

# The Dilemmas and Breakthroughs of Novice Teachers' Instructional Leadership Under the New Curriculum Standards

A-Fang Deng\*

Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610225, China

\*Correspondence to: A-Fang Deng, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610225, China, E-mail: [d918645142@163.com](mailto:d918645142@163.com)

**Abstract:** The implementation of the new curriculum standards emphasizes students' subjectivity in learning and places more diverse and in-depth demands on teachers' instructional leadership. However, novice teachers often face multiple challenges, including difficulty in shifting teaching philosophies, inadequate classroom management, and insufficient capacity in assessment and resource integration. These challenges stem from both the lack of a comprehensive school support system and personal factors of the teachers themselves. To address these issues, schools should strengthen guidance and support by providing targeted training and improving mentoring systems. Meanwhile, novice teachers need to deepen their theoretical understanding, actively engage in teaching practice, enhance classroom management and assessment abilities, and improve their capacity to integrate and utilize resources, ultimately growing into outstanding educators.

**Keywords:** New curriculum standards; novice teachers; instructional leadership; dilemmas and breakthroughs  
Introduction

On April 21, 2022, China officially released the revised Compulsory Education Curriculum Program and Curriculum Standards, marking the country's entry into the era of core competencies in compulsory education. The new curriculum standards (hereafter referred to as "the new standards") emphasize that teachers should move beyond the traditional lesson-based instructional design and adopt a holistic unit-based approach. This approach highlights the intrinsic logical connections between mathematical concepts and the relationship between learning content and core competency development. Classrooms are

no longer spaces for the one-way transmission of knowledge; instead, they should become vibrant learning environments that stimulate students' agency, foster higher-order thinking, and cultivate comprehensive abilities. This transformation raises unprecedented expectations for teachers' professional roles. Teachers must shift from being mere "transmitters of knowledge" to becoming "leaders," "designers," and "facilitators" of classroom instruction—demonstrating strong instructional leadership. As a new driving force in education, novice teachers shoulder the mission of advancing educational innovation. However, the new



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standards pose new challenges for them, especially in the domain of instructional leadership. Exploring the root causes of these dilemmas and identifying strategies for breakthroughs is crucial not only for the professional growth of novice teachers but also for the effective implementation of the new curriculum standards, ultimately contributing to the overall improvement of education quality.

## **1. New Requirements for Instructional Leadership Under the New Curriculum Standards**

The new curriculum standards have brought about a fundamental transformation in classroom teaching, placing more diverse and in-depth demands on teachers' instructional leadership. This reform shifts teaching from traditional teacher-centered models toward approaches that emphasize students' subjectivity, autonomy, and the cultivation of comprehensive abilities<sup>[1]</sup>. The standards advocate for autonomous, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning, requiring teachers to move from the role of knowledge transmitters to that of learning facilitators and instructional leaders. In terms of facilitating autonomous learning, for example, in Chinese language classes, teachers are expected to design thought-provoking questions that stimulate students' active reading and critical thinking. They should organize group discussions to encourage students to share insights, thereby building bridges that lead students toward independent knowledge exploration and the development of innovative thinking. In organizing cooperative learning, teachers face new challenges. For instance, in mathematics classes, teachers must group students scientifically according to their abilities and personalities, clarify learning tasks, provide timely guidance during inquiry activities, and maintain focus and order. This approach helps ensure cooperative learning is both structured and efficient while fostering students' teamwork and communication skills. Interactive communication is another key component for improving instructional effectiveness. The new curriculum standards emphasize multi-directional interactions between teachers and students as well as among students. In English classes, teachers can create more interactive opportunities through role-playing activities or group competitions. During student

discussions, teachers should listen attentively and provide timely feedback—acknowledging strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and offering constructive suggestions—to enhance students' language expression and communicative abilities.

## **2. Challenges Faced by Novice Teachers in Developing Instructional Leadership Under the New Curriculum Standards**

### **2.1 Difficulty in Shifting Teaching Philosophies**

During their university training, novice teachers are often exposed mainly to traditional educational philosophies and teaching methods, which emphasize teachers' authority and the transmission of knowledge. Once they enter the profession, many find it difficult to adapt quickly to the new curriculum standards, continuing to rely on the "cramming education" that overlook students' active roles and individual differences. Given the innovative concepts and rich content of the new curriculum standards, novice teachers often struggle to fully and deeply comprehend them. Some only have a superficial understanding of the basic requirements, and fail to translate these into effective classroom practices. This leads to a disconnection between teaching behaviors and the requirements of the new curriculum standards.

### **2.2 Insufficient Classroom Management Skills**

Effective classroom rules are fundamental for maintaining order and ensuring smooth instructional processes. Due to a lack of teaching experience, novice teachers often design classroom rules that are not sufficiently scientific, targeted, or practical. When implementing rules, they may be inconsistent or overly lenient, rendering the rules ineffective in regulating student behavior. Additionally, unexpected incidents—such as student conflicts or accidents—are inevitable during teaching. Lacking crisis management experience, novice teachers often panic or respond inadequately when facing such situations, which disrupts the flow of instruction.

### **2.3 Limited Ability to Integrate and Utilize Teaching Resources**

Textbooks are essential teaching resources. However, novice teachers often rely too heavily on textbooks without deeply exploring their content or adapting materials to students' needs and learning objectives.

This leads to dry, unengaging lessons that fail to capture students' interest. With the rapid development of information technology, integrating technology into education has become an inevitable trend. Although novice teachers are generally familiar with basic technological tools, many struggle to apply them effectively in real teaching contexts. As a result, a disconnect often exists between technology use and instructional practices, preventing information technology from fully enriching and transforming classroom learning.

### **3. Analysis of the Causes Behind Novice Teachers' Instructional Leadership Challenges**

#### **3.1 Inadequate School Support Systems**

The training programs provided by schools for novice teachers are often broad and generic, lacking targeted content that addresses the specific requirements of instructional leadership under the new curriculum standards. Consequently, the training fails to effectively address the practical challenges that novice teachers face in classroom teaching. Many schools assign mentors to novice teachers; however, the mentoring process is often ineffective in practice <sup>[2]</sup>. Some mentors, due to their heavy teaching workloads, lack the time and energy to offer comprehensive and in-depth guidance. Others adopt inappropriate mentoring methods, simply telling novice teachers what to do rather than encouraging them to think critically and explore solutions independently. Although the new curriculum standards emphasize competency-oriented education, teacher evaluations in many schools and regions still focus heavily on students' academic performance and examination results. This evaluation bias forces novice teachers to make difficult choices between the "ideal classroom" and "realistic performance assessments." As a result, many revert to traditional, teacher-centered knowledge transmission methods as a "safe" and performance-oriented approach.

#### **3.2 Insufficient Professional Competence of Novice Teachers**

While novice teachers generally possess systematic disciplinary knowledge and declarative pedagogical knowledge, their limited practical teaching experience makes it difficult for them to accurately manage

various aspects of classroom instruction. They often lack flexibility and adaptability when addressing unexpected instructional problems. Furthermore, novice teachers' reflective practices tend to remain at a technical level—such as "Did I explain this concept clearly?"—rather than advancing to situational or dialectical levels, such as "Why did this lesson design fail to stimulate deeper student thinking?" This shallow level of reflection limits their ability to transform experience into professional competence effectively. Some novice teachers lack intrinsic motivation for professional growth. Their engagement with the new curriculum standards is often passive; they are reluctant to invest time and energy in studying teaching methods and strategies. Satisfied with their current level, they experience slow professional development and struggle to enhance their instructional leadership.

#### **3.3 The Gap Between Teaching Ideals and Classroom Realities**

The transition from "learner" to "educator" requires novice teachers to develop a new sense of professional identity and authority. Many enter the profession with high educational ideals, but the realities of the classroom—such as students with short attention spans, varying levels of comprehension, and diverse needs—create a stark contrast with their expectations. This gap often leads to frustration, identity anxiety, and diminished teaching confidence. Additionally, the large amount of administrative and non-teaching tasks, such as inspections, competitions, and paperwork, consumes time that could otherwise be devoted to lesson planning, reflection, and professional development. Consequently, novice teachers often feel mentally and physically exhausted, leaving them with limited capacity to innovate or strengthen their instructional leadership.

### **4. Strategies for Enhancing Novice Teachers' Instructional Leadership Under the New Curriculum Standards**

#### **4.1 Strengthening School Support and Guidance**

Under the background of the new curriculum standards, enhancing novice teachers' instructional leadership relies heavily on strong school support and guidance. This can be achieved through two main approaches: targeted training and the improvement of the mentoring system. Schools should design training programs based

on the requirements of the new curriculum standards and the actual needs of novice teachers. As the new curriculum promotes significant changes in teaching concepts and methods, novice teachers need systematic learning to adapt to these shifts. The training content should be comprehensive and precise, including an in-depth interpretation of the new curriculum to help teachers grasp its core ideas; guidance on transforming teaching concepts to break away from traditional frameworks; the delivery of classroom management techniques to improve instructional control; the explanation of scientific assessment methods to evaluate teaching effectiveness; and instruction on how to integrate and utilize educational resources more effectively.

The training methods should also be diverse. Schools can invite experts to deliver lectures and share advanced concepts and experiences, organize classroom observations to allow novice teachers to experience effective teaching firsthand, and conduct teaching seminars to build collaborative platforms for exchanging ideas and solving instructional challenges together. In addition, schools need to improve their mentoring systems by clearly defining mentors' responsibilities and strengthening performance evaluations to ensure effective implementation. Mentors should regularly communicate with novice teachers, understand their classroom situations, and provide specific, practical guidance. Joint teaching and research activities should also be organized, allowing mentors to share their experiences while novice teachers raise their questions, fostering mutual learning and creating a positive teaching and research environment. Through these measures, schools can continuously support the development of novice teachers' instructional leadership.

#### **4.2 Strengthening Theoretical Learning and Transforming Teaching Concepts**

A key step for novice teachers in improving instructional leadership is to deepen theoretical learning and transform their teaching concepts. They need to thoroughly study the new curriculum standards, which serve as a compass for instructional practice. The standards embody advanced educational philosophies and clearly defined teaching requirements. Through in-depth study, novice teachers can establish a student-

centered teaching philosophy, shifting their focus from mere knowledge transmission to the development of students' competencies and literacy. They should also continually absorb modern educational theories and methods, such as constructivist learning theory and cooperative learning theory<sup>[3]</sup>. Constructivism emphasizes active knowledge construction and situational learning, while cooperative learning focuses on collaboration and communication among students. By integrating these theories into teaching, novice teachers can break away from traditional patterns and explore more adaptive instructional models and methods.

#### **4.3 Engaging Actively in Teaching Practice and Accumulating Experience**

Teaching practice is a critical pathway to strengthening classroom instructional leadership. Novice teachers should actively undertake teaching tasks and participate in various instructional activities, continually honing their skills through practice. Every classroom session and interaction with students presents valuable growth opportunities. During practice, teaching reflection plays a crucial role in teacher development. By summarizing lessons learned and reflecting on successes and shortcomings, novice teachers can identify areas for improvement and refine their teaching strategies. For instance, after teaching a mathematics lesson, they can reflect on whether the content difficulty was appropriate, whether the methods were effective, and how engaged students were, then adjust future plans accordingly.

#### **4.4 Enhancing Classroom Management Skills**

Effective classroom management is the foundation of successful instruction. Novice teachers should learn scientific classroom management methods, including setting reasonable classroom rules so that students clearly understand acceptable behaviors, thereby creating an orderly learning environment. Establishing positive teacher–student relationships is also essential. Teachers should respect and care for each student, building trust and interaction to foster students' willingness to follow guidance. During lessons, novice teachers should be observant, promptly addressing issues such as inattention or peer conflicts, and taking appropriate measures to resolve them. They should also continually improve their ability to handle unexpected

incidents calmly and flexibly, ensuring smooth classroom operation.

#### **4.5 Strengthening the Integration and Utilization of Teaching Resources**

Instructional resources are an essential support for effective teaching. Novice teachers should deeply explore and integrate textbook resources, adapting content to match teaching goals and students' needs. They should also actively adopt information technologies, seamlessly integrating them with teaching practices. By using multimedia courseware, online platforms, and educational software, teachers can provide more vivid, engaging, and diverse learning materials, innovate instructional methods, and enhance teaching efficiency<sup>[4]</sup>. Improving instructional leadership is a long-term and demanding process for novice teachers. It requires continuous efforts in theoretical learning, practical engagement, classroom management, instructional evaluation, and resource integration to eventually grow into excellent teachers with strong instructional leadership.

#### **Conclusion**

Enhancing novice teachers' instructional leadership under the new curriculum standards is a systematic and long-term endeavor. Schools must play a guiding and supportive role by improving training and mentoring systems. At the same time, novice teachers must take

the initiative to strengthen theoretical learning, update their teaching philosophies, gain practical experience, and improve their abilities in classroom management, instructional evaluation, and resource integration. Only through joint efforts between schools and teachers can novice teachers overcome current challenges, enhance their instructional leadership, and better adapt to the demands of the new curriculum—ultimately contributing to students' holistic development and the advancement of education.

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