %	42 %	33%	15%

Source: compiled by the authors.

During the second stage of the experiment, the teaching of the new discipline in the social sciences and humanities, Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice, was extended as planned. Innovative practices implemented during this stage included project activities, group work, and the role of the project leader in material preparation. Furthermore, students were expected to defend their projects and present their leadership positions and concepts. To assess student performance

in the new discipline, a control test was administered. Changes in student performance were examined at the end of the second semester.

Upon completion of the entire training course, a significant proportion of the respondents attained positive grades of "good" and "excellent": EG-1 - 65%, EG-2 - 65%, EG-3 - 68%, EG-4 - 54%. On average, the overall performance of students exhibited an increase from 50% to 58%, indicating an average improvement of 8% (Table 2).

Table 2 Assessment of the academic performance of the experimental and control groups in the second stage (compiled by the authors).

	Failed	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
EG-1	5 %	30 %	47 %	18%
EG-2	8 %	39%	40%	15 %
EG-3	4 %	38 %	40 %	18 %
EG-4	6 %	40 %	38%	16%

Source: compiled by the authors.

The final stage of the study encompassed the assessment of various indicators. These indicators comprised academic performance, project defense outcomes, and evaluations from peers and instructors. The utilization of control tests enabled the measurement of communication skills, socialization abilities, readiness to effectively operate within the student community, and a comprehensive understanding of the unique aspects of student education. Additionally, student success in the course "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice" served as an indicator of a commendable level of proficiency in the repertoire of crisis management skills and the capacity for self-regulation within the educational process. Consequently, innovative practices emerged as the principal impetus behind the formation of the contemporary pedagogical discourse.

Furthermore, the capability to translate knowledge from the domains of social sciences and humanities into a comprehensive set of skills and competencies, along with the aptitude to apply the acquired knowledge in future professional endeavors, serves as a discerning criterion for assessing the efficacy of integrating innovations in higher education.

Upon completion of the "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice" course, a survey was administered to evaluate the participants' perception of the innovation introduced through the new course. The primary objective of the course was to facilitate the socialization of young individuals into the academic discourse of the university setting, fostering the development of effective learning strategies and the acquisition of essential competencies for successful academic pursuits. Furthermore, the course aimed to cultivate skills such as engaging in constructive dialogues, undertaking project-based activities, comprehending the fundamentals of leadership, and navigating the educational system within the university context.

In the concluding phase, participants were presented with a questionnaire. Closed-ended responses were required, allowing for a simple "yes" or "no" answer (Table 3). The outcomes were tabulated as percentages. Throughout the course, students were encouraged to prioritize the development of various skills and abilities, while also evaluating the significance of these opportunities for their learning and interpersonal communication. The participants were provided with a list of six items for contemplation.

Table 3 Participants' assessment of the topics and practices used in the discipline "Humanitarian Studies: Theory and Practice".

Course topics	EG-1 Yes	EG-2 Yes	EG-3 Yes	EG-4 Yes
Awareness and effectiveness in learning	34 %	32 %	20 %	25 %
Self-regulation of personal learning activities	29 %	27 %	18 %	20 %
Anti-crisis management	38 %	37 %	20 %	20 %
Fundamentals of training project management	48 %	40 %	25 %	25 %
Regulated communications and digital literacy	59 %	60 %	40 %	46 %
Anti-crisis communications	53 %	58 %	38 %	42 %

Source: compiled by the authors.

Based on the survey results, it can be inferred that a favorable evaluation of one's abilities and a willingness to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in future education are significant. Participants from the experimental groups achieved the highest ratings for practices associated with communication regulation, digital literacy, and the capacity to respond effectively in crises.

The utilization of knowledge and skills derived from the social sciences and humanities facilitates the realization of potential aimed at developing an understanding of society, enhancing communication skills, fostering independent work abilities, promoting critical thinking and creativity, and motivating learning and professional growth, among others. The integration of innovative practices within university education assists students in cultivating their civic positions, with the acquired knowledge expected to shape personal perspectives and behavioral norms.

6. Discussion

The body of research concerning the integration of innovative practices into pedagogical discourse primarily focuses on addressing the challenges and potential of effectively teaching humanities and disciplines related to the social and public aspects of society, as well as enhancing student engagement within the educational environment (Semenets-Orlova et al 2022; do Rosário Santoro Franco 2017; Czarnecki and Rees 2014). The pursuit of innovative practices that can be effectively implemented in the university context, thereby enhancing motivation, social participation, and communication abilities, remains ongoing. Findings from the study indicate that the introduction of practical, application-oriented, integrated, and innovative educational components receives positive evaluations from participants in the educational process, with over 50% of respondents expressing approval for such practices on average.

When examining the principles of cultivating students' civic stance (Khomyak 2020; Ivanova et al 2020), it becomes apparent that the role of social sciences and humanities extends beyond the transmission of knowledge. Instead, the focus should be on fostering critical thinking and values, thereby countering ineffective rote learning. The utilization of discussions, role-playing games, debates, round tables, and project-based activities within the learning process facilitates the development of critical thinking, initiative, and student autonomy (Rothen 2018; Popovych et al 2020; Araújo da Silva and Rabelo 2021). Our study's findings indicate that participants positively evaluated the incorporation of adaptive and practical case studies in the teaching of social sciences and humanities. Furthermore, academic performance in the course, which integrated innovative practices, experienced an overall increase of 9%. Students also expressed appreciation for the introduction of this comprehensive discipline aimed at adapting to the new academic environment.

7. Conclusions

The integration of innovative practices into the teaching of social sciences and humanities within university education represents a significant and valuable aspect of contemporary pedagogical discourse. By adopting an innovative approach, university education promotes independence, creativity, effective learning, career advancement, and proficiency in project-based activities. Within the realm of modern pedagogical discourse, one of the primary objectives is to foster educational and social values while nurturing a civic stance. Special attention is given to the development of communication skills, social engagement, and preparedness to confront professional challenges and critical situations.

The conducted pedagogical experiment validated the efficacy of this methodology in enhancing the efficiency of the learning process. The study groups exhibited an average improvement in academic performance of 9%, while the positive reception of innovations and the introduction of contemporary social and humanitarian courses exceeded 50%. This study has contributed to the understanding that present-day students display interest in and a favorable appraisal of the integration of innovative educational practices aimed at fostering communication, cognitive, and professional skills. The practical significance of this study lies in the identification of tools for enhancing student performance.

The educational process incorporates diverse European innovations that contribute to enhancing the learning experience and facilitating student adaptation. Simultaneously, teachers are encouraged to continuously engage with innovative practices that foster heightened interest in the subject matter. This is particularly relevant when teaching social sciences and humanities within comprehensive higher education institutions.

The issue of further integrating innovative practices into the educational environment as components of pedagogical discourse remain unresolved, as it aims to equip students with the necessary skills for effective engagement within the academic sphere, fostering their proactive and self-directed learning.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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