

SYMPAB - (15923) - UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS TO TEACH SCIENCE

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Short Abstract

There is a critical shortage of teachers in many European countries, which disproportionately affects the sciences. This is partly due to increasing student numbers and poor teacher retention, but also because not enough new teachers join the profession each year. These shortages pose significant social justice concerns. For example those who teach, and aspire to teach, are likely to identify as female, White, and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Department for Education, 2020); raising questions as to what may be discouraging many others from teaching.

To date, research into science teacher supply has focused almost exclusively on those already teaching, and therefore fails to understand why people choose not to become a science teacher. This study uses mixed methods, including secondary analyses of a national longitudinal dataset of young people's career aspirations in England, to track science teaching aspirations in a cohort from the age of 10 to age 22.

Initial analyses indicate that the discourses of teaching being a 'natural' skill, and suited to traditionally 'feminine' attributes, are juxtaposed with wide-spread views of science, and therefore discourage many young people from wanting to teach science. This is despite the fact that the majority of science students in the sample have experience of working as tutors and reportedly enjoy these experiences.

I use an identity lens, informed by the concept of 'figured worlds' (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), to explore why some young people see themselves as future science teachers, whilst others do not, and why many who aspire to work in science do not consider themselves to 'fit' within figured world of science teaching. This study develops new understandings of science teacher identity development and aspirations, with the hope of informing recommendations for science teacher recruitment.