

TALIS 2018

SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY NOTE



Teachers and School Principals as lifelong learners



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





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Foreword



The identity of a 21st century teacher is rapidly changing. Teachers are faced with a pressing challenge of preparing learners adequately with skills and knowledge for them to be active and contributing citizens of a Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the South African context, issues of a developmental state, scarcity of skills, and fiscal constraints contemporise an identity and practice, yet require innovative, high quality, and advanced knowledge workers, who are capable of mediating teaching, and stimulating learning within changing environments. In this regard, learners must look up to their teachers and see them as active lifelong learners.

I am pleased that we have participated in the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). As the only participant from the African Continent in this global study coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), we have once again positioned our country as a learning system, eager and willing to measure our capabilities among the best in the world. We do so, knowing that many of the countries of the world, have far more robust and advanced education settings; but we are committed towards building an excellent education system that stands up to high international benchmarks and standards.

In this regard, TALIS aims to provide valid, timely and comparable information to help countries review and define policies for developing a high-quality teaching profession. The study provides an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in key areas. In South Africa, 2 046 lower secondary teachers and 169 principals completed the TALIS questionnaires.

Teachers are frontline actors in improving learning outcomes. While we recognise and appreciate that we are a “system on the rise”, we are cognisant of work that needs to be done in addressing early learning gaps on reading comprehension and functional numeracy. Equipping the teacher with adequate knowledge and skills to deal comprehensively with these foundational hallmarks of learning must become the priority of an integrated teacher recruitment and retainment strategy from initial teacher education to continuous professional development. TALIS reminds us that many of our teachers have a high self-efficacy and are motivated by an intrinsic need to influence learners’ development and contribute to society. Education policy must therefore encourage teacher growth, inspire and enable innovation, identify and share best practice to reduce perceived gaps between professional vision and pedagogical practice.

Given the important role our teachers and principals play, our education systems must take greater interest in the professional views of teachers as experts on teaching and learning. Surveys, such as TALIS, which foreground the teacher perspective on their working conditions, professional knowledge, instructional quality, and the changing landscape will strengthen our efforts to re-engineer the education system to achieve the best possible outcomes.

In this Country Note critical information is provided on the socio-demographics of our teaching profession, their instructional practices of teachers, their levels of preparation and development, teaching in a diverse classroom, and teaching in a multicultural or multilingual settings. Teacher interests, beliefs, motivations and fears often go under the radar, and if not considered, can lead to tensions and policy discord, which can undermine education reform and the best intentions of our government.

“Where teachers are not engaged in the design or change, they will rarely help with the implementation of change” (OECD, 2019).

Programmatic determinations on the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), Professional Learning Communities, and the development of professional standards for teachers and principals are an effort to build a shared understanding and collective ownership.



As we are moving swiftly into the 6th Administration, we want to realise the elements of a ‘new dawn’ for teachers underpinned by a merger of collaboration and accountability within an enabling policy climate.

The findings of TALIS, as articulated in this Report, must be shared widely in the Basic Education Sector. I therefore invite all education stakeholders and the broader South African nation to view the results with a sense of ownership and involvement to support the projects, programmes and efforts of the Department of Basic Education, in our mission to deliver quality basic education to all learners.

“Teachers are our greatest public servants; they spend their lives educating our young people and shaping our nation for tomorrow” (Solomon Ortiz).



Mrs M A Motshekga

Minister of Basic Education

RESULTS FROM TALIS 2018

The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is an international, large-scale survey of teachers, school leaders and the learning environment in schools. This note presents findings based on the reports of lower secondary teachers and their school leaders in mainstream public and private schools.

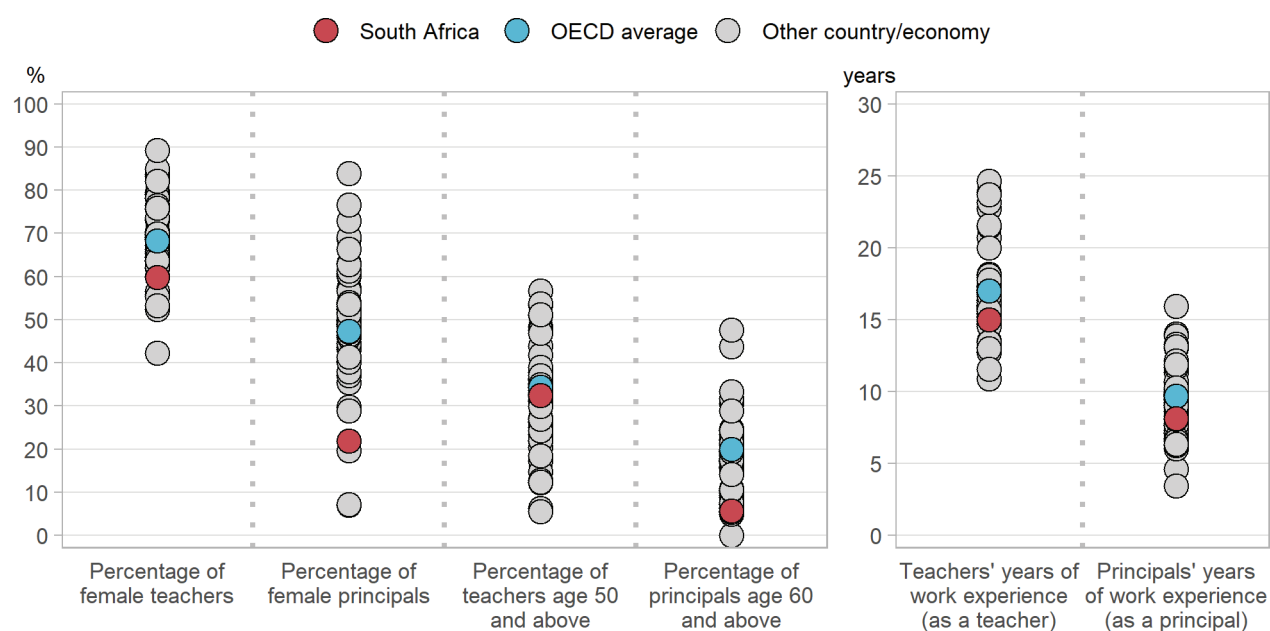
1. South Africa

Who are today's principals and teachers and the students in their classrooms?

- Teaching was the first-choice career for 49% of teachers in South Africa, which is the lowest share of teachers among all countries and economies participating in TALIS (OECD average 67%). In terms of why they joined the profession, at least 97% of teachers in South Africa cite the opportunity to influence children's development or contribute to society as a major motivation. Fewer but still many teachers considered the economic characteristics and the working conditions of the profession as important motivating factors to join the profession, in particular the fact that teaching offered a steady career path (rated as important by 90% of teachers in South Africa, compared to 61% on average in the OECD).

Figure 1. Socio-demographic and experience profiles of teachers and school leaders

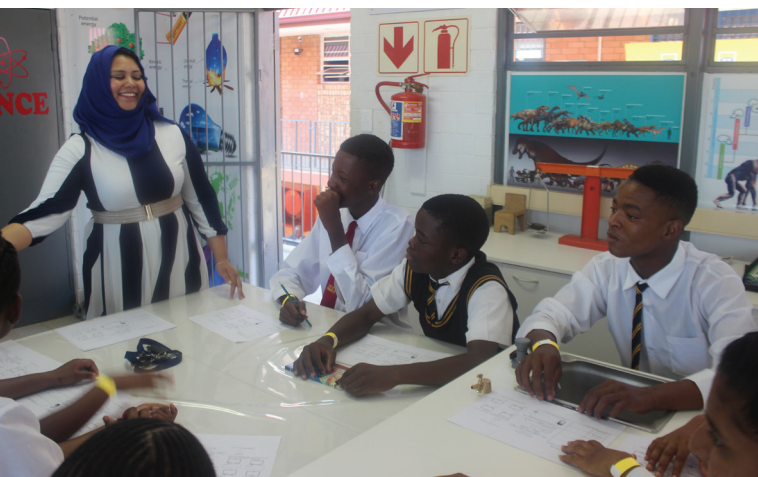
Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown.

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables I.3.17, I.3.21, I.3.1, I.3.5, I.3.9 and I.3.13.

- In South Africa, teachers are, on average, 43 years old, which is lower than the average age of teachers across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (44 years old). Furthermore, 32% of teachers in South Africa are aged 50 and above (OECD average 34%). This means that South Africa will have to renew about one out of three members of its teaching workforce over the next decade or so, under the assumption that all other parameters remain constant.
- In South Africa, principals are, on average, 51 years old, which is lower than the average age of principals across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (52 years old). Furthermore, 6% of principals in South Africa are aged 60 and above, compared to 20% on average across the OECD.
- Information about the gender distribution of the teacher and principal workforces makes it possible to gauge the degree of gender imbalance in the teaching profession and of gender disparities in the scope for promotion to leadership positions. In South Africa, only 22% of principals are women, compared to 60% of teachers. This can be benchmarked against the OECD averages of 47% of women among school leaders and 68% among teachers.
- In terms of classroom environments, relations between students and teachers are positive overall, with 85% of teachers in South Africa agreeing that students and teachers usually get on well with each other. And 82% of teachers report that they can rely on each other, which is lower than the average across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (87%).
- Among all countries and economies participating in TALIS, South Africa is the country where school safety incidents occur the most frequently and under several different forms, according to school leaders. One out of three principals (34%) report that acts of intimidation or bullying among their students occur at least weekly in their school, which is more than double the OECD average (14%). In addition, about one out of four principals report weekly incidents relative to the use or possession of drugs and/or alcohol at school (South Africa 27%; OECD average 1%) and vandalism and theft (South Africa 21%; OECD average 3%), which are comparatively very infrequent in other countries.
- In addition to frequent safety problems, school principals in South Africa report significant material resource shortages hindering the school's capacity to provide quality instruction. The two most frequently reported shortages by school principals concern library materials (70% so report; OECD average 16%) and digital technology for instruction (65%; OECD average 25%). In addition, two other important resource shortages are reported quite frequently: 56% of principals report a shortage of physical infrastructure (OECD average 26%) and 60% report a shortage of support personnel (OECD average 33%).



- In South Africa, many schools are particularly diverse with regard to students' linguistic background: 60% of teachers work in schools with more than 10% of students whose first language is not the language of instruction (OECD average 21%). In contrast, in South Africa, 11% of teachers work in schools where at least 10% of the students have a migrant background (OECD average 17%). At the same time, 91% of school leaders report that their teachers believe that children and young people should learn that people of different cultures have a lot in common (OECD average 95%).
- In addition, 71% of teachers work in schools with over 30% of socio-economically disadvantaged students, according to principals, which is a lot higher than the OECD average of 20%. This pattern signals high levels of poverty and/or inequality in the country.

What practices are teachers using in the classroom?

- Among the range of instructional practices, TALIS asks teachers about, those aimed at clarity of instruction are widely applied in South Africa, as well as across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS. For instance, 87% of teachers report frequently explaining how new and old topics are related (OECD average 84%). Yet, classroom management practices are more common in South Africa, with 84% of teachers reporting frequently calming students who are disruptive (OECD average 65%).
- Practices involving student cognitive activation, which are known to be important for student learning, are less widespread, with about half of teachers using these methods across the OECD. Specifically, in South Africa, 54% of teachers report frequently asking students to decide on their own procedures for solving complex tasks, compared to 45% on average across the OECD.
- During a typical lesson, teachers spend 66% of classroom time on actual teaching and learning, on average in South Africa, which is lower than the OECD average of 78%. Actual teaching and learning time is lower in schools with high concentrations of students from socio-economically disadvantaged homes compared to schools with low concentrations. In South Africa, the difference amounts to 6 percentage points the equivalent of more than 3 minutes of actual teaching and learning per 60-minute hour.
- In South Africa, 86% of teachers routinely assess their students' progress by observing them and providing immediate feedback (OECD average 79%), at the same time 83% of teachers report administering their own assessments to their students (OECD average 77%) and 52% of teachers frequently let students evaluate their own progress (OECD average 41%).
- Overall, a vast majority of teachers and school leaders view their colleagues as open to change and their schools as places that have the capacity to adopt innovative practices. In South Africa, 76% of teachers also report that they and their colleagues support each other in implementing new ideas. This is not significantly different from the average share across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (78%).



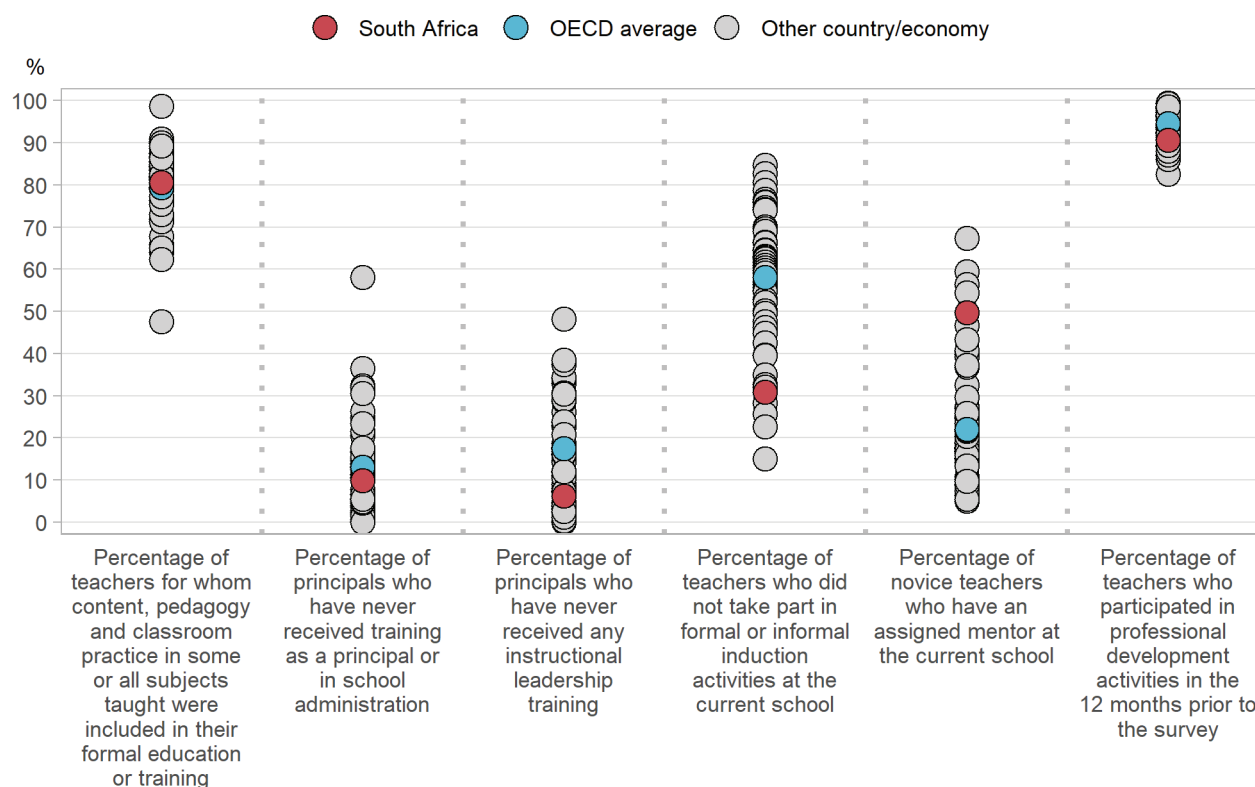
How are teachers and school leaders prepared for their roles?

- Teachers' typical educational attainment is higher than that of the general adult population in South Africa, but lower than in any other country or economy participating in TALIS. More than one out of two teachers (56%) have completed a short-cycle tertiary programme (OECD average 3%), while one out of four teachers in South Africa have not completed any tertiary education (South Africa 24% and OECD average 2%). However, about one out of five teachers have a Bachelor's (18%), Master's or (2%) or a doctoral or equivalent qualification (less than 1%).
- During their initial education and training, 81% of teachers in South Africa were instructed on subject content, pedagogy and classroom practice – a share that is not significantly different from the average of OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (79%). In South Africa, 69% of teachers report having participated in some kind of formal or informal induction when they joined their current school, compared to 42% of teachers across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS.
- While school principals across the OECD generally consider mentoring to be important for teachers' work and students' performance, 22% of novice teachers (with up to 5 years of experience) have an assigned mentor. In South Africa, this share amounts to 50%.
- On average across the OECD, school leaders usually have a higher level of educational attainment than teachers. However, only half of them complete a training course or programme for principals at least once before taking up their position as principal. In South Africa, 52% of school leaders have completed a programme or course in school administration or training for principals (OECD average 54%), and 54% have completed an instructional leadership training programme or course (OECD average 54%), before taking up their position as principal.



Figure 2. Initial and continuous training

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown.

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables I.4.14, I.4.28, I.4.39, I.4.64, I.5.2 and I.5.10.

How do teachers and school leaders keep up-to-date in their profession?

- Taking part in some kind of in-service training is commonplace among teachers and principals in South Africa, with 91% of teachers (OECD average 94%) and 96% of principals (OECD average 99%) attending at least one professional development activity in the year prior to the survey.
- Attending courses and seminars is one of the most popular types of professional development for teachers across the OECD. In South Africa, 71% of teachers participate in this kind of training (OECD average 76%). At the same time 67% of teachers participate in training based on peer learning and coaching (OECD average 44%). It is interesting to note that teachers, across the OECD, report that professional development based on collaboration and collaborative approaches to teaching is among the most impactful for them.
- Teachers in South Africa appear satisfied with the training they received, as 88% report that it had a positive impact on their teaching practice, a share that is higher than the average of OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (82%). It is also true that teachers who report participating in such impactful training tend to display higher levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The association is particularly strong South Africa.
- On average across the OECD, among those teachers reporting that their training had a positive impact, some also reported that such impactful training tended to have four elements: 1) it built on the teacher's prior knowledge (91%); 2) it adapted to the teacher's personal development needs (78%); 3) it had a coherent structure (76%); and 4) it focused on content needed to teach the teacher's subjects (72%). South Africa is one of the TALIS countries and economies with the highest share of teachers reporting these four content-related characteristics as part of their impactful training.

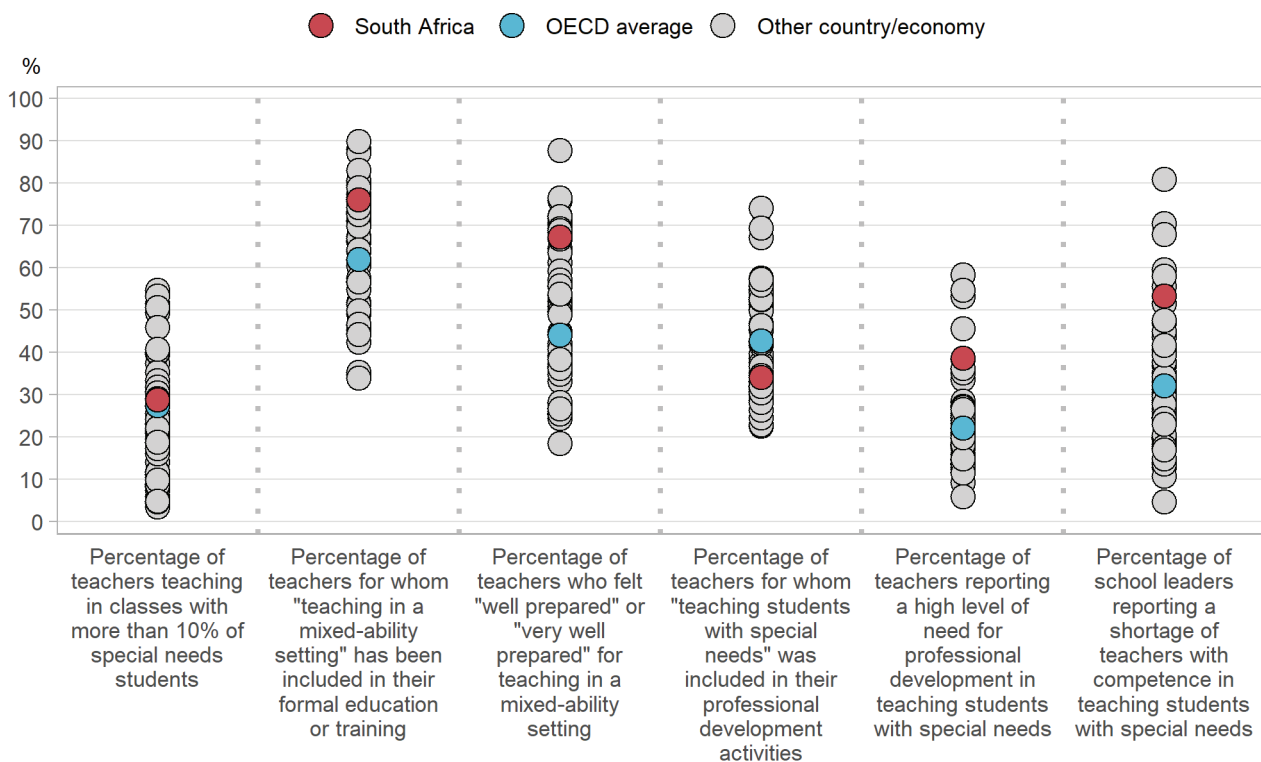
- But some areas of professional development are still lacking, according to teachers. Across the OECD, developing advanced ICT skills is one area in which teachers say that they need more training, along with teaching in multicultural/multilingual settings and teaching students with special needs. Among these three areas, teachers in South Africa expressed a particularly high need for training in teaching students with special needs (39%) and in teaching in a multilingual and multicultural setting (20%).

Teaching students with diverse ability levels and needs

- On average in South Africa, 29% of teachers work in classes with at least 10% of students with special needs (i.e. those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically, or emotionally disadvantaged), which is not significantly different from the average of OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (27%).
- In South Africa, 76% of teachers were trained to teach in mixed-ability settings as part of their formal teacher education or training, while 67% of teachers on average felt prepared to teach in such settings when they finished their studies.
- Furthermore, although 34% of teachers on average participated in professional development activities including teaching students with special needs in the 12 months prior to the survey, training in teaching special needs students is the professional development topic with the highest percentage of teachers reporting a high need for it – 39% in South Africa (compared to 22% across the OECD).
- On average in South Africa, 53% of school principals report that delivery of quality instruction in their school is hindered by a shortage of teachers with competence in teaching students with special needs (compared to 32% across the OECD).

Figure 3. A snapshot of teaching students with diverse ability levels and needs

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown.

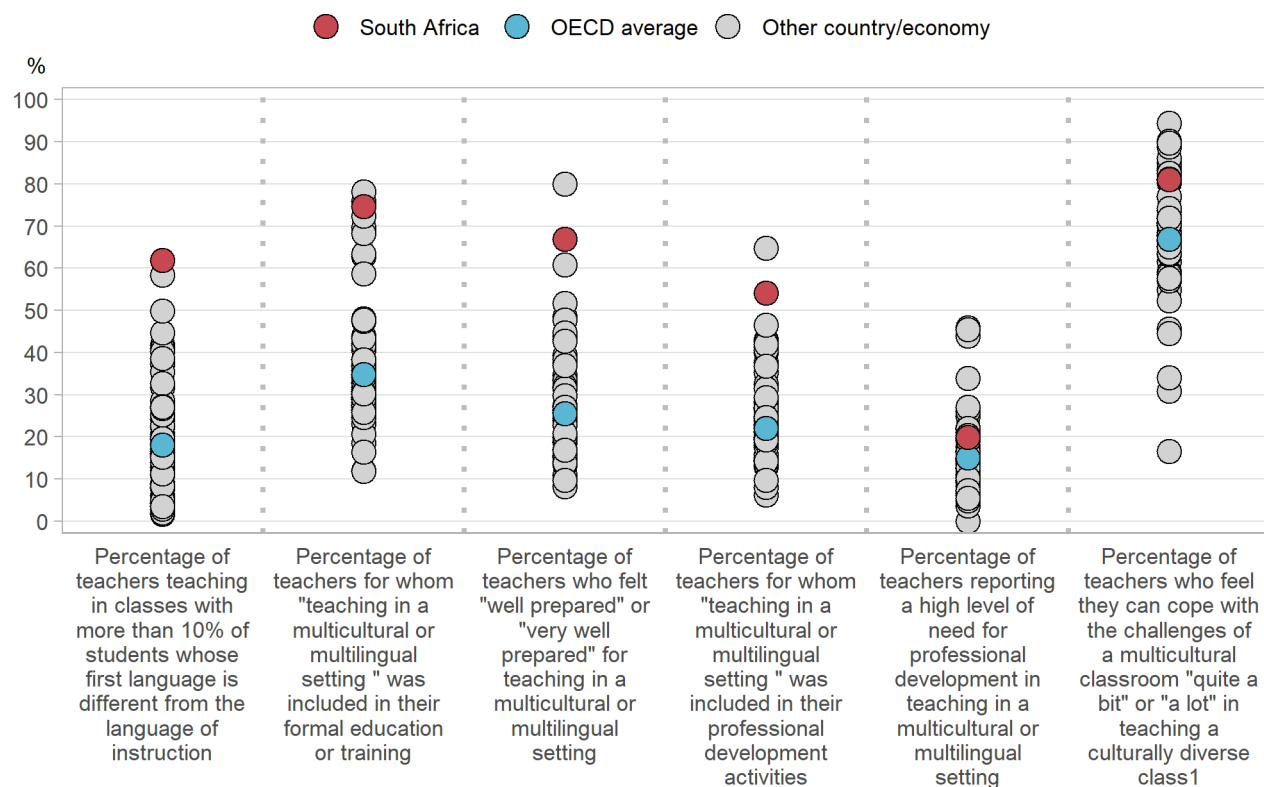
Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables I. 3.28, I. 4.13, I. 4.20, I. 5.18, I. 5.21 and I. 3.63.

Teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings

- On average in South Africa, 62% of teachers work in classes with at least 10% of students whose first language is different from the language of instruction, which is the highest share across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (18%).
- In South Africa, 75% of teachers were trained to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting as part of their formal teacher education or training, while 67% of teachers on average felt prepared to teach in such settings when they finished their studies.
- Furthermore, although 54% of teachers on average participated in professional development activities including teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting in the 12 months prior to the survey, training in teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting is the second professional development topic with the highest percentage of teachers reporting a high need for it – 20% in South Africa (compared to 15% across the OECD).
- However, on average in South Africa, 81% of teachers feel they can cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom “quite a bit” or “a lot” in teaching a culturally diverse class (compared to 67% across the OECD).

Figure 4. A snapshot of teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



Note: Only countries and economies with available data are shown.

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables I.3.28, I.4.13, I.4.20, I.5.18, I.5.21 and I.3.38.

Key features of TALIS 2018

TALIS uses questionnaires administered to teachers and their school principals to gather data. Its main goal is to generate internationally comparable information relevant to developing and implementing policies focused on school leaders, teachers and teaching, with an emphasis on those aspects that affect student learning. It gives a voice to teachers and school leaders, allowing them to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in key areas.

First, TALIS helps policy makers to review and develop policies that promote the teaching profession and the best conditions for effective teaching and learning. Second, TALIS helps teachers, school leaders, and education stakeholders to reflect upon and discuss their practice and find ways to enhance it. Third, TALIS builds upon past research, while informing the future work of researchers.

- Nine main themes were selected for inclusion in the TALIS 2018 survey: teachers' instructional practices; school leadership; teachers' professional practices; teacher education and initial preparation; teacher feedback and development; school climate; job satisfaction; teacher human resource issues and stakeholder relations; and teacher self-efficacy. Two cross-cutting themes were added to this list: innovation; and equity and diversity.
- The international target population for TALIS is composed of lower secondary teachers and their school leaders in mainstream public and private schools. TALIS 2018 offered three additional options: 15 countries and economies also surveyed teachers and school leaders in their primary schools (ISCED level 1), 11 countries and economies did so in their upper secondary schools (ISCED level 3) and 9 countries and economies conducted the survey in schools that participated in the 2018 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
- In each country, a representative sample of 4 000 teachers and their school principals from 200 schools was randomly selected for the study. Across all survey components, approximately 260 000 teachers responded to the survey, representing more than 8 million teachers in 48 participating countries and economies. In South Africa, 2 046 lower secondary teachers and 169 principals completed the TALIS questionnaires.
- TALIS 2018 findings will be released in two volumes. The first volume, *Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, published on 19 June 2019, explores the knowledge and skills dimension of teachers and school leaders' professionalism. The second volume, *Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, to be published in early 2020, will focus on prestige, career opportunities, collaborative culture and responsibility and autonomy.

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References

OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>

For more information on TALIS 2018 visit <http://www.oecd.org/education/talis/>

Data can be found also on line by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using: <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/>.

Questions can be directed to:

TALIS team

Directorate for Education and Skills

TALIS@oecd.org

Country note authors:

Noémie Le Donné and Markus Schwabe

Directorate for Education and Skills

Noemie.LEDONNE@oecd.org

Markus.SCHWABE@oecd.org

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222 Struben Street

Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001

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