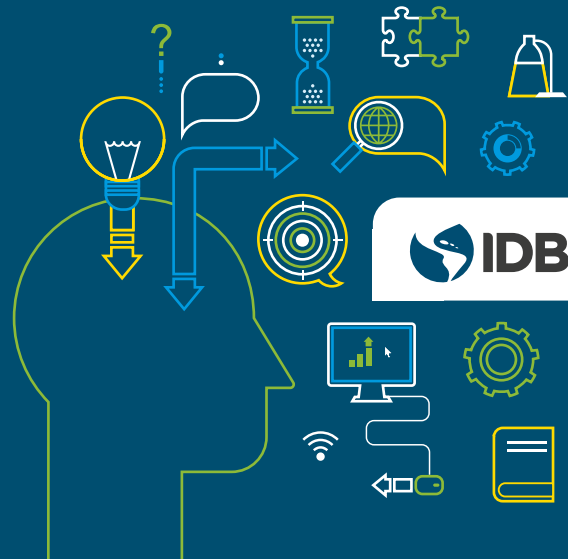


# Do the Incentives Provided to Current Teachers Affect Future Cohorts?

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**Attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers is essential for improving education outcomes, yet making the teaching profession appealing to talented youth remains challenging.**



**Providing information about reforms that enhance the appeal of a teaching career to high school students can positively impact enrollment in higher education and the choice of an education major.**



**This evidence suggests that career incentives and information can shape not only the current teaching workforce but also future cohorts.**



## CONTEXT

**Latin American countries have historically struggled to attract top candidates to the teaching profession, impacting education quality.** Teacher salaries have generally been lower and less performance-based than those in other fields, limiting incentives for talent. In response, several countries have introduced reforms to attract and retain high-quality teachers by improving economic conditions and elevating the profession's social status. A key question is whether these incentives for current teachers could influence the career choices of future cohorts. This question was especially relevant, as talented high school graduates have often opted for higher-paying professions rather than education.



## PROJECT

**Between 2012 and 2015, the Peruvian government introduced reforms to enhance the appeal of teaching by implementing merit-based promotions, periodic evaluations, wage increases, and scholarships for education majors.** These reforms were evaluated through an experiment in Lima designed to encourage high school students to consider a teaching career by providing information about the reforms. The experiment included 200 high schools, divided between a treatment group (80) and a control group (120). The study, using survey data, and the Peruvian school census, analyzed the impact on perceptions of the teaching career and career choice.



## RESULTS

Immediately after the intervention, students' perceptions of a teaching career significantly improved, with many viewing it as more attractive. [Figure 1](#) shows the percentage agreement before and after the intervention on six statements: "the teaching career is attractive," "offers self-realization," "contributes to society," "provides job stability," "offers good wages," and "involves challenging and creative work." The intervention led to notable increases in agreement across all statements. However, despite this marked improvement in perceptions, the intervention did not immediately affect students' expressed intentions to pursue an education-related major.

### Key Concept

#### INFORMATION TREATMENT



Intervention designed to provide specific information to a group of participants to observe how this new knowledge affects their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.

In the long run, the information treatment influenced the career decisions of treated high school students on both extensive and intensive margins. The treatment resulted in a 2.7 percentage point increase in the probability of pursuing higher education compared to the control group. It also increased the likelihood of enrolling in an education major by 0.9 percentage points. Although the point estimates for studying education are small, their significance is notable, given that only 78 students chose a career in education. A 0.9 percentage point increase translates to an 82 percent increase in the number of students choosing an education major, as shown in [Figure 2](#). This effect was primarily driven by female students, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with lower mathematical performance, those exhibiting high levels of patience, students already aware of changes in the teaching career, and those with a favorable initial perception of teaching.



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Our study shows that providing targeted information on teaching career reforms can effectively influence high school students' career choices, increasing the likelihood of enrollment in education majors. Many countries worldwide have introduced education reforms to incentivize teachers, aiming to improve quality by enhancing teacher performance and student achievement. However, a key aspect of these reforms, particularly in Latin America, has been improving the teaching profession itself by addressing conditions that deter top candidates from entering the field. An essential component of evaluating these reforms is assessing whether they attract a new profile of candidates, particularly by influencing high school students during their career decision-making process.

A simple, low-cost, and scalable intervention shows positive, lasting effects on encouraging high school seniors to choose education majors, with an increase in students selecting teaching observed three years after the intervention. This finding remains robust, even given the modest number of students choosing education majors. Although this treatment successfully reached and influenced students' career decisions, its impact on the quality of candidates compared to the current teacher pool remains unclear. Nonetheless, the induced shift in expressed career preferences offers valuable insights, particularly for governments aiming to make teaching a more attractive career option through targeted reforms.

### Key Concept

#### TEACHER REFORMS



Policy changes to elevate the social status of the teaching profession by enhancing working conditions, career advancement opportunities, and compensation to attract and retain talented individuals and improve education quality.

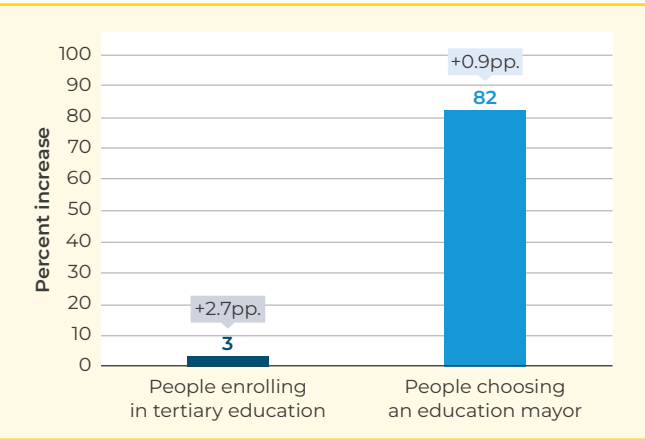


**FIGURE 1. Percentage Agreement with Statements on the Public Teaching Career among the Treated Group**

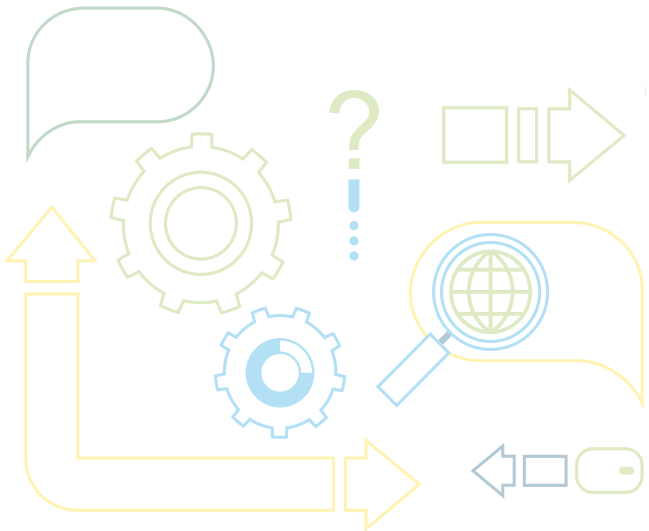


Notes: The figure reports the results of calculating the percentage of students who agreed with each statement. The sample is restricted to students in the treatment group, for whom we have information on the statements: 3,315 students pre-intervention and 3,155 students post-intervention. All differences are statistically significant.

**FIGURE 2. Impact on Career Choices**



Notes: The graph reports the results of student-level regressions. All regressions include stratification fixed effects, controls for school administrative dependence, whether the student was held back a year, math and productive vocabulary test scores, GPA, socioeconomic level, gender, and the patience score. The number of observations is 6,607 for the outcome measuring the probability of enrolling in tertiary education and 5,447 for the probability of studying an education-related major.

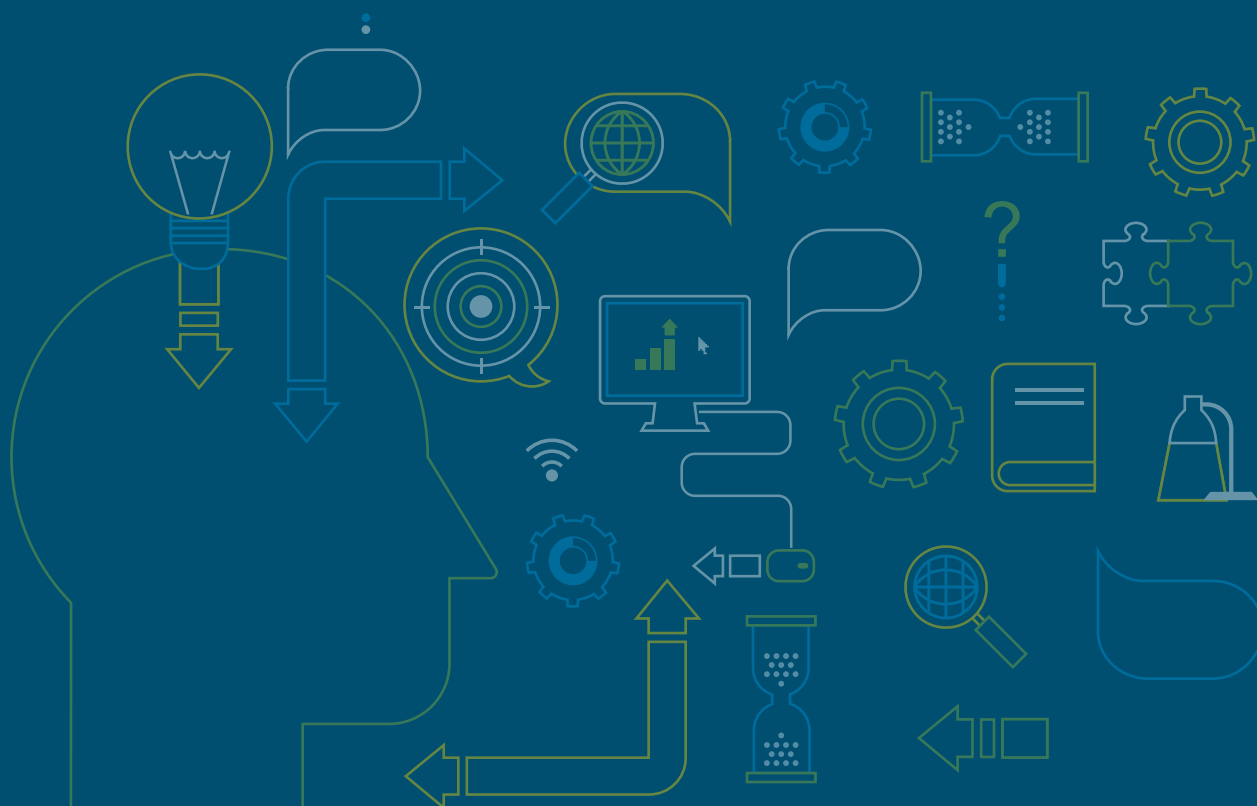


## FULL STUDY

Busso, Matías, Mariana Alfonso, Hugo R. Ñopo, Antonella Maria Rivera Bianchi, and Triana Yentzen. 2024. “Becoming a Teacher: Experimental Evidence from an Information Intervention.” IDB Working Paper No. 1658. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0013244>.

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