

# The Development Path of Young Teachers in Colleges and Universities Based on the WSR System Methodology

Xuan Li, Dan Yuan\*, Anqi Xu, Yijun Zhang

Guangdong University of Science and Technology, Dongguan 523083, Guangdong, China

*\*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

**Copyright:** © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

**Abstract:** As the core reserve force for the development of higher education, the professional growth, teaching competence improvement, and comprehensive quality cultivation of young university teachers are directly related to educational quality and academic innovation vitality. Young university teachers currently face multidimensional challenges in their development, making it urgent to establish a systematic development path. Based on the WSR (Wuli-Shili-Renli) system methodology, this paper constructs a systematic analytical framework for the development of young university teachers, covering professional development, teaching ability, academic ability, ethics and conduct, organizational environment, and social environment. After analyzing its profound connotations, this paper further proposes a three-dimensional coordinated development path: understanding Wuli, comprehending Shili, and mastering Renli, so as to provide theoretical support and practical references for the high-quality development of young university teachers.

**Keywords:** WSR system methodology; Young university teachers; Development path

**Online publication:** May 13, 2026

## 1. Difficulties faced by young teachers in universities

In the process of advancing higher education modernization, young faculty members shoulder multiple missions including teaching reform, scientific research, and talent cultivation. Their professional development directly impacts the core competitiveness of universities and the sustainability of educational endeavors. Currently, young faculty under the age of 40 account for 40% of the total in China's higher education sector, with the proportion continuing to grow. However, this group faces multiple practical challenges: a lack of precise guidance in professional development, intense dual pressures from teaching and research; evaluation mechanisms overly focused on short-term quantitative metrics with insufficient consideration for disciplinary differences; uneven resource allocation, particularly weak funding support for foundational disciplines;

fierce competition for promotion with limited quotas and hidden barriers; high living costs and significant psychological stress in first-tier cities, leading to insufficient professional fulfillment and growth motivation. These issues not only constrain the individual development of young faculty but also hinder the advancement of university education and the release of academic innovation vitality.

Confronted with these complex challenges, universities and relevant departments have implemented measures such as teaching training and research startup funding support. However, most of these initiatives are fragmented and address only isolated issues, lacking a systematic approach to the comprehensive and multidimensional development of young teachers. The key to resolving these challenges lies in integrating resources, streamlining development mechanisms, coordinating stakeholder relationships, and establishing a scientific and efficient collaborative support system. To this end, this paper introduces the WSR (Wuli-Shili-Renli) methodology, analyzing the core elements and critical issues of young teachers' development from a systemic perspective. It aims to build a holistic development support system that facilitates the comprehensive growth of young teachers.

## **2. Adaptability of WSR system methodology to the development of young teachers in universities**

### **2.1. The connotation of WSR system methodology**

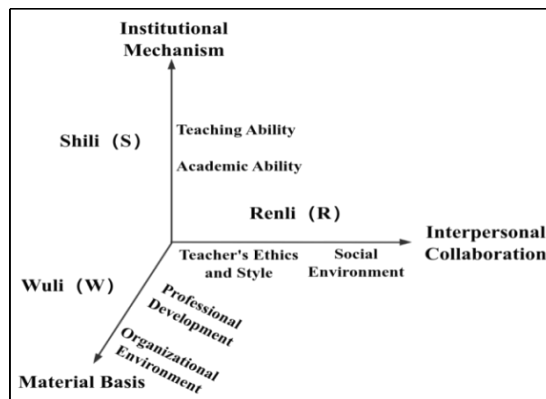
The WSR system methodology, first proposed by Gu *et al.* in 2000<sup>[1]</sup>, posits that the objective laws of existence (Wuli), operational mechanisms (Shili), and interpersonal dynamics (Renli) form an organic unity. It advocates holistic and collaborative thinking to unravel the intricate relationships among multiple elements, addressing complex systems with multi-subject and multi-element interactions rather than isolated single-dimensional analyses.

WSR system methodology breaks through the limitations of traditional single perspective, provides a scientific analysis framework for complex problems, and shows wide applicability in many fields. In the field of digital government, Zhou built an evaluation index system based on this method and carried out empirical analysis from the three dimensions of physics, reason, and human reason<sup>[2]</sup>. In the governance of local colleges and universities, certain scholars employ their analytical discipline coordination and scientific research system to propose optimization strategies such as top-level design and interdisciplinary ecology<sup>[3]</sup>. In the field of university management, Yi *et al.* utilized it for laboratory safety management and implemented rectification in combination with the "six complete" mode<sup>[4]</sup>, while Wang *et al.* analyzed the dilemma of smart sports and proposed corresponding paths<sup>[5]</sup>. Furthermore, this methodology has been applied in evaluating the tourism utilization of ancient architecture<sup>[6]</sup>, constructing international communication systems for Wushu<sup>[7]</sup>, researching big data audit development models<sup>[8]</sup>, governing negative defensive medicine<sup>[9]</sup>, and exploring curriculum ideological and political construction paths<sup>[10]</sup>, fully confirming its cross-scenario practical value.

### **2.2. Analysis framework of young faculty development in universities based on WSR system methodology**

The development of young faculty members in higher education constitutes a complex multidimensional system involving coordinated interactions among individuals, academic institutions, and society. The WSR system methodology, which employs holistic and collaborative thinking to address complex systems, aligns closely with the intrinsic needs of young faculty development. In reality, the growth of young university

teachers is not the result of isolated factors, but rather a dynamic process where physical, factual, and humanistic elements interact and coalesce organically. These three core dimensions collectively form the essential framework for their professional development (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.** Methodological analysis framework of WSR for young faculty development in higher education institutions

The Wuli dimension (W) emphasizes material support, such as funding and laboratory facilities, which serves as the fundamental cornerstone for the growth of young faculty members, aligning with professional development and the organizational environment. It establishes a robust material foundation for young teachers to engage in teaching and research activities, ensuring that professional development is underpinned by necessary hardware and that the organizational environment is solidly supported. The Wuli dimension constitutes the essential guarantee for teacher development. The Shili dimension (S) centers on institutional mechanisms, with training, mentorship, and diversified evaluation systems at its core, aiming to enhance teaching and academic competencies. Through a series of tiered and categorized training initiatives, the career trajectory of young teachers is delineated, thereby resolving the predicament of “aimless growth.” The Renli dimension (R) highlights interpersonal collaboration and humanistic connections, corresponding to teacher ethics and the broader social environment. By instilling teacher ethics, young educators are guided to remain steadfast in their commitment to nurturing students, while diverse interpersonal interactions facilitate their swift integration into the professional ecosystem and alignment with societal needs.

The effective synergy among these three dimensions—wherein the Wuli dimension establishes a solid foundation, the Shili dimension regulates the developmental path, and the Renli dimension invigorates the process—enables a systematic identification of the developmental needs and capability gaps of young teachers at various growth stages. Thus, it can provide a theoretical and practical framework for the holistic development of young faculty in higher education institutions.

### 3. Development path selection of young teachers in colleges and universities based on WSR system methodology

#### 3.1. Understanding physics, laying the foundation for development

The Wuli dimension provides core material support for young teachers’ development, focusing on their professional growth and organizational environment. To solve resource inequality, special funds for humanities, social sciences, and basic disciplines can be set up to support grassroots young teachers and

ease funding shortages. Digital teaching resources will be upgraded, and school-enterprise and inter-school resource-sharing platforms will be built to support interdisciplinary teaching and research. A fair resource allocation mechanism will be established by combining quantitative evaluation and democratic supervision, with online and offline feedback channels opened to respond to teachers' needs in a timely manner, optimize the supply structure, and lay a solid material foundation for their development.

### 3.2. Understanding principles and establishing a comprehensive cultivation mechanism

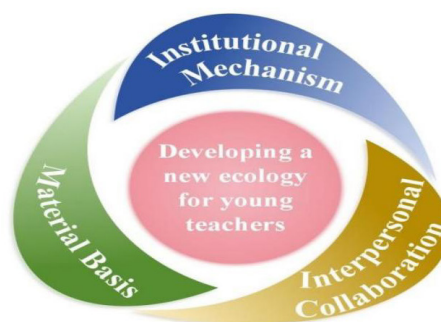
The Shili dimension serves as the institutional guarantee for enhancing young teachers' capabilities, focusing on the coordinated development of teaching and research competence. It provides discipline- and teaching experience-based hierarchical training for new teachers and key teachers, implements a teaching and research dual-supervisor system, and builds inter-university academic exchange platforms to facilitate achievement sharing and transformation. Meanwhile, a diversified evaluation system will be optimized by reducing short-term quantitative indicators such as papers, incorporating teaching effectiveness, research translation, and social services into assessment, and adopting discipline-specific differentiated evaluation that aligns with teachers' growth patterns and actual contributions. This addresses the problems of fragmented cultivation and oversimplified evaluation.

### 3.3. Rationalization of resources and optimization of development ecology

The Renli dimension is key to interpersonal coordination for young teachers, focusing on ethics and social environment. It integrates professional ethics into daily teaching through training, role models, and Party leadership. Peer and teacher-student communication platforms boost experience sharing and emotional connection. Society is encouraged to respect teachers; those in first-tier cities receive living and psychological support. Career guidance and counseling help ease pressure, forming a sound ecosystem jointly built by universities, society, and individuals.

### 3.4. Three-dimensional collaboration: Building a new ecosystem for young teachers' development

The three dimensions—Wuli, Shili, and Renli—are not isolated entities. They necessitate a closed-loop synergy characterized by “material basis–institutional mechanism–interpersonal collaboration,” as shown in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2.** Three-dimensional collaborative diagram of new development ecosystem for young university teachers

The material support inherent in the Wuli dimension lays the groundwork for the practical realization of logical mechanisms and the implementation of humanistic care. In the absence of robust material conditions, mechanisms safeguarding and humanistic empowerment would be rendered futile. The institutional mechanism within the Shili dimension governs the allocation and utilization of physical resources, steering the orientation of humanistic care. It also ensures that material support and humanistic empowerment are precisely aligned with the developmental needs of young faculty, thereby preventing resource wastage and misdirected care. The collaborative empowerment embedded in the Renli dimension ignites the proactive engagement of young teachers, motivating them to actively harness material resources and adhere to institutional mechanisms. This, in turn, fosters the ongoing refinement and enhancement of both material support and institutional frameworks, culminating in a virtuous cycle marked by “more rational resource allocation, more scientifically grounded institutional mechanisms, more thoroughly implemented humanistic care, and more efficient growth of young faculty.”

Overall, universities should coordinate resource supply at the Wuli level, institutional design at the Shili level, and interpersonal collaboration at the Renli level to establish a three-dimensional collaborative management mechanism. Through the closed-loop linkage of these three dimensions, it can break the dilemma of “monotonous material support, rigid institutional mechanisms, and superficial humanistic care.” This facilitates building a new ecosystem for the development of young teachers in universities, where “material support is available, institutional mechanisms are guaranteed, emotional belonging is ensured, and growth paths are provided.”

## 4. Conclusion

In view of the multiple dilemmas of the development ecology of young teachers in Colleges and universities, this paper uses the WSR system methodology to construct a six-dimensional analysis framework including professional development, teaching ability, academic ability, teachers’ ethics, organizational environment, and social environment.

This paper clarifies the three-dimensional connotation of Wuli, Shili, and Renli, and the dynamic relationship of “material foundation–mechanism support–collaborative empowerment,” and puts forward the development path of “understanding physics, comprehending practical principles, and mastering humanistic values through three-dimensional synergy,” which reflects the application value of WSR Methodology in the complex problems of education. This paper also has some limitations, focusing on the theoretical framework and macro design, the lack of three-dimensional collaborative operational rules, the lack of differentiated research on teachers of different teaching ages and disciplines, and it is difficult to accurately evaluate the synergy effect. In the follow-up, we can expand the research sample, carry out cross-regional and cross-type university comparison, and refine the discipline and phased support scheme for key groups; Build a quantitative evaluation model, optimize the theory and path with empirical data, and promote the continuous upgrading of young teachers’ development support system.

## Funding

The Research Project on Party Building of the Guangdong Provincial Higher Education Institutions Party Building Research Association for the Year 2025 (Project number: 2025YB121)

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- [1] Gu J, Zhu Z, 2000, Knowing Wuli, Sensing Shili, Caring for Renli: Methodology of the WSR Approach. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 13(1): 11–20.
- [2] Zhou K, 2025, Construction of Digital Government Evaluation Index System from the Perspective of WSR System Methodology. *Science and Technology and Industry*, 25(18): 272–281.
- [3] Duan L, Jiang Y, Li Z, et al., 2025, Research on Optimization Strategies for Discipline Coordination and Research Output System in Local Universities Based on WSR Methodology. *High Technology and Industrialization*, 31(10): 19–21.
- [4] Yi H, Wu J, Song X, et al., 2025, Laboratory Safety Management and Practice in Higher Education Institutions from the Perspective of WSR Methodology. *Laboratory Research and Exploration*, 44(02): 263–268.
- [5] Wang X, Zhang W, 2025, The Mechanism, Practical Constraints, and Solutions for Smart Sports in Universities under the Background of Smart Education: A Perspective Based on the WSR System Methodology. *Contemporary Sports Science and Technology*, 15(26): 170–173.
- [6] Wang G, Wang W, Yan S, et al., Assessment of Tourism Utilization Potential of Ancient Architectural Heritage Resources in Shanxi Province Based on WSR System Methodology. *Arid Zone Geography*, 1–11.
- [7] Yang K, 2025, Construction and Optimization Path of International Dissemination System of Wushu from the Perspective of WSR System Methodology. *Wushu Research*, 10(04): 30–33.
- [8] Ren L, Dong L, Gao Z, 2025, Research on the Development Model of Big Data Audit in Municipal Audit Organs from the Perspective of WSR Methodology. *Audit Observation*, (03): 91–96.
- [9] Song W, Zhang H, Zhang L, et al., 2025, Research on the Construction of a Set of Priority Governance Strategies for Defensive Healthcare Based on the WSR Methodology. *China Hospital Management*, 45(07): 6–9 + 29.
- [10] Pan W, Liu T, Liu W, et al., 2023, The Construction Paths of Curriculum Ideology and Politics Based on the WSR System Approach: Taking the Marketing Course as an Example. *Curriculum and Teaching Methodology*, 6(15).

### Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.