



Is money the solution to the teacher supply crisis?

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ABSTRACT

Financial incentives and other monetary inducements have been widely used to address the shortage of teachers in many countries. Despite heavy investments in such policies, shortages in some geographical regions and subjects persist. This short commentary summarizes the findings of a comprehensive systematic review of international research to find evidence of what works in attracting and recruiting teachers. The results suggest that money does help but it is not a long-term solution.

Key words: Rural producers, Colombia, Integration into the market, Individual skills, Social resources

INTRODUCTION

A shortage of high-quality teachers has been a problem faced by many countries for decades. A wide range of initiatives and policies have been implemented to solve this problem. Most countries employ fairly similar strategies. The most common among these is the use of financial incentives, such as bursaries, scholarships, tuition fees exemption, higher wages for teachers teaching hard-to-staff subjects or hard-to-reach areas, housing benefits and attractive pension schemes. Others include offering alternative routes to qualification, such as the apprenticeship scheme, immersion programmes and school-based training. While much research has been conducted on the impact of these policies, with many suggesting that these have been effective, few have questioned the research itself. This calls into question the reliability of such evidence. This is important because policies based on weak evidence means unnecessary wastage of investments. There are also the opportunity costs where money could be otherwise spent on initiatives that actually work. A comprehensive review and synthesis of 120 strongest empirical works by See et al. (2020a), suggests that money is only part of the solution to the teacher shortage issue. Unlike previous studies and reviews, See et al. rated each piece of research by the quality of the study design to ensure that the most reliable evidence is represented using a rigorous appraisal sieve (Gorard et al. 2017). Their review found that to be beneficial, such incentives have to be large enough to compensate for the relatively challenging working conditions and competitive enough

to offset the opportunity costs of not being in better paid jobs. But even so, the effects are short-lived. This suggests that other measures, such as improving the career structure and the working conditions of teachers may be needed in addition to increasing teachers' pay. Previous studies have suggested that most teachers do not enter teaching for the money although it does help. It is the knowledge that they are doing something worthwhile that keeps them in (See et al. 2020b; Gorard et al. 2020). While research suggests that professional development of teachers, mentoring and induction holds promise, the evidence is weak because of the lack of robust studies so far.

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