

Written evidence submitted by Dr Joshua Fullard

Submission to the Select Committee for Teacher recruitment, training and retention. Dr Joshua Fullard is an Assistant Professor at the Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, and a Research Associate at the ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (MiSoC) at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex. His expertise is in researching teachers and teacher labour markets and education inequalities. Recent work has specifically looked at the factors that influence teacher recruitment and retention and teacher diversity.

Executive Summary

- Teaching has become a relatively less attractive graduate profession since 2010. Less people are interested in perusing a career in teaching.
- Increasing teachers' salaries to 2010 levels would be the most effective way to boost the relative attractiveness of the profession. But this would be expensive. A merit-based tuition fee reduction for teacher training would be a less expensive alternative in the short run. This approach has been successful in Chile.
- Policies related to increasing teacher salaries, reducing teacher workloads, and improving school leadership would be the most effective ways to improve teacher retention.
- Teacher gender diversity is getting worse. The proportion of secondary school teachers who are male is at a record low (35 percent). Almost 1 in 4 state-funded schools in England do not have a male classroom teacher. This is driven by the decline in teachers' relative wages. Over 50 percent of male teachers would be financially better off in an alternative career.
- Teacher ethnic diversity is improving but the rate of change is slow. Classroom teachers need to become between twice as diverse (London) and ten times as diverse (North East) to become ethnically representative of the pupils they teach.

1. Since 2010, teachers have experienced a real-terms reduction in salaries of up to 13 percent.¹ During the same period average earnings have increased by 2 percent in real-terms.² My research shows that this decline in the relative attractiveness of the teaching profession has had serious implications for teacher recruitment, teacher retention and teacher diversity.

Teacher recruitment

2. When teaching is relatively more attractive, more people are interested in perusing a career in teaching. The more diverse pool of applicants boosts the diversity of trainee teacher (more male graduates, more graduates from an ethnic minority background), reduces subject specific shortages (more Physics graduates) and improves quality (more graduates from Russell Group Universities).³
3. Increasing teachers' salaries to 2010 levels would be an effective way to boost the relative attractiveness of the teaching profession. However, a 13 percent pay rise would cost roughly £1.8bn each year. Given the current budgetary pressures this is unlikely to be affordable.
4. A more cost-effective approach to make teaching relatively more attractive would be through a merit-based reduction in the tuition fees. This approach has found success internationally. Chile, for instance, found that a merit-based reduction in the tuition fees for teacher training increased the quantity of top scoring students going into teaching.⁴

¹ <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/what-has-happened-teacher-pay-england>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/averageweeklyearningsearn01>

³ <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/files/working-papers/iser/2021-06.pdf>

5. In the UK a merit/subject-based reduction in tuition fees for university led initial teacher training programmes would be less expensive than an equivalent bursary scheme (most graduates who go into teaching are unlikely to repay their student loans in full) and is likely to be more effective due to the power of loss aversion – people prefer avoiding losses to acquiring equivalent gains.

Teacher Retention

6. Due to capacity constraints in teacher training, the time it takes to train and integrate new teachers and high attrition rate of new entrants the government should prioritise policies aimed at retaining existing teachers.⁵ My research finds that salaries, working hours and school leadership are the main factors that influence teacher retention.⁶
7. Teachers' salaries play an important role in the decision to remain in the profession or not. Teachers who earn more are significantly less likely to leave.
8. The effect of a salary increase on teacher retention displays increasing marginal returns. A 10 percent increase in salaries has more than twice the effect of a 5 percent increase. For example, increasing teachers' salaries to 2010 levels (13 percent) would reduce teacher attrition by almost one-quarter (23 percent). While a more modest increase (5 percent) would reduce attrition by around 8 percent. If policymakers are going to use salaries to improve teacher retention only a large increase (i.e., 10 percent or above) is likely to make a substantive impact.
9. Policies related to improving and supporting school leaders and reducing teacher working hours seem to be the most cost-effective approaches. For instance, a 5hr per week reduction in teachers working hours has the same effect on teacher retention as a 10 percent salary increase.

Teacher Ethnic Diversity

10. Ethnic diversity is improving year on year, but the rate of change is slow. Today, 60 percent of state-funded schools (primary and secondary) do not have an ethnic minority classroom teacher and almost 90 percent do not have an ethnic minority teacher in the senior leadership team.
11. There is a long way to go before the school workforce becomes ethnically representative of the pupils they teach. In England, the ethnic composition of teachers in London most closely represents the composition of the pupils they teach. But even then, teachers in London need to become twice as ethnically diverse to be fully representative of their student population (both Primary and Secondary School).
12. Primary school teachers from an ethnic minority background are especially underrepresented compared to the pupils they teach. This is most striking in the North East and the South West where classroom teachers need to become 10 times and 9 times more ethnically diverse to be representative of their student populations respectively.

Teacher Gender Diversity

13. Gender Diversity is declining. The proportion of secondary school teachers who are male is at a record low (35 percent). Almost 1 in 4 state-funded schools in England do not have a male

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272775722000371>

⁵ <https://repository.essex.ac.uk/30992/1/EPI-Local-teacher-labour-markets-2021-1.pdf>

⁶ https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4384928

classroom teacher. The issues are most pronounced in the East Midlands where the figure increases to 1 in 3. Almost 1 in 2 state schools do not have a male in the senior leadership team. Roughly 1 in 20 do not have a female in the senior leadership team.

14. The decline in the gender diversity of teaching is driven by the decline in the relative attractiveness of the teaching profession. Men are less likely to go into the profession and are more likely to leave.
15. Men are less likely to apply for, and enrol onto, teacher training programmes. Men's occupational choice is more likely to be motivated by financial considerations than their female counterparts. This means that the decline in teachers' salaries (compared to other graduate professions) has had a larger effect on male graduates' interest in perusing a career in teaching than female graduates.
16. Male teachers are more likely to leave the profession. Male teachers generally have stronger labour market opportunities outside of teaching - my research estimates that over 50 percent of male teachers would be financially better off if they left the profession.⁷ Furthermore male teachers' decision to leave the profession is more motivated by salaries than female teachers.⁸

Teacher Diversity Across the Home Nations

17. Challenges over Gender Diversity are more acute in Wales (30 percent of schools do not have a male classroom teacher). For comparison 23 percent of schools in the West Midlands do not have a male classroom teacher. The proportion of schools without a male teacher in Northern Ireland (25 percent) is like England (24 percent).
18. Challenges over Ethnic Diversity are also more acute in Wales. 89 percent of schools do not have a classroom teacher from an ethnic minority background while 12 percent of pupils in Wales are from an ethnic minority background. To put this figure into perspective the North East of England has a lower proportion of schools without an ethnic minority teacher (81.5 percent) despite having a lower proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority background (10 percent).

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⁷ <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2021-07>

⁸ https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4384928

