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TEMPORARY TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A Radiography
of a growing
trend



Gregory Elacqua
Luana Marotta
Catalina Morales

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The hiring of temporary teachers is seen by educational systems as a more economical and flexible option to meet staff demands, since it implies lower labor costs and greater adaptability to changes in educational demand. This is especially true in contexts where budgetary restrictions are part of the daily life of governments, as is the case in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, where there is a growing dependence on this modality.

However, this practice can negatively affect educational quality and equity, as temporary teachers are often less qualified than permanent teachers and, also, experience precarious working conditions and high turnover, which impacts both student learning and the equitable distribution of educational resources.

This study analyzes the characteristics, working conditions, distribution and trends of temporary teachers in the region, aiming to contribute to the understanding of their impact on education, in general, and in the Latin American and Caribbean region, in particular.

What do we know about temporary teachers?

According to the evidence, there are three key factors that explain the impact of temporary teachers: their qualifications, working conditions (salary and stability) and the level of supervision. How do these elements operate in Latin America and the Caribbean? What does it mean to be a temporary teacher in this region? How do the characteristics and working conditions of these teachers affect the quality of education in the region? This analysis focuses on eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean: Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Argentina.

What it means to be a teacher in Latin America and the Caribbean

The analysis of temporary teacher recruitment in Latin America reveals significant differences in selection processes, required qualifications, and assignment systems across the countries studied.

For example, in terms of **selection processes**, in **Peru, Colombia and Ecuador**, temporary positions prioritize candidates eligible for permanent positions, although less qualified teachers are also hired, especially in remote areas. In **Brazil**, criteria vary by region, but most do not require competency tests for temporary positions. In some states, a third-level degree is mandatory. **Costa Rica and Argentina** require teaching degrees for all positions, while **Chile and Guyana** have more flexible requirements or requirements based solely on academic credentials. In Guyana, credentials determine whether a teacher is temporary or permanent.

When it comes to hiring conditions, temporary teachers usually face lower salaries, less stability and precarious working conditions compared to permanent teachers. In addition, the low frequency of public tenders, especially in Brazil, limits access to permanent positions, forcing many qualified teachers to accept temporary contracts.

In **Peru, Colombia and Ecuador**, **job allocation system** is centralized and based on scores according to criteria such as experience, training and knowledge tests. In **Costa Rica and Argentina**, positions are awarded following lists of eligible candidates organized by score, prioritizing those with certificates. In Chile, hiring is decentralized, allowing for greater discretion, while in **Guyana**, the system is strictly linked to academic credentials.

On the other hand, temporary teachers face less job stability, with contracts of limited duration and variable renewals depending on the country. Their salaries are usually lower, or they have restrictions on moving up the salary scale, except in some cases such as **Costa**

Rica and Argentina, where they are equivalent to those of permanent teachers. Access to training is limited in countries such as **Peru and Colombia**, while in others such as **Costa Rica and Brazil**, it is the same for both types of teachers. The workload is generally similar, although permanent teachers sometimes have priority in accessing additional contracts. These differences affect educational quality and teacher motivation.

Monitoring and supervision play a crucial role in the positive impact that temporary teachers can have on students' performance. Although it is not common in Latin America for local communities to directly participate in the supervision of these teachers, encouraging this practice could improve academic results, provided that the hiring and supervision processes are transparent and competitive to avoid corruption. Linking contract renewal to teacher performance has also proven to be an effective incentive. In **Peru**, temporary teachers must participate annually in competitions for new positions, which encourages their preparation and improves their long-term stability. In **Recife (Brazil)**, contract renewal, which can extend for up to eight years, depends on evaluations carried out by schools, although the objectivity of the criteria is not always clear. Meanwhile, in **São Paulo**, all teachers, both temporary and permanent, are subject to annual evaluations, establishing a regular monitoring system that incentivizes good performance.

The data: distribution of temporary teachers in Latin America

What trends can be observed from a careful analysis of the data? Overall, the analysis shows a significant increase in the hiring of temporary teachers in the region, with notable differences between countries and levels of education. Below we show some of the main trends.

- **More permanent than temporary teachers... for now.** Most education systems have more permanent teachers than temporary teachers, but in Brazil, temporary teachers exceeded 50% in 2022 (reaching 70% in the Espírito Santo region). In contrast, in Colombia, temporary teachers only represent 20%.
- **Rising trend.** In almost all the countries analyzed, the proportion of temporary teachers has grown, especially in **Brazil**, where it increased from 32% to 52% between 2011 and 2022, driven by the low frequency of competitions for permanent positions.
- **More temporary teachers in rural areas.** Temporary teachers are more common in rural areas, due to the lack of qualified candidates and the reluctance of urban teachers to relocate. In terms of teaching levels, there are no major differences between primary and secondary education, but in Brazil, technical programs employ more temporary teachers than regular ones.

► **Total dominance of temporary teachers in indigenous schools.** Indigenous schools have a much higher proportion of temporary teachers in all the countries analyzed. In **Espírito Santo**, 100% of teachers in these schools are temporary, due to specific requirements such as certification in an ancestral language and belonging to indigenous communities.

Finally, some key actions are proposed in order to prevent the increase in the hiring of temporary teachers in the region from impacting on the quality and equity of education..

► **Transparency in selection:** Clear and regulated processes, such as the Educa Empleo platform in Ecuador, to guarantee the suitability of candidates.

► **Access to training:** Continuous training to strengthen the skills of temporary teachers, especially in areas with lower qualifications.

► **Job improvements** Adequate salaries and benefits to attract talent and avoid demotivation.

► **Performance monitoring:** Consistent monitoring of teaching quality and contract renewal based on objective indicators.



INTRODUCTION

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the face of teaching is changing. **Education systems in the region are increasingly turning to temporary teachers as a solution to address budget constraints, adapt to demographic fluctuations, and meet immediate needs in schools.** This trend, which may seem like a pragmatic measure, raises critical questions about its impact on the quality and equity of education. Who are these temporary teachers? What distinguishes them from their permanent colleagues? What does it mean for millions of students to rely on a teaching workforce that often faces precarious working conditions and less stability?

Education systems allocate between 60% and 90% of their budgets to teacher recruitment (UNESCO, 2023), making any decision about their workforce a balancing act between fiscal sustainability and educational quality. However, while temporary hiring can offer **flexibility and savings**, it also comes at a **potential cost in terms of professional motivation and, above all, student learning**. Firstly, because temporary teachers often have lower qualifications than permanent teachers. Their selection processes are often less rigorous, either to fill staffing needs more quickly or to allow the admission of less qualified teachers in schools that fail to attract candidates during competitions for permanent positions. In addition, temporary teachers have fewer opportunities for professional development, and their more precarious working conditions (lower salaries and less stability) can affect their productivity and commitment to school (Marotta, 2019). Similarly, the higher turnover generated by temporary contracts can negatively influence student learning (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Finally, the impact of temporary teachers not only affects quality but also equity, as they tend to be concentrated in more remote schools that serve vulnerable student populations (Bertoni et al., 2020).

This report takes an in-depth look at this complex reality. Based on data from **eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean**, it provides a **detailed snapshot of temporary teachers**: from their **credentials and working conditions** to their **distribution in the education system**. With a mix of **quantitative evidence, comparative analysis and case studies**, this study not only aims to shed light on the growing dependence on temporary teachers, but also to propose ways to maximize their contribution while mitigating the risks.

2 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TEMPORARY TEACHERS?

What determines the success or failure of temporary teachers? What factors influence their performance? **What is the impact of temporary teachers on student outcomes?** The short answer to this question is: it depends. Studies indicate that the impact of temporary teachers varies considerably depending on the hiring context (Kingdon et al., 2013; Chudgar et al., 2014). This is because being a temporary teacher not only entails the absence of a long-term contract but also differences in their academic credentials and working conditions. In general, these teachers receive lower salaries, have less experience, and are often assigned to more challenging environments (Chudgar et al., 2014). However, the specific characteristics of temporary teachers, as well as their working conditions and the contexts in which they work, vary widely across countries. In this section, we review the international literature regarding what it means to be a temporary teacher and its impact on student academic performance.

In contexts where there is a failure to attract qualified candidates to fill temporary teaching positions, studies identify a negative association between these teachers and student outcomes. For example, in Togo and Niger, research by Vegas and De Laat (2003) and Bourdon et al. (2010) found that the rapid increase in the hiring of temporary teachers—in response to rising educational demand and budget deficits—resulted in lower student academic performance, due to the limited availability of qualified teachers to fill these positions.

In China, a similar pattern has been observed in rural areas, where it is difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers for permanent positions. In these areas, temporary teachers with fewer credentials and experience have been hired with lower salaries and benefits. According to Lei et al. (2018), only 69% of temporary teachers have post-secondary education, which is almost 15 percentage points lower than permanent teachers. In this context, the authors also identify a negative impact of temporary teachers on students' academic performance compared to regular teachers.

The influence of context on the impact of temporary teachers is also highlighted by Chudgar (2015). She conducted extensive research on temporary teachers in five African countries and showed that the employment conditions of these teachers are key to explaining variations in their performance. For example, in Guinea, where the recruitment of temporary teachers was carefully planned, the effect was consistently positive, and no major differences were found between contracted and civil service teachers. This is attributed to the fact that salary differences between regular and temporary teachers were smaller in Guinea compared to other countries, and to the fact that Guinea required a minimum level of qualifications from candidates and implemented a training program specifically targeted at temporary teachers. In contrast, in Benin, the association between temporary teachers and students' performance was negative. This country had one of the largest salary gaps between permanent and temporary teachers. Furthermore, the replacement of permanent teachers by temporary teachers with lower salaries and qualifications contributed to the loss of prestige of the teaching profession.

On the other hand, the literature suggests that when temporary teachers are hired locally, they are often subject to **strict supervision by the school community and the hiring unit. This pressure may encourage them to perform better**, since their continued employment and promotion to a permanent position depend on the results obtained. Along these lines, Bourdon et al. (2010) find positive results from the use of temporary teachers on the academic performance of students in Mali. According to the authors, in this case, low salaries and less initial training were offset by the positive effect of close monitoring by parents. Many of these teachers were community-based, hired and paid directly by parents, so their work depended entirely on the satisfaction of families.

Similarly, Duflo et al. (2015) examined the effect of an intervention that randomly allocated resources to schools to hire an additional temporary teacher locally, with renewal contingent on performance and at one-quarter the salary of regular teachers. The authors found that, although reducing the student-teacher ratio did not significantly impact the academic performance of students assigned to regular teachers, it did improve the performance of students assigned to temporary teachers. Possible explanations include that they showed lower rates of absenteeism, while regular teachers reduced their effort in response to the intervention. The authors argue that temporary teachers were likely to make greater effort

in anticipation of eventually obtaining a permanent contract. Furthermore, many of the temporary teachers who performed well did obtain permanent contracts, suggesting the possibility that this expectation may have encouraged greater effort on their part.

In India, Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2013) and Agarwal and Reis (2018) found that, despite their poorer working conditions and lower qualifications, temporary teachers are as effective as regular teachers. According to Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2013), temporary teachers are less likely to be absent than regular teachers. Additionally, Agarwal and Reis (2018) noted that, although there are no formal differences in the supervision of both types of teachers, evidence suggests that those who come from the same local community are more effective, which may indicate greater social closeness or increased monitoring.

In Latin America, evidence suggests that selection processes for hiring temporary teachers are often less rigorous, as they are designed to address immediate teaching needs. In contrast, competitions for permanent positions are more demanding and, in some countries, have multiple evaluation stages (Bertoni et al., 2020b). In addition, temporary positions are often concentrated in vulnerable and remote areas, which face greater shortages of qualified candidates (Bertoni et al., 2020a).

In Colombia, Ayala Guerrero (2017) found that a higher proportion of temporary teachers in secondary schools significantly decreases the average performance of students on standardized tests. According to the author, only 9% of this effect can be explained by lower teacher competencies. The rest could be due to factors such as lower motivation or higher rates of teacher absenteeism, although the study does not present evidence for this point.

Hiring temporary teachers not only changes the academic credentials required, but also the working conditions offered. Among these working conditions, job instability inherent in this type of hiring and lower salaries stand out. Marotta (2019) analyzed the impact of temporary teachers in the state of São Paulo, where they have the same responsibilities as permanent teachers, but with lower salaries and no job stability. At the same time, although their academic credentials are lower than those of permanent teachers, the differences are not as marked as in other systems studied in the literature. However, the author found that, compared to teachers in permanent positions, temporary teachers have less commitment to their school, that is, they are less likely to collaborate in the design of the pedagogical program, participate in school decision-making, serve on the school council, or spend time planning their lessons. In addition, they have a weaker sense of belonging and offer less support and feedback to students.

In that regard, in Peru, Alcázar et al. (2006) identified that temporary teachers are more likely to be absent from school and look for other sources of income. The authors suggest that factors such as lower economic benefits and motivation could explain this fact. They also point out that many temporary teachers had the opportunity to become permanent, in years prior to those considered in the study, which could indicate that those who continued to be temporary are those with a worse profile.

Estrada and Lombardi (2024) studied the impact of granting job stability to temporary teachers in Chile through a policy that, in 2014, forced public education administrators to grant permanent contracts to temporary teachers with at least three consecutive years of experience. The authors found that the measure significantly reduced teacher turnover in the public system. However, this reduction in turnover was significant only for those teachers with the worst and best performances in the initial year of the study. The authors found that the policy significantly reduced the learning of students assigned to low-performing teachers in the base year. The authors of the study conclude that these types of policies can be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, they retain high-performing employees, but at the cost of making it more difficult to separate and motivate low-performing employees.

In summary, the literature reviewed indicates that the impact of temporary teachers on student learning depends on several key factors, such as:

- 1. Teacher qualifications:** who are temporary teachers and how their academic credentials and preparation differ compared to permanent teachers.
- 2. Working conditions of temporary teachers:** : aspects such as salary, job stability, among others.
- 3. Monitoring temporary teachers:** supervision and work pressure to which they are subject to.

In the following sections, this context will be analyzed in eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, delving into each of these three factors.

Table 1 summarizes the literature analyzed in this section, highlighting the estimated effect of temporary teachers on students' academic performance.

Table 1.

Summary of the literature on temporary teachers and their impact on students' academic performance

Research	Country	Context	Hiring features	Conclusion
Vegas and De Laat (2003)	Togo	Growing demand for primary education and budget deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	Students of temporary teachers systematically perform worse.
Bourdon et al. (2010)	Togo, Niger and Mali	Growing demand for primary education and budget deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mali: Positive effect, attributable to close monitoring. Niger: Negative effect. Togo: Mixed effect. Initially, temporary teachers had close monitoring, which decreased over time.
Lei et al. (2018)	China	Attracting teachers to rural schools with hard-to-fill positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	Negative effect compared to regular teachers.
Duflo et al. (2015)	Kenya	RCT: Randomly provide resources to schools to hire a temporary teacher locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries Contract renewal subject to performance 	Positive effect: Academic performance of students assigned to temporary teachers improved. There was no effect on students assigned to regular teachers, despite a decrease in the student-teacher ratio.
Muralidharan and Sundaraman (2013)	India	RCT: Hiring of an additional temporary teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	Students in schools with an additional teacher performed significantly better than those in control group schools.
Agarwal and Reis (2018)	India	Increased need for access to education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	There are no significant differences in added value between a temporary and a regular teacher.
Ayala Guerrero (2017)	Colombia	Legislative change that increased the proportion of temporary teachers in the system.	Hiring outside the meritocratic system established for regular teachers.	Negative effect on students' performance on the standardized test taken at the end of school.
Marotta (2019)	Brazil	Hiring temporary teachers to solve teacher shortage problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower salaries and benefits. Lower qualifications 	Negative effect, mainly on low-income students.
Estrada and Lombardi (2024)	Chile	Policy to grant permanent contracts to temporary teachers with at least three consecutive years of experience.	Direct hiring for temporary teachers; public tender for regulars.	The policy had a negative effect on the learning process of students assigned to initially low-performing teachers, but reduced teacher turnover..

Source: own elaboration, based on the cited studies.

3 OVERVIEW OF TEMPORARY TEACHERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

As the name suggests, **a temporary teacher is someone who occupies a teaching position for a specific period of time**. This study specifically analyzes teachers who, being outside the school system, enter to fill a position or temporary contract for one or more school years, this is the most common group and with the most significant impact in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the region, there are other types of temporary work related to teaching. The first is the substitute teacher, who temporarily covers the work of another teacher during a short period, such as medical leave or maternity permits. The main distinction between a temporary teacher and a substitute is that the first one assumes the same workload and responsibilities as a permanent teacher throughout the school year, while the substitute covers brief absences.

The second case corresponds to **permanent teachers who take on temporary vacant positions to complete their working hours**. This occurs mainly in systems with part-time

permanent teachers who aim at completing their hours by occupying a temporary vacancy. This situation is common in countries such as Brazil (Marotta, 2019; Elacqua and Marotta, 2020). Both this type of permanent teacher who takes on temporary positions and substitute teachers are outside the focus of this study.

In the following sections we will describe in detail what it means to be a temporary teacher in eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean: Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Argentina. We will also analyze the characteristics of these teachers in relation to the selection criteria and their working conditions.

All information presented in these sections was collected directly by the authors in collaboration with local specialists from the Inter-American Development Bank. To do so, we designed a questionnaire aimed at identifying what it means to be a temporary teacher, how these teachers are selected and assigned, and what their working conditions are. This questionnaire was applied through virtual interviews with members of the educational authorities in each country.

Below, we present a country-by-country analysis that explores the particularities of the temporary teacher hiring systems in each of the eight countries studied.



Ecuador:

Two approaches to meeting its educational needs

In Ecuador, there are two types of contracts for temporary teachers: **provisional appointment and occasional contract**. Both are temporary in nature but differ in the type of vacancy. Positions for provisional appointments are funded on a long-term basis, while those for occasional contracts are created to meet specific needs and disappear when these are resolved.



Peru:

Flexibility in hiring to meet temporary needs

As in Ecuador, a temporary teacher in Peru is defined based on the nature of the position. In this case, temporary teachers are those who fill an **eventual vacant position**, which, unlike the so-called **organic positions**, lack long-term financing and are defined annually in the **rationalization process**, which determines the necessary vacancies based on the national enrollment and the number of permanent teachers in the system. Temporary positions may cover short-term needs or replace organic positions that lack a permanent teacher.

These types of temporary vacancies can be filled by teachers who pass and fail the teaching competition for permanent teachers, although the former have priority to fill these positions.

In general, teachers who pass the competition and occupy temporary positions do so because they are unable to obtain an organic position of their preference, mainly because they apply only for positions with high demand.



Colombia:

Solutions to the lack of eligible candidates

In Colombia, temporary teachers fill two types of vacant positions: **permanent positions**, temporarily filled by provisional teachers due to the lack of eligible candidates in the centralized competition, and whose duration depends exclusively on the eventual final assignment of the position. There are also **temporary positions**, which cover brief absences of incumbents, and which are outside the scope of this study.

There is a third category of temporary teachers, which arises from the so-called **temporary plants**, created by territorial entities to attend extraordinary processes or activities and whose hiring is determined by technical studies, periodically carried out by territorial entities to determine the number of teachers they will need in the temporary plants and the provisional ones for permanent positions.



Guyana:

Academic criteria for defining teaching status

In Guyana, the status of a teacher (permanent or temporary) depends on his or her academic credentials. In particular, those who have graduated from the tertiary institution responsible for teacher training in the country, and have successfully passed the probationary period, may serve as permanent teachers. Teachers who do not meet this requirement may only apply for temporary positions.



Brazil:

Regional flexibility in the face of the lack of permanent competitions

In Brazil, temporary teachers are hired through a simplified selection process, usually based on the analysis of qualifications and experience. Contracts have a pre-established start and end but can be renewed according to the rules of each region. These teachers usually make up for the lack of permanent teachers (vacancies, absences, leaves of absence) or support the expansion of teaching networks, working in specific programs.

Teachers who occupy temporary positions in Brazil can be of two types: those who fail to pass the competition for permanent teachers and those who have not had the opportunity to participate in any competition due to the low frequency with which they are held.



Chile:

Direct hiring with discretion

In Chile, temporary teachers are all those teachers whose contracts have a limited duration. In theory, the hiring of temporary teachers is reserved solely to replace a permanent teacher who is temporarily out of the office (substitute teacher) or to carry out a short-term one-off task. However, in practice, the type of contract to be offered (temporary or permanent) falls to the discretion of the person in charge of the contract, and it is often the case that they are, at least initially, subject to a temporary type of obligation.



Costa Rica:

Flexible interim positions with the option to remain

In Costa Rica, temporary teachers are called **interim teachers**, according to the Ministry of Education, and include: **substitutes**, who temporarily replace the incumbent, and interim teachers in pure vacancies, hired temporarily for specific needs without guarantee of continuity. If after a certain time it is determined that the position occupied by the interim teacher must be filled permanently, the hiring of the interim teacher as an indefinite teacher is permitted, in possession of such a position. In fact, a new law enacted in this country requires that interim teachers who have served in the same position for more than two years be appointed indefinitely.



Argentina:

Temporary solutions for vacant positions and restructuring

In Argentina, temporary teachers are also called interim teachers. They occupy positions or cover vacant class hours, and their function ends when: the position or teaching hours are eliminated (due to modifications in the structures, changes in programs or study plans, closure or merger of schools, grades, courses or hours), or when those tasks are assumed by tenured personnel who enter through admission, promotion, transfer, readmission or relocation processes.

4 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TEMPORARY TEACHER IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In this section we analyze the conditions of employment of temporary teachers in the eight countries under study, focusing on three key aspects: the **academic credentials** required to work as a temporary teacher in the different systems; the working conditions under which these teachers are hired, and the **level of monitoring or supervision** to which they are subject to.

4.1. Selection and allocation requirements

In a large part of Latin America and the Caribbean, selection and assignment processes for temporary teachers often differ significantly from those applied to permanent teachers. One of the major differences is in the **minimum requirements that teachers must meet to obtain a permanent versus a temporary position**, which can have important implications for the qualifications of the contracted teacher. These differences impact the composition of the group of candidates applying for these positions. This point is discussed below concerning the countries of our study.

In both **Peru** and **Colombia**, temporary positions are assigned in two phases:

First phase: candidates eligible for permanent positions

Firstly, positions are offered to candidates who have met all the requirements of the regular system but have not obtained a permanent position. This happens mainly when candidates apply only for positions with high demand.

In Peru, teachers who have passed the **National Single Test of the Appointment Competition - Prueba Única Nacional del Concurso de Nombramiento (PUN)** but did not obtain a permanent position, so they first access to temporary positions. They are assigned a classification based on their performance in the PUN, and vacancies are awarded at the level of the **Local Educational Management Units - Unidades de Gestión Educativa Local UGEL**¹.

Similarly, in Colombia, teachers on the list of eligible for permanent vacancies have priority to fill temporary positions. The assignment follows a score order within the **Certified Territorial Entities - Entidades Territoriales Certificadas (ETC)**², that manage the educational service in their respective jurisdictions.

Second phase: selection through files

When vacant positions become available after the first phase, selection and hiring is carried out according to additional criteria. In Peru, four aspects are evaluated: (i) academic training, (ii) continuing education, (iii) work experience and (iv) merits (PUN result). According to these criteria, each teacher is assigned a score and an application classification. The UGELs publish the results through a public call to award vacancies according to this classification. Although academic credentials are evaluated, the system allows hiring teachers without a university degree, which is particularly important in areas with difficulties in filling positions.

In the case of **Colombia**, selection and assignment is carried out through the so-called **Teaching System, a centralized process that evaluates studies and experience**. This system weighs the criteria differently depending on the context (rural, urban or difficult to access). The Teaching System imposes a third-level education degree as a minimum requirement. Applicants apply directly to the position of their interest, that is, they apply at the institution or school level. For each position, based on the application score, the system preselects a shortlist of candidates. From here, the ETC verifies the documents and requirements accredited by the preselected applicants. They can also carry out an additional phase consisting of an interview or written test. If there are no applicants and the vacant position has been re-launched several times, the system allows the position to be awarded directly.

1. Local Educational Management Units are decentralized units of the Ministry of Education and are responsible for managing and supervising education within their jurisdiction.

2. In Colombia, a Certified Territorial Entity - **Entidad Territorial Certificada (ETC)** is a public entity with the authority to manage and administer the educational service in its jurisdiction. These entities are responsible for providing educational services at the preschool, primary and secondary levels within their territories. ETCs can be departments, districts or municipalities that meet the requirements established by the Ministry of Education.

Ecuador also has a **centralized allocation system for temporary teachers**, called Educa Empleo, which, however, operates differently than Peru and Colombia. Educa Empleo positions are not assigned primarily to candidates who have passed the centralized competition for permanent teachers, although one of the criteria evaluated is the candidate's performance in the knowledge test of this competition (if a candidate has not participated in the competition, he or she receives a score of zero in this item). **The allocation of positions is done online through an automated algorithm** that considers the score given to the teachers who apply for each of the positions offered, as well as their preferences. This score is determined according to three criteria: (i) performance in knowledge tests, (ii) educational credentials, (iii) teaching experience.

All teachers who apply to the Educa Empleo system must have at least a third-level education degree. Positions that do not receive applicants or remain unallocated are declared vacant, allowing their decentralized recruitment without having to go through the Educa Empleo process.

In Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador, the selection and assignment systems for temporary teachers generate two profiles of candidates/teachers in terms of qualifications. First, there are teachers who do not meet the requirements to obtain a permanent position. Second, there are teachers who are equally qualified as permanent teachers but who do not obtain a position, either due to the low frequency of competitions for permanent teachers or because they apply for positions with high demand. The latter usually occurs more in urban areas, where there is greater congestion of applicants.

The first case is more prevalent in Peru, where many teachers end up with temporary contracts after failing the National Single Test. However, in Colombia, a large part of temporary teachers arises due to the low frequency of competitions for permanent teachers³. Ecuador presents a mixed case, in which it is more common to find temporary teachers who do not meet the requirements to be a permanent teacher in remote areas, where filling vacancies is more difficult.

In **Brazil**, the selection and **allocation** of teachers, both permanent and temporary, occur in a **centralized** manner, and **the definition of specific hiring rules is the responsibility of each teaching network (federal, state or municipal)**⁴. **In general, instruments to measure the candidate's competence (practical classes or objective tests) are not used for the selection of temporary teachers, although they are widely used to select permanent teachers.** For example, in Recife, the criteria for hiring temporary teachers are only the academic degree and work experience, with priority given to older candidates in the event of a tie. In initial grades, hiring teachers without a third-level education degree is allowed. In final grades, this degree is mandatory. In general, the degree is one of the factors to be

3. In this country, the last two teaching competitions were held in 2019 and 2023, which means that four years have passed without a new competition being held.

4. For more information on how permanent teachers are selected and assigned in Brazil, see Elacqua et al. 2024.

evaluated during the selection process. For example, in the states of Sao Paulo and Espírito Santo, hiring temporary teachers without third-level education degrees is not allowed. However, conditionally on having this minimum degree requirement, the selection and assignment of temporary teachers is also done solely based on academic training and years of service.

In contrast, the system for selecting permanent teachers in Brazil includes content tests and practical tests to assess the candidate's competence for the position for which they are applying. This could explain the greater preparation of permanent teachers compared to temporary teachers. However, in practice this is not always the case, as many teachers enter the educational system as temporary teachers only because of the low frequency with which public competitions for permanent teachers are held. In fact, of the municipal networks in Brazil, around 30% held the last competition between five and nine years ago, and almost 10% have not held a public competition in more than 15 years. Only 37% did so less than five years ago, according to Elacqua et al. (2024).

In **Costa Rica**, the system for hiring temporary teachers is similar to that in Recife. Periodically, interested teachers are called to be included in a **list of eligible candidates**, which is organized **according to scores obtained based on academic credentials and work experience**. Each teacher must indicate the geographic location where he or she wishes to work. This list of eligible candidates is used to select both permanent and temporary teachers. **Certified and non-certified teachers can participate in the process, but certified teachers have higher priority in the ranking**. When a temporary position is available, the educational authority offers the position to each member of the list of eligible candidates interested in that geographic location, in order of priority⁵.

A similar system is used in **Argentina**. Although each province has discretion to define how applicants' backgrounds are evaluated, **the teacher with the highest score has priority for the position they are interested in**, and so on until all positions are filled. Only private schools hire their teachers directly. Unlike in Costa Rica, **one of the requirements that all teachers, temporary and permanent, must meet is to have a teaching degree**. In both Costa Rica and Argentina, unlike other countries analyzed above, no tests or other instruments are used to determine the suitability of candidates.

Chile has a more **decentralized system of teacher selection and allocation**. The hiring of permanent teachers in public schools is the responsibility of the **local authority**, which **must call for a public competition to fill these positions**. On the other hand, **for temporary**

5. If the position lasts 35 days or less, it is managed by the regional offices. For positions lasting more than 35 days, management is the responsibility of the central offices.

teachers, direct hiring is allowed, without the need for a public tender. In both cases, there are no standardized rules, specific requirements or mandatory knowledge tests to qualify for a teaching position. This lack of uniformity means that there is no clear difference in the qualifications and academic credentials between temporary and permanent teachers.

Finally, **Guyana** uses a **radically different system than other countries in the region.** In this country, **academic credentials determine whether a teacher is temporary or permanent.** By definition, temporary teachers have less credentials. Similarly, in order to obtain a temporary position in Guyana, passing all sections of the Secondary School Leaving Examination - **Examen Final de Educación Secundaria** (CSEC) is a requirement.

4.2. Working conditions: job stability, wage differences, access to training and workload

The working conditions of temporary and permanent teachers present significant differences, in addition to those related to hiring requirements, discussed in the previous subsection. **According to international literature, these disparities can have a significant impact on teacher performance, as measured by the academic performance of their students.** The main differences in the working conditions of both types of teachers are described below.

One of the **main differences** between temporary and permanent teachers is, as the name suggests, **job stability.** By definition, **temporary teachers are not guaranteed long-term tenure.** However, the length of time they can remain in a position varies by country and type of contract.

For example, in **Ecuador**, teachers with **provisional nominations remain in their positions until a permanent teacher, who has passed in a competition, fills the position.** In contrast, temporary teachers with occasional contracts renew their contracts annually, as long as the need that gave rise to the position persists and funding is available.

In **Colombia**, temporary teachers face a similar scenario. In this country, **temporary teachers in permanent positions do not have a maximum time limit in their contracts.** In fact, there are teachers who have occupied such positions for 15-20 years, although these cases are rare due to the number of competitions held to nominate permanent teachers. Termination of the contract depends on the vacant position being filled on a permanent basis. **Temporary teachers** end their contract when the annual technical study determines that the position is no longer necessary. In theory, this technical study should be carried out annually. However, in practice these reviews are not always carried out annually, since territorial entities are reluctant to reduce the number of positions.

Unlike Ecuador and Colombia, **in Peru, Brazil and Costa Rica, the contract for temporary teachers has a fixed duration. In Peru, it has a strict duration of one year**, with no possibility of renewal. If the teacher wants to obtain a new temporary contract, he or she must go through the entire hiring process again, with no guarantee of getting the same position back. In **Recife** (Brazil), temporary teachers are hired for an **initial period of two years**, renewable for up to eight years, as long as the school wants to keep the teacher. In **São Paulo** (Brazil), the initial contract is for one year, renewable for up to three, while in **Espírito Santo** (Brazil), the initial contract is also for one year, with the possibility of renewal depending on the needs of the system. In **Costa Rica**, the duration of temporary contracts is predefined at the time of offering the position. Contracts can extend from a few days to several years, depending on the specific need, with no general guidelines regarding their duration. In **Guyana**, the contract for temporary teachers also has a predetermined finite duration. However, they may be renewed if there are no qualified candidates to fill the position at the end of the contract.

An intermediate case in terms of job stability is **Chile**. In this country, **the contract for temporary teachers must be renewed annually, with no limit on the number of renewals**. In practice, this allows many teachers to work indefinitely, renewing their contract every year. However, this situation allows that the teacher can be fired without compensation once the contract has ended, which generates greater instability compared to permanent teachers.

Another of the major differences in the working conditions of permanent and temporary teachers is salary. In **Ecuador and Recife** (Brazil), temporary teachers receive a lower salary than permanent teachers. In **Colombia**, although both types of teachers can enter the same salary scale, only permanent teachers can move up in it. In **Peru**, temporary teachers receive the same base salary as permanent teachers, but this does not increase with experience. Both types of teachers receive bonuses for working in remote or hard-to-reach areas. In contrast, in **Espírito Santo** (Brazil), the base salary (part-time) of temporary teachers is higher than that of permanent teachers. In **Argentina, São Paulo** (Brazil) **and Costa Rica**, the base salary is the same for both types of teachers. In Costa Rica, salary differences depend exclusively on academic credentials, not on temporary or permanent status.

Access to training is also different in some education systems. For example, in **Ecuador**, both temporary and permanent teachers have access to free training from the Ministry of Education. However, third or fourth level training is only offered to teachers with permanent contracts, since they must repay the benefit by working twice as long as the training lasted, something that cannot be guaranteed with temporary contracts. In **Peru and Colombia**, access to training is not allowed for temporary teachers. In contrast, in **Costa Rica, Argentina and São Paulo** (Brazil), both types of teachers have access to training. In the case of **Espírito Santo** (Brazil), there are training courses open to all teachers, but also exclusive programs for permanent teachers.

Finally, in general, **the workload of temporary teachers is similar to that of permanent teachers, with some exceptions.** For example, in **Peru** the system prioritizes that permanent teachers have the maximum number of hours available. Some even have up to five contracts, which leaves temporary teachers with fewer contractual hours. In **Costa Rica**, the workload is comparable for both types of teachers, but temporary teachers cannot complement their contract with additional appointments or administrative positions.

4.3. Monitoring

Analysis of the international literature suggests that **monitoring is a key element** in the performance of temporary teachers (Bourdon et al., 2010; Chudgar et al., 2014; Duflo et al., 2015). These studies suggest that **closer supervision of teacher performance by school principals, parents and local communities is an important mechanism to understand why, in some contexts, there is a positive effect of hiring temporary teachers on the academic performance of their students.**

In the countries analyzed in this study, it is not common for local communities and parents to be directly involved in the hiring and supervision of temporary teachers. However, this approach could represent an opportunity to improve the performance of these teachers, given that evidence points to positive impacts of these practices on student academic performance. However, to implement these practices effectively, it would be essential to ensure that local hiring processes are transparent and competitive, thus avoiding possible cases of corruption.

International evidence also suggests that linking the renewal of temporary contracts to teacher performance can be a positive incentive (Duflo et al., 2015). In general, in the region, the renewal of temporary contracts does not depend on the teacher's performance, except in specific cases. For example, in Peru, temporary teachers must participate annually in the competition for permanent teachers in order to continue to be eligible for a temporary position, which creates incentives to prepare for and pass the competition, thus ensuring greater long-term job stability. In **Recife** (Brazil), the temporary contract is renewable for up to eight years, after an initial period of two years of service. Renewal depends on an evaluation carried out by the school where the teacher works, which also creates an incentive for good performance, although it is not clear whether this evaluation is based on objective performance criteria. Finally, in the state of São Paulo, all teachers, both temporary and permanent, must participate in mandatory annual evaluation processes, which introduces a component of regular monitoring of their performance.

Table 2: below summarizes the main aspects discussed in this section on temporary teachers in the countries analyzed.

Table 2:

Summary of the hiring characteristics of temporary teachers by country

Country	Types of temporary teachers	Hiring system	Working conditions
Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional Nomination: Position with long-term financing. • Occasional contract: Position created for a specific need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized selection and allocation system: Educa Empleo. • In schools with hard-to-fill positions, the district may select the teacher. • Requirement: third level education degree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: lower than that of permanent teachers. • Job stability: Contract until the arrival of a competition winner or until the need ceases. • Change of position is not permitted.
Peru	<p>Hired teachers: They fill temporary positions reviewed annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system: 1. Positions offered to eligible teachers from the permanent teacher competition, in order of ranking. 2. If vacancies remain available, an evaluation is carried out by files. • Requirement: hiring teachers without third level education degrees is permitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: Same base salary as regular teachers. This salary does not increase based on experience • Job stability: Strict duration of one year. • A contract for the maximum number of hours is not guaranteed.
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional on permanent position: Occupied until the arrival of a permanent teacher. • Temporary staff: Positions created for a specific need or program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system: 1. Positions offered to those eligible for permanent positions, in order of ranking. 2. If vacancies remain available, they are assigned through the Sistema Maestro. • Requirement: at least a third level education degree is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: Same base salary as permanent teachers. No salary changes are allowed. • Job stability: Relative duration, depending on the arrival of a permanent teacher or the cessation of the need.
Guyana	<p>Teachers without a third level education degree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system • Academic credentials determine the type of contract. • They must pass all sections of the secondary school exam (CSEC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job stability: Pre-established finite duration. Renewable if a qualified candidate is not found to fill the position
Brazil	<p>Teachers not selected in a public competition: due to low frequency of calls or failure to pass the competition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system . • In Recife, teachers without a third-level qualification can only be hired in the initial grades. • In São Paulo and Espirito Santo a third level degree is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: Same base salary as permanent teachers in Sao Paulo. Lower salary in Recife and higher in Espirito Santo. • Job stability: varies by region. In Recife, initial contract of two years, renewable up to eight years. In São Paulo, initial contract of one year, renewable up to three years. In Espirito Santo, initial contract of one year, renewable as needed.

Chile	Teachers with finite contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized selection • There are no standardized minimum requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job stability: One-year contract, renewable at discretion
Costa Rica	Teachers are hired to meet a specific need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system: positions offered in order according to the list of eligible candidates. • Non-certified teachers participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: Same base salary as permanent teachers, but varies depending on the teacher's credentials. • Job stability: duration predetermined at the time of hiring. • Additional nominations and administrative positions are not permitted.
Argentina	Teachers are hired to meet a specific need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized system: positions offered in order of score. Each province defines how it evaluates the background of the applicants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary: Same salary and benefits as regular teachers. • Job stability: the contract ends when a permanent teacher arrives.

Source: own elaboration..



5 RADIOGRAPHY OF TEMPORARY TEACHING IN THE REGION

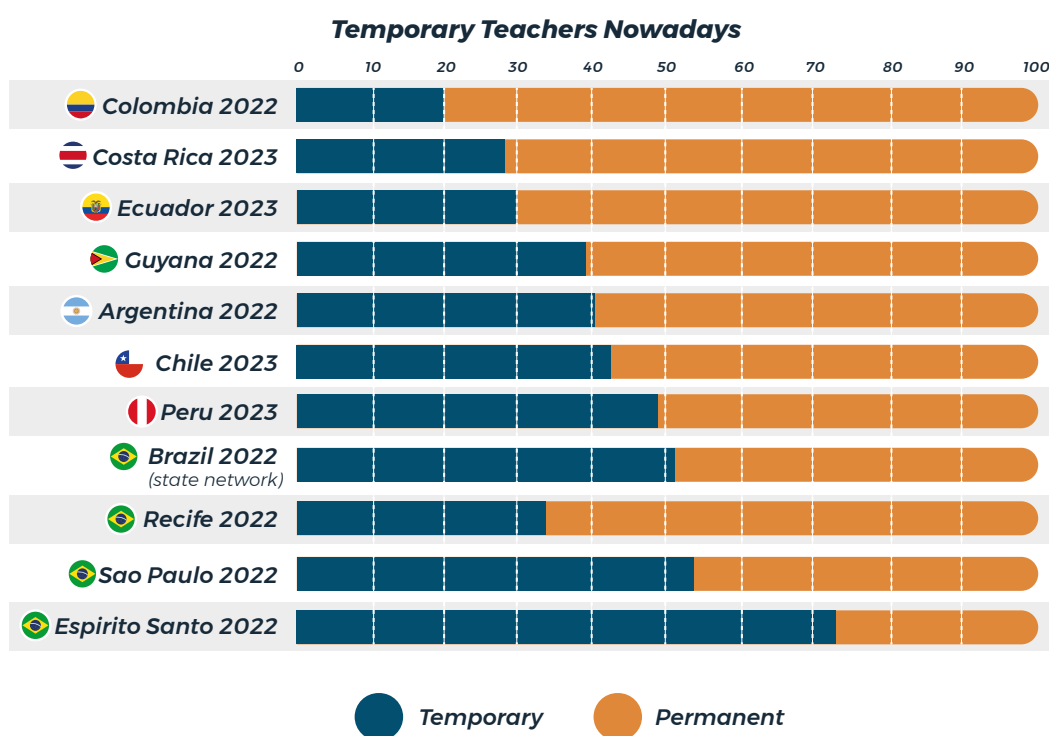
Once we have understood what it means to be a temporary teacher in Latin America, this section presents a quantitative analysis of the prevalence of these teachers in the region. The analysis focuses on identifying: the **degree of mass hiring** of temporary teachers; **the differences according to the type of schools** that employ more temporary teachers; and the **heterogeneity between countries** in the region in the proportion of temporary teachers. The quantitative information used in this section was provided by local specialists from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Prevalence of temporary teachers

Figure 1 shows the current proportion of temporary teachers in the eight countries studied. As a first observation, **most education systems have a higher percentage of permanent teachers.** However, in Brazil (total), the percentage of temporary teachers exceeded the 50% barrier in 2022. Additionally, we see that there is a marked heterogeneity between the countries analyzed, where the percentage varies from 20% in Colombia to more than 70% in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo.

Figure 1:

Decomposition of teachers by contract type



Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

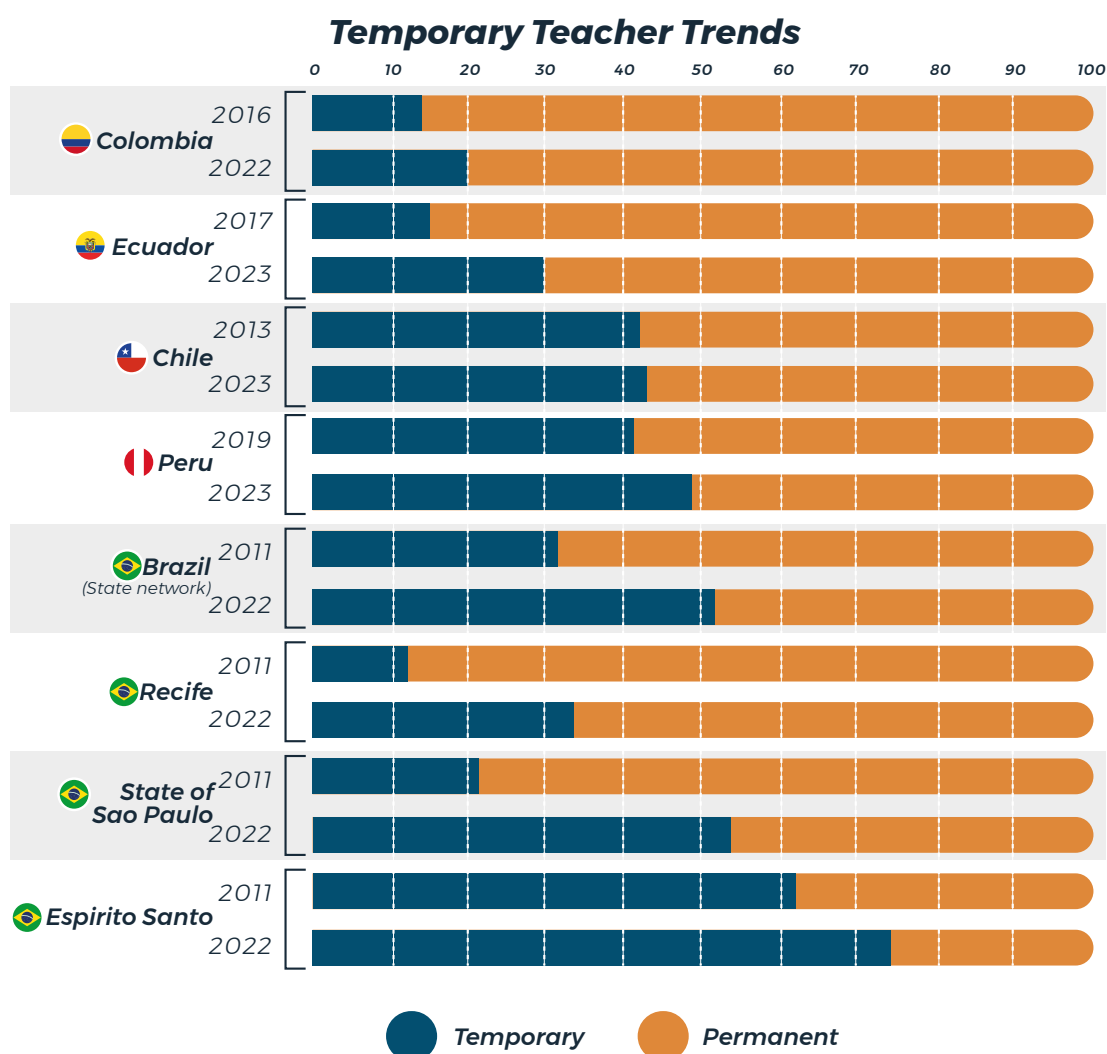
Note: The figure presents the percentage of teachers with temporary and permanent contracts for the most recent year available. It includes data from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica, Argentina, Chile, Brazil (Total, Espírito Santo, Recife and São Paulo) and Guyana.

Changes over time

Figure 2 compares the percentage of permanent and temporary teachers at two different points in time for Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Brazil (total, Recife, Espírito Santo and São Paulo). **We can see that, in general, except in the case of Chile, the percentage of temporary teachers has increased in almost all countries.** The most extreme case is Brazil, where this proportion rose from 32% to 52% between 2011 and 2022. As we mentioned above, one of the main causes of this increase is the low frequency of centralized competitions for permanent teachers.

Figure 2:

Decomposition of teachers over time by type of contract



Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

Geographical distribution and educational levels

Based on the most recent information available (years indicated in Figure 1)^{6,7}, Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 analyze the prevalence of temporary teachers by geographic location and by levels and types of teaching.

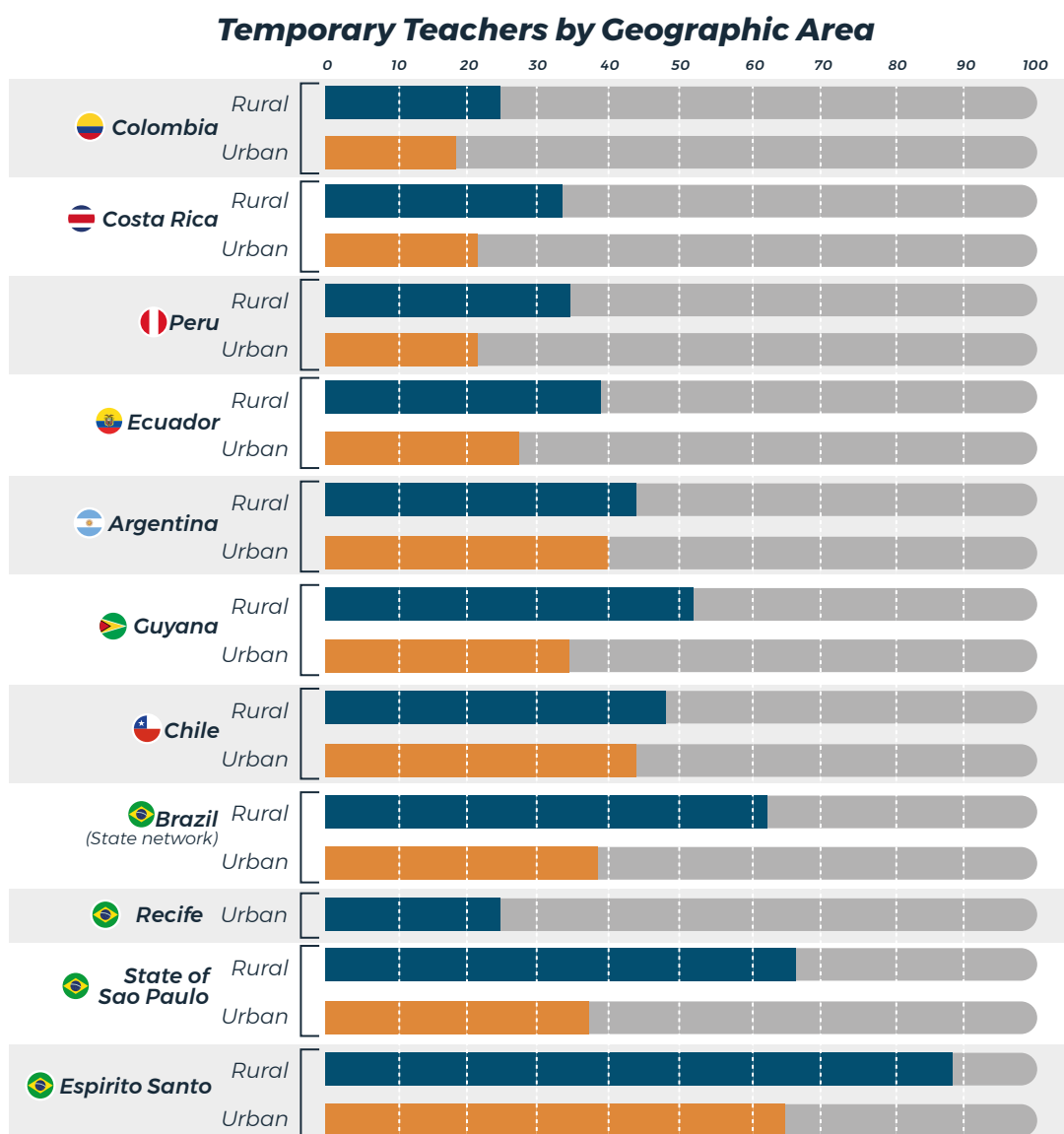
Figure 3 shows that **in all countries analyzed, the proportion of temporary teachers is higher in rural areas**. This is explained by the shortage of qualified candidates who pass competitions for permanent positions in these areas. In addition, qualified teachers in urban areas are often unwilling to move to remote areas, which makes it difficult to fill these positions. Consequently, rural schools resort to hiring temporary teachers, usually with inferior academic credentials.

6. In the case of Brazil (total and specific locations), the data corresponds to the year 2020.

7. In the case of Peru, the data corresponds to the year 2017. For this country in particular, due to data limitations, Figures 3, 4, and 6 show the percentage of temporary teachers out of the total number of organic positions. This information was taken from Bertoni et al. (2020a)

Figure 3:

Decomposition of teachers by type of contract and geographic location

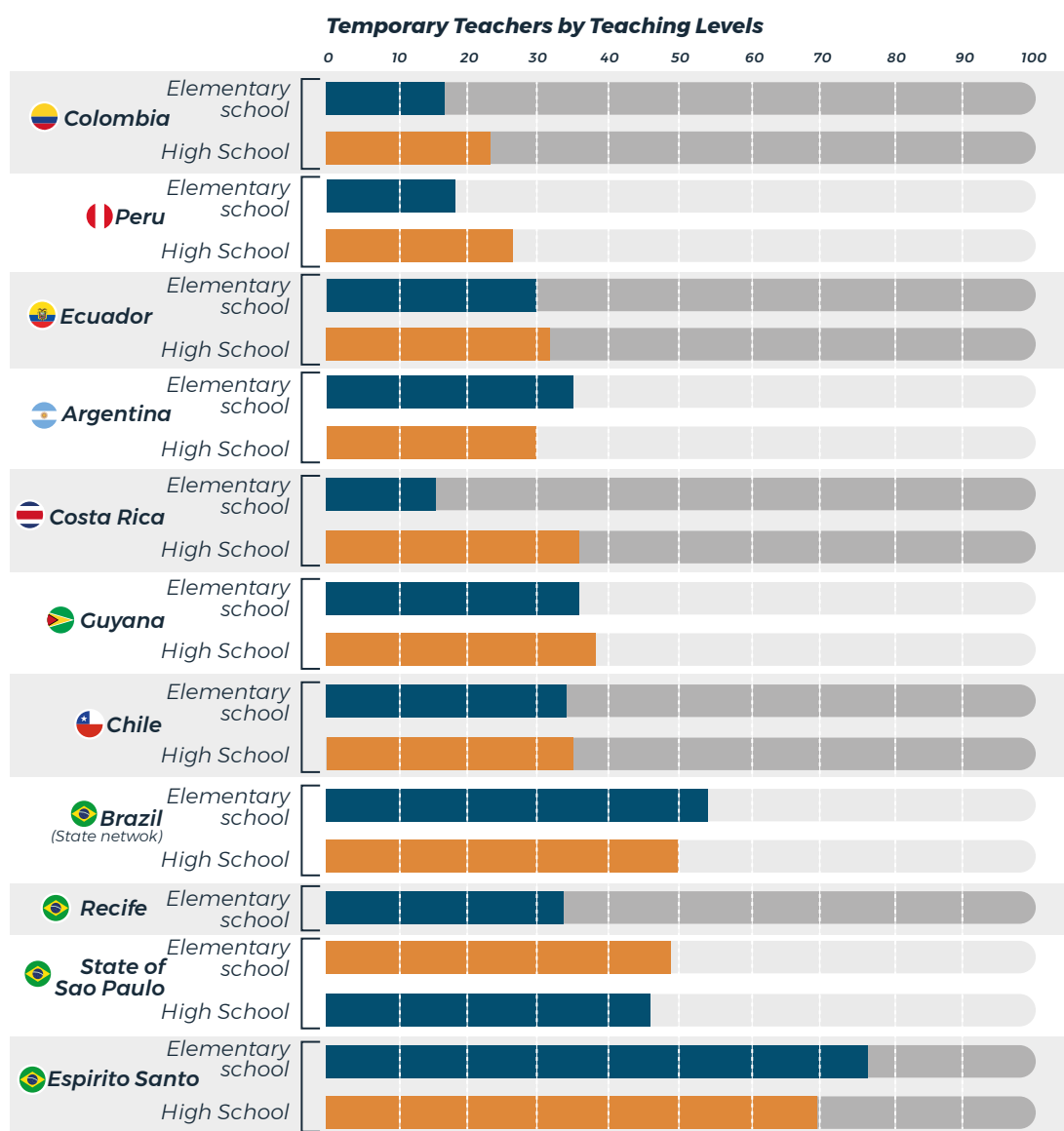


Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

Figure 4 shows the **proportion of temporary teachers by level of education**. Within each country, **there are no significant differences in the percentage of temporary teachers between primary and secondary education**. This finding is interesting, since in other economies around the world there is a greater shortage of teachers in secondary education, since this type of teaching requires greater specialization

Figure 4:

Decomposition of teachers by type of contract and level of teaching

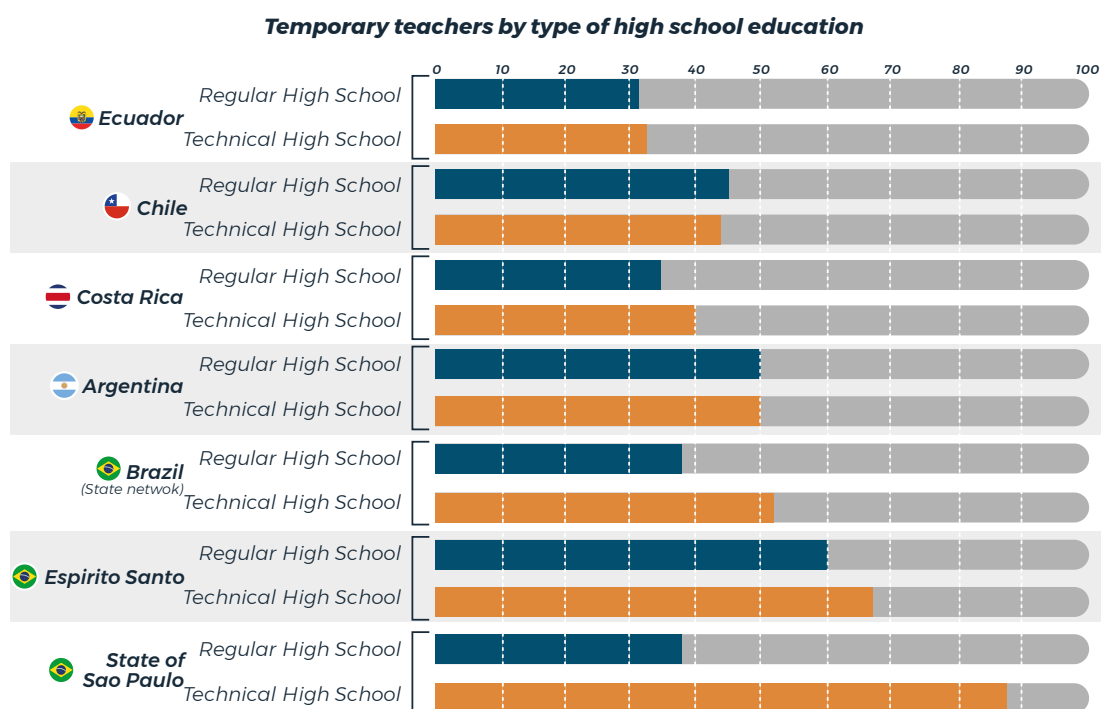


Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

On the other hand, **Figure 5** compares the **percentage of temporary teachers in regular and technical education programs within high school level of education**. Except in the case of **Brazil**, no significant differences are detected in the use of temporary teachers between both types of programs. In Brazil, however, technical high school programs employ a significantly higher proportion of temporary teachers compared to regular high school programs.

Figure 5:

Decomposition of teachers by type of contract and type of high school



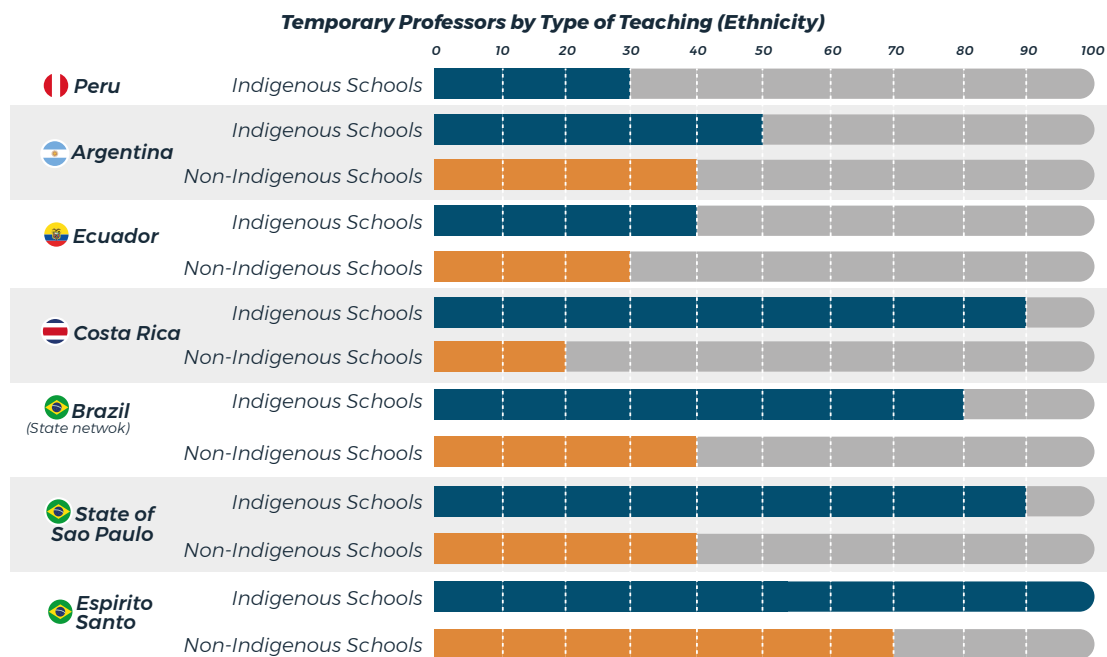
Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

Note: Based on data availability, the countries considered correspond to Ecuador, Chile, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil (total, Espírito Santo and São Paulo). Source: Prepared by the authors using administrative data from each country.

Finally, **Figure 6** compares **the proportion of temporary teachers in schools that provide intercultural bilingual education versus non-indigenous schools**. This information is available only for Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil (total, Espírito Santo, São Paulo) and Costa Rica. **In all the countries analyzed, indigenous schools have a higher proportion of temporary teachers**. A notable case is **Espírito Santo**, where 100% of teachers in indigenous schools have a temporary contract. However, it is important to mention that the total number of schools that provide intercultural bilingual education in this state is low. **One of the reasons behind this higher proportion of temporary teachers in indigenous schools is the requirement of certification in an ancestral language, in addition to the usual requirements for credentials and tests**. In some systems, teachers are also required to be members of the indigenous community. These conditions add to an additional layer of complexity, making it difficult to find qualified candidates who meet all the requirements and pass the competitions for permanent positions. As a result, indigenous schools rely more on hiring temporary teachers.

Figure 6:

Decomposition of teachers by type of contract and bilingual intercultural education



Source: Prepared by the authors, using administrative data from each country.

Note: The figure compares the percentage of teachers with temporary and permanent contracts in schools that provide bilingual intercultural education and non-indigenous schools. Based on data availability, the countries considered are Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Argentina and Brazil (total, Espírito Santo and São Paulo).

In conclusion, the data presented in this section reveal an upward trend in the hiring of temporary teachers in the countries of the region. In addition, a higher proportion of temporary teachers is observed in rural schools and in those that offer bilingual intercultural education. This is explained by the difficulty of filling permanent positions in areas with difficult access and a lower supply of qualified teachers.

Although there is a marked heterogeneity between the countries analyzed, the data show that temporary teachers represent a significant proportion of the teaching staff in the region. Understanding who these teachers are, what their characteristics are, and the conditions that lead them to occupy these non-permanent roles is a fundamental first step in measuring their impact on educational systems. This analysis not only allows us to evaluate how they influence student learning, but also to reflect on the educational policies necessary to strengthen the stability and quality of the teaching staff.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals an increase in the hiring of temporary teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is mainly due to the fiscal constraints faced by countries in the region. Since teachers represent a significant part of government spending, hiring temporary teachers with lower salaries can be a strategy to contain payroll expenses and avoid long-term fiscal commitments. In addition, rural and vulnerable areas in the region face a chronic shortage of teachers, which leads governments to hire temporary teachers with lower qualifications and less stringent requirements to guarantee educational provision in hard-to-reach areas.

However, the literature points out the importance of carefully planning teacher hiring to avoid negative impacts on educational quality and equity. A series of recommendations in this regard are offered below:

1. Transparency and objectivity in selection processes: it is essential to ensure that temporary teachers are selected through clear, regulated and objective processes, ensuring that only minimally qualified teachers are admitted. In this context, the **Educa Empleo** platform in Ecuador is presented as a good practice to digitize and regularize applications from candidates for temporary vacancies.

2. Access to professional development opportunities: temporary teachers should have access to ongoing training, especially in areas where hiring of low-qualified professionals is common due to teacher shortages. Training can be a requirement for contract renewal or for applying for permanent positions, strengthening the quality of the teaching staff.

3. Improvements in working conditions: it is essential to consider improvements in the working conditions of temporary teachers, such as better salaries and benefits. This will prevent the increase in temporary contracts from discouraging the best university students from choosing a teaching career, which could reduce the quality of the educational offer.

4. Monitoring and tracking performance: adequate monitoring is key to improving the management of temporary teachers. For example, attendance monitoring could mitigate the higher absenteeism observed in this group. However, these measures should be applied uniformly to all teachers to avoid stigmatization of temporary teachers. In addition, as we noted above, contract renewal should be conditional on certain quality indicators, such as participation in professional development programs.

The region is going through a key moment in the formation of its teaching staff, and it is essential that decision-making is not focused solely on financial issues but also prioritizes educational quality. To achieve this, changes are needed in the hiring policy for temporary teachers to ensure that their situation does not become precarious and, as a consequence, the quality of the educational service is not affected.



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