

Educational Innovation as A Non-Conventional Form of Support for Students Returning to Stationary Education After the SARS-CoV -2 Virus Pandemic*

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Abstract

The article addresses issues related to educational innovations. It was emphasized that they are a response to the real, current needs of a given institution or educational system and allow, among others, to solve current problems, improve learning outcomes, shape new cultural competencies or personal traits of a young person. It also presented the author's proposal for innovative activities to support students in returning to stationary education after the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic. The phenomenon of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the COVID-19 disease, has caused everyone to experience difficult emotions and problems typical of crisis situations. As a state of disorganization, crisis causes feelings of anxiety, shock, anger, and rage, possibly resulting in serious behavioural disorders. Underlying the creation of innovative activities under was a concern for the return to a healthy, happy life of the pupils, i.e., for their well-being, which is one of the most important resources shaping human existence. Given the ongoing health risks, as well as the negative effects of the pandemic on the mental, physical, and social well-being of individuals, a holistic approach was needed to rebalance the challenges faced by the individual with the internal and external resources at their disposal. The description of the innovative activities includes the motivation for introducing the pedagogical innovation, general assumptions, objectives (primary objective: developing students' mental, social, and physical well-being), methods (knowledge assimilation methods, self-directed learning methods, valorisation methods, practical methods), and forms of work, thematic modules, implementation and realization of tasks, subject of classes, expected achievements, evaluation.

Keywords: Pedagogical Innovation, Crisis, Well-Being.

Introduction

Innovation, creativity, rationalization, progress, individualism, change is the basic elements of modernity. In times of growing competition, increased awareness of service recipients, as well as numerous problems affecting institutions or enterprises, it is necessary to look for various solutions aimed at making a given entity distinguish itself against a turbulent environment. An opportunity for development, promotion, the attractiveness of the offer, and positive image of the organization, is an innovative activity. Innovation means any novelty in terms of products or services (Zawada and Herbuś, 2015), or changes in different areas of a company's operation concerning things, ideas, ways of doing things, methods of

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organisation, and management (Kalinowski, 2010). The place for the development of potentials is school, which is not an isolated fragment of reality, but one of the most essential components of society. The educational process determines the ability to deal with the challenges of the future and is closely linked to economic innovation, social innovation, environmental justice, humanity, and community spirit (Rasfeld and Breidenbach, 2015). Educational innovation, or the ability to generate new ideas, fosters solutions for effective learning, development, progressive change, and overcoming technical, medical, social, and other problems (Podgórska-Jachnik, 2012). Pedagogical innovation is a systemic change in the sphere of education and/or upbringing, that increasing the quality of operation of a school. It is characterized by dissimilarity to the existing solutions, while its goal is to transform the teaching and educational practice in accordance with the idea of supporting the comprehensive development of children, adolescents, and adults. Pedagogical innovations include modifications, modernizations, and creations or: transformations, supplements, substitutions, eliminations, adaptations, reinforcement, integration (Kotarba-Kańczugowska, 2009). The literature also distinguishes the following innovations: programmatic, methodological, organizational, institutional, and systemic ones (Przyborowska, 2013). Innovative activities, having a phased nature, usually consist of four areas of activity:

- preparation of the goals, assumptions, and programme of innovation;
- consistent execution of the tasks of innovation;
- evaluation of the course and effects of innovative activities;
- dissemination of the effects of innovation (promotion of novelty and its effects) (Sawiński, 2015).

When designing educational innovation activities, teachers should be aware that:

1. To be an innovation leader is to know how to implement it.
2. Conscious change is a response to the state of the surroundings.
3. The foundation of change is the vision of the new state of affairs.
4. Innovation in schools is not introduced by one person.
5. To change school, you have to convince the teachers.
6. Innovation is not an end in itself.
7. Technological innovation should be for better learning.
8. Innovation can also improve school organization.
9. The point of innovation is school growth (Kalbarczyk, 2015).

On the one hand, pedagogical innovations allow to solve current problems, to increase educational results, to form new cultural competences, personality traits of students, and on the other hand, they are conducive to increasing the adaptability of institutions and the professional and personal development of teachers (Atroszko and Atroszko, 2014).

Innovative activities as a form of supporting students in returning to stationary education - own proposal

The innovative activities under the slogan of “I feel good about myself and others” were developed for a specific elementary school, but can also be modified and used by other educational institutions.

Motivation for innovation

The phenomenon of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the COVID-19 disease, has caused everyone to experience difficult emotions and problems typical of crisis situations. As a state of disorganization, crisis causes feelings of anxiety, shock, anger, and rage, possibly resulting in serious behavioural disorders. The dynamics of the emotional burden of a crisis depends on three elements: the social context (e.g., changes in daily life, movement restrictions, media information, peer behaviour), the family context (e.g., economic conditions, quality of family relationships, problems occurring in the family), and personality traits (e.g., maturity of defence mechanisms, level of sensitivity, temperament) (Poleszak and Pyżalski, 2020). A crisis, though limited in time, can evolve into a string of recurring transcisis breakthroughs. A pandemic affecting an entire society is one of the more universal experiences, hence the need to share what we experienced or are still experiencing. The fact that we are not alone makes it easier to cope with various problems. Every crisis, however, presents both a threat and an opportunity for a person, motivating them to act, and thus to grow.

The diagnosis was carried out among students (270 subjects), during which the following techniques were used: survey method, direct participatory observation, examination of documents and materials, analysis of the content and products of the activity, as well as a research tool in the form of an observation sheet prepared by the author, revealed a significant increase in such emotions as fear (52%), anxiety (63%), uncertainty (48%), sadness (36%), stress (44%), nervousness (59%). Loss of the sense of safety, of the need to belong, the inability to cope with tension, or the use of ineffective strategies to do so resulted in negative changes in psychophysical aspects (eating disorders – 43%, loss of or increase in

appetite – 39%, bedwetting – 7%, nightmares – 12%, disrupted sleeping patterns – 21%, mood swings – 32%, decreased energy – 56%, constant irritability – 31%, aggression – 29%, self-aggression – 6%, getting into conflicts – 39%, difficulty concentrating – 61%, etc.). Time spent in home isolation, mostly in front of a computer screen, and less exercise, have contributed to a significant decline in children's physical fitness (67%). Peer relationships have also been severely diminished (79%). The results of the study clearly showed that students require comprehensive support to meet needs that have been disrupted as a result of the crisis. Taking care of a young person's emotional condition, building their mental resilience, and providing positive experiences, are the essential tasks for proper functioning in the environment.

Underlying the creation of innovative activities under the slogan “I feel good about myself and others” is a concern for the return to a healthy, happy life of the pupils, i.e., for their well-being, which is one of the most important resources shaping human existence. Well-being, defined as the frame of mind of a person who knows their potential, understands emotions, is resilient to stress, takes care of their body, has a sense of purpose, and bonds with and belongs to a community, is influenced by elements such as positive self-esteem, appropriate relationships with peers, teachers, constructive feedback, attractive lessons, classroom atmosphere, sense of influence, physical activity, clear rules of cooperation, and appreciation (Bigaj and Debski, 2020). Given the ongoing health risks, as well as the negative effects of the pandemic on the mental, physical, and social well-being of individuals, a holistic approach is needed to rebalance the challenges faced by the individual with the internal and external resources at their disposal.

General Assumptions

Innovative Activities: “I feel good about myself and others”, creating space for students to, among other things, bring up difficult topics, understand and feel with empathy, recognize other people's needs and emotions, and focus attention on other people, are meant to build a sense of safety, as well as establish proper relationships based on mutual respect and acceptance. Enabling children to acquire new social-emotional skills and the ability to establish, maintain, and nurture peer relationships, on the other hand, is intended to foster a renewed sense of belonging. Working on their psychophysical development, broadening their awareness of their impact on the environment, shaping their resourcefulness in life, will give the pupils a sense of stability and predictability, which will help them to achieve the harmony lost. Innovative Activities: “I feel good about myself and others” is addressed primarily to students in grades 1-8, but also to their parents and teachers. They will take place during early childhood education classes, classes with teachers, daycare classes, extracurricular activities, and breaks between classes, taking various forms, such as workshops, meetings with various people, competitions, rallies, marches, walking trips, organization of celebrations, and implementation of projects.

Objectives

Primary objective: developing students' mental, social, and physical well-being.

Specific objectives:

- reintegrating of the class unit, creating an atmosphere of calmness, safety, rebuilding the team;
- developing a sense of group community;
- making pupils aware of their contribution to the development and functioning of the team;
- developing the ability to take different perspectives in interpreting social situations;
- developing skills in understanding one's own emotions and creating satisfying interpersonal relationships;
- increasing self-awareness about factors that affect well-being;
- developing skills to cope with anxiety, stress, and hateful messages online;
- increasing mental toughness;
- counteracting neurotic behaviours, anxiety disorders, mood disorders;
- developing skills to constructively and safely build parent-child bonds;
- implementing rational choices of activities to achieve important life goals;
- encouraging reflection on the ethical aspects of pursuing life goals;
- providing good experiences;
- developing a sense of empowerment;
- equipping with competencies that enhance self-regulation;
- implementing conflict resolution through the use of restorative justice concepts;
- increasing a sense of empowerment through participation in the decision-making in various areas of school life;
- developing key competencies;

- developing skills to evaluate and develop personal passions and talents;
- providing opportunities for self-fulfilment;
- developing creative thinking, creativity;
- implementing various forms of physical activity;
- promoting a healthy lifestyle;
- encouraging regular and rational dietary habits;
- motivating to work on oneself and one's improvement;
- supporting developmental potential;
- enhancing self-esteem.

Methods and forms of work

- 1) Methods of work:
 - a) knowledge assimilation methods (learning by assimilation);
 - b) self-directed learning methods (discovery learning);
 - c) valorisation methods (experiential learning);
 - d) practical methods (learning by doing).
- 2) Forms of work:
 - a) individual (uniform, differentiated);
 - b) group (unified, differentiated);
 - c) collective.

Thematic modules

- 1) Psychological well-being:
 - a) "My experiences related to the pandemic" - a reflection of emotions, feelings using various forms of artistic communication - early childhood education classes (grades I-III), classes with a teacher (grades IV-VIII) (Siedlaczek-Szwed and Jałowicka-Frania, 2020).
 - b) Implementation during the early childhood education, and teacher classes, of topics enabling the development of mental well-being of students (according to the indicated scenarios).
 - c) Conducting prevention and education workshops for students in grades 4-8 in the area of development of skills in coping with stress, hateful messages online.
 - d) Training of the Pedagogical Council on counteracting neurotic behaviours in children, anxiety disorders, mood disorders.
 - e) Preparation of leaflets for parents on neurotic (anxiety) disorders and mood disorders in children.
 - f) "Self-care, or take care of yourself" - creating practical tips for students in grades I-VIII.
 - g) Organization of active breaks to relax and soothe difficult emotions.
 - h) Starting off an intervention centre for students in need of help, support.
 - i) Promotion of trust boxes for students on school grounds.
- 2) Physical well-being:
 - a) Meeting of students of grades IV-VIII with a dietician.
 - b) Organization of a wall newspaper on the principles of reasonable nutrition.
 - c) "Healthy Meal" - promotion of recipes.
 - d) "Page from a cookbook" - a contest for students in grades IV-VIII to design a daily menu in accordance with the rules of healthy eating.
 - e) Creating a practical nutritional guide entitled "I eat healthy - menus not only for children".
 - f) Conducting outdoor daycare activities.
 - g) School nurse counselling for students in grades I-VIII on prophylaxis and health promotion.
 - h) Development of a set of physical, motor exercises for students in each age group and their parents.
 - i) "I take care of my fitness, so I exercise every day" - a competition for students who do not participate in any additional sports activities organized at school or in the city.
 - j) Designing didactic games concerning the open-air activities in question (presentation during Children's Day celebrations).
 - k) Promotion and organization of rallies and hikes within the activities of School Tourist and Sightseeing Societies (SKKT) and Regional Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society in Częstochowa.
 - l) Promotion of *Nordic walking*.

- m) Organization of motor activities during breaks.
- n) Meetings with people practicing various sports or promoting a healthy lifestyle - the “Parent with passion” project.
- o) Promoting healthy projects: “Keep in shape”, “School milk”, “School fruit”, etc.
- p) Development of leaflets for parents to promote healthy lifestyles.

3) Social well-being:

- a) Reintegration of class teams - early childhood education classes (grades I-III), teacher classes (grades IV-VIII).
- b) Creation of a Teacher Vademecum entitled: “How do you build relationships with and in a group”
- c) Preparation of creative workshops for students of grades I-VIII as part of the “Subject Months” project.
- d) Development of the “ABCs of Teacher-Learning Mentor” guide as part of the “November as a Mnemonics Month” project.
- e) Promotion of volunteer activities and activities of the School Student Council.
- f) Organization of the Student Assembly under the slogan of “I discuss, I decide, I act, I cooperate”.
- g) Participation of representatives of the School Student Council in a meeting of the Pedagogical Council devoted to discussion of problems related to teaching and upbringing.
- h) Undertaking of activities that integrate students from parallel classes.
- i) Organization of active breaks that allow for social relationships (team games, discussion clubs).
- j) Preparation of leaflets for parents on how to develop constructive and safe parent-child bonds.

Implementation and Execution

Table 1: Implementation and execution of innovative activities

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Addresses</i>	<i>Execution Time</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING				
1.	“My experiences related to the pandemic” - reflection of emotions, feelings using various forms of artistic communication - early childhood education classes, classes with a teacher.	Students of grades I-III, IV-VIII	September 2021	Teachers of grades I-VIII
2.	Implementation during the early childhood education, and teacher classes, of topics enabling development of mental well-being of students (according to the indicated scenarios).	Students of grades I-III, IV-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Teachers of grades I-VIII
3.	Conducting prevention and education workshops for students in grades 4-8 in the area of development of skills in coping with stress, hateful messages online.	Students in grades IV-VIII	September/October 2021 February/March 2022	School counselor
4	Training of the Pedagogical Council on counteracting neurotic behaviours in children, anxiety disorders, mood disorders	Teachers	August 2021	Leader in Intra-School Teacher Training
5	Preparation of leaflets for parents on neurotic (anxiety) disorders and mood disorders in children	Parents	September 2021	School counsellor
6.	“Self-care, or take care of yourself” - creating practical tips for students in grades I-VIII	Students in grades I-VIII	October 2021	School counsellor

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Addresses</i>	<i>Execution Time</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
7.	Organization of active breaks to relax and soothe difficult emotions	Students in grades I-VIII	Twice a week throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Teachers of grades I-III, tutors of the School Student Council
9.	Launching an intervention centre for students in need of help, support	Students in grades I-VIII	Once a week throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Student Ombudsman
10.	Promotion of trust boxes for students on school grounds	Students in grades I-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	tutors of the School Student Council
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING				
1.	Meeting of students of grades 4-8 with a dietician	Students in grades IV-VI; VII-VIII	September/October 2021	School nurse
2.	Organization of a wall newspaper on the principles of reasonable nutrition	Students in grades I-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Teachers of the school common room
3.	“Healthy Meal” - promotion of recipes	Students in grades I-VIII	Once a week throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Intendant, common room teachers
4	“Page from a cookbook” - a contest for students in grades 4-8 to design a daily menu per the rules of healthy eating	Students in grades IV-VIII	November 2021	Teachers of the school common room
5	Creating a practical nutritional guide entitled “I eat healthy - menus not only for children”	Students in grades I-VIII	November/December 2021	Intendant, school nurse, nutritionist
6.	Conducting outdoor day care activities	Students in grades I-VIII	Minimum 1 hour daily throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Teachers of the school common room
7.	School nurse counselling for students in grades I-VIII on prophylaxis and health promotion	Students in grades I-VIII	Twice in each grade throughout the 2021/2022 school year	School nurse
8.	Development of a set of physical, motor exercises for students in each age group and their parents	Students in grades I-VIII Parents	September 2021	Physical education teachers
9.	“I take care of my fitness, so I exercise every day” - a competition for students who do not participate in any additional sports activities organized at school or in the city	Students in grades I-VIII	October 2021	Physical education teachers
10.	Designing of didactic games concerning the open-air activities in question	Students in grades I-VIII	September 2021/May 2022	Early childhood education teachers, subject teachers
11.	Promotion and organization of rallies and hikes within the activities of School Tourist and Sightseeing Societies (SKKT) and Regional Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society in Częstochowa	Students in grades IV-VIII Parents	Five times during the 2021/2022 school year	Tutors of the School Tourist and Sightseeing Society
12.	Promotion of <i>Nordic walking</i>	Students in grades IV-VIII Parents	Five times during the 2021/2022 school year	Physical education teachers
13.	Organization of motor activities during breaks	Students of grades I-III, IV-VIII	Once a week throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Teachers of grades I-III

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Addresses</i>	<i>Execution Time</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
14.	Meetings with people practicing various sports or promoting healthy lifestyle - the "Parent with passion" project	Students in grades I-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Teachers of grades I-VIII
15.	Promoting healthy projects: "Keep in shape", "School milk", "School fruit", etc.	Students in grades I-VIII Parents	All school year 2021/2022	Teachers of grades I-VIII
16.	Preparation of leaflets for parents to promote a healthy lifestyle	Parents	September 2021	School counsellor
SOCIAL WELL-BEING				
1.	Reintegration of class teams - early childhood education classes, activities with the teacher	Students of grades I-III, IV-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Teachers of grades I-VIII
2.	Creation of a Teacher Vademecum entitled: "How do you build relationships with and in a group?"	Teachers	September 2021	School counsellor
3.	Preparation of creative workshops for students of grades I-VIII as part of the "Subject Months" project	Students of grades I-III, IV-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Early childhood education teachers, subject teachers
4	Development of the "ABCs of Teacher-Learning Mentor" guide as part of the "November as a Mnemonics Month" project	Teachers	November 2021	Selected teachers of grades I-VIII, school counsellor
5	Promotion of volunteer activities and activities of the School Student Council	Students in grades III-VIII Parents	All school year 2021/2022	Tutors of the School Student Council
6.	Organization of the Student Assembly under the slogan of "I discuss, I decide, I act, I cooperate"	Students in grades III-VIII	September 2021 June 2022	Tutors of the School Student Council
7.	Participation of representatives of the School Student Council in a meeting of the Pedagogical Council devoted to discussion of problems related to teaching and upbringing	Representatives of the School Student Council	November 2021	Tutors of the School Student Council
8.	The undertaking of activities that integrate students from parallel classes	Students in grades I-VIII	All school year 2021/2022	Class teachers, subject teachers
9.	Organization of active breaks that allow for social relationships (team games, discussion clubs)	Students in grades I-VIII	Twice a week throughout the 2021/2022 school year	Teachers of grades I-III, tutors of the School Student Council
10.	Preparation of leaflets for parents on how to develop constructive and safe parent-child bonds	Parents	September 2021	School counsellor

Class Topics

The topics have been developed in accordance with the core curriculum of general education for elementary school. It is planned to implement 20 thematic blocks, 10 for students of grades I-III and 10 for grades IV-VIII.

- 1) Issues of psycho-social activities designed for students in grades I-III:
 - a) We get to know each other and make closer connections.

- b) We create a climate of trust, respecting our distinctness and that of others.
 - c) We overcome intimidation by revealing our feelings and thoughts.
 - d) We improve effective communication with others.
 - e) We control our emotions.
 - f) We learn empathy to understand the behaviour and empathize with others.
 - g) We work as a team and collaborate other.
 - h) We strengthen self-esteem.
 - i) We express ourselves when interacting with others by practicing assertive behaviour.
 - j) We cope with stress and anxiety.
- 2) Topics for classes with the class teacher - grades IV-VIII:
- a) Expression of emotions - we can talk about our feelings and express them in different ways.
 - b) We mature through camaraderie and interpersonal interaction.
 - c) We are responsible for the tasks we are given, our own choices, learning and development.
 - d) We can defend our opinion and behave assertively - or how to communicate effectively with peers and adults?
 - e) Social and selfless work in voluntary service to meet our own needs and those of other people.
 - f) We work as a team and collaborate with each other.
 - g) We consciously use mass media and information technology.
 - h) We say NO to drugs and psychotropic substances - we focus on a healthy lifestyle.
 - i) We are aware of our psycho-physical changes associated with adolescence (fears, anxieties, difficulties).
 - j) My strengths and interests determine my future school and profession.

Expected Achievements

- 1) Students:
- will reflect feelings using various forms of artistic expression;
 - will understand and control their own emotions;
 - will know what contributes to their well-being;
 - will deal with anxiety, stress, and hateful messages online;
 - will communicate effectively with others;
 - will establish satisfying interpersonal relationships;
 - will have a sense of group community;
 - will be involved in the development and functioning of the team;
 - will act as a team and collaborate with peers;
 - will undertake volunteer tasks;
 - will take different perspectives in interpreting social situations;
 - will can settle disputes and resolve conflicts through negotiation;
 - will make rational choices of actions to achieve important life goals;
 - will make independent decisions, think creatively, and be creative;
 - will develop personal interests, passions, and talents;
 - will know mnemonics and how to use them in practice;
 - will enhance their self-esteem;
 - will eat healthily and rationally;
 - will be physically active.
- 2) Teachers:
- will create an atmosphere of calmness, acceptance, and safety, by reintegrating class divisions;
 - will care for the emotional condition of students, building their mental resilience;
 - will provide good experiences, enabling students to properly function at school;
 - will expand their knowledge and acquire skills on how to prevent neurotic behaviours in children, anxiety disorders, mood disorders;
 - will equip students with competencies that strengthen self-regulation;
 - will encourage students to reflect on the ethical aspects of pursuing life goals;
 - will teach students how to resolve conflicts using the idea of restorative justice;
 - will provide opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes involving various areas of school life;
 - will promote self-realization, personal development, and social integration through the development of key competencies;
 - will be mindful mentors in the scope of learning;
 - will promote a healthy lifestyle;

- will mobilize students to engage in various forms of physical activity.
- 3) Parents:
- will acquire knowledge about neurotic (anxiety) disorders and mood disorders in children;
 - will know how to constructively and safely build parent-child bonds;
 - will provide good experiences;
 - will motivate children to work on themselves;
 - will encourage and engage in various forms of physical activity with children;
 - will promote a healthy lifestyle.

Evaluation

The primary tasks of the evaluation will be related to answering the following questions:

- is the implementation of innovative activities proceeding as intended?
- are the anticipated results being achieved?
- shouldn't the designated activities be reviewed and amended?

Both ongoing and *ex-post* evaluations will be conducted to provide feedback and to assess the extent to which the intended tasks have been achieved. Sources of information about innovative actions and their effects will include: opinions of: students, parents, teachers and documentation of the course of the teaching and upbringing process. Collection methods will include

- individual and group discussions with students;
- discussions with parents;
- discussions with teachers as part of monthly Education Team meetings;
- classroom evaluations;
- observations of students, their behaviour and activities;
- school profile prepared in connection with an internal evaluation.

Summary

The school of the 21st century needs to shape such skills as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication (Siedlaczek-Szwed and Jałowicka-Frania, 2009), collaboration, flexibility and adaptation to change, initiative, goal setting, social competence, and intercultural competence, among others (Robinson and Aronica, 2015). Innovation as one of the most desired abilities of modern mankind is closely related to the concepts of human capital development. The creation of innovations is determined by several external factors, so they should respond to the real, current needs of a particular institution or educational system. All the innovative activities require reliable preparation, programme development, implementation strategy for new undertakings, as well as accurate evaluation. Their effectiveness is conditioned by meticulously defined goals, objectives, implementation plans, and ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken.

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