EXPLORING TEACHING BELIEFS, EFFICACY, INNOVATION, AND ORGANISATIONAL ATMOSPHERE IN WESTERN CHINA UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Background: In response to the challenges posed by the information economy, Chinese education, like many other global educational institutions, has undergone significant changes. The economic expansion and educational progress in China have led to an improvement in the country’s overall educational standards. However, the economic disparities between the eastern and western regions have resulted in lower living standards in the western part of the country. Notably, there are substantial differences in economic and educational growth between the eastern and western regions, with the eastern region experiencing rapid expansion, while the western sector lags behind, particularly in the realm of university education.

Objective: This review explores teaching beliefs, efficacy, innovation, and organizational atmosphere in Western China Universities, aiming to understand the dynamics in the context of regional economic and educational disparities.

Method: Recent research in China on teaching beliefs and related aspects is emerging. Scholars emphasize adopting progressive educational values aligned with contemporary society’s complexity. The study aligns with the pedagogical shift towards student activation through methods like inquiry-based and collaborative learning.

Results & Conclusion: The review emphasizes disparities between eastern and western China, highlighting the crucial role of positive teaching elements in enhancing outcomes in Western China Universities. Recommendations include addressing economic and educational gaps and adopting progressive educational values for better alignment with societal needs.

Keywords: curriculum development, university education, learning styles, education outcome.

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EXPLORANDO CRENÇAS DE ENSINO, EFICÁCIA, INOVAÇÃO E ATMOSFERA ORGANIZACIONAL EM UNIVERSIDADES DO OESTE DA CHINA

RESUMO

Antecedentes: Em resposta aos desafios colocados pela economia da informação, a educação chinesa, como muitas outras instituições educacionais globais, sofreu mudanças significativas. A expansão econômica e o progresso educacional na China levaram a uma melhoria nos padrões educacionais gerais do país. No entanto, as disparidades econômicas entre as regiões oriental e ocidental resultaram em padrões de vida mais baixos na parte ocidental do país. Em particular, há diferenças substanciais no crescimento econômico e educacional entre as regiões oriental e ocidental, com a região oriental experimentando rápida expansão, enquanto o setor ocidental fica para trás, particularmente no domínio da educação universitária.

Objetivo: Esta revisão explora as crenças de ensino, a eficácia, a inovação e a atmosfera organizacional nas universidades da China Ocidental, com o objetivo de entender a dinâmica no contexto das disparidades econômicas e educacionais regionais.

Método: Pesquisas recentes na China sobre crenças de ensino e aspectos relacionados estão emergindo. Os acadêmicos enfatizam a adoção de valores educacionais progressivos alinhados com a complexidade da sociedade contemporânea. O estudo se alinha com a mudança pedagógica para a ativação dos alunos por meio de métodos como a aprendizagem baseada em inquérito e colaborativa.

Resultados & Conclusão: A revisão enfatiza as disparidades entre o leste e o oeste da China, destacando o papel crucial de elementos de ensino positivos no aumento dos resultados nas universidades da China Ocidental. As recomendações incluem a resolução das lacunas econômicas e educacionais e a adoção de valores educativos progressivos para um melhor alinhamento com as necessidades da sociedade.

Palavras-chave: desenvolvimento curricular, educação universitária, estilos de aprendizagem, resultados educacionais.

1 INTRODUCTION

The higher education system plays a major role in improving the ability of higher education institutions to assist the social and economic growth of the country. Meanwhile, it has the responsibility of preparing the country's educational systems for the increasing impacts of globalisation on higher education (Hallinger et al., 2018). Thurlings et al. (2015) claim that the establishment of world-class institutions has been a strategic goal of the Chinese government and universities since the mid-1990s. Within the context of globalisation and a knowledge-based economy, their goal is to provide China with a sufficient quantity of educated human resources for economic modernization and future expansion. The development of higher education in China has shown two noteworthy trends: a noteworthy uptick in the quality of the nation's top universities and a significant increase in enrolment overall (Cao et al., 2020).
Teachers' beliefs are constructed and developed during the learning process through a variety of learning activities, including apprenticeship observations as language learners and teachers, initial formal pre- and in-service teacher training/education, and actual teaching practicums in specific contexts (Wang et al., 2020). They are believed to serve as the foundation for teachers' pedagogical practises, which, as research on teacher cognition has shown, need them to make snap judgements in the classroom. A teacher's level of ambition, openness to new ideas, and resilience in the face of difficulty may all be influenced by their effectiveness as an educator. Asif et al. (2020) found that effective instructors are more likely to remain in the field, spend more time in the classroom, organise the classroom more thoroughly, and have a greater sense of love for what they do. Additionally, highly successful educators are more sensitive to the requirements of their students. They have a less critical attitude towards the mistakes made by their pupils, are willing to devote more time to assisting those who need it, and actively engage in their education (Yuan, 2017).

To foster innovative student development, Chinese colleges and institutions adhere to a national paradigm (Lee & Lee, 2022). According to national standards, technical universities are strongly urged to consider closely combining innovation and entrepreneurship as well as adjusting talent development programmes to meet industry demands (Lo, 2021). Nonetheless, some academic staff members believe that universities should not be in charge of offering this sort of training since they are ill-prepared or lack the necessary expertise to guide students via innovation and entrepreneurship education. If they can secure the funding necessary to host the pertinent lectures, their students have started a few small businesses, and they have won a few prizes in student competitions, then some people consider their efforts to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship through education to have been successful (Teo & Huang, 2019).

Cooke et al. (2019) assert that the definition and comprehension of every individual activity inside an organisation, including creativity, are greatly influenced by the organisational environment. A set of characteristics or attributes that may be associated with a particular company that may result from the way the business engages with its stakeholders and the external environment is one definition of organisational climate (Marshall, 2018). As per an alternative interpretation, the term “organisational environment” pertains to the shared convictions among employees on the importance of the organization's policies, guidelines, and protocols, in addition to the behaviours they
see as anticipated, promoted, and acknowledged (Tran, 2021). Other definitions define organisational environment as members’ awareness of how the organisation functions based on their individual experiences, or as members' collective perceptions of conceptual dimensions shaped by member interactions, such as autonomy, trust, harmony, approval, innovation, and justice (Erthal & Marques, 2018). This paper explores the teaching beliefs, efficacy, innovation, and organisational atmosphere in Western China Universities.

2 CURRICULUM REFORMS IN WESTERN CHINA UNIVERSITIES

The way that people see postsecondary education has changed dramatically. In the past, higher education was seen as a revolutionary tool and a way to oppose bourgeois values (Li et al., 2019). Its ideological function was greatly exaggerated while its pedagogical role was mostly ignored. Once these myths about universities and higher education were debunked, they started to be seen as the real hubs of society for research, culture, and instruction (Yang, 2018). As an illustration, consider the current viewpoints on higher education. First, as stated by Lo and Pan (2021), the purpose of Chinese higher education is now cultivation and education rather than becoming a political weapon. Second, higher education currently occupies a prominent position in society (Gu et al., 2018). The national policy of advancing the country via education and research is supported by the majority of the population. At the top of the educational pyramid in the country, higher education is essential to produce highly skilled scientists. Research and education advancements have to be prioritised (Yang, 2018).

Third, Yu and Liu (2018) assert that the purpose of higher education has been re-evaluated. Higher education not only acts as a hub for teaching but also as a major centre for scientific research, a hub for technological innovation, and a location where a variety of artistic production may occur. The main goal of higher education is to foster Chinese uniqueness and improve the quality of Chinese national identity. Fourth, according to Gu et al. (2018), 100 Chinese universities are anticipated to be among the top 100 in the world in the twenty-first century. Due to substantial income increases during the 1990s, university instructors are now considered to be in the middle or upper middle class of society (Li et al., 2019). There have been major changes to the facilities and teaching equipment in higher education. Recent increases in funding have allowed nearly all universities to construct new dining halls, staff housing, instructional buildings,
equipment, and dorms for students. The use of computers and the Internet as instructional resources in higher education has increased. A significant proportion of academics use PowerPoint and other digital tools to teach their lectures (Li et al., 2019).

University courses and programmes have been completely redesigned. China adopted its higher education system from the former Soviet Union in the 1950s (Lin, 2019). Each of the sciences was dissected into smaller parts. Over 600 disciplines were available to undergraduate students at the university. Beginning in 1997, the State Education Department asked many scholars to conduct a comprehensive system study. After two years of work, only about 270 courses were left for the undergraduate students (Gu et al., 2018). The goal of university instructors was to break free from the limitations of the subject-based system and acquire a wider range of knowledge. Updated information is now available in higher education. University lecturers are expected to be at the vanguard of academics and to employ cutting-edge teaching strategies to provide their students with the most recent knowledge (Gu et al., 2018). There is a push in higher education to offer cultural education. According to Gu et al. (2018), most Chinese universities currently demand six credits of scientific coursework for humanities and social science majors and ten credit hours of humanities and social science coursework for those majoring in technology and natural science. The methods of instruction used in higher education have changed. Methodological study and new instructional tactics are required for new material. University teachers have asked for updates to their research and teaching strategies. The purpose of instruction is to support students in their own study. Creative study and creative research are the benchmarks used to evaluate the efficacy of training in these institutions (Gu et al., 2018).

3 CONCEPTS OF QUALITY AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

According to Yip et al. (2019), the term “teacher quality” encapsulates the essential attributes of an effective educator and what makes for “outstanding effective teaching.” A competent teacher should possess a range of best or effective teaching practises, skill development, teacher assessment, preparation, and comprehension (Yip et al., 2019). Teachers are required to adopt best practise (successful) teaching strategies as part of their pre-service training, with an emphasis on performance-oriented qualities as they develop experience and skill over time. Two main factors led to the creation of the
term, both of which are related to the reform appeals covered in the policy papers under consideration.

The motivation and performance of students are affected by the personal and professional characteristics of their teachers at all educational levels (Liu et al., 2022). When instructors demonstrate positive social, professional, and organisational qualities, students are more likely to be motivated and produce high-quality learning outcomes (Liu et al., 2022). When teachers are disorganised, unprofessional, uncaring, and boring, students’ learning outcomes and motivation decline (Smith & Baik, 2021). Assessing a teacher's personal and professional qualities should include consideration of the students' motivation and learning goals.

Students' performance is influenced by how they engage with and view their instructors (Tam et al., 2009). Comparable findings have been seen in China, where undergraduate students have shown a desire for teachers who are competent, display a certain degree of experience, are friendly, engaging, and employ a range of teaching strategies. They also want their instructors to be enthusiastic about their subject matter and to have a sense of humour. Additionally, they want educators who can utilise relevant materials, engage students in exciting debates, foster creativity in them, make them feel smart, are fair and approachable, and successfully communicate (Duarte, 2013). Duarte (2013) separated the qualities of an effective teacher into three categories: personality, competence, and delivery. Many of these traits have been influenced by globalisation and reform, even if some of them are consistent with the traditional understanding of a Chinese educator. Chinese undergraduate students in the twenty-first century have access to the entire world. The internet has made a wide range of social and political beliefs accessible with just a click. They are more independent than their parents were, and they have never experienced major social or political disturbance (Tam et al., 2009). The expectations Chinese undergraduate students have of their teachers are influenced by these and other factors. Students anticipate that their instructors will challenge them intellectually, be totally invested in the subject, and be competent and knowledgeable. They want to have a close relationship with their teacher (Tam et al., 2009).

3.1 TEACHING BELIEFS

Because teacher beliefs are a crucial part of teachers’ cognitive processes, they have become a hot topic in research on teacher education and development (Hong et al.,
2023). With the continued development of basic education curriculum reform, teachers' educational attitudes have gradually emerged as a topic of interest in teacher research (Hong et al., 2023). According to Hong and others (2023), an instructor's perspectives encompass their beliefs, expertise, and comprehension of ideas derived from scientific studies, in addition to teaching, student learning, the role of educators, and other related subjects. Some scholars claim that the concepts held by instructors make up a complex, open system. Instructors summarise their own experiences in the classroom, guide learning, affect change, and provide an example of conduct for their beliefs (Sansom, 2020). Instructor opinions in the current study include knowledge views, learning views, teaching views, teacher-student views, and research views. Because they provide strong support for instructional conduct and a critical assurance of efficacy, teachers' beliefs are vital to the advancement of educational reform and their professional growth (Anjum, 2021). Sansom (2020) reports that most academics believe that instructors' ideas are very valuable and closely related to personal practices and experiences.

Research on the impact of individual experiences on teachers' perspectives, role beliefs, and professional development and professionalism has dominated previous studies. In a qualitative study based on interviews, Anjum (2021), for example, found that personal experiences are the main source of teachers' beliefs at teaching universities and that teachers' beliefs are influenced by their personal learning experiences. Their research refers to pre-professional education for teachers at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels as their "individual learning experience." Additionally, the findings of a qualitative research showed that teachers' perspective of their responsibilities as facilitators, educators, and people who build relationships with students is shaped by their own cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and environmental factors (Anjum, 2021). Two additional interviews revealed that college instructors' academic style, attitude towards scientific research, teaching content, teaching methodology, academic accomplishment, and teaching attitude are just a few of the ways that studying abroad can enhance their professional development (Hong et al., 2023).

3.2 TEACHING EFFICACY

In educational psychology, teaching efficacy is a relatively new concept, according to American academic Bandura (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). It characterises a person's perception of their ability to carry out a certain conduct in a
particular situation or their anticipation that they will be able to carry out the behaviour required to accomplish a particular goal (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). Scholars in China and other nations have given the notion of teaching effectiveness a variety of definitions and interpretations. According to Berg and Smith (2018), instructional efficacy is the extent to which teachers are able to convince students to complete assignments. Sum et al. (2021) state that instructors believe they have an effect on students' performance because they believe they can influence students' future success or because they are confident in their ability to fulfil their given obligations. According to Er (2020), a teacher's overall educational philosophy, their belief in the importance of education, their accountability for the progress or failure of their students' learning, the role that learning plays in the classroom, and their assessment of their own influence on students all contribute to their effectiveness as teachers. Chinese scholars borrow ideas on the effectiveness of teachers from the viewpoints of foreign researchers. Teaching effectiveness, according to Xiu and Chen (2021), is the extent to which educators can evaluate and examine their own accomplished conduct as teachers and then support their students' growth. Teaching success, according to Xiu and Chen (2021), entails both an objective representation of successful teaching capacity as well as instructors' subjective evaluations of their own capacities to carry out particular behaviours in particular settings.

Recent studies have shown that highly competent university teachers have higher levels of work satisfaction and are more likely to provide personalised instruction and assessments for their students (Rabaglietti et al., 2021). However, research on teachers' self-efficacy (TSE) has mostly focused on instruction in traditional classroom settings; online contexts have received less attention, and the majority of assessments used have been based on the popular Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Rabaglietti et al., 2021). The abrupt switch to online education put university teachers' confidence in their ability to teach online to the test. They discovered that it was challenging to set up the course materials, determine how long their students could focus, and use technology to engage the students in online group discussions (Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). Among the most often cited factors that negatively impacted university instructors' self-efficacy in online teaching (OTSE) were their lack of experience teaching in a physical classroom or online, as well as their lack of knowledge about digital technology. The benefits of prior experience with using relevant technology were especially clear when it comes to assisting instructors in developing higher TSE for developing online learning materials.
and adding in-class activities to grasp and engage students (Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). However, Dong et al. (2023) found that most university instructors reported being successful at conducting assessments and teaching online provided they had enough support from their faculty. Improvements in their OTSE were reported by university professors throughout a one-month emergency online teaching session. The teachers who had no prior experience teaching online had the most gains in OTSE; no variations were seen amongst teachers from various disciplines (Dong et al., 2023).

Both students' and teachers' professional development are impacted by their sense of self-efficacy. This teacher's strong self-efficacy students have generally performed better than their peers in previous classes. Teachers with low self-efficacy usually avoid creating classes that are more complicated than they can teach well (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018). They lack effective patience when helping students overcome barriers, and they are less likely to take the time to look for instructional reference materials that can increase students' comprehension and retention of knowledge. Chavez (2019) posits that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to value democracy, foster student individuality, and encourage self-discipline. According to Li's (2023) research, teachers with high and low self-efficacy differ significantly in how they manage class time, ask questions that are cognitively challenging, assign subjects, and give feedback to students. Teachers with greater self-efficacy perform better in those domains. Therefore, instructors' self-efficacy is an important teaching indicator since it affects both their performance as teachers and that of their students.

3.3 TEACHING INNOVATION

Innovation is the process that leads to creative learning by creating and implementing new ideas, techniques, tools, and material, and it is the cornerstone of modern educational practise. It improves teacher effectiveness and fosters curiosity, interest, and learning in students (Zhu et al., 2023). Since educators are at the vanguard of developing and implementing new ideas, their creative behaviour is crucial to the effectiveness and long-term survival of educational institutions (Zhu et al., 2023). Innovation in educational institutions is largely a collaborative, sophisticated, knowledge-based activity that is directed by leaders and instructors, however people can self-initiate inventive conduct (Li & Zhu, 2022). Some studies (Klaseijsen et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2023) describe teaching innovation as “teachers' receptivity, openness, and eagerness to
accept change.” This, in their opinion, is a crucial facet of teachers' creative behaviour and a requirement for both innovation and transformation. The three main indicators of innovative teaching are instructional materials, teaching/assessment procedures, and information content (Klaseijsen et al., 2018). Zhu et al. (2023) offer four fundamental competencies: learning, pedagogical, social, and technical competency. The integrated use of information and communication technology, the adoption of student-centred learning, and the use of collaborative learning techniques are three other prevalent trends in innovative teaching and learning that they list (Klaseijsen et al., 2018). Li and Zhu (2022) have classified the content of creative teaching into five categories: idea thinking, curricular content, teaching materials, teaching approaches, and multidimensional assessment.

When it comes to innovative teaching, Jiang et al. (2021) state that learning occurs through the interaction of the learner and the learning environment; better teaching effectiveness can be developed when the appropriate technology use strategies and skills are applied, making technology a useful teaching tool. Teaching innovation, according to Yin et al. (2020), happens when teachers use rich, varied material and dynamic, multifarious teaching tactics to ignite students' intrinsic passion to learn. Students' ability to learn is enhanced as a result, and they also acquire proactive learning attitudes. In order to help students understand the material and develop their critical and creative thinking, Yuan et al. (2019) state that effective teachers must be open-minded, able to reflect on their own instruction, and able to apply the cogitative skills of reflection, questioning, deconstruction, and reconstruction. Teachers can also utilise their own moral qualities and good traits to gently influence students and assist them in developing moral character and a positive outlook on life.

Lin (2019) asserts that integrating technology into the classroom can improve the customization and diversity of instruction. It improves learning effectiveness. Furthermore, according to Lin (2019), integrating ICT into instruction offers a fresh and dynamic method of teaching. According to Hoffmann and Ramirez's (2018) research, integrating information technology into the classroom is the best option for educators seeking to improve their techniques and skills. It can also help teachers solve problems creatively and deliver lessons. Information technology integration in the classroom is not easy; there are a few cooperating needs that need to be met. As a result, incorporating information technology into the classroom might provide some challenges. These include
financial, scheduling, environmental, man-made, course-related, and integration-related issues (Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018). Resolving these challenges will lead to positive effects on student satisfaction and creative teaching practices.

3.4 ORGANISATIONAL ATMOSPHERE

There are unique cultures at every university. There are certain schools where the principal and teachers get along well and freely, and the instructors themselves look self-assured and clever. That being said, there is a stressful climate in another school, which is reflected in the way teachers interact with pupils and how they act (Pan & Song, 2014). There are several universities with good environments. Their unity, justice, efficiency, strictness, and order are what make them unique. However, there is an unpleasant atmosphere at certain other colleges. They manage things recklessly, are constantly divided, lack discipline, and work inefficiently. Let us examine the three most renowned Chinese universities: Tsinghua University, Beijing Normal University, and Peking University. According to Pan and Song (2014), the three universities are the best in the state and are located in close proximity to one another in Beijing. Theoretically, there should be very little difference between them. However, one will feel quite differently going from Tsinghua University to Peking University, and even more differently going from Peking University to Beijing Normal University. It is not too difficult to learn about the various tastes on campus, the layout of the classrooms, the upkeep of the libraries and labs, the way people run and walk on the playgrounds, the way people dress, walk, talk, and greet each other, and even the traits of the presidents (Huang et al., 2022). Peking University seeks “patriotism, progress, democracy, and science”; Tsinghua University emphasises “self-discipline and social commitment”; while Beijing Normal University's staff and students want “to learn to be a master, to conduct as a model.” There is nothing like this in the world. These unique characteristics that set each institution apart are referred to as the “organisational environment.” Indeed, one may consider the environment of an organisation to be its “personality”; that is, atmosphere serves as an organization's equivalent of an individual's personality (Huang et al., 2022). University organisational environments are made up of a variety of persistent internal psychological traits that distinguish one university from another (Huang et al., 2022).

The atmosphere of schools is one common psychological perception. In addition to helping them accomplish the school's training objectives for students, this shared
psychological perspective may develop trust between educators and managers as well as between educators and instructors. This will increase the students' sense of purpose and work satisfaction. A supportive school environment may boost confidence among administrators, teachers, and students, as well as promote cooperation. This can help educators overcome obstacles and think outside the box to solve problems, which will improve their psychological capital (Han et al., 2022). In order to reach their full potential, enjoy the teaching process, develop their professional identities, and ultimately find more job satisfaction, educators possessing high psychological capital can also commit more time and energy to their work (Han et al., 2022).

4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This paper has explored the teaching beliefs, efficacy, innovation, and organisational atmosphere in western China universities. The main methodological approach to general university education in China is to combine theoretical and practical training. By taking part in practising teaching, students can get a sense of creativity and practical skills in an authentic environment. It helps colleges accomplish their educational goals by helping to raise the general level of instruction for both staff and students. In the current study, instructor viewpoints encompass knowledge, learning, teaching, teacher-student, and research perspectives. Teachers' beliefs are crucial to the achievement of educational reform and their professional development because they offer a critical guarantee of efficacy and strong support for instructional conduct. Teachers feel they have an impact on students' performance because they think they can affect students' success in the future or because they know they can achieve their responsibilities. Because it influences both the teachers' and the students' performance as learners, instructors' self-efficacy is a crucial instructional indicator. University teaching innovations include concept thinking, course design, instructional materials, pedagogical approaches, and multimodal assessment. In a supportive learning environment, educators, administrators, and students may all feel more certain and cooperative. Teachers' psychological capital will increase as a result of this ability to overcome challenges and solve issues creatively.

5 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by this article, highly effective teachers usually exhibit better levels of planning, organisation, and participation in the classroom. Additionally, they
show a stronger desire to try new things and modify their methods to better meet the needs of their students. Teachers who have higher trust in their ability to educate children may also report feeling less pressurised and more content with their professions, have better communication within their schools, and deal with misbehaviour from students more easily. Not only does it improve student satisfaction and learning outcomes, but it also advances the knowledge society and the professional development of educators. This article claims that teacher creativity is closely correlated with a variety of human and environmental factors, such as resources, professional autonomy, support from colleagues and supervisors, instructional efficacy and motivation, and resources
REFERENCES


