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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

A serious teacher shortage that could jeopardize the standard of education in American schools is the biggest threat to public education in the country. The states of Nevada, Utah, and California are seeing the worst shortages, which highlights a nationwide issue affecting American students. The severity of this problem is highlighted by recent statistics, which projects that by the 2025–2026 academic year, the United States will require almost 200,000 additional public school teachers to cover the shortfalls. Studies indicate that poor quality instruction hinders learning and makes it more difficult for students to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Several factors have contributed to the exodus of teachers from the profession, which include low pay compared to other professions, inadequate preparation for the teaching profession, a lack of administrative support, and difficult working conditions, particularly in schools that serve a high proportion of low-income families. Schools frequently have to combine classes, hire teachers who are unqualified, or depend on long-term substitutes when there is a teacher shortage. Thus, this paper recommends there is a need to recognize that there are several contributing factors to the teacher shortage, which means that a comprehensive set of long-term solutions is necessary to address it. This recognition shifts our focus away from frameworks of single "magic remedy" solutions, which may seem like an easy quick fix but are insufficient to address the scope of the issue. Furthermore, there is the need to acknowledge that the complexity of the situation necessitates coordinated actions of numerous stakeholders, including schools and school districts, parent-teacher groups, school boards, teachers unions, and states.

KEYWORDS: *Teacher, Teacher Shortage, United States, Students Achievement*

INTRODUCTION

Among education's most crucial problems are teacher shortages and turnover which is the greatest in-school factor affecting student accomplishment in the United States. Studies indicate that poor quality instruction hinders learning and makes it more difficult for students to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. According to a report by the Learning Institute Policy (2018), many jurisdictions cut back on their teacher workforce to balance their budgets during the Great Recession, since then, teacher shortages have become an increasingly pressing issue. Furthermore, several factors have contributed to the exodus of teachers from the profession, which include low pay compared to other professions, inadequate preparation for the teaching profession, a lack of administrative support, and difficult working conditions, particularly in schools that serve a high proportion of low-income families. In addition, the ongoing trend of school shootings serves as another motivating factor. It is unsettling common for school shootings to happen in which a lone shooter kills both pupils and teachers, leaving parents and the teacher's family grieving. These incidents have become commonplace in the US, and both legislators and supporters of the US Constitution's Second Amendment fiercely oppose calls for more gun control (Sweeney, 2023). Since the summer of 2015, widespread media stories about local teacher shortages have made education a hot topic. Districts resumed hiring after years of teacher layoffs as the economy emerged from the Great Recession. Many were surprised to learn that they were having a significant amount of trouble filling their jobs with qualified teachers, particularly in subjects like science, math, special education, bilingual education, and English language development. In order to meet these demands, several states significantly increased the number of emergency permits that allowed the hiring of inexperienced teachers the quintessential definition of a shortage. However, a thorough national examination of the causes, scope, and prognosis for these shortages has not yet been conducted.

According to the Learning Policy Institute (2018), enrollment in teacher education reduced from 691,000 to 451,000 between 2009 and 2014, which indicated a 35% decrease. This translates to around 240,000 fewer professionals heading towards the classrooms in 2014 than there were in 2009 (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). A recent survey of students taking the American College of Teachers (ACT) college entrance exam revealed that just 5% of them were interested in becoming teachers, which demonstrates a 29% drop from 2010 to 2014. Furthermore, the

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National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that in 2022, there was one vacant teaching job in 18% of public schools in the US as well as multiple vacancies in 26% of schools in the US. Given this, 44% of public schools lack enough staff members. The hardest-hit public schools are those in high-poverty school districts, where 55% of teachers report a shortage, compared to 40% in low-poverty districts (ELEVATE K-12, 2023).

Teacher Shortage and Students' Achievement

Shortages of teachers can have a negative impact on student, such like a reduction in their graduation rates, restricted learning opportunities, and impair student success. Additional detrimental effects of teacher shortages on pupils include diminished efficacy of instruction: Schools frequently have to combine classes, hire teachers who are unqualified, or depend on long-term substitutes when there is a teacher shortage. While they can be a useful temporary solution, substitute teachers are not the best option for ongoing needs because they are frequently unqualified and lack subject-matter expertise. As a result, pupils receive education that is of lower quality. Furthermore, less individualized attention: Limited individualized attention by teachers makes it difficult to offer students the one-on-one attention they require to succeed when class sizes are higher and there are fewer teachers. With larger class sizes and fewer teachers, educators struggle to give each student the individualized attention they need to succeed. In addition, teacher turnover disrupts student learning significantly. Whether teachers leave mid-year or schools frequently shuffle staff, it can cause students to face repeated material, miss key topics, and struggle with different teaching methods. This turnover also severs trusted student-teacher relationships, which can lead to disengagement, reduced participation, and a decreased enthusiasm for learning. Also, teacher shortages can lead to schools cutting classes or programs, limiting the educational opportunities available to students. Schools in low-income areas, where students may not have access to resources outside of school, suffer the most (ELEVATE K-12).

The State of Teacher Shortage in the United States

A serious teacher shortage that could jeopardize the standard of education in American schools is the biggest threat to public education in the country. The states of Nevada, Utah, and California are seeing the worst shortages, which highlights a nationwide issue affecting American students. The severity of this problem is highlighted by recent statistics, which projects that by the 2025–2026 academic year, the United States will require almost 200,000 additional public school teachers to cover the shortfalls.

This shortage not only places immense pressure on existing educators but also adversely affects the educational outcomes for students, leading to larger class sizes, reduced individual attention, and in some cases, the elimination of critical programs and subjects from the curriculum. With the increase of digital platforms and the availability of online teaching options, we can ease some of the strain caused by the national teacher shortage. Plus, giving online teachers the right support and training can make teaching more appealing and prepare them for today's classroom challenges. This way, we're not just filling the current teacher vacancies, but rather, making our education system stronger and more flexible for the future.

In addition to putting a great deal of strain on currently employed teachers, this scarcity has a negative impact on students' educational performance by increasing class sizes, decreasing one-on-one attention, and occasionally removing important programs and courses from the curriculum. We can lessen some of the pressure brought on by the national teacher shortage by making online teaching options more accessible and increasing the number of digital platforms. Giving online teachers the proper assistance and training can also boost teachers' interest in teaching and better equip them for the difficulties of the modern classroom. By doing this, we're strengthening and expanding the flexibility of our educational system rather than just filling open positions.

Top 10 Teacher Shortage States

S/N	State (BS4)	Enrolled Students per One Employed Teacher
1	Nevada	24.56
2	Utah	21.88
3	California	21.36
4	Michigan	21.20
5	Arizona	21.10
6	Idaho	20.55
7	Florida	19.87
8	Washington	19.41
9	Washington	19.41
10	Oregon	19.40
11	Alaska	19.08

Source: Keech, 2024.

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CONCLUSION

Teacher shortages nationwide pose significant challenges to the education system. To that end, efforts must be made to address the root causes of the shortage, including investing in teacher education programs to mitigate the impact of teacher shortages. In the United States teacher deficit presents serious problems for the educational system. In order to lessen the effects of teacher shortages, efforts must be taken to address the underlying reasons of the shortage, which may include funding teacher education programs. Students, teachers, and the public education system as a whole are all affected by the teacher shortage that this paper documents and examines. The ability of pupils to learn is threatened by a lack of skilled teachers, staff instability lowers teachers' effectiveness, and a high teacher turnover rate wastes money that may be better used elsewhere. This furthers the persistence of the teacher shortage by making it more challenging to establish a strong reputation for teaching and to professionalize it. Furthermore, the distribution of the deficit among children from various socioeconomic backgrounds poses a challenge to the American school system's objective of giving every child an equal opportunity at a quality education. Thus, this study proffers the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need for an increase in public investments in education and treat teachers as professionals and teaching as a profession from the onset. These two system-level recommendations are critical to improving the context in which the teacher shortage operates, thus, fr automatically lessening the teacher shortage and making the targeted recommendations easier to implement or even unnecessary in some cases.
- It is also recommended that there is the need to recognize that there are several contributing factors to the teacher shortage, which means that a comprehensive set of long-term solutions is necessary to address it. This recognition shifts our focus away from frameworks of single "magic remedy" solutions, which may seem like an easy quick fix but are insufficient to address the scope of the issue.
- The knowledge that the complexity of the situation necessitates coordinated actions of numerous stakeholders, including schools and school districts, parent-teacher groups, school boards, teachers unions, and states, is the final core proposal

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