

Article

How to Get More People into Teaching? Comparing Undergraduates' and Teacher Trainees' Motivation and Perceptions of a Teaching Career

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Abstract: Understanding people's perceptions of teaching as an occupation, and their motivation or otherwise to teach, can help identify which initiatives/policies are most promising in improving teacher recruitment. Previous studies have often sought only the views of teachers/teacher trainees to understand why people choose teaching as a career. Recruitment strategies based on evidence from such research are therefore only appealing to those who are already interested in teaching. It is the views of those who might otherwise have gone into teaching that can provide better clues to what we can do to get more people into teaching. This paper compares the views of 4469 undergraduate students and 788 trainee teachers in England. Our analysis goes beyond the usual approach by comparing young people completely uninterested in teaching, those who considered teaching but rejected it, those intending to be teachers, and those already in training. Our study found little or no difference between prospective teachers and others in terms of generic career drivers and the attraction of financial incentives, although prospective teachers tended to have lower levels of qualifications and to come from less prestigious occupational backgrounds. However, those not planning to be teachers are much less concerned about teachers' workload, suggesting that this is probably not a great deterrent for those considering teaching. Compared to those who intend to be teachers, those who have considered but rejected teaching are less likely to view teaching as intellectually stimulating. They are least likely to see teaching as a high-status profession, offering good promotion prospects and job security. Policies to improve recruitment need to make teaching more attractive to the second group by addressing these issues. Additionally, these policies should be distinct from policies to retain existing teachers.

Keywords: teacher supply; career motivation; perception of teaching; teacher trainees

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1. Introduction—The Teacher Supply Problem

Attracting people to the teaching profession has been an important policy issue for many countries for several decades. Teachers are essential for the provision of an effective education system [1] and can make a difference to children's academic and lifelong outcomes [2–4].

Despite the crucial role of teachers for each generation of new students, and the recruitment of teachers being a key policy for many governments, a widespread shortage of teachers is still reported in many countries. More than half of the countries in Europe, and almost all school districts in the US, have apparently reported chronic challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers [5]. In England and the US, the teacher shortage has been predicted to get worse as the pupil population is rising for some age groups, and more teachers are leaving before retirement [6]. In England, shortages are particularly acute in some subjects and regions [7].

The shortage of teachers is reportedly partly the result of people leaving the profession prematurely. Teaching has often been characterised as an occupation with a high level of

turnover especially among new teachers [8]. Although all occupations experience some degree of turnover and career change, turnover in teaching is particularly high in the first few years compared to many other professions [9], and in England, early attrition is particularly acute for maths, science and languages teachers [10]. Among the secondary teachers who qualified in 2010–2012, only around 66% stayed on in state-funded schools by the fifth year, for example [11].

Part of the problem may be lack of adequate preparation for dealing with the stress and workload associated with teaching [12]. In England, the government have set out a series of approaches including the Early Career Framework (ECF) [13], as part of the wider Teacher Recruitment and Retention strategy, to support new teachers [14]. Studies indicate that teachers' perception of workload are strong predictors of their decision to leave teaching [15,16]. Workload, policy changes, and accountability pressure were among the top reasons cited as reasons for teacher attrition in a survey of over 1,000 teachers in England [17]. In 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) in England launched the Workload Strategy to tackle unnecessary and unproductive tasks teachers undertake in the course of their duty. The Teacher Workload Survey carried out in 2019 in England by the DfE showed a reduction in teachers' working hours, but workload was still a major challenge for secondary school teachers [18]. Does a finding like this also mean that factors such as high workload are putting people off becoming teachers in the first place?

To maintain an adequate supply of teachers, we need to look more carefully at the supply pipeline to understand why some students choose to go into teaching and others do not. The perception of teaching as a favourable career or not is an important one, and some of the literature suggests that an unfavourable perception is a reason why fewer people choose teaching as a career. This may be due to a variety of factors including financial rewards (such as salary) or the demand of the role (such as workload). Studies on motivation to go into teaching have also emphasised the importance of altruistic and intrinsic attractors, such as the enjoyment of working with children [19], or a desire to help others [20–23].

Current recruitment strategies to improve teacher supply often involve rewards such as bursaries and scholarships for shortage subjects, loan forgiveness, paid internships, incentive payments for teaching in shortage regions, and increasingly targeted advertising as well. For example, the Department for Education's (England) marketing campaign, *Every Lesson Shapes a Life* was designed to appeal to the social utility (altruistic values) of teaching because this is what most studies on teacher motivation report as important. However, despite heavy investments in these strategies, recruitment to teaching has not improved.

One reason that these approaches make so little difference is perhaps because such recruitment strategies are based on evidence collected from those already in teaching or who intend to enter teaching. In other words, they are "preaching to the converted". The problem with almost all research on teacher motivation and perceptions of teaching is that it only examines the views of teachers and prospective teachers. This ignores a large group of people who have thought about teaching but have decided against it. Understanding the perceptions and motivations of this group is relevant as it can help address potential teachers' fears and apprehension. Omitting them in any analysis means that such factors could be missed in any policy initiatives. Our most recent review [24] of over 250 studies found only a few, including our own, that have asked about participants who have made the decision not to be teachers [25–29].

Understanding existing teachers' motivations and perceptions alone is not enough if we want to increase the pool of teachers. We already know quite a lot about the motivations of those who have decided on teaching as a career because most previous studies have tended to focus on the motivations of those who had already made the decision to be school teachers. However, we know relatively little about the motivation of those who have yet to make the decision. Our previous work [25] shows that around 60% of undergraduates have considered teaching as a career. It may not be useful to focus policies on the 40%

who have never wanted to be a teacher. These are on a different career trajectory towards occupations in medicine, architecture and so on. Of the 60% who have considered teaching, only 20% intended to be teachers. What is more useful than is to see how we can persuade the rest of the “considered” group (the remaining 40%) to think seriously about teaching. This is the group where we still have a good chance of encouraging them to translate their “consideration” to “intention”.

For this reason, this current paper will compare the views of teacher trainees and those who firmly intend to be teachers with those who have considered but decided otherwise, to see how they are different and what can be done to persuade the latter group to think seriously about teaching as a possible career. This new paper is a follow-up of our earlier work [25] which considered the perceptions and motivations of general undergraduates with regard to teaching as a career. In this new paper, we include the views of actual teacher trainees as well. The aim is to investigate the possible differences between those students who go on to become teachers and the rest. Practically, this is important because it provides an indication of what might need to be done differently in order to encourage a larger and wider group of people into teaching. For both research and policy, it is important to assess to what extent teachers and non-teachers differ. The purpose here is to give a more complete account of those who do and do not want to be teachers than is usual in the existing literature, which is based primarily on existing teachers and prospective teachers’ accounts.

It is also the case that many recruitment strategies tend to be based on a ‘universal’ human capital theory of motivation. They are often introduced without clear and complete understanding of people’s concerns about the profession. In reality, not everyone is similarly motivated. Yet, successive governments in England and those in many other countries have emphasised these so-called targeted recruitment incentives. Shortages are often attributed to the relatively poor pay of teachers. Consequently, many policy initiatives have addressed shortages through financial incentives to attract more people into the teaching profession. There is some evidence that these approaches can be effective, at least in terms of attracting people who were already considering teaching anyway [30,31]). However, financial incentives are not enough to keep teachers in schools once the payments are removed. Additionally, official government data has consistently shown that academically strong prospective teachers are less likely to progress through the teacher supply pipeline than their academically weaker peers [32]. To those who have no intention to be teachers, such incentives are not likely to alter their career decision.

For this reason, our new study also considers the social-economic background of respondents, their demographic background, and their academic profile because much of individuals’ career choice might also be influenced by these factors, although they are seldom explored in previous work. The question, therefore, is how we can appropriately encourage those who might otherwise have gone into teaching to translate their earlier interest in teaching into reality. Our new study addresses all of these issues and more.

2. Methods Used in This Study

This is a cross-sectional study involving a nation-wide survey of undergraduate students and of teacher trainees. Our study extends current knowledge in this area in its coverage of types of institutions and disciplines. Most previous studies are located within one institution (usually the researchers’ own institution) and cover only one or few disciplines (e.g., only science and maths students). Including a range of institutions and disciplines allows us to get a more representative and thus less biased view from students about their career choice. Unlike most previous research, which seek the views of only those who have indicated interest in teaching, we have also included the general undergraduate population. In addition, we surveyed teacher trainees who were completing their postgraduate certification in education (PGCE) in a sample of teacher training providers. This allows us to see if those who have apparently made firm decisions to be teachers are,

in any way, different to those who said they wanted to be teachers, or those who have considered and rejected teaching.

The whole sample included 4469 undergraduate students in 53 universities of all types and 788 trainee teachers from 10 teacher training institutions, in England. Students were recruited via personal contacts and emails to head of departments, university career advice centres, and careers fairs. The number of cases represents those who responded. The focus of this paper is on the teacher trainees, and how their responses differ from the more general student population.

2.1. *The Instrument*

Our questionnaire instrument included items identified in previous studies as factors influencing general career choice and people's perceptions of teaching as a career. Many of these items were adapted from those previously used and validated by [33]. The questionnaire asked about students' background, their current education (e.g., subject major at university, entrance qualification and expected degree classification), what they look for in a career, sources of information they have found useful in choosing a career, whether they have considered teaching, and which factors attract them to, or deter them from, teaching. It addressed the relative level of qualifications of respondents, and whether they felt that they could easily find a range of jobs. It also included items on the issues that policy is often intended to address (such as workload and monetary incentives).

Students were invited to complete the questionnaire online, by post, or face-to-face, or at the start or end of a lecture. Most responses were collected in-person, and often allowed some discussion as well. Notes were made on such discussions and some example comments by respondents are presented below.

Responses to some items are categorical, such as subject of study at university, and many are ratings on a scale from 0 (no importance) to 10 (most important), such as how important pay is when choosing a career.

The two questionnaires used for undergraduates and trainees are largely similar with a difference in one question, which asked about their teaching intention. Unlike the survey for undergraduates where we asked if they have considered teaching and if they intend to be teachers, for the teacher trainees we asked how likely they are to go on to be a teacher. In this way, we can compare the motivations and perceptions of four groups of people: those who have not considered teaching, those who have considered but decided against it, those who have indicated interest in teaching, and those who have made firm decisions to be teachers (these will be the teacher trainees). Such comparative analysis enables a more sophisticated understanding of the determinants of teaching as a career and what can be done to increase teacher supply.

2.2. *Analysis*

The categorical variables are summarised as frequencies and percentages, and cross-tabulated with the four categories of students who did not consider, considered and rejected, considered and intended to teach, and teacher trainees. For most categorical variables, any of the few missing values were recoded as "not known", or not known to be so for any category. The exception was parental occupation, mostly because the question asked for two parents/carers and many respondents only reported for one. Where responses for two parents/carers were given, we recorded the most prestigious of the responses using the following categories:

- University lecturer, doctor, dentist, solicitor, scientist (or similar);
- Technical, health, welfare, education professional (or similar);
- Clerical, administrative assistant, secretary (or similar);
- Craft related jobs;
- Small employer;
- Not usually employed.

For the 11-point ratings, a small number of missing values were noted, and replaced by the overall mean score. This retains the important information from other variables of any case missing a specific value but does not disturb the mean of the achieved sample [34]

3. Findings

Our findings illustrate what potential teachers are like, what motivates them, and whether there are differences by geographic region, training route, or phase of teaching.

3.1. What Are the Characteristics of Potential teachers?

Potential teachers in England appear to be disproportionately female (Table 1). Females are more likely to have considered teaching; they are even more likely to express intention to teach, and to be training as teachers.

Table 1. Percentage of each sex considering, intending, and training to be a teacher.

Reported Sex	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Female	58	61	69	65
Male	36	33	26	31
Other	6	6	5	4

Trainee teachers tended to be white in ethnic origin. South Asian students are least likely to training to be teachers, to have considered teaching, or expressed an intention to be a teacher. This may be simply due to the nature of our sample, but there is an indication that ethnic minority students, such as South Asian students, are somewhat less likely to follow through on their intention to become a teacher (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of each ethnic group considering, intending, and training to be a teacher.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
South Asian	18	15	18	9
Black	2	4	2	3
East Asian	3	2	3	1
White	69	69	69	79
Mixed	2	4	2	3
Other	7	6	7	5

Undergraduates who have considered teaching are slightly less likely to have parents with a degree and those who intend to be teachers, and teacher trainees, are less likely to have at least one parent with a degree (Table 3). To some extent, teachers come from less educated families.

Table 3. Percentage of students considering, intending, and training to be a teacher, by parents having a degree.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Parent(s) has a degree	56	52	44	45
Parent(s) does not have a degree	37	41	49	52
Not known	7	7	7	3

Similarly, those intending to be teachers, and trainee teachers, are slightly less likely to be from professional and higher managerial families and are more likely to come from families with no known occupation (Table 4). The difference, however, is small.

Table 4. Percentage of students considering, intending, and training to be a teacher, by occupational group of parents.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
University/college lecturer, doctor, dentist, solicitor, scientist,	32	29	24	28
Technical, health, welfare or education professionals	28	30	30	28
Clerical, administrative assistant, secretary, dent	16	17	17	17
Craft related jobs	10	11	14	11
Small employer (under 10 employees)	3	3	2	1
Not usually employed including home-makers, long-term unemployed, never worked	1	1	2	3
Do not know	11	10	11	12

Compared to the general sample, intending and trainee teachers are much less likely to have entered their undergraduate degree programme with A-levels or International Baccalaureate (Table 5). They are more likely to have unspecified prior qualifications. Although undergraduates with vocational qualifications are more likely to report intending to be teachers, this is not reflected in our sample of trainees.

Table 5. Percentage of students considering, intending, and training to be a teacher, by university entrance qualification.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
A-level	67	68	58	50
International Baccalaureate	6	5	4	2
BTEC, GNVQ, vocational	7	8	15	4
Access diploma	4	4	6	5
Scottish qualification	0	0	0	1
Other or unspecified	16	15	17	38

A clearer pattern emerged when we looked at degree outcomes (Table 6). Compared to the overall sample, those who considered teaching and those who intended to teach expected or had received lower class degrees. Teacher trainees were much more likely to have 2:2 degree results than their peers who are not continuing to pursue teaching (as far as it is possible to tell).

Table 6. Expected degree class of undergraduates and degree class teacher trainees.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
1st	31	29	27	22
2:1	53	55	57	58
2:2	3	4	5	15
3rd or pass	1	1	1	2
Other or not classified	12	11	11	3

Note: for the first three columns, the degree class is what was expected, usually in the 2nd year. For teacher trainees, the degree class was their actual result.

In summary, while some differences are small and some may be due to the nature of the two samples, when compared to undergraduates generally, trainee teachers are more

often female, with less educated parents working in less professional occupations, who entered undergraduate courses with alternative or unspecified qualifications, and who left with somewhat lower class degrees, on average. This extends and confirms the analysis in our earlier paper [25].

Trainee teachers and those intending to be teachers also appear less likely to have studied science and maths than the more general sample and are more likely to have studied languages including modern foreign languages, English, and classics (Table 7). What is interesting is that 13% of trainees had a degree in medicine and dentistry. This group is similar in their career motivations to teachers. They are more likely to emphasise the social utility or altruistic values of a career as key drivers.

Table 7. Subject major of undergraduates and teacher trainees.

Percentages	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Physical and mathematical sciences	34	31	21	16
Medicine, dentistry	7	5	2	13
Sports-related	6	7	13	8
Business	3	2	2	1
Social studies	32	36	44	28
Languages	8	9	10	24
Creative arts, media studies	7	8	8	3
Law, architecture	4	2	1	1
Other	0	0	0	7

3.2. General Career Drivers

Previous research suggests that teachers did not usually choose teaching as a fallback career or because of fewer options available to them [35]. Our new study shows that while most undergraduates feel that they could get a job, other than teaching, relatively easily with their existing or planned degree (83%), those intending to be teachers were less likely to think so, and actual trainees were even less so (Table 8). This suggests that perhaps the chosen subject area of prospective teachers offered them less freedom in their choice of career. Of course, it is possible that some intending teachers made the decision before university and thus chose a subject of study more open to a teaching career.

Table 8. Ease of entry to a job other than teaching for undergraduates and teacher trainees.

	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Ease of getting a job other than teaching	83	83	79	67

In terms of financial incentives, undergraduates are largely impartial about the different types of financial incentives for training, rating them between 6.6 and 6.9 (out of 10 points), but the importance of incentives is greater for those considering and intending to become a teacher (Table 9). Teacher trainees are least likely to consider these incentives as important (column 4). Those intending to be teachers are more likely to rate being paid a salary while training as important, while teacher trainees do not consider this as important at all. Overall, those who have decided on teaching are less likely to admit being attracted to teaching by such monetary inducements. Here, we can see how studies that only surveyed teachers or pre-service teachers are likely to downplay such monetary incentives, whereas those that only considered the views of intending teachers might highlight the importance of such incentives.

Table 9. Importance of financial incentives to undergraduates and teacher trainees (ratings).

	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Being paid a salary while receiving training	6.9	7.3	7.9	1.6
Tax free bursary or scholarship for training to teach	6.8	7.3	7.9	5.8
A loan to cover your tuition fees	6.6	7.0	7.8	6.2
A loan to support your living expenses	6.7	7.1	7.8	4.8

Considering only the responses of teacher trainees, intriguingly, we found that trainee teachers in receipt of any kind of incentive do not value it highly (Table 10). Interestingly, those receiving loans would prefer salaries or bursaries to train. However, those with salaries or bursaries to train appear to prefer having loans. The table shows that those training in shortage subjects (thus receiving bursaries and scholarships) would rather have loans and those on certain routes into teaching (e.g., School Direct and postgraduate teaching apprenticeships) prefer loans to cover expenses and fees. We suspect that most trainees would prefer to have salaries/bursaries as well as loans.

Table 10. Relative importance of financial incentives to trainees, compared to actual receipt of incentives.

	Salary While Training	Bursary for Training	Loan for Tuition Fees	Loan for Living Expenses
Being paid a salary while receiving training	1.1	5.4	6.0	4.7
Tax free bursary or scholarship for training to teach	1.0	1.1	5.2	4.7
A loan to cover your tuition fees	1.8	5.5	1.4	1.4
A loan to support your living expenses	1.5	6.0	3.8	1.5

Comments from some of the trainees show that funding is important to them and enables them to undertake the training. For example:

I am studying PE and receive no funding, so therefore have to work around my PGCE which is difficult due to the workload at school.

As I have a young family and a mortgage, I would not have been able to complete this course without the bursary or the student loans.

There was some resistance to the idea of recruitment incentives only being available for some teachers or only in some subjects:

I believe all subjects should be paid to complete their training, not just those with recruitment issues. As this suggests that some subjects are more important than others.

3.3. What Motivates People to Become a Teacher or Not?

This is an important question as it helps guide policy on what aspects of teaching to focus on in recruitment drives. First, there are some generic factors that are considered important or not in an individual's career choice, regardless of whether they have considered, or are intending or actually training to be a teacher (Table 11). These are job satisfaction or enjoyment, job security, career prospects and an opportunity to develop skills in that career. All groups are interested in these job characteristics. Similarly, there is very little difference between prospective teachers and others in what they considered less important in the career choice (e.g., length of working day, holidays and autonomy). These are all rated under 7.0. Despite prior studies emphasising workload as a specific issue and barrier for those thinking of becoming a teacher, this does not appear as a key determinant here.

Table 11. What people look for in a career—Ratings from 0 (not important) to 10 (most important).

	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Job satisfaction, enjoyment	8.8	8.8	8.9	8.7
Job security	7.5	7.5	7.8	7.9
Career prospects	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.8
Opportunity to develop skills	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.7
Kinds of people I will be working with	7.0	7.2	7.5	7.1
Intellectual stimulation	7.0	6.9	6.6	7.1
Job responsibility	6.6	6.6	6.9	7.0
Job that suits my temperament	6.9	7.0	7.2	7.0
Autonomy, scope for initiative	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.8
Length of working day, holidays	5.7	5.9	6.1	5.9
Family tradition	2.1	2.0	2.3	1.8

However, some factors are slightly more attractive to prospective teachers. As shown in previous studies, they include more intrinsic motivators, being more interested in their subject, and sharing that interest with others (Table 12).

Table 12. What career influences are more attractive to likely teachers.

	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Interest in my subject area	7.7	7.8	8.1	8.3
Chance to give something back	6.8	7.1	7.7	8.2
Chance to share my knowledge	6.3	6.5	7.1	7.8
Chance to use academic knowledge	6.3	6.4	6.7	7.4

Consistent with previous research, prospective teachers report being less interested in extrinsic motivation such as higher pay, and in the status of the job, or having an internship (Table 13).

Table 13. Which career influences are less attractive to likely teachers.

	All	Considered	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Pay, salary	7.3	7.1	6.8	5.8
Status, public perception of the job	4.4	4.2	4.2	3.8
Opportunity for internship	4.8	4.6	4.3	2.1

There are some clear differences in the perceptions and attractors for prospective teachers and others (Table 14). The comparison is between the whole undergraduate sample, the subsets who consider teaching and either rejected it or intend to teach, and the sample of trainee teachers. Some of the differences reported are very substantial. For example, prospective teachers are more likely to see teaching as a career for those who enjoy working with young people, allowing them to give something back to society and pursue their academic interest and that is intellectually stimulating. They also report being encouraged by a positive school experience or having teachers in their own family. Prospective teachers have a more positive perception of teaching. They are more likely to see teaching as a secure job with good promotion prospects.

Table 14. Perceptions of teaching as a career.

	All	Rejected Teaching	Intend	Teacher Trainees
Teachers' salaries are not high enough	7.5	7.6	7.5	8.1
It's for those who enjoy working with young people	6.3	7.0	7.2	8.1
It allows you to give something back to society	6.5	7.5	7.9	8.1
Teaching offers intellectual stimulation	5.3	6.0	7.1	7.8
Good teachers at school can encourage people to go into teaching	4.7	7.5	7.8	7.7
A good experience at school can encourage people to go into teaching	6.4	7.1	7.5	7.6
The long holidays are attractive	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.4
Teaching has high job security	2.2	6.4	6.8	7.2
It allows you to continue your academic interest	4.8	6.2	7.1	7.2
It has good career/promotion prospects	2.9	5.3	6.5	7.1
Learning to teach makes you more employable	7.0	5.5	6.2	6.4
It is a high-status profession	7.3	5.0	5.7	5.8
There is a problem with poor discipline in schools	6.2	6.6	6.1	5.5
People who have teachers in their family are more likely to go into teaching	2.0	2.0	2.0	5.2
Working hours in teaching are family friendly	6.9	6.2	6.3	4.9
Teachers' workload is manageable	5.0	4.5	4.8	3.9
It's for people who are academic stars	5.4	3.0	2.9	2.0
It's a more suitable career for women	7.4	4.9	4.5	1.0
It's for those who cannot do anything else	6.0	2.0	1.4	0.9

Of particular interest is the group that have considered but rejected teaching. Compared to those who intend to be teachers, they are less likely to view teaching as intellectually stimulating or as allowing one to pursue their academic interest. They are less likely to see teaching as a high-status profession, offering good promotion prospects and job security. This is interesting.

There is little difference in the perceived attractiveness of school holidays, discipline problems in schools, or the level of teachers' pay. Intending teachers are no more concerned about teacher pay than those not interested in teaching. This suggests that these issues are not key determinants of becoming a teacher or not. Additionally, this contradicts some of the previous work (see above).

Until people are in teacher training, there is less concern that the job may not be family friendly.

Non-teachers are much less concerned about teachers' workload, meaning that this is probably not a great deterrent for those considering teaching. They are much more likely to believe that teaching is more appropriate for women or for those unable to get any other job. This is a major problem of perception that relates partly to the status of teachers in society (and is presumably also linked to their lower average attainment and less prestigious family background in the overall sample). However, non-teachers are more likely to report that teaching is a high-status profession, despite the perceived lack of promotion opportunities. Additionally, trainee teachers report that their training leads to more than one possible occupational outcome. For example:

I decided to do my Primary PGCE, mostly because you do not need to directly go into teaching to use this qualification. I am definitely considering the other opportunities available, for example, working in a prison, library, becoming an education officer and

even working in education psychology roles. Basically, I think the PGCE is an attractive qualification because there is more to it than classroom teaching.

3.4. Differences between Routes and Areas

As additional analyses, we also compared teacher trainees on school-based training routes and PGCE (university-based) students, those training to teach in different phases, and in different parts of the country. We found few differences between them in terms of what attracts them to teaching. Their ratings are very similar whether they are following the university PGCE route, or a school-based route such as a SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) (Table 15). Similarly, there is little difference between those training for the primary sector and those planning for posts in the secondary sector.

Table 15. Comparison of perceptions of teaching between school-led and university trainees.

	PGCE Students	SCITT/School Direct	Primary (n = 158)	Secondary (n = 630)
It allows you to give something back to society	8.2	8.0	7.7	8.0
It's for those who enjoy working with young people	8.1	8.2	8.1	8.3
Teachers' salaries are not high enough	8.1	7.9	8.0	7.9
Teaching offers intellectual stimulation	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.8
Good teachers at school can encourage people to go into teaching	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.4
A good experience at school can encourage people to go into teaching	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.5
The long holidays are attractive	7.3	7.7	7.0	7.9
It allows you to continue your academic interest	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.1
Teaching has high job security	7.2	7.1	6.9	7.2
It has good career/promotion prospects	7.1	7.2	7.1	7.3
Learning to teach makes you more employable	6.5	6.2	5.7	6.3
It is a high status profession	5.8	5.6	5.9	5.5
There is a problem with poor discipline in schools	5.5	5.6	5.1	5.7
People who have teachers in their family are more likely to go into teaching	5.3	4.7	4.0	4.9
Working hours in teaching are family friendly	4.9	4.8	5.3	4.7
Teachers' workload is manageable	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.0
It's for people who are academic stars	2.1	1.9	1.1	2.1
It's a more suitable career for women	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.9
It's for those who cannot do anything else	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.8

Finally, there is little evidence that views on teaching vary much for those training or planning to teach in different regions in England (Table 16).

Table 16. Ratings of influences on choice of teaching, comparing students training in different economic areas.

	London, East, Southeast England	Northeast, Northwest England	West Midlands	Yorkshire, Humber	East Midlands
Teachers' salaries are not high enough	8.8	7.8	8.1	8.3	8.0
It allows you to give something back to society	8.2	7.9	8.2	8.1	8.6
It's for those who enjoy working with young people	8.1	8.2	8.0	8.4	8.0
Good teachers at school can encourage people to go into teaching	7.8	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.7
Teaching offers intellectual stimulation	7.7	7.7	7.8	8.0	7.6
The long holidays are attractive	7.2	7.2	7.5	7.5	7.8
A good experience at school can encourage people to go into teaching	7.2	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.9
Teaching has high job security	7.0	6.9	7.6	6.7	7.3
It allows you to continue your academic interest	7.0	7.1	7.3	7.6	6.7
It has good career/promotion prospects	6.9	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.0
Learning to teach makes you more employable	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.5
It is a high-status profession	6.2	5.7	5.9	5.5	5.7
There is a problem with poor discipline in schools	5.6	5.6	5.3	5.6	5.9
People who have teachers in their family are more likely to go into teaching	5.5	5.1	4.9	5.4	5.6
Working hours in teaching are family friendly	5.2	4.5	5.0	5.3	4.7
Teachers' workload is manageable	4.3	4.0	4.1	3.7	3.4
It's for people who are academic stars	1.3	2.1	2.0	2.2	1.8
It's a more suitable career for women	0.8	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.7
It's for those who cannot do anything else	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.7

In summary, there is little difference in the motivations of trainee teachers from different areas and on different training routes. The key differences in this paper are between prospective or trainee teachers and those who considered but rejected a career in teaching.

4. Discussion

The research described here is unusual in that it involves teachers, those interested in teaching, and those not interested in teaching. In several respects, this alters the kinds of findings produced by standard research based only on the views of teachers and intending teachers. In attempting to improve the recruitment of new teachers, a key consideration for policy and research must be about who is intended to be attracted to teaching. This paper looks at four main groups: those never considering teaching, those considering and rejecting teaching, those who intend to become teachers, and those in training. Presumably, the first group is not a fruitful area for new recruitment. A lot of these students are studying subjects at university such as accountancy, law, medicine, architecture and engineering, which have their own clear professional or vocational outcomes. A lot are planning a career in their specialist subject area, at this stage at least. At the other extreme, a focus only on those firmly intending or training to become teachers would lead to the same,

probably misleading, answers as standard research in this area, that does not have a suitable comparator.

In general, teaching is currently disproportionately attracting students from less educated families with less prestigious occupational backgrounds, who have somewhat lower attainment prior to, and at, university. Prospective teachers also tend to come from some of the most generic subject areas (such as sport, English, classics, and history). However, in the short term, student background characteristics, prior experiences, and course choices such as these are not malleable, and so these differences do not help much in deciding how to attract more people into teaching.

The key distinction lies in the views of intending teachers and those who express some interest in teaching, but do not now intend to become teachers. This distinction is important as it provides clues for how to attract more people into teaching. Research on the first group tends to emphasise the concerns of those in the profession, but these concerns had clearly not deterred them from becoming teachers. For the second group, it is job satisfaction, job status, job security, career/promotion prospects, and intellectual stimulation that seem to be more important.

Many of the issues that teachers/trainees report as negative (e.g., heavy workload and poor student discipline) do not discriminate between prospective teachers and others. Such headline-grabbing factors simply disappear when a genuine comparative design is used, as here.

Policy-makers and other stakeholders therefore need to learn the lesson that teacher supply will not only (or at all) be addressed by tackling the largely bureaucratic issues that existing teachers complain about. The reason why most students do not intend to become teachers is probably much deeper and long-standing. Additionally, the key difference lies in the prestige that young people see, or do not see, in teaching as an occupation. Policies need to be devised to make teaching more attractive to this “possible” group, totally distinct from policies to try and retain existing teachers. Working towards this is the next step in our project.

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