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Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?

[Richard Ingersoll, University of Pennsylvania](#)

Document Type

Report

Date of this Version

9-2003

Abstract

Contemporary educational thought holds that one of the pivotal factors behind school performance is the inability of schools to adequately staff with qualified teachers. It is widely believed that schools are plagued primarily due to recent increases in teacher retirements and school closures. This report summarizes a series of analyses that have investigated whether there are other factors—tied to the organizational characteristics of schools—that are behind school staffing problems. The data utilized in this report are from the Schools and Staffing Survey and its supplement, the Teacher Worklife Survey, both conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The

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school staffing problems are not primarily due to teacher shortages or an insufficient supply of qualified teachers. Rather, the data indicate that the problems are primarily due to a “revolving door”—where large numbers of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement. The amount of turnover accounted for by retirement is relatively small compared to that associated with other factors, such as teacher job dissatisfaction and pursuing other jobs. This report concludes that teacher recruitment policies traditionally dominant in the policy realm—will not solve the teacher shortage in schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of the problem.

Comments

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Recommended Citation

Ingersoll, Richard. (2003). Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?. *CPRE Research Report*. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/

Date Posted: 06 July 2015



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