
NEWSLETTER

Who Chooses Teaching as a Career? Empirical Evidence from a Survey of College Graduates Employment

By Xing, C. B., Cui, X. Y., & Jiang, C.

Correspondence to: Chunbing Xing, Renmin University of China, China. E-mail: xingchb@ruc.edu.cn

THE proportion of teaching staff in China's labor force as a whole has been steadily rising. It increased from 1.99% in 1990 to 2.3% in 2015 according to estimates based on census data. As a result of the expansion of higher education in China, the education level of the newly employed in the labor market has remarkably improved. In this process, one prominent phenomenon is that young females with college degrees have outnumbered their male counterparts. These changes yield significant effects on teacher labor force supply. Consequently, teachers with a university degree or above predominate the teaching staff; the proportion of female teachers with college degrees is also rising. Hence, to better understand college graduates employment and the current state of teacher supply in China, it is crucial to study the factors influencing graduates' decision on their career as a teacher.

This study sourced data from Chinese College Graduates Employment Sample Survey 2019 by Peking University's Institute of Economics of Education. The survey included 14, 8, and 10 higher education institutions in eastern, central, and western China, respectively, covering "double first-class construction" universities, regular undergraduate colleges/universities, junior colleges, and higher vocational colleges. A total of 16571 valid questionnaires were retrieved, with 23% from junior college students, 63% from undergraduates, and 14% from master and doctoral candidates. After eliminating those questionnaires with variable-related information missing, a sample of 5362 subjects was obtained, consisting of 745 teacher candidates and 4617 non-teacher candidates.

The research findings showed that students who majored in education-related subjects, had higher levels of education, graduated from schools of higher rankings and obtained relevant professional credentials were more likely to choose teaching as their career; that the majority of teacher candidates came from lower-level cities in the central and western China; that the educational background and birth place could more effectively predict female students becoming teacher candidates than their male counterparts while the school type had a greater impact on the male students' decision on

their career as a teacher than on that of female students; that graduates who chose to be teachers received lower starting salaries than those took up other professions and had a higher employment rate in central and western China; and that female teacher candidates' career choice is determined by their personal preferences, consideration of job security, and willingness of serving the public and communities.

Source: Educational Research, 2023; 44(1):144-159.