



BECOMING A TEACHER: INITIAL TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Public thematic report

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Executive Summary

Pupils' success at school owes a great deal to the quality of the teaching and the support provided by their teachers throughout their learning process. This means that the quality of teacher recruitment and training is crucial for school performance.

As the number of teachers is the highest in the civil service, the complex issues of recruitment and initial training involve mastering processes that are very heavy in volume.

There have been several reforms of recruitment and initial training of future teachers over previous decades. Firstly, the creation of the *Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres* (IUFM) in 1989/1990, with the consequent dissipation of the *écoles normales d'instituteurs*, established the principle of teacher training by universities, and this became even more pronounced after these institutes were integrated into the university framework in 2005. Secondly, the increase, from 2010, in the level of the qualification required, which is now a master's degree - with a few exceptions - has called into question the previous balance between the training and recruitment processes, which until then had followed on from one another.

Since 2010, this new framework has continued to be unstable, despite reforms that have failed to reconcile the sometimes conflicting expectations of those involved, or to ensure that the training satisfactorily prepares students for entering the profession and for their future duties.

These questions are raised in the broader context of the reflection on the development of the teaching profession, on the place of teachers in society and on the practical conditions in which they carry out their duties. The attractiveness crisis that has often been mentioned over the last twenty years, in France as in many OECD countries, is now becoming more tangible, even if many students or people changing careers remain attracted to teaching. However, it requires strong action from the public authorities, at the risk of accepting the already significant deterioration in the quality of recruitment.

Increasingly difficult to recruit, particularly in certain territories and in certain subjects

While the need for teachers depends on student and teacher demographics and educational policy decisions, it is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, over the period 2017-2021, on the basis of positions unfilled by external competitive examinations, as an annual average, there was a shortfall of just over 1,000 teachers (1,110), resulting in the recruitment of non-tenured teachers. In 2022, which was exceptional due to the implementation of the recent reform, around 4,500 new contractual staff were recruited.

¹ This level of qualification is required for the external competitive examination. Exemptions from the requirement to hold a diploma are provided for, in particular for certain categories of profiles (parents of at least three children, high-level sportsmen and women) or for competitive examinations in vocational education.

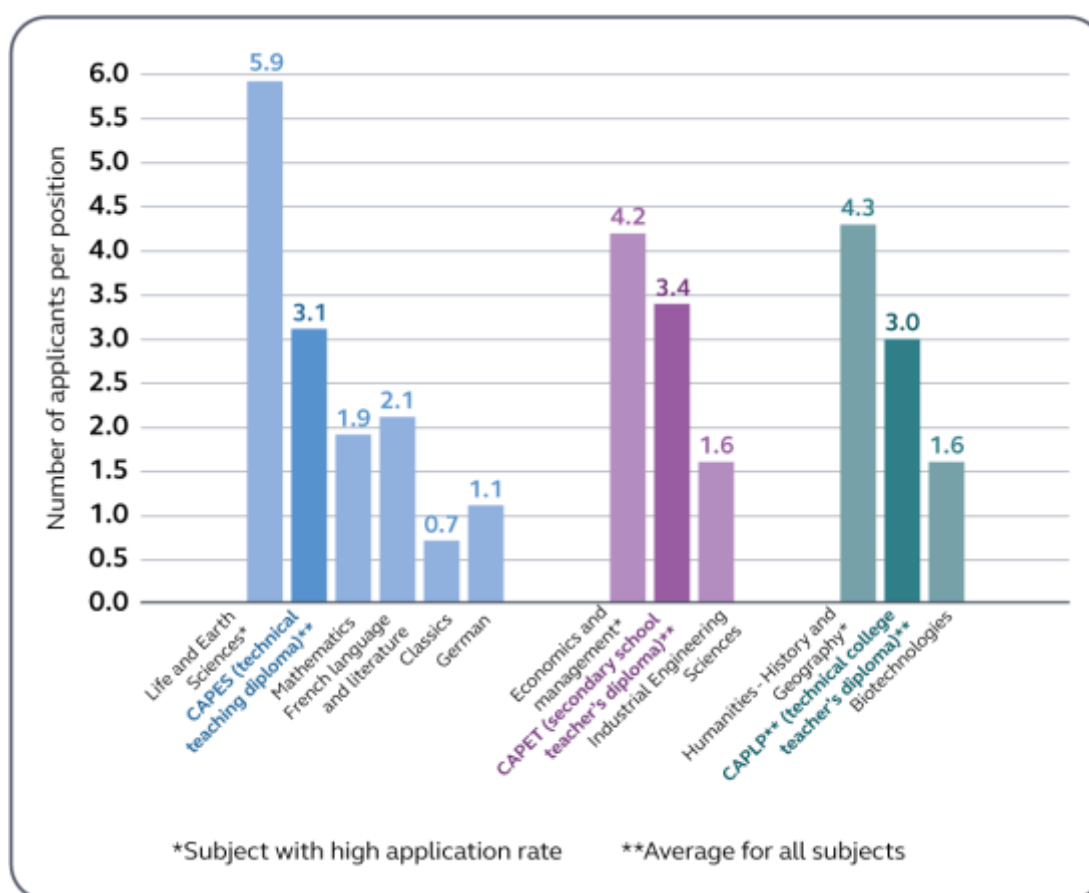
Indeed, there are increasing signs that teacher recruitment is becoming less attractive. However, this general trend needs to be qualified. The two largest education authorities (Créteil and Versailles) are experiencing major recruitment tensions, visible in primary education, for which the competitive examination is organised by each education authority, but also in secondary education; this is reflected in the growing difficulty in finding contractual staff of a satisfactory level and in the high number of first-time assignments of tenured teachers in these education authorities. Furthermore, the grades obtained, even if they can always be put into perspective, in the competitive examination for school teachers in the Créteil and even Versailles education authorities, attest to the worrying weaknesses of many applicants, but also of the successful applicants. Similarly, with low or even very low application rates in some subjects (classics, German, industrial engineering sciences, biotechnology, even mathematics), success rates in competitive examinations are high.

There are many reasons for this loss of attractiveness, some of which are located upstream of the recruitment process, such as the drop in the number of students on certain university courses. However, the deterioration in the image of the teaching profession, its working conditions and remuneration also have a significant impact on its attractiveness, as confirmed by the survey conducted by IPSOS at the request of the Court. The level of remuneration is not a central part of this report - it is indeed one of the factors of disaffection with the profession, but not the only one - nor is the question of the first assignment of new teachers, a subject dealt with by the Court for all civil servants².

In response to these difficulties, the Ministry of Education has developed an active recruitment policy over the past few years, with the aim of diversifying the pool of applicants for competitive examinations, adding specific examinations to the standard ones for less attractive education authorities, and attracting students to teaching at an earlier stage in their studies. It makes greater use of contractual staff, a policy which has its limits, however, since the pool of contractual staff largely overlaps with that of future tenured staff. Recruitment is still based mainly on competitive examinations, which pursue two objectives that are sometimes difficult to reconcile: verifying the acquisition of solid subject skills, as the pool of applicants for competitive examinations has been enlarged; but also, better assessing the teaching ability of future teachers by making certain tests more vocational.

² Court of Accounts, *L'affectation et la mobilité des fonctionnaires de l'État*, thematic public report, July 2019.

Number of applicants per position (2021 session)



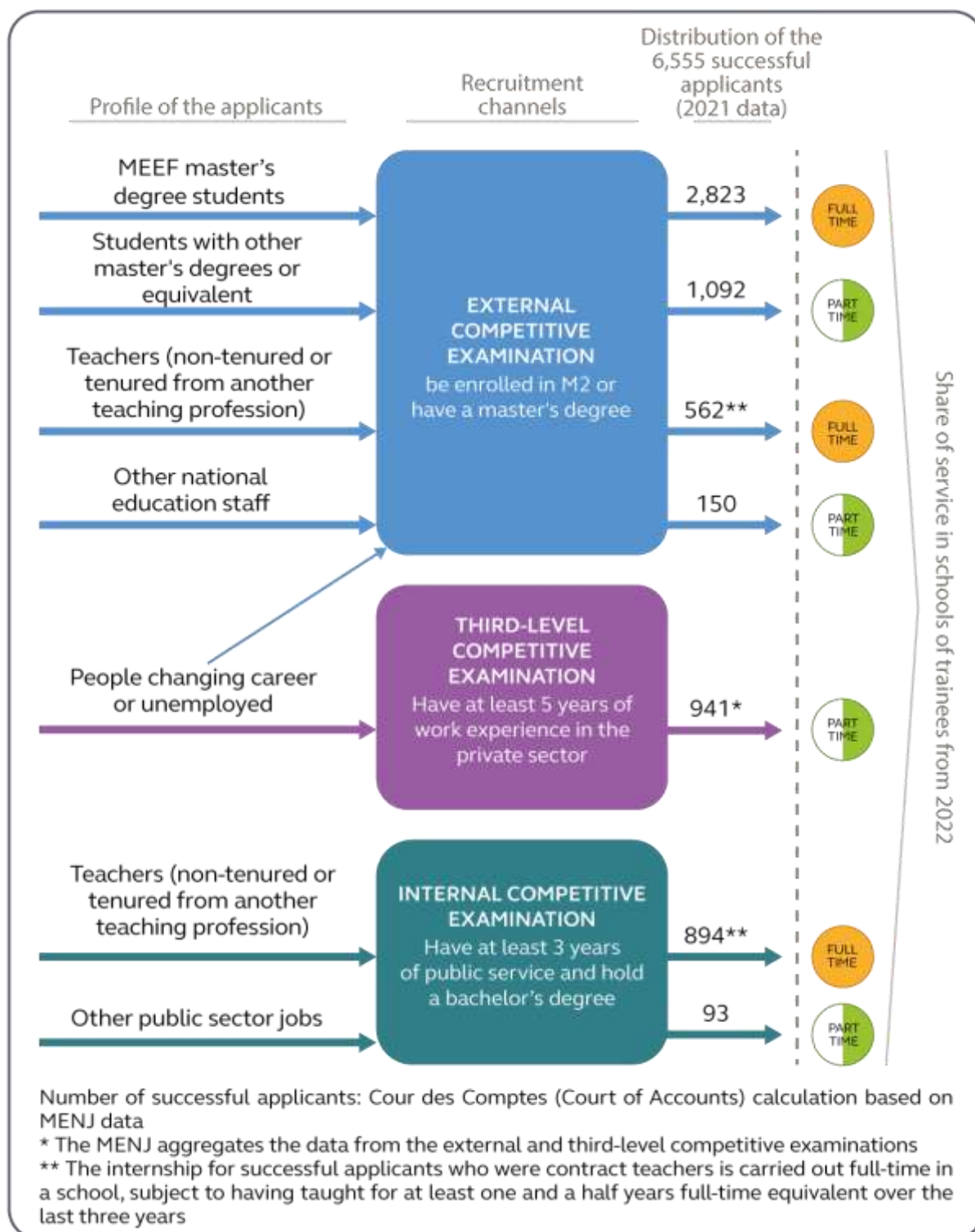
Source: Court of Accounts

The link between initial training and unsatisfactory recruitment levels since introduction of the master's degree, which the 2019 reform has not managed to stabilise

There is currently a debate on the content of training, in relation to the very nature of the teaching profession. The first view emphasises a global approach to the profession, based as much on mastering knowledge of the subject as on a good knowledge of the educational system, pupil psychology, pedagogy and the didactics of subjects. The second approach, while not denying the importance of these skills, places greater emphasis on mastering knowledge of the subject as the basis for teaching.

This tension is particularly evident in secondary education. Moreover, although the introduction of the master's degree, which has brought the training methods of primary school teachers closer to those of secondary school teachers, is no longer really questioned, it has had the mechanical effect of accentuating recruitment difficulties due to having to study longer to become a teacher, which is particularly difficult for the least privileged students, and by reducing the pool of applicants. Moreover, it has not settled the debate on training content. The 2019 reform did not do so either. It has, however, allowed the ministry employing teachers to express its needs, through more prescriptive national models, allowed training to be given by national education teachers at *instituts nationaux supérieurs du professorat et de l'éducation* (INSPE), more vocational competitive examinations in the second year of the master's degree since the 2022 session, and new pre-vocational training methods for students enrolled in the "Teaching, education and training professions" master's degree (MEEF).

Recruitment of teachers by competitive examination: the example of the CAPES (public education)



Source: Court of Accounts

However, even if its implementation suffered from the context of the health crisis, the lack of clarity of the reform led to a certain exhaustion of the those involved. The arbitrations and decisions came late, when the reform was already being deployed on the ground.

The complex position of the INSPEs within universities and the desire of the Ministry of Education to verify the achievements of applicants have led to competitive examinations opening doors to recruitment. The MEEF master's degree therefore has a dual function of training for a future profession and also of preparing for a competitive examination. The pursuit of this dual objective results in an overload of work that is counterproductive for students. Moreover, this is the first time that students who choose to do a work-study contract become a teaching resource, taking over a class for a third of the time, which adds significant organisational difficulties.

The choice of the master's degree (or equivalent diploma) also has consequences for entry into the profession: successful applicants of the competitive examination with a MEEF master's degree become full-time trainee civil servants during their year of tenure and undergo 10 to 20 days of training, whereas other successful applicants, in particular those with a master's degree in a subject/research area, are now "alternating" between part-time service and time spent in training at the INSPE. The consequences of such a choice on the attractiveness of the MEEF master's programme should be assessed.

Finally, the cost of initial teacher training is still not easy to assess, as the Court of Accounts has already pointed out³. It estimates it at around one billion euros. Nor has the cost of the 2019 reform been the subject of a precise or shared assessment by the ministries responsible for national education and higher education respectively, even though it provides the Ministry of Education with new resources, students (on work-study contracts) and full-time trainee civil servants.

Drawing all the consequences of the reforms undertaken to build an effective training and recruitment policy

Beyond the technical improvements of the 2019 reform, a more comprehensive overhaul of the way teachers are trained and recruited is needed.

The Court recommends adjusting the recruitment procedures for education authorities that are struggling to fill teaching positions, or those in secondary education for subjects in short supply. The education authorities could experiment with recruiting on the basis of diplomas, via a multi-year contract (three to five years), during which applicants would commit to remaining in the position. At the end of the period, the teacher could apply for tenure or opt for another career. Recruitment, which would take place at the end of the second year of the master's degree, would be based more on the recognition of the qualification of the diploma, in particular the MEEF master's degree, extended by recruitment interviews with the education authorities. This scheme could also be used for applicants changing profession.

For primary education, the central issue, given that recruitment is already entrusted to the education authorities, is to better develop the training of future school teachers over a five-year continuum. Their curriculum now combines a variety of bachelor's degrees, followed by a master's degree (often MEEF), during which many students undergo a special refresher course in mathematics and French, while acquiring pedagogical skills. While setting up preparatory courses for the teaching profession (PPPE) is a step in this direction, creating genuine vocational bachelor's degrees leading to teaching, and in particular to the MEEF master's degree, should be strongly encouraged.

However, these reform proposals alone cannot make the teaching profession more attractive. The social status of the position of teacher and the attractiveness of the profession must be a real interministerial priority, demonstrated and translated into resources. The survey carried out by IPSOS at the request of the Court confirms how little students know about efforts

³ Court of Accounts, *La mise en place des écoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation (ÉSPÉ) chargées de la formation initiale des enseignants du secteur public*, referenced, June 2018.

to improve the salaries of teachers at the beginning of their careers, even those who are considering this profession or who are enrolled in a MEEF master's degree. However, the attractiveness of the teaching profession cannot be reduced to a question of salary, as teachers within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and in France cite other factors relating to the attractiveness or rejection of the profession, linked to the conditions under which it is practised (in particular, the difficulty of working in the classroom and the conditions under which people enter the profession).

A new organisation of training and recruitment involves compensating for territorial inequalities in the attractiveness of the profession by a stronger differentiation in favour of the education authorities of Créteil and Versailles, targeted at schools under the greatest pressure. Beyond the financial aspect, the conditions of work and reception of new teachers must be improved, whether in relation to housing conditions or by support within the school. In this respect, and for all the education authorities, schools, institutions and even their groupings must increasingly become places where future and new teachers are welcomed and trained, thus developing, around the tutors of the various trainees, an internal training policy involving all the teachers.

Recommendations⁴

Measures to improve recruitment

1. Open more positions and sections to third-level competitive examinations in order to diversify the recruitment pool for the benefit of people changing profession (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
6. In education authorities in difficulty and in subjects under pressure, allow the chief education officer to recruit teachers on medium-term contracts on the basis of their diploma (master's degree, in particular MEEF) and on the basis of an interview, accompanying them with appropriate training, with a commitment by the applicants to remain in their position for the duration of their contract (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
9. To compensate for the lack of attractiveness of certain schools in the Créteil and Versailles education authorities, allow the chief education officers to implement specific measures and financial resources in a targeted manner (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).

Measures to improve initial training

2. Introduce compulsory training for contractual teachers of at least one week before they take up their first post, and fully involve contractual teachers in the campaigns to support and train new teachers during their first years of service (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
7. Build with university and academic partners a five-year training continuum leading to the teaching profession, based on specific vocational bachelor's degrees allowing access to the MEEF master's degree (*Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
8. At the instigation of school headteachers and directors, include the induction and adaptation of new teachers in school charters (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).

Management and steering measures

3. Publish the results of the 2022 competitive examinations session in order to assess the effective vocational nature of the tests and to evaluate in autumn 2023 the relevance of the arrangements adopted for the internship year of successful competitive examination applicants (*Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
4. Resume and complete work to provide INSPEs with reliable project budgets (*Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Ministry of National Education and Youth*).
5. Identify the costs of initial training and distinguish in budgetary documents between expenditure on initial training and that on continuing training (*Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Ministry of National Education and Youth*).

⁴ The recommendations are listed below by theme. Their numbering corresponds to the order of appearance in the report.