



# Teacher Recruitment Strategies in High-Income Nations.

Implications for Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Latin America.

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*The primary purpose of this review, prepared as a draft version by Carol DeShano da Silva for PREAL's Working Group on the Teaching Profession, was to highlight the range of teacher recruitment strategies in place in high-income countries, to inform the implementation of such practices in Latin America. Several observations must be made on this concern.*

*First, few strategies have been evaluated and, when evaluations are available, the evidence is descriptive in nature. To date, there is no teacher recruitment strategy—offering financial incentives, improving working conditions, or offering alternative pathways to teaching—that research has concluded is consistently effective in recruiting teachers. This lack of evidence is important to be considered when creating new teacher recruitment policies and programs.*

*Second, the framework for this review is based on theories of teacher motivation created in high-income nations with different historical and cultural contexts, as well as structurally different educational systems, than most countries in the LAC region. Finally, the structural characteristics of education systems in developed countries tend to be highly decentralized, a fact that influences teacher recruitment. Although most educational systems in Latin America have undergone decentralization initiatives in recent years, in some cases, teacher recruitment, training and placement remain partially centralized processes.*

## Financial Incentives.

Salary is widely considered a key factor in an individual's decision to pursue or not pursue teaching and most believe that teachers' salaries are low in comparison to other professions (Price, 2003). Research in the U.S. suggests salary determines, at least in part, where a teacher chooses to work (Murnane et al., 1991; Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin 1999; Loeb and Page 2000.) Based on this basic finding, it seems logical that offering potential teachers financial incentives to join the teaching profession would be one effective way to increase recruitment.

The range of salary-related initiatives to attract new teachers is wide. Perhaps the most straightforward is passing an overall increase in teachers' salaries. In 2001, legislatures in 28 states in the United States proposed bills to increase teachers' salaries and as of 2003, 11 had passed (Price, 2003).

However, expenditures on teacher salaries are already a large proportion of the education budget in most countries. Thus, to recruit teachers but also maintain financial efficiency, it is essential to identify what salary level is necessary to make a significant impact in attracting new candidates to the teaching profession. One must also consider whether salary increasement across by itself is an effective strategy for recruiting new teachers in comparison to other sorts of financial incentives or strategies.

Given that lower salaries are one explanation for teacher shortages in hard-to-serve areas, such as rural communities, this seems to be a common-sense approach to teacher recruitment. However, little empirical evidence exists to show that raising salaries alone will recruit and retain teachers.

## Loan Forgiveness and Education Scholarship Programs.

Popular strategies to encourage individuals to enter the teaching profession in the United States are loan forgiveness or scholarships.

Scholarship programs provide funds for students to attend higher education or specialized training in the field of education. Loan forgiveness programs repay a percentage of a former student's educational debt in exchange for work as a teacher. In recent history, the U.S. federal government and numerous U.S. states have implemented such programs. At the federal level, the Stafford Loan Program offers the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) and the William D. Ford Direct Loan, which can be forgiven up to US\$5000 after teaching for five consecutive years in critical-needs schools (May et al., 2005). At the state level, the American Federation of Teachers'—a national teachers' union—web site lists approximately 90 different financial incentive programs for prospective, pre-service and in-service teachers that include a scholarship or loan forgiveness component (AFT, 2010). However, few of these programs appear to have been evaluated for effectiveness in recruiting new teachers to the profession.

One loan program that has been evaluated is the Teacher Loan Program in the U.S. state of South Carolina. The program began in 1984 to provide loans to state residents to attend higher education and become certified teachers in critical need subjects or geographic areas (Annual Review, 2003-2004). This program is a conditional program in that a percentage of the loan is cancelled once participants have fulfilled their teaching requirement. In academic year 2003-2004, over US\$5 million was loaned.

## Teachers' Loan Scheme,

Implemented by the UK government in 2002 targets new teachers and offers loan forgiveness once they have begun teaching. The program encourages teachers to stay in the profession for 10 years, as one-tenth of their loans are repaid for each year of teaching.

In 2004, Barmby and Coe interviewed 246 math, science and English teachers participating in the program. The authors investigated how the Teachers' Loan Scheme influenced their decisions to become teachers, the subject they chose to teach, and their beliefs about staying in the teaching profession.

The authors found that most teachers did not believe that the Teachers' Loan Scheme influenced their decision to become teachers (78 %) and a minority (38%) felt the Scheme was important in recruiting them into teaching. In contrast, 84% of teachers felt teacher salaries were important and 49% felt signing bonuses were important in attracting them to the profession (Barmby & Coe, 2005).

## Offering Induction and Mentoring.

Multiple studies have found that the presence of teacher induction or mentoring programs, is related to teacher retention. Mentoring refers to one-on-one support from a teaching colleague, generally a more experienced teacher. Induction refers to an ongoing program of support, generally through the initial year or years of teaching (AASCU, 2006). For example, studying a sample of 3000 beginning teachers, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers who received mentoring during their first year of teaching were less likely to leave their positions. Likewise, in their study of 50 early career teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers who left teaching or switched schools attributed the decision to a lack of support in their original schools. Finally, Odell and Ferraro (1992) found that teachers in New Mexico who participated in a mentoring program were more likely to remain in teaching than the average teacher in their state. In the U.S., at least 17 states require mentoring for all novice teachers and at least 30 states run such programs (AASCU, 2006).

Mentoring has been suggested as one method to attract men to the teaching profession. As discussed previously, educators, policymakers and researchers in many nations have called to increase the number of male teachers in the teaching profession to, among other things, provide strong male role models for young boys (Mills et al, 2004).

In sum, although it is clear that working conditions contribute to individuals' decisions to enter, not to enter, or leave the teaching profession, there is a dearth of research into the relationship between various elements of working conditions and teacher recruitment. Also, while induction and mentoring programs are intended to improve increase job satisfaction and quality of entering teachers, the evidence supporting such programs remains inconclusive.

## Targeting Local Teacher Candidates.

In both urban and rural districts and in indigenous schools, a potentially effective teacher recruitment strategy is to target local candidates (Reeves, 2003). One method of targeting prospective, local teacher candidates provides financial assistance in various forms to individuals who live in a given community and are expected to return to or remain in the community to teach. Targeted individuals may be enrolled in secondary or tertiary education when they enter the program. They may receive tuition, financial support for books or living costs and offered summer job placement, internships or specialized training (Early & Ross, 2006). This strategy is based on the theory that most teachers work in schools that are close to their homes. In their study of teacher labor markets, Boyd et al. (2003), found that teachers prefer to work in schools near or similar to their hometowns. Also, a benefit of such a strategy is to capitalize on the individual's knowledge of the local culture, language or connection with the local community, thus enhancing the quality of education. An example of such a strategy is a U.S. program to prepare Native American teachers (Wechsler et al., 1994).

Although a study of this program did not follow teachers over a significant period of time, the results on entry into teaching were promising. Of those participating in the program, 72 percent received tertiary degrees. Eighty-five percent of those receiving degrees worked in education and 80 percent worked in schools with a majority population of Native Americans (Wechsler et al., 1994). The study showed that the program was effective in recruiting teachers to work in critical-needs schools, although it did not examine the impact on retention. In addition to recruiting promising, local secondary school students to train as local teachers, grow-your-own strategies target non-traditional teacher candidates, such as school para-professionals and second-career adults (Hammer et al., 2005). Research suggests that helping para-professionals attain teacher credentials is an especially promising strategy for recruiting rural teachers (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Eubanks, 2001; Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002).

Finally, using technology can help recruit and retain teachers in rural areas by increasing access to teaching opportunities, decreasing isolation and facilitating professional development and teacher credentialing processes. In the U.S. numerous initiatives exist to advertise job openings in rural schools, facilitate professional communities among rural teachers and provided educational opportunities that improve rural teachers working environments.

## Recruiting Indigenous Teachers.

Many of the challenges faced in recruiting rural teachers are similar to those faced in recruiting indigenous or teachers. To respond to the need for additional indigenous teachers in remote areas, the Australian Northern Territory Government has launched several initiatives as part of its "More Indigenous Teachers" program (MIT). The program's main goal is to increase recruitment of Indigenous teachers living in remote areas and encouraging more Indigenous students to consider teaching (DET, 2010). The three programs currently in operation under the MIT initiative are: cadetships, scholarships and fellowships.

Cadetships provide financial and program support to Indigenous people to complete the teacher qualification process and work in Department of Education and Training schools. It targets Indigenous secondary school students and offers numerous financial incentives and an ongoing mentorship for participants

Another method of recruiting indigenous teachers, particularly those who speak the local language, is to vary certification requirements based on the need to revitalize the indigenous language. In the U.S. state of Montana, a special license was created to allow indigenous tribes to indicate fluent speakers of the local language as teachers (Silverthorne, 1997). The criteria for indication varied depending on the vitality of the language in question.

Finally, building university-tribal collaborations to attract indigenous citizens into teaching is another method. One example of this is the Hopi Teachers for Hopi Schools (HTHS) in the U.S. state of Arizona. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the program sought to recruit individuals from the Hopi Tribe to attend pre-service teacher education courses at Northern Arizona State University (White et al., 2007).

## Recruiting Urban Teachers.

Despite the many barriers to recruiting teachers to urban schools, the New Teacher Project (TNTP) has been quite successful at increasing the pool of teacher candidates in urban, U.S. schools. Founded by teachers in 1997, TNTP is a national, non-profit organization that strives to bring high-quality teachers into hard-to-staff schools (TNTP web site, 2010). The organization has worked or is working in Baltimore, Chicago, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York City and Washington, DC, among other locations.

TNTP partners with urban school districts to establish recruitment programs tailored to the district's needs. For example, in 2002, TNTP partnered with the Baltimore City Public School system to create the Baltimore City Teaching Residency program, an alternative certification initiative. The program included both a recruitment program and a four-week, pre-service teacher training program. By 2007, approximately 20 percent of the district's new teachers were hired through TNTP. In 2004, TNTP received 15,000 applications for 1,850 teaching positions in New York City and 3,000 applications for 650 positions in Washington, D.C. (Stotko et al., 2007).

## Urban Teacher Residency Programs.

The Boston Teacher Residency Program (BTR), started in 2003, aims to be a comprehensive recruitment, preparation and induction program to provide high-quality teachers to urban schools (Solomon, 2009). Funded through a private foundation, Strategic Grant Partners. BTR recruits its teachers based on a needs assessment of the Boston Public School district. A primary concern in recruitment is to identify potential teachers who want to remain in Boston. Since its inception, BTR has successfully recruited 250 new teachers and the most recent acceptance rate for the program was approximately 12.5 percent (BTR, 2010).

The application process to the BTR program is rigorous. First, applicants must possess a bachelor's degree, be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and have taken or be registered to take the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (BTR, 2010). Then, applicants must submit an application that is reviewed by committee and finalists are invited to what is called Selection Day. At Selection Day, which takes place at a participating public school, finalists must participate in group problem-solving activities, a mini-teaching lesson, writing activity and individual interviews. Candidates are examined based on the school district's vision of effective teaching. These include a focus on: a) equity and high expectations; b) professionalism; c) safe, respectful and culturally sensitive and responsive learning communities; d) partnerships with family and community; e) instructional planning and implementation; and f) content knowledge; g) monitoring and assessment of progress; and h) reflection, collaboration and personal growth. One selected for the program, "residents" receive two months of intensive

teacher training and spend an academic year working under a mentor teacher in a Boston Public School classroom four days a week. The fifth day is devoted to ongoing coursework. Residents commit to a three-year teaching commitment in the Boston Public School system in high need areas: science, math, special education, English Language Learners. Initial indicators suggest that the BTR is a success. One of the motivations for starting the program was to increase the ethnic and racial diversity of the BPS teaching force.

## Teach for America.

Perhaps one of the most well known alternative pathways to teaching in the United States that also includes financial incentives, is the Teach for America program (TFA). TFA recruits recent college graduates and professionals to teach for two years in high-need urban or rural schools (TFA Web site, 2010). It was founded in 1990 and to date, 24,000 individuals have been placed as teachers in high-need schools around the country. Teachers are recruited in all subject areas, but candidates with science, math and engineering degrees are eligible for an additional \$2000 signing bonus. TFA recruits teachers through college campus visits and has an online web site ([www.teachforamerica.org](http://www.teachforamerica.org)). Participation in TFA is competitive. In 1990, TFA received 2500 applications and placed 500 teachers (Xu, et al., 2007). In 2008, TFA received 25,000 applications and hired 3,600 new teachers, a 14 percent acceptance rate (TFA Annual Report, 2008). To apply, candidates must possess a bachelor's degree, a 2.50 grade point average (based on a 4.0 scale), and must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Candidates must complete an application that includes a writing sample and resume. Also, applicants must participate in both a phone and in-person interview that includes the presentation of a sample teaching lesson.

Once candidates have been selected, they undergo a 5-week pre-service training institute. During this institute, candidates teach part-time in summer school programs under supervision. They also take courses and participate in trainings to build their knowledge and skills. Weekends are reserved for lesson planning and studying.

Because of its perceived success, the Teacher for America program has been replicated in several other countries, including TeacherFirst (UK), Teach for Australia, Teach First Deutschland (Germany), Enseña por Argentina, EnseñaChile, as well as Estonia, India, Latvia, Lebanon, and Peru.