# Raising Teacher Retention in Online Courses through Personalized Support. Evidence from a Cross-national Randomized Controlled Trial

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Does providing teachers with personalized support help them complete online training courses?

Yes, but not for all and not everywhere. The TeachUP policy experimentation found large effects of personalized support on course completion in nine European Union Member States among professional (i.e., in-service) teachers (+10.6 percentage points), but not among student teachers. Moreover, no effects are found in Turkey. More studies are needed to investigate the contextual and learner characteristics that drive the heterogeneous effects.

Figure 2 Personalized support's effects on course completion
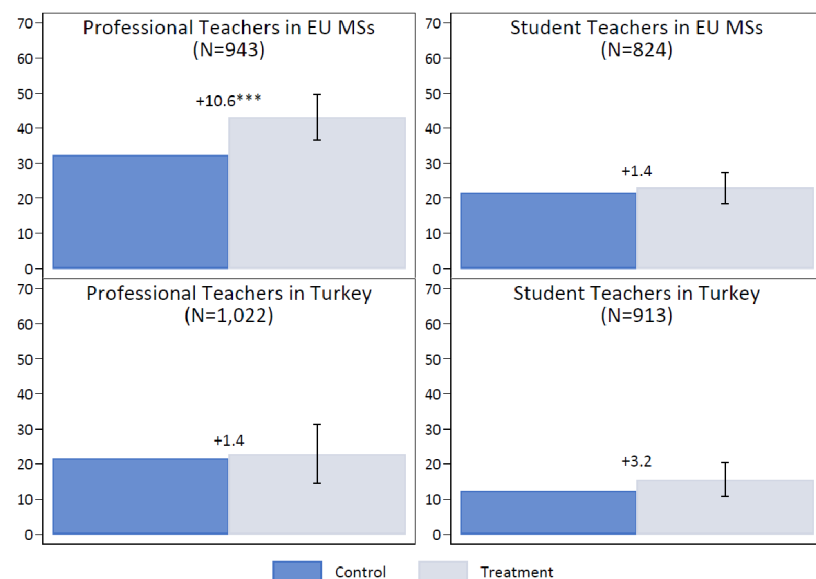
How to read this chart: The dark bars represent the average online course completion rates among enrolled teachers in the control group while the light bars represent the average online course completion rates for the treatment group. 95% confidence intervals for the difference between the two groups are also included on the latter.

The TeachUP personalized support

The tested personalized support consists of a package of nine messages aimed at helping participants start the course(s) they have enrolled in and successfully complete those they have started. Personalized messages are sent to participants with low online training experience or who exhibit inactions on the course platform (typically, they don't start a course in time).

How did we do this study?

The support package was piloted in the context of four newly developed scalable online courses made available to secondary school in-service and student teachers in school year 2018/2019.

The 3,777 teachers who enrolled in at least one of the four courses were randomly assigned to the treatment or the control group. Only teachers in the treatment group could receive a personalized support message.

Implications of the study

The study provides evidence about the potential of online support mechanisms to help teachers acquire new competences in online settings—something which has become even more important in the aftermaths of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Policy makers looking for effective ways to harness the potential of online courses for teacher training should consider two main recommendations. First, reach out to teachers who enroll in a course but do not to start it in time. Second, reach out to teachers with poor online training experience as previous experience of online learning is a determining factor in non-completion.

For more info about the TeachUP policy experimentation, please visit here.