EXPLORING CHINESE EFL UNIVERSITY TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

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The study investigates Chinese EFL university teachers’ beliefs about Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in China with a quantitative research method. 678 questionnaires were acquired from seven major parts of China. Descriptive analysis and comparative analysis were employed to examine the demographic factors for teachers’ belief about CPD in three aspects: updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA) and collaborative activities (CA). Findings indicate that teachers’ beliefs of reflective activities about CPD were relatively stronger than collaborative activities and updating activities. There are gender differences in reflective activities; female teachers’ beliefs about CPD in the reflective activities were relatively stronger than those of male teachers. For age differences, the data showed that the reflective activities increase almost the same as the age growth, but the age group (41-45) and (46-50) as an exceptional. For regional differences play a significant role in determining teachers’ beliefs in all three activities, future research is needed to identify the underlying mechanisms driving these regional differences. University rankings differences in updating activities showed its significance. The implications of these findings are crucial for teacher educators, and training planners to promote stronger beliefs with a much clearer plan for the reasonable arrangement and design of three activities among teachers.

Keywords: EFL university teachers; teacher belief; quantitative study; Continuous Professional Development (CPD); China

Introduction

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has always been a major concern for its potential value in the field of teacher education. Educational authorities have implemented and initiated various interventions to help with the development of CPD.

However, CPD appears to be a dynamic and fluctuated process which needs long-term instruction and spiritual support.

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To ensure the steadfast and sustainable evolution of CPD, promising strategies lie in the fusion of target-oriented interventions with consistent, extended assistance. Nevertheless, delving into the subjective catalysts that shape the advancement of CPD remains of utmost importance. Among these, notably teachers’ beliefs emerge as pivotal forces dictating the course of CPD journey. The primary objective of this study is to scrutinise the perspectives on CPD held by Chinese EFL university teachers.

This investigation will encompass three key activities: updating, reflective, and collaboration. Through this inquiry, the intention is to discern the influence of these activities on teachers’ CPD beliefs, thereby furnishing a comprehensive comprehension of the intrinsic processes that shape their CPD outlook.

**Teacher belief about CPD**

Beliefs are often seen as precursors to behavior and individuals' practice. He concluded that belief and knowledge are closely linked. The social context advances or inhabits teachers' beliefs. When teaching, educators who manage the experiences of learning depend on their individual beliefs within different classrooms, situated in diverse schools, communities, and national and international cultures. An instructor's practice heavily relies on their personal beliefs, which may include their intuition or habits, to fulfil the needs of their professional practice.

Beliefs about CPD in this study adapted three groups such as “updating knowledge and skills, reflection and collaboration with colleagues” (cited from De Vries, S., et al. 2014: 341). Updating activities expands teaching practice and provides significant knowledge, but ongoing social, economic and technological developments require continuous, deliberate updating of theoretical knowledge.

Updating activities help other professional activities, especially critical reflection, since a firm theoretical knowledge base is an essential requirement for reflective practice. Reflective activities are connected with critical reflection, in “reflection to action” (De Vries, S., et al. 2014: 341). Collaborative activities can help teachers to experience better motivation to improve their confidence in teaching (Cordingley et al., 2003).

The study focuses on teachers’ beliefs about CPD from the three activities which are important for the improvement of teachers in Chinese EFL university context.

The study was conducted under a personal context and guided the following questions.

What are Chinese EFL university teachers’ beliefs about continuous professional development (CPD) in three aspects: updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA) and collaborative activities (CA)?

**Research methodology**

This study is quantitative research; the questionnaire was adopted from Questionnaires on beliefs about learning and teaching related to CPD (De Vries, S., et al. 2014).

SPSS 26 was used to process the data. The items used mainly focus on teachers’ beliefs about CPD in three dimensions such as updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA) and collaborative activities (CA). These are important elements for teachers to maintain their commitment to their CPD journey.
With demographic characteristics such as gender, age and region are collected, 678 questionnaires were obtained from the data from seven major parts of China, namely North China, Central China, South China, Southwest China, Northwest China, Northeast China and East China.

Research findings

Teachers' beliefs about CPD in the teaching profession

In this part, general conclusions of the updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA) and collaborative activities (CA) were presented with the descriptive analysis and demographic different analysis in relation to gender, age groups and geographical locations and university ranking. The general situations were as follows:

Teachers' Beliefs about CPD in the teaching profession

Descriptive statistics of Teachers’ Beliefs about CPD of the three activities

Descriptive statistics was performed to provide a general profile of teachers’ beliefs about CPD in their teaching profession. Tab. 1 shows the outcome for parameters of mean, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum accessed by the variables.

Table 1 - Report on teachers’ beliefs about CPD of updating activities, reflective activities and collaborative activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>RA</th>
<th>CA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.245</td>
<td>4.574</td>
<td>4.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UA=updating activities, RA=reflective activities, CA=collaborative activities

Tab. 1 shows the descriptive statistics for three categories of professional development activities: updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA), and collaborative activities (CA).

A total of 678 participants had valid data for the investigation. From the data of frequency of the three activities among participants, we found that the mean score for updating activities was 4.245 (SD = .686), for reflective activities was 4.574 (SD = .497), and for collaborative activities was 4.377 (SD = .592), indicating that on average, participants engaged in these activities form a moderate to high extent.

The minimum score for updating activities was 1.00, for reflective activities was 2.33, and for collaborative activities was 2.00, whereas the maximum score for all three variables was 5.00. These findings suggest that participants engaged in a range of updating, reflective, and collaborative activities, and their beliefs of reflective activities (RA) were relatively stronger than collaborative activities and updating activities.
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Comparative analyses of teachers’ beliefs about in different demographic characteristics

Statistical analyses to explore the potential gender, age groups and geographical locations within our sample were employed. Specifically, we conducted comparative analyses to determine if significant differences exist in terms of gender, age groups and geographical locations with respect to the variables of interest. To this end, we utilised a range of statistical tests, including t-tests and ANOVA, to examine the potential effects of gender, age groups and geographical locations on the outcome measures.

These analyses allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the potential impact of these demographic factors on our study results.

Teachers’ beliefs about CPD in relation to gender difference

Table 2 - Teachers’ beliefs about CPD of gender differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.165</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>-1.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>4.265</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.474</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>-2.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>4.599</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.320</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>-1.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>4.391</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.320</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>-2.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>4.416</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UA=updating activities, RA=reflective activities, CA=collaborative activities, TB= teachers’ beliefs about CPD.

In Table 2, an independent two-sample t-test was performed to investigate gender differences in 3 types of updating activities (UA), reflective activities (RA), collaborative activities (CA). The sample consisted of 135 males and 543 females, and descriptive statistics were computed for each group. Statistical analysis was conducted to investigate the significance of these differences between male and females.

For RA (reflective activities), the mean score was 4.474 for males and 4.599 for females, with standard deviations of .562 and .477, respectively. The difference in means was statistically significant (t = -2.381, p = .018).

The M and SD for total behaviour of teachers’ beliefs about CPD were also calculated, and the difference in means between males and females was statistically significant, with mean scores of 4.320 and 4.416, and standard deviations of .547 and .482, respectively (t = -2.008, p = .045).

The results indicated that for UA (updating activities), the difference in means was not statistically significant (t = -1.504, p = .133). For CA (collaborative activities), the difference in means was not statistically significant (t = -1.247, p = .213).

These results suggest that there are gender differences in reflective activities, not in updating or collaborative activities, but teachers’ beliefs about CPD as a whole have its
gender differences. The female teachers’ reflective activities were with more frequencies than male teachers and female teachers’ beliefs about CPD in the reflective activities were relatively stronger than those of male teachers.

*Teachers’ beliefs about CPD in relation to different age groups*

The data presented in Tab. 3 demonstrate the M and SD for different age groups. No differences showed in UA, CA and teachers’ beliefs about CPD.

For UA, the highest M and SD was observed in the age group 36-40 (4.38, 0.72), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the age group under 25 (4.07, 0.86). However, the differences between the age groups about UA were not statistically significant, as indicated by the non-significant F-value and p-value (F=1.2022, P=0.299).

For CA, the highest M and SD was observed in the age group under 25 (4.60, 0.45), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the age group under 41-45 (4.31, 0.59). The differences between the age groups about CA were not statistically significant, as indicated by the non-significant F-value and p-value (F=1.087, P=0.370).

For all activities in teachers’ beliefs about CPD, the highest M and SD was observed in the age group above 55 (4.52, 0.43), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the age group 41-45 (4.34, 0.50), the differences between the age groups were not statistically significant, as indicated by the non-significant F-value and p-value (F=1.080, P=0.374).

These findings suggest that age may not be a significant predictor of teachers’ beliefs about CPD, only with significant difference in RA for those young teachers (under 25) and senior teachers (above 55) in this population, and the data showed that the reflective activities increase almost as the same as the age growth, for the age group (41-45) and (46-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>UA M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>RA M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CA M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>TB M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 25</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 55</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UA=updating activities, RA=reflective activities, CA=collaborative activities, TB= teachers’ beliefs about CPD.
50) as an exceptional. Another point to note is that young teachers enjoy the highest CA, while experiencing the lowest UA and RA.

*Teachers’ beliefs about CPD in relation to China’s regional differences*

In this part, potential geographical differences of teachers’ beliefs about CPD were investigated as in Tab. 4. The participants were recruited from seven different regions: North China, East China, South China, Central China, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest.

Table 4 - Teachers’ beliefs about CPD of China’s regional differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>RA</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>TB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>M 4.07</td>
<td>M 4.39</td>
<td>M 4.32</td>
<td>M 4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.96</td>
<td>SD 0.58</td>
<td>SD 0.78</td>
<td>SD 0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>M 4.37</td>
<td>M 4.44</td>
<td>M 4.20</td>
<td>M 4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.58</td>
<td>SD 0.48</td>
<td>SD 0.56</td>
<td>SD 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>M 4.07</td>
<td>M 4.46</td>
<td>M 4.34</td>
<td>M 4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.66</td>
<td>SD 0.55</td>
<td>SD 0.51</td>
<td>SD 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>M 4.24</td>
<td>M 4.62</td>
<td>M 4.41</td>
<td>M 4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.68</td>
<td>SD 0.48</td>
<td>SD 0.59</td>
<td>SD 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>M 4.08</td>
<td>M 4.34</td>
<td>M 4.11</td>
<td>M 4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.65</td>
<td>SD 0.60</td>
<td>SD 0.53</td>
<td>SD 0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>M 4.74</td>
<td>M 4.76</td>
<td>M 4.73</td>
<td>M 4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.40</td>
<td>SD 0.36</td>
<td>SD 0.36</td>
<td>SD 0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>M 4.46</td>
<td>M 4.51</td>
<td>M 4.30</td>
<td>M 4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.57</td>
<td>SD 0.47</td>
<td>SD 0.59</td>
<td>SD 0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UA=updating activities, RA=reflective activities, CA=collaborative activities, TB=teachers’ beliefs about CPD

The results showed that there were significant differences in scores of teachers’ beliefs about CPD across the different regions (F=3.213, P=0.004). Specifically, the highest M and SD of teachers’ beliefs about CPD was observed in the Northeast region (4.74, 0.28), while the lowest M and SD of teachers’ beliefs about CPD was observed in the Northwest region (4.17, 0.52).

For UA, significant differences in scores also existed across the different regions (F=2.857, P=0.009). Specifically, the highest M and SD was observed in the Northeast region (4.74, 0.40), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the North region (4.07, 0.96).

For RA, significant differences were found across the different regions (F=3.654, P=0.001). Specifically, the highest M and SD was observed in the Northeast region (4.76, 0.36), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the Northwest region (4.34, 0.60).

For CA, significant differences in scores (F=2.996, P=0.007). The highest M and SD was observed in the Northeast region (4.73, 0.36), while the lowest M and SD was observed in the Northwest region (4.11, 0.53).

These findings suggest that regional factors may play a role in determining teachers’ beliefs, and future research is needed to identify the underlying mechanisms driving these regional differences.

Overall, the statistics provide important insights into the potential determinants of teachers’ beliefs and highlights the importance of considering regional factors when investigating teachers’ beliefs.
Teachers’ Beliefs about CPD in relation to university ranking

Table 5 - Teachers’ beliefs about CPD of different university ranking
(made by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>985 M/SD</th>
<th>211 M/SD</th>
<th>Double First-class M/SD</th>
<th>General Undergraduate M/SD</th>
<th>Vocational M/SD</th>
<th>Private M/SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>4.10 0.78</td>
<td>4.13 0.79</td>
<td>4.19 0.64</td>
<td>4.28 0.65</td>
<td>4.18 0.60</td>
<td>4.41 0.61</td>
<td>2.769</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>4.64 0.55</td>
<td>4.55 0.48</td>
<td>4.53 0.48</td>
<td>4.55 0.50</td>
<td>4.39 0.52</td>
<td>4.65 0.44</td>
<td>1.570</td>
<td>0.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>4.38 0.68</td>
<td>4.39 0.59</td>
<td>4.28 0.58</td>
<td>4.36 0.59</td>
<td>4.29 0.44</td>
<td>4.48 0.52</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>4.37 0.57</td>
<td>4.36 0.48</td>
<td>4.33 0.46</td>
<td>4.40 0.50</td>
<td>4.29 0.41</td>
<td>4.51 0.43</td>
<td>1.361</td>
<td>0.237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UA=updating activities, RA=reflective activities, CA=collaborative activities, TB=teachers’ beliefs about CPD

As presented in Tab. 5, potential differences in scores across different university rankings were investigated. The university ranking covered all major ranks of the universities currently established all across the country.

No statistically significant differences showed in RA, CA and teachers’ beliefs about CPD as a whole. For RA (F=1.570, P=0.166) with highest M and SD (4.65, 0.44) of the Private universities and lowest (4.39, 0.52) of the Vocational universities, CA (F=0.829, P=0.529) with highest M and SD (4.48, 0.52) of Private universities and lowest (4.28, 0.58) of Double First-class universities(non-985 and non-211), teachers’ beliefs about CPD (F=1.361, P=0.237) with highest M and SD (4.51, 0.43) of Private universities and lowest (4.29, 0.41) of Vocational universities.

The only significant differences in university ranking showed in UA (F=2.769, P=0.017). Specifically, participants in private universities had the highest M and SD (4.41, 0.61), followed by General undergraduate universities (4.28, 0.65). While the lowest M and SD were observed in the 985 universities (4.10, 0.78).

It’s contrary to common sense, and further research is needed to further explore the potential mechanisms driving these differences and to determine the generalizability of the findings to other populations.

Research discussion

Teachers’ Belief about CPD in the teaching profession

Regarding teachers' beliefs about CPD, the mean and standard deviation scores show that their updating activity (UA) is the lowest, while their reflective activity (RA) is the highest. There is proof of its significance in several aspects, such as variation in gender, age, regional differences and university rankings.

Teachers’ belief about CPD with respect to gender differences

Regarding gender differences, this study found that female teachers engaged in reflective activities (RAs) significantly more frequently than male teachers. The identification concurs with the outcomes delineated by Almusharraf & Almusharraf (2021), wherein similar disparities were observed indicating that female postsecondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) exhibited higher
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total scores on the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI) in comparison to their male counterparts.

Teachers’ belief about CPD with respect to age differences

Regarding age differences, reflective activities (RA) differ significantly between young teachers (under 25) and senior teachers (above 55) in this population. The data indicates that the frequency of reflective activities increases nearly in line with age. This is in line with Afshar & Farahani’s (2015) finding that Iranian EFL teachers' use of reflective teaching and thinking increases with teaching experience. This is an exception for the age group (41-45) and (46-50). These age groups predominantly have teaching experience ranging from 16-20 years. This provides evidence for the uniqueness of this group.

Teachers who are below the age of 25 experienced the lowest levels of resilience (RA) and adaptability (UA). It may be due to the fact that, as new teachers, their ability to adapt to the new teaching context may be better, as evidenced by the highest CA. Therefore, their main attention is towards adjusting to the educational settings and building a strong teacher identity, resulting in the lack of dedication to RA and UA.

According to Walkington (2005), engaging in reflective teaching not only supports the evolution of the teacher’s functional role but also provides teachers with effective strategies for fostering the continuous development of a teacher identity, one that is influenced by past experiences and will continue to be shaped over an extended duration. This indicates that teaching reflection is strongly linked to teacher identity. As a teacher's identity is dynamic, it changes over time and in different environments. Therefore, age contributes to shaping a teacher's beliefs through reflective activities during their continuous professional development (CPD).

Regarding collaborative activities (CA), the mean score and standard deviation values suggest that teachers aged below 25 and above 55 have a relatively higher perception of CA. More specifically, those with teaching experience less than 5 years and above 20 also enjoy a slightly higher perception of CA.

Contrary to the common belief that collaboration benefits in academia lead to higher productivity, Bu et al. (2018) found that researcher productivity is generally lower when working persistently in large groups. Bu et al. proved that collaborations consisting of authors from diverse scientific backgrounds or age groups tend to benefit more from persistence than homogeneous collaborations. This partially explains why novice teachers seek collaboration from other age groups. Experienced teachers also perceive a higher degree of collaboration because the novice and experienced teachers represent the two age polarities and are the most likely to achieve age diversity, resulting in positive collaborative outcomes.

In conclusion, our findings reveal some inconsistencies with previous research, but also provide detailed insights into the data. Further studies are needed to explore and identify differences in beliefs about CPD among Chinese EFL university teachers, especially in the aforementioned age group.

Teachers’ Belief about CPD with respect to China’s regional differences

Regarding regional differences in China, teachers in the Northeast part of the country have the highest updating activity (UA). Regional differences in English language teaching (ELT) are notably significant in both less developed and developed areas (Hu, 2003), and unbalanced regional development has resulted in differences in information infrastructure
Regional differences caused significant distinctions in teachers' updating activities. Moreover, the study showed that teachers' attitudes towards updating activities differed significantly by region, with the highest updating activity (UA) in the Northeast.

Affiliation or connections to a community or group are considered the foundation for human motivation and identity consolidation (Allport, 1979; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Collaboration within and beyond the classroom is essential for nurturing motivation and developing a robust professional identity among teachers. The study demonstrates that collaborative activities differ regionally, particularly in the northeast region. Policy and cultural differences may be the underlying cause of these regional disparities.

Additionally, it is worth noting that only Northeast teachers have the highest levels of UA, RA and CA, which in turn results in the highest teacher belief (TB) about continuous professional development (CPD). Conversely, Northwest teachers experience the lowest levels of RA, CA, and TB. Although personal attributes in the north-eastern part of China are beneficial for building strong personal beliefs, it's worth considering that EFL teachers at local universities may also receive favourable treatment from regional policies.

Northeast teachers presented the only group who possess the highest collaborative activities (CA) with significant differences. Collaborative activities (CA) have been shown to benefit teaching through exchange activities (such as discussing and exchanging materials) and professional activities (such as developing materials and team teaching) (De Vries et al., 2014). Numerous collaborative activities have been developed in the field of education, taking various forms such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) (Du Four, 2004), Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger,1991), Learning Communities (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999), Collaborative Learning Networks (Mason & Watts, 2012; Hiltz, 1998; Kreijns & Jochems, 2003), Teacher Collaboration Groups (Johnson, 2003) and other related initiatives. Collaboration, in its various forms, underscores its significance.

To understand the reasons that remain unexplored in this region, further investigation is needed for this special group of Northeast teachers. Alternatively, conducting comparative empirical research can provide robust advantages for educational administrators and reformers.

**Teachers’ Belief about CPD with respect to differences of University rankings**

University rankings are significantly affected by updating activities (UA). Specifically, private universities have the highest UA, followed by general undergraduate universities, while the 985 universities have the lowest. At present, there is only a limited amount of research on the impact of university ranks in terms of UA.

University ranking depends on various factors such as research output, academic reputation, and improved student outcomes. To meet these requirements, teachers are expected to update their teaching and learning. The lifelong career should be supported with the abilities to fit them for the changing and updating world. All these concepts suggest that individuals develop their academic potential and abilities through their beliefs. These beliefs are critical determinants of individuals’ academic motivation and achievement.

Top universities have much higher research and scientific productivity indicators, but the findings that top universities have the lowest UA which is contrary to common assumptions. This might be due to the fact that the respondents from the study are mostly senior teachers from 985 universities, whose indicators may differ or be unique. Further
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research is necessary to investigate the potential mechanisms driving these differences and to evaluate the degree to which the findings can be generalised to other populations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results indicate that teachers’ beliefs about CPD differ significantly based on gender (with females holding stronger beliefs than males) and region (with the Northeast region having the highest beliefs). Reflective activity is significantly different based on gender, age, teaching experience, region and university ranks. Updating activity significantly differs based on regional differences and university ranks. Collaborative activity significantly differs only based on region. In other words, regional differences are the major contributing factor to teachers' beliefs in general, and reflective activity has the most significant differences in gender, age, and region.

The study gives a deeper insight into the three activities of teachers’ beliefs about CPD, their reflective activities are of most significant differences among the demographic characteristics. Regional differences also have a significant impact on Chinese EFL university teachers. Further qualitative research could help to shed light on these factors and explore the underlying reasons for these differences.

The limitation of study explored the three internal factors of teachers’ beliefs about CPD, other demographic factors might also contribute to teachers’ beliefs about CPD, so further study probes other demographic factors might be necessary. Further qualitative study could also be a supplementary method to get a holistic view of the problem.

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