

Jefferson Educator: Domain of Innovation

The Jefferson Educator purposefully explores instructional strategies and tools from a variety of contexts to design and redesign educational experiences, energizing learning for one's self and others.

Innovation in education is an openness to looking with fresh eyes at problems in teaching and learning and addressing them in new ways. Innovation does not require invention. It recognizes that educators do not always have the solutions, but they are open to new approaches to improve teaching strategies and knowledge transfer. Core to innovation in education are creativity and adaptability to address a specific goal in mind.

With so many new and emerging pedagogies, as well as tools and resources that foster collaboration, educators are presented with many options for adopting innovative practices to teaching and instruction that align with their learners' needs. Deciding to design, re-design, and/or implement an innovation should be intentional and align with several key innovation principles.

When might I use Innovation?

- To address needs and/or goals that current tools, methods, or knowledge do not adequately address.
- To better prepare learners for changes in real workplace settings.
- To enhance learner adaptability and problem-solving skills.
- To rekindle one's personal motivations for teaching.
- To explore the role of technology in teaching, learning, and assessment.

Key Principles of Innovation

Innovation in teaching should engage both educators and learners. When designed successfully, innovative teaching leverages faculty motivators of engagement. Three key factors that link to intrinsic motivation include: What am I doing in this learning experience? What am I doing in this learning experience?

- **Autonomy:** Autonomy is the need to direct your own life and work as an educator. To be fully motivated, educators should be able to control their teaching. Autonomy can help educators think creatively. When designing innovative learning experiences, educators should have a certain amount of choice about when learning can take place, with whom their learners will learn, how their learners will learn, and what their learners will learn.
- **Mastery:** Mastery represents the desire to improve. Educators motivated by mastery will seek to improve their teaching skills through learning and practice. When designing innovative learning experiences, educators should strive to design experiences that are meaningful to them. These experiences should challenge educators to grow, while also considering their current level of capacity [calibration of a 'must do' attitude vs. a 'can do' attitude].
- **Purpose:** Educators may become disengaged and demotivated with their teaching if they cannot visualize the "bigger picture." When designing innovative learning experiences, educators, should connect the learning to something larger than the educators themselves. Learning should be connected to their values.

Educators will also benefit from focusing on the "Six Cs" of Innovative Professional Learning as they try to become more innovative when designing and implementing educational experiences. These include:

- **Choice:** Educators should have a certain amount of choice in their teaching. Similar to amplifying student voice and student choice, educators should raise their teacher voice and teacher choice when it comes to professional learning.
- **Connection:** Educators need to connect with other educators to share professional passions, interests, responsibilities, and goals. Innovative teaching and learning rarely, if ever, happen in isolation.
- **Context:** Authentic learning is less likely to occur if it is disconnected from any practical context. Context will serve as the glue to connect the dots along the path to applying learning in real-world settings. Innovative professional learning requires context: authentic relevant settings in which educators not only know something, but to do something with what they know.
- **Coaching:** When it comes to innovative teaching, educators should receive coaching about new teaching techniques and the practice of new skills. Educators should also have the opportunity to coach and mentor one another.
- **Curiosity:** One of the most important components to learning is the actual desire to learn. Innovative teaching should instill curiosity in educators. Educators should be openly curious themselves, and reflect on their content, their instructional techniques, and their challenges and successes. Experiences that prompt curiosity are more likely to lead educators to discover new and better ways to inform their teaching.
- **Culture:** Innovative teaching requires a culture of innovation. A culture of curiosity, connection, and choice should be infused within their respective learning spaces. The culture should promote learning in the appropriate practical context and allow for coaching to take place - between educators and learners, as well as between learners themselves. The teaching culture should support, encourage, and celebrate taking risks; establish transparency and vulnerability as the norm; and reaffirm a growth mindset.

How can I get started?

- Start small. When it comes to innovation, small ideas can mean big wins.
- Be intentional. Start with the why.
- Consider your willingness to adopt the new innovation in your educational space.
- Give yourself time to make the decision to design, re-design, and/or implement the innovation.
- Embrace design thinking principles to build a culture of innovation in your educational space.
- Design a learner-centered space that matches your innovative pedagogy.
- Spark innovation from failure.
- Examine your innovation from an equity lens.

Selected Resources

- Casas, J., Whitaker, T., & Zoul, J. (Eds.). (2018). 10 Perspectives on Innovation in Education (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429486104>
- Pink, D. H. (2009). *Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us*. Riverhead Books.
- Palahicky, Sophia. (2020). *Enhancing Learning Design for Innovative Teaching in Higher Education*. Information Science Reference.
- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with Why: how great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. Portfolio.
- Ellis, V., Souto-Manning, M., & Turvey, K. (2018). [Innovation in teacher education: towards a critical re-examination](https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2019.1550602). *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 45(1), 2-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2019.1550602>

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