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Who wants to become a teacher?

- Across OECD countries, 5% of students expect to work as teachers: 3% of boys and 6% of girls.
- The academic profile of students who expect to work as teachers varies, but in many OECD countries, students who expect to work as teachers have poorer mathematics and reading skills than other ambitious students who expect to work as professionals but not as teachers.
- PISA shows that, on average, a higher percentage of students expects to work as teachers in countries where teachers' salaries are higher.

The quality of teachers has been repeatedly shown to be more important than any other factor of schooling in predicting student academic outcomes. In recent years, however, many countries have suffered from shortages of high-quality teachers, particularly in science and mathematics. Education systems around the world are trying to figure out how best to attract high-achieving and motivated candidates into teacher-education programmes, how best to train them, and how to retain them in the teaching profession once they choose to become teachers.

The teaching profession is not attractive to most 15-year-olds.

In 2006, PISA asked 15-year-old students from more than 60 education systems what occupation they expected to be working in when they were 30. On average, around 44% of students in OECD countries said that they expect to work as professionals: high-status occupations that typically require a university degree; but only 5% of students expected to work as teachers, one of these professional careers. This suggests that, on average, about one in 10 students who expects to work in a high-status professional career anticipates pursuing a career in teaching.

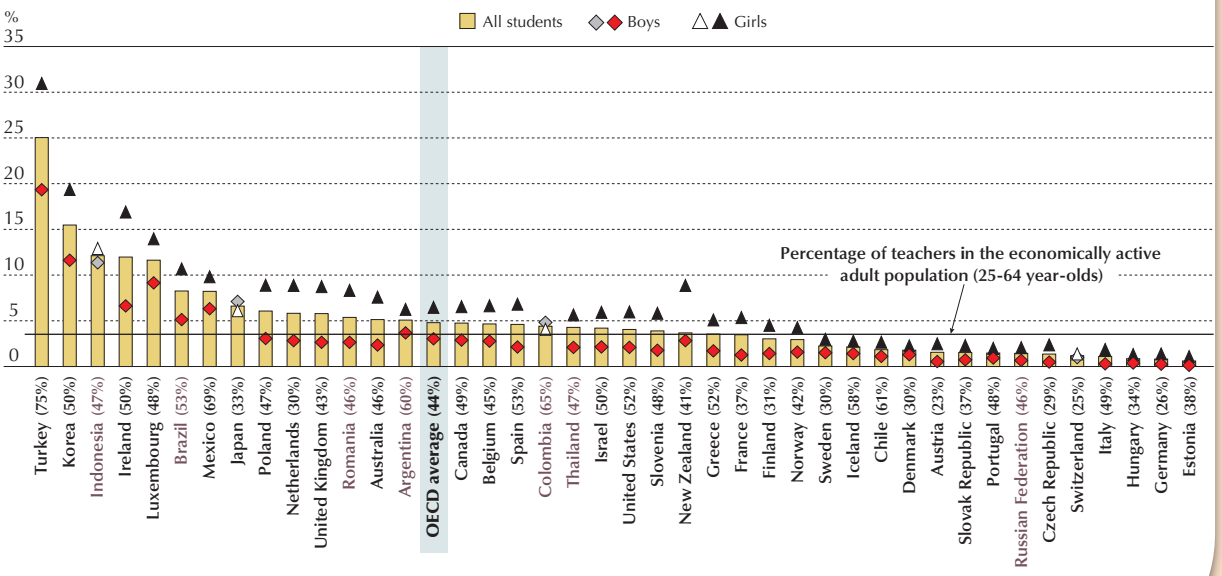
However, the percentage of students who expect to have a teaching career varies widely across countries. The teaching profession is particularly attractive to students in Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg and Turkey. For example, in Indonesia, Korea and Turkey, about three out of 10 students who expect to work as professionals expect to work as teachers. By contrast, the teaching profession is not particularly attractive to 15-year-olds in Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Italy.

Around two-thirds of teachers and academic staff at all levels of education (i.e. from pre-primary through tertiary education) are women. The feminisation of the teaching profession is a concern in many countries, as the increasing numbers of low-achieving and disengaged boys could benefit from more male role models in school. A more diverse teaching workforce may be better able to cater to the wide range of student dispositions and expectations. And, as countries struggle to find qualified candidates for teaching jobs, attracting men into the profession may reduce shortages and widen the pool of suitable candidates.

PISA IN FOCUS

Teaching is not a very attractive career choice for most students

Percentage of 15-year-old boys and girls who plan to work in the teaching profession, by gender



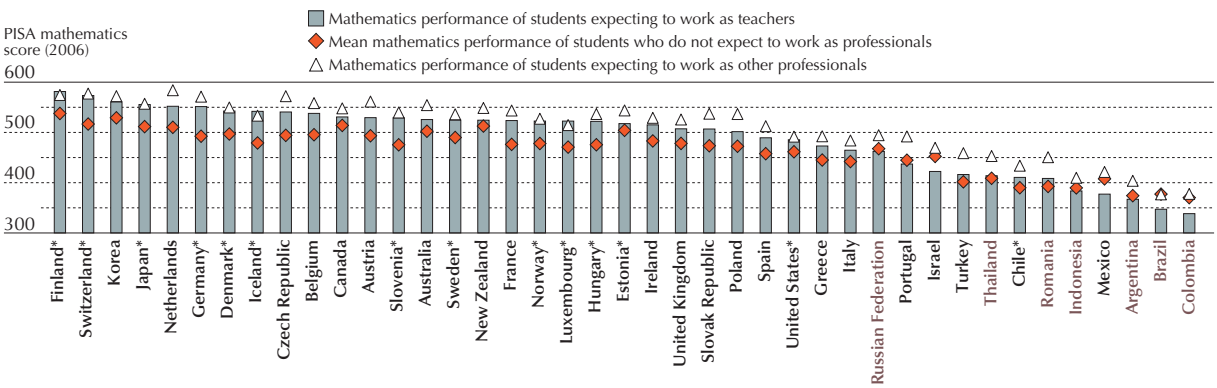
Notes: Countries in which gender differences are not statistically significant are shown in light grey and white.
The percentage of students who expect to work as professionals (high-status occupations that typically require a university degree) is provided in parentheses next to the country name.
Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 15-year-old students who expect to work as teachers.
Sources: OECD. PISA 2006 Database, *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*.

PISA reveals that just as job markets are segregated along gender lines, so are students' career expectations. Girls are under-represented among those expecting to work in computing and engineering, but they outnumber boys among those who expect to work as teachers. In almost every OECD country, more girls than boys expect to work as teachers. Only 3% of boys in OECD countries, on average, expect a career in the teaching profession, while 6% of girls expect to work as teachers. However, in Bulgaria, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan and Switzerland, there are no gender differences in the percentage of students who expect to work as teachers.

The most proficient students in reading and mathematics are not necessary those who expect to become teachers…

Several top-performing countries, such as Finland and Korea, build high-quality teaching forces by recruiting the best high school graduates into education institutions. PISA reveals marked differences across countries in the skills profile of students who expect to work as teachers.

Students who expect to be teachers aren't as proficient in mathematics as their peers who expect to work in other professional occupations



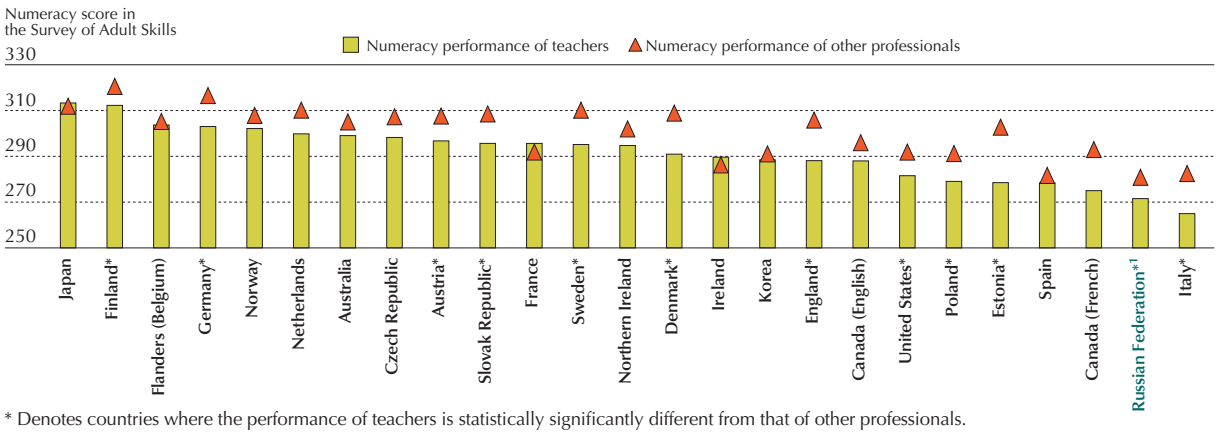
* Denotes countries in which the difference in the mathematics performance of students who expect to work as teachers and those who expect to work as non-teaching professionals is not statistically significant.
Countries are ranked in descending order of the mathematics performance of students who expect to work as teachers at the age of 30.
Source: OECD. PISA 2006 Database.

In Finland and Luxemburg, students who expect to work as teachers have higher reading scores than students who aspire to be professionals in other occupations. There is no difference in average mathematics scores between these two groups of students. In Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Korea and the United Kingdom, there is no difference in reading scores between the two groups of students, but students who expect to enter the teaching profession tend to have lower scores in mathematics than those who expect to enter other professional occupations. In Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, there are no differences in the reading and mathematics scores between the two groups of students, while in Argentina, Australia, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal and Turkey, students who aspire to be teachers have significantly lower reading and mathematics scores than students who expect to work in professions other than teaching.

...and teachers are not necessarily highly proficient in numeracy.

Data on the mathematics performance of 15-year-old students who expect to work as teachers closely matches data on the literacy and numeracy skills of adults who work as teachers. In many countries, teachers have poorer literacy and, in particular, poorer numeracy skills than individuals who work in other professions. But this is not true in Belgium (Flanders), France, Ireland, Japan and Korea. In Japan, not only do teachers have the highest numeracy skills among teachers working in all other countries that participated in Survey of Adult Skills (a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, or PIAAC), they are also as proficient in numeracy as Japanese adults who work in other professions.

Teachers' numeracy skills mirror those of the 15-year-old students who expected to become teachers



* Denotes countries where the performance of teachers is statistically significantly different from that of other professionals.

1. Readers should note that the sample for the Russian Federation does not include the population of the Moscow municipal area. The data published, therefore, do not represent the entire resident population aged 16-65 in Russia but rather the population of Russia excluding the population residing in the Moscow municipal area. More detailed information regarding the data from the Russian Federation as well as that of other countries can be found in the *Technical Report of the Survey of Adult Skills*.

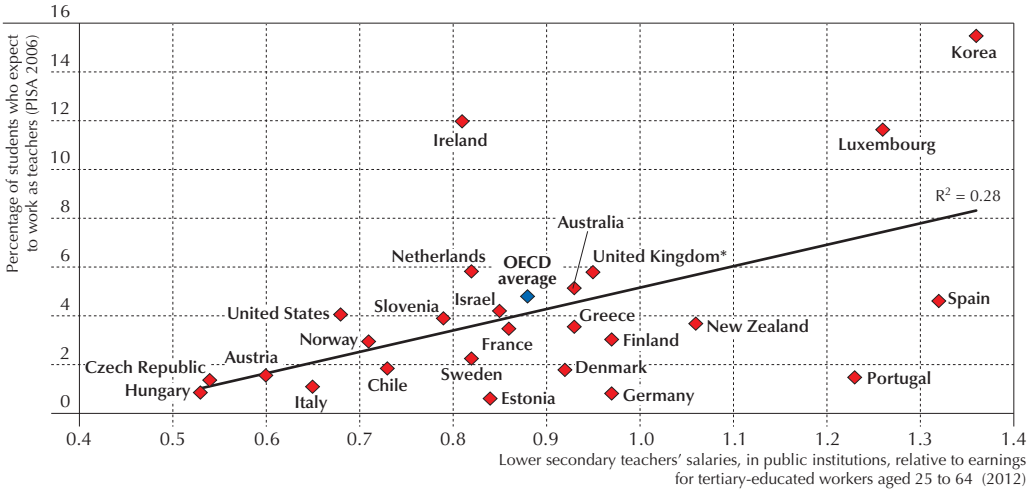
Countries are ranked in descending order of teachers' performance in numeracy.

Sources: OECD. PIAAC Database.

Countries need to do more to attract men and more highly skilled adults into the teaching profession.

Differences across countries in the percentage of students who expect to work as teachers, and in the academic profile of those who do, indicate that the teaching profession is not equally desirable and socially valued. In most countries, the competition for talent is intensifying; high-achieving students have a range of career opportunities from which they can choose. On average across OECD countries, primary school teachers earn 85% of the salary of a tertiary-educated adult who works full time in a different profession (all professions that require tertiary qualifications, including both higher-than-average pay professions, such as medicine and engineering, as well as lower-than-average pay professions, such as nursing). Lower secondary teachers are paid 88% of that benchmark, and upper secondary teachers are paid 92% of that benchmark salary.

Salaries have an impact on students' decisions to become teachers



* Data on students' career exectations and earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education refer to the United Kingdom while data on teachers' salaries refer to England. See *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, Table D3.2.

Sources: OECD. PISA 2006 Database, *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*.

School systems will only be able to recruit the skilled and motivated people they need to build a high-quality teaching force if they can offer similar salaries and working conditions as other professionals enjoy and/or grant teachers greater autonomy and raise the status of the teaching profession. While teenage students are unlikely to know precisely how much their teachers are paid, they know very well how their societies value the teaching profession, and salaries are generally a good marker of social status.

The bottom line: Education systems have to become more competitive in recruiting – and retaining – skilled and motivated teachers. While extrinsic benefits, such as salaries and compensation, may help, countries should also consider promoting the intrinsic value of teaching by giving teachers more autonomy in their work and raising the social status of the profession.

For more information

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See OECD (2014). *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2014), *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris.

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