

**INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING
HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING BASED ON THE CIPP
(CONTEXT, INPUT, PROCESS, PRODUCT)
MODEL AT UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF SYMBOLS.....	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xvii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	xviii
ABSTRAK	xix
ABSTRACT	xxi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of Study.....	3
1.3 Statement of the Problem	9
1.4 Research Objectives	14
1.5 Research Questions	16
1.6 Hypotheses	17
1.6.1 Key Construct Hypotheses (Based on Research Question 2)	17
1.6.2 Moderating Hypotheses (Based on Research Question 3).....	18
1.7 Significance of the Study	20
1.7.1 Theoretical Significance.....	20
1.7.2 Practical Significance.....	21
1.7.3 Methodological Significance.....	22
1.8 Scope of the Study.....	22
1.9 Operationalized Definition.....	23
1.10 Summary	27

CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	28
2.1	Introduction	28
2.2	Curriculum and Hidden Curriculum (HC)	28
2.2.1	Curriculum and Types of Curriculums.....	29
2.2.2	Difference and Relation between Hidden Curriculum (HC) and Formal Curriculum (FC)	30
2.2.3	Definition and Characteristics of Hidden Curriculum (HC)	33
2.2.4	Conceptualization Development of Hidden Curriculum (HC) in Higher Education	36
2.2.5	Components of Hidden Curriculum (HC).....	39
2.2.6	Conceptualizations of Hidden Curriculum in Chinese Higher Education Context	42
2.3	English Language Teaching (ELT)	43
2.3.1	English Language Teaching Development in China.....	46
2.3.2	Hidden Curriculum (HC) in English Language Teaching (ELT)	49
2.4	Curriculum Evaluation Theory and CIPP Evaluation Model.....	50
2.4.1	Theories Related Curriculum Evaluation.....	50
2.4.1(a)	Concept and Content of Curriculum Evaluation	50
2.4.1(b)	The Approaches/Models of Curriculum Evaluation.....	51
2.4.2	An Introduction to CIPP Evaluation Model.....	52
2.4.2(a)	Definition and Development of CIPP evaluation Model.....	52
2.4.2(b)	Features and Potentials of CIPP Evaluation Model.....	53
2.4.2(c)	Limitations of CIPP Evaluation Model	61
2.4.2(d)	CIPP Evaluation Model and Curriculum Evaluation.....	61
2.4.3	Justifications for Applying the CIPP Evaluation Model to Hidden Curriculum (HC) of English Language Teaching (ELT)	65
2.5	Teacher Individual Differences and Teaching	68

2.5.1	EFL Teachers' Individual Differences.....	69
2.5.1(a)	EFL Teachers' Gender.....	71
2.5.1(b)	EFL Teacher's Teaching Experience.....	71
2.5.1(c)	EFL Teachers' Language Proficiency	72
2.5.2	EFL Teachers' Individual Differences and Hidden Curriculum of ELT	74
2.5.2(a)	The Relationship between Gender, ELT and Hidden Curriculum.....	74
2.5.2(b)	The Relationship between Teaching Experience, ELT and Hidden Curriculum.....	77
2.5.2(c)	The Relationship between English language proficiency, ELT and Hidden Curriculum.....	80
2.6	Theoretical Framework of Study.....	82
2.7	An Overview of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education in China... 84	
2.7.1	Definition and Characteristics of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE).....	85
2.7.2	Relations Between Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE) and Hidden Curriculum (HC)	87
2.7.3	Policies Related Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE)	88
2.7.4	English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE)	93
2.7.5	Related studies on Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE) of English Language Teaching (ELT).....	94
2.7.5(a)	Annual Publication and Trend.....	95
2.7.5(b)	Studies on Evaluation of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education of English Language Teaching	96
2.8	Conceptual Framework	101
2.9	Summary of the Literature Review and Research Gaps.....	104
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....		107
3.1	Introduction	107

3.2	Research Design.....	107
3.2.1	Research Questions	110
3.2.2	Research Variables.....	110
3.2.3	Research Hypotheses.....	111
3.2.4	Mixed-method Research Design	113
3.2.5	Justification of Using a Sequential Explanatory Mixed-method Design.....	114
3.2.6	Triangulation	116
3.3	Research Population and Sampling.....	117
3.3.1	Research Site	118
3.3.2	Participants Sampling for a Quantitative Study	119
3.3.3	Participants Sampling for a Qualitative Study	123
3.4	Research Instrument.....	127
3.4.1	Questionnaire and Socio-demographic Characteristic	128
3.4.2	ELT Hidden Curriculum Scale.....	130
3.4.3	CIPP Questionnaire	133
3.4.4	Focus Group Interviews	135
3.5	Validity and Reliability	139
3.5.1	Validity and Reliability of Quantitative Phase.....	139
3.5.2	Trustworthiness of Qualitative Phase.....	142
3.6	Quantitative Pilot Study	144
3.7	Qualitative Pilot Study	149
3.8	Data Collection and Analysis Methods	152
3.9	Quantitative Analysis	153
3.9.1	Data Preparation and Screening.....	154
3.9.1(a)	Normality.....	155
3.9.1(b)	Screening for Outliers and Missing Values	156
3.9.2	Descriptive Analysis	157

3.9.3	Measurement Scale Analysis	159
3.9.3(a)	Reliability Analysis	159
3.9.3(b)	Validity Analysis	160
3.10	Qualitative Analysis	170
3.11	Ethical Consideration	174
3.12	Summary	175
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS.....	177
4.1	Introduction	177
4.2	The Results of Research Question 1	178
4.2.1	EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Social Atmosphere	178
4.2.2	EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Organizational Structure.....	180
4.2.3	EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Interaction between Teachers and Students	181
4.3	The Results of Research Question 2	183
4.3.1	Quantitative Results	184
4.3.1(a)	CIPP Factors and Social Atmosphere.....	186
4.3.1(b)	CIPP Factors and Organizational Structure.....	188
4.3.1(c)	CIPP Factors and Interaction between Teachers and Students.....	189
4.3.2	Qualitative Results	191
4.3.2(a)	Context Factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	192
4.3.2(b)	Input Factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	197
4.3.2(c)	Process Factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	201
4.3.2(d)	Product Factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	205
4.3.3	Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings	207
4.3.3(a)	Convergent Findings.....	207

4.3.3(b)	Complementary Insights	209
4.3.3(c)	Divergent Results and Explanations	210
4.4	The Results of Research Question 3	212
4.4.1	Moderating Effect of EFL Teacher's Gender	212
4.4.1(a)	Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between CE and HC.....	212
4.4.1(b)	Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between IE and HC	213
4.4.1(c)	Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between PE and HC	214
4.4.1(d)	Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship between PTE and HC.....	215
4.4.2	Moderating Effect of EFL Teacher's Teaching Years	217
4.4.2(a)	Moderating Effect of Teaching Years on the Relationship between CE and HC	217
4.4.2(b)	Moderating Effect of Teaching Years on the Relationship between IE and HC.....	218
4.4.2(c)	Moderating Effect of Teaching Years on the Relationship between PE and HC.....	219
4.4.2(d)	Moderating Effect of Teaching Years on the Relationship between PTE and HC	220
4.4.3	Moderating Effect of EFL Teacher's English Language Proficiency	222
4.4.3(a)	Moderating Effect of English Language Proficiency on the Relationship between CE and HC	222
4.4.3(b)	Moderating Effect of English Language Proficiency on the Relationship between IE and HC.....	223
4.4.3(c)	Moderating Effect of English Language Proficiency on the Relationship between PE and HC.....	224
4.4.3(d)	Moderating Effect of English Language Proficiency on the Relationship between PTE and HC	225
4.5	Summary of Key Findings	228
4.6	Conclusion.....	232

CHAPTER 5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	234
5.1	Introduction	234
5.2	Summary of the Findings	234
5.3	Discussion of Findings for Research Questions.....	236
5.3.1	Discussion of Findings for Research Question 1	237
5.3.1(a)	EFL Teachers Perceived Social Atmosphere	238
5.3.1(b)	EFL Teachers Perceived Organizational Structure.....	240
5.3.1(c)	EFL Teachers Perceived Interactions between Teachers and Students	241
5.3.2	Discussion of Findings for Research Question 2	244
5.3.2(a)	Context Evaluation and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching	244
5.3.2(b)	Input Evaluation and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	247
5.3.2(c)	Process Evaluation and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching	249
5.3.2(d)	Product Evaluation and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching	252
5.3.3	Discussion of Findings for Research Question 3	255
5.3.3(a)	Gender as Moderator on the Relationship between CIPP Factors and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	256
5.3.3(b)	Teaching Years as Moderator on the Relationship between CIPP Factors and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching	258
5.3.3(c)	English Language Proficiency as Moderator on the Relationship between CIPP Factors and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.....	261
5.4	Implications of the Present Study.....	264
5.4.1	Theoretical implications.....	265
5.4.2	Practical Implications.....	266
5.4.3	Methodological Implications.....	267

5.5	Limitations of the Study	268
5.6	Recommendations of the Study.....	270
5.7	Conclusion.....	271
REFERENCES.....		274

APPENDICES

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1 Key Differences between the HC and FC	32
Table 2.2 Conceptualization Development of the Hidden Curriculum.....	38
Table 2.3 Features of CIPP Evaluation Model.....	55
Table 2.4 Empirical Studies Related to CIPE Education in recent years (2016-2024).....	63
Table 2.5 Policies Related to CIPE and English Language Teaching in China	91
Table 2.6 Empirical Research (2016-2024) on CIPE Evaluation in Chinese Higher Education	99
Table 3.1 Research Variables of the Study	111
Table 3.2 The Types of Triangulation Applied in the Study	117
Table 3.3 Determining Minimum Returned Sample Size for a Given Population Size for Continuous and Categorical Data adopted from Adam (2020, P.95)	121
Table 3.4 Random Sampling of the Participants.....	122
Table 3.5 Participant Attributes for Focus Group Interviews	126
Table 3.6 Research Questions and Instruments of the Study	127
Table 3.7 Outline of Questions of Focus Group Interviews in the Study	136
Table 3.8 Measures to Guarantee the Quantitative Validity and Reliability ...	139
Table 3.9 Measures to Guarantee the Qualitative Trustworthiness	142
Table 3.10 The Cronbach's Alpha Values of the Key Constructs (Pilot Study)	146
Table 3.11 Measures of Good Fit Model (Pilot Study).....	147
Table 3.12 Convergent validity (Pilot Study)	148

Table 3.13	Regression Analysis of Key Constructs and HC (Pilot Study).....	149
Table 3.14	Refinements to the Interview Questions (Pilot Study).....	151
Table 3.15	Research Procedure and Outcome of the Present Study	152
Table 3.16	Data Analysis Methods of the Present Study.....	153
Table 3.27	The Skewness and Kurtosis Value for Dependent Variables.....	155
Table 3.18	Descriptive Statistics of EFL Teachers' Demographic Information	157
Table 3.19	Descriptive Statistics of Measured Variable.....	158
Table 3.20	Degree of Reliability Scale	159
Table 3.21	Cronbach's Alpha Value of Key Constructs.....	160
Table 3.22	KMO and Bartlett's Test of HC.....	161
Table 3.23	HC Total Variance Explained	161
Table 3.24	HC Rotated Component Matrix	162
Table 3.25	KMO and Bartlett's Test of CIPP Questionnaire	163
Table 3.26	CIPP Total Variance Explained	163
Table 3.27	CIPP Rotated Component Matrix	164
Table 3.28	Measures of Good Fit Model	166
Table 3.29	Construct Validity	168
Table 3.30	Discriminant Validity.....	169
Table 3.31	Thematic Coding Table.....	173
Table 4.1	Descriptive Statistics of Social Atmosphere (SA)	179
Table 4.2	Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Structure (OS)	180
Table 4.3	Descriptive Statistics of Interaction between Teachers and Students (ITS)	181
Table 4.4	Descriptive Statistics of Hidden Curriculum (HC)	182
Table 4.5	Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Coefficient of Variables	183

Table 4.6	The Effect of the CIPP Factors on HC of ELT	184
Table 4.7	The Standardised Beta Coefficient of Items in Social Atmosphere.	187
Table 4.8	The Standardised Beta Coefficient of Items in Organizational Structure	188
Table 4.9	The Standardised Beta Coefficient of Items in Interaction between Teachers and Students.....	190
Table 4.10	The Demographic of the Focus Group Interviews.....	191
Table 4.11	The Effect of Gender Differences on the Relationship between CE and HC of ELT	213
Table 4.12	The Effect of Gender Differences on the Relationship between IE and HC of ELT	214
Table 4.13	The Effect of Gender Differences on the Relationship between PE and HC of ELT	215
Table 4.14	The Effect of Gender Differences on the Relationship between PTE AND HC of ELT.....	216
Table 4.15	Hypotheses Testing Results with EFL Teachers' Gender as Moderator	216
Table 4.16	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between CE and HC of ELT	217
Table 4.17	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between IE and HC of ELT.....	219
Table 4.18	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between PE and HC of ELT	220
Table 4.19	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between PTE and HC of ELT	221
Table 4.20	Hypotheses Testing Results with EFL Teachers' Teaching Years as Moderator.....	221
Table 4.21	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between CE and HC of ELT	222

Table 4.22	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between IE and HC of ELT.....	224
Table 4.23	The Effect of Teaching Years Differences on the Relationship between IE and HC of ELT.....	225
Table 4.24	The Effect of English Language Proficiency Differences on the Relationship between PTE and HC of ELT	226
Table 4.25	Hypotheses Testing Results with EFL Teachers' English Language Proficiency as Moderator	227
Table 4.26	Hypotheses Testing Results with Key Constructs	229
Table 4.27	Hypotheses Testing Results with EFL Teachers' Individual Differences (Gender, EFL teaching years, English language proficiency) as Moderators	230

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2.1	Theoretical Framework of the Present Study.....	84
Figure 2.2	Annual Trends of the Number of Publication on CIPE	95
Figure 2.3	Conceptual Framework of the Present Study.....	101
Figure 2.4	Research Hypnoses of the Present Study Based on Theoretical Framework	103
Figure 2.5	Literature Map of the Present Study	106
Figure 3.1	The Interconnection of Philosophical Worldviews, Design, and Research Methods (adopted by John W. Creswell & J. David, 2018, P43)	108
Figure 3.2	Causal Diagram of the Variables (Inspired by Neuman, 2014).....	111
Figure 3.3	The Current Sequential Explanatory Mixed Method Design inspired by Creswell’s the explanatory sequential mixed method design (2015, p73).....	115
Figure 3.4	Quantitative Data Analysis Procedure of the Present Study	154
Figure 3.5	Histogram and the corresponding P-P plots.....	156
Figure 3.6	Measurement Model.....	167
Figure 3.7	Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure of the Present Study	171
Figure 4.1	Path Diagram of the Present Study	185
Figure 4.2	Gender as a moderator between IE and HC	214
Figure 4.3	Teaching years as a moderator between CE and HC	218
Figure 4.4	Teaching years as a moderator between PE and HC.....	220
Figure 4.5	English language proficiency as a moderator between CE and HC.....	223
Figure 4.6	English language proficiency as moderator between PTE and HC	226

LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	Cronbach's alpha
p	Asymptotic bilateral Significance values
χ^2	Chi-square
df	Degree of freedom
χ^2/df	Normed chi-square
β	Coefficient value
C.R.	Critical ratio
r^2	R square
ΔR^2	R square change

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	Average Variance Extraction
CE	Context Evaluation
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CIPE	Curriculum Ideological and Political Education
CIPP	The CIPP evaluation model including Context evaluation, Input evaluation, Process evaluation, and Product evaluation
CR	Composite Reliability
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELP	English Language Proficiency
ELT	English Language Teaching
FC	Formal Curriculum
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
HC	Hidden Curriculum
IE	Input Evaluation
IPE	Ideological and Political Education
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
PE	Process Evaluation
PTE	Product Evaluation

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	ONLINE SURVEY-EFL HIDDEN CURRICULUM QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX B	PERSONAL DETAILS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF THE EXPERTS' PANEL
APPENDIX C	EXPERT JUDGMENT FORMAT
APPENDIX D	PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW)
APPENDIX E	QUANTITATIVE RESULTS (PILOT STUDY)
APPENDIX F	THEMES, SUBTHEMES, AND CODES FROM FOCUS GROUPS
APPENDIX G	THEMATIC MAP OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

**MENYIASAT FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI KURIKULUM
TERSEMBUNYI DALAM PENGAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS
BERDASARKAN MODEL CIPP (KONTEKS, INPUT, PROSES, PRODUK)
DI UNIVERSITI DI CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Kurikulum tersembunyi dalam pendidikan tinggi mempunyai pengaruh yang besar namun sering diabaikan kerana ia membentuk pembangunan holistik pelajar melalui pemindahan norma, nilai, dan jangkaan sosial secara tersirat yang melengkapi pengajaran akademik formal. Walau bagaimanapun, literatur sedia ada kebanyakannya tertumpu pada kesan kurikulum tersembunyi, meninggalkan jurang pemahaman mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keberkesanannya dan bagaimana faktor-faktor tersebut memberi impak kepada pelaksanaannya, khususnya dalam konteks pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di universiti tempatan dalam negara China. Kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik dan meneliti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kurikulum tersembunyi pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di institusi pengajian tinggi China dengan menggunakan model penilaian CIPP (Konteks, Input, Proses, Produk). Selain itu, perbezaan demografi guru EFL—termasuk jantina, tahun pengalaman mengajar EFL, dan tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris—diambil sebagai pembolehubah pemoderasi. Menggunakan kaedah campuran berurutan penjelasan, kajian ini menggabungkan data kuantitatif daripada soal selidik ke atas 306 guru EFL yang dipilih secara persampelan rawak mudah, serta data kualitatif susulan daripada temu bual kumpulan fokus melibatkan 12 guru EFL yang dipilih secara bertujuan dari universiti terpilih di China. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa guru EFL mempunyai persepsi sederhana terhadap kurikulum tersembunyi dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris dan komponennya. Hasil

analisis mendedahkan hubungan positif antara faktor-faktor CIPP—iaitu Konteks, Input, Proses, dan Produk—dengan kurikulum tersembunyi pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris, menyokong empat hipotesis utama yang dikemukakan. Di samping itu, tiga pembolehubah pemoderasi—jantina, tahun pengalaman mengajar EFL, dan penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris—dibuktikan bertindak sebagai pemoderasi separa dalam hubungan antara faktor-faktor CIPP dan kurikulum tersembunyi pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris, dengan lima daripada dua belas hipotesis pemoderasi disokong. Kajian ini merupakan salah satu percubaan empirik terawal yang menggabungkan model penilaian CIPP dengan teori kurikulum tersembunyi dalam konteks pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris, memperluas kebolegunaan model tersebut dan menjawab jurang penyelidikan dalam pendidikan tinggi Cina dan linguistik terapan. Penemuan kajian ini memberikan panduan yang berguna kepada guru EFL, pembangun kurikulum, dan pembuat dasar, serta menyediakan asas kukuh untuk pembangunan skala penilaian bagi menilai dan meningkatkan kualiti pengajaran kurikulum tersembunyi. Akhirnya, kajian ini dapat menyumbang kepada reformasi kurikulum dan pembangunan dasar, bagi memastikan pendidikan tinggi selaras dengan garis panduan kebangsaan dan memupuk pembangunan menyeluruh pelajar.

**INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING HIDDEN
CURRICULUM OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING BASED ON THE
CIPP (CONTEXT, INPUT, PROCESS, PRODUCT) MODEL AT
UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA**

ABSTRACT

The hidden curriculum in higher education is powerful yet often overlooked as it shapes students' holistic development by transmitting implicit norms, values, and social expectations that complement formal academic instruction. Nevertheless, existing literature has largely concentrated on the effects of the hidden curriculum, leaving significant gaps in understanding what influences the effectiveness of hidden curriculum and how these factors impact its implementation particularly in Chinese English language teaching context. This present study investigated and examined the factors influencing the hidden curriculum of English language teaching at universities in Chinese higher education, utilizing the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model. In addition, EFL teachers' demographic differences such as gender, EFL teaching years, and English language proficiency were integrated as moderating effects. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed method, the study integrated quantitative data from questionnaire surveys with 306 EFL teachers recruited by using simple random sampling, as well as follow-up qualitative data from focus group interviews involving 12 EFL teachers with purposive sampling from selected Chinese universities. The research indicated that EFL teachers had a moderate perception of hidden curriculum of English language teaching and its components. The findings revealed positive relations between the CIPP factors – namely Context, Input, Process, Product- and hidden curriculum of English language teaching, supporting the four

proposed key hypotheses. In addition, three moderation variables—gender, EFL teaching years, and English language proficiency—were examined as partial moderators in the relationship between the CIPP factors and the hidden curriculum of English language teaching, five out of twelve moderating hypotheses were supported. This study was one of the few empirical attempts to integrate the CIPP evaluation model with the hidden curriculum theory in the context of English language teaching, expanding the model’s applicability and addressing gaps in research within the Chinese higher education and applied linguistics. The findings provided valuable insights for EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers, highlighting a solid foundation for developing an evaluation scale to evaluate and improve the quality of hidden curriculum teaching. Consequently, this study can contribute to curriculum reform and policy development, ensuring that higher education aligns with national guidelines and promote the overall development of students.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, the Hidden curriculum (HC) has garnered significant attention, particularly in its role in shaping students' attitudes, emotions, behaviours, and values beyond the Formal curriculum (FC) (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Saylor et al., 1981; Margolis, 2001; Smith et al., 2004; Zhang & Luo, 2016; Afridi, et al., 2020). While the FC focuses on explicit, academic and skill outcomes, the HC encompasses the implicit attitudes, social norms, and cultural values that individuals acquire through education (Chen, 2020; Anunobi & Ukwoma 2016; Smith et al., 2004; Rossouw and Frick, 2023). Those objectives encompass planned or impulsive actions intended at educators, students, or other school personnel, as well as the environment (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Kozlowski & Lauen, 2019). Understanding and implementing the hidden curriculum is crucial for educators as it plays a pivotal role in student development (Margolis, 2001; Gair & Mullins, 2001; Nuryana & Suyadi, 2019; Kalantari & Gholami, 2011; Barzegar et al., 2018; Asif et al., 2020; Yang, 2021; Min, 2024).

Meanwhile, with rapid growth of English worldwide and the evolving needs for future talents in the 21st century, which have fundamentally transformed the principles underlying teaching and acquisition of the English language (Wen, 2021; Rose et al., 2021; Hu, 2022). The topic of reforming the English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum in higher education is a subject generates significant debate, causing discussion among English educators, scholars, and administrators (Han & Yin, 2016; Yu & Liu, 2018). In the context of English language teaching (ELT), the HC becomes even more significant due to the complex cultural, linguistic, and other factors

involved in teaching and learning EFL (Kalantari & Gholami, 2011; Barzegar et al., 2018; Sazegar et al., 2021).

China's initiative to integrate English Language Teaching (ELT) with cultural and political ideologies mirrors global trends where ELT serves not only as a medium for developing linguistic skills but also as a platform for fostering intercultural communication and global engagement (Asif et al., 2020; Wang & Zhu, 2022; Hui, 2023). In this context, investigating factors influencing HC becomes crucial to ensure that students are provided with a well-rounded education (Wen, 2016; Wen, 2022; Hui, 2023). By evaluating both the explicit and implicit messages conveyed through teaching practices, educators can better align ELT with broader educational objectives, ensuring that students acquire not only language proficiency but also the cultural awareness and identities necessary for global citizenship (He, 2020b; Liu, 2016; Wen, 2022). The improvement of HC effectiveness in ELT in higher education should be based on scientific evaluation because the curriculum evaluation is the foundation for improvement and enhancement (Simons, 1987; Brown, 1989; Bell & Cole, 2008; Richards, 2013; Zhou, 2023; Wen, 2021).

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate and examine the factors that influence hidden curriculum of English language teaching at universities in China based on the CIPP evaluation model. The model applies to a wide range of educational contexts, including evaluating English language teaching programs, developing curricula, and assessing the efficacy and effectiveness of curriculum (Dardjito, 2021; Shaikh & Alwi, 2022; Naz et al., 2020).

Moreover, this study also seeks to examine whether EFL teachers' individual differences, namely gender (male and female), EFL teaching years (1-5 years, 6-10

years, 11-15 years; 16-20 years more than 20 years), and English language proficiency level (level 1-5) moderate the relations between the influencing factors and the HC of ELT in Chinese higher education setting. As the role of teachers as moral agents and teaching as a moral endeavour is well recognized in general education, however, the moral and ideological dimensions of foreign language teaching have been less explored in ELT scholarship (Yang & Yin, 2024; Mirhosseini, 2018)

1.2 Background of Study

The core mission of higher education is to cultivate well-rounded talents who contribute to societal progress, balancing intellectual growth with moral and civic development (Crowley & Hauser, 2007; Margolis, 2001; Gair & Mullins, 2001). This requires integrating knowledge, skills, and values into education, ensuring students achieve personal success while embracing social responsibility (Jukić, 2021; Zhou, 2023; Wen, 2021; Wang & Zhu, 2022). Moral and civic education, particularly through ideological and political education (IPE), forms the foundation of this mission (Gunawan et al., 2018).

To strengthen moral education, *Chinese National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities* (2016) was issued and emphasized that Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE) should remain the core focus with ideological and political values integrated throughout the entire educational and teaching process (Asif et al., 2020; Hui, 2023). Curriculum Ideological and Political Education (CIPE) is a broad context of Chinese higher education and a policy requirement established by China's Ministry of Education which mandates the integration of Chinese socialist core values and ideological-political education into all academic disciplines and curriculum system (He, 2020; Wen, 2016; Wen, 2021). It

aimed to achieve comprehensive and holistic education, contributing to the advancement of higher education in China. It is generally agreed that CIPE is implicit and hidden education (He, 2020; Wen ,2021; Yang, 2022), and various kinds of tangible and intangible curricula involved in CIPE are all categorised as Hidden curriculum (HC) (He, 2020; Wen ,2021; Yang, 2022; Hui, 2023). The HC plays an essential and irreplaceable role in curriculum implementation, serving as a valuable resource for both teaching and learning (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Bergenhenegouwen, 1987; Hafferty & Franks, 1994; Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Gair & Mullins, 2001; Semper et al., 2018; Rossouw & Frick, 2023; Karimi 2014). It significantly contributes to the development of students' social and emotional learning.

The core value of HC operates on two levels in Chinese CIPE context (Asif et al., 2020), the first is to meet societal needs by fostering patriotism and encouraging students to serve the country, the people, and society as a whole, and the second level is to support students' personal development and success. Research by Hui (2023), Yuan (2022), Yang (2021), Hu (2021), and Wen (2016; 2023; 2021) highlighted those socialist core values as the content of HC within Chinese CIPE context, such as family unity, harmony, prosperity, and honesty, play a central role in teaching implementation. Additionally, students are taught traditional Chinese values, including self-sacrifice, collectivism, honesty, and loyalty, reflecting the importance of these virtues in both societal and personal contexts.

Language teaching is inherently moral in nature like other forms of higher education (Johnston, 2003), English language teaching (ELT), in particular, can go beyond the simple transmission of linguistic skills. The core of ELT is deeply embedded with moral significance (Johnston, 2003). ELT classrooms represent a

uniquely complex moral environment due to their inherent cross-cultural dynamics. Teachers are tasked with guiding learners' integration into the target culture, which is often viewed as more dominant or valuable, while simultaneously respecting and preserving learners' home cultures, which may be marginalized in international contexts. This intersection of cultures significantly shapes the moral dimensions of language teaching. Moreover, ELT holds moral weight because it involves teaching learners a language that can enhance their lives—materially, intellectually, and spiritually. Teachers also face a moral dilemma: whether to engage learners, particularly adults, in moral education or allow them to independently navigate their own moral development (Johnston, 2003). Despite the omnipresence of moral considerations in various facets of ELT, these issues rarely receive the sustained scholarly attention they merit (Johnston, 2003). This oversight suggests a gap in understanding the HC in language education, highlighting the need for more focused inquiry into this critical aspect of ELT. Furthermore, there has been limited scholarly exploration of HC of ELT from multiple dimensions, such as across disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives, along with an in-depth analysis of its core elements. Evaluating the HC in higher education is a complex and systematic endeavour, particularly within the Chinese higher education context. This process is influenced by numerous factors, and existing studies lack deep investigation of HC and its components, making it difficult to capture the holistic construction and quality of HC and its role on students' cultivation.

China's initiative to implement HC of ELT aligns with trends in other nations. Many of these countries have acknowledged the ideological aspect of language education, incorporating moral and cultural values into their foreign language curricula (Widodo et al., 2018). This broader ideological framework has sparked scholarly

interest in diverse contexts, including Japan, Malaysia, Madagascar, Greece, and the United States (Mirhosseini, 2018). Studies illustrated that ELT's objectives go beyond linguistic and communicative competence, extending into the realms of moral and value-based education (Yang & Yin, 2024). EFL teachers tasked HC of ELT often face challenges. Including navigating the linguistic and cultural complexities of conveying Chinese socialist values in English, reconciling ideological objectives with communicative language goals, and addressing gaps in pedagogical training and resource allocation. Such challenges underscore the need for context-sensitive strategies to align HC delivery within Chinese higher education. Given its relational and situational nature, HC is dynamic, often taking on different meanings depending on the context in which it is enacted (Gair & Mullins, 2001; Semper et al., 2018; Rossouw & Frick, 2023). A key concern is that many lecturers may be unaware of the unintended lessons they are imparting to their students through HC (Karimi, 2014; Barzegar et al., 2018; Sazegar et al., 2021).

The College English Curriculum Requirements issued by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2020 edition) stated that CIPE covered all parts of the English curricula system. This policy emphasized that all stakeholders—including teaching administrators, experts, educators, and students—should actively engage in evaluation processes and adopt diverse methodologies to enhance ELT development. Therefore, evaluation is very important for promoting foreign language courses. However, given the unique characteristics of the HC, its contents, implementation methods and instructions are different from the traditional foreign language curricula. HC evaluation should concentrate on both the development of language communication, usage skills and students' ideology, morality, and values shaping (He, 2020b; Liu, 2016; Wen, 2021). At present, existing frameworks for

evaluating HC in ELT remain fragmented, lacking systematic criteria to comprehensively gauge effectiveness (Liu et al., 2022). A multidisciplinary, context-sensitive evaluation system is urgently needed to align with CIPE's objectives and address the interplay between language acquisition and ideological cultivation (He, 2020b; Wen, 2022).

Despite the growth of research on HC within Chinese CIPE—evidenced by a surge in publications from 100 (2016) to 8,827 (2024)—critical gaps exist, particularly within applied linguistics, where studies comprise only 4.37% of total research. A central challenge lies in the methodological rigor of HC components and its evaluation in ELT. Existing studies often lack reliability and validity due to vague understandings, insufficiently replicable methodologies, undermining efforts to integrate linguistic, moral, and ideological objectives (Zhou, 2022; Ren, 2022). To address this, scholars advocate for systematic framework, transparent research designs, data collection, and interdisciplinary frameworks to assess HC teaching and impact on students' values and language competence (Rose et al., 2021; Zhou, 2023). Concurrently, teachers should enhance pedagogical capacity to navigate the dual demands of language instruction and ideological cultivation, ensuring HC informs curriculum development and CIPE feedback loops (Wang & Li, 2022; Pu et al., 2021). The hidden curriculum operates through social atmosphere and context, organizational structure, principles and rules, and teacher-student interactions, subtly shaping students' learning experiences and social development (Vallance, 1974; Karimi, 2014; Sazegar, et al., 2021; Semper et al. 2018). Understanding these elements is crucial for evaluating implicit learning and ensuring that educational institutions foster inclusive, culturally responsive, and effective learning environments. Bridging these gaps is of importance to align ELT

with China's educational reforms and advance applied linguistics research in ideological-political contexts.

In EFL education, teachers' demographics such as gender, experience, and proficiency as well as the context shape the transmission of HC. For instance female teachers often exhibit higher self-efficacy in student engagement, enhancing the integration of cultural norms into classroom interactions (Odanga et al., 2015). Experienced educators develop nuanced approaches to embedding cultural elements, enriching contextual learning (Richards, 2017). Language proficiency mediates HC transmission, with proficient teachers better modeling language use, cultural contexts, and social dynamics (Kasumi, 2015; Wang & Zhu, 2022). Collectively, these factors influence how implicit knowledge, ideologies, and interpersonal dynamics shape language education outcomes. Understanding how teachers' gender, teaching experience, and English proficiency contribute to the hidden curriculum in ELT is essential for developing comprehensive teacher training programs and improving curriculum design.

To summarize, achieving effective integration of ELT and HC within CIPE remains a pressing challenge. Currently, the EFL hidden curriculum in Chinese universities is in its early stages, with much needed to convert concepts into actionable measures. This integration not only supports the development of HC in Chinese higher education but also marks a new research direction. While some progress has been made in defining the components and connotations of CIPE, limited research addresses the empirical factors influencing HC effectiveness within ELT (Wen, 2021; He, 2020b). Existing studies predominantly offer conceptual frameworks on HC teaching and evaluation principles (Ren, 2022; Zhou, 2022), but lack quantitative models and

empirical validation methods (Wang & Li, 2021). Additionally, reliance on interdisciplinary approaches, and triangulation methods would enhance the research quality, providing more comprehensive theoretical and practical guidance, and enhancing the teaching and learning in Chinese higher education.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The HC plays a significant role in higher education, influencing the values, norms, and identity formation of students (Penna, 1979; Gunawan et al., 2018; Nahardani et al., 2022; Winter & Cotton, 2012), encompasses implicit learning and development practices that influence teacher-student relationships, teaching and learning processes, and student learning outcomes (Cheng, 2022; Ding et al., 2022; Duan et al., 2023; Hafler et al., 2011; Madaus & Stufflebeam, 2000; Wang, 2022; Wang & Dong 2018; Ressa et al, 2021). In the field of applied linguistics and education, the hidden curriculum is crucial in implementing EFL curriculum by fostering the cultivation of valuable skills, attitudes, and values (Wen, 2016; Matorevhu & Madzamba, 2022), which is essential in student character development and societal capacities (Nuryana & Suyadi, 2019).

Evaluation of the HC is of importance in educational settings, to ensure that it aligns with the intended educational goals and does not inadvertently convey unintended values or norms (Fajardo & Gunio, 2018). An evaluation of a curriculum is a critical component in the curriculum implementation, serving as a foundation for stakeholders regarding the program's continuation or revision (Lawrence et al., 2018; Rossouw & Frick, 2023). Research on HC in educational (53%), medical (29%), and nursing (11%) fields is very in-depth, but fewer studies can be found in applied linguistics (less than 2%) which leads to an imbalance among different fields of HC,

therefore the successful experience of hidden curriculum evaluation is worth learning and can provide reference. Employing a more structured framework to analyze the HC will also enhance the understanding of instructional methodologies (Lawrence et al., 2018).

Given the situational and dynamic nature of the HC (Rossouw & Frick, 2023), the importance of evaluating HC of ELT within Chinese higher education is increasingly acknowledged, particularly under the CIPP evaluation model in both public and professional courses (Xia & He, 2019; Liu & Yue, 2020; Xiang, 2022; Wen, 2022). Effective HC evaluation aligns educational development with intended goals, as evaluation mechanisms provide critical feedback on teaching outcomes, yet remain an underdeveloped area within the CIPP framework (Wen, 2021; He, 2022a; Liu et al., 2022). Challenges in quantifying HC processes and effectiveness have hindered the establishment of a rigorous CIPP-based evaluation system, which is essential for motivating teachers and ensuring consistent HC integration. Without structured assessment, educators lack the external impetus to refine their teaching, limiting the impact of CIPE across college English curriculum.

CIPE integrates ideological and political education into various courses within the curriculum. It aims to combine the imparting of knowledge, skill training, and value formation seamlessly to help students develop a correct socialist worldview, outlook on life, and values. In the context of ELT. Xu and Wang's (2022) survey of 2,497 undergraduates in Chinese universities found that while 75.41% of students acknowledged the importance of implementing the CIPE in Chinese higher education, 58.31% observed that over half of their teachers struggled to integrate CIPE naturally and effectively into their teaching. Additionally, 51.03% reported limited or negligible

gains from CIPP-related instruction. These findings reinforce concerns raised by Chinese scholars regarding inadequate exploration, inconsistent application of nurturing elements, and suboptimal teaching outcomes within the CIPE context (Wen, 2016; Chen, 2020; Yang, 2022; Cheng, 2022). Consequently, improving the effectiveness of ELT of HC in the context of CIPE is an urgent priority, with a critical need to explore factors influencing its implementation as a foundation for enhancing HC integration within Chinese higher education (Asif et al., 2020).

Educators are essential in driving the reform of CIPE in Chinese higher education (Pu & He, 2021; Asif et al., 2020; Cheng, 2022), and their lack of teaching concepts and teaching competence has become a blockage in the teaching effectiveness of CIPE, which is a challenge to be faced in the current college curriculum reform (Pu & He, 2021). CIPE is a novel concept and model that aims to implement teaching reform effectively, it also serves as an effective way to achieve the fundamental goal of promoting values and cultivating persons. Currently, there is a widespread nationwide promotion of the reform of CIPE throughout curricula in Chinese higher education, which primarily focuses on the fundamental principles, essential qualities, and implementation throughout curriculums. Nevertheless, there is currently few established systematic theoretical framework or practical methods for assessing and evaluating the teaching quality of CIPE (Yao et al., 2023; Wang, 2022; Chen, 2021). This lack of guidance poses a challenge for teachers in effectively advancing ELT development.

What is more, existing studies on HC evaluation primarily focus on materials and textbook assessment (Liu et al., 2021; Huang, 2018), student engagement and outcomes (Hu, 2022; R. Sun et al., 2022), and the impact of HC on students' academic

achievements (Barzegar et al., 2018; Bandimi, 2017; Zhang & Luo, 2016). Limited research focus on factors influencing HC has hindered a comprehensive understanding of its conceptual definition and robust evaluation methods, thus restricting the development of effective HC teaching and implementation (Rossouw & Frick, 2023; Zhou, 2022). Given the variability of HC across educational settings and cultural contexts (Cogan et al., 2001; Rossouw & Frick, 2023), further research is essential to explore these contextual influences and to develop HC evaluation models that encompass both context and input evaluation (Martimianakis et al., 2015; Wang & Zhu, 2022). This study addresses the lack of HC effectiveness evaluation, particularly in contextual and input factors, as a research gap.

While many studies have focused on the student experience and their perspective of the HC (Bandimi, 2017; Zhang & Luo, 2016; Chen et al., 2021; Gunawan et al., 2018; Gunio, 2021; Peterson et al., 2014; Qingmei, 2021; B. Wang et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022), there is also a research gap in understanding the perspectives of teachers and how they contribute to the hidden curriculum teaching. Investigating teachers' perceptions, awareness, experiences, background, and teaching practices through the whole curriculum implementation can provide deep insights into their role in shaping students' implicit learning experiences (Barzegar et al., 2018; Baş & Duran, 2022; Hafler et al., 2011; C. Sun et al., 2022). While students are the primary recipients of the HC, teachers perform a vital role in shaping and transmitting it (Balakrishnan, 2022). Further research is needed to explore teachers' perspectives on the HC, their awareness of its existence, and their role in its evaluation and management (Taconis & Sanden, 2004; Barzegar et al., 2018).

Another research gap lies in the methodological approaches used investigate influencing factors and evaluation of the hidden curriculum. Existing studies on hidden curriculum evaluation have utilized qualitative methodologies including interviews, observations, and document analysis, because of the nature and characteristics of hidden curriculum (Gunawan et al., 2018; X. Wang, 2015). There is a need for more rigorous and standardized quantitative research that utilizes surveys, questionnaires, and standardized assessments to gather data on the prevalence and impact of educational settings in the HC (Baş & Duran, 2022; Bergenhenegouwen, 1987; Gunawan et al., 2018; B. Wang et al., 2023; Winter & Cotton, 2012). Additionally, mixed methods approach that combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies can yield a more comprehensive comprehension of the hidden curriculum and influential factors (Baş & Duran, 2022; Rossouw & Frick, 2023).

In Chinese EFL higher education context, the inadequacies of the evaluation system in university English education pose significant challenges for the promotion of Chinese culture (Wen, 2016; Liu, 2023). Currently, English language assessment primarily centres on students' performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with limited emphasis on cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills (Wen, 2016). This skills-focused evaluation tends to overlook the role of cultural education, potentially leading students to neglect the cultural norms and values embedded within the language. Consequently, the lack of emphasis on cultural learning in evaluations not only skews teachers' instructional priorities but also hinders students' holistic development, as the HC's role in transmitting cultural values and norms remains unmeasured and undervalued (Min, 2024).

To conclude, considering the aforementioned problems and gaps, the ultimate aim of this study focuses on analysing, investigating and examining factors influencing hidden curriculum of English language teaching from perspective of EFL teachers in Chinese higher education. This research aims to strengthen HC delivery in ELT (Kalantari & Gholami, 2011), promoting outcomes more aligned with English language teaching needs. Additionally, given the growing emphasis on IPE for governance, studying trends in this area is critical to ensure precise and effective implementation in contemporary contexts.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the current study are as follows:

RO1. To investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the Hidden Curriculum components of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

1a. To investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the Social Atmosphere in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

1b. To investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the Organizational Structure in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

1c. To investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the Interaction between Teachers and Students in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

RO2. To investigate the influence of the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors on the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

2a. To investigate the influence of the Context factor on the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

2b. To investigate the influence of the Input factor on the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

2c. To investigate the influence of the Process factor on the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

2d. To investigate the influence of the Product factor on the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

RO3. To examine the moderating effect of EFL teachers' individual differences (Gender, Teaching years, English language proficiency) on the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

3a. To examine the moderating effect of EFL teachers' gender on the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

3b. To examine the moderating effect of EFL teachers' teaching years on the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

3c. To examine the moderating effect of EFL teachers' English language proficiency on the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching.

1.5 Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guide this study corresponding to the research objectives:

RQ1 . What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the Hidden Curriculum components of English Language Teaching at universities in China?

1a. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the Social Atmosphere in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

1b. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the Organizational Structure in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

1c. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the Interaction between Teachers and Students in the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

RQ2. How do the CIPP factors (Context, Input, Process, Product) influence the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China?

2a. How does the Context factor influence the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

2b. How does the Input factor influence the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

2c. How does the Process factor influence the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

2d. How does the Product factor influence the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

RQ3. Do EFL teachers' individual differences (gender, teaching years, English proficiency) moderate the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China?

3a. Does EFL teachers' gender moderate the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

3b. Does EFL teachers' teaching years moderate the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

3c. Does EFL teachers' English proficiency moderate the relationship between the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) factors and the Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching?

1.6 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are drawn from the second and the third research questions as follows:

1.6.1 Key Construct Hypotheses (Based on Research Question 2)

H1= Context factor is a statistically significant predictor of Hidden Curriculum Evaluation of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H2= Input factor is a statistically significant predictor of Hidden Curriculum Evaluation of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H3= Process factor is a statistically significant predictor of Hidden Curriculum Evaluation of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H4= Product factor is a statistically significant predictor of Hidden Curriculum Evaluation of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

1.6.2 Moderating Hypotheses (Based on Research Question 3)

H1a= EFL teachers' gender is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Context factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H2a= EFL teachers' gender is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Input factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H3a = EFL teachers' Gender is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Process factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H4a= EFL teachers' gender is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Product factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H1b= EFL teachers' teaching years is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Context factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H2b= EFL teachers' teaching years is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Input factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H3b= EFL teachers' teaching years is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Process factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H4b= EFL teachers' teaching years is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Product factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H1c= EFL teachers' English language proficiency is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Context factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H2c= EFL teachers' English language proficiency is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Input factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H3c= EFL teachers' English language proficiency is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Process factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

H4c= EFL teachers' English language proficiency is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between Product factor and Hidden Curriculum of English Language Teaching at universities in China.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Through the comprehensive investigation of this study, the factors that influence HC evaluation of ELT in the Chinese high education context will be analysed, investigated, and examined. Additionally, this research can provide new perspectives on teaching effectiveness issues of moral education through EFL teachers' moderation. The significance of the research can be classified into three categories: theoretical contribution、 practical contribution and methodological contribution.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

The CIPP evaluation model is introduced to provide the basic structure of the theoretical framework and the evaluation survey foundation in the context of Chinese higher education. The present study combines the CIPP evaluation model, HC theory to investigate factors that impact the effectiveness and quality of HC of ELT, which can enrich the literature of EFL HC on the construction of theoretical framework, provide new perspectives and empirical support within the research field, supplement and improve the evaluation of HC of higher education curriculum system. While the research does not seek to extend these theories, it demonstrates their practical utility in a unique sociopolitical setting. By contextualizing HC theory within China's CIPE, the study illustrates how globally recognized concepts can be adapted to address localized educational priorities, such as integrating socialist values into language instruction. Additionally, the study investigates moderating variables—EFL teachers' gender, teaching years, and language proficiency—that may refine the relationship between CIPP dimensions and HC. It may provide insight into refining the applicability of the CIPP evaluation model combines with HC of English language teaching among those demographic characteristics.

1.7.2 Practical Significance

This study aims to effectively enhance the quality of HC of ELT by establishing a combined framework to investigate potential factors in teaching process and curriculum operation. This system provides feedback on effectiveness of ideological, value-based, and political dimensions transmitted, evaluation of educational effectiveness within the HC, responding to the national guidelines' focus on enhancing the quality of well-rounded talent cultivation.

First, grounded in the CIPP evaluation model and the characteristics of HC of ELT, the determinants of HC are investigated and examined from teacher and teaching perspective. By understanding the effectiveness of the HC of ELT, educators can improve their teaching to provide better support for students fostering their academic growth and social development, which can fully engage participants actively in ideological and political education. Second, the result of the study may have the function of reflection and feedback for continuous improvement, permitting ongoing adjustments to enhance HC effectiveness. This process of feedback, adjustment, and enhancement ensures the progressive refinement of ELT HC outcomes. Thirdly, the evaluation results of the EFL HC can be helpful for teachers to analyze whether the goals of HC of ELT have been achieved, and how to improve and innovate their teaching strategies and methods so that the shareholders of the EFL hidden curriculum can be more clearly aware of the achievements and shortcomings of CIPE teaching. Finally, EFL administrators, scholars, and curriculum designers might utilize the findings as a frame of reference for revising the assessment and evaluation scale. The evaluation model can be duplicated in China and other non-English-speaking countries, with the aim of involving EFL educators and institutions dedicated to teaching EFL in teaching the HC of EFL.

1.7.3 Methodological Significance

This study employs a rigorous mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to enhance methodological validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness. It systematically reflects the fundamental state of the HC in Chinese college English education, offering both applicability and practical value, generates deep insights into the complex dynamics of teaching and learning, with implications for pedagogical practice, curriculum development, and educational policy.

By employing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and quality HC of ELT. The utilization of both qualitative methods (semi-structured focus group interviews) and quantitative methods including surveys, allows for a triangulated analysis, offering a more nuanced perspective on the complex factors influencing the evaluation of EFL HC of English language teaching. To analyze contextual influences, moderation analysis is employed as a statistical technique to examine the role of teacher demographics (gender, teaching experience, and English proficiency) in shaping HC dynamics. Ultimately, the methodological rigor of this research endeavors not only ensures the validity and reliability of the findings but also paves the way for ensuring transparency, replicability, and credibility in the field of ELT and curriculum evaluation.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is confined to factors related to teaching procedure from EFL teachers' perspective, that influence the HC of ELT based on the CIPP evaluation

model and to what extent those factors contribute to the quality and effectiveness of EFL HC and teaching. The research is geographically and institutionally bounded to universities in China, specifically targeting EFL teachers as the primary participants.

Firstly, the research is confined to Chinese higher education, focusing exclusively on universities in mainland China. The sociopolitical and cultural context of China's CIPE defines the ideological and pedagogical parameters under investigation.

Secondly, the application of the CIPP evaluation model as a theoretical and conceptual framework to guide classifying the influencing factors of the HC of ELT into four dimensions, refined specifically to teaching- and teacher-related aspects. Broader discussions of HC in non-ELT disciplines or non-ideological contexts are excluded.

Thirdly, analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected only from perspective of in-service EFL teachers involved in ELT in Chinese higher education, to explore their perceptions and experiences related to the HC teaching and evaluation. Data collection is restricted to teacher-reported perceptions via structured surveys and semi-structured focus group interviews. Observational or longitudinal data are excluded. Additionally, teacher gender, years of EFL teaching experience, and English proficiency are examined as moderating variables, so student perspectives, administrators, or policymakers fall outside this scope.

1.9 Operationalized Definition

The following terms are used throughout the present study:

Hidden Curriculum (HC): According to Giroux and Purpel (1983) and Anderson (2001), HC refers to a refers to formless, disorganized, and inappropriately

defined entity that has been introduced versus a clear curriculum in a latent way, leading to the disclosure of interactions in an educational environment, and the one according to the definition it consists of implicit teachings and learnings acquired above formal curriculum and shapes students' values, attitudes, and behaviors, throughout the curriculum and courses in Chinese higher education, HC implicitly affects students' attitudes, beliefs, social and cultural growth, and how they perceive authority, social roles, and cultural expectations. EFL Hidden Curriculum can be measured through three dimensions in the study: Social Atmosphere, Organizational Structure and Interaction between Teachers and Students.

Social Atmosphere (SA): The social atmosphere of the hidden curriculum refers to the underlying social environment and culture within a school or classroom that influences students' learning experiences, attitudes, and behaviours (Saylor et al.,1981; Sazegar, at al., 2021). Unlike the formal curriculum, which includes planned educational objectives and content, the social atmosphere consists of the unspoken norms, values, interactions, and power dynamics that subtly shape students' understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and social relationships.

Organizational Structure (OS): The organizational structure of the hidden curriculum refers to the way in which a school or educational institution is structured, both in terms of formal hierarchies and informal power dynamics, and how this structure influences students' learning and socialization in ways that are not explicitly stated in the formal curriculum (Saylor et al.,1981; Sazegar, at al.,2021). It includes the underlying rules, roles, and routines that guide the functioning of the curriculum, which implicitly shape students' perceptions of authority, decision-making, responsibility, and social order.