

# Job Seeking, the Process of Insertion, and Difficulties of Beginning Teachers to Adapt

## Búsqueda de empleo, proceso de inserción y dificultad de adaptación de profesores principiantes

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### Abstract

The time period during which teachers seek to join the labor market and begin their first job is characterized by various challenges that not only plays a major role in shaping teachers' identities, but also contribute to defining their careers. The objective of this research is to describe the job search in which new teachers take part, starting from when they conclude their Initial Teacher Training and up until their first years in the profession. Analysis of a longitudinal survey administered to a group of 168 novice teachers revealed that the first year was critical in defining teachers' job stability. Middle-aged male teachers educated at so-called non-traditional postsecondary institutions experienced the greatest difficulties in adapting to the schools in which they worked. In turn, the survey indicated that teachers whose first job was to work at schools with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, where classroom-teaching hours are respected and there is more support available from colleagues, faced the lowest barriers to adaptation. In light of this evidence, preparation for the first years of the teaching career cannot be underestimated, since it has the potential to engender the necessary conditions for novice teachers to successfully develop their professional skills.

**Keywords:** teaching career, beginning teacher induction, school contexts

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## Resumen

La inserción profesional docente constituye un período caracterizado por diversos desafíos que marcan la identidad de los profesores, siendo estos determinantes en el desarrollo de su carrera laboral. La presente investigación busca caracterizar el proceso de búsqueda de empleo que llevan a cabo los profesores principiantes, desde que concluyen su formación inicial docente hasta sus primeros años en la profesión. Por medio de una encuesta de seguimiento a un grupo de 168 profesores principiantes, se observó que el primer año es clave para definir la estabilidad de los docentes en el plantel. Son los profesores varones de mediana edad y provenientes de instituciones no tradicionales quienes perciben mayores niveles de dificultad para adaptarse a los establecimientos en los que se han desempeñado. En tanto, en las escuelas de alto nivel socioeconómico, donde se respetan sus horas lectivas y cuentan con el apoyo de sus pares, los docentes tienen menos dificultades para adaptarse. Ante esto se plantea la necesidad de subrayar el estatus formativo de los primeros años de la carrera docente, brindando las condiciones necesarias para que los docentes principiantes desarrollen con éxito sus habilidades.

*Palabras clave:* carrera docente, inducción a profesores principiantes, contexto escolar

During the process of labor force entry, there is a period of transition from student to teacher, in which the beginning teacher must face situations that are hitherto unknown and acquire eminently practical knowledge. The first few years can even be understood as a continuation of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) (Marcelo, 2006; Ruffinelli, 2014b), where the teacher builds his or her professional identity by means of interpretation and reinterpretation of these new experiences, revising their decision or motivation for teaching (Ávalos, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). This study uses longitudinal data to describe this critical transition period and the start of the teaching career. The research questions that guide this study are the following:

1. What job seeking strategies are used by recently graduated teachers?
2. What is the selection and hiring process faced by recently graduated teachers?
3. What are the initial working conditions of recently graduated teachers?

What degree of difficulty is there in adapting to the first job and in what way does this difficulty vary depending on the demographic and academic characteristics of the teachers and the institutional characteristics of the schools they start working at? The discussion presented below demonstrates the importance of labor force entry for beginning teachers with respect to three key phenomena for the professional career and teacher performance, and for the educational system in general. First, we describe the role of the process of initial transition to employment as a teacher in the unequal distribution of teachers in institutions with different characteristics. Second, we discuss how the job seeking process, application, selection, and hiring of beginning teachers allows or hinders a successful match between the school and the teacher. Third, we present evidence regarding the support (or lack thereof) that beginning teachers receive from the institutions where they work and how these working conditions affect the transition between initial training and reality of the classroom.

### Labor force entry and segmentation of teachers

Along with the development of teaching identity, the labor force entry phase has particular influence on the distribution of teachers with different abilities in the education system. These inequalities are observed from the choice of the first job and increase with subsequent decisions about mobility or teacher dropout (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Loeb & Reininger, 2004). In the choice of their first job, teachers consider the salary, the contextual conditions (characteristics of the students, type of school and available resources), and the location. It is a recurrent phenomenon that they prefer to teach in places that are similar to and geographically close to the institutions in which they were educated (Boyd et al., 2005; Loeb & Reininger, 2004). In the case of Chile, these preferences result in

systematic organization, where teachers with lower academic levels teach in more vulnerable institutions, while those with better performances opt for private schools (Ortúzar, Flores, Milesi, & Cox, 2009; Paredes, Bogolasky, Rivero, & Zarhi, 2011). Considering this, the factor with most weight in positioning within the educational system is the school of origin, since when making their choice, new teachers tend to prefer the same type of school in which they received their school education (Cabezas, Gallego, Santelices, & Zarhi, 2013; Meckes & Bascopé, 2010; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009). As a consequence, greater education of the father, higher scores on admission tests for higher education, and having graduated from a private school reduce the probability that that teachers' first job will be in a more vulnerable school, it being more likely that they will be incorporated into a medium-, medium-high- or high-level school (Paredes, Bogolasky, Rivero, & Zarhi, 2011).

Furthermore, mobility and teacher dropout decisions reinforce the segmentation of the educational system. While indicators of mobility and teacher dropout are low, they are not uniform among teachers. International and national evidence indicates that both mobility and teacher dropout are more frequent in the first two to four years of the teaching career and become unlikely after this period (Allen, Burgess, & Mayo, 2012; Cabezas et al., 2013; Loeb & Reininger, 2004; Valenzuela & Sevilla, 2013). In Chile in 2013, between 7% and 8% left the teacher profession (ignoring those who were at retirement age). Of these teachers, the majority were younger than 35 years old (54.7%), with the most critical age being between 26 and 30 (25%), which coincides with the first years of exercise of the profession (Mineduc, 2014). Mobility and teacher dropout were mainly seen among teachers who worked at schools of a lower socioeconomic level, since these usually offer the worst working conditions, which means there is a greater turnover of teachers at such school. In addition to this, when choosing to change school, teachers usually do not vary in either the school sector or the school's socioeconomic level, which perpetuates the existing distribution (Paredes et al., 2011; Valenzuela & Sevilla, 2013). Finally, there is a greater degree of teacher dropout mostly among the highest-qualified teachers, which could be a sign that teachers with greater academic skills go into the teaching profession with the intention of remaining there for a short period of time, or that the work performed does not produce the expected satisfaction, leading them to opt for alternative occupations (Boyd et al., 2005; Loeb & Reininger, 2004).

Mobility and early abandonment have high costs for the institutions in particular and for the school system in general in terms of the human resources needed to constantly seek, select, and train new teachers. It is also harmful to the learning of students, since they lose teachers who have accumulated experience and must constantly adapt to new teachers (Cabezas et al., 2013; Valenzuela & Sevilla, 2013).

It is therefore necessary to stop to observe the process through which new or beginning teachers obtain their first jobs in the classroom, as well as the difficulties that they face in the stage of work insertion.

### **The hiring process**

A good match between the teacher and the institution during the selection and hiring process does not merely contribute to the efficacy of the teacher in the classroom, but also has implications for their job satisfaction and retention within the school system (Liu & Johnson, 2006). The process begins with the job search, a time in which individuals face institutional and informal obstacles that limit the employment options perceived by teachers. These obstacles include the difficulty that applicants have to find out about the demand for teachers by the institutions. In this regard, personal contact networks acquired in training institutions facilitate the flow of information about existing and potential jobs, exceeding the informative capacity of classified ads (Maier & Youngs, 2009). In a study conducted in Chile by Ricardo Paredes (2014), it is shown that contact networks are seen as the most effective means of reporting on available job offers, followed by other sources such as classified ads published in newspapers, on the internet, and in the training institutions themselves, and actually going directly to schools, even if they are unaware of the existence of vacancies (Paredes et al., 2011).

The same study by Ricardo Paredes indicates that young teachers often apply to many schools without much discrimination, which could be explained by their limited working experience. The most selective teachers are those who graduate from private schools (who usually only apply to institutions

with the same school sector) and who have personal contacts within the schools to which they apply (Paredes et al., 2011).

In a second stage of the application process, the teacher is contacted by the institution and subjected to the procedure set out by the schools to select their teaching staff, mainly based on personal interviews and requests for documentation to verify the experience and references of the applicants (curriculum vitae, presentation letters or references) (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Once again, contact networks play an important role, since they operate as a reference both for the institutions on the teacher and for the candidate on the working conditions (Maier & Youngs, 2009).

The selection period is usually short, so neither the school nor the teacher takes much time to make a decision. The school thus acquires little knowledge about the qualifications of the teacher and the teacher has few chances to observe the institution in action and interact with the rest of the teaching staff and to familiarize themselves with the educational project or the students. This can hinder a satisfactory match between the school and the teacher and, as a consequence, the teachers feel they are not meeting the expectations created during the selection process, which leads to dissatisfaction, inefficiency, and early teacher dropout (Liu & Johnson, 2006; Maier & Youngs, 2009; Paredes et al., 2011).

### **Challenges in the first few years of the teaching career**

During the first years of practicing the profession, teachers experience a transition between initial training and the reality of the classroom. This transition is often described as a time of tension and intensive learning, during which beginning teachers must adapt to the school classroom while developing the skills of an autonomous professional (Vonk, 1996). This stage has been denominated in various ways in the literature, such as a reality shock or practice shock (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Paredes et al., 2011; Ruffinelli, 2014a). In these circumstances teachers acknowledge that they feel a lack of support, while the demands are equivalent to those of their more experienced peers (Ávalos 2013; C. X. Flores, 2014).

In 1984, Simon Veenman published an interesting review of international studies on the problems perceived by teachers in their first year or teaching practice, which seems to have changed little over time. The eight most frequent problems were: management of discipline in the classroom, motivating students, managing individual differences, assessment of students' work, relations with parents, organization of work in the classroom, lack or unsuitability of teaching materials and supplies, and dealing with the problems of the students. In order to avoid that these difficulties be reduced to the dichotomy of «sink or swim» (Vonk, 1996), new teachers should have support in the first two years.

The support they receive in the school is mainly informal, provided by their peers, and focused more on administrative issues than pedagogical training. Teachers also do not feel comfortable seeking help, so they usually resort to bodies external to the institution: at their universities, on websites or taking postgraduate programs, among others (C. X. Flores, 2014).

Instead of this informal and unsystematic support, some studies indicate that, in order for the transition between initial training and the first job to be successful, the institution should operate as a learning organization, that is, it should provide support to beginning teachers so they can cope with the challenges they face in the first years in order to allow them to develop the skills needed for teaching. Skills that can only be learned in teaching itself (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Although individual factors like efficiency and adaptability are predictors of the level of adaptation of new teachers, so are organizational environment factors, such as induction programs and the culture of the institution (Rajagani, 2014).

The existing induction systems include tutorials, where teachers have individual training in the classroom. Another practice is to facilitate mutual learning, in which a group of teachers work together, planning their classes in groups and observing the work of their colleagues in order to help each other and create a culture of continuous training within the school (Barber & Mourshed, 2008). Effective induction is capable of avoiding the problems associated with shock in the early years and, consequently, teacher dropout of the teaching career (OECD, 2014). This is shown by various international studies where teachers who are involved in induction programs have higher levels of satisfaction, commitment,

and retention at work. They also show better performance in teaching practice and their students achieve better academic results (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, it should be stressed that this induction process should have certain quality standards, which will have an effect on the effectiveness of that induction (Ortúzar, Flores, Milesi, Müller, & Ayala, 2011).

In light of this evidence, an approach is needed for the path taken by beginning teachers in the Chilean context. The main objective of this research is to characterize the process carried out after completing ITT until their first years of practice of the profession, thus encompassing the process of searching for work and recruitment, labor force entry and the conditions they face, and the levels of difficulty of adaptation they perceive depending on their socio-demographic characteristics, initial teacher training, the existence of support, and working conditions.

### Data and methodology

This investigation is quantitative nature and forms part of a broader study to monitor pedagogy graduates from various Chilean universities.

The cases that form part of this study<sup>1</sup> were included in two separate investigations that were aimed at ascertaining the perception of future teachers regarding their initial teacher training programs, their beliefs concerning teaching and learning, and their view of the state of education in Chile. The first study was conducted in educational institutions in different regions of the country<sup>2</sup> in 2010 and identified 222 practitioners of pedagogy in school classrooms. The second investigation was conducted during 2011-2012<sup>3</sup> in 12 Chilean universities in various regions of the country<sup>4</sup> and covered 856 students studying education and basic pedagogy degrees<sup>5</sup>. In short, the two investigations included 1,078 participants who were students of pedagogy at various stages of the training process. As the interest of the monitoring study was focused on the jobs seeking process and labor force entry, among other things, only those participants who had graduated and were close to labor force entry were invited to take part<sup>6</sup>. A total 168 people agreed to participate in the monitoring study and they were surveyed in person between December 2013 and January 2014.

The analysis unit of this research is beginning teachers, that is, teachers who have recently completed initial teacher training and who are starting to teach in classrooms, mainly in primary education.

Of the 168 people who agreed to take part in the study, 74% (124) had finished their pedagogy or education degree (i.e. they had graduated or received their degrees). A large proportion of those who had graduated were working in educational institutions at the time of the questionnaire (some 75%, or 93 cases). On the other hand, of those who had not graduated, a small proportion was also working as teachers in classrooms (18%, or 8 cases). Another relevant group includes those participants surveyed who had not graduated, but were seeking work at schools anyway, or who had done so at some time (17 cases). The cases that are included in this analysis are those surveyed respondents who have had some kind of work experience in school classrooms or who had, at least, carried out some stage of the job-seeking process (regardless of whether or not they had been hired). The distribution of the cases according to the academic situation (graduated or not) and work (sought work or not, had worked or not) is shown in Figure 1.

<sup>1</sup> As this is a monitoring study, the researchers have taken special care with the use of the contact information and in order to respect the anonymity of the study participants. Firstly, participation in the monitoring study was completely voluntary. Secondly, the participants were given a letter of informed consent in which the study objectives were explained and the contact details of the researchers were provided (in case of questions, comments or complaints). Thirdly, the personal and contact information (name, address, telephone number and email) was only used to coordinate the visit and application of the questionnaire. This information was eliminated once the fieldwork was finished. Fourthly, the databases do not contain any information that would allow the survey respondents to be identified.

<sup>2</sup> From Region IV to Region X, including the Metropolitan Region.

<sup>3</sup> The fieldwork for this study was planned for the second half of 2011, but due to student protests (which particularly affected pedagogy and education courses in the country) it was extended to the first half of 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Twelve higher education institutions, located in the cities of La Serena-Ovalle (Region IV), Viña del Mar-Valparaíso (Region V), Santiago (Metropolitan Region), Concepción (Region VIII) and Villarrica-Temuco (Region IX).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that both the research conducted in 2010 and that conducted in 2011-2012 had multi-stage and stratified sampling, being randomized in the stage of selection of institutions (2010) and universities (2011-2012), and in selection of survey respondents.

<sup>6</sup> This indicates that pedagogy students that were in the first years of initial teacher training in 2010 2011, and 2012 were not invited to take part, since it was very unlikely that they were in the process of seeking jobs and labor force entry in 2013.

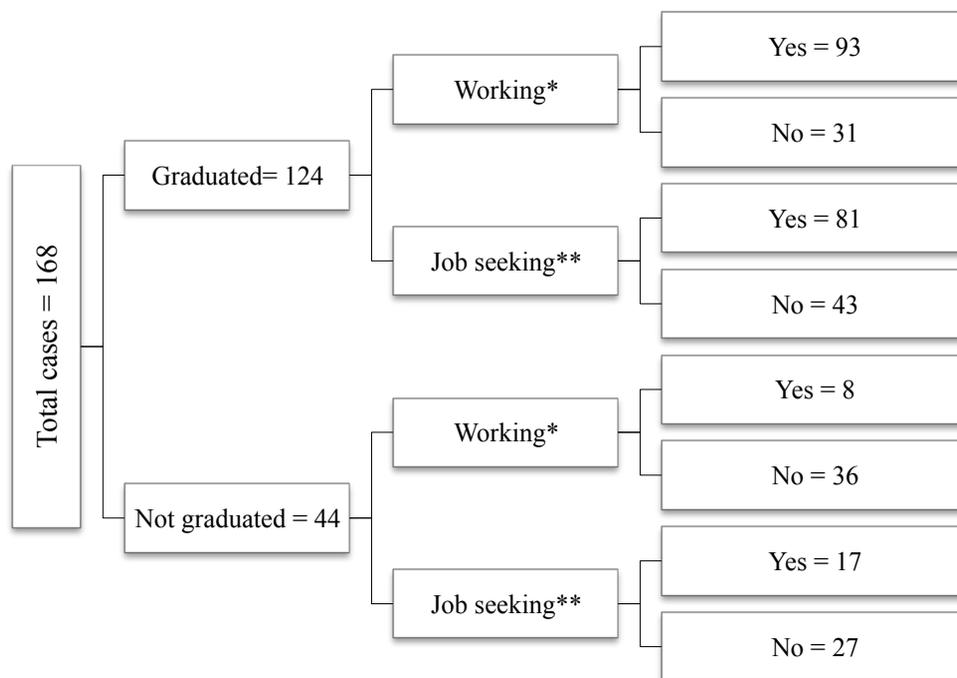


Figure 1. Distribution of cases according to academic and work situation.

\*Working or has worked at some time in schools.

\*\* Has participated at some time in the process of seeking a job at schools.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring survey of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

The questionnaire applied only included closed questions. The first section included questions on the job search process (sources of information on job offers used, number of curriculum vitae sent, waiting time between sending and being called to an interview, activities carried out, and documents requested by the hiring institution to define admission to the staff).

A second section was aimed at collecting information on the working experiences of beginning teachers (number of schools at which they had worked and time spent there), hiring conditions (type of contract, working day, respect of school times, approximate number of students per class), and the characteristics of the schools in which they were working or had worked (socioeconomic group of the school and number of students per classroom).

Finally, the questionnaire included a section that sought to measure the level of difficulty perceived by beginning teachers in the process of adaptation to the school, as well as identifying the existence of support from the principals, heads of the Technical Pedagogical Unit (UTP) and teachers at the school during the first year of exercising the profession.

Demographic descriptors are also included (sex and age), type of school at which the respondent attended secondary education, the education of their parents, and the type of institution where they received initial training teacher (ITT), as well as the number of years that the institution has accreditation.

Table 1 shows the variables that allow the sample of 168 participants in this study to be characterized. Most of them are women, with an average age of 26 at the time of the questionnaire. More than half of the graduates studied at private subsidized secondary schools, while 40% came from municipal schools. On the other hand, almost two thirds of the graduates are the first generation of professionals in their family, that is, their parents only had primary or secondary education. As regards

initial teacher training, 49% were trained at non-traditional universities (that do not belong to Cruch<sup>7</sup>) and 48% were trained at traditional universities (which do belong to Cruch). As for accreditation, 53% studied ITT at institutions that only had between two and four years' accreditation.

Table 1  
Distribution of the sample of beginning teachers according to analytical variables

Gender	Male	19%
	Female	81%
Age (in years)	18-24	29%
	25-26	33%
	27 or more	37%
Secondary school sector	Secondary	26
	Municipal/Public	40%
	Subsidized private	52%
Parents' education	Paid private	6%
	None or primary education	21%
	Secondary education	45%
Initial teacher training institution	Postsecondary education	32%
	Cruch	48%
	Non-Cruch	49%
Accreditation of initial teacher training institution	IP	1%
	Low: 2-4 years	53%
	High: 5-7 years	47%

N = 168 cases (total number of study cases)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

It should be noted that descriptive analysis techniques (frequency tables, contingency tables and measures of central tendency) were used to process the data, due to the limitations of the sample size (n = 168 cases), making use of the statistical program IBM-SPSS 22.

## Results

The results of this study are shown below in three sections. In the first, there is a characterization of the job search and hiring process of beginning teachers. Subsequently there is a description of the insertion process and the working conditions when starting teaching. Finally, the levels of difficulty of adaptation perceived by beginning teachers and the differences according to demographic variables, the ITT, the existence of support, and working conditions are identified.

### Process of seeking work and hiring of teachers

The job seeking process generally begins with the task of identifying available job offers, either using classified ads, websites, personal contacts, job fairs, or others. As can be seen in Table 2, the most frequent method is to use personal contacts (74%), specialized websites (71%), or classified ads in newspapers or journals (63%). The least frequently used means seem to be those offered by the training institutions, either via the networks acquired at practice centers (36%) or by advertisements published by the institution or spread among their students and graduates (33%). However, it should be noted that graduates use more than one source when looking for work. On average, these cases used five of the options listed in Table 2, and 56% used between five and eleven of these sources of publication of job offers.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities.

Table 2  
Information source of job offers used by applicants beginning teachers who have gone through the job seeking process

Classified ads	Classified ads in newspapers or journals	63%
	Websites specialized in job seeking	71%
Contacts and personal networks	Personal contact information (friends, family members, acquaintances, etc.)	74%
	Information on social media	47%
	Academic contact information	55%
	Offers in schools or networks where they studied	35%
Initial teacher training institutions	Offers in the practice school	36%
	Advertisements in the higher education institution	33%
Other sources	Websites of municipal schools or education networks	42%
	Job fairs	15%
	Directly visiting the schools or sending emails	11%
General descriptors	Average number of sources used	4,9
	Proportion that uses between 1 and 4 sources	44%
	Proportion that uses between 5 and 11 sources	56%

N = 98 (corresponds to the cases that have sought work at some time; in the rest of the cases, the respondents state that they have never taken part in the job seeking process).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

The next step consists of sending one or more curriculum vitae (CV) to educational or municipal schools or networks. When the questionnaire respondents are asked when they last sought work, they state that they sent an average of nine CVs. Of the total number of respondents who sent CVs, 76% mention that they were called to one or more interviews. Thus, to be called to an interview, the respondents had to send a CV to an average of 2.4 schools. However, it is noteworthy that those who sent a CV to a smaller number of schools (one to five) were contacted more often (82%) than those who sent a larger number of CVs (six or more; 71%). These differences could be due to the skill of the applicants in identifying offers for which they have the greatest chance of being selected.

In general, the time between sending a CV and being called to an interview is no longer than 30 days, and only 18% say that two to four months passed between sending their CV and being called to an interview.

The activities conducted to define admission to the staff usually include a personal interview with the principal of the school (87%), followed at some distance by an interview with the head of the UTP (58%). Activities in which teachers' abilities can be observed in the classroom are infrequent: 36% say that they carried out some activity related to contact with students, 19% took some kind of knowledge test, and only 14% stated that they had to present a portfolio. It should be noted that, on average, the applicants had to go through 2.8 of these activities and, without doubt, the interview with the principal was transversal (Table 3).

Table 3  
Activities conducted with the hiring institution to define admission to the staff

Interview	Interview with the principal or assistant principal	87%
	Interview with school supporter	36%
	Interview with head of UTP or similar	58%
	Interview with educational psychologist or psychologist	27%
Assessment of teachers' abilities	Test class or other activity that implies contact with students	36%
	Test of educational and/or disciplinary knowledge	19%
	Portfolio	14%
	Average number of activities conducted	2,8
General descriptors	Proportion that uses 1-3 activities	71%
	Proportion that uses 4-7 sources	29%

N = 117 (corresponding to the total interviews recorded per case)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

Among the documentation requested by the schools or hiring institutions, 82% of respondents said that they had to present their degree certificate. References or letters of recommendation are less frequently requested, which could be due to the fact that many of these applicants were seeking work for the first time. It is noteworthy that only a small proportion were asked for some academic records, such as grades (33%) or scores on university admission tests (4%). Although this is still uncommon, the practice of requesting the INICIA test taken or the score achieved on that test (15%) as a strategy of differentiating between applicants (Table 4) has emerged.

Table 4  
Documents requested by the hiring institution to define admission to the staff

Academic records	Degree certificate	82%
	Grade transcripts and/or graduation grade	33%
	Certificate of PSU or PAA score	4%
	INICIA score or test	15%
References	Contact for references	33%
	Recommendation letter	33%
	Letter of backing from the higher education institution from which the applicant graduated	27%

N = 117 (corresponding to the total interviews recorded per case).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

### Labor force entry and working conditions

As can be seen in Figure 1, 60% of respondents (101 cases) have worked in classrooms, regardless of whether or not they have graduated. Among those who have not worked (67 cases), 59% state that the reason is that they have not graduated, while 25% state that they have not found work in classrooms, 10% are engaged in another occupation, and 6% mention other reasons.

Turning our attention to those cases that were incorporated into classrooms (101 cases), 14% started working before graduating, 49% began working the same year that they graduated, and the remaining 37% were incorporated between one and five years after graduating.

Regarding the working conditions in which teachers have worked, it is noteworthy that three of every four teachers have worked at just one school. With respect to contractual conditions, 39% state that they have signed a fee or substitution contract, 45% had a fixed-term contract, and 15% an indefinite-term contract. The average working week was 33 hours, and more than 80% of the cases state that the schools in which they have worked always or almost always respect non-classroom hours. In relation to

the number of children per class, 25% of the teachers said that they had 35 students or more, with the average being 29 students (Table 5).

Table 5  
Working conditions reported by beginning teachers

Type of contract	Substitute teacher, hourly rate or without a contract	39%
	Fixed term	45%
	Indefinite term	15%
Working hours according to contract	22 or fewer	17%
	23 to 39	50%
	40 or more	33%
Respect of non-teaching hours	Average contract hours	32.9
	Never or sometimes	16%
	Almost always	41%
	Always	44%
Approximate number of students per class	20 or fewer	29%
	21 to 35	46%
	More than 35	25%
	Average students per class	28.7

N = 143 (corresponding to the total work experiences recorded per case).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

Interesting evidence is shown by the relationship with the time in the job. Voluntary or non-voluntary teacher dropout from the job takes place 43% of the time, but this usually occurs within the first year. Figure 2 demonstrates the function of survival in the job for each job that these beginning teachers have had, measured in months. It is noteworthy that if the teacher survives in the job for the first year (test period), it is most likely that they will continue to be employed. In other words, the turning point is observed at 6 months and at 12 months, that is, after the first year at the school, the likelihood of remaining at the same school continues almost constant.

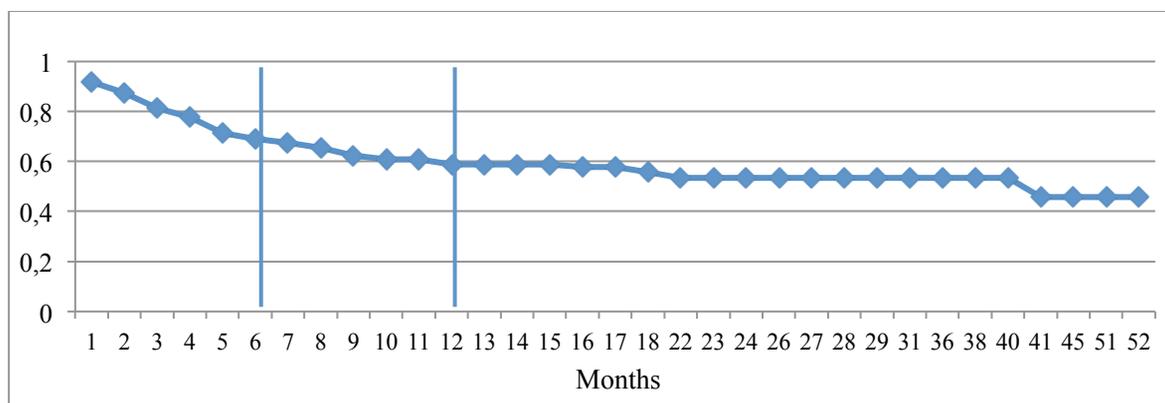


Figure 2. Function of survival in the job (in months)

N = 143 (corresponding to the total work experiences recorded per case).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

### Difficulty of adaptation perceived by beginning teachers

The literature on the start of the teaching career agrees on highlighting the practical shock perceived by teachers in their first years of work in the classroom. However, in this study, the respondents tend to perceive low levels of difficulty in the process of adaptation to the schools in which they have worked (Figure 3). To the question «from 1 to 10 (where 1 is easy and 10 is difficult), how difficult was your

process of adaptation to this school?». 78% of the teachers mention low values on the scale of difficulty (between 1 and 5), while 22% state high values (between 6 and 10).

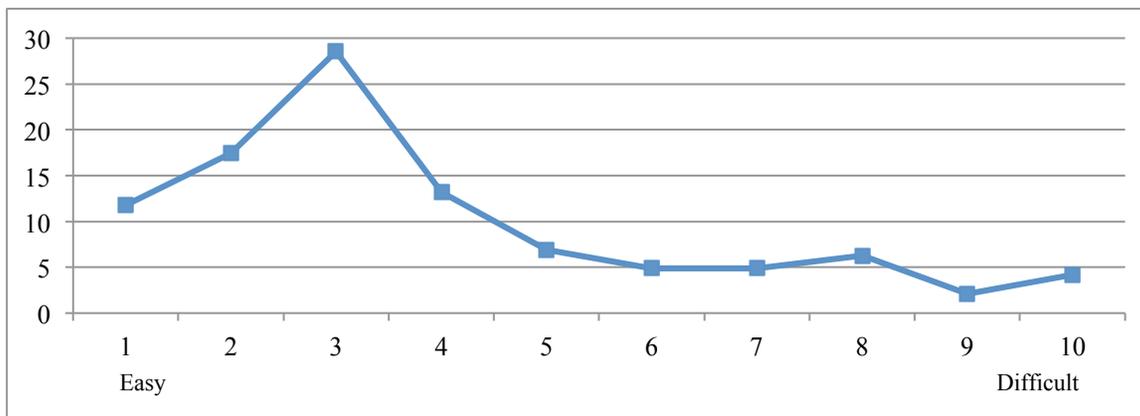


Figure 3. From 1 to 10 (where 1 is easy and 10 is difficult), how difficult was your process of adaptation to this school? (%)

N = 143 cases (corresponding to the total work experiences per case).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

However, as shown in Table 5, there are marked differences depending on teacher’s skills, their ITT, their working conditions, and the contexts in which they work.

Males perceive a higher level of difficulty than females, as in the case of middle-aged graduates. Regarding initial teacher training, those who studied at non-traditional universities (i.e. not belonging to the Cruch) also perceive higher levels of difficulty than those who were trained at Cruch universities. Thus, while 28% of beginning teachers who were trained at non-traditional universities perceive high levels of difficulty, the figure declines to 15% for those who studied at traditional universities.

The respondents were asked whether they received support from principals and internal and external teachers during the first year in which they worked at the school. In general, it is observed that those who received most support perceive a lower level of difficulty in adapting. In particular, 19% of the cases that said they received support from a teacher mentor at the school perceived high levels of difficulty in adapting, a proportion that rises to 28% among those who did not receive this type of support.

The help received during insertion into the school also seems to influence the continuity of the job. Among those who received some kind of support in their work, 23% stopped working at that school, while this figure increased to 41% among those who did not receive any kind of support.

Regarding working conditions, those who have a fee contract perceive a lower level of difficulty, followed by those who have an indefinite-term contract. The same is true of those who work part time (from 23 to 39 hours). Respect for non-classroom hours appears to play a key role. 43% of teachers who work at schools in which –non-teaching hours are not respected perceive high levels of difficulty, while this proportion falls to 17% among those who work at schools where non-school hours are respected.

The characteristics of the contexts in which they work, and particularly the level of poverty, have an especially important role. Those who work at schools in the low socioeconomic group are those who perceive the highest levels of difficulty: 23% of teachers who work at this type of school perceive a high level of difficulty, while this figure declines to 9.5% among those who work at schools with a high socioeconomic level.

Finally, the size of the classes shows somewhat unexpected results, since the teachers that said they had smaller classes (20 students or fewer) were those that perceived the highest levels of difficulty, followed by those who said they had the largest classes (35 or more).

Table 6

Level of difficulty of adaptation perceived according to demographic variables, initial teacher training, support received, working conditions, and characteristics of the schools

		Level of difficulty of adaptation	
		Low (1 to 5)	High (6 to 10)
	Total	77.8 %	22.4 %
Gender	Male	72.4 %	27.6%
	Female	79.1 %	20.9%
Age when starting work	19 to 24	78.8 %	21.2%
	25 to 26	72.2 %	27.8%
	27 or more	79.5 %	20.5%
Type of higher education institution	Cruch	84.6%	15.4%
	Non-Cruch	72.4%	27.6%
	IP	100.0%	0.0%
Level of internal or external support at the school	Low (0 to 2)	71.4 %	28.6%
	High (3 to 6)	82.2 %	17.8%
During the first year at the school received support from a teacher mentor	No	71.7 %	28.3%
	Yes	81.0 %	19.0%
Work experience	First job	78.2 %	21.8%
	Second or later job	76.7 %	23.3%
Type of contract	Substitute teacher, hourly rate or without a contract	84.2 %	15.8%
	Fixed term	75.0 %	25.0%
	Indefinite term	69.6 %	30.4%
Working hours according to contract	22 or fewer	69.6 %	30.4%
	23 to 39	82.7 %	17.3%
	40 or more	73.9 %	26.1%
Respect for non-school hours	Never or sometimes	57.1%	42.9%
	Almost always	83.0%	17.0%
	Always	82.3 %	17.7%
School socioeconomic group	Low (A+B)	76.9 %	23.1%
	Medium (C)	80.6 %	19.4%
	High (D+E)	90.5 %	9.5%
Approximate number of students per classroom	20 or fewer	68.3 %	31.7%
	21 to 35	83.6 %	16.4%
	More than 35	77.8 %	22.2%

N = 143 cases (corresponding to the total work experiences recorded per case).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the monitoring questionnaire of pedagogy students from twelve Chilean universities.

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## Discussion and conclusions

The first few years of the teaching career is increasingly understood as a continuation of initial training. These initial years are not only a key stage for the acquisition of eminently practical knowledge, but also mark the beginning of the building of a professional identity. Hence the need to investigate the way in which the teacher is inserted in school classrooms, as well as the levels of difficulty that beginning teachers perceive in their first jobs.

Similarly to the findings of Paredes et al. (2011), it can be observed that beginning teachers often resort to various sources to find out about available job offers; however, the most important source is the personal contact networks. Likewise, it is clear that the applicants are not usually very selective when making applications, since they send a large number of CVs to schools, municipalities and educational networks. Selectivity when applying for jobs is a key factor, as it can be seen that those who sent fewer CVs were called to more interviews. This would indicate that some applicants are more selective and direct their applications to schools where they have a great chance of being selected, due to their personal characteristics and their contact networks, or because of the school requirements to which they apply.

In the activities carried out by schools to define hiring, the personal interview with the director was transversal. Some studies that investigate demand for teachers indicate that the importance of the personal interview lies in the fact that recruiters place special emphasis on the *socio-cultural affinity* between the applicant and the school where they are expected to work (Flores, Ortúzar, Ayala, & Milesi, 2014), an aspect that can surely be ascertained in a face-to-face meeting between the principal and the applicant. Activities that involve direct contact with the students, knowledge tests, or any type of activity that reveals performance in the classroom are less common. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the INICIA test is mentioned as background information requested when applying. It is important to underline the infrequent use of specific information of the role of the teacher, such as their portfolio or observation in a classroom. This could hinder the match between the teacher and the school and, moreover, could reinforce a culture where what takes place in the classroom is the exclusive responsibility of the novice teacher, who has limited resources in the process of their induction.

Regarding the process of insertion into teaching, it is noteworthy that although the majority of cases of this study have worked only in one school, the first year of the contract is key to defining whether they remain on the staff. This underlines the importance of a good searching and hiring process, since in this instance it is possible that the applicant and employer share their expectations and qualities.

In the literature, the first few years in the classroom are often defined as a *reality shock* or *practice shock*. This study notes that male middle-aged teachers from non-traditional institutions perceive higher levels of difficulty to adapt to the schools in which they have worked.

The characteristics of the contexts in which teachers are inserted also appear to affect the levels of difficulty that they perceive. Beginning teachers that work in vulnerable contexts perceive greater difficulties than those inserted into schools of a higher socioeconomic level. Even so, the school may provide conditions to reduce that perception of difficulty. The evidence indicates that respect for non-teaching hours and support from peers during the first year make the difference between those who perceive higher or lower difficulty to adapt.

The findings of this study underline the challenges associated with labor force entry for teachers and the formative role of the first years of the teaching career. It is pertinent to conceptualize this transition between being a student of pedagogy and a classroom teacher as a critical period in the teaching profession, where the success or failure of teachers during this specific period is key to performance, satisfaction, and remaining in teaching. During this period, teachers are particularly sensitive to the working conditions they face and the support they receive. A clear implication in terms of public policy refers to the need to create working conditions that allow beginning teachers to better adapt to the role of being a teacher. These conditions highlight the need for support and induction programs that lead to reflection on practices in the classroom, as well as working conditions that enable such reflection.

Important methodological limitations of this study include the small sample size and the non-randomness of the study participants, which restricts the statistical significance of the data. In spite of

these limitations, by considering the processes of job seeking and labor force entry, this study opens a series of questions regarding the impact of these processes on job opportunities for teachers, on the processes of selecting the academic staff of schools, and the way in which beginning teachers can deal with their early years in school classrooms.

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