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A second career in teaching: Exploring practices and evidence for training, supporting and retaining second-career teachers

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Jan Maarse, Charlotte Kohlloffel, Sophia de Berardinis and José Manuel Torres

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Abstract

Recruitment difficulties, changing career patterns and growing classroom diversity have prompted many OECD education systems to look beyond traditional Initial Teacher Education to recruit experienced professionals from other fields. This working paper synthesises what is known about these second-career teachers (SCTs). It is structured around six questions: who they are, where they work, how they are prepared and supported, how they integrate into schools, what they contribute, and how they can be retained. Drawing on the international research literature, recent OECD data – including original analysis using a broader definition of SCT than the published the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) measure – and policy examples from OECD systems, the paper identifies key aspects to support effective preparation, sets out the conditions that shape SCTs' integration and retention, and considers what governments, schools and researchers might do to support this growing share of the teacher workforce.

Acknowledgements

This working paper was prepared by Jan Maarse, Charlotte Kohlloffel, Sophia de Berardinis and José Manuel Torres for the *Unlocking the potential of diverse teaching profiles* project at the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), which seeks to understand how education systems can attract, prepare and retain teachers from a wider range of backgrounds, and how innovative pathways and policies can strengthen teacher diversity, responsiveness and sustainability.

The authors would like to thank Eric Charbonnier, Lydia Vosberg, Christina Schweickert, Ricardo Espinoza, Claire Shewbridge, Edmund Misson and Andreas Schleicher for their valuable feedback on earlier versions of this Working Paper. The authors would also like to thank Daniela Frison (University of Florence), Anke Tigchelaar (University of Utrecht) and Thibault Coppe (Université libre de Bruxelles) for their time, feedback and valuable lessons.

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A complementary perspective comes from how SCTs perceive their own effectiveness. TALIS 2024 asked teachers how confident they feel across a range of teaching tasks. Broadly, SCTs are as confident in their teaching as their first-career colleagues (see Table A A.1. in Annex A). Where consistent, but limited, significant differences emerge (both across the workforce as a whole and among teachers with five or fewer years of experience) they concentrate in a single domain: Classroom and behaviour management. SCTs feel significantly less confident than first-career teachers in getting students to follow classroom rules and in calming a disruptive or noisy student. This echoes the literature, in which classroom management is among the most commonly reported early challenges for SCTs. 33

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A second career in teaching: Exploring practices and evidence for training, supporting and retaining second-career teachers

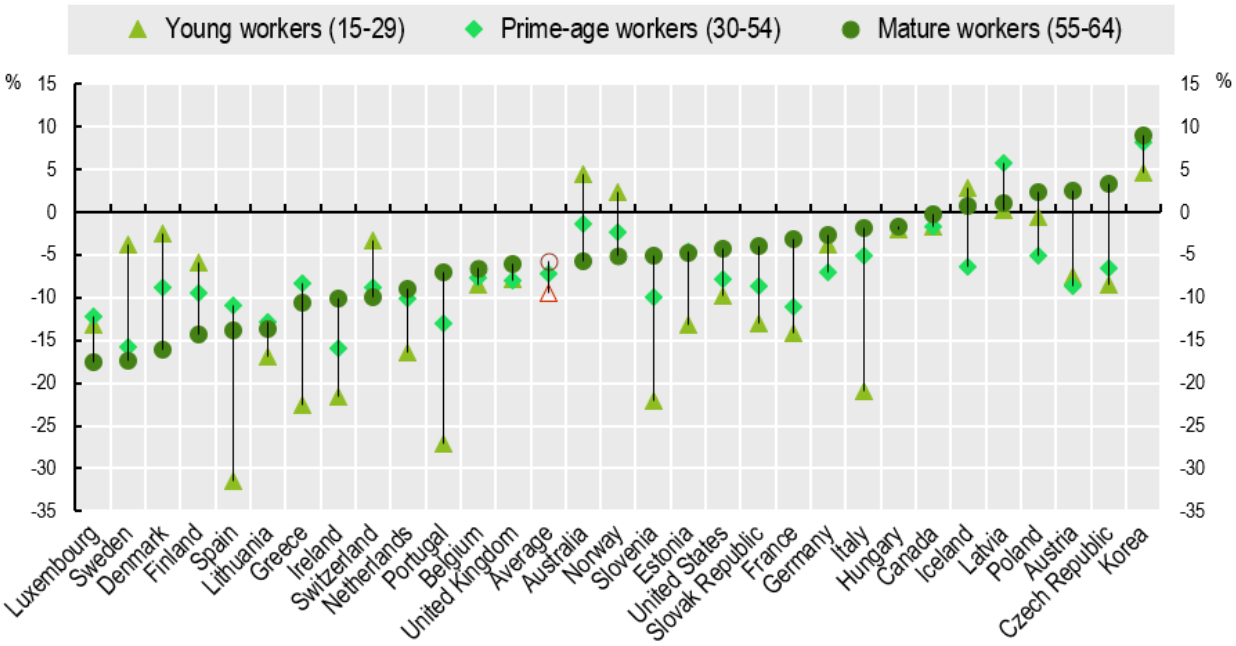
Introduction: Why second-career teachers and why now?

Teaching as a second career is not new, but the policy attention it now receives is. People move into teaching from other professions for a range of reasons – the desire for meaningful work, a wish to contribute to society at a later stage of life, a change in personal circumstances – and research consistently identifies the same intrinsic and altruistic motivations that draw first-career teachers into the profession (Hunter-Johnson, 2015[1]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]; Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014[3]; OECD, 2025[4]). Across OECD countries, governments are investing more deliberately than at any previous point in pathways that bring experienced professionals from other fields into teaching. More than two-thirds of countries surveyed in the OECD *Education Policy Outlook* identify attracting new types of candidates and diversifying entry into the profession as priority objectives for 2025–2030 (OECD, 2024[5]). Three converging trends help explain why.

A growing and persistent challenge of teacher recruitment (Education International, 2024[6]; ILO, 2024[7]; UNESCO, 2024[8]). Teacher shortages have been documented for decades, and PISA 2022, *Education at a Glance* 2024 and 2025, and TALIS 2024 confirm this trend across different education systems (Schleicher, 2023[9]; OECD, 2024[10]; 2025[11]; 2025[4]). Measuring them is not straightforward – countries use different methodologies and observe shortages at different stages of the recruitment process – but the underlying picture is consistent across measures (OECD, forthcoming[12]). In many countries, recruitment difficulties in education reflect broader labour shortages and are often linked to economy-wide tensions rather than unique to the profession (OECD, forthcoming[12]). In the United States, for example, teaching positions go unfilled at low rates relative to the labour market as a whole (Bruno, 2026[13]). Within that wider context, teaching-specific factors also play a role in some systems, including the low perceived status of the teaching profession and the working conditions in particular school settings (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2019[14]; See et al., 2020[15]; Kraft and Lyon, 2024[16]; Gehrmann, 2025[17]; OECD, forthcoming[12]). The average age of teachers continues to rise across many systems, reflecting both demographic shifts and challenges in attracting younger professionals to the field (OECD, 2025[4]). Schools serving populations with low socio-economic status in particular, suffer disproportionately from teacher shortages (OECD, 2018[18]; OECD, 2025[4]). Recruiting career changers is one of the policy levers governments are deploying in response. (OECD, forthcoming[12])

A changing world of work. Career trajectories that were once relatively linear are increasingly diversified, with people pursuing multiple careers during their professional lives (OECD, 2025[19]; 2024[20]; 2023[21]). Recent trends and future labour-market projections suggest that career switching is likely to remain a lasting feature of working life (Lee and Lamport, 2011[22]; Broom, 2023[23]; Coppe, 2024[24]). Average job tenure has declined for both prime-aged and mature workers across almost all OECD countries between 2012 and 2019 (see Figure 1), and OECD analysis indicates that a fifth of workers who changed jobs in the last five years did so to follow a new passion or career, which rises to over a quarter among younger workers and highly educated workers (OECD, 2023[21]). This pattern applies to teachers too: One in five teachers under 30 in TALIS 2024 intends to leave the profession within five years (OECD, 2025[4]). Greater career mobility cuts both ways for education systems: It widens the pool of potential teachers from other sectors, while also raising the possibility that teaching itself may increasingly be experienced as one stage in a longer professional trajectory rather than a single lifelong one. This makes the design of pathways into teaching (including those for second-career teachers) increasingly consequential.

Figure 1. Average job tenure has declined for mature and prime-aged workers in almost all countries between 2012 and 2019



Note: The data refer to the change in average job tenure (adjusted for compositional effects) between the average of years 2012/14 and 2017/19. The unfilled markers represent the unweighted average of the 30 OECD countries shown. Data are adjusted to control for the composition of the labour force by education and gender. The methodology is the same as that used in OECD (2019), OECD Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work, and is based on Farber, H (2010) "Job Loss and the Decline in Job Security in the United States", in Abraham, K., J. Spletzer and M. Harper (eds.), Labor in the New Economy, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
Source: OECD (2023[21]), Retaining Talent at All Ages, Ageing and Employment Policies, https://doi.org/10.1787/00dbdd06-en.

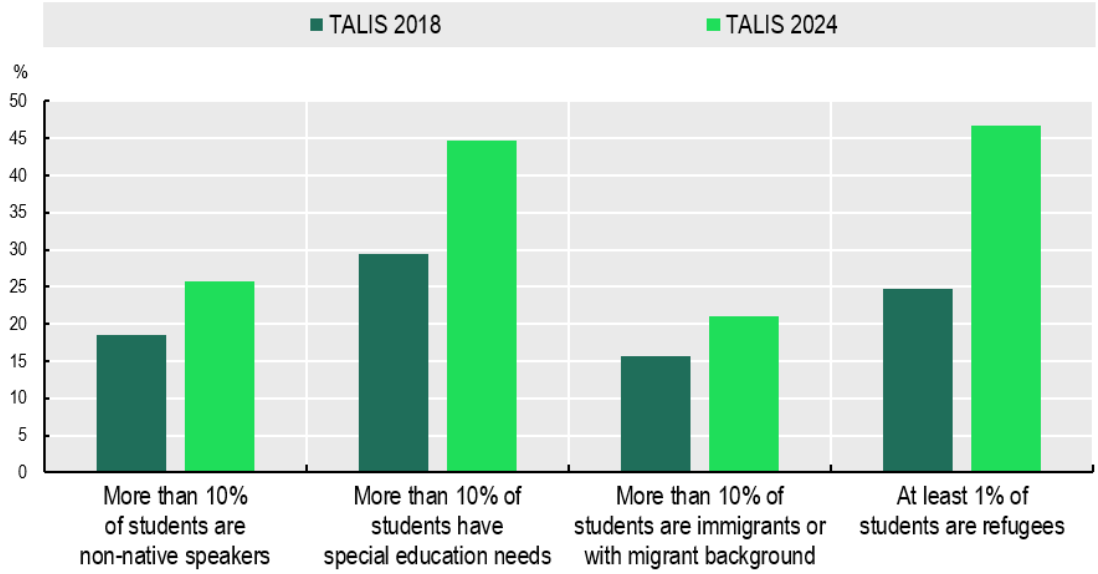
Increasing diversity in classrooms. Student populations across OECD education systems are becoming more diverse (see latest TALIS data in Figure 2). Schools are reporting higher shares of students with migrant backgrounds, special education needs, refugee status and other characteristics that have shaped policy attention in recent years (OECD, 2025[4]; OECD, 2023[25]). Yet the teaching workforce in many systems has not kept pace with these changes – diversity in classrooms is not always reflected in staff rooms (UNESCO, 2024[8]; Forghani-Arani, Cerna and Bannon, 2019[26]; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2025[27]). Recruiting from a wider pool of candidates is one strategy education systems are

pursuing in response, and SCTs – considering their varied professional backgrounds and life experiences – can contribute to this objective.

For the first time in 2025, the OECD has gathered data on specific government support for diverse pathways into teaching, including specialised pathways for second-career teachers (OECD, 2025[11]). The 2024 cycle of TALIS – responses from 280 000 educators from 55 education systems – identified teachers who did not choose teaching as a first career and have more than ten years of prior work experience outside education as a distinct "second-career teacher" group (OECD, 2025[28]), allowing their experiences, working conditions, professional development and attitudes toward teaching to be examined comparatively at scale. This ten-year threshold, while useful for ensuring a conservative and clearly bounded measure, excludes a substantial group of career changers who entered teaching after shorter careers in other fields. For the original analysis of TALIS 2024 data presented throughout this paper, a broader definition is therefore adopted: Teachers who did not choose teaching as their first career and who have at least five years of prior work experience in non-teaching roles, whether in education-adjacent positions or outside education altogether. This broader threshold captures career changers at a wider range of life stages and roughly doubles the share of teachers identified as SCTs relative to the official ten-year measure. Unless otherwise stated, all analyses of TALIS data in this paper use this five-year definition.

Figure 2. School demographics are changing, as reported by school principals

Change in the percentage of lower secondary teachers teaching in schools with the following compositions



Note: Results based on responses of principals, results are based on OECD countries who were able to provide data for both 2018 and 2024.
Source: OECD (2019[29]), TALIS 2018 Database, table I.3.25 School composition, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2018-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026); OECD (2025[4]), TALIS 2024 database, Table I.25, School composition, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

One important caveat applies throughout. TALIS data is self-reported. It captures how teachers describe their own preparation, working conditions, perceptions and intentions, not directly observable outcomes such as student achievement or classroom practice. Self-report data of this kind have well-known limitations (e.g. recall bias, social desirability) and TALIS findings should therefore be read as reflecting *teachers' own perspectives* on their work, rather than as measures of underlying performance. The findings are still highly informative: Differences across groups of teachers reveal what those groups themselves regard as important, where their experiences diverge and which dimensions of their work matter most to

them. Throughout this paper, TALIS evidence is interpreted in that spirit and is read alongside qualitative research.

These two data sources together with the broader-definition analysis conducted for this paper mark a step-change in what can be said about SCTs internationally, and motivate this paper's effort to bring the international research literature, the new OECD data and country policy examples into dialogue.

This Working Paper synthesises what is currently known about second-career teachers across OECD education systems. It is structured around six questions:

- Who are second-career teachers?
- Where are they working?
- How are they prepared and supported?
- How do they integrate into schools?
- What do they contribute to education systems?
- How can they be retained?

The paper draws on three sources of evidence: International research literature on second-career teachers (SCTs hereafter), recent OECD data from Education at a Glance 2025 and TALIS 2024 (including original analysis using the broader definition), and policy examples from education systems that have introduced special pathways to recruit and train SCTs (highlighted in Boxes and Annex B).

Who are second-career teachers?

Teaching as a second career is by no means a new phenomenon. Long before the concept had a name, professionals from other fields stepped into classrooms – sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity (see Box 1). What is new is the scale of interest, the policy infrastructure built to support it, and the data now available to understand it.

Box 1. A brief history of second-career teaching

For much of history, teaching was not a standalone profession – it was something people did alongside, or after, something else. Before the start of national education systems in the 19th century, teaching basic skills was often a secondary occupation held by those whose primary identity lay elsewhere. The specifics varied by context: In early modern Europe, teachers were frequently surgeons, painters, shoemakers or bookbinders teaching part-time alongside their trade (Boekholt and De Booy, 1987[30]); in Tokugawa Japan, priests, doctors, samurai and literate commoners provided basic instruction (Kobayashi, 1965[31]); and in pre-Columbian Aztec society, education was delivered by members of the religious or military class (Aguilar-Moreno, 2007[32]). The first profession differed across societies, but teaching very often came second.

The professionalisation of teaching – driven by the expansion of universal education and the introduction of government-funded teacher training (Rousmaniere, 2019[33]) – gradually changed this. As formal qualification requirements took hold, teaching became a distinct career path, and the idea of entering it from another profession became less common, though never absent. The large influx of students following the post-World War II baby boom, for instance, prompted countries including the United States, Germany and the Netherlands to actively recruit professionals from other fields to fill classrooms (CBS, 2020[34]; Gehrmann, 2025[35]; Loeb and Reininger, 2004[36]).

The second-career teaching phenomenon gained its modern shape in the United States in the 1980s, when a growing number of mid-career professionals began transitioning into teaching (Crow, Levine and Nager, 1990[37]; Coppe, 2024[24]; Grossman and Loeb, 2008[38]). Researchers quickly identified that their needs, motivations and prior experiences set them apart from first-career entrants – and that standard teacher education was not designed with them in mind (Bullough and Knowles, 1990[39]). This recognition drove a rapid expansion of dedicated alternative pathways: the number of US states offering programmes tailored to career changers grew from 8 to 33 between 1983 and 1990 (Novak and Knowles, 1992[40]). The term "second-career teacher" entered the academic and policy vocabulary, and the research field that now informs this paper began to take shape.

Programmes developed in that period have since spread and evolved across many OECD education systems. Today, against a backdrop of persistent teacher shortages and changing labour markets, governments are investing more deliberately in SCT pathways than at any previous point – making the questions of who these teachers are, how they are prepared, and how they are supported more policy-relevant than ever.

Defining second-career teachers

In the literature, second-career teachers have been referred to as ‘career-change teachers’ or ‘career changers’ (Hogg, Elvira and Yates, 2023[41]; Siostrom, Mills and Bourke, 2023[42]; Crow, Levine and Nager, 1990[37]) or ‘lateral entrants’ or ‘side-entrants’ (OECD, 2022[43]; Frison et al., 2023[44]). In 2025, OECD countries decided to gather data on SCTs for the first time, publishing the results as an indicator in *Education at a Glance*. To ensure consistency and comparability across different national contexts, OECD members, partners and accession countries adopted the following definition:

> *Second-career teachers are individuals who transition into teaching from a different profession or career. They bring valuable skills and perspectives gained from their previous work experience, enriching the learning environment and offering students diverse insights (OECD, 2025, p. 487[11]).*

This recognises key points raised in the literature:

1. SCTs are professionals who leave their job outside of education to become a teacher and they have previously established a professional career in another field (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]). Most definitions agree that these individuals have developed at least one (and sometimes more) professional identities prior to entering teaching.
2. There is no consensus in the literature regarding the minimum duration spent in another career to qualify as a SCT. Early literature tended to associate SCTs with mid-life career transitions, typically around the age of 40 (Baeten and Meeus, 2016[45]; Crow, Levine and Nager, 1990[37]). More recently, TALIS 2024 has operationalised the concept more broadly, identifying teachers with at least ten years of work experience outside education and who did not choose teaching as their first career (OECD, 2025[4]).
3. There is no one way for an established professional to become a teacher. SCTs follow traditional teacher education programmes or alternative routes, and what counts as ‘alternative’ varies considerably across systems (Schweickert and Torres, 2026[46]). Importantly, TALIS 2024 and EAG 2025 both show that SCTs are present even in education systems that have not established dedicated pathways (OECD, 2025[4]; OECD, 2025[11]), suggesting that career transitions into teaching occur regardless of whether formal structures exist to support them. For a more nuanced difference between ‘second-career teachers’ and ‘alternative pathways’, see Box 2.

   As a result of these varying definitions and contexts, describing SCTs as a single population risks capturing “entirely different realities” (Coppe, 2024, p. 132[24]). This paper takes the OECD's agreed

conceptual definition as its reference point throughout, operationalised through the five-year threshold described above for its own analysis of TALIS data, while acknowledging the limitations this entails for interpreting research and official OECD statistics that draw on different definitions.

Box 2. Second-career teachers and alternative pathways: Related but not the same.

Two concepts frequently appear side by side in policy discussions and research on teacher workforce diversity: 'alternative pathways into teaching' and 'second-career teachers'. They are related, but they are not interchangeable and conflating them creates real difficulties for both research and data collection (OECD, 2025[11]; Grossman and Loeb, 2008[38]; OECD, 2025[4]). When surveys capture entry route rather than prior career history, they measure pathway use, not necessarily SCT presence – contributing to undercounting in some systems.

The distinction comes down to what is being examined. Alternative pathways are about **routes**: The structures, programmes and certification mechanisms through which someone can enter the teaching profession via a non-traditional route. Second-career teachers are about **people**: Individuals who bring substantial professional experience from another field into teaching, regardless of which route they took to get there. As Gehrmann (2025[35]) suggests, much of the confusion in this area stems from researchers and policymakers shifting between these two frames of reference.

In practice, the overlap is real but partial. Many alternative pathways were originally designed with career changers in mind and are well suited to their needs, offering flexibility, recognition of prior experience and adapted training formats. But not *all* alternative pathways are intended for, or appropriate for, SCTs – some target recent graduates, career returners, or other specific groups.

Conversely, some SCTs enter the profession through traditional teacher education programmes, particularly in systems where no dedicated alternative route exists. TALIS 2024 data on recent entrants illustrate this directly: Among teachers with five or fewer years of experience, second-career teachers are significantly more likely than first-career teachers to have obtained their first teaching qualification through a fast-track, shorter or specialised programme, yet the majority still completed a regular programme (see Figure A A.1 in Annex A). Career changers lean towards alternative routes more than their first-career colleagues, but they are far from confined to them.

This paper focuses on the *people*: SCTs as professionals who leave a career in another field to become teachers, and the conditions that shape their training, integration and retention. For a systematic analysis of the *pathways* – their structures, policy drivers and comparative landscape across OECD countries – see Schweickert and Torres (2026[46]).

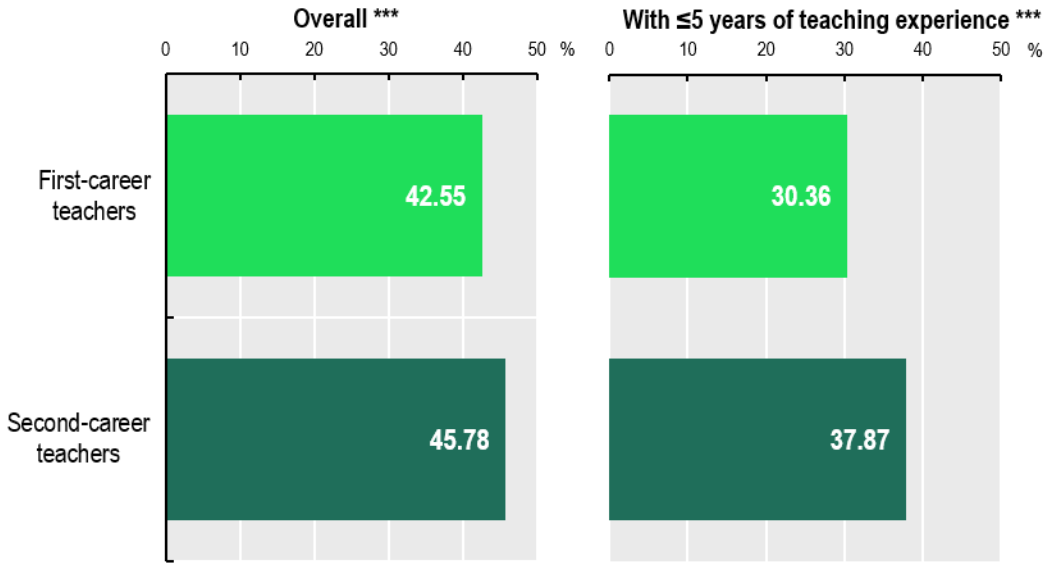
Sources: Gehrmann, A. (2025), "Lateral Entry and Career Jumping into the Teaching Profession in Germany", in Teacher Shortage in International Perspectives: Insights and Responses, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-45398-5_1, OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en, Grossman, P. and S. Loeb (2008), Alternative Routes to Teaching: Mapping the New Landscape of Teacher Education, Harvard Education Press, OECD (2025), Results from TALIS 2024: The State of Teaching, TALIS, https://doi.org/10.1787/90df6235-en, Schweickert, C. and J. Torres (2026[46]), "Alternative pathways into teaching: Broadening access and expanding diversity", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 342, , https://doi.org/10.1787/80bfc617-en.

Characterising second-career teachers

People choose teaching as a second career for many of the same reasons people choose it as a first one. Research consistently identifies intrinsic and altruistic motivations: The desire for meaningful work, personal fulfilment, and the opportunity to contribute to society and the lives of young people (Hunter-Johnson, 2015[1]; Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023[47]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]; Bauer, Trösch and Aksoy, 2021[48]; Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014[3]; Beck, 2025[49]; OECD, 2025[4]). For those moving into teaching at a later stage of life, additional motivations come into play. The desire to make an impact in society at a later stage in life, job stability, a better work-life balance and the possibility to work part-time are frequently cited as reasons to make the transition (Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012[50]; Hunter-Johnson, 2015[1]; OECD, 2025[4]).

TALIS 2024 data reveal clear patterns in the age profile of second-career teachers across OECD education systems. On average, SCTs are over three years older than first-career teachers, a gap that is statistically significant (see Figure 3, left panel). This gap broadens when the comparison is restricted to teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience, the newest entrants into the profession (right panel). This is consistent with what would be expected given the requirement for prior professional experience, and it largely confirms the intuition that SCTs cluster in later career stages.

Figure 3. Age of first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)



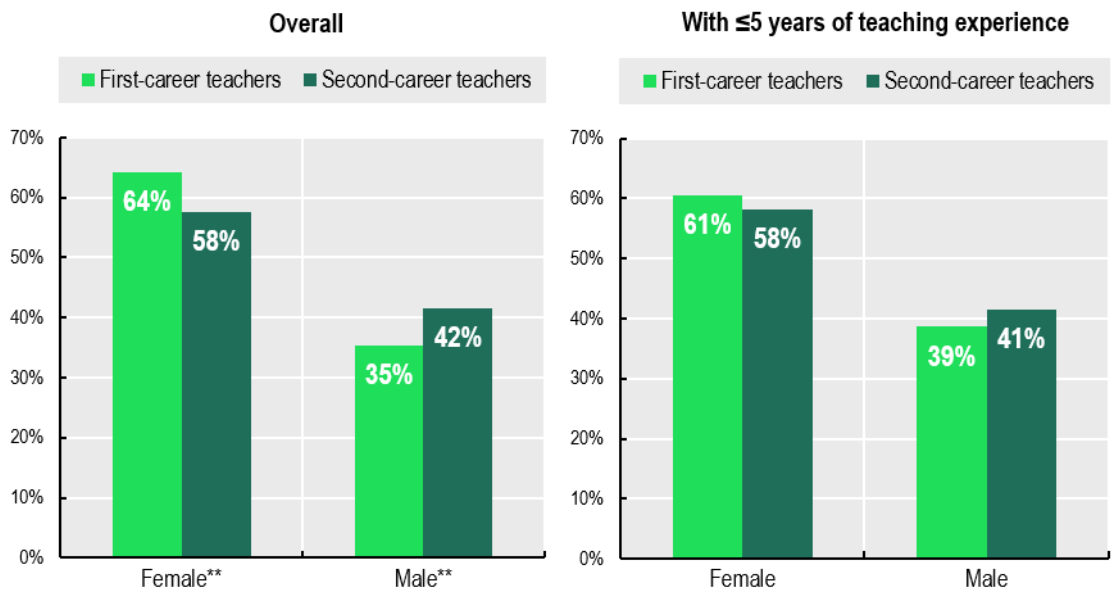
Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. Differences are statistically significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

This growing interest from people choosing teaching later in life is also visible in teacher education enrolments in several OECD countries. In England, a significant share of postgraduate Initial Teacher Training entrants is already over 25 (Department for Education, 2024[52]). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the share of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students aged 26 and over has risen steadily over the past decade (see Figure A A.3 in Annex A).

A second consistent pattern concerns gender. SCTs are significantly more likely to be male than first-career teachers (see Figure 4, left panel). This finding is, however, more nuanced than it first appears. The higher share of men among SCTs is not unique to this group. It partly reflects a broader pattern: More

recent and less experienced cohorts of teachers, whether first- or second-career, are more male than the long-standing teaching workforce. When the comparison is restricted to teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience, the gender gap between SCTs and first-career teachers narrows substantially and is no longer statistically significant (right panel). The male-female gap narrows mainly because the gender mix of new first-career teachers is shifting, not because SCTs themselves are changing.

Figure 4. Gender of first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Where are second-career teachers?

Across OECD countries that participated in TALIS 2024, an average of 19% of lower secondary teachers fit the definition of second-career teacher used in this paper – having at least five years of prior work experience in non-teaching roles and not having chosen teaching as their first career. Figure 5 shows that this average masks very substantial variation across systems, with shares ranging from 36% in Iceland to under 5% in Japan, Türkiye and Korea, all systems where teaching is a relatively closed profession with limited routes for career changers.

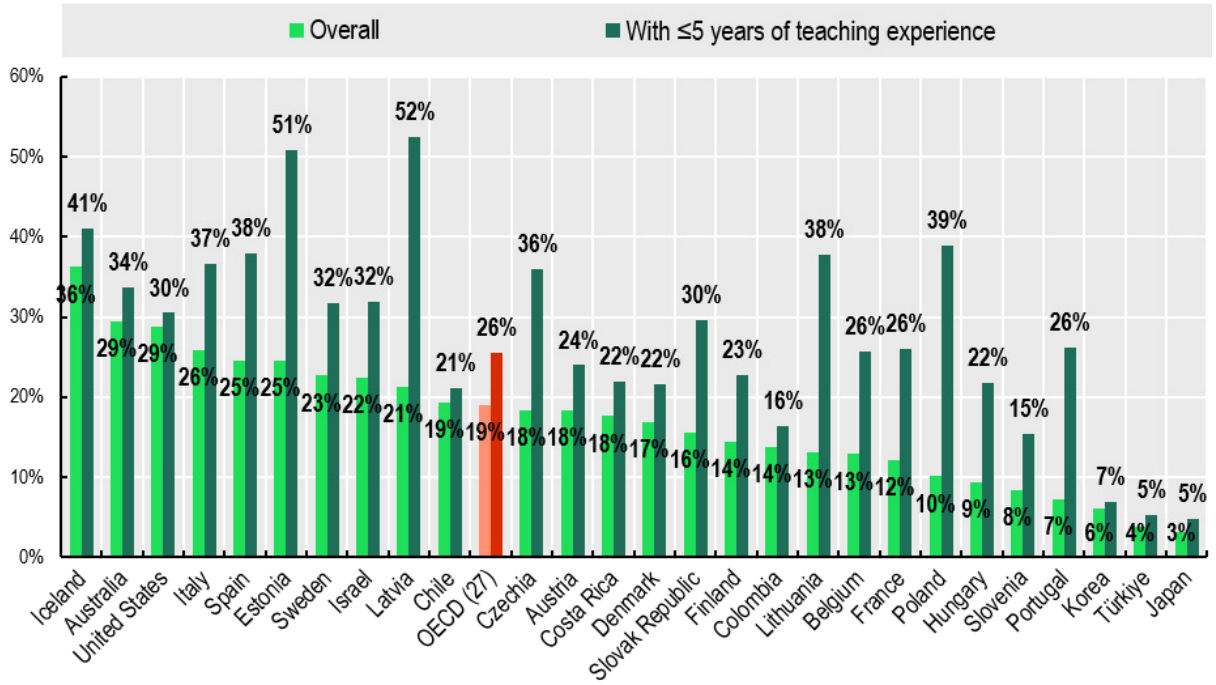
An important pattern emerges from comparing the overall workforce with teachers in their first five years of teaching. Across OECD countries, the SCT share among these recent entrants rises to 26%, 6.5 percentage points above the overall average. In the Netherlands alone, SCTs now account for roughly a quarter of all new entrants into teacher education (Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, 2025[53]). This suggests that career changers represent a substantially larger proportion of new teachers entering the profession than of the existing workforce, although confirming a time trend would require longitudinal data.

The Baltic countries and Poland show the largest absolute growth, with the SCT share among recent entrants rising sharply. These four systems now have among the highest shares of SCTs in the OECD when looking at recent entrants, in contrast to their varied positions when looking at the workforce overall.

Portugal shows the largest relative growth, showing that career changers may be becoming a meaningfully more significant route into teaching. French-speaking systems show parallel doubling, with the SCT share among recent entrants roughly twice the overall share in both France and Belgium.

By contrast, some systems with already-high overall shares (Iceland, Australia and the United States) show much smaller increases among recent entrants. Others with similarly substantial baselines (Italy, Spain and Estonia) show considerable further growth, suggesting that even where SCT presence is already established, the share can continue to expand. The combined picture, then, is one in which SCTs are a meaningful and growing presence across very different education systems: Well-established and stable in some, accelerating rapidly in others and emerging from a low base in still others.

Figure 5. Share of second-career teachers in lower secondary education, by country (TALIS 2024)



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

TALIS 2024 data on classroom composition reveal a clear and policy-relevant pattern in where SCTs work. While there are no significant differences between SCTs and first-career teachers in classrooms with low concentrations (1–10%) of students from specific groups, significant differences emerge at the *high-concentration* end (see Figure 6). SCTs are more likely than first-career teachers to teach in classrooms where more than 30% of students belong to minority groups, and in classrooms where more than 30% of students have special education needs.

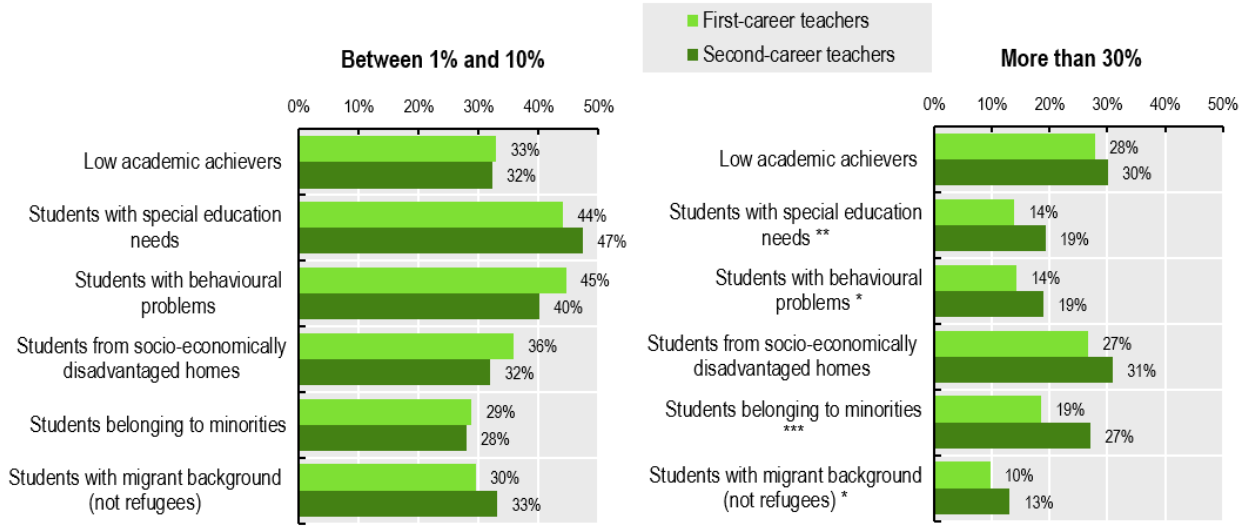
These findings carry two policy implications that connect to arguments developed later in this paper. First, they strengthen the case for specialised induction and support for SCTs. If SCTs are disproportionately placed in classrooms with high concentrations of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or from minority backgrounds, they are entering some of the most pedagogically demanding teaching contexts, settings where the gap between professional seniority and novice-teacher status is likely to be felt most acutely. Generic induction designed around the assumption that all novice teachers face similar challenges

may be poorly fitted to SCTs who are simultaneously navigating a career change *and* teaching in classrooms with high needs.

Second, these findings offer a more nuanced framing of how SCTs contribute to teacher workforce diversity. The contribution may not be primarily demographic, as TALIS shows only that SCTs are more often male and somewhat older than first-career teachers. But they appear to be more likely to teach in classrooms where student diversity is highest. SCTs may therefore contribute to diversity not through who they are, but through where they work and the students they reach.

Figure 6. First- and second-career teachers' classroom composition (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers reporting their classroom is composed by 1-10% and by above 30% of students who have the following characteristics.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

These TALIS findings are consistent with research suggesting that SCTs frequently work in schools facing staffing challenges. Teacher shortages are more likely in schools that serve socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Dadvand et al., 2023[54]), even six times more likely (OECD, 2018[18]). Research indicates that alternatively certified teachers (a category that overlaps with but is not identical to SCTs) are often employed in such schools (Schweickert and Torres, 2026[46]), and they are more likely to work in schools serving economically disadvantaged students in certain countries (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017[55]; OECD, 2025[4]).

These patterns of SCT prevalence should be read alongside an important caveat about what the data can and cannot tell us. Despite the growing presence of SCTs in schools, only a minority of education systems are currently able to systematically identify them in national statistics (see Table 1). Among the 28 countries and economies that participated in recent the OECD Indicators of Education Systems Programme (INES) ad hoc survey on teacher shortages, only 5 explicitly classify SCTs as a separate category in their official data collection (OECD, 2025[11]). Most systems capture information on qualifications or employment status at entry but do not distinguish SCTs from first career entrants, making it difficult to monitor their trajectory into and through the profession.

Table 1. Identification and reporting of second-career teachers in data collection

Identification of second-career teachers in educational statistics, OECD and partner countries and other economies

	(a) Second-career teachers are identified as a distinct group at the national level and data on their qualifications and employment status could be reported in data collection.	(b) There is no specific identification or data collection for second-career teachers.
	5 countries and other economies	23 countries and other economies
OECD countries	Hungary, Japan, Netherlands	Australia, Austria, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland
Other economies	French and Flemish Community (Belgium)	England (UK)
Partner and/or accession countries		Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Romania

Source: OECD Indicators of Education Systems Programme (INES) ad hoc survey on teacher shortages.

This monitoring gap matters for policy. Better data on SCT inflows, training pathways and career trajectories would allow policymakers to assess more rigorously the extent to which second-career entrants contribute to mitigating shortages, how prior professional experience shapes career development, and what forms of support are most effective in the long term. Strengthening data collection in this area would provide a more solid foundation for workforce planning and evidence-based policy design.

Most OECD countries have established formal pathways for SCTs to obtain teaching qualifications: 16 out of 28 countries and economies with available data report dedicated routes, while 12 require SCTs to follow the same qualification process as other teacher candidates (see Table A A.1 in Annex A). For a comparative analysis of how these pathways are structured across systems, see Schweickert and Torres (2026[46]).

How are second-career teachers prepared and supported?

Entering teaching from another profession raises specific preparation questions. SCTs typically bring substantial professional competencies and life experience, but not the pedagogical foundation that those entering ITE directly after their schooling will develop through their teacher training (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]; Varadharajan and Buchanan, 2021[56]). Their preparation needs are therefore *different*, calibrated to a profile that combines established professional identity with novice-teacher status. Across OECD countries, this has prompted education systems to develop training programmes that recognise both what SCTs already bring and what they still need.

The transition is rarely seamless. Many SCTs experience a form of "praxis shock" when they first step into a school, as the day-to-day realities of teaching often diverge sharply from the expectations they held before entering the profession (Redding and Smith, 2016[57]; Anthony and Ord, 2008[58]; Beck, 2025[49]). At the same time, SCTs arrive with an established professional posture – a familiarity with workplace norms,

collaboration and self-directed work – that can support their transition when adequately recognised (den Hertog et al., 2023[59]; den Hertog et al., 2025[60]).

Training pathways for SCTs vary considerably in how they manage this transition. In some cases, SCTs enrol in regular ITE programmes, sometimes supported by scholarships, and follow the same training as first-career teachers. In other cases, preparation is delivered through short, intensive courses – typically three weeks to three months, often during the summer –, after which trainees may begin teaching directly or combine part-time training with their previous employment (see Annex B for examples). When teaching begins immediately after such short courses, most of the professional development is conducted 'on-the-job' (Perez-Roux and Lanéelle, 2013[61]). These contrasting approaches reflect a difficult balancing act between several competing demands: Training quality, programme accessibility and financial viability for both candidates and providers, efficient use of public funding, and the relevance of addressing teacher shortages.

Data from TALIS 2024 suggest that fast-track options are a significant feature of the SCT landscape. On average across OECD participating countries, more than a quarter of SCTs with five or fewer years of teaching experience completed a fast-track programme (defined by TALIS as a shorter programme whose duration or content is adapted to specific groups of candidates) as their first teaching qualification, compared to 15% of their first-career peers (see Figure A A.1 in Annex A). However, there is great variation across systems. Identifying and sharing promising practices could support countries in calibrating flexible entry routes into teaching with strong preparation standards, facilitating mutual learning across contexts.

This section examines how SCT preparation works in practice. It first identifies the key aspects of effective training programmes, drawing on research and country examples. It then turns to the main challenges that continue to complicate this work, from tailoring learning and supporting knowledge transfer, to balancing preparation quality against the pressure to fill classrooms quickly.

Key aspects of effective programmes

Drawing on a narrative review of the literature, Baeten and Meeus (2016[45]) identified seven key aspects as essential for the education of SCTs:

1. extensive field experience;
2. a preparatory period;
3. integration of coursework and field experience;
4. opportunities to transfer expertise;
5. self-directed learning and peer support;
6. intensive mentoring support; and
7. flexible programme structures.

Most of these aspects would also be reflected in any well-designed ITE programme: Good preparation for any future teacher benefits from structured field experience, integration of theory and practice, mentoring and flexibility in delivery. What makes them worth examining specifically for SCTs is that their relevance, design and stakes shift when applied to candidates who already carry an established professional identity, financial and family commitments, and prior expertise that may or may not transfer to teaching. This section therefore examines how each aspect manifests in SCT programmes across OECD countries and where its design needs to be adapted to fit the SCT profile. It also proposes two additional aspects – assessment of aptitude to teach and financial support – that emerge consistently from the broader literature and from country examples, and that warrant equal attention in programme design.

Extensive field experience: First-hand exposure to the school environment

The image of a teacher who cares about and works seamlessly with a group of friendly and eager children gathered in a classroom has been lovingly described in literature and movies for decades. As with other stereotypes, the reality can be different, intense and disorienting. The realities and responsibilities of classroom teaching should therefore be clear to those considering a career (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]; van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]; Beck, 2025[49]).

This is true for any pre-service teacher, but the stakes are higher for SCTs, who are making a career change with concrete financial, professional and family implications. To mitigate the "praxis shock" that is widely documented among SCTs, some training pathways begin with short, low-stakes practical experiences designed to familiarise candidates with the school environment before formal commitments begin.

This may involve school visits, classroom observation and clinical experiences (supervised teaching practice). For example, the EnCORPS Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) SCT programme in several states of the United States (see Annex B) allows candidates to participate in mandatory initial "guest" training for one month, to get acquainted with the school context. Beyond field experience, simulated environments are used in some contexts as well. These early experiences serve a dual purpose: they help candidates develop a realistic picture of teaching and allow them and programme providers to assess whether a career transition is the right step.

A preparatory period: Internship during training

Once formal training begins, school-based internships are a common feature of SCT programmes, as they are for teacher education more broadly. While some SCTs enter the workplace immediately and develop their skills on the job with growing responsibilities from the outset (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2024[63]), other pathways provide supervised classroom placements with structured feedback.

Requirements vary: Some programmes specify a fixed number of credit-equivalent hours, others require weekly placements over a defined period, and others use intensive blocks of two to three weeks. In many education systems, as well as part of individual teacher training programmes, internships are mandatory for all teachers in training, SCTs included, to complete their certification, as is the case in Sweden, Denmark and the United States (see Annex B).

What distinguishes this aspect from the early field experience described above is its placement within formal training and its progressive character. Internships are where teachers begin to take on genuine teaching responsibilities and integrate coursework with classroom practice. For SCTs in particular, the internship is often the first sustained opportunity to test which elements of their prior professional repertoire transfer usefully into the classroom and which do not.

Integration of coursework and field experience

Both subject knowledge and pedagogical competence are necessary for effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000[64]), but SCTs often arrive with an uneven preparation across the two. Many already hold a bachelor's or master's degree in a relevant subject (chemistry, economics, history), but lack the pedagogical preparation needed to translate that knowledge into effective classroom practice.

Challenges commonly reported by SCTs in their early teaching include classroom management, time management, motivating students and communicating with parents (Haggard, Slostad and Winterton, 2006[65]). Research highlights gaps in their pedagogical readiness (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]). Well-designed SCT programmes integrate subject-specific pedagogy with field experience from early in training, rather than treating them as sequential. Sweden's

Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning (KPU) programme, for example, provides dedicated preparation in assessment, monitoring and analysing learning, conflict management and leadership alongside subject-specific content (see Annex B).

Box 3. When is training second-career teachers successful?

The question of whether teacher training is "successful" remains contested in educational research. Much depends on how "impact" is defined. Level-based models' (Guskey, 2002[67]; Desimone, 2009[68]; King, 2013[69]) conceptualise impact along sequential stages: Participants' reaction, learning, behavioural change, and ultimately student outcomes. Critical perspectives, however, caution against linear models, noting that teacher training is rarely a straightforward process and is instead mediated by individual teacher traits and beliefs, school culture, resource allocation, accountability pressures and feedback loops (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002[70]; Opfer and Pedder, 2011[71]; Cameron, Mulholland and Branson, 2013[72]). From this standpoint, attributing direct causality between training and student outcomes is problematic and risks overstating the effectiveness of specific programmes.

Hybrid approaches have been proposed in response. Coldwell and Simkins (2011[73]) suggest using level models as an organising framework while embedding them within analyses of contextual complexity and feedback mechanisms. Kennedy (2016[74]) similarly argues that evaluation should draw on diverse tools and perspectives, since single-method assessments risk overlooking critical dimensions of impact.

For SCTs, these concerns are particularly relevant and compounded by a scarcity of evidence. Defining "impact" is a prerequisite for any meaningful evaluation, whether the target is SCT pedagogy, content mastery, retention, student learning, teacher well-being, or institutional practice. Yet longitudinal studies are scarce both in teacher training generally and in SCT programmes specifically (Gehrmann, 2025[35]), research evaluating the effectiveness of SCT training pathways is largely absent. Qualitative interviews suggest SCTs find their ITE helpful for their practice and professional stance (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]; Frison et al., 2023[44]), but these findings cannot be linked to specific programmes or used to gauge relative effectiveness. This gap matters: Understanding whether early changes in practice translate into enduring improvements in teaching and learning – and how SCT training affects retention – is essential from both a policy and a budgetary perspective (Coppe, 2022[75]; Chambers Mack et al., 2019[76]).

Sources: Guskey (2002[67]), "Professional Development and Teacher Change", *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 8/3, pp. 381-391; Desimone (2009[68]), *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 38/3, pp. 181-199; King (2013[69]), "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: an evidence-based framework", *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 40/1, pp. 89-111; Clarke & Hollingsworth (2002[70]), "Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 18/8, pp. 947-967; Opfer & Pedder (2011[71]), "Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Learning", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 81/3, pp. 376-407; Cameron, Mulholland & Branson (2013[72]), "Professional learning in the lives of teachers: towards a new framework for conceptualising teacher learning", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 41/4, pp. 377-397; Coldwell & Simkins (2011[73]), "Level models of continuing professional development evaluation: a grounded review and critique", *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 37/1, pp. 143-157; Kennedy (2016[74]), "How Does Professional Development Improve Teaching?", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 86/4, pp. 945-980; Gehrmann (2025[35]), Lateral Entry and Career Jumping into the Teaching Profession in Germany. In: Gehrmann and Germer (eds), *Teacher Shortage in International Perspectives: Insights and Responses*; Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021[66]), "Longing for recognition: A literature review of second-career teachers' induction experiences in secondary education", *Educational Research Review*, Vol. 33, p. 100389; Frison et al. (2023[44]), "Second-Career Teachers: First reflections on non-traditional pathways toward the teaching profession", *Formazione & Insegnamento*, Vol. 21/1, pp. 210–218; Coppe (2022[75]), *Untangling second career teachers' entry process in TVET schools: From the suitability of entry profiles to the benefits of social capital for a successful work socialization process (PhD thesis)*; Chambers Mack et al. (2019[76]), "Why do teachers leave? A comprehensive occupational health study evaluating intent-to-quit in public school teachers", *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research*, Vol. 24/1.

Opportunities to transfer expertise: Recognition of previous professional experience

This is one of the aspects most uniquely relevant to SCTs. SCTs bring professional competencies from their prior careers that are potentially relevant to teaching, but the transfer of this expertise is neither automatic nor straightforward. Some programmes formally recognise prior experience within training – allowing candidates to document relevant competencies through a portfolio, assessed by a jury, which may reduce the scope of required training or validate seniority. In France, for instance, candidates must demonstrate through reflective commentary that their prior professional experience has equipped them with the disciplinary and pedagogical skills required to teach (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, 2023[77]).

Research cautions, however, that effective recognition requires a careful analysis of task similarities between previous and new roles, sensitivity to the difference between routine and adaptive expertise, and support in helping SCTs articulate and leverage their own strengths (den Hertog et al., 2025[60]; den Hertog et al., 2023[59]).

Self-directed learning and peer support: Personalised learning and collaborative networks

The literature strongly advocates for training approaches that respond to the varied needs and backgrounds of individual candidates (Hogg, Elvira and Yates, 2024[78]; Baeten and Meeus, 2016[45]; Gehrmann, 2025[35]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]). In practice, this means identifying learning gaps and designing tailored learning plans, often with the support of an academic tutor or mentor and informed by intake assessments where these are conducted. Micro-credentials may also support personalisation by allowing candidates to address specific preparation gaps in a modular way (Orman, Şimşek and Kozak Çakır, 2023[79]). Germany, the Netherlands and the United States provide examples of programmes that adapt content explicitly to candidates' prior knowledge (see Annex B). Personalisation matters for all candidates but is particularly load-bearing for SCTs, whose prior professional backgrounds vary widely and rarely justify a uniform curriculum.

Peer collaboration is a closely related dimension of self-directed learning. Working alongside peers is described as "the most important form of support for SCTs" (Baeten and Meeus, 2016, p. 181[45]), providing space to share experiences, process challenges and learn from one another. Collaborative professional development is especially important in systems where teacher training is considered 'light' (Maehara, 2025[80]), such as Japan and in certain short-term alternative pathways available in France, the United States, Germany (Schweickert and Torres, 2026[46]) and Sweden (Boström, 2025[81]). Supporting professional networks among SCTs also connects to broader frameworks of collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018[82]; Suarez and McGrath, 2022[83]), workplace cooperation among teachers (Bush and Grotjohann, 2020[84]; Bar-Tal et al., 2020[85]) and cooperation within the broader context of the school (McGrath, 2023[86]).

Intensive mentoring support

During induction, SCTs are often assigned a mentor in the workplace, typically an experienced teacher, who supports both their professional development and their socialisation into the school environment. Research shows that novice teachers prefer guidance from experienced peers (Colognesi, Van Nieuwenhoven and Beausaert, 2019[87]), and SCTs are no exception. Culturally sensitive mentoring is also important for establishing positive relationships (Kimmel et al., 2024[88]). Mentors can help SCTs "cross horizons" from the previous professional career to the new one (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Korthagen, 2008[89]), supporting the identification of transferrable skills and identifying areas of improvement (Education Council of The Netherlands, 2025[90]; den Hertog et al., 2023[59]). This horizon-crossing role is what gives mentoring its particular weight for SCTs. While all novice teachers benefit from experienced

guidance, SCTs uniquely need help integrating two professional identities rather than building one from scratch.

High quality mentoring programmes have been found to contribute to teacher commitment and retention, and instructional practices (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011[91]; den Hertog et al., 2025[60]), and SCTs often cite peer mentoring as central to their learning (van Heijst, Volman and Cornelissen, 2023[92]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]). Tigchelaar et al. (2010[2]) distinguish different mentor roles for SCTs: Modelling and guiding; offering personal support; and forming collaborative partnerships where both parties contribute to knowledge-building.

Mentoring can help align training with individual needs, which is often more easily addressed in one-on-one settings (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]). In practice, however, mentoring support for SCTs is often inadequate. Research shows that "[SCTs] perceive induction support as being untailored to their age, maturity, prior work experience, and needs" (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021, p. 8[66]), and that mentors are not always selected or trained with SCTs' specific profile in mind (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]). Allocating dedicated time for mentoring could improve support for SCTs (van Renselaar et al., 2025[93]; Parker, Zenkov and Glaser, 2021[94]; Shanks et al., 2020[95]). Assigning SCTs who have already completed their own training transition as mentors to newer cohorts could be particularly effective, since they can more deeply understand the challenges SCTs face during their induction phase and have "successfully undertaken the hard work of reframing their career identity" (Hogg, Elvira and Yates, 2024, p. 19[78]).

Flexible programme structures: Timetabling and delivery

Flexibility is one of the most consistently identified features of effective SCT programmes, reflecting the reality that most career changers have professional, financial and family commitments that make full-time study impractical (Gehrmann, 2025[35]; Keller-Schneider and Schneider Boye, 2025[96]; van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2024[97]). Models vary: Some programmes allow part-time study extending the standard training duration; others combine a short intensive phase – typically three weeks to three months, often delivered over the summer – with ongoing part-time workshops, seminars or one day per week of training. Evening, weekend and online delivery are also common, with fully online options offering the greatest scheduling autonomy. In Denmark, for instance, "candidates in the Merit Teacher Education Programme at the University of Copenhagen can attend all classes online (see Annex B). Where programmes offer candidates a choice of format, the assumption is that SCTs are more autonomous in their learning than those who choose teaching as a first career (Varadharajan and Buchanan, 2021[98]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]), making flexible approaches pedagogically appropriate as well as practically necessary (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2024[97]).

Assessment of aptitude to teach

The literature and several country examples point to a further aspect of SCT preparation: Systematic assessment of candidates' aptitude and readiness before they enter a training programme. Some systems – notably the Netherlands and Austria – use formal intake assessments to evaluate dispositions towards teaching and identify existing skills that may justify a shorter or adapted pathway (see Box 4).

Tools include written tests and simulated classroom tasks. Beyond screening, these assessments serve a broader purpose: they create an early opportunity to help candidates develop realistic expectations of teaching, examine and reshape their prevailing conceptions of what constitutes a "good teacher" (Korthagen, 2004[99]), and identify where preparation should focus. Where intake assessments are conducted, they can also inform the design of personalised learning plans, linking this aspect directly to the self-directed learning dimension described above.

Box 4. Mandatory intake assessment before commencing Initial Teacher Education in The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, roughly a quarter of all ITE students are registered as side-entrants, defined as those holding a bachelor's or master's degree from a non-education sector who are not eligible to teach. A wide range of options is available: In 2018/2019, there were 384 different routes into teaching, 74 of them designed specifically for side entrants.

To ensure that these side entrants achieve a level of quality similar to regular ITE students, teacher training centres are bound by statutory competency requirements, an accreditation framework and national knowledge tests, all periodically reviewed and some enshrined in legislation. Mandatory intake assessments for aspiring side-entrants have been a legal requirement.

Before applying, an agreement is drawn up between the side entrant, the school board where they will be employed and the ITE institution, setting out responsibilities for training and guidance of the prospective teacher. The government provides grants of up to EUR 25 000 for each school board employing a side entrant. The intake assessment itself addresses three questions: (i) whether the candidate can teach independently; (ii) whether they can reasonably be expected to obtain an official teaching qualification within two years; and, if so, (iii) what schooling and guidance are needed to get there. Candidates who pass receive a declaration of suitability for lateral entrants and can begin their training.

Assessment procedures are demanding. ITE centres train assessors (often experienced former school leaders and teacher trainers) to observe classroom practices and assess candidates' pedagogical and didactical skills, group management, professionalism, collaboration and capacity for reflection.

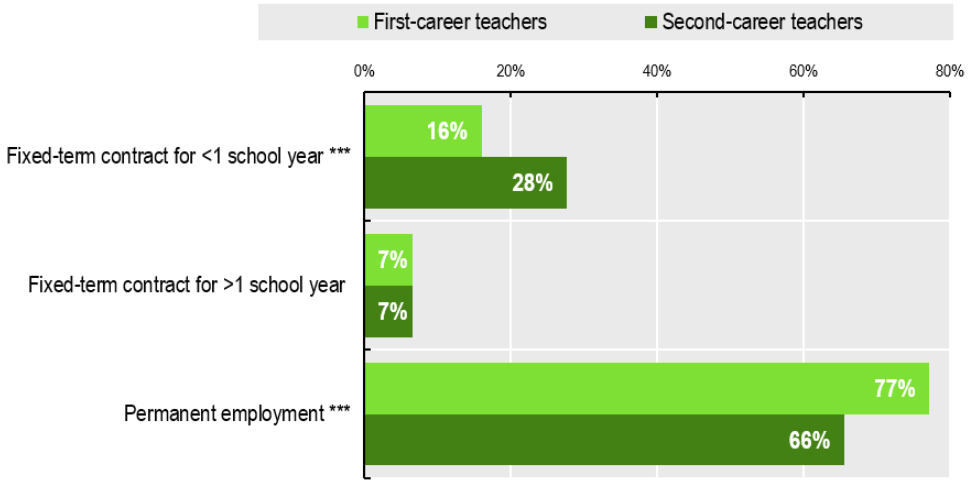
Sources: Dutch Inspectorate of Education (2020[100]), Routes naar het leraarschap (routes into teaching); Education Council of The Netherlands (2025[90]), Bekwaamheid beter borgen (better guarantees of competence); Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (2008[101]), Decision of 5 July 2008 laying down rules on the lateral entry of teachers into primary and secondary education (Decision on lateral entry of teachers into primary and secondary education).

Financial support

A second aspect not captured in the original Baeten and Meeus framework, but prominent in both research and policy practice, is financial support. Changing careers involves real opportunity costs: Foregone income, training fees and the challenge of meeting existing financial obligations on a reduced or student salary (Bresges et al., 2023[102]; Powers, 2002[103]).

Many systems have developed targeted measures to reduce the opportunity costs faced by SCTs. A common approach is to provide salaried pathways into teaching, either by employing career changers as teachers from the outset or by offering paid training contracts. In addition, prior professional experience may be recognised in the determination of starting salary, giving credit to previous employment used to place new entrants higher on the pay scale. For example, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, lateral entrants may validate up to 15 years of financial seniority in high-demand subjects and positions (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2023[104]). Targeted bursaries, stipends and scholarships – linked to service commitments for several years – are used in programmes in Australia and New Zealand (see Annex B).

Figure 7. Employment status of first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 20 June 2026).

These measures address the financial pressures of the transition into teaching. TALIS 2024 data, however, point to a second financial dimension: The conditions under which SCTs are employed once they are in the profession. As Figure 7 shows, SCTs are significantly more likely than first-career teachers to hold short fixed-term contracts and significantly less likely to hold permanent employment. This contract precarity is reflected in how SCTs themselves perceive the profession: They agree significantly less than first-career teachers that teaching is a secure job (see Table A A.2 in Annex A), suggesting that the precarity visible in administrative data is also experienced subjectively by those affected.

The implications of fixed-term contracts vary across systems, however. In some education systems they offer relatively stable employment conditions, while in others they are short-term and more precarious (OECD, forthcoming[12]). The TALIS finding that SCTs perceive teaching as less secure than first-career teachers suggests that, for SCTs themselves, the practical experience of these contracts tilts toward the more precarious end.

Table 2 summarises the key aspects identified in literature and practice as important for the education of SCTs.

Table 2. Key aspects of effective Initial Teacher Education programmes for second-career teachers

Aspect	Description
Extensive field experience	Early, low-stakes exposure to the school environment before formal training begins, including school visits, classroom observation and supervised teaching practice, to build realistic expectations and reduce praxis shock.
A preparatory period	Structured school-based internships during training, with growing responsibilities, allowing SCTs to integrate coursework with classroom practice and develop genuine teaching competencies.
Integration of coursework and field experience	Dedicated preparation in both subject-specific pedagogy and general pedagogical skills — including classroom management, assessment and communication — delivered in parallel with field experience rather than sequentially.

Aspect	Description
Opportunities to transfer expertise	Formal recognition of prior professional competencies through portfolio assessment or validation mechanisms, reducing training scope where relevant and acknowledging SCTs' existing professional identity.
Self-directed learning and peer support	Tailored learning plans responding to individual candidates' gaps and strengths, combined with deliberate peer collaboration structures that allow SCTs to share experiences and support one another.
Intensive mentoring support	One-on-one support from an experienced teacher during induction, helping SCTs navigate the transition between professional identities, develop pedagogical skills and integrate into the school environment.
Flexible programme structures	Part-time, online, evening or modular delivery options that allow SCTs to pursue qualification while managing existing professional, financial and family commitments.
Assessment of aptitude to teach	Systematic evaluation of candidates' dispositions, skills and readiness before entering a training programme, informing both selection decisions and the design of personalised learning plans.
Financial support	Measures to reduce the opportunity costs of career change, including salaried training pathways, recognition of prior experience in salary determination, and targeted bursaries or scholarships.

Note: Aspects 1–7 are drawn from Baeten and Meeus (2016[45]). Aspects 8–9 are proposed by the authors based on evidence from the broader literature and country examples.

Challenges in training second-career teachers

Preparing SCTs for work in education is not as straight forward as it is sometimes considered, regardless of the measure of success (see Box 3). Research has identified three recurring challenges: (i) tailoring learning to SCTs' specific needs; (ii) supporting the transfer of previous professional experience; and (iii) managing the timeframe of training programmes.

Tailoring learning

SCTs enter teacher education with professional backgrounds and prior experiences that set them apart from first-career entrants – yet translating this recognition into genuinely differentiated training has proven difficult in practice. Context-sensitive and individually responsive preparation for SCTs remains a challenge (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2024[97]), compounded by real constraints in funding, time and institutional resources (White et al., 2024[105]).

Part of the difficulty lies with those responsible for delivering training. Teacher educators and mentors are not always equipped – in terms of preparation or practical tools – to identify and respond to the specific needs SCTs bring (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]). Grouping SCTs with similar professional backgrounds could help address this, as shared prior experience may generate common training needs that educators can more readily anticipate and respond to (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]).

TALIS 2024 data offer a useful counterpoint to the assumption that SCTs experience systematically different training needs. Among recent entrants, second- and first-career teachers report broadly similar levels of professional learning need across most areas, with no statistically significant differences on the substantial majority of items (see Figure A A.5 in Annex A). This cautions against assuming that SCTs arrive markedly less prepared or with markedly diverse professional needs than their first-career colleagues.

Transfer of previous professional experience

While SCTs often bring valuable previous professional experience, related to a certain subject (in secondary education) or skill (in Vocational education and training (VET)), the transfer of prior expertise to educational contexts is neither automatic nor reliably advantageous.

Den Hertog et al. (2023[59]) offer a useful conceptual distinction here. *Near transfer* refers to applying knowledge or skills in a context closely resembling the original – for instance, a former engineer drawing on technical knowledge when teaching physics. *Far transfer* involves applying expertise across contexts that are structurally quite different – as is the case for most SCTs, whose prior careers bear limited resemblance to classroom teaching. Since transfer effectiveness depends heavily on how similar the previous and new tasks actually are (Barnett and Ceci, 2002[106]), far transfer is more difficult to achieve. Even so, "most SCTs report engaging in near transfer tasks even when coming from far transfer domains" (den Hertog et al., 2023, p. 6[59]), suggesting that SCTs may often lean on the surface-similar elements of their previous work rather than wrestling with the deeper adaptations far transfer would require. This carries a risk for SCT training: Candidates may believe their experience is more transferable than it actually is.

A related distinction is between *routine expertise* – highly developed competence in familiar tasks – or *adaptive expertise*, the ability to apply skills flexibly in new situations. SCTs arriving with strong routine expertise from their previous career may find it can hinder rather than help their adaptation to teaching, if it encourages over-reliance on established approaches that do not translate well to the classroom. Together, these observations point to a practical implication: prior professional experience is not inherently advantageous (Hogg, Elvira and Yates, 2023[41]; Poole, 2018[107]). SCT training should therefore help candidates actively identify which of their prior skills are genuinely applicable, where gaps remain, and how to adapt rather than simply apply what they already know.

Timeframe of training programmes

A third challenge concerns the duration and pace of SCT preparation. Compressed, short-cycle programmes have attracted sustained criticism in the literature. While they respond to the immediate pressure of staffing classrooms, they risk sending inadequately prepared teachers into schools, with consequences for student outcomes, content delivery quality and attrition rates (Darling-Hammond, 2000[108]; Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow, 2002[109]; Lampert and Dadvand, 2024[110]). Ethical concerns have also been raised about placing poorly trained or uncertified teachers in charge of students (OECD, 2018[18]; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2021[111]).

For SCTs specifically, the time pressure is particularly acute. Developing a teacher identity takes time (Hogg, Elvira and Yates, 2024[78]; Trent, 2018[112]), as does building the pedagogical repertoire needed for effective practice. Lampert and Dadvand (2024[110]) caution against training that moves "at the speed of light", prioritising rapid entry over genuine preparation. At the same time, excessively long programmes may deter career changers with financial obligations and limited capacity for extended study. The right balance between preparation quality and programme accessibility is therefore context-dependent and requires careful calibration.

How do second-career teachers integrate into schools?

Once SCTs enter the workplace, a new phase of development begins. Because SCTs can enter schools at very different points in their training – some with growing responsibilities from the start of ITE, others only once fully certified – their workplace experiences vary considerably. Research evidence on SCTs in schools is largely qualitative, drawing on the accounts of SCTs themselves and of their colleagues and

school leaders. This section examines what that evidence tells us about how SCTs integrate, develop and contribute to the workplace.

Entering the school: The case for intentional support

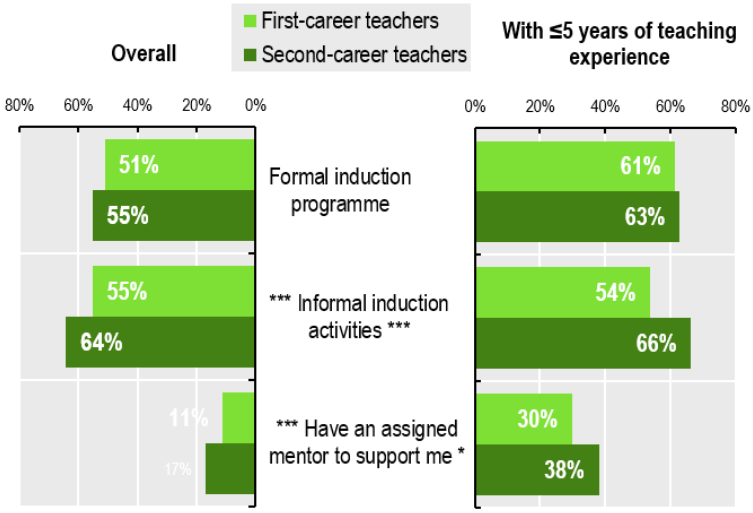
SCTs develop their professional teacher identity in schools and in classrooms, where it is shaped by individual factors and through interaction with a school's organisational context: its culture, routines, and the support available to newcomers (Dawborn-Gundlach et al., 2025[113]; Shwartz and Dori, 2020[114]). It is important to note that individual and contextual factors are in constant interplay in developing a professional teacher identity, they should not be viewed as separate layers (Suarez and McGrath, 2022[83]). While individual traits are difficult to influence, organisational factors can be adapted and supportive towards each candidate.

Beyond the intrinsic motivation to teach and work with young people (OECD, 2025[4]), perceived support is a strong predictor of job satisfaction for SCTs (Bar-Tal et al., 2020[85]) and of their intention to remain in the profession (Rose and Sughrue, 2021[115]), while dissatisfaction with organisational support is a major driver of attrition (Redding and Smith, 2016[57]). SCTs coming into schools suffering from shortages in (educational) resources and trained staff report lower job satisfaction as well (Fütterer et al., 2023[116]).

A persistent risk, however, is that SCTs' age and prior professional experience are read as signals of self-sufficiency. The research literature is consistent that SCTs need substantial and well-fitted support during their entry into teaching, yet they are often perceived as needing less mentoring or guidance than younger colleagues entering from ITE. Colleagues in a recent Dutch study explicitly reported that SCTs need *more* support than first-career teachers in the initial period, particularly given the complexity of their transition (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]). Other research stresses that what SCTs most need is support *tailored* to their dual status as experienced professionals and novice teachers, recognising their prior career, adjusting guidance for the demands of teaching, and having induction designed around their specific profile rather than around a generic novice template (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]; den Hertog et al., 2025[60]). A lack of support can lead to disappointment and frustration – sentiments that emerge consistently across diverse samples described in studies (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2024[63]; Coppe et al., 2022[117]; Troesch and Bauer, 2017[118]; Ilmer et al., 2005[119]; Laming and Horne, 2013[120]; Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev, 2022[121]). More broadly, SCTs report dissatisfaction with social support and collaboration (den Hertog et al., 2025[60]; Bauer, Trösch and Aksoy, 2021[48]).

Figure 8. Induction and mentoring for first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers that report having been or being involved in the following induction and/or mentoring activities.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 20 June 2026).

TALIS 2024 data offer a more nuanced picture, however. Looking at all teachers, around half report participating in formal induction programmes, and a similar share report informal induction activities – though here SCTs are significantly more likely to participate than first-career teachers (see Figure 8). Mentoring shows the same pattern: SCTs are significantly more likely than first-career teachers to report having an assigned mentor supporting them, although absolute levels remain low. Among teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience, participation in formal induction is substantially higher across both groups (around 6 in 10 teachers), and the SCT advantage on informal induction persists (66% vs 54%). On mentoring among the newest teachers, SCTs again report more support, though the difference is no longer statistically significant.

These findings do not contradict the qualitative literature so much as refine it. Systems appear to be doing more to support SCTs at entry than research focused on individual SCT experiences sometimes suggests. The qualitative concern is therefore less about whether support exists, and more about whether it is well *tailored* to SCTs' specific profile as experienced professionals who are simultaneously novice teachers. Higher rates of participation do not, by themselves, indicate that the support delivered fits the dual identity SCTs bring.

Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021[66]) identify three main sources of support for SCTs in school: Mentors, colleagues and school leaders. Mentoring was addressed in the previous section as an element of SCT preparation; the subsections that follow focus on the other two – the role of colleagues and school leaders – as well as on how SCTs' professional self-identity takes shape through workplace interaction.

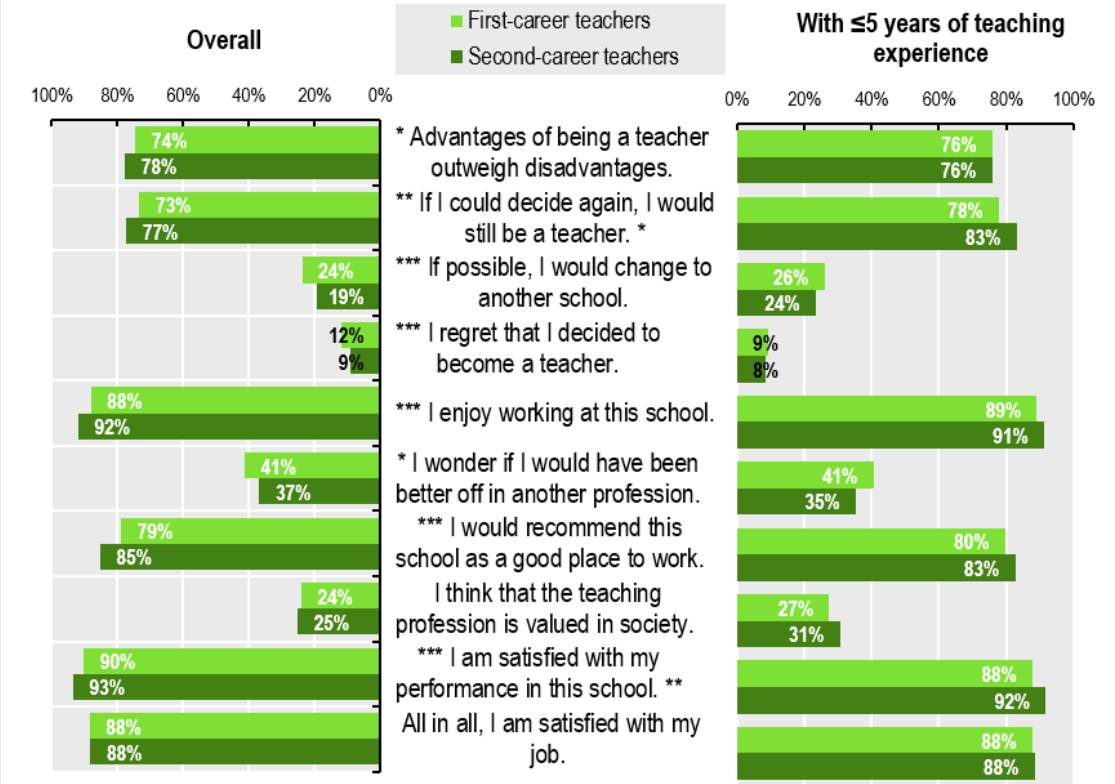
Box 5. Are second-career teachers satisfied in their job?

TALIS 2024 shows that, on average, SCTs and first-career teachers report similar overall job satisfaction (see Figure 9). Beneath this headline, however, the data reveal a more textured picture. Across six items where significant differences emerge, SCTs report higher satisfaction than first-career teachers. They are more likely to say the advantages of teaching outweigh the disadvantages, that they would choose teaching again, that they enjoy working at their school, and that they would recommend their school as a good place to work. They are less likely to express regret about becoming a teacher or to want to change school.

This consistent pattern shifts substantially, however, when the comparison is restricted to teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience. Among this group, almost all of the first-/second-career gaps narrow or disappear, and most are no longer statistically significant. At the point of entry into teaching, first- and second-career teachers report broadly similar perceptions of their job. The differences observed in the overall comparison emerge later, as both groups accumulate teaching experience, with SCTs developing or maintaining higher satisfaction over time than their first-career colleagues.

Figure 9. Feelings on teaching of first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with the below statements.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Developing a teacher identity at work

SCTs' identity development as teachers begins primarily through workplace socialisation, a process that unfolds gradually rather than at a single transition point. Across multiple studies, SCT identity appears to develop with time spent in the school environment rather than being established at entry, with workplace interactions and accumulated experience shaping how SCTs come to see themselves as teachers.

Building teacher professionalism appears closely tied to the professional integration process itself (Perez-Roux, 2019[122]). For SCTs, schools are not only places of work but also the primary site where they learn a new professional posture (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2023[123]). A recent longitudinal study in Australia (Dawborn-Gundlach et al., 2025[113]) documented how SCTs' concerns shifted over across their first years in schools: Initial challenges centred on classroom and behaviour management and basic teaching skills, while at a later stage their attention broadened to school culture, policies and practices. Teacher identity itself became more central in later interviews, with SCTs becoming "increasingly outward looking in their professional judgments" (Dawborn-Gundlach et al., 2025, p. 147[113]). The trajectory suggests that SCTs developed their professional identity over time while working in the schools and is not established on entry.

A consistent finding is across studies is that SCTs expect recognition of their prior professional experience and actively seek opportunities to contribute this expertise to the school context and to student learning. This connects to the concept of teacher agency developed by Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015[124]), in which past experiences form a repertoire of responses that teachers draw upon when navigating new professional situations. When this repertoire is valued by colleagues and school leaders, SCTs appear to thrive, reinforcing their agency development. Positive socialisation processes can further support this.

Working with colleagues

Peer networks and collegial exchange play a central role in SCTs' workplace socialisation and evidence suggests this seems more challenging than for first-career entrants (van Renselaar et al., 2025[93]; Trent and Gao, 2009[125]; Aslan and Eröz, 2025[126]). Research finds that SCTs experience lower levels of social integration: They have reported fewer collegial interactions, difficulties navigating unwritten norms, and at times not being recognised as "real" teachers by colleagues (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2023[123]). SCTs have reported unfulfilling experiences due to stressful and unsupportive school environments (Watters and Diezmann, 2015[127]) and have scored lower across multiple dimensions of socialisation (socialisation to institution, micropolitics, work groups, and teaching tasks) in comparison to other teachers (Coppe et al., 2022[117]).

Part of the difficulty reflects cultural mismatch. Research shows that SCTs have retained private-sector logic – prioritising efficiency, performance and individual accountability, which could conflict with schools' collaborative and value-oriented norms (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2024[63]). In technical and vocational schools, their social network interactions were largely confined to small departmental subgroups, with limited exchanges across departments. Yet SCTs actively seek out more connection than they receive: they want to build professional networks but occupy peripheral positions in school social structures (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2023[123]).

The practical implication is that schools cannot rely on socialisation happening organically. To promote socialisation, prevent isolation and a sense of 'not belonging', SCTs would benefit from a more central network position in schools. In addition, the opportunity to have work-related discussions is central not only to socialisation but also to learning (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]). Focusing on SCTs' networks, it is important to highlight that peer support within SCTs' cohort should not lead to ulterior isolation or group segregation within the school setting.

The challenges of integration are not only experienced by SCTs themselves. Colleagues also report difficulties on their side: A lack of tools to adequately support SCTs in their daily work, and time constraints limited opportunities for guidance and dialogue (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]). These constraints are compounded by context: Schools employing SCTs are often those facing shortages, which reduced the capacity of colleagues to provide systematic support. SCTs' seniority can itself create friction: Their prior professional experience could be an asset, but sometimes generates expectations of flexibility or expertise that do not align with their novice status as teachers. This points back to a dilemma that runs throughout the SCT literature: How to value the expertise SCTs bring while recognising that, as teachers, they are still beginners.

School leaders are key to SCT integration

School leaders play a pivotal role in whether SCTs feel recognised, supported and able to contribute – and the research suggests many are not yet well prepared for this. Awareness of the specific characteristics of SCTs is identified in the literature as a precondition for appropriate support from school leaders (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2023[123]; Rak, 2013[128]), and several studies have called for targeted leadership professional development to address the challenges faced by alternatively certificated teachers, including SCTs (Rak, 2013[128]; Fütterer et al., 2023[116]). Where this awareness is missing, principals tend to hold unrealistic or overly advanced expectations of SCTs – for example, expecting deep pedagogical understanding at an early induction stage (Rose and Sughrue, 2020[129]).

Recognition of prior experience is the single most consistent message from SCTs about what they need from school leaders. SCTs are described as "longing for recognition" from their colleagues and school leaders (Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]) and when school leaders acknowledge their previous professional experience, SCTs report feeling more committed, autonomous, and recognised in their new professional role (den Hertog et al., 2025[60]; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011[91]; Rak, 2013[128]). This recognition must be substantive, not symbolic: Superficial or ad hoc support that does not acknowledge SCTs' prior expertise is less effective than sustained efforts to foster an inclusive school culture (Bauer, Trösch and Aksoy, 2021[48]). Research has reported that SCTs felt their previous knowledge was disregarded, as support systems were the same for them as for first-career teachers, with no tailored support measures in place (den Hertog et al., 2025[60]).

Leadership style also matters. Research indicates that SCTs sometimes expect school leaders to act as "managers", reflecting workplace conceptions from their former professions (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2024[63]). At the same time, SCTs tend to prefer non-authoritarian leadership styles, which fosters greater commitment in the new profession (Rak, 2013[128]). Collegial leadership has been identified as a strong predictor of SCT integration (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2024[63]) underscoring the importance of school leaders for both retention and socialisation. An "encouraging school culture" (Bauer, Trösch and Aksoy, 2021, p. 473[48]) led by engaging leadership (Coppe, März and Raemdonck, 2023[123]) can broaden SCTs' socialisation into the profession. Watters & Diezemann (2015[127]) suggest that leaders foster "integrated professional cultures" (p. 190) where first- and second-career teachers contribute from their respective professional backgrounds and cultures.

What do SCTs contribute to education systems?

Beyond the question of how SCTs are prepared and how they integrate into schools lies a further question that is central to any policy rationale for recruiting them: what do they actually contribute? Three dimensions have been explored in the literature: Implications on student achievement, contributions to teacher workforce diversity and broader contributions to schools and teams. The evidence across these three areas is uneven. This section reviews what can and cannot be said from the available evidence.

Implications on student achievement

Measuring the effect of any individual teacher characteristic on student achievement is notoriously difficult, particularly when traits are generalised across diverse teacher populations (Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005[130]). Research that has examined entry pathways suggests that the route into teaching is not the most important factor influencing student achievement. Among teachers with the same or similar ITE backgrounds, differences in individual effectiveness are larger than any effect attributable to the background itself (Ing and Loeb, 2008[131]). More recent research reinforces this, finding that teaching experience is a stronger predictor of student outcomes than certification pathway, with novice teachers, regardless of how they entered the profession, being less effective in raising student achievement than their more experienced colleagues (Kini and Podolsky, 2016[132])

Evidence specifically on SCTs is limited. A study of teachers in New York City public schools found that teachers with prior career experience were slightly less effective in teaching mathematics, as measured by student test scores, than traditionally certified teachers (Boyd et al., 2011[133]). This finding is consistent with the broader pattern noted above: What appears to matter the most is the length, form and rigour of ITE programmes, combined with accumulated teaching experience (Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Korthagen, 2008[89]; OECD, 2025[4]). The implication is that SCTs are not inherently less effective than their first-career colleagues, but like any novice teacher, their effectiveness depends heavily on the quality of their preparation and on time in the classroom.

A complementary perspective comes from how SCTs perceive their own effectiveness. TALIS 2024 asked teachers how confident they feel across a range of teaching tasks. Broadly, SCTs are as confident in their teaching as their first-career colleagues (see Table A A.1. in Annex A). Where consistent, but limited, significant differences emerge (both across the workforce as a whole and among teachers with five or fewer years of experience) they concentrate in a single domain: Classroom and behaviour management. SCTs feel significantly less confident than first-career teachers in getting students to follow classroom rules and in calming a disruptive or noisy student. This echoes the literature, in which classroom management is among the most commonly reported early challenges for SCTs.

Contributions to teacher workforce diversity

Student populations across OECD countries are becoming more diverse, but the teaching workforce has not kept pace. In several systems, significant gaps persist between the demographic composition of classrooms and of staff rooms. Countries in South America, for example, tend to lack indigenous teachers who reflect the communities in which they teach (Corbetta et al., 2020[134]). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, only 6.4% of teachers have a migration background, compared to 39.6% of the student population (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2023[135]). In the United States, teachers from historically disadvantaged groups remain significantly underrepresented relative to student demographics (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2025[27]).

Whether SCTs help to close these gaps depends on how diversity is defined. Research on alternative pathways in the United States suggests that backgrounds of future teachers are more diverse than in regular ITE programmes (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2025[27]), but this pattern has not been specifically demonstrated for SCTs. TALIS 2024 data confirm only two consistent demographic differences: SCTs are more likely to be male and more likely to be older than their non-SCT colleagues (OECD, 2025[4]).

Yet diversity in the teaching profession is not only a matter of demographic representation. A growing body of research argues that SCTs diversify teaching teams through their perspectives, prior professional experience, the pedagogical approaches they bring, and the connections they hold to communities and sectors outside education (Aslan and Eröz, 2025[126]; Baeten and Meeus, 2016[45]; den Hertog et al., 2023[59]; den Hertog et al., 2023[59]; van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]), even when their socio-

demographic profiles resemble those of existing staff. On this broader definition of diversity – one that includes perspectives, professional trajectories and life experience – the case that SCTs contribute to a more diverse workforce is more robust.

Contributions to schools and teams

Less is known about how SCTs contribute to the daily life of schools than about their preparation, integration or retention. The most systematic evidence comes from a recent Dutch study by van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman (2025[62]), drawing on surveys and interviews with colleagues, management staff and school-based teacher educators in secondary schools. Bearing in mind the limits of a single small-scale study, its findings offer a useful starting point for thinking what SCTs bring to schools beyond their demographic profile. Colleagues in the study widely perceived SCTs as bringing "refreshing perspectives" (2025, p. 9[62]) to their schools, operating at several levels.

How can second-career teachers be retained?

At a *cultural* level, SCTs prompt colleagues to reflect on their own practice, introducing alternative reference points drawn from their previous professional environments. At a *practical* level, they bring new teaching ideas: Examples from their former fields, new approaches to organising classroom work, and opportunities such as field trips that draw on their professional networks. At an *organisational* level, their skills for non-teaching tasks support the division of labour within schools, and their presence helps alleviate staffing shortages by redistributing workload across the team. Colleagues also emphasise that SCTs enrich the workforce through their age and prior career trajectories, echoing the broader diversity argument developed above. Whether and how these perceived contributions translate into measurable outcomes for students and schools remains largely unexplored

Attrition is a meaningful component of the teacher supply challenge, particularly in systems where alternative employment options for qualified graduates are abundant, and has been identified to be one of its main causes, especially in high-income countries (UNESCO, 2024[8]; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011[91]). Across 19 OECD education systems, 6.5% of fully-qualified teachers (from pre-primary to upper secondary education) left the profession in the 2022/2023 school year. Among the seven systems able to report this disaggregation, the share of those leavers with fewer than five years of teaching experience varied widely, from 16% to 68% depending on the system (OECD, 2025[11]).

Cross-country variation in teacher turnover partly reflects broader labour-market dynamics. In systems where long-term job tenure is above the OECD average, teachers also tend to express lower-than-average intentions to leave teaching, whereas countries characterised by greater labour-market mobility often report higher levels of intended teacher attrition (OECD, forthcoming[12]). Empirical work on individual systems shows the same pattern from the other side: Teacher recruitment in Norway, for instance, becomes more difficult when employment opportunities outside education are plentiful, and more accessible when wider labour markets weaken (Falch and Strøm, 2025[136]). And once teachers have entered the profession, exit rates in the United States are broadly comparable to those observed for workers in occupations with similar qualification requirements (Bruno, 2026[13]). Teacher attrition therefore needs to be interpreted in the context of the labour markets in which education systems operate, while remaining attentive to the teaching-specific factors (including employment conditions and the perceived attractiveness of teaching careers) that also play an important role in shaping retention (OECD, forthcoming[12]).

TALIS 2024 data reinforce the picture looking forward: More than a quarter of teachers across participating OECD education systems are contemplating leaving the profession within the next five years. Notably, this sentiment is shared by one in five teachers under the age of 30 (OECD, 2025[4]). In the United States,

where estimates are particularly stark, attrition accounts for between 66% and almost 100% of the annual teacher demand (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas, 2019[137]). Recent data also indicate that, at a minimum, 411 549 teaching positions were either unfilled or filled by teachers not fully certified for their assignments, representing roughly one in eight teaching positions nationally (Tan, Comai and Patrick, 2025[138]). Replacing a single teacher can cost anywhere from USD 11 860 to 25 000 (Learning Policy Institute, 2024[139]).

For SCT policy, the implication is direct: Recruiting career changers into teaching is only a meaningful response to shortages if those teachers stay. A strategy focused solely on entry – without matching attention to retention – risks replicating at the individual level the same dynamic that created the shortage in the first place.

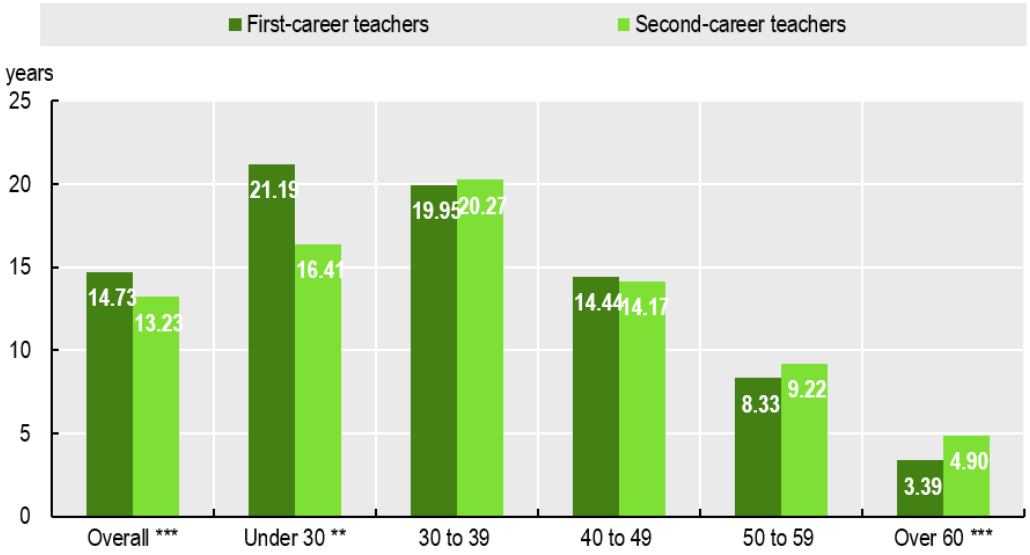
What the evidence on SCT retention shows

Research on SCT retention is limited and the findings are mixed. A study of New York City public schools suggested that teachers with prior career experience leave teaching slightly more often than traditionally certified teachers, though the gap was small (Boyd et al., 2011[133]). Research from the French-speaking Community of Belgium found a more pronounced pattern, with significantly higher attrition among SCTs than among first-career teachers (Coppe, 2022[75]). The divergence between these findings is itself informative: SCT retention appears to be shaped less by career stage on entry and more by the conditions SCTs encounter once they begin teaching.

TALIS 2024 data offer two further perspectives on SCT retention: how long teachers intend to remain in the profession, and which factors they identify as likely to drive them out.

Figure 10. Self-estimated teaching years left of first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)

Average number of years that first- and second-career teachers estimate they will continue to work as a teacher.



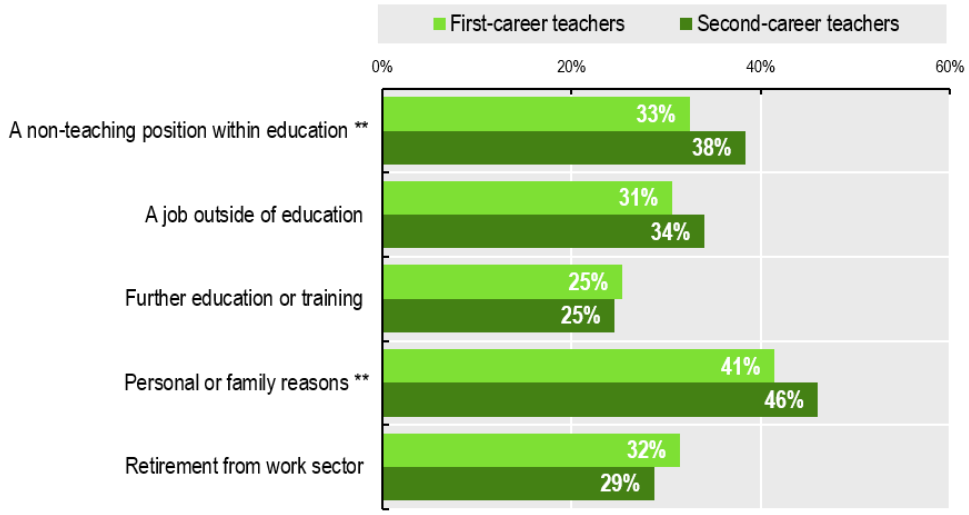
Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

On the first question, SCTs report on average wanting to stay in teaching for fewer years than first-career teachers (see Figure 10). This headline gap, however, largely dissolves once age is taken into account. Age-stratified analysis shows that in three of five age groups, SCTs and first-career teachers report essentially equivalent intended horizons. In the over-60 group, SCTs intend to stay marginally longer than their first-career colleagues (around five years compared to around three), both close to retirement, but with SCTs, who joined the profession later, plausibly seeing a small number of additional years ahead of them before they leave The only age group where SCTs intend to stay meaningfully fewer years than first-career teachers is among teachers under 30, where the gap is significant.

On the second question, what teachers identify as likely to drive them out, TALIS data show that across most factors (a job outside of education, retirement, further education or training) first- and second-career teachers report similar likelihoods. Where significant differences emerge, however, two factors stand out: SCTs are more likely than first-career teachers to cite a non-teaching position within education and personal or family reasons as likely to lead them to leave teaching in the next five years (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Attrition factors for first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers reporting the following factors as “likely” or “very likely” to cause them to leave teaching in the next five years.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. ‘**’ indicates differences significant at 5%. ‘***’ indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

The "non-teaching position within education" difference points to a specific kind of mobility: SCTs are more likely than their first-career colleagues to see themselves moving into non-teaching roles in the education sector. This may reflect their broader sense of professional mobility, having already changed careers once, or the recognition that their prior expertise may transfer to roles outside the classroom but within education.

The "personal or family reasons" finding is more difficult to interpret without further analysis, because SCTs are on average older than first-career teachers, and older teachers may be more likely to face caregiving responsibilities, partner-related life events or health considerations. An age-stratified analysis (see Figure A A.6 in Annex A) shows that this is partly true. Across most age groups, the gap between SCTs and first-career teachers is small and non-significant. This changes, however, in the oldest age group:

Among teachers over 60, SCTs cite more often than first-career teachers personal or family reasons, an 18-percentage points gap.

What shapes SCT retention

Research identifies five main factors that influence whether SCTs remain in the profession. Notably, most of these factors mirror the drivers of attrition for first-career teachers – suggesting that SCT retention is, to a significant extent, a subset of the broader teacher retention challenge rather than a distinct problem.

The *quality of Initial Teacher Education* has been identified as a predictor of retention for teachers generally (Keese et al., 2023[140]; Darling-Hammond, 2000[108]) and the limited research that examines this specifically for SCTs points in the same direction (Wood, 2025[141]), although whether ITE designed specifically for SCTs produces stronger retention than generic ITE remains largely unexplored.. Beyond retention, ITE quality has also been linked to the motivation to pursue certification in the first place (Richter et al., 2022[142]; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas, 2019[137]; Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]; Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017[55]; Tigchelaar, Brouwer and Vermunt, 2010[2]),.

Induction support, recognition and socialisation emerge consistently as key factors. Limited support from colleagues, mentors, or school leadership, and weak professional socialisation into the school environment, are associated with increased likelihood of leaving the profession (Redding and Smith, 2016[57]; Rose and Sughrue, 2020[129]; Troesch and Bauer, 2020[143]; Dadvand et al., 2023[54]; Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021[66]; Wood, 2025[141]).

School context also shapes retention. Teachers who enter through alternative pathways, including SCTs, show higher attrition rates in schools serving disadvantaged communities (Redding and Smith, 2016[57]; Grissom, 2008[144]). More broadly, high job demands and challenging working conditions in particular school settings are consistent predictors of turnover within teacher populations (Ingersoll, 2025[145]; Boyd et al., 2011[133]). At the same time, when teachers' working conditions are compared with those of other highly educated workers across dimensions such as working hours and time pressure, the differences are modest (OECD, forthcoming[12]), suggesting that the predictors of turnover identified within teaching populations operate at the level of specific school settings rather than reflecting a structural disadvantage of teaching as a profession.

Financial recognition of previous professional experience – through higher placement on the pay scale or through scholarships that reduce the opportunity cost of teacher training (Varadharajan and Buchanan, 2021[98]; Dawborn-Gundlach et al., 2025[113]) – can be supportive of SCT retention.

Finally, *individual characteristics* play a role. Lower self-efficacy and resilience are associated with higher attrition, while feelings of efficacy and positive influence on students contribute to persistence (Chambers Mack et al., 2019[76]; Rose and Sughrue, 2020[129]).

Implications for policy

Taken together, the evidence suggests that SCT retention is shaped by an interaction between individual, institutional and contextual factors – not by career stage or entry pathway alone. What SCTs need is well-prepared entry, structured induction that recognises their dual status as experienced professionals and novice teachers, supportive school cultures led by capable school leaders, and working conditions that make staying a viable choice.

Where SCT-specific retention policy does add value is at the margins: In financial recognition of prior experience, in mentoring that supports the transition between professional identities, and in preparation that equips SCTs for the classroom without compressing training to the point where quality suffers. These are policy levers that not only apply to SCTs – but they sit on top of, rather than substitute for, the broader

improvements in schools as workplaces that support retention across the profession. Focusing on organisational factors can impact SCT retention (OECD, 2024[5]), improving schools as workplaces (Ingersoll, 2025[145]) and focusing on ITE and induction to prepare future teachers are important if SCT recruitment and training is to be sustainable from the human, financial and policy perspective.

Conclusions

Second-career teachers have become a trending topic when it comes to teacher workforce policy in many OECD countries. Demographic shifts, evolving career patterns and persistent teacher shortages have made the case for diversifying entry into the profession more pressing than at any previous point, and governments are increasingly investing in alternative pathways to bring experienced professionals from other fields into teaching. The OECD's 2025 cycle of *Education at a Glance* and 2024 TALIS, both drawn on extensively in this paper, mark a step-change in the international evidence available on this group, and the broader-definition analysis of TALIS 2024 conducted here adds further texture to that picture.

SCTs sit at the intersection of two policy narratives that can pull in different directions. The first is the immediate and pressing issue of teacher shortages, the need to fill classrooms now. The second is the persistent and longer-term issue of teaching quality, the recognition that effective teaching takes time to develop and benefits from substantial preparation (Siostrom, Mills and Bourke, 2023[42]; Coppe, 2024[24]). When shortages are acute, the temptation is to relax the second imperative in service of the first: To compress preparation, simplify selection and treat SCTs as a fast route to have "enough warm bodies" in front of classrooms (Darling-Hammond and Podolsky, 2019, p. 3[146]). The evidence reviewed in this paper suggests that this temptation should be resisted. Short-cycle solutions to teacher shortages have been associated with higher attrition among the cohorts they produce, weaker student outcomes and what has been described as a longer-term "de-professionalisation" of teaching itself (Gehrmann, 2025, p. 20[35]).

What the evidence supports

Despite the heterogeneity of SCT pathways, profiles and contexts across OECD countries, the evidence reviewed in this paper points to a number of findings that are robust enough.

First, **second-career teachers are a meaningful and growing presence in OECD education systems** – not a niche category. Using a broader five-year category, on average, 1 out of 5 of lower secondary teachers across participating OECD countries fit the SCT profile, and the share rises to 26% among teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience. The share varies widely across systems, from 36% in Iceland to below 5% in Japan, Türkiye and Korea, and is rising sharply among recent entrants in the Baltic systems and Poland, in Portugal, and in French-speaking systems. SCTs are present in all systems examined, including those without dedicated pathways.

Second, **SCTs' preparation needs are different, not lesser**. The evidence consistently shows that effective programmes recognise both their established professional identity and their novice-teacher status. The nine aspects identified by Baeten and Meeus (2016[45]) and proposed in this paper – field experience, internships, integration of coursework and practice, recognition of prior expertise, peer support and personalised learning, intensive mentoring, flexibility, aptitude assessment and financial support – are widely reflected in what the evidence so far identifies as features of effective programmes. When they are missing, SCTs can suffer when making the transition.

Third, **organisational support, not entry pathway, is the strongest predictor of how SCTs experience the workplace**. Perceived support, structured induction and recognition of prior experience by colleagues and school leaders are repeatedly identified as decisive for SCT job satisfaction, professional identity development and intention to remain in the profession. TALIS 2024 offers some reassurance on the

support that exists: SCTs are more likely than first-career teachers to receive informal induction and assigned mentoring. The concern is therefore less about whether support exists than about whether it is well-tailored to SCTs' dual status as experienced professionals and novice teachers.

Fourth, **SCT retention is shaped by the same factors that shape teacher retention generally**. The raw aggregate gap in intended years remaining in teaching dissolves once age is controlled for, and the factors SCTs cite as likely to drive them out largely mirror those cited by first-career teachers, with two specific exceptions: a non-teaching position within education, and personal or family reasons (concentrated among teachers over 60). Effective SCT retention policy is therefore largely a question of doing well what should be done for all teachers, with a small set of additional levers (financial recognition, mentoring designed for the career-change transition, and stable employment conditions) that apply specifically to SCTs.

What the evidence does not yet tell us

The same review also reveals where the evidence base remains thin, and where claims should therefore be made with caution.

The definitional landscape remains fragmented. The OECD's *Education at a Glance* 2025 indicator and TALIS 2024 both advance the field, but they use different definitions, and national administrative definitions vary further. This paper has addressed the most restrictive aspect of the TALIS measure by using a broader five-year threshold – which roughly doubles the share of teachers identified as SCTs – but every claim about SCTs still carries an implicit definitional caveat. Beyond definitions, the TALIS-based findings reported throughout the paper rely on self-reported measures: teachers' own accounts of their preparation, working conditions, perceptions and intentions, rather than directly observable outcomes such as classroom practice or student achievement. Self-report data of this kind are highly informative about what teachers themselves regard as important and how their experiences differ across groups, but they are not measures of underlying performance and should be read in that light.

The broader research literature on SCTs has its own limitations that constrain how confidently general claims can be made. Much of the qualitative evidence draws on small samples in single education systems (specific cohorts within particular ITE centres, interview studies with a handful of individuals, or single-country surveys). Several findings in this paper each rest on individual studies that, while valuable, would benefit from replication in other contexts. The geographical concentration of the SCT research base (heavily Anglophone and Northern European) and the diversity of programmes and definitions across systems make it difficult to generalise findings without careful attention to context. As Coppe (2024[24]) notes, the possibility to engage in cross-country comparative research is of vital importance to better understand the phenomenon of second-career teaching and would help establish which findings reflect SCTs as such, and which reflect particular national configurations.

The impact of specific preparation models on SCT outcomes remains under-evaluated. Whether SCT-specific ITE produces stronger retention, better classroom outcomes or higher job satisfaction than generic ITE has not been systematically established. This is a significant gap given the substantial public investment many countries are making in dedicated SCT pathways. Longitudinal studies of SCT trajectories linking preparation, induction, classroom performance and retention over time are particularly scarce.

Little is known about how SCTs' professional contributions translate into outcomes for students and schools. The "refreshing perspectives" finding from the Netherlands (van Heijst, Cornelissen and Volman, 2025[62]) – that colleagues perceive SCTs as bringing new ideas, reference points and connections to the school – is promising but rests on a single qualitative study. TALIS 2024 shows that SCTs are more likely than first-career teachers to teach in classrooms with high concentrations of students with special education needs or from minority backgrounds, but whether and how SCTs' prior expertise

actually changes pedagogical practice, expands student opportunities or shapes school culture in these settings remains largely unmeasured.

Considerations for policy and practice

The findings reviewed above suggest several considerations for governments, education systems and schools investing in second-career teachers. These considerations apply with varying force depending on national context, but they are grounded in evidence common across the literature and country examples.

Treat retention, not recruitment, as the central design question. Recruitment without matching investment in retention reproduces the dynamic that created the shortage in the first place. Education systems considering or expanding SCT pathways should plan retention into the design of those pathways from the outset, through induction, school-level support, workplace conditions and stable employment terms. Contract precarity is itself a retention risk worth attending to: SCTs are significantly more likely than first-career teachers to hold short fixed-term contracts, and report perceiving teaching as a less secure profession. Embedding retention into the design of SCT pathways also depends on a longer policy horizon. Past efforts to recruit career changers have been short-lived responses to acute shortages, unable to produce lasting structural effects (Sikkes, 2017[147]). Pathways designed under that kind of pressure tend to prioritise quick entry over the conditions that keep teachers in the profession, leaving systems to rebuild the same pathways during the next shortage cycle. Sustained investment, by contrast, gives systems the time to develop the induction, support and employment structures that retention requires.

Invest in preparation rather than compromising it. The evidence on student achievement and on attrition both point in the same direction: SCTs perform comparably to first-career teachers when well-prepared, and significantly worse when rushed into classrooms with minimal preparation. The temptation to shorten and skim training in response to immediate shortages is understandable but produces outcomes that undermine both quality and the long-term cost-effectiveness of SCT pathways. A shorter model can work if its content proves to be of equal substance and rigour, but compressing duration while also stripping out content that is genuinely formative is a different matter.

Design induction around novice-teacher status, not professional seniority. One of the most consistent findings in the qualitative research base is that SCTs are perceived as needing less support than younger first-career entrants because of their age and prior experience, when in fact they need different support that takes their dual status as experienced professionals and novice teachers into account. This is especially important given that TALIS data show SCTs are more likely to be teaching in classrooms with high concentrations of students with special education needs and from minority backgrounds, pedagogically demanding contexts in which generic novice support is unlikely to be sufficient.

Strengthen administrative monitoring of SCTs. Only a small minority of OECD countries currently identify SCTs systematically in national education statistics. Better data on inflows, training routes, working conditions and retention patterns would let systems evaluate whether their investments in SCT pathways are working, and would strengthen the international evidence base on which all systems can draw.

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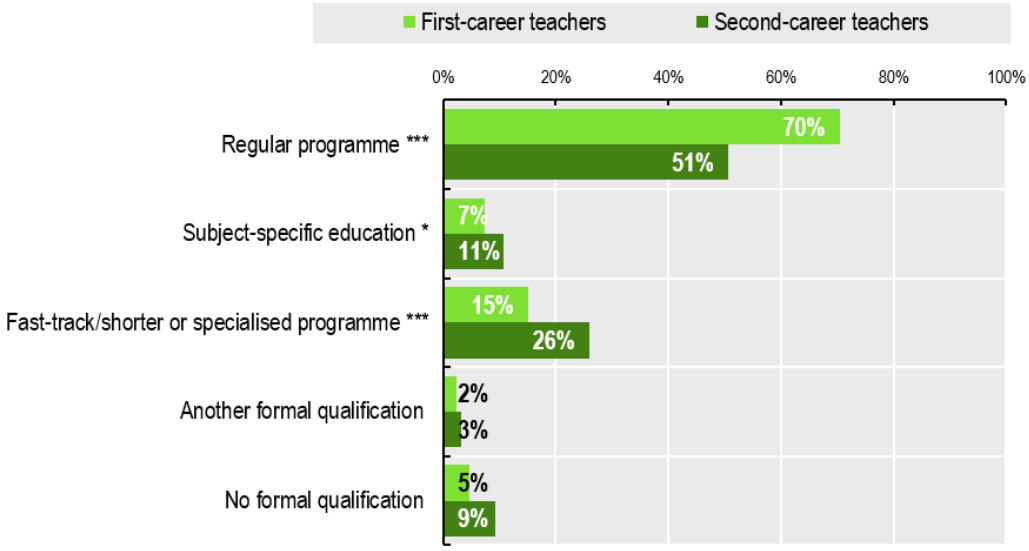
Annex A. Further OECD and TALIS analyses

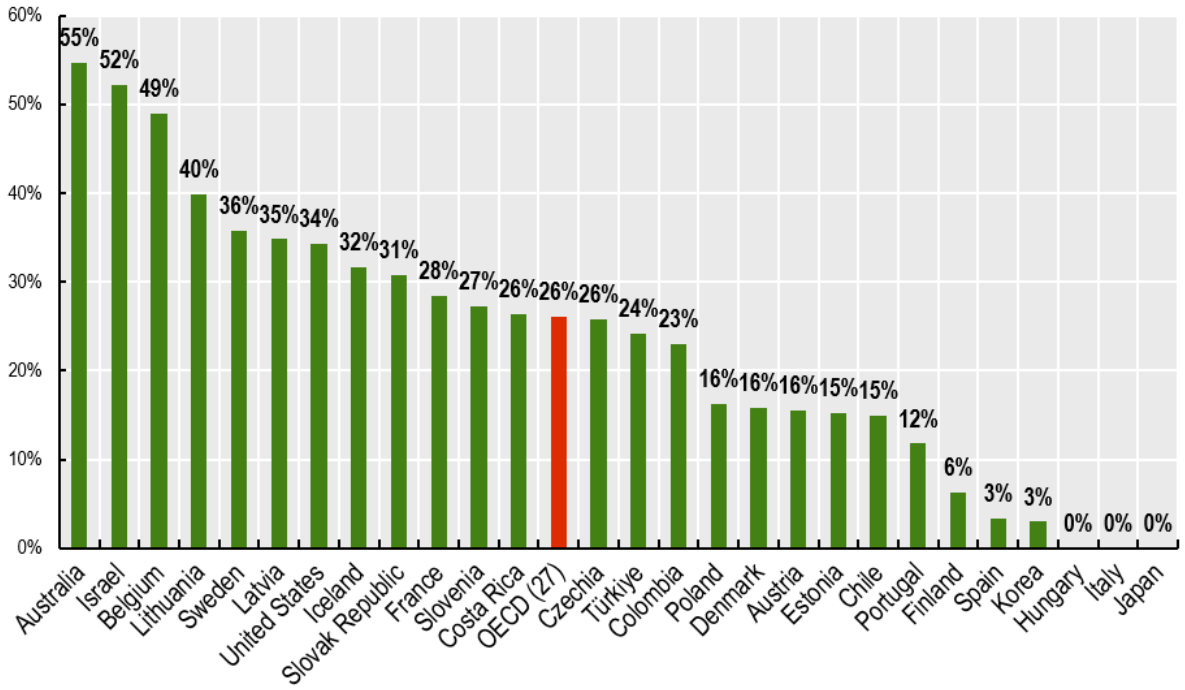
Figure A A.1. Type of teaching training of first- and second-career teachers with five or fewer years of experience (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers with five or fewer years of experience, by type of education completed for their first teaching qualification.



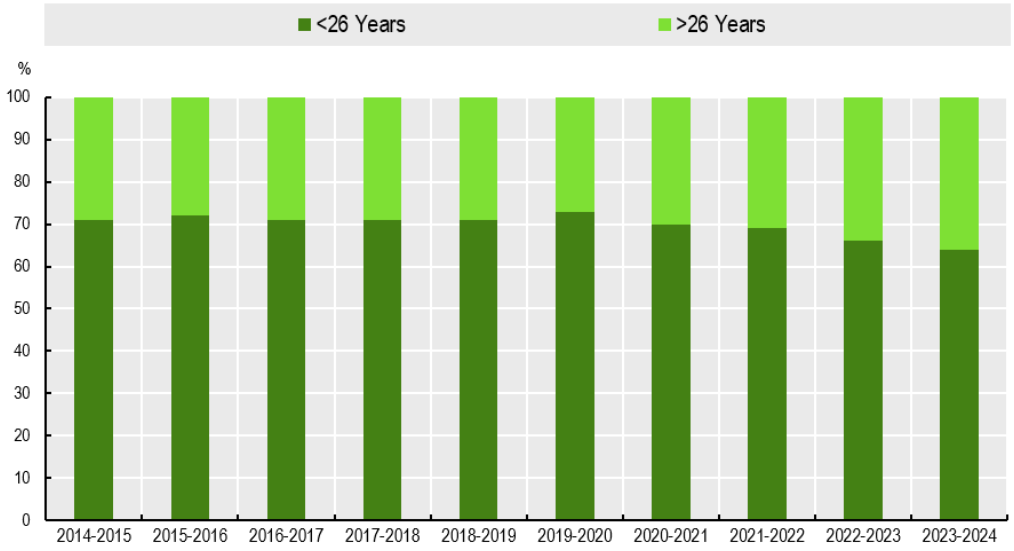
Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html, (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Figure A A.2. Share of second-career teachers with five or fewer years of experience completing their first teaching qualification in a fast-track or specialised programme, by country (TALIS 2024)



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Figure A A.3. Age of Flemish students in Initial Teacher Education programmes



Note: Depicted is the percentage of students who are either younger or older than 26 years of age in Flemish bachelor's programmes for primary and secondary education between academic years 2014-2015 and 2023-2024.

Source: Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (2025[148]), Monitor Lerarenopleiding (Teacher Training Monitor), Workbook: Monitor lerarenopleiding (extern) (accessed on 29 January 2026)

Table A A.1. Pathways for second-career teachers to become fully qualified

	(a) There are established pathways for second-career teachers to obtain required qualifications and become fully qualified.	(b) Second-career teachers must follow the same qualification process as other teacher candidates if they want to be fully qualified.	(c) Both
	14 countries and other economies	12 countries and other economies	2 countries and other economies
OECD countries	Australia, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland	Costa Rica, Estonia, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye	Denmark
Other economies	Flemish Community (Belgium)	England, French Community (Belgium)	
Partner and/or accession countries	Argentina, Bulgaria	Romania	Brazil

Note: Existence of alternative pathways for second-career teachers, OECD and partner countries and other economies
Source: OECD (2025[11]), *Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en.

Table A A.2. First- and second-career teachers' reported teaching self-efficacy (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers reporting they can do the given teaching practice "quite a lot" or "a lot".

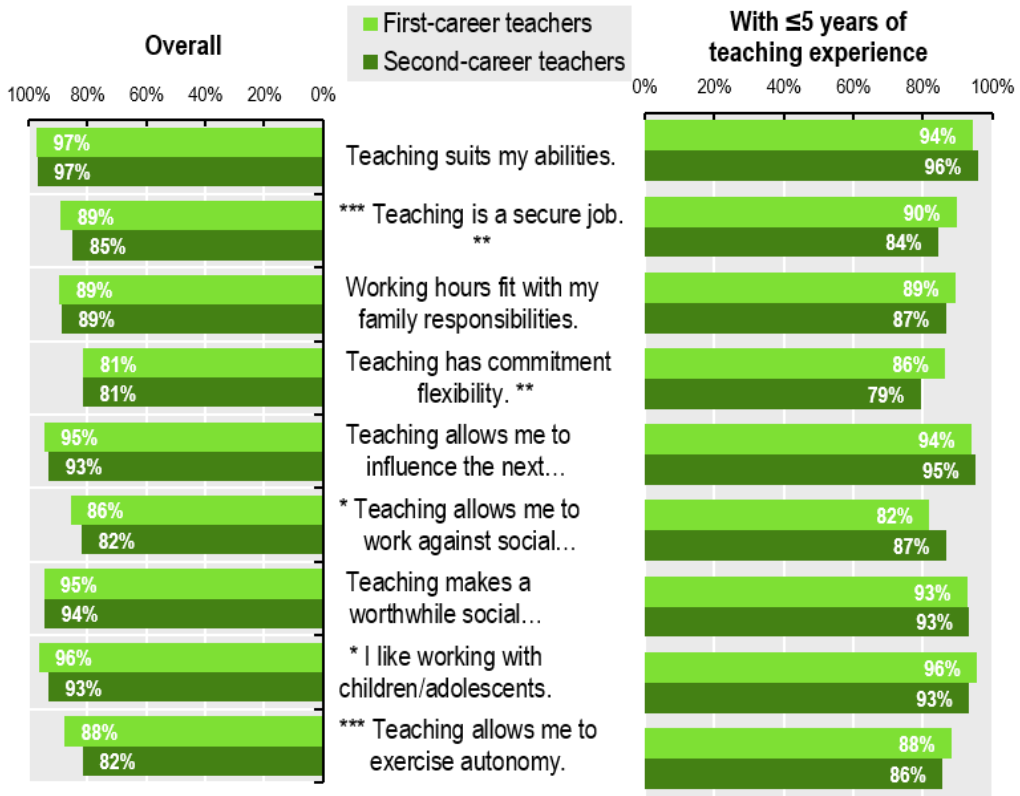
	Overall			With ≤5 years of teaching experience		
Teaching practices	First-career teachers	Second-career teachers	Sign.	First-career teachers	Second-career teachers	Sign.
Get students to believe they can do well in school	81%	84%	**	81%	79%	
Help students value learning	75%	78%		74%	72%	
Craft good questions for students	85%	84%		83%	82%	
Control disruptive behaviour in the classroom	82%	79%	**	74%	70%	
Motivate students who show low interest in school	64%	59%	*	62%	55%	*
Make my expectations about student behaviour clear	89%	89%		88%	85%	
Help students think critically	79%	82%		80%	75%	
Get students to follow classroom rules	87%	84%	**	83%	76%	**
Calm a student who is disruptive or noisy	80%	77%	**	76%	67%	**
Use a variety of assessment strategies	78%	80%		74%	74%	
Provide an alternative explanation	91%	95%	***	89%	92%	

Teaching practices	Overall			With ≤5 years of teaching experience		
	First-career teachers	Second-career teachers	Sign.	First-career teachers	Second-career teachers	Sign.
Vary instructional strategies in my classroom	84%	86%		79%	83%	*
Support student learning through digital resources	72%	76%	*	74%	73%	
Help every student progress	80%	81%		82%	76%	*
Reduce achievement gaps among students	59%	58%		57%	50%	*
Support students' social and emotional learning	71%	73%		72%	70%	

Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Figure A A.4. Given importance of first- and second-career teachers' to teaching factors (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers reporting the following factors of teaching as "of moderate" or "of high importance".

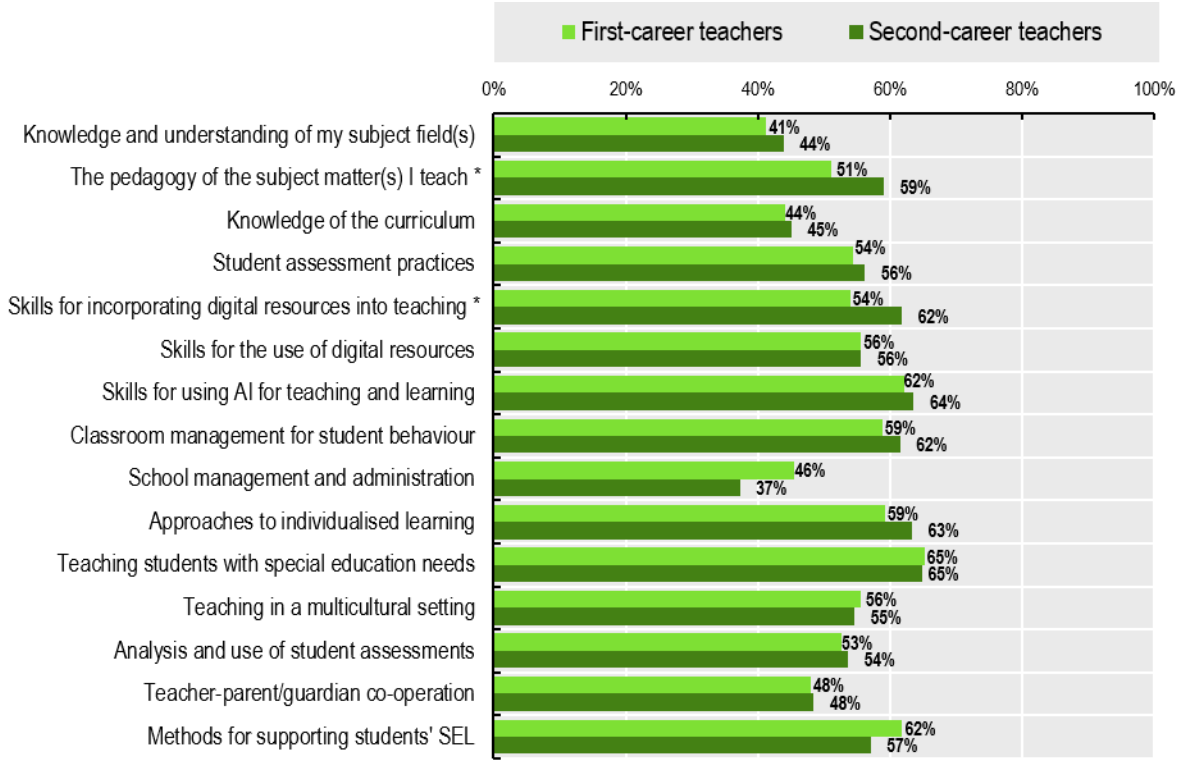


Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.

Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Figure A A.5. Professional learning needs of first- and second-career teachers with five or fewer years of experience (TALIS 2024)

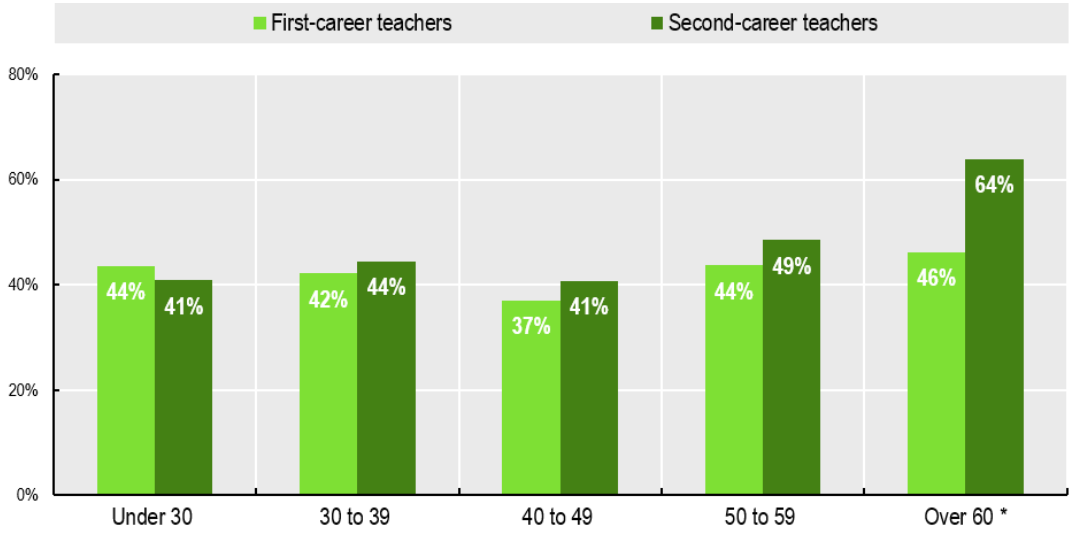
Share of first- and second-career teachers with five or fewer years of experience that reported needing professional learning at a moderate or high level on the following teaching areas.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. '**' indicates differences significant at 5%. '***' indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).

Figure A A.6. Personal or family reasons as attrition factor for first- and second-career teachers (TALIS 2024)

Share of first- and second-career teachers reporting “Personal or family reasons” as a “likely” or “very likely” factor to cause them to leave teaching in the next five years, by range of age.



Note: Second-career teachers are defined here as those who reported having at least five years of work experience in non-teaching roles, for whom teaching was not a first career choice. Only OECD education systems are included. ‘**’ indicates differences significant at 5%. ‘***’ indicates differences significant at 1%.
Source: OECD (2025[51]), TALIS 2024 Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/talis-2024-database.html (accessed on 20 June 2026).

Annex B. Examples of SCT training programmes in OECD countries

The following table demonstrates some examples of alternative programmes and scholarships specifically designed for SCTs. The overview is not meant to serve as exhaustive, nor does it intend to highlight programmes considered 'good'. The table merely serves as to indicate that a significant portion of OECD countries have training programmes specifically focusing on SCTs.

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
Austria	*Quereinstieg* (HLG) – lateral entry (secondary education) Möglichkeiten für einen Quereinstieg in den Beruf als Lehrerin bzw. Lehrer	Employed by school; part-time pedagogical programme at University of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*); aptitude screening; complete the certification programme within up to 8 years; mainly for shortage subjects.	Between 1.5 and 3 years of relevant professional experience (for which candidates can provide proof).	Full time	Part time	Varies (salary as employee; study may be self-funded)
Belgium (Flemish Community)	LIO – *Leraar in Opleiding* (work-and-study) Leraar in opleiding (LIO) - voor onderwijspersoneel en directies | Vlaanderen.be	School employs candidate: school and provider share practicum; mentoring; leads to Qualified Teacher Status-equivalent with degree.	Relevant degree (no fixed years).	Both possible	Both possible	Salary as employee + salary scale calculated on the candidate
Denmark	Merit Teacher Education Programme Teacher Education in Denmark | Springer Nature Link Initial education for teachers working in early childhood and school education Meritlæreruddannelsen | Professionshøjskolen Absalon Meritlærer - Københavns Professionshøjskole	Self-financed training course. Duration individually planned (between 2-4 years). Between 135 and 150 ECTS with mandatory 20 ECTS internship (90 ECTS shorter than traditional ITE): 4 hours/week of teaching per subject. Individual education plan prepared after admission. Possible options of either full-time studies (2 years) or part-time studies (4 years) compatible with another job. The programme needs to be finished within 6 years maximum. Option of day, evening or online classes. Previous teaching experience (at least 1 year teaching full-time in the subject of study) can be recognised as internship ECTS (20 ECTS required of internship).	Whether having completed a bachelor, master or professional bachelor's degree, or having completed a Vocational and Educational Training and having at least 2 years of relevant professional experience (in the field of Merit Teacher Education Programme) or 4 years of general work experience.	Both possible	Both possible	Grants available for a contribution up to 10 000 DKK. Possible to apply to State Adult Education Support

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
France	*Troisième concours* for professional reorientation Troisième concours | Institut national du service public | INSP Les épreuves des concours de recrutement d'enseignants des collèges et lycées | devenirenseignant.gouv.fr	Separate competitive exam track for professionals (≥5 years of professional experience). Preparation for exam can be done autonomously but also French Inspectorate courses are available. Possible validation of acquired experience (*validation des acquis de l'expérience* - VAE) or validation of professional expertise (*validation des acquis professionnels 85* - VAP 85). One year of university training and paid part-time internship.	For « *troisième concours* » ≥5 years of professional experience.	Part-time (*alternance*)	Part-time	Salary as intern working part-time or subsidies available for professionals
Germany (Berlin)	*Quereinstieg in den Lehrerberuf* - Lateral entry into teaching Quereinstieg in den Lehrerberuf - Berlin.de Studienzentrum für Erziehung, Pädagogik und Schule (StEPS) - Berlin.de	Candidates can enrol in the programme only if there is shortage in the subject they want to teach, and a school needs to select them for permanent employment. Before entering part-time training: 7-day format of basic modules of initial orientation (e.g. school law and basic didactic principles). Then two months support in classes and feedback offered. 12 courses are provided on the topics of the initial basic modules, deepening/tailoring them based on participant needs and teaching experience. After that, access to preparatory service: it lasts 18 months with teaching commitment of 17 hours/week. Practical seminars in schools are part of the programme. Finally, pass state examination.	Unspecified the requirement (no minimum years).	Part-time (17 hours/week for 18 months)	Part-time	Salary of 1 500 EURupon entering teacher training

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
Germany (Free State of Saxony, Freistaat Sachsen)	Dresden University Part-time qualification for Teachers Die wissenschaftliche Ausbildung in der berufsbegleitenden Qualifizierung von Lehrkräften (BQL) — Center for Teacher Education and Educational Research — TU Dresden	Technical Univeristy (*Technicshe Universität*, TU) Dresden contributes to the professional development of teaching staff in the Free State of Saxony through second-career scientific training programs. Programs focus on equipping participants with subject-specific knowledge, pedagogical skills, and didactic competencies tailored to their chosen discipline or to elementary school education. The two-year continuing education program runs concurrently with participants' teaching duties at their respective schools. Instruction is delivered on two full weekdays at TU Dresden and, except for elementary school programs, follows the university's semester schedule.	Depends on chosen direction.	Part-time	Both possible	No tuition fees, salaried for days working in schools
Israel	New Direction *(Kivun H'adash)* – Ministry initiated during COVID-19 The Effect of COVID-19 on a Short-Term Teacher-Education Program: The Israeli Case	13 weeks intensive online training + practical experience gained in the field: internship in the field and one day a week training in the academic institution. At the end of the year conferred a certificate.	Specifically addressed to academics.	Full time	Full time first – then part time	Scholarship and unemployment benefits
Latvia	Mācītspēks Mācītspēks. Otrais gads	Exam to enroll. Two-year part-time studies while employed: study once a week at university. Strong mentoring. Full qualification after the first year.	Unspecified the requirement (no minimum years).	Part time (16-21h contract/ week)	Full time	Monthly tuition scholarship
Netherlands	Zij-instroom in beroep (ZIB) Zij-instroom in Beroep (ZiB) - Tweedegraadsleraar - Scholingstraject | HvA	Intake Assessment. If passed, then two-year salaried employment-based route; bespoke training; portfolio and final assessment for full qualification.	Unspecified the requirement (no minimum years).	Full time and Part time	Part-time	Salary as employee; training co-funded eventually
Sweden	Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning (KPU) KPU - kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning	1.5 years programme (3 years part time training). Part time training once a week to become fully-qualified teacher. It is possible to combine it with work activity. Internship mandatory (23 days/semester)	Unspecified the requirement (no minimum years).	Both possible	Both possible	Economical support from fundings if older than 25

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
	Fler ska kunna läsa kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning - Regeringen.se					
Switzerland	Quereinstieg / Zürich PH 'Quest' (cantonal specific) Changes to EDK regulations Quereinstieg als Lehrerin/Lehrer - EDK Reconversion dans l'enseignement - swissuniversities	Cantonal Universities/authorities run specific training (e.g., PH Zürich Quest – Formation par l'emploi: part time work in schools during the second year of studies) than can be shortened compared to traditional teacher training. Previous expertise can be recognised via validation of acquired experience (*validation des acquis de l'expérience* - VAE).	Must be older than 27 and have 3 years of professional experience.	Full time	Choice of both	Highly specific but cantonal subsidies can be allocated or paid part time leave
United Kingdom	Now Teach NowTeach - Teacher Training as a Second Career	Possible to pursue Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and/or Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Now Teach helps career changers find the best training programme for those who enrol. Possible to study part-time (for example: options of one day/week to train) When qualified with QTS it is possible to enrol for salaried positions and internships in specific subjects are promoted by Teach First. Internship of 3 weeks to gain confidence and insight of what teaching looks like – initiative "visit the school" promoted too.	Career change status needed but no minimum years of experience.	Both options available but necessary QTS to teach	Both options available depending on the needs	If in a course with tuition fee pays, then both scholarship and bursaries funds are available but mainly for teachers that enrol in shortages' impacted subjects
United States	EnCORPS STEM Teachers for middle or high school teachers STEM Teachers Program® | California | EnCorps	Tailored support to understand which credentials the candidate needs to fulfil to be able to teach by a Programme Coordinator: mandatory initial "guest" training for one month. Available residency options. Then internship (volunteer guest) teaching 2h/week for 10 consecutive weeks in one high-needs school, partners with the programme. Online learning resources, annual learning summit (a week-long professional development and networking event). Community of learners supported (other SCTs in STEM). The programme mandates to teach for 3 years in a hard-to-staff school.	STEM industry or education experience (no minimum years).	Part-time internship	Initial full-time – during the year part time	USD 200 travel stipend to go to internship schools – USD 100 fingerprinting fees – USD 50 to support CSET (California Subject Examinations for Teachers) preparation

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
United States	Troops to teachers Troops to Teachers For Service Members | The Official Army Benefits Website Troops to Teachers	Former military personnel need to enroll in a state programme for alternative certifications – individualised counselling available. Candidates should then choose between available traditional or alternative routes of teaching in their State.	Being a former member of the US military (retired or separated).	Depends on the programme chosen	Depends on the programme chosen	Up to USD 5 000 stipend (maximum amount of economic support should not trespass USD 10 000)
United States	Education career switcher program (Virginia) Commitment to Privacy - Virginia Commonwealth University 8VAC20-23-90. Alternate routes to licensure.	Online learning for asynchronous modules once a week for a total of 180h (level I) – then obtain position in a school (level II), monthly check-in with school mentor and monthly seminar sessions.	At least 3 years of full-time professional experience.	Full time on level II	Part time	Not specified – stipend as a teacher on level II
United States	Williams Paterson University – Career and Technical Education Alternate Route Teacher Certification (Online) Career and Technical Education Alternate Route Program | William Paterson University	Self-financed training course. Qualification to teach computer science, health science, and business. 2 years duration and full remote training to obtain Certificate of Eligibility (50h preparation course) and then Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (350h coursework). During the first 50h preparation course a 10h clinical experience is provided through simulations and/or field experiences. Then, while pursuing the Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, a supervisor from the programme visits the novice teacher and provides feedback (during second and fourth semester).	Industry recognised certification, if possible.	After Certificate of Eligibility: full-time novice teacher	Part time	Since not-credit bearing and part-time no federal financial aid

Country	Name of the Programme and Link	Characteristics	Prior professional or work experience needed to enrol	Work part time or full time	Study time allocated	Economical support
Australia	Transition to teaching Scholarship Program (New South Wales) Transition to Teaching Scholarship Program	Scholarships to support career changers are allocated for the studies and then support is provided to apply for Conditional accreditation and commence teaching on a temporary/casual basis after completing the first 6 months of flexible master degree. A permanent position in teaching is provided after the completion of studies. Minimum teaching time required is 2 years in teaching profession after completing the degree.	Minimum of 2 years of professional experience within the last 10 years.	After first 6 months temporal/ casual teaching	The candidate chooses whether part-time or full-time	AUSD 10 000 financial support while studying full-time & AUSD 1 000 per week professional experience allowance (up to AUSD 12 000). Support is allocated also for accessing enhanced Salary Determination Procedures.
New Zealand	Te-Huawiti Career – Changers Scholarship Te Huawhiti Career-Changer Scholarship | Education Workforce	Scholarship specifically offered to career changers to sustain them through their studies to become certified teachers. Different options available to combine training and mandatory time to teach after obtaining diploma. For example: 2 years part-time study for a teaching degree & no allowance – mandatory to teach for 1 year after completing studies, or 1 year of full studies/2 years part time – mandatory to teach for 2 years in the 4 years after completing studies, etc.	At least 7 years of professional or equivalent experience.	Not required by the scholarship and is conceived after reaching full teacher qualification.	The candidate chooses whether part-time or full-time	2 different kinds of scholarship available – fees to study an approved teaching programme & allowance of NZD 30 000/year (limited to maximum 3 years)

Note: All links provided were accessed on 13 October 2025.