

Research on the Status Quo and Improvement Needs of Foreign Language Teachers' Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Ideological Education in Xinjiang Colleges and Universities

Xiaoling Liu*

School of International Economics and Trade, Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics, Urumqi 830012, Xinjiang, China

*Corresponding author: Xiaoling Liu, mysarah_8@163.com

Copyright: © 2024 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: This study investigated the status quo and further improvement needs of foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education (CIE) in Xinjiang colleges and universities. The results show that the teachers' teaching competence in CIE is generally good, with the "cultivating quality" being the highest and the "scientific research quality" the lowest; there still exist several problems, such as teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge in CIE, lack of teaching resources, and insufficient abilities in teaching design and research. It is hoped that with the support and efforts from university administrations, teachers can improve their teaching competence in CIE through various approaches adopted and multiple measures taken, thus optimizing their teaching effectiveness, promoting the construction of CIE in Xinjiang colleges and universities in the new era, and contributing to Xinjiang's high-quality development.

Keywords: Foreign language teachers; Curriculum-based ideological education; Teaching competence; Status quo; Improvement needs

Online publication: March 24, 2024

1. Introduction

In the context of "Great Ideological and Political Education," teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education (CIE) has been a hot topic discussed in the education circle in recent years. The "Guidelines for the Construction of CIE in Colleges and Universities" indicate that "teachers are the key to comprehensively promoting the construction of ideological and political courses"^[1]. Only by continuously improving college teachers' teaching competence in CIE can we make teaching in CIE effective. Among all kinds of courses in colleges and universities, foreign language courses do have their inborn advantages over Chinese courses in terms of their invisible education effects in CIE due to their peculiar characteristics, such as the comparison and contrast between the Chinese and Western cultures and values. As a result, curriculum-based ideological

education in foreign language teaching should not be underestimated. Most important of all, foreign language teachers' teaching competence, as an indispensable part, does play a crucial role in the construction of curriculum-based ideological education.

Xinjiang is located in the hinterland of the Eurasian Continent, thus being of great significance as a strategic location. In addition, Xinjiang is also a multi-ethnic area. There is no doubt that social stability and long-term peace and order are the fundamental guarantees for the development of Xinjiang. Stability and development are inseparable from ideological and political education in Xinjiang colleges and universities, connected with the construction of CIE in Xinjiang colleges and universities, closely related to ideological and political education in foreign language courses. It stands to reason that foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education is of great importance in the long run. Research into the current teaching competence in CIE and the improvement needs of foreign language teachers in Xinjiang colleges and universities is of great practical significance, definitely providing reference and some suggestions for improving foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education, and undoubtedly offering support so as to advance the effect of the construction of CIE in Xinjiang colleges and universities in the new era and eventually contribute to the high-quality development of Xinjiang.

2. Foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education

Unlike teaching competence in the general sense, teaching competence in CIE involves the personality and characteristics that teachers are endowed with, relevant knowledge that teachers acquire, necessary skills that teachers master, and attitudes that teachers should take in CIE, the result of which is that it should reflect the inherent special requirements of ideological and political education ^[2]. In the field of foreign language teaching, teaching competence in CIE means that teachers consciously explore the ideological and political elements contained in the courses in various teaching situations of foreign language courses, and subtly integrate them into students' hearts, with the aim of helping students to shape values, improve abilities, and accumulate knowledge ^[3].

Based on the "Teaching Guide for College English" (2020 Edition) ^[4], Gao and Zhang constructed a Pyramid Model of teaching competence in ideology and politics for college English teachers, which consists of five dimensions: cultivating quality, subject quality, teaching quality, scientific research quality, and global quality ^[3]. These five dimensions are the constituent elements of this study, and they provide an operational tool for measuring foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education in Xinjiang colleges and universities.

3. Research design

3.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of four parts, namely basic information of the respondents and three modules, which were the Teaching Competence Scale in CIE, Existing Problems, and Improvement Needs. Based on the Pyramid Model constructed by Gao and Zhang, the Teachers' Competence Scale ^[3] was designed from five dimensions and made up of 30 items. The Existing Problems and Improvement Needs modules together referred to the 32 items collectively compiled by experts from the Teaching Competence Group of the "Teaching Guidelines for CIE in Foreign Language Courses in Colleges and Universities." The questionnaire adopted the form of a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 to 5 indicating "completely inconsistent" to "completely consistent," respectively. Two senior foreign language professors from Xinjiang colleges and universities participated in the

design and modification of the questionnaire, thus ensuring its scientific nature and validity.

3.2. Research participants

The research participants were 142 foreign language teachers from the five major universities in Xinjiang (Xinjiang University, Xinjiang Normal University, Xinjiang Agricultural University, Xinjiang Medical University, and Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics). Among them, there were 125 (88.03%) female teachers and 17 (11.97%) male teachers; according to their ages, there were 13.38% of teachers below 30 years old, 26.06% between 31–40 years old, 47.89% between 41–50 years old, and 12.68% above 51 years old (**Figure 1**); in terms of academic qualifications, there were 10 teachers with Bachelor degree, accounting for 7.04%; 117 teachers with Master’s degree, accounting for 82.39%; 15 teachers with doctoral degree, accounting for 10.56% (**Figure 2**); concerning professional titles, there were 18 teaching assistants, accounting for 12.68%; 95 lecturers, about 66.9%; 27 associate professors, about 19.01%; 2 professors, about 1.41% (**Figure 3**). Data analysis of the questionnaire adopted a method in which qualitative research and quantitative research were combined.

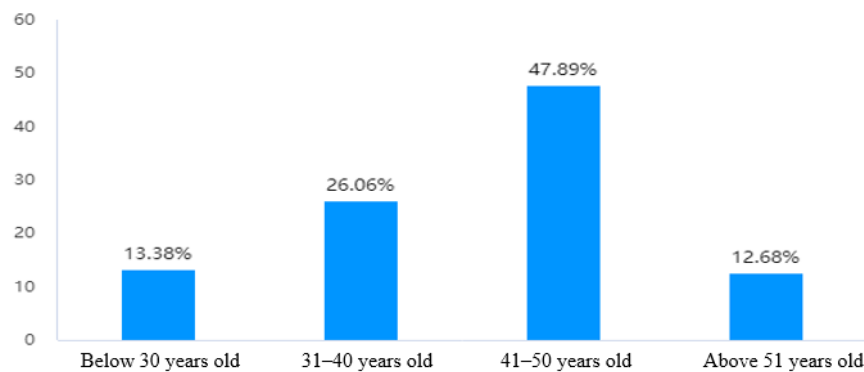


Figure 1. Proportion of age of foreign language teachers in five universities in Xinjiang

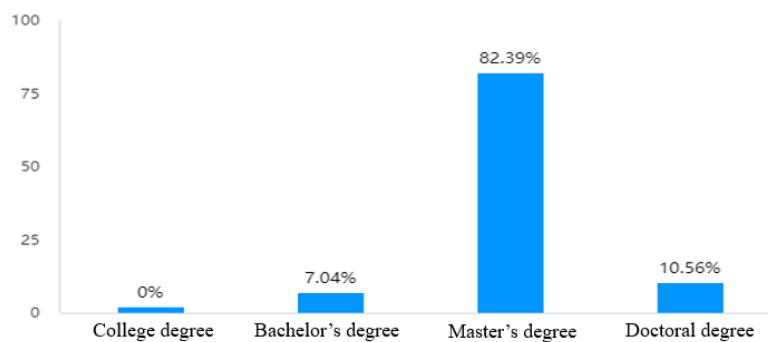


Figure 2. Proportion of academic qualifications of foreign language teachers in five universities in Xinjiang

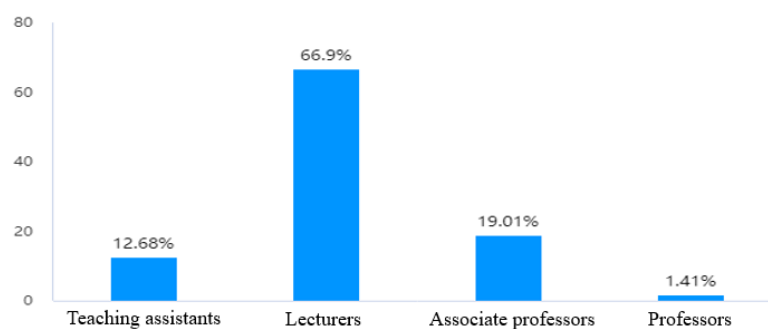


Figure 3. Proportion of professional titles of foreign language teachers in five universities in Xinjiang

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Questionnaires were distributed through “Questionnaire Star.” The foreign language teachers from the five major universities in Xinjiang were invited to fill out the questionnaires carefully. A total of 142 questionnaires were collected, all of which were valid questionnaires. The reliability of the questionnaire data was tested through SPSS26.0 software. The results showed that the Cronbach’s alpha of the overall scale and the five dimensions are all greater than 0.9 (Table 1). The overall and each dimension coefficients of the Existing Problems and Improvement Needs modules are also greater than 0.9 (Table 2), indicating that the reliability of the questionnaire is excellent.

Table 1. Reliability test of teaching competence scale in curriculum-based ideological education

Dimensions	Cronbach’s alpha	Number of items
Cultivating quality	0.939	4
Subject quality	0.925	4
Teaching quality	0.958	10
Scientific research quality	0.967	8
Global quality	0.906	4
Total	0.982	30

Table 2. Reliability test of existing problems, improvement needs, approaches, and measures in CIE

Dimensions	Cronbach’s alpha	Number of items
Existing problems	0.949	8
Improvement needs	0.927	8
Approaches to improvements	0.903	8
Measures to take	0.916	8
Total	0.968	32

4. Research findings

4.1. Foreign language teachers’ teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education

The mean value of each item in the questionnaire scale is shown in Table 3. The statistical data showed that the mean values of 29 items out of 30 items are all greater than 4.0, and the overall mean value of the questionnaire scale is 4.35, indicating that foreign language teachers’ current teaching competence in ideology and politics is generally acceptable. The mean values of the five qualities are arranged in descending order: “cultivating quality” (M = 4.69), “subject quality” (M = 4.43), “teaching quality” (M = 4.30), “global quality” (M = 4.29), and “scientific research quality” (M = 4.25).

To be more specific, the mean value of “cultivating quality” is 4.69, indicating that the performance of foreign language teachers in this dimension is the most excellent; the mean value of “subject quality” is 4.43, suggesting the specialized knowledge of the foreign language teachers stands up to the most rigorous test; the mean value of “teaching quality” is 4.30, indicating that foreign language teachers are able to deal with teaching process freely, but teachers need to focus more on self-evaluation and mutual evaluation of the students, and are encouraged to participate in relevant teaching competitions concerning the foreign language courses. The mean value of “global quality” is 4.29, indicating that the teachers have a good command of systematic knowledge

of foreign languages as well as a strong awareness of ideological education. Nevertheless, their ability to have cross-cultural communication with native speakers of foreign languages needs to be improved. By contrast, the mean value of “scientific research quality” is 4.25, there is still much room for further improvement in team building, teaching methods, and teaching evaluation. It can be seen that the “cultivating quality” of foreign language teachers in Xinjiang colleges and universities is relatively high ($M = 4.69$), while the “scientific research quality” is comparatively poor ($M = 4.25$).

Table 3. The mean value of each item in the teaching competence scale

Quality	Teaching competence in CIE	Mean
Cultivating quality	To have faith in teaching job, be a role model for others, and be tireless in educating others.	4.72
	To have a strong sense of responsibility, and a keen desire for educating people.	4.72
	To actively play a leading role in demonstration and pay attention to students' worldviews education.	4.73
	To be aware of the significance and role of CIE and regard it as a conscious behavior.	4.60
Subject quality	To be well-equipped with systematic knowledge of foreign languages and can draw out the ideological and political elements.	4.37
	To understand Chinese and foreign cultures, accept their respective uniqueness, differences, and diversity.	4.51
	To have proficient skills in foreign languages' listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation.	4.48
	To know foreign languages and delve into their ideological values and spiritual connotations.	4.39
Teaching quality	To be quite familiar with students, conduct timely needs analysis of CIE, and always confirm educational goals.	4.40
	To flexibly draw on teaching materials to carry out ideological and political teaching activities.	4.43
	To deeply explore the ideological and political elements in teaching content and organically integrate them into the curricula.	4.41
	To carry out ideological and political education mainly in implicit ways.	4.43
	To pay much attention to the evaluation of ideological and political teaching effects.	4.28
	To emphasize the weight of students' self-evaluation and peer evaluation in terms of evaluation subject.	4.18
	To focus on changes in students' thoughts and values in terms of evaluation content.	4.26
	To help students form their values with the concept of formative evaluation in terms of evaluation methods.	4.38
	To actively participate in various teaching competitions on ideology and politics.	3.92
	To actively conduct the research into teaching and reform on ideology and politics.	4.23
Scientific research quality	To think deeply about the ideological and political teaching design of the course.	4.30
	To be ready to explore methods of drawing out ideological and political elements.	4.25
	To identify the authenticity, accuracy, and value of ideological and political teaching content and information in courses.	4.30
	To actively explore ideological and political teaching methods in courses.	4.33
	To flexibly use ideological and political teaching evaluation methods.	4.25
	To objectively evaluate the effectiveness of ideological and political teaching in courses.	4.23
	To carry out reflections on CIE, the corresponding advantages and disadvantages, and further strategies.	4.28
To strengthen cooperation among team members and actively assume team responsibilities.	4.13	
Global quality	To ensure the theme of ideological and political resources, concern current worldwide affairs and things around students.	4.35
	To make full use of digital teaching tools, materials, and platforms to innovate teaching models.	4.29
	To effectively carry out cross-cultural exchanges and communication with native speakers of foreign languages.	4.13
	To absorb and learn from the outstanding cultural achievements of other countries and promote the Chinese culture to the world.	4.39
Total mean	4.35	

4.2. Influencing factors of foreign language teachers' teaching competence in CIE

Table 4 shows variables and *P* value in Pearson's chi-squared test on foreign language teaching in curriculum-based ideological education. Based on $\alpha = 1$, when $P < 0.1$, we hold that there is a remarkable correlation between the two sides concerned. It can be seen that the *P* value of academic qualification and "cultivating quality" is 0.045 (< 0.1), and that of professional title and "cultivating quality" is 0.065 (< 0.1), both indicating that significant interaction exists between academic qualification and professional titles and "cultivating quality." In a similar way, the *P* value of gender and "subject quality" is 0.049 (< 0.1) while that of academic qualification and "subject quality" is 0.002 (< 0.1), revealing that there exists significant interaction between gender and "subject quality," between academic qualification and "subject quality." What's more, the *P* value of gender and "teaching quality" is 0.050 (< 0.1), similarly demonstrating that gender and "teaching quality" are closely correlated with each other.

Table 4. Variables and *P* value in Pearson's chi-squared test on foreign language teachers' teaching competence in CIE

Information	Cultivating quality	Subject quality	Teaching quality	Scientific research quality	Global quality
Gender	0.138	0.049	0.050	0.427	0.543
Age	0.914	0.533	0.751	0.828	0.796
Teaching experience	0.967	0.912	0.761	0.769	0.277
Academic qualification	0.045	0.002	0.525	0.926	0.427
Professional title	0.065	0.519	0.753	0.898	0.876
Type of university	0.106	0.654	0.519	0.535	0.624

According to **Table 4**, teachers' teaching competence is not related to their age, teaching experience, or the type of university they come from. However, there does exist a significant impact between academic qualification, professional title, and gender. It is essential that foreign language teachers improve their academic qualification and promote their professional titles so as to advance their teaching competence in CIE.

4.3. Existing problems of foreign language teachers' teaching competence in CIE

Table 5 presents the existing problems in curriculum-based ideological education. The comparison results showed that the mean values of all existing problems at the individual level are between 2.17–2.96, and the overall mean value is 2.52, indicating that teachers recognize their teaching competence in ideological education in the course. It can be seen from the data that the lack of theoretical knowledge ($M = 2.96$), lack of teaching resources ($M = 2.84$), insufficient teaching design and research capabilities are the main problems that foreign language teachers are confronted with.

Table 5. The mean value of each item on the existing problems

Number	Existing problems	Mean
1	Weak awareness of ideological education	2.52
2	Lack of theoretical knowledge	2.96
3	Unclear teaching goals	2.17
4	Lack of teaching resources	2.84
5	Traditional teaching methods	2.51
6	Insufficient foreign languages skills	2.26
7	Inadequate teaching design abilities	2.46
8	Inadequate capabilities in teaching and research	2.82
Total mean		2.52

4.4. Improvement needs, approaches, and supporting measures of foreign language teachers' teaching competence in CIE

Foreign language teachers in Xinjiang colleges and universities are aware of the importance of teaching competence in ideological education and the significance of improving their teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education. For that reason, their improvement needs, the possible approaches to improvements, and their expectant supporting measures were investigated in the questionnaire.

According to **Table 6**, the mean values of the improvement needs are between 3.96–4.44, and the overall mean value is 4.19, indicating that teachers realize that there is considerable room for improvement in terms of ideological education in foreign language courses. Confronted with the existing problems, foreign language teachers have an increased demand for improvements. For example, they expect a variety of training arranged by the university administrations intended for foreign language teachers' improvements in their teaching competence in CIE, and they welcome rules and regulations and reasonable systems established by the university administrations to ensure their improvements. They are in great need of high-quality resource-sharing mechanisms and opportunities to exchange typical experiences in CIE.

Table 6. The mean value of each item on the improvement needs

Number	Improvement needs	Mean
1	Training on professional ethics	3.96
2	Pre-service training on teaching competence in CIE	4.11
3	On-the-job training on teaching competence in CIE	4.09
4	General training on teaching competence in CIE	4.18
5	On-site teaching observation	4.18
6	Sharing mechanism of high-quality resources	4.44
7	Exchange of typical experience	4.38
8	Collaborative teaching and research	4.23
Total mean		4.19

As shown in **Table 7**, the overall mean value of the main improvement methods is 4.09, and the methods are as follows: communicating and discussing with colleagues, searching for ideological and political resources online, participating in various training, and observing teaching competitions. Practical cases from colleagues and the Internet are important resources for ideological and political courses, and various training, lectures, and teaching competitions are indispensable driving forces for ideological and political courses^[5]. The overall mean value of the supporting measures needed to improve teaching capabilities is 4.29, with establishing a high-quality resource-sharing mechanism ranking first, followed by conducting training and seminars, educational reform projects, and teaching competitions.

Table 7. The mean value of each item on the improvement methods and supporting measures

Number	Improvement methods	Mean
1	To actively participate in teaching and training lectures on CIE	4.23
2	To reasonably draw on the cross-school exchange platform for the sake of CIE	3.89
3	To observe teaching competitions on CIE	4.12
4	To attend golden-class projects and other related projects on CIE	3.76

5	To periodically and actively learn related documents and materials on CIE	4.09
6	To read relevant research papers and books on CIE	4.13
7	To search related case resources on CIE	4.24
8	To be involved in discussions and communications with colleagues	4.29
Total mean		4.09

Number	Supporting measures	Mean
1	To establish and improve high-quality resource-sharing mechanisms	4.50
2	To encourage teachers to share ideological and political resources	4.49
3	To conduct training and seminars on CIE	4.43
4	To set teaching reform projects on CIE	4.42
5	To periodically identify demonstration courses with regard to educational reform	4.35
6	To conduct design competitions on CIE	4.35
7	To conduct teaching competitions on CIE	4.33
8	To carry out the selection of famous teachers based on their teaching competence	4.23
Total mean		4.29

5. Discussion

The questionnaire used covered three dimensions in addition to the basic information of the respondents, and it was directed against foreign language teachers from five universities in Xinjiang, aiming at collecting data concerning their teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education, the existing problems, and the improvement needs, possible approaches, and supporting measures. The results showed that the foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education is comparatively acceptable, with the "cultivating quality" being the highest and "scientific research quality" the lowest. At present, there exist prominent problems, such as teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge, lack of teaching resources, insufficient abilities in teaching design, as well as deficient capabilities in teaching and research, etc. In view of the problems, teachers have their own demands for improvements, some approaches for adoption, and some measures to be taken. It is obvious that teachers and universities administrations need to work together to achieve better results.

5.1. Improvement needs, approaches, and measures from the perspective of foreign language teachers

5.1.1. Information-based status quo and teaching competence

(1) Gender and teaching competence

For the teachers' part, there are still some problems that cannot be dealt with for the time being. For instance, female foreign language teachers heavily outnumber male foreign language teachers, which has always been an indisputable and unsolvable problem in colleges and universities throughout China. Based on the results, gender is closely related to subject quality and teaching quality. As indicated by the result of one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA), female teachers' subject quality and teaching quality are better than those of their counterparts, indicating that male foreign language teachers are supposed to consciously equip themselves with linguistic knowledge and raise their cross-cultural awareness in their professional field so as to promote their subject quality and teaching quality.

(2) Academic qualifications and professional titles and teaching competence

In addition, the structures of teachers' academic qualifications and professional titles are somewhat unreasonable, and the proportion of high qualification and professional titles is quite low. Teachers should maintain a strong desire for lifelong learning, take the initiative to improve their academic qualifications, and attach importance to promoting their senior titles in profession. These in turn will constantly stimulate them to improve their qualities in every aspect and subconsciously enhance their awareness of curriculum-based ideological education, eventually achieving the goal of improving their teaching competence in teaching courses combined with elements of ideology and politics.

5.1.2. Questionnaire-based problems and teaching competence

In the face of the existing problems in CIE, foreign language teachers must take on the teaching job attentively, and promote their all-round qualities to conduct scientific research through teaching and research, so as to proceed to improve their scientific research quality step by step, which in turn will benefit curriculum-based ideological education as a whole, ultimately increasing their ability to teach foreign languages.

Furthermore, foreign language teachers should actively participate in seminars, discussions, and lectures concerning curriculum-based ideological education, and should observe teaching competitions of different courses and related training, so as to consolidate their theoretical knowledge of CIE. It can also enrich their teaching resources, innovate their teaching methods, improve teaching design and teaching research capabilities, and eventually enhance their ability to effectively conduct teaching evaluation, so that they are able to achieve the goal of educating the students, and promoting the integration and sharing of ideological and political resources in foreign language courses.

5.2. Improvement needs, approaches, and measures from the perspective of university administrations

For the school administrations' part, they should make great efforts to provide supporting measures for teachers, and go to extraordinary lengths to create opportunities to help teachers in terms of their academic qualifications and professional titles, which is actually correlated with teaching competence in CIE. Furthermore, they are supposed to enhance the resource-sharing mechanism, incorporate the training and improvement in teachers' ability to apply information resource into the training content, help all teachers to use network platforms proficiently, and to willingly and regularly participate in co-building and sharing resources.

The management and departments concerned in colleges and universities should hold various seminars, lectures, and training on CIE, and organize teaching competitions for different courses on curriculum-based ideological education, providing all teachers with opportunities to participate in activities relevant to curriculum-based ideological education.

6. Conclusion

The foreign language teachers' teaching competence in curriculum-based ideological education is closely related to the construction of CIE in Xinjiang colleges and universities, and is undoubtedly inseparable from the stability and development of Xinjiang. It is of great significance to study its current situation, existing problems, and improvement needs. The findings of this study indicated that foreign language teachers in Xinjiang colleges and universities need to continuously enhance their awareness of curriculum-based ideological education, build a solid ideological and political position in foreign language courses, and improve their ability to teach with ideological and political elements. These can effectively implement the fundamental task of moral education

and cultivating students in Xinjiang colleges and universities, and comprehensively promote the construction of curriculum-based ideological education in Xinjiang in the new era, making a valuable contribution to high-quality development in Xinjiang.

Funding

2022 Project of Foreign Language Teaching and Research in Xinjiang Colleges and Universities—General Project “Research on the Approaches to Improving Foreign Language Teachers’ Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Ideological Education in Xinjiang Colleges and Universities in the New Era” (Project number: XJGXWYJG2022B04)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Ministry of Education, 2020, Guidance for the Construction of Curriculum-Based Ideological Education in Colleges and Universities, viewed March 5, 2024, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html
- [2] Hu P, Liu W, 2022, Survey on the Current Situation of College English Teachers’ Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Ideological Education. *Foreign Language Audio-Visual Teaching*, 2022(05): 11–17 + 106.
- [3] Gao Y, Zhang Z, 2022, Construction of a Structural Model of College English Teachers’ Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Ideological Education. *Foreign Language Audio-Visual Teaching*, 2022(01): 8–14.
- [4] Ministry of Education, 2020, College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee, College English Curriculum Requirements (2020 Edition), Higher Education Press, Beijing.
- [5] Zhang W, Zhao H, Hu J, 2022, Research on the Current Status and Development Needs of Foreign Language Teachers Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Ideological Education in Colleges and Universities. *Foreign Language World*, 2022(03): 28–36.

Publisher’s note

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