

Educator Spirit Guiding the Path of Teaching Innovation for Young Teachers

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The uniquely Chinese educator spirit provides a fundamental guideline for teachers in the new era to fulfill their mission of moral education and talent cultivation. There exists a profound alignment between the teaching innovation practices of young teachers and the core tenets of the educator spirit. Consequently, a three-dimensional framework for systematic guidance can be constructed focusing on values, wisdom, and resilience. Guided by ideals, beliefs, and moral integrity, the foundational values of teaching innovation are solidified, ensuring it remains anchored to the direction of nurturing students. Through educational wisdom and benevolence, the practical rationality of innovation is refined, propelling teaching toward greater scientific rigor and humanistic care. With a diligent attitude and a pursuit of propagating moral principles, enduring resilience for innovation is forged, guaranteeing its sustainable development. Under this spiritual guidance, a deeper conscious understanding of the value, methodology, and mission of teaching innovation is fostered, steering it toward professional practice that is soulful, rational, and resilient. This effectively translates the educator spirit into an internal driving force and a developmental compass for the teaching innovation of young teachers.

Keywords: the spirit of educators, young teachers, teaching innovation

Introduction

In January 2025, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued “The Outline for Building a Leading Nation in Education (2024-2035)”, which explicitly advocates for “implementing the educator spirit to strengthen teachers’ commitment” (2025, p. 6), thereby placing the promotion of the educator spirit at the strategic core of teacher development. In March of the same year, the “Deployment and Promotion Meeting for the Comprehensive Reform Pilot of the Three-Year Action Plan for Building a Leading Nation in Education” further emphasized the need to “innovate the systems and mechanisms of teacher education and cultivate a new generation of high-level teaching professionals” (2025). Against this backdrop of policy guidance and the call of the times, young teachers, as the most dynamic and promising group within the teaching force, find the development of their teaching innovation capabilities directly linked to the construction of a high-quality education system and the realization of the goal of building a leading nation in education. However, current teaching innovation practices among young teachers often face multiple practical challenges, including ambiguous value orientation, weak methodological support, and insufficient sustained motivation. In an era of rapidly evolving technology and diverse educational concepts, how to guide young teachers in conducting

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teaching innovation that is profound, humane, and sustainable has become a critical issue demanding urgent resolution. The uniquely Chinese educator spirit, which systematically integrates ideals and beliefs, educational wisdom, a diligent and grounded attitude, and the pursuit of propagating moral principles, provides fundamental value guidance and practical wisdom for addressing this challenge. This study aims to systematically elucidate the guiding mechanism of the educator spirit in the teaching innovation of young teachers and to construct a three-dimensional pathway framework encompassing the anchoring of value coordinates, the refinement of practical rationality, and the forging of innovation resilience. It seeks to provide theoretical reference and practical pathways for promoting the profound transformation of young teachers from “technology appliers” to “conscious creators”, thereby contributing to the development of a new generation of high-level innovative teaching professionals.

The Guiding Soul: Ideals, Beliefs, and Moral Integrity Anchoring the Value Coordinates of Teaching Innovation

The essence of teaching innovation is not a value-neutral technical activity; rather, its evolutionary direction and practical depth fundamentally depend on the spiritual realm and value orientation upheld by the educational subject. The ideals, beliefs, and moral integrity inherent in the educator spirit establish a profound value reference framework for teaching innovation, enabling it to maintain internal stability amid the intertwining influences of diverse educational thoughts and technological tools, thereby consistently anchoring itself to the fundamental educational tenet of “fostering virtue and cultivating talents”.

From Professional Livelihood to National Educational Mission

The core essence of the educator’s spirit provides a fundamental guidance for young teachers to transcend the limitations of individual career development and achieve the value elevation of teaching practice. The ideals and beliefs advocated by it, such as “having a great sense of responsibility and wholeheartedly serving the country”, require that the teaching practice of young teachers must undergo a meaning reconfiguration from “professional career” to “national grand goals”. This means that teachers need to break through the “small self” cognition of equating teaching work with a means of livelihood, and consciously place daily teaching within the grand educational mission of “cultivating talents for the Party and educating people for the country” (Zhang, 2026, p. 8). When teachers actively combine classroom teaching and student cultivation with the demands of national development and the goals of national rejuvenation, their teaching activities gain value depth and lasting momentum beyond instrumental rationality. This value consciousness led by the educator’s spirit promotes teachers to shift from focusing on teaching skills and efficiency at the micro level to thinking about how to effectively cultivate students’ sense of family and country, social responsibility, and times’ responsibility through overall educational concepts, contents, and methods innovation, thus making teaching practice itself become an important arena carrying national missions and responding to the call of the times.

Using Virtue to Delineate the Ethical Boundaries of Innovation

Against the backdrop of digitalize and intelligent education, while the application of technological tools enhances teaching efficacy, it also harbors the risk of value alienation. The moral integrity emphasized by the educator spirit, encapsulated in “setting an example with words and serving as a model with actions”, provides fundamental ethical guidance and normative values. This spirit demands that young teachers, when utilizing technology to assist teaching, must transcend the limitations of instrumental rationality and consistently regard

“cultivating the whole person” as the fundamental starting point of pedagogical practice. Specifically, teachers should take the educator spirit as their value coordinate and proactively develop ethical awareness across all stages of instructional design, implementation, and evaluation. On the one hand, they must ensure that the application of technology does not compromise educational equity, paying attention to resource accessibility and student engagement to prevent the widening of the digital divide. On the other hand, they should adhere to a humanistic stance, respecting student agency, protecting their data privacy and personal dignity in the teaching process, and avoiding the reduction of education to a mere efficiency contest of knowledge transmission. Only through such self-regulation, with virtue at its core, can young teachers maintain their original educational aspirations in technology-enhanced teaching practices, ensuring that education remains an endeavor filled with warmth, respect, and developmental significance.

Achieving Educational Efficacy Through the Teacher’s Exemplary Conduct

The educator spirit’s advocacy of “serving as a model with actions” provides young teachers with an embodied path of value guidance and demonstration in their teaching practice. This requires teachers not only to transmit knowledge through speech but also to employ their holistic practice—including their scholarly attitude, professional ethics, and ways of responding to challenges—as the most vivid and direct educational vehicle. In their daily practice, young teachers should consciously translate the educator spirit into tangible and exemplary behaviors: demonstrating intellectual rigor through a meticulous scholarly approach, exhibiting a growth mindset by openly reflecting on their teaching experiences, and building students’ resilience by modeling calm persistence in overcoming difficulties. This form of “teaching by example”, grounded in character and expressed through action, transcends mere knowledge transmission. It constructs a hidden educational field that integrates value guidance, character shaping, and ability cultivation. It renders the teaching process itself a living embodiment of the educator spirit, allowing students to internalize a scientific spirit, ethical awareness, and innovative character through subtle influence. Thereby, it achieves a deep unity between imparting knowledge and nurturing character, as well as between verbal instruction and exemplary conduct.

The Guiding Wisdom: Pedagogical Wisdom and Benevolence Refining the Practical Rationality of Teaching Innovation

The educational wisdom embodied in the educator’s spirit, such as “enlightening the mind and nurturing the heart, and teaching according to individual aptitudes”, and the benevolent heart of “enjoying teaching and caring for students, and being willing to contribute”, together constitute a profound practical rationality. This rationality guides teachers to go beyond the superficial application of methods and techniques, allowing teaching practice to simultaneously be rooted in the scientific grasp of learning laws and the deep concern for the growth of students’ lives. Thus, in complex educational situations, they can make educational judgments that are both professional and rich in humanistic warmth.

Driving Innovation Transformation With Scientific Evidence

Effective teaching innovation cannot rely on accidental inspirations or unverified personal experiences; instead, it should be based on a solid foundation of educational science. The educationalist spirit emphasizes the wisdom of educating people, which inherently requires teachers to become researchers of learning laws and practitioners of evidence-based practice. This means that innovation should draw nourishment from in-depth study of fields such as learning science, cognitive psychology, and subject teaching theory, understanding the

internal mechanisms of knowledge construction, skill acquisition, and thinking development. On this basis, instructional innovation should follow a hypothesis-testing cycle: Teachers develop and implement improvements informed by theory, systematically gather multi-faceted evidence on student learning processes and outcomes, and iteratively refine their approaches based on that evidence. This paradigm shift—from relying on experiential intuition to being driven by evidence—transforms teaching innovation from a potentially arbitrary endeavor into a rigorous, inquiry-based practice, thereby significantly enhancing its scientific validity and potential for broader application.

Guiding Individual Creation With Deep Care

The benevolent heart advocated by the educator's spirit, such as "enjoying teaching and caring for students, being willing to contribute", provides the fundamental emotional motivation and practical guidance for young teachers to implement differentiated teaching. This caring ethics requires teachers to go beyond the limitations of standardized teaching models and actively establish a deep understanding of each student's cognitive characteristics, emotional state, and development needs. In teaching practice, teachers should grasp the individual differences and real problems of students through systematic observation, continuous dialogue, and empathetic listening, and make teaching decisions based on this. At the operational level, teachers must make precise judgments on the "zone of proximal development" of students, flexibly integrate teaching resources, design tiered tasks, and provide adaptive support, so that teaching arrangements are in line with the individual development rhythm. This practice path led by the educator's spirit promotes teaching from a standardized process to a dynamic art of nurturing individuals, respecting the uniqueness of life while achieving the dialectical unity of educational scale effect and individual development.

Exploring Practice Based on Trust Relationships

The benevolence and educational wisdom in the spirit of educators jointly point to the construction of a teaching relationship centered on trust. This provides a crucial guarantee for young teachers to implement open and exploratory teaching practices. Teachers should consciously create a cultural atmosphere in their daily teaching that respects differences, tolerates trial and error, and encourages expression: sincerely accept students' unconventional viewpoints and guide rational discussions, patiently analyze unconventional problem-solving paths, and clearly define attempts and adjustments during the learning process as valuable cognitive development experiences rather than simple judgments of ability. At the same time, teachers should also actively model an open learning attitude—openly sharing their own confusion, adjustments, and reflections in teaching practice, demonstrating the professional image of educators who continuously grow from "imperfect" experiences. This teaching culture based on trust effectively alleviates the anxiety caused by performance orientation, releases the cognitive courage and exploration vitality of both teachers and students, and transforms the classroom into a "learning community" where teachers and students jointly question, verify, and grow, providing indispensable emotional and relational support for achieving continuous and in-depth educational goals.

The Foundation of Leadership: The Attitude of Diligent Practice and the Pursuit of Greatness Forge the Lasting Resilience of Teaching Innovation

The down-to-earth attitude and the pursuit of moral excellence advocated by the educator's spirit have jointly infused the teaching practice with lasting spiritual resilience. This resilience is manifested as the iterative action power in continuous practice, the sense of value found in fulfilling the mission of education, and the mental

model of maintaining an enterprising spirit when facing challenges, thereby enabling teachers to realize the profound value of education throughout their long career.

Generating Locally-Grounded Models Through Action and Reflection

Teaching innovation cannot remain at the level of conceptual design or external transplantation; its vitality stems from the continuous cycle of “doing” and “reflecting” within real and complex classroom contexts. The diligent, grounded attitude inherent in the educator spirit essentially advocates a philosophy of rooted practice. It requires teachers to view the classroom as the primary “field” and “laboratory” and to initiate a spiraling cycle of design, implementation, observation, reflection, and adjustment in response to the authentic problems that emerge in teaching. Within this cycle, teachers do not merely apply external theories or models but engage in creative adaptation and generation based on specific student conditions, subject characteristics, and school culture.

During the instructional design phase, teachers should take moral education and talent cultivation as their foundation, systematically considering how to integrate the goals of intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic, and labor education into teaching activities, thereby unifying knowledge transmission with value guidance. In the process of implementation and reflection, teachers must continuously attend to the educational outcomes for all students, across the entire process and all dimensions. Through careful observation, evidence collection, and critical reflection, they should continually refine their teaching strategies, gradually forming a practical model that aligns with educational principles while embodying school-based characteristics and personal style. This process genuinely realizes the creative transformation and sustainable growth of the educator spirit within classroom teaching.

Linking Classroom Practice With the Epoch: Endowing Innovation With Meaning

The pursuit of moral and cultural propagation represents the highest ideal within the educator spirit. As the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau observed, “Before undertaking the task of forming a man, the educator must first have formed himself and must feel worthy of setting an example” (1985, p. 99). When the daily, often granular work of teaching innovation is connected to a transcendent educational mission and value-driven vision, it acquires a deeper sense of meaning capable of resisting professional burnout and inspiring lasting passion. The educator spirit’s commitment to propagating moral and cultural values provides precisely such a framework for expanding and elevating meaning. It guides teachers to situate the design of a lesson, the refinement of a teaching method, or the reform of an assessment approach within grand narratives such as “cultivating new generations capable of undertaking national rejuvenation”, “advancing cultural inheritance and innovation”, and “contributing to the common well-being of humanity”. This transforms each specific innovative practice from merely an instructional task into an act of participating in shaping the future and contributing to social progress. By linking the “small classroom” with the “grand epoch”, teachers’ professional work is elevated from the level of a vocation to that of a calling. This connection provides robust spiritual support and value-based consolation when they encounter resource constraints, institutional inertia, or temporary setbacks, enabling them to transcend short-term utilitarian calculations and sustain a long-term orientation toward educational innovation.

Cultivating a Growth Mindset to Forge Psychological Resilience

The path of teaching innovation inevitably involves uncertainty, unforeseen challenges, and even unavoidable setbacks and failures. The capacity to transform such adversity into a stepping stone for learning and progress depends fundamentally on the educator’s inner mindset. The resilience inherent in the educator spirit aligns closely with the “growth mindset” emphasized in contemporary psychology. Teachers with a growth

mindset tend to perceive difficulties encountered in teaching innovation, negative student feedback, or outcomes that fall short of expectations not as final indictments of their ability or worth, but as valuable feedback and opportunities to enhance professional competence and refine their practice. They maintain the belief that through strategic adjustment, seeking support, and persistent effort, both their capabilities and situations can improve. Actively cultivating this mindset helps teachers develop a high degree of psychological resilience—the ability to recover vitality, persist toward goals, and adapt following pressure, setbacks, or even failure. This helps educators build the resilience required for long-term innovation, enabling them to reinterpret setbacks as narratives of growth and thus protecting their innovative drive and sense of agency from temporary disruptions. In this way, the sustainable development of teaching innovation is genuinely realized.

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