

THE CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR YOUNG TEACHERS AT GUIZHOU QIANNAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, CHINA*

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of China's higher education pursuing connotative and high-quality development, young teachers have become a key force for talent cultivation in private applied universities. Existing studies mostly focus on teachers' explicit teaching skills but neglect implicit elements like values, attitudes and personal traits. Targeting Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology, a representative private university in southwest China, this study explores the current situation, influencing factors and formation mechanism of young teachers' teaching competence. Grounded in competency theory and the iceberg model, this research adopts a mixed-methods design, with questionnaire surveys of 246 valid samples from full-time young teachers aged 35 and below, and semi-structured interviews with 10 administrators, teachers and students. Data analysis reveals that the overall teaching competence of young teachers is at a high level, with uneven development across five dimensions: values

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($M=4.107$) rank the highest, followed by knowledge ($M=4.005$), attitude ($M=3.908$), skills ($M=3.802$), and traits ($M=3.743$) score the lowest. Exploratory factor analysis confirms the five-dimensional structure with 67.174% cumulative variance explanation, and group difference analysis shows that teaching experience, professional title and educational background are significant influencing factors. This study further constructs and verifies the hierarchical TVASK model (Traits–Values–Attitudes–Skills–Knowledge) and clarifies its internal action mechanism.

The findings compensate for the deficiencies of previous skill-oriented research and enrich the localized application of competency theory in Chinese private higher education. Targeted optimization strategies are proposed from institutional, individual and classroom perspectives, providing practical references for teacher professional development in private applied universities.

Keywords: Young university teachers, Teaching competence, TVASK model, Mixed-methods research, Private higher education

Introduction

Against the backdrop of China's higher education transitioning from large-scale expansion to connotative, high-quality development, the quality of classroom instruction and talent cultivation has become a core indicator for evaluating institutional performance (Ministry of Education of China, 2019). Teaching competence, as a key variable influencing instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, serves as an essential foundation for advancing educational reform and achieving high-quality development in higher education institutions (Gu, 2026). Young teachers, as the principal force undertaking frontline teaching tasks and a vital source of renewal within the academic workforce, their teaching competence directly relates to the quality of talent cultivation and the sustainable development of universities (Ren, 2023). However, existing studies tend to define teaching competence primarily in terms of teaching behaviors or

instructional skills, emphasizing the measurement of explicit knowledge and operational abilities while neglecting implicit elements such as values, attitudes, and individual psychological traits (Gu, 2026). This unidimensional and instrumental conceptualization makes it difficult to systematically reveal the holistic composition and developmental mechanisms of young teachers' teaching competence.

Private higher education, as an important part of China's higher education system, has become a significant growth point for educational development and a key force for reform and innovation (Ministry of Education of China, 2024). By 2023, private colleges and universities accounted for a notable proportion of the total scale of higher education in China, with over 9.94 million students enrolled (Ministry of Education of China, 2023). However, after scale expansion, private colleges and universities face the urgent task of improving education quality, and young teachers, who occupy the main position in their teaching teams, are crucial to this process (Gu, 2026). Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology, a private application-oriented undergraduate institution in southwestern China, is representative in this context, with young teachers accounting for over 65% of the faculty (Gu, 2026). Yet, like many private colleges and universities, it confronts challenges such as young teachers' insufficient teaching experience, inadequate professional development support mechanisms, and weak teaching innovation capabilities (Luo et al., 2023; Zhang, 2014).

Nationally, the Chinese government has issued a series of policies to strengthen teacher teaching capacity building, from laying institutional foundations (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Finance of China, 2007; Ministry of Education of China, 2010) to deepening reforms (Ministry of Education of China, 2019, 2021). These policies highlight the strategic position of young teachers and emphasize the need to enhance their teaching competence through systematic training and supportive mechanisms (Ministry of Education of China, 2021).

Meanwhile, China's higher education has entered the popularization stage, with a gross enrollment rate reaching 60.8% by 2024, but the rapid expansion has led to structural contradictions such as an unbalanced student-teacher ratio, putting higher requirements on teachers' teaching competence (Ministry of Education of China, 2024; Wu, 2021). Young teachers in universities generally face the tendency of "focusing on scientific research, light on teaching" due to unreasonable salary structures and evaluation systems, which hinders the cultivation of their teaching competence (Wang et al., 2023; Xu, 2013).

In addition, the rapid development of information technology in the 21st century has transformed education from traditional models to intelligent, technology-driven ones, requiring teachers to possess rapid learning abilities and lifelong learning mindsets (Gu, 2026). Young teachers, while having high academic qualifications and strong innovation awareness, lack systematic training in teaching methods and scientific research capabilities, and face issues such as low salaries, limited promotion channels, and role conflicts between teaching and research (Luo et al., 2023; She, 2010; Zhou, 2017). These problems are particularly prominent in private colleges and universities in western China, making Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology a typical sample for studying the development of young teachers' teaching competence in private institutions.

Existing research mostly focuses on macro-level teacher development issues, with a lack of specialized empirical research on the teaching competence of young teachers in western private applied universities. The core research question of this study is: how to systematically enhance the teaching competence of young teachers in private applied universities? Specifically, this study addresses three sub-questions: (1) What is the current status of teaching competence among young teachers at Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology? (2) What are the key factors affecting young teachers' teaching

competence? (3) What is the formation path and action mechanism of young teachers' teaching competence, and can a targeted development model be constructed accordingly?

Objectives

1) To measure the overall level and structural characteristics of young teachers' teaching competence, and clarify the development differences across knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and traits dimensions.

2) To identify the individual and institutional factors influencing the development of young teachers' teaching competence, and explain the underlying mechanism through multi-stakeholder perspectives.

3) To construct and validate a scientific and operable teaching competence development model (TVASK model) for young teachers in private applied universities, and propose targeted optimization recommendations.

Literature Review

This study systematically synthesizes theoretical foundations, conceptual evolutions and empirical findings related to university teachers' teaching competence, with a focus on young faculty in private application-oriented institutions, to identify research gaps and lay a theoretical framework for model construction.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Teaching Competence

The theoretical underpinnings of teaching competence construction draw primarily from two classic frameworks. First, Spearman's Two-Factor Theory (1904) divides competence into general abilities and specific abilities, providing a psychological basis for understanding teaching competence as a composite of foundational cognitive traits and specialized instructional skills. This theory has informed subsequent pedagogical research, with scholars such as Gu Mingyuan

(1992) and Kang Jintang (1991) classifying teaching competence into general cognitive abilities and subject-specific teaching skills.

Second, Boyatzis's Competency Onion Model extends the iceberg model by emphasizing layered internal and external factors: inner-layer traits, middle-layer attitudes and values, and outer-layer knowledge and skills. This hierarchical structure highlights that teaching competence is not merely observable behavior but is rooted in deep-seated psychological characteristics, attitudes, and values. This insight is critical for moving beyond instrumental, skill-centric definitions of teaching competence, and provides the core logical basis for the five-dimensional framework in this study.

2. Conceptual Evolution of Teaching Competence

The concept of teaching competence has evolved through multidisciplinary perspectives, reflecting comprehensiveness, professionalism and developmentalism. Psychological perspectives, exemplified by Liang Zhisun (1999) and Jin Li (2014), focus on cognitive and personality traits influencing teaching effectiveness, distinguishing between general cognitive abilities and specific instructional skills. Educational perspectives, such as those from Zhang Qing (1998) and Shen Jiliang (2000), frame teaching competence as task-oriented abilities, including curriculum design, teaching organization and research integration. Organizational behavior scholars like Sun Yaling (2004) emphasize process-based competencies across teaching phases, while sociological perspectives (Wang Shaoliang, 2010) highlight social interaction and student development.

These perspectives converge on defining teaching competence as a dynamic, integrated system, yet existing research often leans toward narrow, skill-focused definitions (Wang & Peng, 2019) that neglect implicit elements like values and traits. To address this gap, this study adopts a broad conceptualization

encompassing five layers: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and traits, forming a hierarchical structure from explicit to implicit.

3. Empirical Research on Young University Teachers' Teaching Competence

Domestic research on young university teachers' teaching competence highlights both strengths and challenges. Young teachers exhibit high academic qualifications and digital literacy (Li et al., 2013) but face systemic barriers: insufficient pre-service training (She, 2010), unscientific evaluation systems prioritizing research over teaching (Wang et al., 2023), low salaries (Luo et al., 2023), and limited career development pathways (Zhang, 2014). Empirical studies note weaknesses in classroom management, teaching reflection and educational psychology knowledge, while acknowledging strong willingness to improve through feedback and training (Zhou et al., 2011).

International research emphasizes institutional support for competence development. U.S. universities utilize faculty development centers and mentorship programs (Cox, 1995); the UK's PSF standards guide competency development through a unified professional framework (Xiong, 2018); and Japan's revised Teacher Qualification Law mandates continuous in-service training (Wang, 2015). These international models highlight the importance of systemic, context-specific support, an area underdeveloped in Chinese private universities.

4. Research Gaps

Despite advancements, existing research has critical gaps. First, most studies adopt narrow, skill-centric definitions, neglecting the interplay between implicit traits, values and explicit abilities. Second, few focus on private application-oriented universities, particularly in western China, where young teachers constitute over 65% of faculty but face unique regional and institutional constraints. Third, empirical validation of multidimensional hierarchical models remains limited, and developmental mechanisms linking individual traits,

organizational factors and teaching outcomes are understudied. This study addresses these gaps by integrating classic competency theories, adopting a mixed-methods approach, and constructing a contextually tailored model for young teachers in private applied universities.

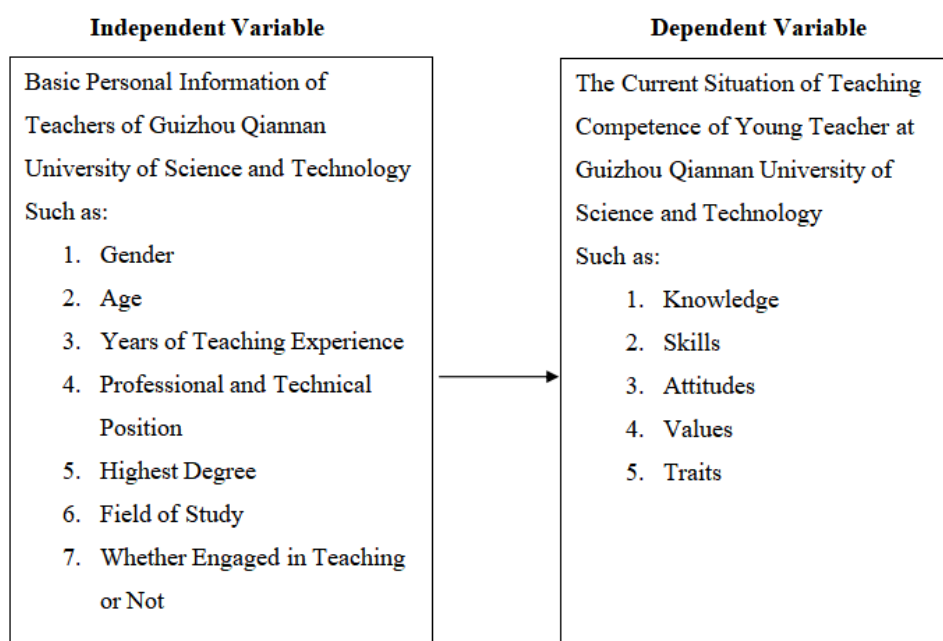


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, to comprehensively explore the teaching competence of young teachers and construct a contextually adaptive developmental model. Grounded in competency theory and the iceberg model, this design leverages the objectivity of quantitative research to measure competence status and verify structural dimensions, and the depth of qualitative research to explain influencing mechanisms and model paths. The quantitative

phase addresses the first and second research objectives, while the qualitative phase supports the second and third objectives, ensuring method-target alignment.

The research population comprises full-time young teachers at Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology, defined as in-service educators aged 35 years or younger engaged in full-time teaching work. As of May 2025, the total population size is 582.

For the quantitative survey, stratified random sampling was adopted with stratification by faculty, professional title and teaching years, to ensure sample representativeness. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, resulting in a required sample of 237. A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed online, and 246 valid questionnaires were retained after excluding invalid responses (effective recovery rate: 87.86%), covering teachers with varying academic qualifications, professional titles and teaching experience.

For the qualitative interview, purposive sampling was used to select 10 participants to achieve theoretical saturation: 2 university administrators in charge of faculty development, 3 young teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience, and 5 undergraduate students. This multi-stakeholder sampling ensures multi-perspective data and enhances the validity of qualitative findings.

A self-developed teaching competence questionnaire was used as the quantitative instrument. Based on literature review and the theoretical framework, a preliminary framework with 5 dimensions and 25 sub-dimensions was constructed, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Preliminary Composition of the Teaching Competence Framework for Young University Teachers

Level	Dimension	Subdimension	Performance Indicators
Outer layer	Knowledge	Content Knowledge	Subject matter knowledge and pedagogical background knowledge
		General pedagogical knowledge	Knowledge of instructional design and implementation
		Curriculum knowledge	Knowledge of curriculum design and development
		Pedagogical content knowledge	Discipline-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills
		Knowledge of learners and their characteristics	Knowledge of students' backgrounds and learning traits
		Knowledge of educational contexts	Knowledge of classroom, institutional and policy contexts
		Knowledge of educational purposes and values	Knowledge of educational goals and philosophical foundations

Level	Dimension	Subdimension	Performance Indicators
	Skills	Teaching design skills	Ability to plan classroom instruction systematically based on objectives
		Teaching organisation skills	Ability to engage students, stimulate interest and promote thinking
		Teaching implementation skills	Ability to deliver teaching plans with modern educational facilities
		Teaching evaluation skills	Ability to conduct diagnostic, process and summative assessments
		Educational reflection skills	Ability to reflect on teaching before, during and after class
Middle layer	Attitude	Teachers' professional attitudes	Recognition of professional value and professional impact
		Role Attitude	Willingness to position oneself in the teacher role
		Professional belonging	Emotional connection to the institution and teaching profession

Level	Dimension	Subdimension	Performance Indicators
		Professional ethics	Compliance with educational norms and ethical standards
	Values	Work values	Behavioral tendency to fulfill professional responsibilities
		Curriculum ideological competence	Ability to integrate value guidance into subject courses
		National identity and social responsibility	Initiative to promote positive values and social responsibility
		Concern for students' ideological dynamics	Attention to students' mental state and value guidance
		Educational Outlook	Patience and student-centered educational belief
Inner layer	Trait	Self-confidence	Confidence in professional knowledge and teaching ability
		Stress resistance	Ability to cope with teaching and research pressures

Level	Dimension	Subdimension	Performance Indicators
		Lifelong Learning	Awareness and ability of continuous professional learning
		Teamwork	Participation in collaborative teaching and research

Expert consultation with five scholars specializing in teaching competence and educational management was conducted, and the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) confirmed all items met the acceptable criterion of 0.50. A pilot test with 32 young teachers yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.961 for the overall questionnaire and 0.856–0.897 for each dimension, indicating good internal consistency. The formal questionnaire adopted a 5-point Likert scale, with score ranges interpreted as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Description of Likert Scale Score Ranges

Score Range	Interpretation
4.24 – 5.00	Highest
3.43 – 4.23	High
2.62 – 3.42	Moderate
1.81 – 2.61	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Lowest

Semi-structured interview outlines were designed for three stakeholder groups respectively, with targeted dimensions as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Interview Dimensions for Investigating Young Teachers’ Teaching Competence

Group	Interview Dimensions
Administrators	Existing problems in teaching competence development; institutional constraints; policy suggestions for improvement
Teachers	Causes of competence deficiencies; demands for professional development; suggestions for improvement
Students	Observed problems in teachers’ teaching; expectations for teaching quality; suggestions from student perspective

Data collection was conducted from September 2025 to June 2026. The questionnaire was distributed through the university’s faculty work platform via an online survey system, with informed consent stated at the beginning of the questionnaire. In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face or via video conferencing, each lasting 30–45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ informed consent and transcribed verbatim within 24 hours. Relevant institutional documents, including teacher training policies, evaluation schemes and professional development reports, were also collected as supplementary data.

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to present the overall level and structural characteristics of teaching competence. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were conducted to examine group

differences across demographic variables. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Promax oblique rotation was performed to validate the structural validity of the questionnaire and verify the dimensional framework.

Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, following the procedures of open coding, axial coding and selective coding to extract core themes related to influencing factors and development paths. Triangulation of quantitative results, interview findings and document data was conducted to enhance the credibility and explanatory power of the research conclusions.

Strict ethical principles were followed throughout the research process. All participants provided voluntary informed consent before data collection, with clear notification of the research purpose, data usage and right to withdraw at any time. All personal information was anonymized, and the collected data were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes, with no disclosure to any third party.

Results

This section presents the empirical findings corresponding to the research objectives, including descriptive statistics of teaching competence, structural validity verification, group difference analysis and qualitative thematic findings.

Descriptive statistics show that the overall teaching competence of young teachers at Guizhou Qiannan University of Science and Technology is at a high level. The score distribution across the five primary dimensions is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Five Primary Dimensions

Dimension	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness	Coefficient of Variation (CV)
Knowledge	246	4.005	0.775	0.600	2.399	-1.350	19.343%
Skills	246	3.802	0.835	0.697	0.458	-0.807	21.961%
Attitude	246	3.908	0.862	0.744	0.621	-0.914	22.070%
Values	246	4.107	0.818	0.669	2.057	-1.524	19.917%
Traits	246	3.743	0.959	0.920	-0.132	-0.869	25.621%

As shown in Table 4, the values dimension scores the highest, followed by knowledge and attitude, while skills and traits rank the lowest. The traits dimension has the largest coefficient of variation, indicating the most uneven development among individual teachers.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Promax oblique rotation was conducted to verify the five-dimensional structure. The KMO value was 0.952 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2=3872.412$, $df=300$, $p<0.001$), indicating the data were suitable for factor analysis. Five common factors were extracted, cumulatively explaining 67.174% of the total variance, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Total Variance Explained

Factor	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance Explained (%)	Cumulative Variance Explained (%)
1	8.911	35.644	35.644
2	2.707	10.827	46.471
3	2.182	8.726	55.197
4	1.981	7.924	63.121
5	1.013	4.053	67.174
6	0.661	2.643	69.817
7	0.655	2.621	72.438
8	0.580	2.319	74.757
9	0.552	2.209	76.967
10	0.530	2.120	79.087

The scree plot shows a clear inflection point at the fifth factor, confirming the rationality of extracting five dimensions. The factor loading of each item on its corresponding dimension is above 0.6, indicating good structural validity. These results empirically verify the hierarchical TVASK framework consisting of traits, values, attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA results show that teaching competence differs significantly across groups with different teaching

experience, professional titles and educational backgrounds ($p < 0.05$). Specifically:

Teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience score significantly higher in all dimensions than those with less than 2 years of experience, with the largest difference in the skills dimension.

Teachers with intermediate professional titles have significantly higher scores than those with junior titles, especially in the attitude and values dimensions.

Teachers with master's degrees or above score higher in the knowledge dimension than those with bachelor's degrees, while no significant difference is found in the traits dimension.

No significant gender difference is found in overall teaching competence.

Thematic analysis of interview data extracts three core themes of constraints on teaching competence development:

Research-oriented evaluation mechanism: Both administrators and teachers reported that the current title evaluation and performance appraisal system overemphasizes research outputs, leading young teachers to allocate most time and energy to scientific research rather than teaching practice and reflection.

Insufficient targeted training support: Existing teacher training is mostly general lectures, lacking staged and differentiated design for new and mid-career teachers, and insufficient attention to the cultivation of implicit qualities such as professional values and psychological traits.

Heavy workload and role conflict: Young teachers generally face dual pressures of teaching and research, with heavy course loads and administrative affairs, leaving limited time for teaching reflection and professional learning, which restricts the improvement of teaching competence.

Student interviews also reflect that young teachers have solid subject knowledge but need improvement in classroom organization, teaching interaction and individualized guidance, which is consistent with the low score of the skills dimension in quantitative results.

Discussion

First, the overall teaching competence of young teachers is at a high level, but the five dimensions develop unevenly. The high scores of values and knowledge dimensions reflect that young teachers have good educational beliefs and subject knowledge foundation, which is consistent with the characteristics of high academic qualifications and strong value identity of young teachers in previous studies (Li et al., 2013). The low scores of traits and skills dimensions indicate that psychological qualities such as stress resistance and lifelong learning awareness, as well as practical teaching abilities such as classroom organization and teaching evaluation, are the main weaknesses. This result confirms the core view of the iceberg model: implicit deep-seated traits are the most difficult to develop and often become the bottleneck of competence improvement.

Second, teaching experience, professional title and educational background are significant influencing factors. The accumulation of teaching experience directly promotes the improvement of practical teaching skills, while higher professional title means more teaching resources and development opportunities, which enhance teachers' professional identity and value commitment. The significant difference in knowledge dimension by educational background reflects the impact of pre-service academic training on subject knowledge reserve.

Third, the TVASK model with hierarchical structure has good structural validity. The five dimensions from inner trait to outer knowledge form a progressive action path: inner traits determine the stability of values and

attitudes, which in turn drive the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills. This hierarchical structure makes up for the deficiency of previous flat dimensional classification, and reveals the holistic formation mechanism of teaching competence.

Compared with domestic studies on public university teachers, this study finds that young teachers in private universities have more prominent problems in the traits dimension, which is related to greater work pressure, weaker organizational support and more limited career development channels in private institutions (Luo et al., 2023). Different from the traditional skill-oriented competence framework, the TVASK model constructed in this study incorporates implicit elements such as values and traits, which expands the connotation of teaching competence research and is consistent with the multidimensional perspective of international research (Dineke et al., 2004).

In terms of influencing factors, this study confirms that the “research over teaching” evaluation orientation is a common institutional barrier for young university teachers, which is consistent with the findings of Wang et al. (2023). Meanwhile, this study further points out that the lack of differentiated training for implicit qualities is a key constraint for private universities, which supplements the localized research on teacher development in the context of Chinese private higher education.

This study has several limitations. First, it adopts a single-case design focusing on one private university in western China, and the generalizability of findings to other regions and types of institutions needs further verification. Second, it uses cross-sectional data, which cannot fully reveal the dynamic development process of teaching competence over time. Future research can expand the sample scope to include more private universities in different regions, and adopt longitudinal tracking design to explore the dynamic evolution mechanism of teaching competence. In addition, intervention studies based on

the TVASK model can be carried out to verify the effectiveness of the proposed strategies.

Recommendation

Based on the TVASK model and empirical findings, targeted recommendations are proposed from institutional, individual and classroom levels, to promote the sustainable enhancement of young teachers' teaching competence in private applied universities.

1. Institutional Level: System Guarantee and Support System Construction

First, optimize teaching-centered evaluation and incentive mechanisms. Universities should increase the weight of teaching performance in title promotion, performance allocation and career assessment, and incorporate teaching attitude, value guidance and student feedback into the evaluation system, so as to mitigate the crowding-out effect of overemphasis on research outputs.

Second, establish a staged and differentiated training system. For new teachers with less than 2 years of experience, focus on foundational teaching knowledge and basic instructional skills training; for mid-career teachers, emphasize curriculum innovation, teaching reflection and educational research ability; for experienced young teachers, encourage them to take on mentoring roles and lead teaching communities. Training content should cover not only explicit skills but also the cultivation of professional values and psychological qualities.

Third, foster a collaborative teaching culture. Build teaching development communities, carry out regular peer observation, collective lesson preparation and teaching salon activities, strengthen professional belonging of young teachers, and form a collaborative atmosphere of mutual learning and common progress.

2. Individual Level: Internal Drive and All-round Development

First, strengthen professional identity and value internalization. Young teachers should deepen their understanding of the educational mission of fostering virtue through education, internalize educational values into stable professional beliefs, and form sustained internal motivation for competence development.

Second, promote the transformation of knowledge into practical ability. Young teachers should actively learn pedagogical theories, carry out classroom teaching experiments, make full use of peer feedback and student evaluation, and form a closed cycle of knowledge application, reflection and optimization.

Third, pay attention to the cultivation of core personal traits. Young teachers should consciously improve their stress resistance and self-efficacy, establish the concept of lifelong learning, and actively participate in teaching and research cooperation, so as to lay a solid psychological foundation for long-term professional development.

3. Classroom Level: Student-centered Teaching Practice Optimization

First, adopt student-centered instructional design. Young teachers should align teaching objectives, content and methods with students' learning needs and cognitive characteristics, increase the proportion of interactive and practical teaching links, and improve the relevance and effectiveness of classroom teaching.

Second, establish diversified teaching feedback mechanisms. Combine classroom interaction observation, student evaluation and learning outcome analysis to timely identify deficiencies in teaching, and carry out targeted teaching adjustment.

Third, enhance high-quality teacher-student interaction. Adopt interactive teaching methods such as case-based teaching, project-based learning and practical demonstration, pay attention to students' individual differences and

ideological dynamics, and form a virtuous cycle of teaching improvement driven by student feedback.

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