

# Policies to Attract a High-Quality and Innovative Teaching Force

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In most European countries, the teacher profession is unattractive among 15-year-old students with high ability. The main policy to improve the attractiveness of the profession is increased flexibility in the recruitment of teachers and working conditions in schools.

## SMART TEACHERS

Productive innovations in the classroom require teachers that are willing and able to accomplish smart experimenting and changes in teaching methods. However, whether a change is a true innovation can only be observed by improvements in some skills of the students. Since creative and innovative skills of teachers are hard to measure, the empirical literature focuses on teacher quality measured by teachers' value-added on student achievement. High-quality teachers presumably use the most efficient teaching methods and to a large part possess pre-conditional abilities for introducing innovative teaching methods.

Some teachers contribute consistently much higher achievement of their students than other teachers (EENEE Policy Brief 4/2014). Research evidence shows that the teachers' value-added are correlated with school principals' subjective evaluations of teachers, and have long-lasting positive effects on future college attendance, earnings, and social achievements.

The literature provides evidence that the basic skills of teachers are positively related to student achievement. The attractiveness of the teacher education and the teacher profession is therefore crucial. Are high-achieving students choosing the teacher profession?

## THE TEACHER PROFESSION IS UNATTRACTIVE IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES

Evidence suggests that the attractiveness of the teacher profession has been falling. In countries like the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway, the test-

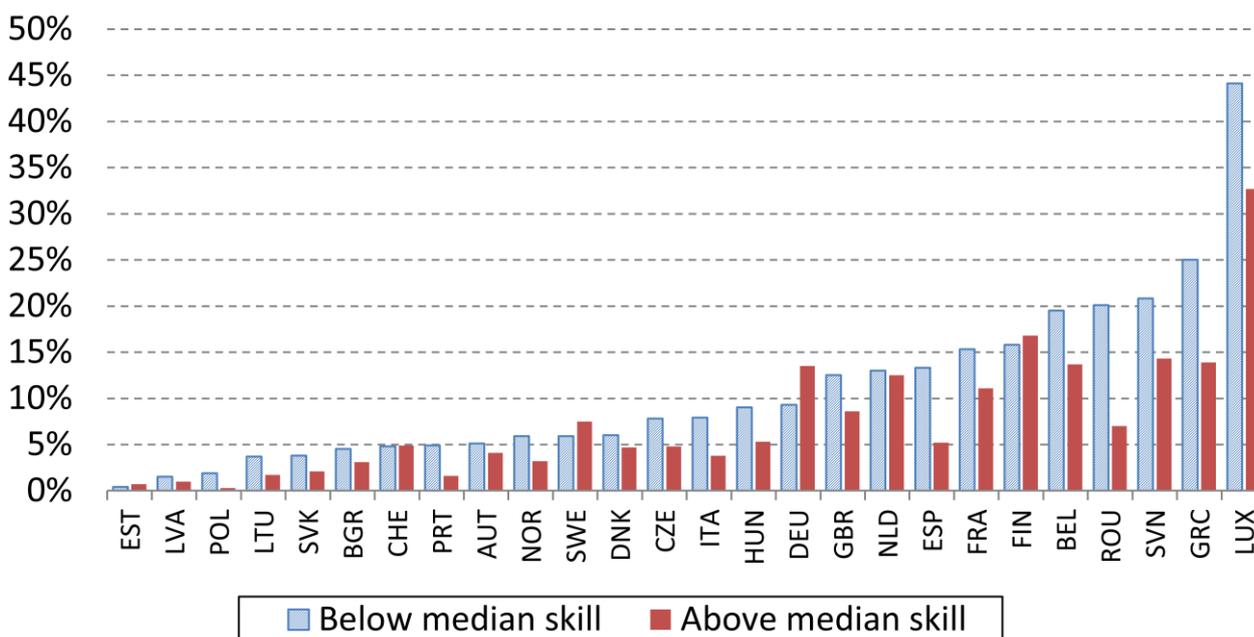
score ability rank of the average teacher fell by about 10 percentile points from the teachers born in the 1950s to the teachers born in the 1970s. While this might have changed for later cohorts in the United Kingdom (see Figure overleaf), that does not seem to be the case in Scandinavia.

Improved quality of the teacher workforce requires that the profession is attractive for students. The research evidence clearly suggests that skills prior to choosing teacher education predict teacher quality, which implies that the attractiveness among high-ability students is of specific importance.

The interest for the teacher profession among 15-year-old students revealed by the PISA study varies greatly. The figure overleaf focuses on the students aspiring for higher education, and shows that the teaching profession is several times more attractive in countries like Luxemburg and Greece compared to the Baltic countries and Slovakia. In addition, in the latter countries the attractiveness is absent in the upper part of the skill distribution. The situation seems much more promising in countries like Germany and Finland, where the profession is most attractive among students in the upper part of the skill distribution.

Credible evidence on, e.g., optimal selection processes of applicants to teacher education and characteristics of high-quality teacher education is hard to establish. However, the teacher profession can only be attractive if schools are attractive employers. In particular, employees that wish to implement experiments and changes search for flexible employers without rigid

### The interest for the teaching profession among 15-year-old students



Note: Proportion of 15-year-old students who expect to be non-tertiary 'teaching professional' at the age of 30. The sample is students aspiring for higher education. Source: OECD PISA 2006, own computations.

work environments. In order to recruit innovative teachers and to stimulate innovations, schools - and the educational system in general - must allow for and appreciate experiments.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHER LABOUR MARKET

The recruitment behaviour of schools and local governments depends on the institutional setting in the country. While the hiring of teachers is mainly in the hands of individual school principals in the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the decision is mainly made at the state or federal level in countries like Italy, France, and Germany.

A career is more attractive for skilled and creative youngsters if they can expect to climb up a career ladder to more recognised and better paid positions if successful. Schools offering better conditions attract more and better applicants to vacant teacher posi-

tions. Financial and fringe benefits can work as important incentive devices if they are linked to student achievement and innovations, which is manageable because subjective evaluations of school principals seem to be correlated with true teacher quality. The present international evidence suggests a positive effect of performance pay on student achievement, but unfortunately there is very limited evidence from experimental studies in Europe.

Career systems with limited possibilities for professional progress and salary increases are not attractive. Stimulating a high-quality and innovative teacher work force requires flexibility at the local level in recruitment processes and school organisation. Decentralized recruitment and accountability at the school level stimulate recruitment processes that actively search for motivated and innovative teachers that match the specific needs of the individual school.

For more details see: Torberg Falch, Constantin Mang, *Innovations in Education for Better Skills and Higher Employability*. EENEE Analytical Report 23, March 2015, [http://www.eenee.de/dms/EENEE/Analytical\\_Reports/EENEE\\_AR23.pdf](http://www.eenee.de/dms/EENEE/Analytical_Reports/EENEE_AR23.pdf).