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The attractiveness of the teaching profession: a integrative literature review

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The widespread shortage of teachers highlights the urgent need to examine the factors influencing the attractiveness of the teaching profession. This issue is driven by high rates of early-career attrition, an ageing workforce, and a decline in candidates entering teacher education programs. Understanding the factors that make the profession appealing—or unappealing—has become essential for ensuring educational quality and equity. An integrative literature review was conducted to identify the key themes related to the attractiveness of the teaching profession, synthesizing evidence from multiple studies and highlighting research gaps. Findings reveal that teaching still attracts candidates driven by intrinsic motivations and social utility. However, external factors such as low salaries, challenging working conditions, and limited career progression remain significant deterrents. The social image of teaching, shaped by media and community perceptions, also influences career choices. The intersection of demographic shifts and educational policy changes highlights the complexity of addressing teacher shortages. Despite increased attention from policymakers, significant gaps remain, particularly in relation to interventions that reduce early-career attrition and support teacher retention. Future research should explore targeted strategies to support early-career teachers and examine the socio-economic factors that influence career decisions. Addressing these issues is critical to developing sustainable policies that enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession and promote educational equity.

KEYWORDS

teaching attractiveness, integrative literature review, teaching profession, recruitment, teacher shortage

1 Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in the teaching and learning process, so concerns about growing teacher shortages on the global stage (Viac and Fraser, 2020; Eurydice, 2022) have been high on many countries' policy agendas and in the field of research. Underlying this shortage are two central factors: the departure of teachers from the profession, either at an early age (Sutcher et al., 2019) or through the phenomenon of an ageing teaching workforce (Monteiro et al., 2020) and the declining number of new candidates interested in the teaching profession, the so-called “vocational crisis in the teaching profession” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021). On the other hand, this shortage of teachers cannot be considered linearly in

different contexts. It can be particularly severe in certain subjects (Schleicher, 2012), in specific geographical areas, and in areas of school segregation (Yang Hansen and Gustafsson, 2016) or pedagogical segregation (Luschei and Chudgar, 2017).

The global shortage of teachers has significant and far-reaching implications for educational systems worldwide, affecting student learning outcomes, educational equity, and overall school quality (OECD, 2022; Federičová, 2021; García and Weiss, 2019). One of the most immediate consequences is the increase in class sizes, as schools are forced to combine classes to manage the shortage (Hanushek et al., 2017). This leads to overcrowded classrooms, severely limiting individualized attention and hindering effective teaching. Research consistently shows that larger class sizes are associated with lower student performance, especially in under-resourced schools, particularly those in low-income and rural areas (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

The shortage also compels schools to rely on underqualified or temporary teachers to fill gaps, undermining education quality. This reliance on less experienced staff further deepens educational inequities, as students in disadvantaged areas often miss instruction from skilled, seasoned teachers (UNESCO, 2022; Adamson and Darling-Hammond, 2012). Moreover, in some cases, students are left without teachers for extended periods in certain subjects, which can severely impact their overall educational development (Flores et al., 2024). Another critical consequence is the increased burnout and demoralization among current teachers. The pressure to cover additional subjects and handle larger classes escalates stress levels, leading to higher attrition rates (Gore et al., 2015).

The problem of teacher shortages is closely linked to the profession's declining attractiveness, particularly evident in the decreasing demand for teacher training programs (European Commission, 2023; See and Gorard, 2019). The European Commission defines the attractiveness of the teaching profession as "a set of characteristics of this profession that make it relatively attractive to skilled candidates concerning other professions requiring the same level of qualification and that encourage competent teachers to stay in the profession" (European Commission, 2013, p. 13). Although the meaning of attractiveness is not consensual, as far as the teaching profession is concerned, it can be understood from its consequences (shortage or oversupply of teachers) and from considering factors that should determine it (working conditions, social status of the profession). The studies dealing with the attractiveness of the teaching profession focus predominantly on issues such as: (1) the motivations of students who want to become teachers, (2) the opinion of various categories of the population regarding the profession, (3) the opinion of the teachers themselves about their profession and (4) its evolution, government measures to encourage entry and retention in the profession. This study defines *attractiveness* as a combination of these factors: motivations for entry into teaching, public and personal perceptions of the profession, and policy measures to increase recruitment and retention.

Recruitment and retention are central to understanding the scope of teacher shortages. Recruitment refers to attracting new candidates into the profession, while retention focuses on preventing existing teachers from leaving (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Research shows that teacher quality directly affects student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Consequently, a stable and qualified teaching workforce is essential for maintaining and improving the quality of education. Many countries are grappling

with persistent teacher shortages, exacerbated by challenges in recruiting and retaining talented individuals (Ingersoll, 2001; OECD, 2005). Understanding the teaching profession's attractiveness is essential for addressing these shortages and ensuring educational systems have access to committed, capable teachers.

At the interface of the problem of the teacher shortage, which is not new but has worsened in recent years (Sutchter et al., 2019) and the issues of teacher attractiveness, this study aims to:

- (a) map (temporally and geographically) the studies on the attractiveness of the teaching profession;
- (b) identify the central themes addressed in the studies analysed;
- (c) present the main results of the studies;
- (d) identify missing themes, which could be the focus of future studies.

2 Methods

From the scenario presented above regarding the ageing of the teaching workforce, the drop-out rates from the profession and its attractiveness, it becomes urgent the debate towards the need for teachers' renewal which, in turn, involves issues regarding the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Previous reviews such as those by Heinz (2015), See et al. (2022), and Gore et al. (2015) have extensively examined the motivations and career aspirations of student teachers. Our integrative systematic review differentiates itself by focusing on the broader concept of 'attractiveness' within the teaching profession. Therefore, this working paper aims to conduct a survey and analysis of studies that discuss the attractiveness of the teaching profession through an integrative systematic review approach (Boland et al., 2014).

We conduct an integrative literature review (Russell, 2005) to gather and synthesise the results of research on the topic in a systematic and ordered way, thus contributing to deepening its knowledge. It is called integrative because it provides broader information on the researched topic, thus constituting a body of knowledge (Cronin and George, 2023).

This methodology ensures that the data collected are reliable and relevant to the study field (Ten Ham-Baloyi and Jordan, 2016), avoiding the inherent bias found in the traditional literature review. It begins with a predefined strategy used to identify, select, evaluate and synthesise relevant literature, which later draws a conclusion or addresses the research questions with concrete evidence (Boland et al., 2014). The following sub-sections explain the review details.

2.1 Data collection and analysis procedure

For the review in question, the following keywords were searched in the Web of Science and Scopus databases between 1 September and 31 October, 2022:

- Attractiveness AND Teaching OR teacher education OR teacher training;
- Recruitment AND Teaching profession OR teacher education OR teacher training.

The choice of Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) as databases for identifying studies on the attractiveness of the teaching profession was carefully considered and well-justified. Although the use of these databases may result in the omission of some relevant articles, they are widely recognized for their extensive international indexing and inclusion of peer-reviewed articles, making them among the most comprehensive data sources for a wide range of academic purposes (Pranckutė, 2021). Moreover, these databases provide sophisticated search and filtering capabilities that support a systematic approach to literature reviews, especially in evidence synthesis, due to their high level of precision, recall, and reproducibility in search outcomes (Gusenbauer and Haddaway, 2020). These features enable researchers to construct complex queries within a structured search environment, enhancing the robustness of systematic review processes (Martín-Martín et al., 2021).

Regarding the definition of keywords, the initial search focused solely on the combination of “Attractiveness AND Teaching OR teacher education OR teacher training,” which yielded a limited number of articles. A preliminary review of the materials retrieved revealed that discussions of attractiveness were often linked to recruitment issues. This finding led to the decision to expand the search by adding the keywords “Recruitment AND Teaching profession OR teacher education OR teacher training.”

2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Boland et al., 2014), identified articles were subject to a few principles. They should be published between 2011 and Agosto de, 2022 and written in Portuguese, English, Spanish, or French. The review excluded materials concerning books, book chapters, procedures, opinion letters, or similar. At the same time, they needed to belong to the “Education educational research” category (in the WoS database) and the “Social Science” subject area (in the Scopus database). WoS and Scopus categorize research articles differently due to variations in their indexing systems and subject classification structures. WoS has a specific category called “Education educational research,” which narrowly focuses on studies directly related to education and research in educational practices, theories, and policies. In contrast, Scopus has broader subject areas, and “Social Science” was selected because it encompasses a range of fields related to education, including sociology, psychology, and other disciplines that intersect with educational research.

The documents selected for the review cumulatively met the following inclusion criteria:

Criteria 1. Alignment with the thematic scope. This criterion was set to keep the review highly focused, seeking that all articles selected could provide insights directly related to the central research question—the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Criteria 2. Empirical basis or policy analysis is aimed at the attractiveness of the teaching profession. This focus on empirical evidence and policy-oriented work ensured that the review draws on data-driven insights, avoiding purely theoretical discussions.

Criteria 3. Provision of detailed information. To facilitate a rigorous synthesis of findings, the selected studies must provide substantial details regarding their methodology, results, and conclusions. This criterion strengthens the reliability of the review by ensuring that only studies with clear and comprehensive information are included. The objective was not to evaluate the studies’ quality but to ensure they contained sufficient information for meaningful analysis.

From the application of these criteria, 528 articles were exported to Endnote. After the elimination of duplicate articles (n. 249), and in order to identify the relevant studies, all of them (n. 279) were submitted to a screening process in which we read all abstracts generated from the searches to infer if the studies were genuinely related to the scope of the research problem. This process was carried out by two of the article’s authors, and whenever doubts arose as to the inclusion/exclusion of any article, the reading was carried out by one of the other two authors. Based on the established criteria, 248 articles were excluded under Criterion 1, which includes studies focused on the attractiveness of other professions and vocational education and training (VET); focused on digital and social issues, the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching practices, career abandonment, early career stages, school management, and subject-specific topics. An additional 12 articles were excluded under Criterion 3, as they needed more comprehensive information on methodology, results, and conclusions. No exclusions were made under Criterion 2 (see Table 1).

At the end of this first screening, we could count on 30 articles that were retrieved to screen the full text. The studies were double-checked about the eligibility of the inclusion criteria, and 11 articles were identified that were not directly related to the problem of this review. Although these 11 articles addressed teacher recruitment, they focused exclusively on recruitment processes without discussing the profession’s attractiveness. Consequently, 19 articles met all criteria and were selected for this literature review.

2.3 Data extraction

The 19 selected articles (according to Appendix 1) were exported to Nvivo for the analysis process. The data were categorized deductively, guided by the study’s research objectives, resulting in the following categories: (1) Temporal Analysis of Studies on Teacher Attractiveness, (2) Geographical Distribution of Reviewed Studies, (3) Core Themes in Teacher Attractiveness, (4) Key Findings from Analyzed Studies, and (5) Literature Gaps and Directions for Future Research. The first two categories (outlined in Section 3.1) were defined *a priori*, focusing on mapping relevant publications’ temporal and geographical distribution. In contrast, categories 3 and 4 (covered in Section 3.2) were also initially constructed deductively to align with the goals of identifying core themes and synthesizing the main findings of the studies analyzed. However, during the data analysis process, inductive subcategories emerged within these categories, allowing for a more detailed grouping of specific themes and findings.

The relatively small number of studies included in the final analysis resulted from rigorously applying the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This methodological decision was made to enhance the precision and relevance of the review, enabling a focused examination of factors directly related to the attractiveness of the

TABLE 1 Number of articles excluded based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Articles identified—528 exclusion criteria	No of articles excluded after abstract reading	No of articles excluded after a complete reading of the article
Duplicate articles	249	-
Criteria 1—Alignment with the thematic scope		
Higher education—other courses	90	-
Vocational education and training (VET)	11	-
Digital Issues	21	-
Social issues	14	-
Teaching practices	27	-
Covid	04	-
Leaving the profession	14	-
Starting a career	08	-
School management	02	-
Subject-specific issues	46	-
Teacher recruitment	-	11
Criteria 2—Theoretical discussions		
-	-	-
Criteria 3—Provision of detailed information		
Insufficient information	12	-
Total of excluded articles		
	498	11
Selected articles		
	30	19

teaching profession. While this selective approach was essential for preserving the analytical integrity of the review, it simultaneously highlights a gap in the existing body of research on this topic. This finding aligns with concerns raised by scholars such as Sutchter et al. (2019), who emphasize the need for further empirical studies addressed to minimize the challenge of increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession (see Figure 1).

3 Results

3.1 Mapping the studies on the attractiveness of the teaching profession—geographical and time trends

Concerning the geographical context, we consider the countries where the studies were conducted (participants and data collection). Table 2 shows the distribution of the articles analysed by countries. Brazil is where the most significant number of studies originated, followed by the United States and England. In one of the articles (#8), the context investigated was not restricted to one country but to the European continent. In this sense, in terms of continents, the studies carried out in the European continent prevail (10 articles), followed by the American continent (7 articles). However, we cannot fail to consider the specificities of the different divisions of the continents, such as, for example, Latin and North America and Eastern and Oriental Europe.

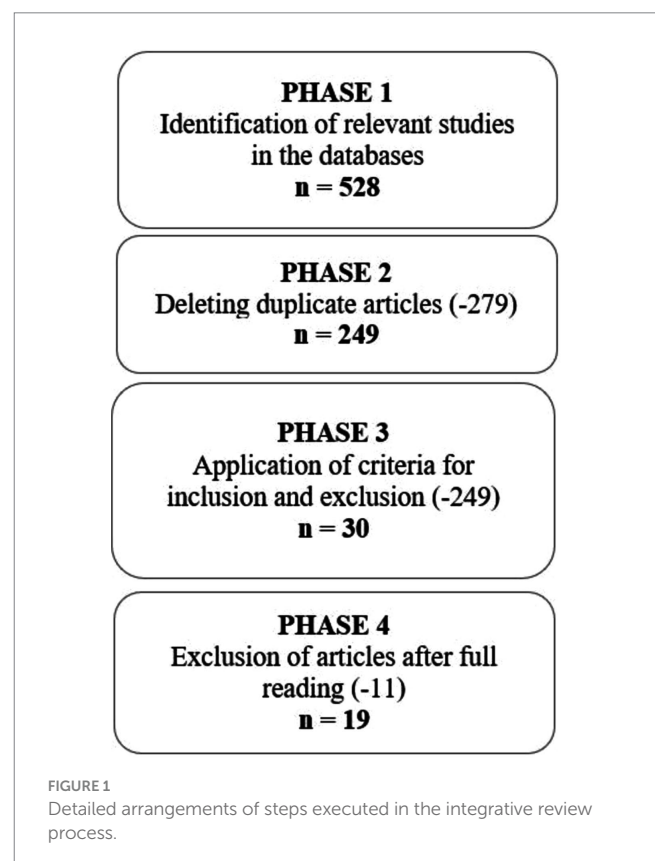
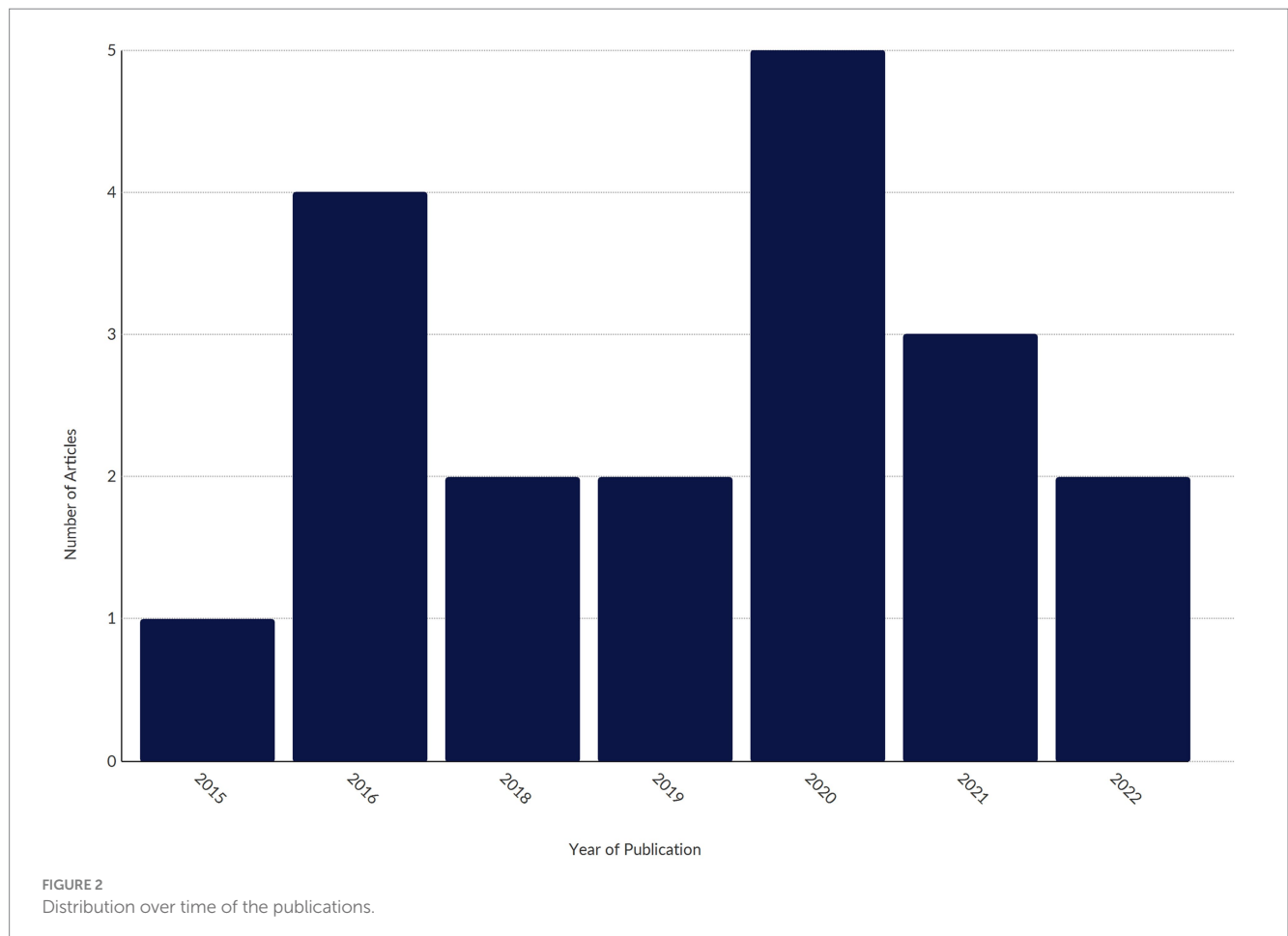


TABLE 2 Contexts where the studies were conducted.

Context		Article	Year of publication
Continent	Country		
	England	#11	2021
		#19	2020
	Norway	#16	2018
	France	#18	2016
	Serbia	#14	2019
Europe 10 studies	Finland	#13	2021
	Sweden	#1	2021
	Spain	#15	2022
	Russia	#2	2016
	Different countries at the same time	#8	2020
America 7 studies	Brazil	#3	2016
		#4	2019
	USA	#6	2020
		#12	2020
		#10	2020
	Chile	#17	2015
		#5	2022
Oceania 1 study	Australia	#9	2016
Africa 1 study	South Africa	#7	2018



While teacher shortages are a global issue, their manifestations vary across regions. For example, Brazil and the USA have long struggled with shortages in rural and underserved urban areas. Northern European countries like Sweden and Finland have recently begun exploring factors related to teacher attractiveness in response to emerging shortages (OECD, 2022; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021). This disparity highlights how the urgency and focus of research can differ depending on the local educational challenges and policy priorities.

The data on the temporal distribution of publications (Figure 2) shows that, throughout the 6 years analysed, there were always studies on the theme in reference. Since the first identified study was published in 2015, there have been at least two publications per year uninterruptedly. There has been a surge in publications in specific years, such as 2020 (5 studies), 2016 (4 studies), and 2021 (3 studies), likely reflecting increased global concern over teacher shortages exacerbated by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in educational policies (OECD, 2022; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021).

By examining the intersection of temporal and geographical data, we observed that early research (2015–2019) primarily focused on the USA, France, Russia, and Brazil, with later studies (2020–2022) expanding to include countries like England, Finland, Spain, and Chile. This temporal shift suggests that while countries like Brazil and the USA have maintained consistent interest in understanding the attractiveness of teaching, Northern Europe has only recently intensified its focus on this issue. Research on attractiveness factors has been published simultaneously as concerns about the growing teacher shortage are becoming more pressing through international reports such as OECD (2022), European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2021), Eurydice (2022), EACEA and European Commission.

It is evident from the temporal and geographical distribution that research on the attractiveness of the teaching profession aligns with policy concerns about teacher shortages. The convergence of research efforts and policy actions is particularly noticeable in countries where shortages have reached critical levels (Sutcher et al., 2019).

Regarding the concept of attractiveness, it is essential to clarify that while the term is widely used in recent literature, related issues such as job satisfaction, teacher motivation, and career retention have been studied under different terminologies in previous decades (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This broader historical context suggests that the concept of attractiveness, while evolving, has long been central to understanding teacher recruitment and retention dynamics.

3.2 Central themes

The analysis of the 19 articles allowed us to identify, inductively, three thematic axes in the studies:

- (i) the motivations for entering the teaching profession;
- (ii) the motivations for not entering the profession;
- (iii) the quality of the candidates who intend to enter the teaching career.

The identification process involved examining the focus of each article, coding the content, and categorizing the recurring topics into thematic axes.

These themes have an uneven relevance: the first two are central in almost all articles. The third theme appears in three articles as a

central theme and in many articles in a peripheral way, being less expressive as an object of study in the articles considered.

Most of the articles concentrated on empirical data collected from initial teacher education (ITE) students (#2, #3, #6, #7, #13, #14, #15, #17, #18) and secondary school students (#5, #9, #10, #16). A smaller subset of studies focused on analyzing policy documents and legal frameworks (#1, #4, #8, #11, #12, #19).

Several studies utilized the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice scale (#5, #7, #10, #14, #15, #16), which provided a structured framework for examining motivations related to entering the teaching profession. This tool allowed for consistent data categorization across studies, facilitating comparisons. Meanwhile, other studies involving ITE students (#6, #17, #18) and policy analysis (#1, #4, #8, #11, #12, #19) adopted other analytical approaches tailored to their research questions.

Regarding this first thematic axis, eight studies identified key characteristics that attract prospective teachers. These included studies focused on university students in initial teacher training (#6, #7, #14, #15, #17, #18) and those exploring the perspectives of secondary school students (#5, #16). Additionally, one study based on document analysis (#11) provided insights into policy-driven factors that influence the choice of teaching as a career. Table 3 summarizes the primary motivating factors identified in these studies, such as intrinsic motivations (e.g., a desire to make a social impact) and extrinsic factors (e.g., job stability and benefits).

The second thematic axis focuses on the barriers and disincentives that deter individuals from choosing a teaching career. Seven studies examined these deterrents based on empirical data collected from initial teacher education students or through policy and document analysis (#6, #12, #19). Factors identified include concerns about low salaries, high workloads, lack of professional autonomy, and the perceived decline in the social status of teachers. For example, study #12 highlights that secondary school students perceive teaching as a less prestigious and financially rewarding career than other professions, discouraging them from considering it a viable option. The specific demotivating factors are summarized in Table 4.

In the field of the third thematic axis—the quality of candidates who intend to enter the teaching career—three studies discuss the issue. Alatalo et al. (2021), and Han and Borgonovi (2020) show that the academic performance of students who go on to the teaching profession is lower: it has either suffered decreases over the last few years (#1) or is lower compared to those who tend to choose other professions (#10). The study by Gore et al. (2016), in turn, problematises recruitment policies focused on attracting the ‘best’ candidates; they do so because the choice of profession is not linked to performance but to intrinsic motivations.

TABLE 3 Factors motivating choice/entry into the teaching profession.

Motivation factors	Authors
Intrinsic motivations	#5, #6, #7, #14, #15, #16
Social utility (altruistic motivations)	#7, #11 #14, #16
Self-perception of teaching ability	#5, #7, #14, #15, #16
Influence of others (family, friends, teachers, positive role models, school experiences and the mass media)	#14, #15, #17, #18
Personal usefulness (extrinsic motivations)	#7, #11, #16, #17
Teaching as a fallback career	#6

TABLE 4 Factors for not choosing/entering the teaching profession.

Demotivation factors	Authors
Personal utility (or extrinsic motivations)	#2, #3, #4, #8, #12, #13
Influence of others (family, friends, teachers, negative role models, school experiences and the mass media)	#2, #8, #13
Profession demands	#8, #13
Admission—initial training or profession	#13, #19

4 Discussion

The widespread and significant shortage of teachers, which the OECD presents as factual, makes the (non-)attractiveness of the teaching profession an object of unequivocal interest, not only because of the problems it raises but also because of its consequences. The early abandonment of the teaching profession, the ageing of the teaching workforce, and the significant decrease in candidates for the profession make it urgent to investigate the profession's attractiveness.

The analysis of the temporal distribution of publications reveals a consistent interest in teaching attractiveness over the past 6 years, with at least two studies published annually since 2015. Notable increases were observed in 2016, 2020, and 2021, indicating heightened research activity in response to global concerns about teacher shortages.

Geographically, earlier studies were concentrated in countries like the USA, France, and Brazil, with a recent shift towards Northern Europe, including England, Finland, and Sweden, between 2020 and 2022. Brazil and the USA have shown sustained research interest over time, while Northern European countries have more recently begun focusing on this issue.

The geographical transversality of the phenomenon is also perceived from the link between the debate about the attractiveness of the teaching profession and the shortage of teachers mentioned in all the countries that originated the articles analysed. Although most of these articles come from European Union countries, the realities of other countries are represented and show similar characteristics. While it is true that the problem is complex due to the nature of the reasons that justify such a situation, we must recognise its transversality in that it affects several countries in the same way.

While teacher shortages are not a new problem, it is clear that they have worsened in recent years (Sutcher et al., 2019), with consequences affecting the quality of education. Demographic factors (increasing student numbers, ageing teaching profession), types of shortages linked to specific subject areas and access to remote geographical locations, decreasing enrolment and retention rates of students in teacher training courses and the less favourable working conditions and low social status of the teaching profession, are cross-cutting factors that make the “teacher vocational crisis” persist (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021).

The data reveal different perspectives of attractiveness analysis, possibly associated with country-specific concerns. When the research takes initial teacher education courses as the reference context, it can be seen that: the studies in the Russian,

Chilean, English and Finnish contexts are linked to concerns about decreasing demand for initial teacher education courses (#2, #5, #11, #13); in the articles produced from data from Sweden, Spain, Chile, Australia and South Africa (#1, #5, #7, #9, #15), the concerns relate to the quality of candidates accessing ITE and the consequent implications for the quality of teaching; in the Brazilian context, one of the studies conducted (#3) indicates that although the demand for ITE courses remains stable, most newly qualified teachers choose to follow other professions; in the Brazilian, English, Finnish, Serbian, Norwegian and United States contexts (#6, #11, #13, #14, #16, #17), the shortage of teachers in specific subject areas and/or due to geographical constraints; in Norway and also in at least 23 other countries that participated in TALIS in 2018 (#8, #16), the reality referred to is the ageing of the teaching staff and the consequent departure from the profession of a large number of teachers.

One of the similarities in these studies, regardless of the investigative context, concerns the motivations for entering the profession. The analysis of the results of these studies showed that the predominant motivational factors in choosing the teaching profession are intrinsic and social utility factors. In other words, the choice of the teaching profession is motivated by the pleasure and satisfaction expected to be derived from the teaching activity. It is a choice not dependent on external rewards and configured as a prototype of self-determination (Deci et al., 1991). The motivation factor related to social utility, also referred to by other authors (Wang et al., 2024) as altruistic motivation (Brookhart and Freeman, 1992) and strongly related to intrinsic motivations (Gore et al., 2015), concerns wanting to contribute to children's development, the desire to teach or help others, a moral obligation to their community (Muñoz et al., 2022). In this set of articles, a few studies (#5, #15, #18) address and discuss socio-demographic factors' influence on the teaching profession's choice. This finding is in line with the criticism by Gore et al. (2015) regarding the low number of studies that discuss the relationship between demographic characteristics and the choice of the teaching profession.

The studies focusing on the reasons for not entering the profession are related to external factors, namely personal utility. The profession's low social status, precarious working conditions and remuneration are transversal to the results of the studies analysed. In the case of influences from others, the profession's image conveyed in the media is relevant. Issues related to admission to initial training and the profession are relevant in two studies (#13, #18). Working conditions, low pay and the low social status of the profession are also referred to as causes of a “crisis of attractiveness for teachers” (#18) present in Brazil, the United States, Russia, Serbia and France (#2, #4, #12, #14, #17, #18, #19).

Different investigations corroborate the idea that the ranking in recruitment to teacher training has undergone a marked decline, driving the problematisation of the quality of these future educators in the relationship that can subsequently be established with the quality of what they teach.

Moreover, although the issue of context may present some variables, the truth is that we can affirm the many faces of the same reality that the teaching profession acquires in terms of attractiveness: sometimes it is presented as an alternative when

this means second choice, sometimes it is presented as a guarantee for entry into the labour market due to the low demand that exists; in parallel to this scenario we recognise the low social status, with the consequences that derive from it, the poor working conditions and the geographical context, expressed as conditions that inhibit its attractiveness.

When we compare the factors underlying the choice and non-choice of the teaching profession, we can see that there are at least two categories that appear in both situations:

- (1) personal utility (or extrinsic motivations), which underlies both entry and non-entry;
- (2) the category 'influence of others' includes family, friends, teachers, role models (positive or negative), school experiences and mass media.

The media's influence on the teaching profession's choice (or not) is not new. They help to build a pejorative idea of the profession when they present it as an area without value and utility, where we can find those who cannot succeed in other professions. Or when they reproduce an image of the school at the expense of rankings based on the relationship between teaching quality and student results. As such, knowing that extrinsic motivations and the influence of others are decisive for the decision to enter teacher training courses, it is possible to develop educational policies based on the possibility of a positive influence. E.g., the one that motivated teachers can exercise young people at the age of vocational choice based on their positive professional experiences.

On the other hand, the intrinsic motivations category and social utility (altruistic motivations) have a powerful positive influence on those who choose a profession. These factors support the idea that education, and consequently the act of educating, is in itself a noble exercise of putting ourselves at the service of the other as a social being, turning ourselves into transforming agents of the world with the will to be an active part of this teaching-learning process. However, in this intrinsic dimension, we must recognise the lived experience as students and even the representations each has about their abilities to exercise the profession.

The literature review shows that the teaching profession can still attract followers. However, once the act of education is demanding and has to be of quality, which requires specific skills, the various studies also show the strategies to serve a professional profile adjusted to these demands. However, selection criteria that validate the best skills for the teaching profession neglect the characteristics and positions of more committed, involved, and motivated candidates. Moreover, criteria promoting social and social usefulness continue to devalue the importance of personal characteristics for the teaching profession.

The literature review also pointed out areas where it is possible to intervene to increase the attraction of interested people to the profession, considering their strong influence at the moment of choice. An example is the social image of the school built by the media and families, as already mentioned. However, some teaching profession's dimensions create resistance to its potential attractiveness: the working conditions and counter expectations in career progression.

After identifying the central themes addressed in the studies reviewed, it is possible to detect absent themes that may be the subject of future studies. Among these themes, we may note, for example, the

impact of specific measures in mitigating the abandonment of the profession in the first years of service. We refer to measures such as the follow-up measures in the induction year. Another theme would be the possible link between candidates' socio-demographic or socio-educational profiles for initial teacher training courses and their choices for the profession.

Finally, it would be relevant to know studies similar to those analysed in Portugal even though we can equate the hypothetical similarity of the attractiveness of the teaching career in Portugal with other countries culturally closer, such as Spain. However, a specific study could give substance to measures concerning the definition of new models of initial teacher training or follow-up programmes in the induction year or rebuilding the profession's social image.

5 Limitations of the study

This integrative literature review highlights the critical factors influencing the attractiveness of the teaching profession, emphasizing the need for policies that balance intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. However, the study is limited by its focus on English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French publications, potentially excluding relevant research in other languages. Furthermore, the reliance on indexed databases may have overlooked grey literature that could provide additional insights into the practical implementation of policies.

Future studies should expand the geographical scope and consider exploring the long-term impact of policy interventions on teacher retention and recruitment, particularly in underrepresented regions. Addressing these gaps could significantly contribute to solving the global teacher shortage crisis.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

LT: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SR: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. LJ: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MC: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2024.1380942/full#supplementary-material>

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