



First job and the unequal distribution of primary school teachers: Evidence for the case of Chile



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Teachers with better training are more likely to work in high income schools.
- A relationship exists between dissatisfaction and having accepted the first offer.
- Non-pecuniary considerations are relevant in the first job search process.
- Search processes are mainly through contact networks.

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' first employment is key to explain their final distribution in the system. Through a mixed-method approach we study the factors that are related to the first job for teachers in Chile in schools with different regimes. Specifically, we consider teacher's socio-demographic and initial training-related characteristics, the application and hiring processes, and job characteristics. We find that teachers with a higher social capital are less likely to start teaching in public schools, and that participation in field experience during their initial training in a public school, increases the probability to teach in those contexts.

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1. Introduction

There is systematic evidence about the role teachers play in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive abilities in their students, and their effectiveness in student learning (Heckman, 2010; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). However, the impact a teacher has, according to value-added measures on

student achievement, varies considerably depending of the quality of their work (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004).

Chile has invested huge resources and tried diverse policies to reduce inequity in children's learning,¹ which is highly correlated to

¹ From 1990 to 2015 Chile implemented multiple policies to increase the quality and equity of the educational system, and increased public spending on education, from 2.9% of GDP in 1990 to 4.1% in 2011 (MINEDUC, 2008). Education comprised 18% of the Chilean government budget in 2011 - while the OECD average was 13%. However, adding municipalities and the private sector, total investment in education reaches 6.4%, slightly higher than the OECD average (6.3%) (MINEDUC, 2013).

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the differing levels of exposure students have to teachers with lower levels of initial training, and who have worse results in teacher evaluations and in standardized tests (Rivero, 2015; Meckes & Bascopé, 2012; Cabezas, Gallego, Santelices, & Zarhi, 2011). Previous research suggests that teachers are stratified across schools, and those with better academic performance are underrepresented in public schools and in schools with greater numbers of low-income students (Cabezas et al., 2011). This phenomenon is not exclusive to Chile and has been observed in other countries (OECD, 2005). Countries that have the majority of teachers employed by the public sector and have “position-based” teacher employment models (vs “career-based”),² and/or that have decentralized personnel selection and management to schools or local authorities offices, often have greater disparities among schools in terms of teacher qualifications and experience (e.g. Canada, Sweden, Switzerland) (OECD, 2005). This because position-based systems rely less on regulation than career-based systems in assigning staff to schools.

At the same time, there is consensus that the choice of the first job is key when determining inequality in the teaching distribution (Cabezas et al., 2011; Rivero, 2015; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2003; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009; Meckes & Bascopé, 2012). Rivero (2015) suggests that less qualified teachers are more likely to have their first teaching job in rural, public, low-income, and low-performance schools.

Our contribution in this paper is to complement the literature in this area. Using a mixed methodology, we analyse the influence that initial training characteristics, contact networks, elements from critical contact theory, and pecuniary and non-pecuniary factors have in the first job choice. We also describe the influence the search, application and selection processes, and job satisfaction in their first years in the workforce, to explain the unequal distribution of teachers. Even though the placement of teachers is the result of a double match which involves both teachers and schools (Dolton, 2006; Goldhaber, 2008; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Murnane & Steele, 2007), this study is mainly focused on the teachers' decision making process.³

To our knowledge, this is the first study for Latin America that in addition to analyzing the stratification of teachers according to socio-demographic and initial training-related characteristics, tests hypotheses about the sources of stratification in the application and hiring process and of the job itself, as well as the possible influence of these factors on job satisfaction. The study is also relevant because the Chilean educational system presents characteristics which differ from most countries analysed in the literature: it has one of the most extensive voucher systems in the world, and institutions with distinct types of funding arrangements coexist (see Paredes & Pinto, 2009; Gallegos, Chumacero, & Paredes, 2016; Carnoy, Brodziak, Luschei, Beteille, & Loyalka, 2009).

This article is divided into five sections, in addition to this introduction. Section 2 describes the literature, Section 3 provides a summary of the Chilean context, Section 4 presents the methodology, Section 5 presents the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies, and Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature

Teachers' academic qualification distribution across schools has been evidenced by Loeb and Reininger (2004), in a summary of US teacher labor market literature up to 2004. The study shows that there is a systemic over representation of less qualified teachers in low-income schools, which might be related to non-observable variables (e.g. lower levels of perseverance, self-discipline and self-confidence), and with their effectiveness in the job. This has also been observed in other countries (OECD, 2005, 2011). Evidence for Chile suggests that students from socially vulnerable contexts generally have less qualified teachers (Cabezas et al., 2011; Rivero, 2015; Meckes & Bascopé, 2012; Ortúzar, Flores, Milesi, & Cox, 2009; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009; Toledo, Puentes, & Valenzuela, 2010a, 2010b).

Studies that analyse the reasons why teachers are distributed according to their qualifications in different SEL schools, have found that, in fact, it starts with the selection of their first job (e.g., Boyd et al., 2003; Loeb & Reininger, 2004). Cabezas et al. (2011) analysed a subsample of the Chilean Teacher Longitudinal Survey and found a positive correlation between the type of school (i.e., either publicly or privately administered) in which the teacher completed their secondary education and the type of school in which they take their first job. They also found that teachers with higher grades in university selection tests (PAA/PSU⁴) are proportionally more likely to start working in higher-income schools. Meckes and Bascopé (2012) found that teachers who are the first in their family to obtain a college degree and who obtained low grades in Inicia,⁵ a voluntary exit exam for students from teaching programs, have a higher probability to work in public, lower-income schools. Rivero (2015), analyzing ten measures of teaching quality and first job selection, confirms the inequality in the distribution for all of the variables, and finds that teachers with formal qualification in teaching at secondary school level, or with specialization in any subject, have twice the probability of taking their first job in a school with high-performance students, whereas those teachers who do not have these qualifications are three times more likely to take a job in a rural school rather than an urban one, and three times more likely to work in a public school rather than a private one.

One of the reasons the first job is a crucial factor in generating unequal teachers' qualification distribution, is that it has a strong relationship with the long term outlook; the first year of work can be decisive in terms of teacher effectiveness, mobility and retention (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu & Kardos, 2002). Rivero (2015) shows that teachers who are better qualified, and who then start working their first year in high-performance, high-income, urban and private non-subsidized schools, have a higher probability of staying in that type of school compared to less qualified teachers. Moreover, further mobility could increase these inequalities (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). This, because teachers with higher academic abilities have a higher probability of moving from a school over represented with low-income students, and also leaving the teaching career altogether (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1988; Murnane & Olsen, 1990).

To understand the first job matching between schools and

² According to OECD Report (2005), two basic models shape teacher employment in the public sector: “career-based”; and “position-based”. In career-based systems, teachers are generally expected to stay in the public service throughout their working life. Initial entry normally occurs at a young age, it is based on academic credentials and/or a civil service entry examination, and the entry criteria are usually demanding. Position-based public services tend to focus on selecting the best-suited candidate for each position, whether by external recruitment or internal promotion.

³ For a focus on schools, see Paredes, Cabezas, Bogolasky, and Zarhi (2013).

⁴ The university entrance selection test used until 2002 was the Prueba de Aptitud Académica (PAA). In 2003 it was replaced by the Prueba de Selección Universitaria (PSU), which has different characteristics but the same goal. Both tests have been standardized. The PSU has a media of 500 points, and the scale goes between a minimum and maximum of 150 and 850 points, respectively.

⁵ The Inicia test is a voluntary test for newly graduated teachers. This test provides an assessment of the knowledge and abilities of the teachers. It also collects socio-demographic information. For more information, see Manzi (2010).

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