A Study on the Competency Model Building (CMB) for the Curriculum-based Moral Education (ME) of Foreign Language Teachers: An Empirical Study Based on Multi-factor Analysis

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Abstract: 50 EFL teachers, 100 students, and 12 administrative leaders from 10 universities in Southern China are selected as subjects to explore the structural features of EFL teachers' competence in curriculum-based moral education. Questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations are conducted to gather their insights and feedback on how to integrate moral education into English language teaching (ELT). The data is analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative multi-factor analysis. A novel competency model is proposed with four layers: teaching design, situational construction, classroom interaction, and multiple assessment. Recommendations are provided to enhance foreign language teachers' awareness of moral education and the quality of curriculum-based moral education.

Keywords: EFL teaching; Competency model building; Curriculum-based moral education; Multi-factor analysis

1. Introduction

McClelland (1998) first proposed the concept of "competency," which is defined as "knowledge, skill, ability, trait, or motivation that is directly similar to or related to work performance or other important results in life" [1]. The research on the competency model began abroad early on and developed several mature competency models, such as the iceberg model, onion model, and whole brain model, and scholars conducted application research in practice. In the field of education, the introduction of the competency model has made evaluation of educational administrators more scientific, and researchers have also focused on the structure of the competency model [2]. More in-depth research on teacher competency mainly focuses on the competency model for teacher quality, which includes abilities such as individual innovation, critical thinking, and judgment

traits that go beyond simple skill competency models [3–8]. Some research focuses on the leading and outstanding characteristics of teachers [9] and one research in Thailand yielded six factors, namely, self-management and interactive competency, functional and research competency, pedagogical psychology and assessment, leading learning and mentoring, technological and digital competency, and problem-solving [10]. Clearly, research abroad primarily focuses on the general study of educational administrator leadership and does not prioritize the study of teacher competency within individual disciplines. In China, research on college teacher competence has just begun. Most studies focus on general teacher competence at the macro level, with little attention given to teaching competence specifically. Most research methods are limited to superficial discussions at the theoretical level, often without the backing of empirical evidence. Additionally, there is a lack of rigorous and systematic mathematical modeling approaches in this field.

Teachers play a crucial role in cultivating high-level talents. The competency of teachers in moral education significantly influences the development of students' life values, moral values and worldviews. An effective evaluation system for teachers' competence in curriculum-based moral education is essential for training qualified educators. This system will contribute to the establishment of a new model for foreign language professional education and foster a comprehensive and integrated educational framework for all staff.

In today's globalized context, moral education integrated into foreign language courses serves not only as a vehicle for disseminating linguistic knowledge but also as a means to cultivate unique cross-cultural moral literacy. This educational model melds the international perspective of foreign language disciplines with a localized value orientation, setting higher-level demands on the pedagogical skills of foreign language teachers. To date, numerous studies have delved into how to effectively intertwine the core content, implementation strategies, and overarching principles of ideological and political education within foreign language curricula. These studies underscore the necessity of fully exploring the cultural nuances embedded in language and respecting the diversity of cultural viewpoints. By doing so, teachers can enhance students' linguistic proficiency while simultaneously fostering their moral reasoning and sense of social responsibility as global citizens.

Developing a model framework for curriculum-based moral teaching ability, tailored to the characteristics of specific subject areas, will enhance the theoretical aspect of college teachers' competence evaluation. This approach aims to rectify the mismatch between evaluation purposes and the orientation of assessments, thereby ensuring objective standards for evaluating moral instruction within curriculum settings. Furthermore, constructing a competency model for foreign language educators will facilitate the proper guidance of evaluation, optimize the integration of ideological and political education within foreign language instruction, and enhance the richness of the curriculum's content. This will foster a synergistic effect among ideological and political courses, and cultivate globally-minded individuals who possess a deep affection for their family and country.

2. Literature review

Most research in the field of foreign language education focuses on the teaching competence of college English teachers. Studies on the competence of curriculum-based moral education primarily target the teachers of college English public courses. Chu L *et al.* (2020) constructed a model for the ideological and political teaching ability of college foreign language teachers from four dimensions: curriculum design, context construction, environment construction, and process management [11]. Previous study classified the curriculum

ideological and political ability of college English teachers, including the stages of cognition, identification, and integration of curriculum ideological and political elements. However, this research ignored the structural complexity of teaching ability and the diversification of elements and did not fully reflect the particularity of college English curriculum-based morality teaching ability. Gao Y *et al.* (2022) proposed a pyramid model of morality teaching ability for college English teachers.[12] Zhao G *et al.* (2020) constructed competency models for ideological and political teachers, teachers of specialized courses, and counselors respectively, from the perspective of curriculum thought and politics [13]. They also adopted the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) [14] to construct a competency index system for specialized course teachers from three aspects: personal characteristics, ideological and political cognition, and skills. Sun *Y et al.* (2018) proposed the "Competence Framework for Foreign Language Teachers" in universities for the first time in the field of foreign language teaching [15]. This framework called for the establishment of a competency model for English teachers with Chinese characteristics, based on the Chinese context. Based on the mentioned literature, it is evident that there is much room for domestic research on the morality teaching ability model of English major teachers, which is also a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research objectives

This study thoroughly examines the theories and literature on teachers' teaching abilities both domestically and abroad. It employs a multi-factor analysis method to conduct an in-depth investigation into the various subjects involved in the integration of ideological and political education within foreign language courses, involving teachers, administrators, experts, and students. The objective is to delve into the essence of foreign language teachers' ideological and political teaching capabilities within their courses and to establish a three-tiered evaluation index system. This aims to offer both theoretical guidance and practical reference for the enhancement of foreign language teachers' pedagogical skills. The paper meticulously assesses the current state of foreign language teachers' teaching abilities, identifies the issues inherent in these practices, and performs a comprehensive attribution analysis. Thereupon, the study develops a model for moral education instruction specific to foreign language majors and proposes guidelines and strategies to refine teaching practices.

3.2. Research subject

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of EFL teachers' moral education competence, considering the unique characteristics of foreign language teaching, surveys were conducted among teachers, students, educational administrators, and leaders. The interplay between the instrumental and humanistic aspects of language adds complexity to the effective integration of foreign language teaching with ideological and political education. Therefore, there is a need for the professional curriculum to be taught in conjunction with moral education.

In developing a competence model for integrating morality into foreign language teaching, it is crucial to focus on various aspects of foreign language teaching activities, including curriculum objectives, content, evaluation, and resources, as well as context and culture.

Consequently, the study includes 50 EFL teachers (13 males and 37 females), 100 English major students, and 12 administrative leaders (comprising 6 foreign language school deans, 3 human resource department directors, and 3 teaching affairs department directors) from 10 universities in Southern China.

3.3. Research method

Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were employed.

(1) Critical Incident Interviews (CIIs)

Winners of ideological and political teaching competitions across various levels of education were interviewed to ascertain their curricular perspectives. From this, the study extracted the competency traits of distinguished teachers and identified key indicators for the model.

(2) Questionnaire Survey

Administrators, experts, and scholars were surveyed to garner their authoritative opinions and recommendations regarding the amalgamation of foreign language instruction with moral education. This data was used to complement and refine the competency elements within the curriculum-based ideological and political teaching framework.

(3) The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Mathematical Modeling

Utilizing a systematic and rigorous hierarchical analysis, the study developed a mathematical model to pinpoint the competency model indicators. Through statistical analysis, an index system was established for college foreign language teachers' teaching competence, thereby constructing a comprehensive model applicable to EFL educators.

4. Results and discussion

Through in-depth interviews with award-winning teachers of the ideological and political teaching competition, the study refined the core characteristics of the teaching process and unique understanding and profound insights into ideological and political education in foreign language courses. In addition, through dialogues with relevant administrative personnel and experts, the study collected valuable opinions on the subjects' expectations for the moral education ability of foreign language teachers. Based on these interview materials, the study carefully constructed a foreign language teacher's ideological and political competence model. This model not only covers the subjective cognition and professional knowledge of teachers but also extends to the three dimensions of objective behavior to ensure the depth and breadth of ideological and political education in foreign language courses. At the practical operation level, this model is further refined into four key aspects:

(1) Teachers should have a firm political stance and a high sense of responsibility to ensure that the course content is consistent with my country's socialist core values;

(2) Teachers need to be well versed in the laws of foreign language teaching and master rich cross-cultural communication knowledge to naturally integrate ideological and political elements into teaching;

(3) Teachers should have excellent moral education teaching ability and be able to skillfully combine ideological and political education with foreign language teaching;

(4) Teachers need to constantly improve themselves and pay attention to the dynamics of ideological and political education at home and abroad to keep the teaching content contemporary and forward-looking.

In short, this ideological and political competency model for foreign language teachers aims to provide foreign language teachers with a comprehensive and scientific development path, guide them to continuously improve their abilities in teaching practice, and better shoulder the responsibility of cultivating foreign language talents with a global vision and national sentiment (see **Figure 1**).
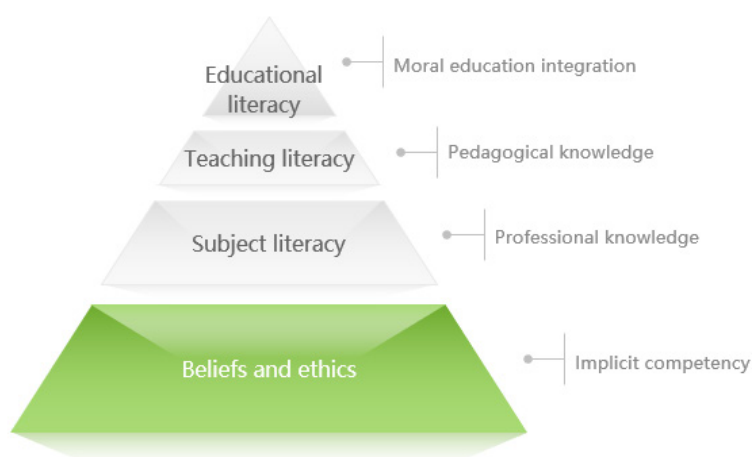
Figure 1. The pyramid model of teachers' moral teaching competence.

In the teaching practice of ideological and political education, teachers must master and comprehensively apply the following four core abilities to ensure the effectiveness and practicability of teaching activities:

(1) The ability of exquisite teaching design, which means that teachers should be able to systematically plan course content, teaching methods and evaluation mechanisms, coordinate them with each other, and form a complete education and teaching system;

(2) The ability of excellent situation creation, where teachers need to be good at creating teaching situations with educational significance and appeal so that students can deepen their understanding and emotional experience in a real or simulated environment;

(3) The ability to organize wonderful classroom interactive activities, by which teachers should be able to effectively stimulate students' engagement and enthusiasm for participation, guide them to actively think, discuss and practice, realizing the internalization and externalization of ideological and political education.

5. Conclusion

Curriculum thought and politics align with the educational philosophy that responds to the needs of the current era and national conditions. It also exhibits an advanced understanding of knowledge and innovative approaches to curriculum development. Consequently, the composition of curriculum ideological and political teaching capabilities is grounded in a correct and profound subjective understanding. A wealth of extensive professional knowledge is manifested in the pedagogical behaviors dedicated to moral cultivation. This integration serves to fulfill the trifold educational function of shaping curriculum values, imparting knowledge, and training abilities.

The competency of curriculum ideological and political teaching encompasses both explicit and implicit elements. Consequently, the construction of the competency model for such teaching should organically integrate both types of elements, as well as subjective and objective behaviors, static and dynamic observations, and qualitative and quantitative research methods. Furthermore, multi-factor analyses were conducted to verify and complement each other

This study is the first to examine the construction of a competency model for curriculum ideological and political education for foreign language major teachers in universities. A multi-factor analysis method is

employed to investigate the multifaceted subject of curriculum ideological and political teaching.

The construction of a competence model that ingeniously integrates professional teaching with moral education offers profound inspiration for foreign language teachers involved in moral education. This model not only emphasizes the imparting of knowledge and the development of skills but also focuses on shaping students' moral character and cultivating values. By utilizing this model, foreign language teachers can more effectively integrate moral education elements into their teaching, thereby nurturing comprehensive talents possessing both solid professional knowledge and excellent moral qualities. This undoubtedly represents an important innovation in educational concepts for foreign language teachers and also provides fresh directions and goals for their teaching practice.

Funding

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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