
NEWSLETTER

Who Are Studying as Pre-Service Teachers in Universities? An Investigation of Gender Composition and Urban-Rural Backgrounds of Pre-service Teachers Enrolled between 1982 and 2019

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IN 2018, the Chinese government issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Supply in the New Era and the Action Plan for Teacher Education Revitalization (2018-2022) to emphasize the need to attract high-quality students to join in teacher education programs through various means such as advanced enrollment, setting public-funded targeted teaching positions, tuition refunding for novice teachers, and shortening compulsory service periods. The purpose of this study is to investigate the pre-service teacher body composition and its alterations in the past few decades to identify what kind of college students have studied as pre-service teachers and the changes in student sources for teacher education programs?

The study adopted stratified sampling to select as subjects pre-service mathematics, history, Chinese language and literature, English, art, chemistry, and ideological education teachers recruited in the years of 1982, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2019 by six long-running teachers' universities in Shanghai City, Fujian, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Jiangxi Provinces. The proportion of students sampled is 25% of the total enrollments in each year. The sample of the study included 12,030 subjects with their student numbers ending in odd numbers. The opportunity index was used to analyze the changes in opportunities for students of different genders and urban-rural backgrounds to participate in pre-service teacher education programs.

The research found that the number of male pre-service teachers, from both urban and rural areas is continuously decreasing, while that of female pre-service teachers, especially those from rural areas, has significantly increased, leading to the shift from a male-predominated to female-predominated composition of pre-service teacher body. As of 2019, girls had six times more opportunities than boys to enroll in teacher education programs, indicating a severe gender imbalance in pre-service teacher body composition. This imbalance existed among students from both urban and rural areas.

Source: Journal of South China Normal University, 2023; 2023(1):38-47.