

TALIS 2024 SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY REPORT



Teachers and school leaders as constructors of learning



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



G20 SOUTH
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2025



TALIS 2024 SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY REPORT

FOREWORD

True teachers use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross then, having facilitated their crossing joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own

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Nikos Kazantzakis



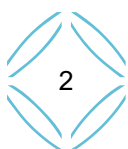
It is with great pleasure that we present this report, which details South Africa's key findings from its participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2024 iteration of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). As the only African nation to participate in two cycles of this comprehensive global study of teachers and school leaders, our engagement offers a unique and invaluable window into how South African teachers and school leaders bridge and build learning systems.

TALIS provides internationally comparable data on core working conditions of teachers and school leaders, the structures of their learning environments, and the professional practices that shape learning outcomes. For South Africa, the results are more than just statistics; they are a critical mirror reflecting our progress, challenges, and the essential differences that characterise our unique educational landscape, such as teaching in highly diverse environments, coping with inequitable resource settings, and mediating learning to non-first-language recipients.

In an era defined by rapid technological change, evolving learner diversity and needs, and increasing societal complexity, TALIS offers insight into how the roles of the teacher and the school leader are being fundamentally redefined, transforming them into adaptive designers of learning and cultural facilitators. This complexity requires teachers to move beyond content delivery to master advanced pedagogic techniques such as differentiated instruction and linguistic scaffolding. Ultimately, managing this range of diverse learning needs increases a teacher's workload, making classroom dynamics more complex, and necessitates continuous upskilling and professional development in adaptive pedagogy and digital integration.

It is with this view, that we position participation in TALIS and its results as critical and necessary towards better understanding and supporting teachers create meaningful bridges for their learners. To assist, this country report details findings on enduring and contemporary features on enabling working teachers and the associated role of school managers, policy makers and the education sector in support of South African teachers. Policy makers build on the voices of teachers and principals on critical domains such as initial teacher education, teacher characteristics and pathways, and continuous professional development with insights into teachers' self-efficacy, their opportunities for professional learning, and how these factors impact on job satisfaction and retention. Against these themes, TALIS data allows us to benchmark our education system against global best practice and, crucially, to understand our own teachers' and principals' perspectives on their work against views expressed by their global peers.

The results affirm the high professional motivation and commitment of South African educators but also underscores the urgent need to address factors that impact their well-being, workload, assessment pressure and the retention of talent in the profession.



This report is not an end point but provides a critical set of diagnostics packaged for maximum utility and as a catalyst for evidence-based policy dialogue and action for policymakers, teacher unions, academic researchers, departmental officials and professional learning communities. I call on the education community to engage more deeply with these findings and to integrate them into the strategic planning, curriculum review processes and design of relevant and responsive continuing professional development programmes. The insights contained in this report affirm the priority of the seventh administration towards equipping our teachers with the support, resources, and professional growth they need to thrive.

Ultimately, the quality of our education system rests on the quality of our teaching profession—a profession that remains our nation’s greatest asset in securing a prosperous future for all South African children.

Teachers who love teaching, teach children to love learning.

- Unknown



Ms S Gwarube
Minister of Basic Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The OECD TALIS 2024 is a collaboration among participating countries and economies, managed by a TALIS consortium, with technical support provided by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

The TALIS 2024 South Africa country report is the culmination of the collaborative work and effort of several stakeholders who facilitated the administration, participation and completion of the online survey, and preparation of the data presented.

Gratitude is extended to the following stakeholders:

- ❖ Participating schools, principals and teachers, and designated TALIS School Coordinators across all provinces.
- ❖ Provincial Assessment Coordinators for the training of School Coordinators, and support of participating schools throughout the administration of the survey.
- ❖ Officials from the Directorate: National Assessment for the adaptation of the Teacher and Principal questionnaires, coordination, communication, training of provincial coordinators and monitoring and support of schools during the survey period.
- ❖ Officials from the Directorate: Communications who enabled the production of the county report.
- ❖ Expert peer reviewers for their valuable contributions that guided the county report to ensure that the data interpretation and presentation of the findings is a reliable representation of the surveyed teachers and principals.
- ❖ TALIS Governing Board representative for South Africa, Mr SG Padayachee for his oversight, support and guidance throughout the project cycle and all aspects of administration.
- ❖ The Director-General of Basic Education for his support of South Africa's participation in the largest international teacher survey that enables that the education system to gain insight into how educators perceived their work and the comparability of their experiences cross nationally.

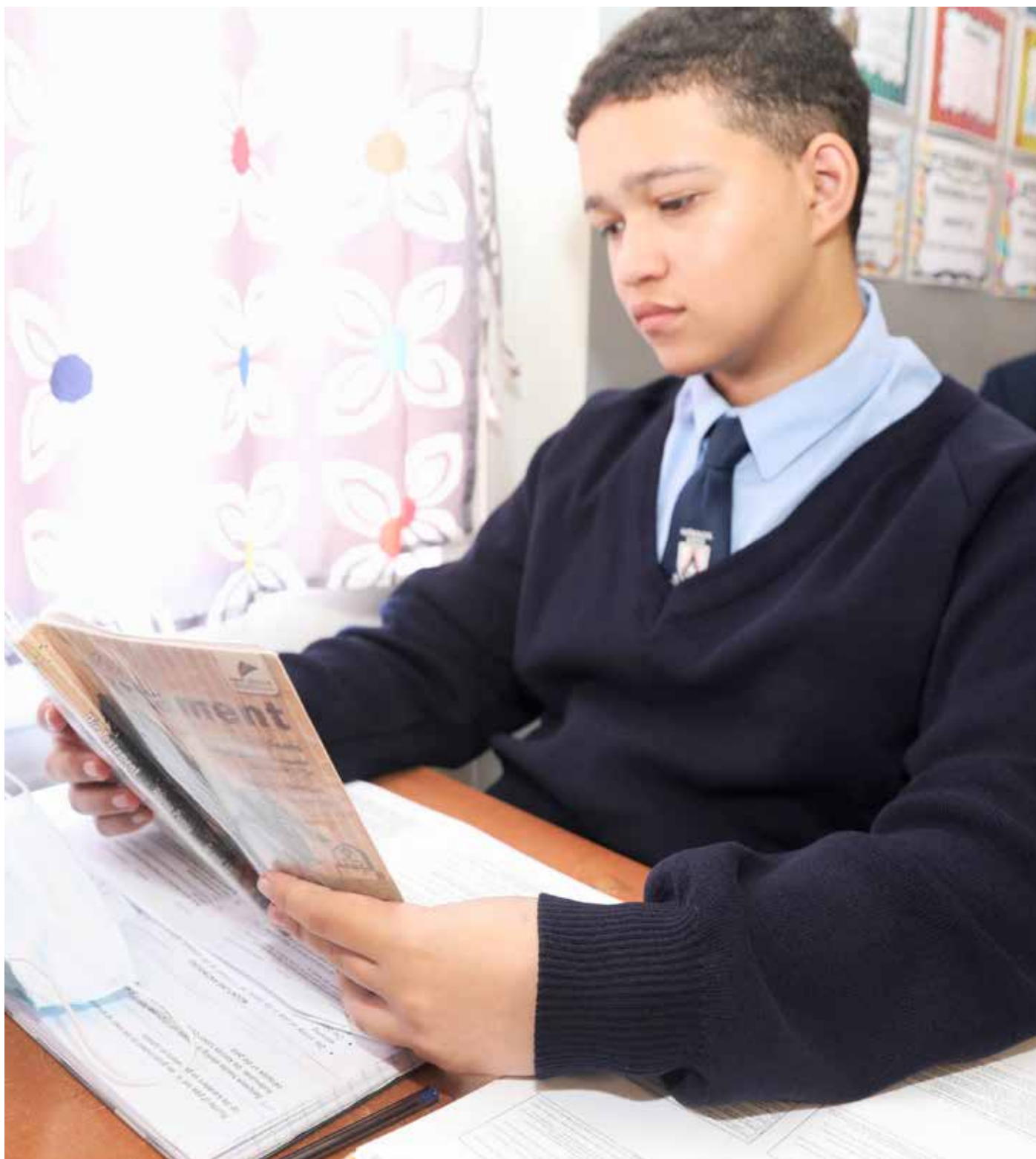


DISCLAIMERS

This report is published under the responsibility of the Secretary General of the OECD.

The opinions or interpretations expressed in the South Africa report do not necessarily reflect the official views of the member countries of the OECD or partner countries that participated in the core survey.

This country report, as well as, any data, maps and information included herein, is done so without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. The source of the data included in the report has been extracted from the OECD, TALIS 2024 database.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. The 2024 South Africa Country Report on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) marks the nation's second cycle of participation and offers a critical reflection on the evolving landscape of the teaching profession in a developing country context.
2. TALIS is managed by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and 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 (principals) to provide input into educational policy making and express their views on key development areas needed.

Purpose

3. One of the identified priority areas of the seventh administration of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is teacher professional development. The insights contained in this report affirms the priority of equipping our teachers with the support, resources, and professional growth they need to thrive. It is with this view, that participation in TALIS is positioned as critical and necessary towards better understanding and supporting teachers create effective and efficient learning environments.

Themes

4. TALIS is an international large-scale survey that investigates the condition of teaching and learning environments in schools within the OECD participating countries and partner countries. The survey provides data on two broad conceptual themes on teaching and learning: enduring features of practice over different time points, and emerging trends that are affecting the profession.
5. Against these themes, the report details the findings of South African teachers and their principals on critical domains of teacher characteristics, learning and development, work practices, and occupational perception with valuable insights offered on initial teacher education, continuous professional development, self-efficacy, opportunities for professional learning, job satisfaction, career pathways and teacher retention.

Participation

6. South Africa has participated in TALIS in 2018 and 2024. The target group in both cycles were teachers and principals working in schools providing lower secondary education (i.e. Grades 8 and 9, referred to as ISCED Level 2 internationally).
7. The country over two cycles has maintained high participation rates, a testament to the commitment of teachers and principals towards improving the quality of education. The sample in 2024 was much larger than in 2018 providing more robust estimates in the data. The table below provides an overview of participation over the two cycles.

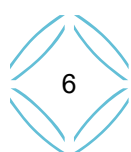


Table 1: School participation rates

School Participation Rates:	2018	2024
Number of schools	169	361
School participation (%)	92.1	93.3
Number of teachers	2046	3301
Teacher participation (%)	89.7	85

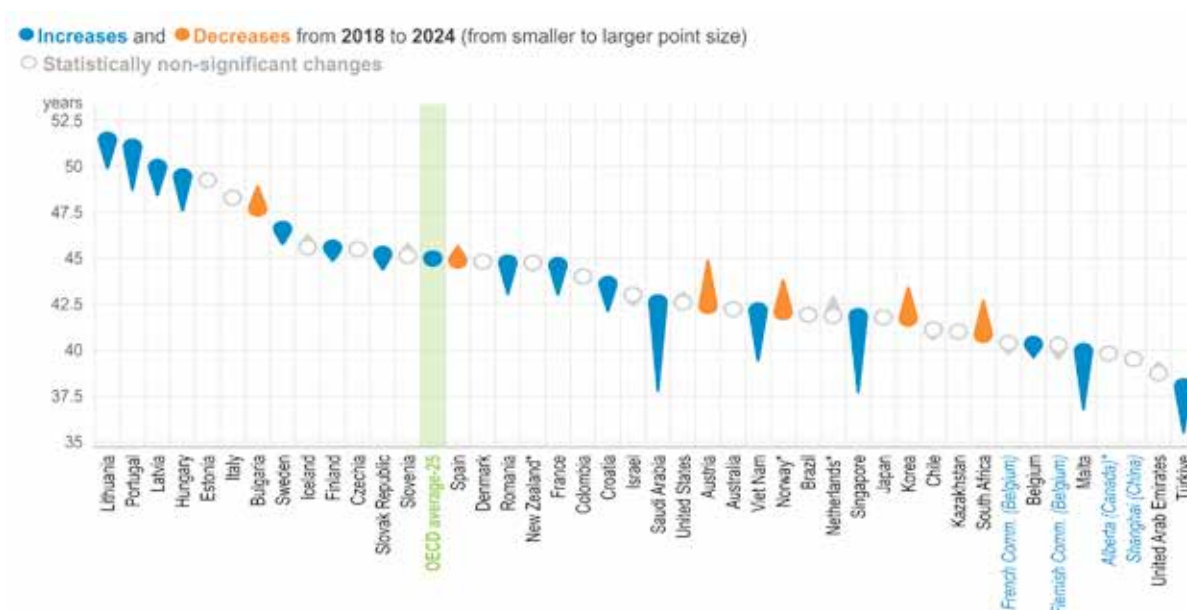
Key findings:

The following key findings could be lifted from the report:

Teacher profiles

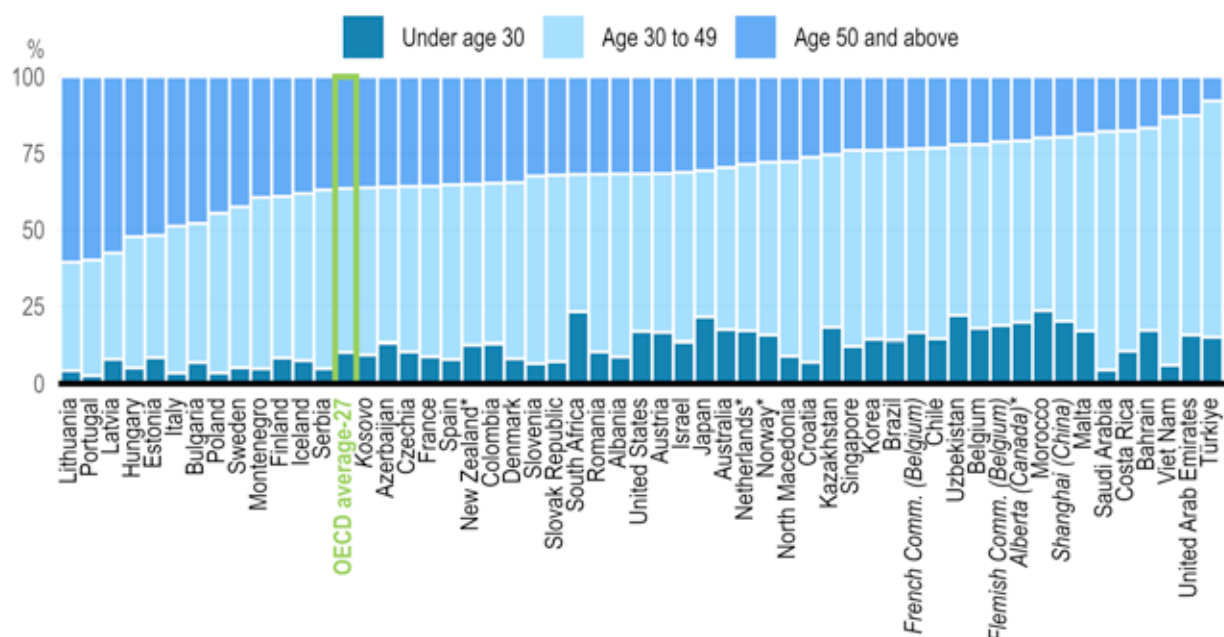
- Although the average age of teachers globally increased since 2018, a notable observation is that the average age of South African teachers decreased from 43 years in 2018 to 41 years in 2024, implying a younger teacher workforce than their OECD counterparts where the average age is 45 years old. The figure below shows the global change in the average age of teachers since 2018.

Figure 1: Change in the average age of teachers from 2018 to 2024



- Furthermore, 32% of teachers are aged 50 and above (lower than the OECD average: 37%) and 23% of teachers are aged below 30 (higher than the OECD average: 10%). Since 2018, the share of teachers aged 50 and above has not changed. In South Africa 23.2% of teachers were under the age of 30 by 2024 placing South Africa alongside systems like Japan, Uzbekistan and Morocco in terms of younger teachers (see figure below).

Figure 2: Teachers' age categories

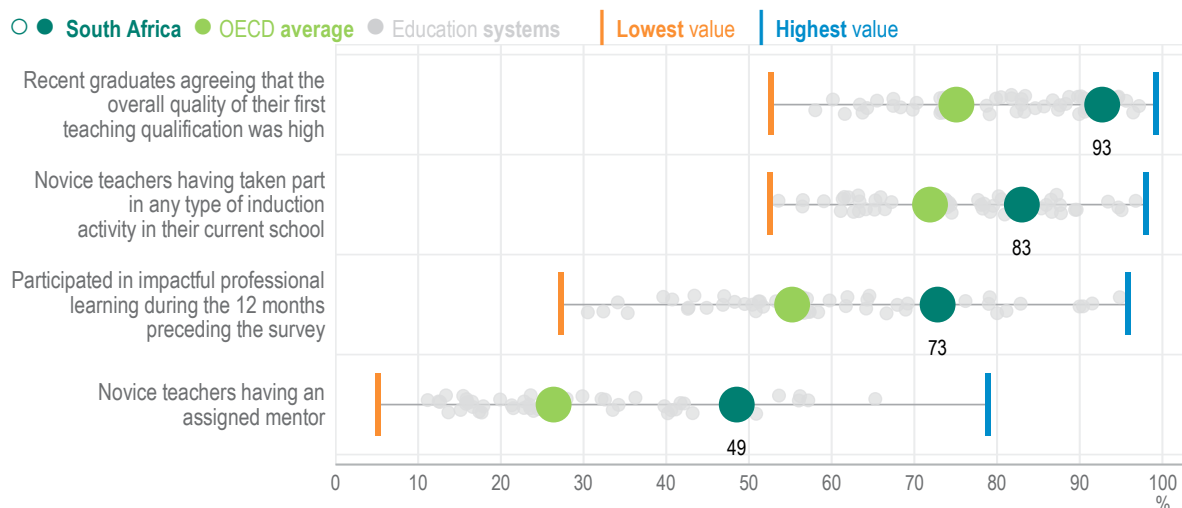


10. The gender distribution also shifted slightly, with female teachers comprising 62% of participants, a trend especially pronounced among recent graduates aged 20–24. The teaching workforce in South Africa is majority female, at 62.4%, though this is lower than the OECD average of 69.8%. A substantial gender leadership gap exists, as only 32.5% of principals are female, creating a gap of approximately 30% between female teachers and female principals, which is notably higher than the OECD average gap of 15.1%.
11. In terms of experience, nearly one-third (over 30%) of teachers have five or fewer years of teaching experience. Principals, on average, have seven years of experience at their current school, with 50% of them having less than five years of experience in their current school.

Teachers' learning opportunities

12. Despite these demographic shifts, the TALIS 2024 data shows that several challenges still persist and require targeted policy attention, particularly in initial teacher education (ITE). South Africa's education system remains defined by its high-diversity learning environments and a significant proportion of non-first-language instruction across schools, which intensifies teacher workload and demands training, induction and mentoring into advanced pedagogical strategies such as differentiated instruction, assessment for learning and linguistic scaffolding. The table below illustrates the opportunities afforded to recent graduates in schools.

Figure 3: Opportunities for novice teachers to learn in the workplace



13. In South Africa, 93% of recent graduates (teachers who have completed their initial teacher education in the five years prior to the survey) “agree” or “strongly agree” that the quality of their initial education was high overall (higher than the OECD average: 75%).
14. Recent graduates report that their initial teacher education prepared them well for: subject content (83%), general pedagogy (85%), teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting (77%), using digital resources and tools for teaching (75%), and supporting students’ social and emotional development (72%). In 2024, the share of recent graduates feeling prepared “quite a bit” or “a lot” for subject content was 6 percentage points lower compared to 2018. For general pedagogy, it was the same as 2018.
15. The survey also showed that 37% of teachers completed a fast-track or shorter specialised programme.
16. South African teachers placed a significantly higher importance on key CPTD characteristics compared to the global peers, with 73% of teachers reporting that the professional learning activities they participated in during the 12 months preceding the survey had a positive impact on their teaching (higher than the OECD average: 55%). The most valued characteristics relate directly to content and prior knowledge, with 70.9% of South African teachers finding CPTD being built on prior knowledge to be “A lot” important, compared to the TALIS average of 39.7%. Despite this high demand for relevant CPTD, several critical topics, such as emerging skill gaps, are currently not being addressed through CPTD activities.
17. The areas for which teachers most commonly report high levels of professional learning needs include teaching learners with special education needs (44%), skills for using artificial intelligence for teaching and learning (36%), and technical skills for the use of digital resources and tools (35%). The areas most indicated by novice teachers in relation to high level of professional learning needs are teaching students with special education needs (43%), skills for using artificial intelligence for teaching and learning (31%), and methods for supporting students’ social and emotional learning (27%).
18. While most teachers report strong foundational preparation (55% feeling well-prepared in subject content and 38% in general pedagogical readiness) gaps remain in the critical 21st-century competencies required. Only 33% felt adequately prepared to teach in multicultural or multilingual settings, 32% use digital resources and tools effectively, and 36% teach environmental sustainability.
19. A clear generational digital gap exists, as 45% of teachers trained after 2020 felt their education prepared them “a lot” for digital use, compared to only 12% of teachers trained up to 1990.

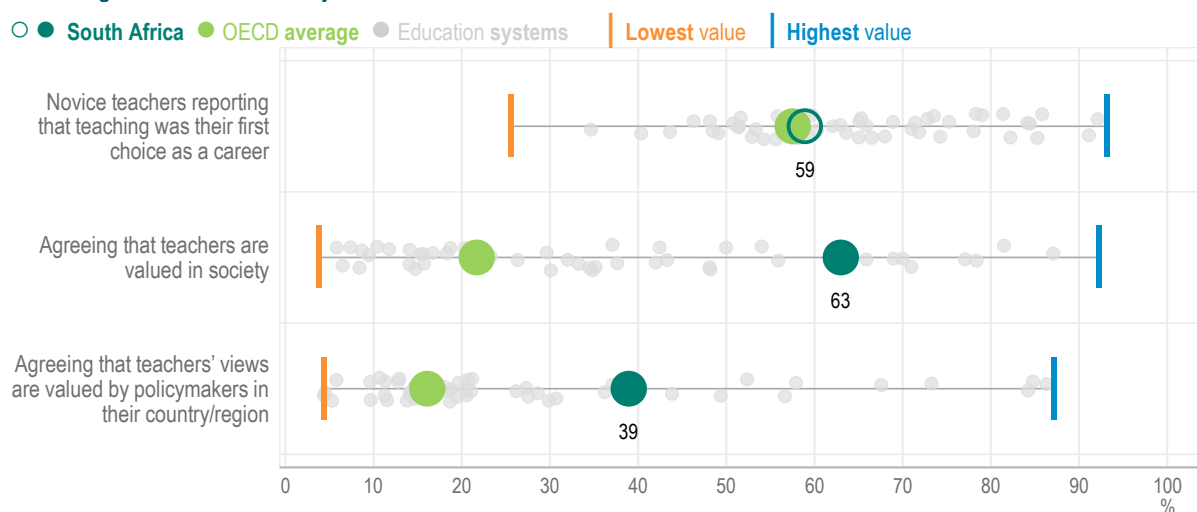
20. Nonetheless, South African educators continue to demonstrate high levels of professional commitment. Principals reported exceptional levels of teacher engagement in professional activities, with 93.6% of teachers taking leadership roles in professional learning communities and 93.1% leading their own professional development all of which surpass the TALIS average of 86.5%.

Status of the teaching profession

21. Higher social status of the teaching profession can help attract high-calibre candidates to the profession and retain experienced teachers. In South Africa, the teaching profession is increasingly becoming a first-choice career, with 62% of teachers reporting it as such (up from 49% in 2018).
22. Sixty three percent (63%) of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that teachers are valued in society (higher than the OECD average: 22%). Between 2018 and 2024, this share did not change.
23. Thirty nine percent (39%) of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that teachers’ views are valued by policymakers in their country/region (higher than the OECD average: 16%). This share has increased by 6 percentage points since 2018.
24. Fifty nine percent (59%) of novice teachers report that teaching was their first choice as a career (similar to the OECD average: 58%). This share has increased by 17 percentage points since 2018. Figure 4 illustrates data relating to the status of the profession.

Figure 4: Status of the teaching profession

Percentage of lower secondary teachers



Teachers' leadership and autonomy

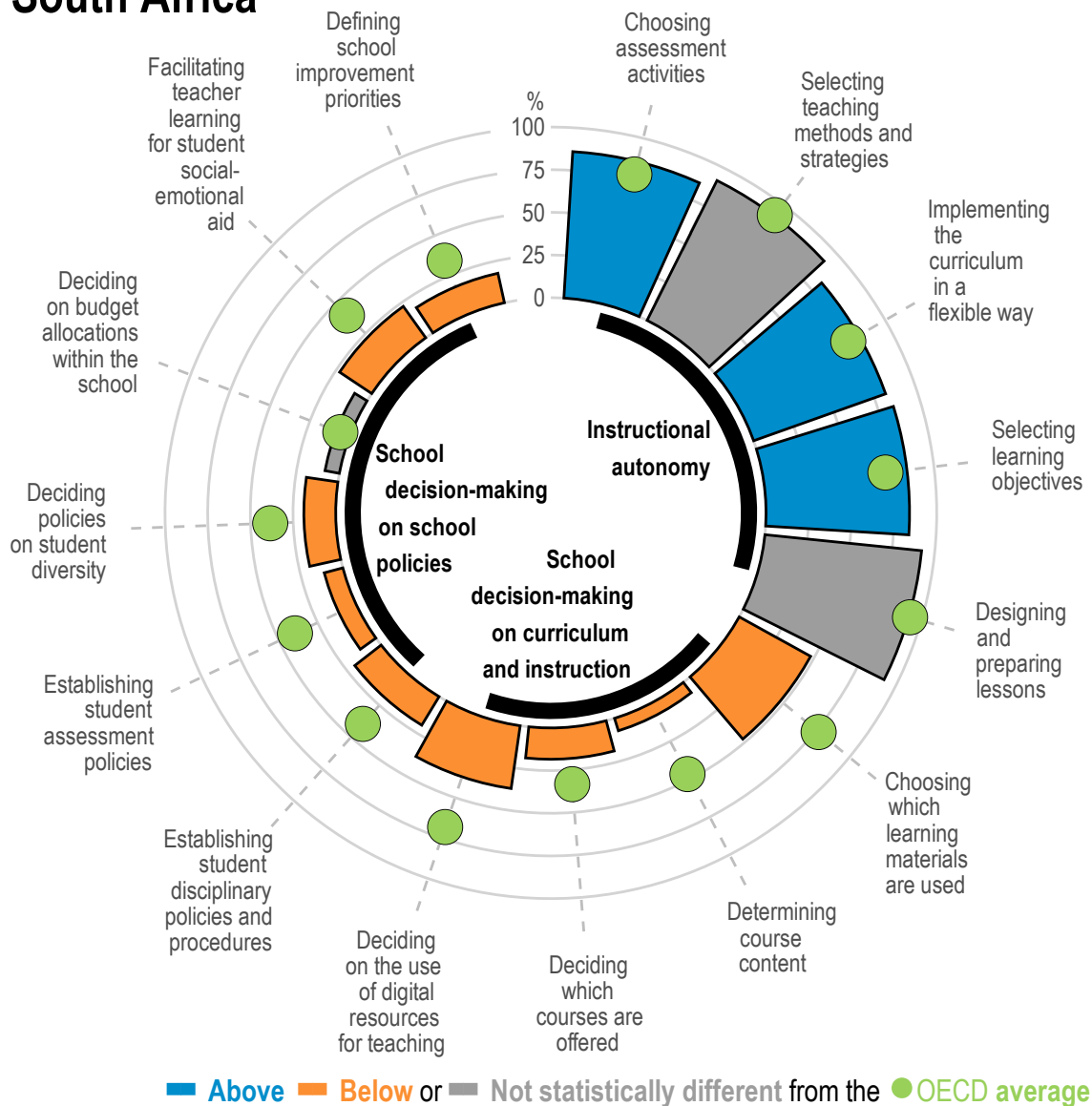
25. Principals perceived a strong culture of professional autonomy and peer-led development among teachers at their schools⁴, exceeding international averages. 93.6% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that teachers took leadership roles in promoting a professional learning community (PLC), and 93.1% agreed or strongly agreed that teachers led their professional growth and development. This perception of professionalism is balanced against highly centralised curriculum control. Decisions on curriculum content are overwhelmingly centralised, with 87% of decisions made at either district, provincial, or national levels. However, there is high local autonomy in operations, as responsibility for tasks like school-level policy, finance, learner admission, and human resources administration are led by the School Governing Body (SGB) and the principal.

26. Teachers' decision-making authority is multi-faceted ranging from school decision making on school policies to decision making on curriculum and instruction to instructional autonomy. The figure that follows, illustrates how South African teachers' decision-making autonomy compares to their OECD counterparts.

Figure 5: Teachers' decision-making authority

Percentage of lower secondary teachers

South Africa



27. In South Africa, levels of instructional autonomy, reported by teachers, and involvement in school-level decision making on curriculum, instruction, and other school policies, reported by principals are close to the OECD average, with no consistent pattern of being above or below it across items.
28. Teacher appraisal not only serves a formative role by supporting professional growth but also a summative role by assessing effectiveness and ensuring accountability.
29. Teachers reported a strong degree of individual professional agency and control over their classroom practices. A vast majority of teachers feel they have high autonomy in lesson design: 58% reported full autonomy in designing and preparing lessons, with another 34% reporting substantial autonomy. Similarly, teachers feel empowered to adapt the curriculum, with 82% reporting having full (37%) or substantial (45%) autonomy in implementing the curriculum. Ninety two percent of teachers indicated that they frequently employ cognitively activating practices,

fostering critical thinking and deep learning implying pedagogical depth in South African classrooms and 65% of teachers report high awareness of learners' emotional needs, embedding empathy and warmth into classroom practice implying high self-efficacy on Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Growth mindset

30. In a comparison of the perceptions of teachers' growth mindset, South Africa stood out as an extreme outlier, with roughly ten times the OECD average across all statements. South African data revealed the highest mean percentages across all categories: 58.2% of teachers in the country agreed/strongly agreed that everyone had a certain amount of intelligence, 50.1% agreed people's intelligence was something that they couldn't change and 58.1% agreed that learning new things did not change one's intelligence. This represented the strongest collective endorsement of a fixed mindset among the participating countries.
31. This data suggests that a very large proportion of South African teachers strongly believe that intellectual capacity is an inherent limit that cannot be fundamentally altered. Morocco also showed a strong endorsement, particularly for the statement that "People's intelligence is something about them that they can't change" at 10.5% which is over four times the OECD average of 2.3%. In sharp contrast, the United States and Australia exhibited the lowest mean agreement for all three statements, with percentages consistently below 18%. This suggests that teachers in these countries are the least likely to view intelligence as a fixed trait, suggesting a greater prevalence of a growth mindset where intellectual capability is seen as something that can be developed and changed in learners. Other non-OECD countries like the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, and Colombia also have teacher populations with a significantly higher proportion strongly agreeing with fixed beliefs than the OECD average.
32. Overall, this data showed that there is not a uniform global perception of intelligence among teachers. The stark contrast between developing countries like South Africa and Morocco (high fixed-mindset belief) and developed countries like Australia and the US (low fixed-mindset belief) suggested that cultural, systemic, or policy factors may heavily influence the core beliefs teachers held about the potential for intellectual change in their learners. The table below illustrates the aforementioned findings.

Table 2: International Level: How strongly teachers agreed with statements related to intelligence and learning

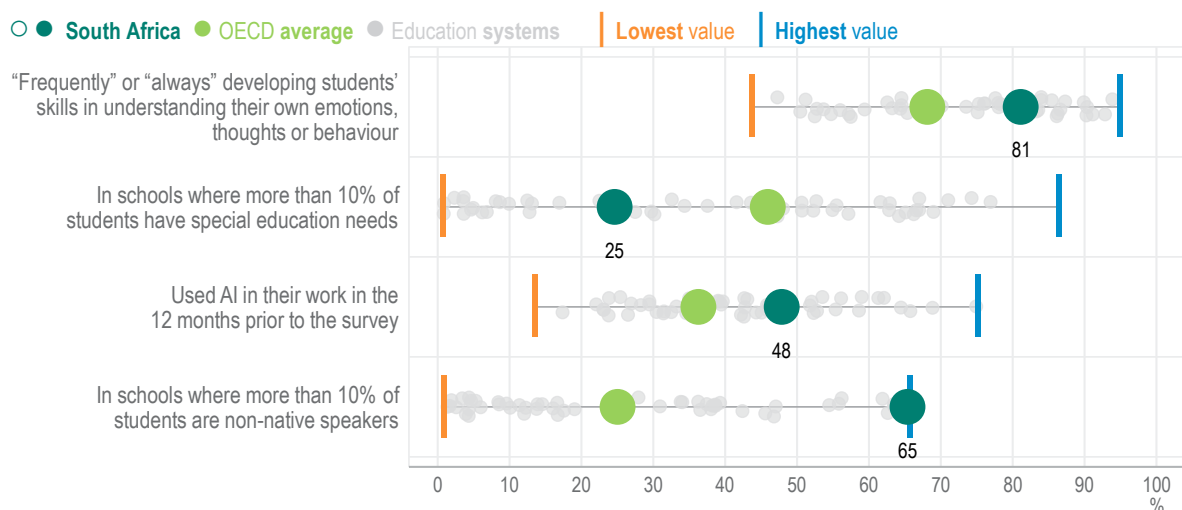
COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Strongly agree” that:		
	Everyone has certain amount of intelligence	People’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change	Someone can learn new things but can’t change their intelligence
Australia	0,7	1,1	1,7
Brazil	4,5	3,8	4,7
Colombia	3,4	2,9	4,1
Estonia	1,5	1,0	3,8
Finland	1,7	1,7	6,3
Japan	1,5	1,4	2,1
Morocco	10,5	6,1	9,9
Netherlands*	2,4	1,6	8,7
Singapore	2,7	1,8	3,6
South Africa	21,2	17,1	21,1
TALIS average-49	6,0	4,5	7,8
United Arab Emirates	6,9	4,9	9,7
United States	2,3	1,5	2,5
OECD average-27	2,8	2,3	5,4

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

Teaching for today’s world

33. In a rapidly changing teaching and learning environment, teachers are confronted with a range of contemporary issues where increased capabilities are required to manage the increased diversity of learners in their classrooms. The table below indicates how South African teachers compare to their global peers on student (learner) diversity; special education needs; socio-emotional skills and technology

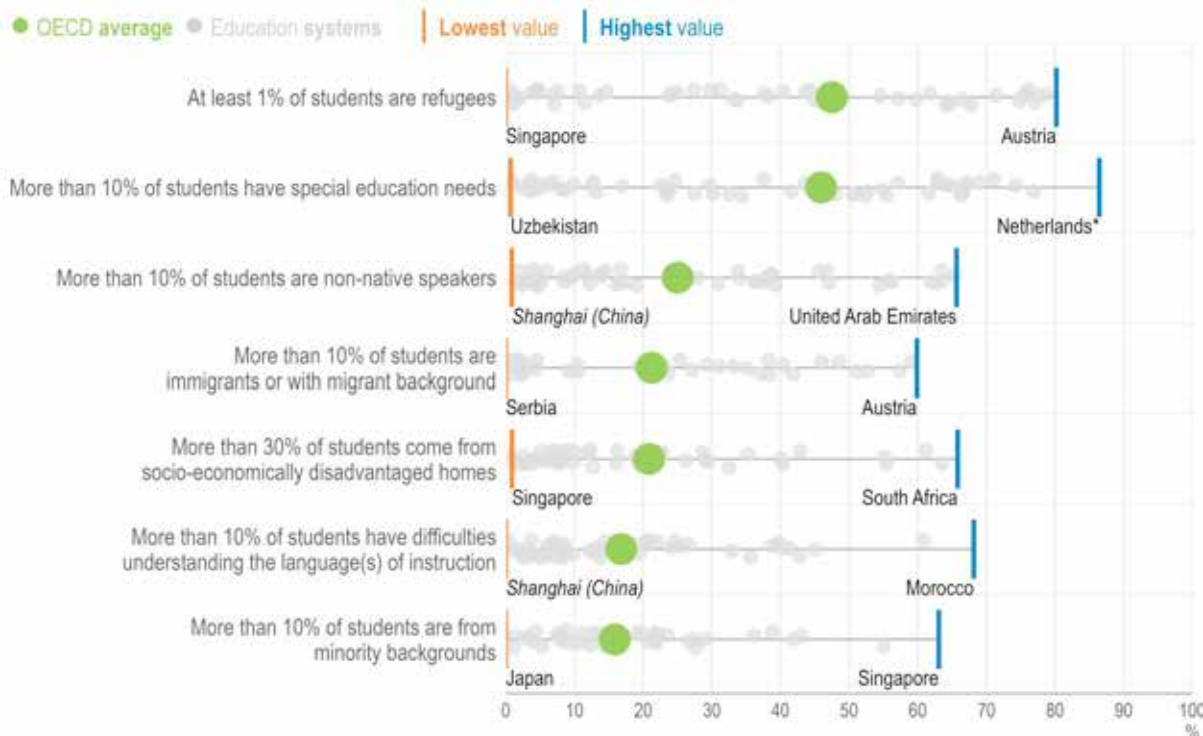
Figure 6: Teaching for today’s world



34. In South Africa, 65% of teachers work in schools where the share of learners whose first language is not the language of instruction, is above 10% (higher than the OECD average: 25%) and 24% teach in schools with at least 1% of learners who are refugees (lower than the OECD average: 47%). Compared to 2018, the share of teachers in schools where more than 10% of students are non-native speakers have not changed.
35. South Africa faces one of the most severe challenges globally with language as a barrier, as more than 50% of teachers reported that over 10% of their learners had difficulties understanding the language of instruction. A significant Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) mismatch is prevalent when 24% of teachers and almost a quarter of schools indicate that all learners in their class speak a first language different from the LOLT.
36. In the North West province, specifically, a high percentage of learners were estimated to struggle with the LOLT. For Special Education Needs (SEN), only 22% of schools nationally reported having no learners with such needs.
37. The share of teachers who teach in schools where more than 10% of students have special education needs is 25% (lower than the OECD average: 46%). The share of teachers in these schools did not change between 2018 and 2024. To note, in certain countries, the term has shifted from special education needs.
38. Social and emotional skills are vital for academic, professional, health, and societal outcomes, making it essential to understand teachers' competencies and confidence in teaching them. In South Africa, 83% of teachers feel they can support students' social and emotional learning "quite a bit" or "a lot" (higher than the OECD average: 73%), and 96% report being comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills to students (higher than the OECD average: 86%).
39. South African teachers are increasingly making use of AI as 48% of them report having used artificial intelligence (AI) in their work (higher than the OECD average: 36%). Teachers tend to use AI to efficiently learn about and summarise a topic (86%), generate lesson plans or activities (78%), and generate text for student feedback or parent/guardian communications (68%). The least frequent use of AI is to help learners practice new skills in real-life scenarios (59%), support students with special education needs (52%), and assess or mark student work (50%).
40. Beyond planning, 68% relied on AI to produce educational texts, while 65% leveraged it to analyse learner participation and performance data, enabling them to automatically adjust lesson difficulty to suit individual learner needs. Importantly, 52% of teachers used AI to support learners with special educational needs, highlighting its role in fostering inclusive education.
41. Among teachers who report that they have not used AI in their teaching in the 12 months prior to the survey, 57% report that they do not have the knowledge and skills to teach using AI (lower than the OECD average: 75%) and 75% say that their schools lack the infrastructure to use AI (higher than the OECD average: 37%).
42. Despite consensus on the value of digital tools, their integration into direct instruction remains limited. Only 13% of teachers consistently used digital resources to present information, and a mere 7% of teachers consistently assigned problems solvable through digital resources and tools. Contrary to the international trend, a reverse gender gap in use is observed, where a smaller share of female teachers is using digital resources and tools for direct instruction (41% of female teachers compared to 47% of male teachers nationally). Principals' actions in supporting contemporary educational change are notably infrequent. There is low digital integration support, with only 15% of principals very often supporting the integration of digital resources.
43. Most classes of teachers are characterised by high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, with 56% of teachers estimating that at least a third of their learners came from socio-economically disadvantaged homes. The figure below illustrates countries with high diversity in school composition.

Figure 7: School composition

Percentage of lower-secondary teachers teaching in schools with the following compositions



Percentage of lower-secondary teachers teaching in schools with the following compositions

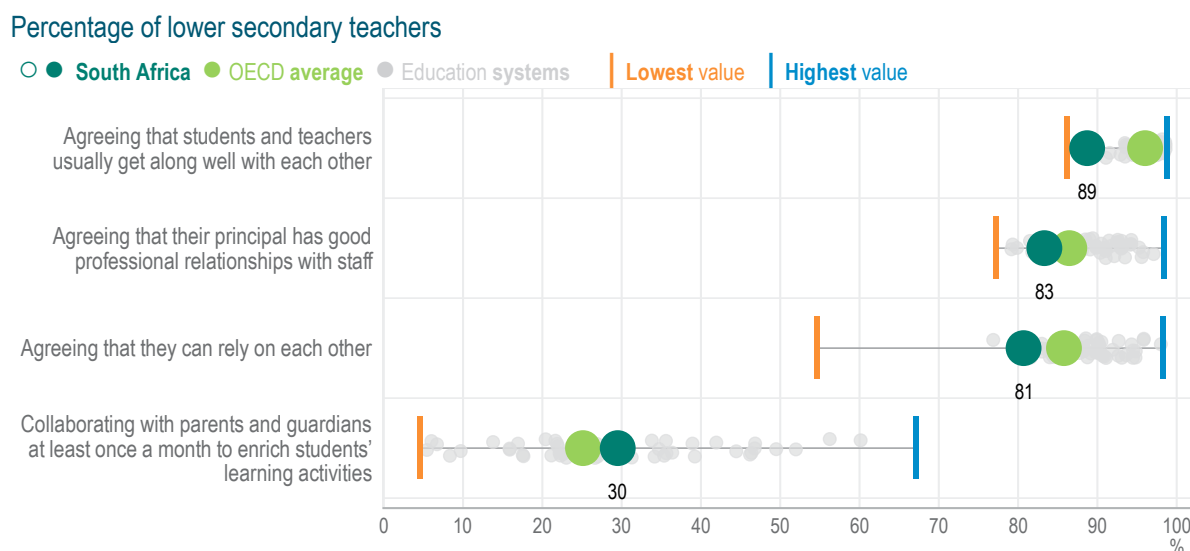
44. A significant gap exists in action concerning environmental sustainability and climate change education, with 20% of principals nationally having never or rarely acted to support teaching about climate change. They identified the most pressing barriers as curricular and resource-related: 48% cited insufficient teaching materials, 39% pointed to limited teacher knowledge, and 37% believed subject relevance was a concern. In contrast, ideological resistance and curricular mandates were seen as minimal issues, with only 2% viewing disbelief in climate change as a major barrier and just 13% citing the lack of curricular requirement.
45. TALIS 2024 data showed that principals were personally motivated, highly concerned, and convinced of the human causes of climate change. This conviction translated into a strong commitment to environmental and sustainability education (ESE) at the school leadership level, with high reported rates of curriculum integration and teacher encouragement. However, their perception of barriers tended to externalise the problem to teacher-centric issues (materials, subject relevance, subject knowledge) while downplaying the role of institutional policy gaps (e.g. lack of a formal strategy, management prohibition, or assessment mandate). This suggests a need for principals to move beyond high-level support and focus on formalising the integration of an ESE strategy into curriculum delivery and directly addressing teacher resource and training needs at schools.

Professional relationships

46. Strategic inter-school collaboration remains an untapped resource, with only 25% of principals engaging very often with their peers. Most principals internationally, felt they needed more support, and a significant portion felt a lack of influence in their jobs. The feeling of needing more support from authorities/ officials was widespread, with an average of 74.5% (TALIS average) of principals agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. This need for more support was highest in Morocco (90.7%), Colombia (88.7%), and South Africa (88.6%).

47. A noticeable proportion of school principals lack formal training in core leadership and administrative roles: 14.85% had never completed a school administrator or principal training programme; 16.66% had never completed an instructional leadership training course; and almost one in seven principals reported never having received formal training specific to their administrative role. A similar proportion also reported no formal training on instructional leadership.
48. South African principals are exceptionally and highly engaged in general leadership, as the frequency of engagement in leadership activities is above the international average. While highly engaged, their leadership focus prioritises discipline and accountability over instructional support with 90.8% of principals often ensuring that teachers felt responsible for learner outcomes.
49. Despite overall high leadership engagement, the intensity of essential instructional leadership practices is inconsistent. Frequent, formal, observation-based feedback is extremely rare in certain provinces. Nationally, 45% of principals very often addressed classroom discipline, but only 28% very often provided feedback to teachers based on instructional observations. The lowest intensity of formal feedback is observed in the North West and Western Cape, where only 2.5% and 5.0% of principals, respectively, reported providing observation-based feedback “Very often”.
50. However, 83% of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that their principal has good professional relationships with staff (lower than the OECD average: 86%), 83% report that their principal provides useful feedback to teachers and staff (higher than the OECD average: 77%), and 88% agree that their principal has confidence in the expertise of the teachers at their school (lower than the OECD average: 92%). This is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 8: Teachers’ professional relationships at lower secondary school



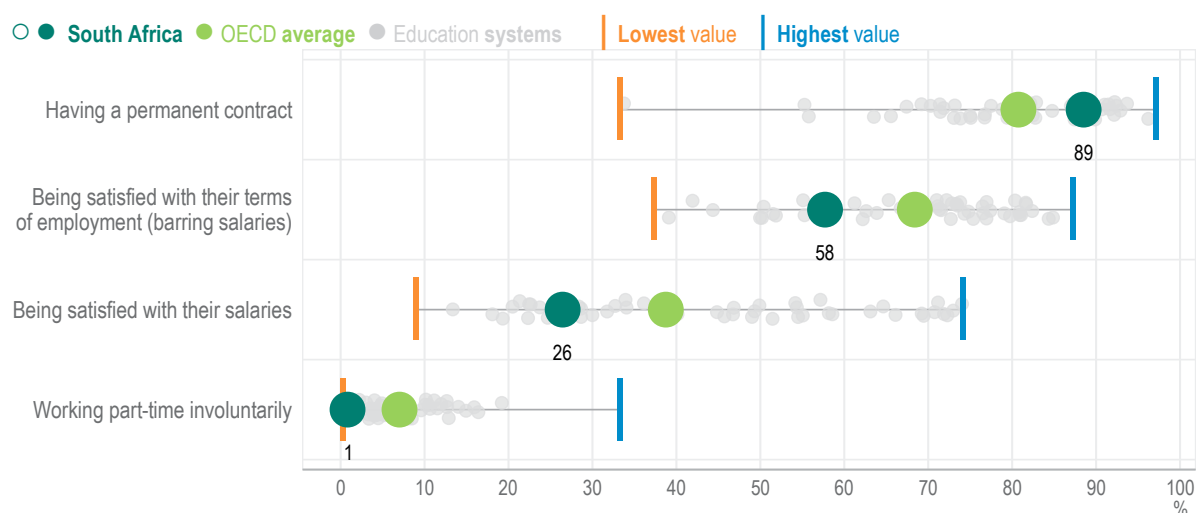
51. In South Africa, the most frequent forms of collaboration among teachers include working with other teachers in the school to ensure common standards in evaluations for assessing student progress (57%), exchanging teaching materials with colleagues (57%), and engaging in discussions about the learning development of specific students (56%). Between 2018 and 2024, the share of teachers engaging in deeper forms of collaboration have evolved in the following way: team teaching increased by 7 percentage points; providing feedback based on classroom observations increased by 6 percentage points; engaging in joint activities across different classes increased by 9 percentage points; and participating in collaborative professional learning increased by 26 percentage points. The professional relationships of teachers are indicated in the figure below.

Teachers' terms of employment

52. In South Africa, 89% of teachers have a permanent contract (higher than the OECD average: 81%). Between 2018 and 2024, the share of teachers with a permanent contract increased by 5 percentage points. Novice teachers are more likely to have a fixed-term contract than their experienced peers. The share of teachers who are employed on a fixed-term contract while reporting job security as highly important is 6% (lower than the OECD average: 9%).
53. Fifty eight percent (58%) of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that they are satisfied with their terms of employment (barring salaries) (lower than the OECD average: 68%). Teachers’ satisfaction with their terms of employment (barring salaries) has not changed since 2018.
54. Twenty six percent (26%) of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that they are satisfied with their salaries (lower than the OECD average: 39%). Between 2018 and 2024, teachers’ satisfaction with their salaries did not change. These figures are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 9: Terms of employment of lower secondary teachers

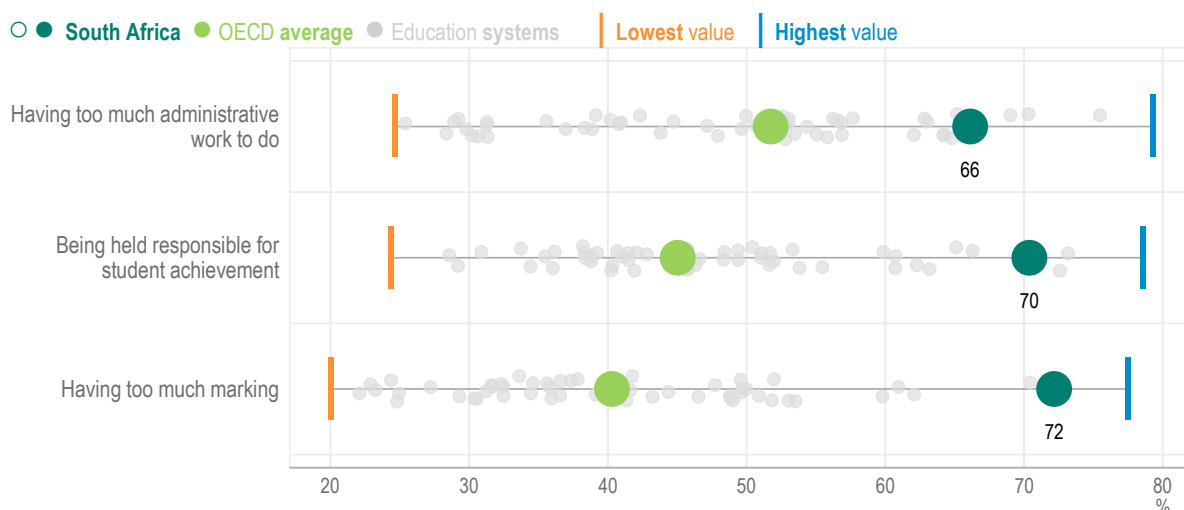
Percentage of lower secondary teachers



Demands of teaching

55. Both teachers and principals experience significant work-related stress, with 59% of teachers and 58.1% of principals reporting they experienced stress in their work “Quite a bit” or “A lot”. Principals report high levels of intense stress, with 30.6% reporting stress “A lot” placing South Africa among the countries with the highest intense stress levels globally. This stress has a significant negative health impact on principals: 31.2% reported the job negatively impacts their mental health, and 32.5% reported a negative impact on their physical health (“Quite a bit” or “A lot”), figures that are significantly above the TALIS and OECD international averages. Key teacher stressors relate to instructional workload and student conflict: 49% are stressed by excessive lesson preparation, and 31% are stressed by intimidation or verbal abuse from learners.
56. Teachers’ primary stress factors were tied to instructional workload, with their most intense stressors being excessive lesson preparation (49%) and too much marking (44%). Teachers’ most intense stressors are specific to demanding instructional and administrative classroom duties with the highest stressors reported being excessive lesson preparation (49%) and too much marking/correction (44%), linked to tests and examinations. The figure below illustrates the most common sources of stress among South African teachers

Figure 10: Most common sources of teachers' stress in South Africa

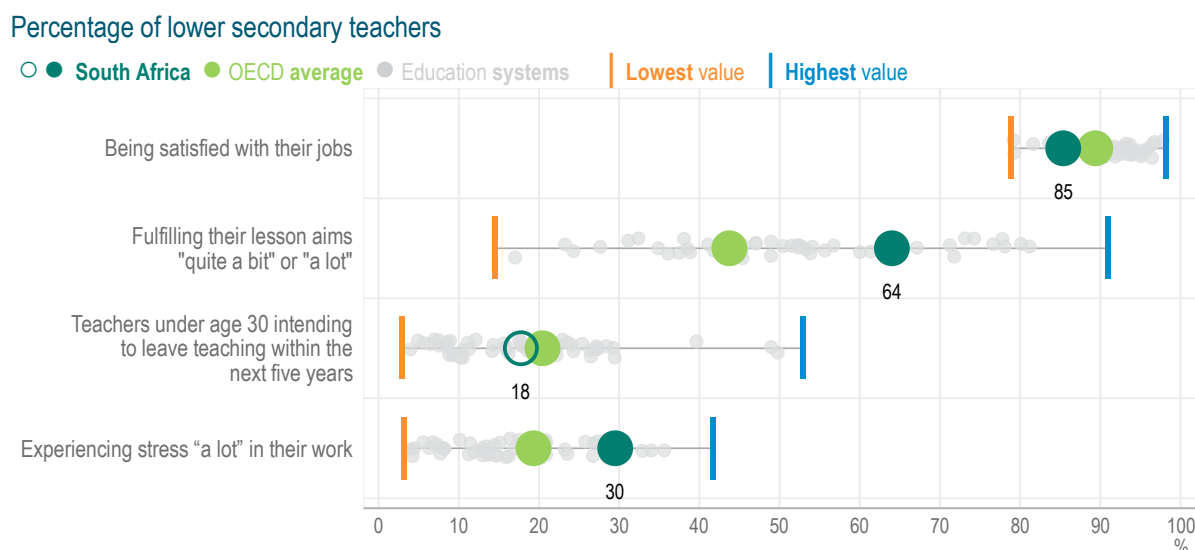


57. A substantial number of teachers also experience safety-related stress, with 31% reporting intimidation or verbal abuse from learners as a high stressor (“A lot”). A shared administrative stress burdens both roles: 44% of teachers and 41% of principals reported too much administrative work as a high source of stress (“A lot”). Principals’ stress also centres on accountability tasks, such as keeping up with changing requirements from authorities (38% “A lot” stress) and having too much teacher appraisal and feedback work (38% “A lot” stress).
58. South African teachers carried one of the highest classroom teaching workloads internationally, with significant provincial variation. The average teaching load in South Africa is 26.6 hours per week, notably higher than the OECD average of 21.2 hours. This heavy load is compounded by inefficient time use in the classroom, as time spent on actual teaching is only 66.44% of class time (compared to the OECD average of 74.9%), while time on administrative tasks is disproportionately high at 14.94% (compared to the OECD average of 9.4%). The burden of marking and corrections to learner’ work is also exceptionally heavy, with South African teachers spending 7.1 hours on this task, the highest among the selected international countries compared to the next highest, Singapore, at 6.4 hours. Provincially, the highest teaching loads are found in the North West (31.7 hours) and Northern Cape (30.9 hours), while the lowest load reported by teachers is in KwaZulu-Natal (23.8 hours). The total average time teachers spend on all job-related tasks at the sampled schools is 38 hours. Furthermore, a substantial portion of class time is consumed by maintaining order (average of 18.25%), which is also higher than the OECD average of 15.4%.

Teachers’ professional perceptions

59. Despite high stress, both teachers and principals reported high job satisfaction, with both groups feeling the advantages of their jobs outweigh the disadvantages. Similarly, both groups show low career regret, as a high proportion of both would choose the profession again. However, teachers express a greater desire to change (mobility), with a larger share expressing a desire to change schools compared to principals. Both groups have a similar, somewhat divided view on the social value perception of the profession.

Figure 11: Professional perceptions of lower secondary teachers



60. Teachers are highly driven by purpose, with the key factors of high importance for them being intrinsic motivation and purpose driven. However, there is a high risk of mobility or attrition due to short-term career planning: half of South African teachers indicated they planned to work only 1-10 more years. Although high intrinsic motivation exists, with 74% motivated by the ability to influence the next generation, this is counterbalanced by a significant mobility risk, as half of all teachers plan to work only 1-10 more years. Many teachers (based on combined responses of very likely and likely) indicated the following main causes of them leaving teaching in the next 5 years: further education and training (58%), retirement from work sector (58%), personal or family reasons (55%) and the appeal of a non-teaching position within education (54%).

Utility of the report by education stakeholders

61. The findings of the report are further explained in detail in the subsequent chapters. The report concludes with key policy recommendations for the sector. The intention of the report is not just to present statistics; but also, to provide a critical mirror that reflects our progress, challenges, and the essential differences that characterise our unique educational landscape when compared to other participating countries. An important objective of the DBE is for the TALIS results to act as a catalyst for evidence-based dialogue among policymakers, teacher unions, academic researchers, departmental officials, education faculties and professional learning communities that can lead to significant teacher development actions in support of improving teaching and learning.

Contents

FOREWORD	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
DISCLAIMERS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	28
ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS	30
STRUCTURE OF REPORT	31
CHAPTER 1: ADMINISTRATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN	34
ADMINISTRATION OF TALIS 2024 IN SOUTH AFRICA	34
RESEARCH DESIGN	35
CHAPTER 2: SCHOOL BACKGROUND, TEACHER, PRINCIPAL AND LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS	45
SCHOOL BACKGROUND	46
CURRENT WORK OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS	49
Employment status of teachers and principals	49
Number of years of experience of teachers and principals at their current school	49
Current work of teachers	51
LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS IN SAMPLED SCHOOLS	55
TEACHERS' BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS	56
Gender: Teachers	56
Age : Teachers	59
Gender: Principals	60
Age: Principals	61
Highest level of education completed	61
CHAPTER 3: TEACHERS' LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	66
INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION	66
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	73
Teacher Induction Programmes	85
CHAPTER 4: TEACHERS WORK PRACTICES	91
TEACHING PRACTICES	91
TEACHING IN THE TARGET CLASS	93
Number of learners in the target class	93
Composition of the target class	94
Primary subject categories in the target class	96
Percentage of time teachers spent on certain activities in the classroom	97
Teaching in the target class: The frequency of teachers' specific actions	99



Use of digital tools by teachers for lesson delivery in the target class	101
Assessment and Feedback to learners	102
Classroom management.....	104
Adaptation of teacher practice	105
Teacher autonomy in the classroom	107
Achievement of lesson aims in the target class	110
Capacity of teachers to provide quality instruction in the target class and hinderances experienced	111
Extent to which teachers can model social emotional learning in the target class	112
Teachers focus on developing learners' skills in the target class.....	113
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	116
Teacher collaboration	118
Teacher Self-efficacy: Teaching Strategies	119
Teacher Self efficacy: Working in Multicultural Classrooms	121
Use of language to read, write and communicate regularly	122
Growth mindset of teachers: Perceptions of intelligence and learning	124
Teachers' use of digital resources and tools in the classroom	130
CHAPTER 5: OCCUPATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS	142
TEACHERS OCCUPATIONAL PERCEPTIONS	144
Occupational well being	146
Stress Intensity: Sources of stress experienced by principals and teachers	147
Job satisfaction, commitment and intrinsic motivation	152
Principals' job satisfaction	154
TEACHER SELF EFFICACY	156
TEACHER MOBILITY	162
CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR TEACHING	174
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	175
Principals work at their current schools	176
Significant stakeholder responsibility for specific tasks at surveyed school	182
Principals' perceptions of teachers at their schools	190
SCHOOL CLIMATE	195
Teachers' perceptions on school climate	197
Teachers' responses about the use of different types of information to provide feedback to them at schools.....	201
Schooling in diverse environments	206
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION	209
CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	220
REFERENCES.....	224

Tables

Table 1: School participation rates.....	7
Table 2: International Level: How strongly teachers agreed with statements related to intelligence and learning	13
Table 3: The study population for TALIS 2024 South Africa included the following participants:	38
Table 4: South Africa participation and sample statistics.....	40
Table 5: Participation Rates.....	42
Table 6: International Level: Approximately how many 60-minute hours teachers spent on the following activities	51
Table 7: Provincial Level Approximately how many 60-minute hours teachers spent on the following activities	52
Table 8: Time spent in terms of 60-minute hours on the following tasks during their most recent complete calendar week.....	54
Table 9: Distribution of principals and teachers in selected international countries	58
Table 10: Distribution of Female principals and teachers in provinces	59
Table 11: The relationship between the South African 10-level NQF system and REQV levels for educators and the ISCED 2011 classifications	61
Table 12: International Level: Professional Learning characteristics that were important to teachers	77
Table 13: Provincial Level: Professional learning characteristics that were important to teachers	78
Table 14: International Level: Current professional development needs of principals	82
Table 15: Provincial Level: Current professional development needs of principals	83
Province.....	83
Table 16: Language combinations used by South African teaches to read, write and communicate regularly	123
Table 17: International Level: How strongly teachers agreed with statements related to intelligence and learning	126
Table 18: International Level: Average Percentage of teachers who strongly agreed on statements about intelligence and learning	128
Table 19: International Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities “A lot” with digital resources and tools	131
Table 20: International level: Means: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities “A lot” with digital resources and tools.....	132
Table 21: Provincial Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities “A lot” with digital resources and tools.....	133
PROVINCE.....	133
Table 22: International Level: Share of female teachers who use digital tools for direct instruction.....	138
Table 23: Provincial Level: Share of female teachers who use digital tools for direct instruction	139
Table 24: International Level: Percentage of principals reporting that certain factors happened to them a lot at their schools	147
Table 25: International Level: Mean percentage of principals where the following factors occurred “Quite a bit” or “A lot” to them at their schools	148
Table 26: Provincial Level Percentage of principals Percentage of principals reporting that certain factors happened to them a lot at their schools	149
Table 27: International Level: How strongly principals expressed satisfaction about aspects of their work	154



Table 28: International Level: Percentage of principals that “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” with statements on job satisfaction	155
Table 29: Provincial Level: International Level: How strongly principals expressed satisfaction about aspects of their work.....	156
Table 30: International level: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners	157
Table 31: International level: Means: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners.....	158
Table 32: Provincial Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners.....	159
Table 33: International Level: The extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills	160
Table 34: International Level: Means: Extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills	161
Table 35: Provincial Level: The extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills	162
Table 36: International Level: Frequency that principals engaged in management activities related to teachers during the last 12 months ..	177
Table 37: International Level: Means: Frequency that principals engaged with these activities during the last 12 months	178
Table 38: Provincial Level: The frequency which principals engaged with these activities during the last 12 months	179
Table 39: International Level: Principals agreement with statements about teachers at their schools.....	191
Table 40: International Level: Means: Principals agreement with statements about teachers at their schools	192
Table 41: Provincial Level: How strongly principals agreed with statements about teachers at their schools.....	193

Figures

Figure 1: Change in the average age of teachers from 2018 to 2024.....	7
Figure 2: Teachers' age categories.....	8
Figure 3: Opportunities for novice teachers to learn in the workplace.....	9
Figure 4: Status of the teaching profession	10
Figure 5: Teachers' decision-making authority.....	11
Figure 6: Teaching for today's world	13
Figure 7: School composition	15
Figure 8: Teachers' professional relationships at lower secondary school	16
Figure 9: Terms of employment of lower secondary teachers	17
Figure 10: Most common sources of teachers' stress in South Africa	18
Figure 11: Professional perceptions of lower secondary teachers	19
Figure 12: Distribution ISCED Levels 2 Schools in South Africa (Grade 8 and 9).....	36
Figure 13: Distribution of TALIS 2024 South African sampled schools.....	37
Figure 14: Frequency of schools by teacher count: TALIS Core Survey.....	41
Figure 15: Frequency of schools by teacher count: Teacher Knowledg Survey	42
Figure 16: Factors considered when learners are admitted to sampled schools	47
Figure 17: Number of years of work experience of principals regardless of whether they worked full time or part time	50
Figure 18: 60 minutes hours spent in most recent complete calendar week	53
Figure 19: Estimated broad percentages of Grade 8&9 learners characteristics	55
Figure 20: Gender distribution of Teachers.....	56
Figure 21: Percentage of female teachers at lower secondary schools.....	57
Figure 22: Change in the average age of teachers since 2018.....	60
Figure 23: Gender distribution of Principals	61
Figure 24: Highest level of education completed by teachers	62
Figure 25: Highest level of education completed by principals	63
Figure 26: Percentage of lower-secondary teachers who completed a fast-track programme as their first teacher qualification.....	68
Figure 27: Year in which teachers completed their first teaching qualification	68
Figure 28: Teachers' perceptions of their first teaching qualification	69
Figure 29: The extent to which their formal education and training had prepared teachers for aspects of their teaching in 2024	70
Figure 30: Percentage of lower-secondary teachers who reported that their formal education made them feel prepared "quite a bit" or "a lot" with various aspects of their teaching	71
Figure 31: The extent to which teachers' formal education had prepared then for the use of digital resources and tools for their teaching in 2024.....	72



Figure 32: Teacher participation in formal induction and activities at school level	74
Figure 33: Provisions that were part of teachers' induction when they began work at their school.....	74
Figure 34: Teachers' participation in professional learning activities in the last 12 months	75
Figure 35: Topics included in Teachers professional learning activities during the last 12 months	76
Figure 36: Characteristics of professional learning activities that were important for teachers	78
Figure 37: Key areas in which teachers needed professional learning activities	79
Figure 38: Barriers to teachers' participation in professional learning activities	80
Figure 39: Professional development activities that principals participated in during the last 12 months	81
Figure 40: Current professional development needs of principals in specific areas.....	84
Figure 41: Provisions included in teacher induction at surveyed schools	85
Figure 42: The frequency of individual teacher appraisal by different stakeholders.....	87
Figure 43: Responses to the outcomes of formal teacher appraisal at schools	88
Figure 44: Seven Sub-domains proposed as indicators for teaching practices in TALIS 2024	92
Figure 45: Number of learners currently enrolled in the target class	93
Figure 46: Teachers reporting that more than 10% of learners have difficulties understanding the language of instruction, by age.....	94
Figure 47: Composition of the target class in surveyed schools	95
Figure 48: Primary Subject categories in the target class	97
Figure 49: Percentage of class time that is typically spent on activities	98
Figure 50: Frequency of strategies used by teachers in the target class.....	99
Figure 51: Change in teachers who gave critical thinking tasks, from 2018 to 2024.....	101
Figure 52: Tasks performed with digital resources and tools by teachers for lessons in the target class	102
Figure 53: Teachers' methods of assessing learners in the target class	103
Figure 54: The extent to which teachers managed situations that happened in the target class	104
Figure 55: Frequency of actions performed by teachers to engage learners in the target class.....	106
Figure 56: Frequency of actions performed by teachers to vary learning and experience in the target class.....	107
Figure 57: Teacher autonomy in aspects of planning and teaching in the target class	109
Figure 58: The extent to which the lessons taught over the past week in the target class achieved its aims	110
Figure 59: Specific issues that hindered teachers' capacity to provide quality instruction in the target class	111
Figure 60: Extent to which teachers can model SEL in the classroom	112
Figure 61: Frequency of teachers focus on developing learners' skills in the target class.....	113
Figure 62: Teacher actions to improve rapport with a male learner	114
Figure 63: Teacher actions to encourage a female learner to like group work	115
Figure 64: Frequency of professional collaboration and engagement at school	119

Figure 65: Extent to which teachers implemented certain teaching strategies	120
Figure 66: Extent to which teachers used learner centred culturally responsive teaching approaches	121
Figure 67: Teachers use of South African Languages	122
Figure 68: Languages teachers used to read,write and communicate regularly	123
Figure 69: Teachers' views on intelligence and learning.....	129
Figure 70: Teacher's self-efficacy in the use of digital tools and resources	134
Figure 71: Teachers views on the use of digital resources and tools	135
Figure 72: Ways in which teachers used AI in the classroom.....	136
Figure 73: Reasons why teachers do or don't use AI to facilitate learning	136
Figure 74: Percentage of lower secondary teachers who "frequently" or "always" use digital tools to present information through direct instruction	137
Figure 75: Countries with more female teachers using digital tools for direction	139
Figure 76: Provinces' share of female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction	140
Figure 77: Factors that are important for teachers	144
Figure 78: Number of years teachers wanted to continue to in the profession	145
Figure 79: Factors that would cause teachers to leave the profession in the next 5 years	145
Figure 80: Factors that impact on the wellbeing of teachers	146
Figure 81: Factors that impact on the wellbeing of principals	146
Figure 82: Sources of Teachers' stress at schools	150
Figure 83: Sources of Principals stress at schools	151
Figure 84: How teachers generally felt about their jobs	152
Figure 85: How principals generally felt about their jobs	153
Figure 86: Teachers travelling abroad for professional purposes in their career as a teacher or during their teacher education training.....	163
Figure 87: Purpose and duration of professional experience travel abroad	164
Figure 88: Current representation on the School Management Team.....	175
Figure 89: Frequency of principals' engagement in the following <u>activities</u> in their current schools during the last 12 months.	180
Figure 90: Frequency of <u>actions</u> taken by principals related to the following areas in this school during the last 12 months.	181
Figure 91: Time spent by principals on specific tasks at their schools	181
Figure 92: Overview of significant stakeholder responsibility for specific tasks at surveyed schools	183
Figure 93: Responsibility for appointing or hiring teachers.....	184
Figure 94: Responsibility for dismissing or suspending teachers from employment	184
Figure 95: Responsibility for establishing teachers' starting salaries including setting pay scales	185
Figure 96: Responsibility for determine teachers' salary increases.....	186
Figure 97: Responsibility for deciding on budget allocations within the school.....	186

Figure 98: Responsibility for establishing learner disciplinary policies and procedures	187
Figure 99: Responsibility for establishing learner assessment policies including national, provincial or district assessments	187
Figure 100: Responsibility for approving learners' admission to the school	188
Figure 101: Responsibility for choosing which learning materials (LTSMs) are used.....	188
Figure 102: Responsibility for determining the course content including national/provincial curricula	189
Figure 103: Responsibility for deciding which subjects are offered	189
Figure 104: Principals agreement or disagreement with statements about teachers at their schools	194
Figure 105: Overview: Where surveyed principals were effective and where they experienced notable challenges in their leadership at schools	195
Figure 106: Teachers' agreement or disagreement with statements about leadership, participation and collaboration at schools.....	198
Figure 107: Teachers' agreement or disagreement with statements applied to their schools- Helping learners	199
Figure 108: Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership.....	199
Figure 109: Teachers' perceptions of general climate at their schools	200
Figure 110: Feedback from Observation of my classroom teaching	201
Figure 111: Learner survey responses related to my teaching	202
Figure 112: Assessment of my content knowledge	202
Figure 113: External results of learners I teach	203
Figure 114: School based and classroom-based results.....	204
Figure 115: Self-Assessment of my work	205
Figure 116: Surveyed schools that included learners from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds.....	207
Figure 117: School policy for grouping learners with different abilities.....	207
Figure 118: Principals' responses on the implementation of policies and practices in relation to diversity at their schools	208
Figure 119: Principal's evaluation of teachers' perceptions of learner diversity at their schools	208
Figure 120: The extent that teachers could do the following activities related to environmental sustainability	210
Figure 121: Extent of teachers thinking about climate change	211
Figure 122: Teacher statements that best described their teaching about climate change in their classrooms.....	211
Figure 123: Reasons that teachers didn't teach lessons about climate change.....	212
Figure 124: Teachers' opinions about the world's climate change in recent decades	213
Figure 125: The role of principals in supporting education about environmental sustainability at their schools	214
Figure 126: Principals' views about barriers to teaching about climate change in their schools	215
Figure 127: Principals' personal concerns about climate change	216
Figure 128: Principals' opinions about the world's climate and the idea that it has been changing in recent decades.	216

INTRODUCTION

1. The 2024 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is the fourth cycle of a global initiative developed under the OECD's Indicators of Education Systems (INES) project. Designed to generate a coherent set of indicators, TALIS provides a robust foundation for cross-national comparisons of education systems among OECD member and partner countries that includes South Africa. Often referred to as the “voice of teachers,” TALIS offers participating teachers and principals to share their opinions on the conditions that influence their work at schools and providing education stakeholders with these unique insights into the perspectives and experiences of teachers and school principals so that there is a deeper understanding of the strategic interventions that education systems can implement to improve teacher quality and learning outcomes.
2. The purpose of TALIS is to support participating countries or territories with information on the development of teaching as a profession, the review and development of pedagogical practices, and the comparison of educational policies and approaches across countries. TALIS, as a cross –sectional survey without teacher data linked to student learning outcomes, does not investigate teacher and school effects directly, but it does investigate the extent to which teachers use practices that have been established through research as being associated with enhanced learning outcomes, including effective outcomes, so that the study reflects a broad view of the potential effectiveness of teachers and schools. (ACER, QEG, IEA.2025[9])
3. The overall objective of TALIS is to generate reliable indicators of teachers, school leaders and teaching that provide the basis for valid international comparisons and perspectives on changes or consistencies over time. The analyses of these indicators are linked to educational policies and practices and are primarily oriented to the following groups of stakeholders:
 - policy makers, to help them review and develop policies that promote the teaching profession and the best conditions for effective teaching and learning.
 - teachers, school leaders, and education practitioners to facilitate reflections on, and discussions of, educational practices and how those practices might be enhanced.
 - Education Faculties to review and improve their programmes by connecting ITE with the realities of modern teaching, gaining insights into teacher preparedness and satisfaction, and using the data to inform curriculum development and professional standards. By understanding the gaps between training and classroom practice, and what teachers actually need, Higher Education Institutions can better prepare graduates for challenges like teaching in diverse classroom and school contexts, use new technologies, and adaptive, inclusive teaching approaches.
 - researchers, to build upon past research literature on each content area (as identified in a conceptual framework) and provide bases for further research using TALIS and other data.
4. Each cycle of TALIS produces fully documented data files that provide the bases for:
 - national and international analyses of teaching and learning issues
 - international reports that map teaching processes cross-nationally
 - thematic reports of particular teaching and learning issues
 - national reports that focus on issues of policy interest to TALIS participants
 - scholarly articles published in scholarly journals.

5. The conceptual framework for TALIS 2024 was shaped by a collaborative process involving researchers, the OECD, international stakeholders, and participating countries and territories. The survey integrates key concepts from contemporary research literature alongside pressing policy interests, ensuring relevance and applicability across diverse educational contexts. In this cycle, TALIS gathered data from teachers across more than 50 education systems, reflecting a broad and inclusive scope.
6. TALIS 2024 was strategically designed to address four contemporary challenges facing education systems today:
 - Diversity and equity
 - Educational use of technology
 - Social and emotional learning
 - Environmental and sustainability education

In addition, the survey explores four core features central to teaching and learning:

- Teachers' learning and development
 - Teachers' work practices
 - Occupational perceptions
 - Institutional environments for learning
7. A key challenge in the design of TALIS 2024 was to achieve a balance between the continuity of knowledge, evolving policy priorities, and the refinement of measurement tools across the successive cycles. The result is a comprehensive and forward-looking framework that supports evidence-based decision-making and fosters international dialogue on educational improvement.
 8. This is the second cycle in which South Africa participated with an increased sample of 389 schools that included schools which also participated in the TALIS Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS) which is a new module in the 2024 cycle focusing on assessing teachers' general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) which will provide deeper insights into the foundational understanding of how learners learn, classroom management, instructional design, and assessment strategies. The GPK is applicable across all disciplines and is crucial for effective teaching. The TKS explores how teachers apply this knowledge in practice, especially in areas like inclusive education, technology use, and social-emotional learning. The South Africa country report on the findings from the TKS will be developed in March 2026.

ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

BRR	Balanced Repeated Replication
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ESE	Environmental Sustainability Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Qualification
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
PYEI	Presidential Youth Employment Initiative
QMS	Quality Management System
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
SCHWGTC	Final Principal Weight
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TCHWGT	Final Teacher Weight
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

1. The OECD's 2005 report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* provided the foundation for TALIS by identifying the core challenges in teacher policy and called for the provision of better data to guide education policy development and reform.
2. TALIS became the key tool for collecting and providing data on teacher learning and development for several reasons: It brought attention to global concerns about teacher quality, professional development, and retention. It emphasised the importance of ongoing, relevant professional learning for educators. TALIS tracked the types, frequency, and perceived impact of professional development activities, helping countries assess whether teachers were receiving adequate support. It also foregrounded the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives, leading to direct surveys about their working conditions, beliefs, and challenges. This approach gave policymakers valuable insight into classroom realities. Additionally, TALIS identified the critical role of school leadership and appraisal, prompting the inclusion of data on teacher appraisal, feedback, and leadership—factors essential for teacher motivation and effectiveness.
3. This led to the development of the enduring features of teachers, teaching and learning that have been the focus of successive cycles of TALIS which have enabled benchmarking and shared learning to help participating countries to evaluate how their teacher policies have impacted on the quality of teacher and teaching and learning so that requisite improvements could be implemented where needed.
4. The conceptual mapping of TALIS 2024 Core Survey (ACER, QED, IEA: 2015:14) identifies and illustrates how these enduring features and contemporary issues and contexts intersect at schools, and impact on the work of teachers and principals. Some of the enduring features that have been investigated in previous TALIS cycles included teachers' initial teacher education (ITE) and professional learning throughout their careers and the climate of their schools.
5. TALIS 2024 focused on teachers' learning and development, teachers' work practices, occupational perceptions and institutional environments. Discussion with educational experts and organisations led to the inclusion of the contemporary issues diversity and equity, the educational use of technology, social and emotional learning of learners, and environmental sustainability education because these issues do affect teachers' responsibilities and expectations and the work of participating countries' education systems. The survey also cross-examined the contemporary issues from the lens of the enduring features for an understanding of their impact on teachers, teaching and learning.
6. Each enduring feature comprises of specific domains to organise TALIS data more meaningfully and enables deeper insights into how these contemporary issues and enduring factors impact teaching and school management in South Africa.

4 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FOR EDUCATION SYSTEMS			
Diversity and equity	The educational use of technology	Social and Emotional learning	Environmental sustainability education
4 ENDURING FEATURES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING			
Teachers, learning and development	Teachers' work practices	Occupational perceptions	Institutional environments for learning
DOMAINS			
1. Initial Teacher Education	1. Teaching Practices	1. Job satisfaction	1. School Leadership
2. Continuing Professional Development	2. Professional Practices	2. Occupational well being	2. School Climate
		3. Teacher Self-efficacy	
		4. Perceived value of teaching	
		5. Teacher mobility	

3. These enduring features and their intersection with the contemporary issues have guided the organisation and presentation of the South African findings in the following chapters:

CHAPTER	FOCUS
Chapter 1	Administration and Research Design: Overview of the sampling, participation and administration of the core survey.
Chapter 2	Teacher, Leader and school characteristics
Chapter 3	Teachers learning and development Findings are presented on two domains: Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Learning.
Chapter 4	Teachers' work practices Findings are presented on two domains: Teaching Practice and Professional Practice.
Chapter 5	Occupational perceptions Findings are presented on two domains: Job satisfaction, occupational well-being and perceived value of teaching and Teacher self-efficacy
Chapter 6	Institutional environments for teaching Findings are presented on two domains: School Leadership and School Climate
Chapter 7	Recommendations and conclusion

4. Findings across chapters are presented at an international, national and/or provincial level. This report includes the findings on 58 of the 84 items on the Teacher Questionnaire and 28 of 52 items on the Principals Questionnaire so that we could have more targeted insights that align with current national education policies and strategic goals. A narrower scope enabled a more nuanced analysis of key issues, by concentrating on selected items with direct policy implications like teacher retention or use of technology makes the report more useful for decision and policy makers and has contributed to findings around a few impactful themes that can be used to respond to the professional development needs of educators.
5. In several domains we benchmarked South Africa's findings with similar countries for focused comparisons with countries facing similar challenges so that policy lessons more applicable locally: Countries with similar economic profiles and education systems included Brazil, Colombia and Morocco, which is the only other African nation participating in TALIS. Education systems that are widely recognised as performing better than South Africa's included Singapore, Estonia, Finland, Netherlands and Japan. Australia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and United States were also included because these countries and education systems have a range of strong pull factors that attract South African teachers opting to teach overseas.

CHAPTER 1: Administration and Research Design



CHAPTER 1: ADMINISTRATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

ADMINISTRATION OF TALIS 2024 IN SOUTH AFRICA

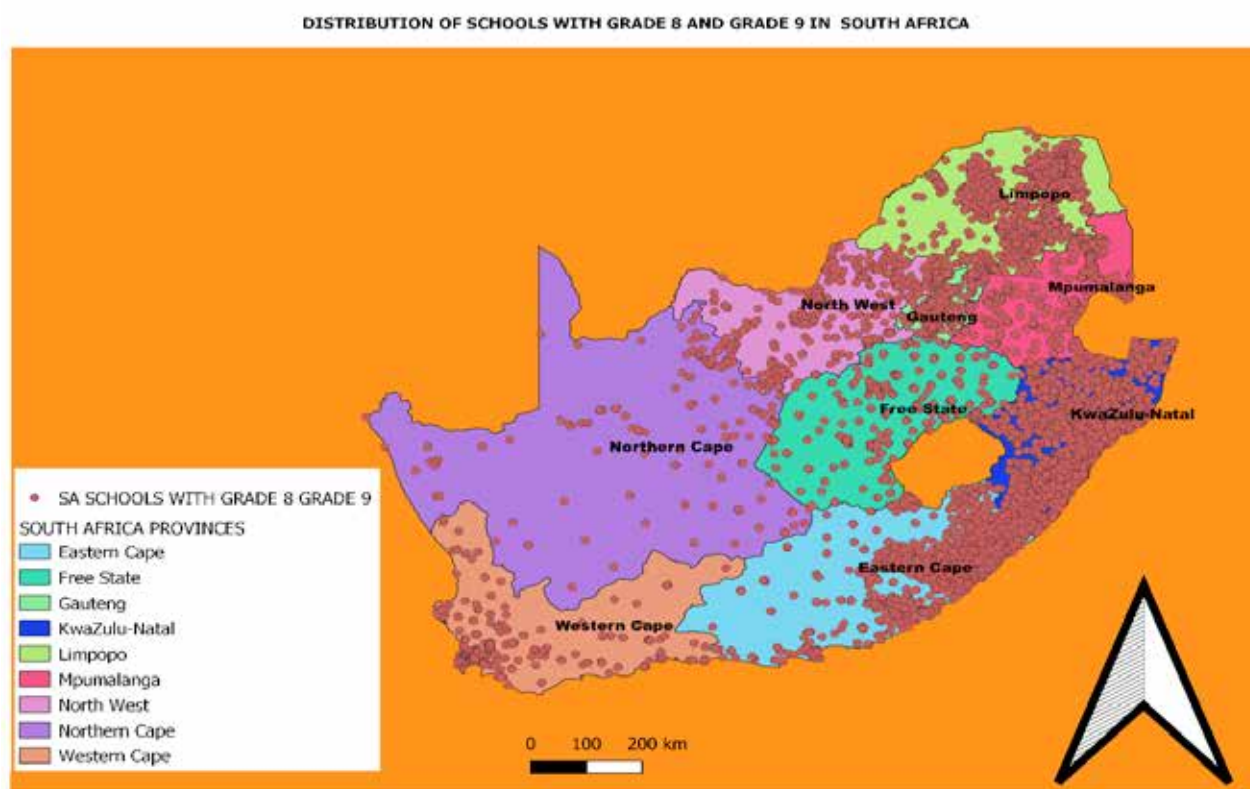
1. According to the OECD TALIS 2024 Conceptual Framework (ACER, QED. IEA. 2025: 8-9), TALIS surveys for teachers and principals are developed and implemented to generate valid, reliable and comparable TALIS surveys are developed and implemented to generate valid, reliable and comparable data on robust indicators that allow policy-relevant analyses about teachers and school leaders, their development, and their professional and pedagogical work, as well as the environments and conditions in which teaching and learning take place.
2. Sample sizes (typically a minimum of 4 000 teachers from 200 schools per country) are sufficiently large to generate estimates with high precision, and standards were specified to ensure largely unbiased estimates (such as requiring participation rates of 75% of sampled schools and 75% of sampled teachers within each country or territory). Probability samples of schools and simple random samples of teachers within schools were surveyed to obtain data that was representative of the school and teacher populations in each participating country or economy.
3. TALIS 2024 questionnaires for teachers and for principals each required around 45-60 minutes to complete. They were administered online (with provision for print-based administration as an option). The questionnaire material in the source versions was adapted and translated to national languages and extensive verification procedures are in place to maximise the comparability of TALIS data across countries. TALIS questionnaire development involved pilot studies (focus group pre-testing) and field trials before instruments were finalised prior to their administration in final data collections.
4. TALIS 2024 marked the second cycle in which South Africa has participated with an increased sample of 389 schools that included schools which also participated in the TALIS Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS) which is a new module in the 2024 cycle focusing on assessing teachers' general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) which will provide deeper insights into the foundational understanding of how learners learn, classroom management, instructional design, and assessment strategies. The GPK is applicable across all disciplines and is crucial for effective teaching. TKS explores how teachers apply this knowledge in practice, especially in areas like inclusive education, technology use, and social-emotional learning. The South Africa country report on the findings from the TKS will be developed in March 2026.
5. Schools participating in the Core Survey completed two questionnaires: one for teachers and one for principals that were administered online at the sampled schools between June-August 2024 (in in the Southern Hemisphere). In South Africa, the target group of teachers and principals were sampled from Lower Secondary (Grades 8 or 9 level) which equates to ISCED Level 2 according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) developed by UNESCO to provide a globally recognized framework for comparing education systems.
6. The overall objective of TALIS is to generate reliable indicators of teachers, school leaders and teaching that provide the basis for valid international comparisons and perspectives on changes or consistencies over time. The analyses of these indicators are linked to educational policies and practices and are primarily oriented to the following groups of stakeholders:
 - policy makers, to help them review and develop policies that promote the teaching profession and the best conditions for effective teaching and learning.
 - teachers, school leaders, and education practitioners to facilitate reflections on, and discussions of, educational practices and how those practices might be enhanced.

- researchers, to build upon past research literature on each content area (as identified in a conceptual framework) and provide bases for further research using TALIS and other data.
7. Each cycle of TALIS produces fully documented data files that provide the bases for:
- national and international analyses of teaching and learning issues
 - international reports that map teaching processes cross-nationally
 - thematic reports of particular teaching and learning issues
 - national reports that focus on issues of policy interest to TALIS participants
 - scholarly articles published in international journals.
8. To prepare South African teachers and principals for their participation in TALIS 2024, the Department of Basic Education used a cascade model of training, by convening a training session for the nine provincial coordinators who would then facilitate the training of designated School Coordinators at all sampled schools. The training manual content and mediated discussions covered the following information:
- The role of the school coordinator
 - The main tasks of the school coordinator
 - Preparation of the Teacher Listing Form
 - Administering the questionnaire
 - Quality control during the main survey
9. To ensure that all participating schools had the necessary access and resources to complete the questionnaires online within the allocated timeframe for the Southern Hemisphere, the Department of Basic Education procured 6800 sim cards with 5GB day/night data availability from a mobile phone company. Sim cards were issued to every teacher participating in every sampled school. The DBE managed and coordinated the distribution and receipt of these sim cards by the intended users through a rigorous, yet arduous administrative process was maintained at school level where a register containing the sim card number corresponding names of teachers to whom these were issued.
10. Prior to issuing the sim cards to schools, the DBE was required to comply with the RICA (Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication Related Information Act), a South African law that requires the registration of personal details with a mobile service provider when purchasing a SIM card. RICA is a mandatory law, and failing to register a SIM card can result in the service being locked or deactivated. It helps make communication channels less of a haven for criminals and allows for better investigation of crime committed using telecommunications. This RICA registration links a user's identity to their SIM card, allowing law enforcement to track criminal activity and helping to protect individuals from illegal communication interception. By linking a specific person (teacher or principal) to a mobile number and SIM card, the RICA can help authorities track down criminals who use cell phones for illegal activities. The Act also outlines the rules for lawful interception and monitoring of communications, ensuring that personal and sensitive information is protected from unauthorized access and the privacy of the sim card users was protected.

RESEARCH DESIGN

11. TALIS 2024 employs a cross-sectional, school-based survey design targeting teachers and principals at ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) Level 2 (lower secondary education). The Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS) was also administered to a subsample of teachers.

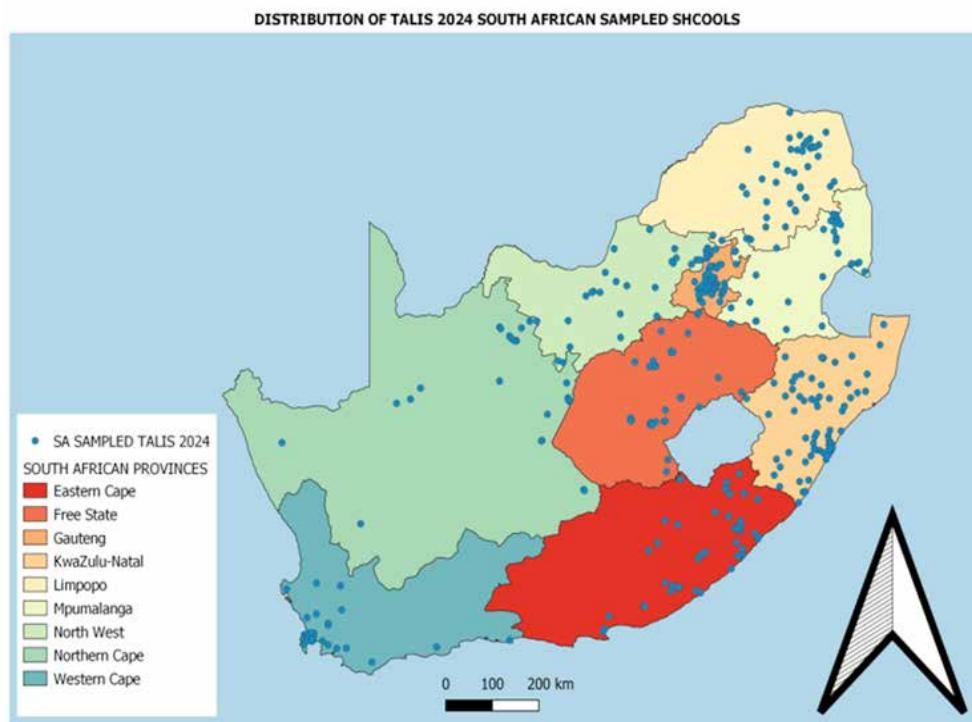
Figure 12: Distribution ISCED Levels 2 Schools in South Africa (Grade 8 and 9)



Sampling Strategy

12. A two-stage stratified probability sampling method was used:
 - Stage 1: Schools were randomly selected from a national sampling frame, stratified by province and school type (public/private).
 - Stage 2: Within each selected school, a random sample of teachers was drawn. The principal of each school was also invited to participate.
13. The sample was designed to yield nationally representative estimates:
 - Main Study (MS): Minimum of 400 schools and 20 teachers per school.
 - TKS: Minimum of 15 teachers per school.

Figure 13: Distribution of TALIS 2024 South African sampled schools



Instrumentation

14. The survey instruments included:

- Teacher Questionnaire (58 out of 84 items in country report)
- Principal Questionnaire (28 out of 52 items in country report)
- Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS)

Data Collection Procedures

15. Data collection was conducted using online questionnaires. School coordinators facilitated within-school logistics. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Study Population

Table 3: The study population for TALIS 2024 South Africa included the following participants:

Sample	Population Estimate	Gender Distribution		Age Distribution	
Teachers Core Survey	87,309	women	61.7%	Under 30	25%
		men	37.1%	30-39	28%
		missing/other	1.2%	40-49	15.8%
				50-59	26.6%
				60+	4.6%
Principals	7,806	women	32.4%	Under 40	7%
		men	67.2%	40-49	20%
		missing/other	1.2%	50-59	62.5%
				60+	10.7%
Teachers (TKS)	85,677	women	64.2%	Under 25	7.0%
		men	34.7%	25-29	19.3%
				30-39	28.1%
				40-49	15.3%
				50-59	25.5%
				60+	4.8%

16. These estimates were derived using calibrated sampling weights and Balanced Repeated Replication (BRR) zones to ensure national representativeness and accurate variance estimation.

Quality Assurance

17. Quality control measures included:
- A field trial prior to the main survey
 - International and national quality observations
 - Participation monitoring
 - Data verification and validation protocols
18. South Africa adhered to the OECD's TALIS 2024 Technical Standards, ensuring comparability and data integrity.

Data Management and Confidentiality

19. Data was anonymised and securely transmitted to the international consortium. All procedures complied with South Africa's data protection laws and OECD confidentiality protocols.

Weighting and Variance Estimation

20. To ensure representativeness and accurate variance estimation, Balanced Repeated Replication (BRR) weights were applied:

Teacher Weights (ISCED 2)

- Final teacher weight: TCHWGT (Code)
- BRR zones: 178 across strata
- Uneven Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were collapsed or combined in final zones

Principal Weights

- Final principal weight: SCHWGTC (Code)
- BRR zones: 157
- Special treatment applied to zones with uneven PSUs

TKS Weights

- Final teacher weight (TKS): TCHWGT
- BRR zones: 177
- Similar adjustments for uneven PSUs

Standard Errors and Variance Estimation: What Standard Errors entail

21. Standard errors quantify the uncertainty or sampling variability in survey estimates. In large-scale sample surveys like TALIS, standard errors reflect how much an estimate (such as a mean or percentage) would vary if the survey were repeated with different samples drawn from the same population. They are crucial for:
 - Constructing confidence intervals around estimates
 - Testing statistical significance
 - Assessing the precision and reliability of survey results

Variance Estimation in TALIS 2024

22. TALIS 2024 uses a complex, stratified two-stage sampling design. Standard formulas for standard errors (assuming simple random sampling) would underestimate the true variability. To address this, TALIS applies Balanced Repeated Replication (BRR), a robust method for variance estimation in complex surveys.

Key features of BRR in TALIS 2024

23. The sample is divided into a set of variance strata and zones (or “replicates”).
24. For each replicate, a different subset of the data is weighed up, simulating the effect of drawing a different sample.
25. The variability across these replicates provides an empirical estimate of the standard error for each statistic.

Implementation Details

26. BRR zones were constructed for teachers, principals, and TKS samples (e.g., 178 zones for ISCED 2 teachers, 157 for principals).
27. In cases where the number of primary sampling units (PSUs) was uneven, zones were collapsed or combined to maintain statistical validity.

28. The final standard errors reported for all key estimates (means, proportions, etc.) are based on the BRR method, ensuring that they accurately reflect the complex sample design.

Interpretation

29. Larger standard errors indicate greater uncertainty and less precision in the estimate.
30. Confidence intervals constructed using these standard errors provide a range within which the true population value is likely to fall, accounting for sampling variability.
31. Comparisons between groups or over time should always consider the standard errors to determine if observed differences are statistically meaningful.

Participation and Sample Statistics

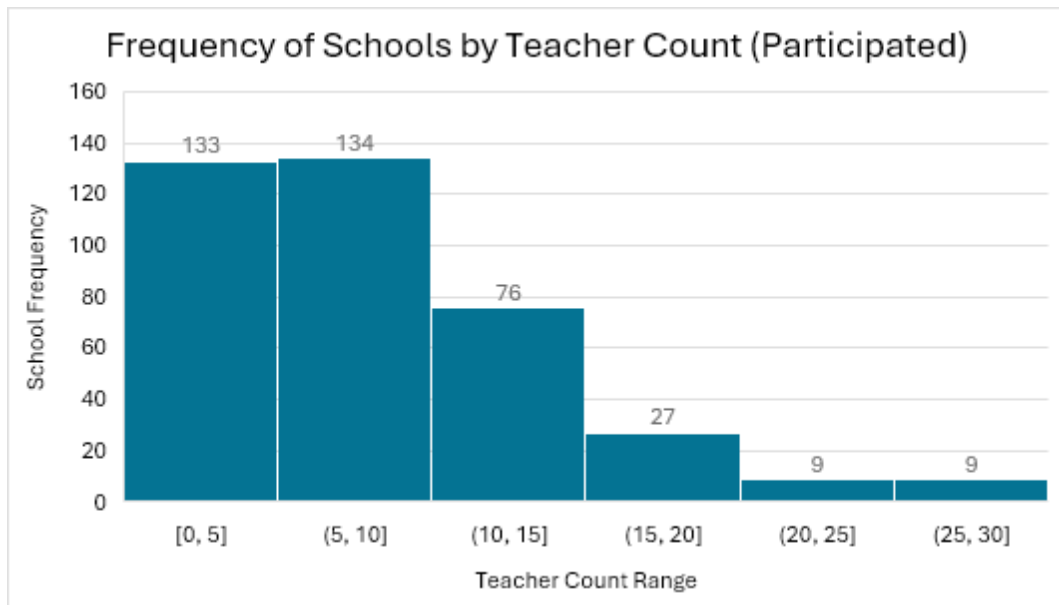
Table 4: South Africa participation and sample statistics

Survey	Total Responses (Schools)	Participated	Absent	Questionnaire Not Returned	Left Permanently	Not Part of Sample
Teachers Core Survey	4,053 (388)	3,301 (from 361 schools)	241	320	91	100
Principal Survey	388	318	70	—	—	—
Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS)	2,902 (386)	2,376 (from 359 schools)	182	222	58	64

Teachers Core Survey

- Total responses: 4,053 (from 388 schools)
 - Participated: 3,301 (from 361 schools)
 - Absent: 241
 - Questionnaire not returned: 320
 - Left school permanently: 91
 - Not part of sample: 100

Figure 14: Frequency of schools by teacher count: TALIS Core Survey



Distribution of schools by the number of teachers who participated in TALIS Core survey

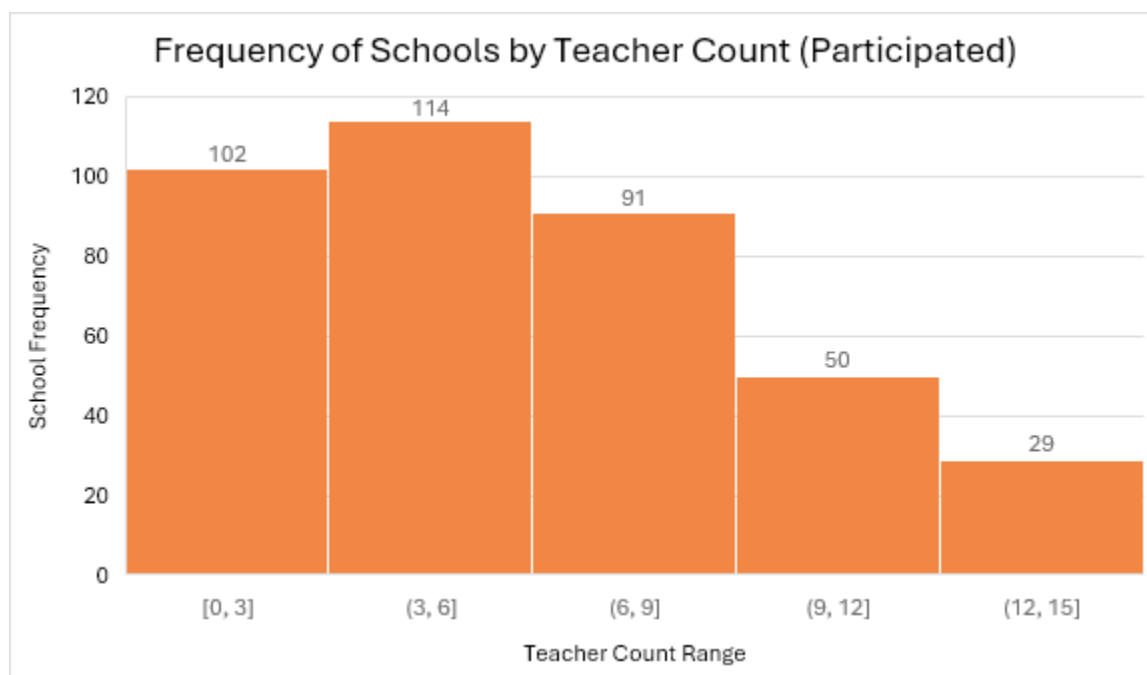
Principal Survey

- Total responses: 388
- Participated: 318
- Absent: 70

Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS)

- Total responses: 2,902 (from 386 schools)
- Participated: 2,376 (from 359 schools)
- Absent: 182
- Questionnaire not returned: 222
- Left school permanently: 58
- Not part of sample: 64

Figure 15: Frequency of schools by teacher count: Teacher Knowledge Survey



Distribution of schools by the number of teachers who participated in TKS

Table 5: Participation Rates

Survey	Unweighted	Weighted
Teacher Survey (ISCED 2)	Schools: 93.3% Teachers: 91.2%	Schools: 93.6% Teachers: 89.7%
Principal Survey	82.0%	84.6%
TKS Survey	Schools: 93.2% Teachers: 91.5%	Schools: 93.4% Teachers: 90.0%

- **Teacher Survey (ISCED 2):**
 - Unweighted: 93.3% (schools), 91.2% (teachers)
 - Weighted: 93.6% (schools), 89.7% (teachers)
- **Principal Survey:**
 - Unweighted: 82.0%
 - Weighted: 84.6%
- **TKS Survey:**
 - Unweighted: 93.2% (schools), 91.5% (teachers)
 - Weighted: 93.4% (schools), 90.0% (teachers)

Limitations

32. Instrument-specific limitations: Some items may not fully align with the South African context.
33. Non-response: Despite high participation rates, some schools and individuals did not respond.
34. Weighting complexity: BRR zones required collapsing in cases of uneven PSUs, which may affect precision in variance estimation. Collapsing of BRR zones in strata with few PSUs may slightly reduce the precision of variance estimates, but this is a standard and accepted practice in international surveys.
35. Standard errors do not account for non-sampling errors (e.g., measurement error, non-response bias).
36. Self-Reported Data in TALIS: The 2024 survey offers valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of South African teachers and principals. However, as with any self-reported data, the following important limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings:
 - Subjectivity and Bias: South African educators may respond to TALIS items based on personal beliefs or perceived expectations, especially in areas like classroom discipline, workload, or leadership support. Social desirability bias may lead to underreporting of challenges such as resource shortages or administrative burdens.
 - Cultural and Linguistic Interpretation: Given South Africa's linguistic diversity and varied school contexts, questions may be interpreted differently across provinces and language groups. This can affect the comparability of responses and may obscure provincial disparities in teaching conditions or school leadership practices.
 - Lack of External Validation: TALIS does not incorporate classroom observations or learner performance data, e.g. while teachers may report frequent use of cognitive activation strategies in the classroom, this cannot be verified without complementary evidence from lesson plans or learners' work.
 - Non-Response and Sampling Bias: Educators in under-resourced or rural schools who often faced the greatest challenges may be less likely to participate in TALIS due to time constraints or survey fatigue. This can result in an underrepresentation of critical voices in the data.
 - Static Snapshot TALIS captures a single moment in time, which may not reflect the dynamic nature of South Africa's education system, especially in the wake of policy shifts, curriculum changes, or post-pandemic recovery efforts.

CHAPTER 2: Teacher, Leader and school characteristics



This chapter provides an overview of the schools, teachers, principals that participated in TALIS 2024

1. The surveyed teachers, principals and schools they represented are important independent variables in analyses of variations in the contemporary influences and enduring features of teaching and learning. Whilst these variables are not necessarily used for exploring differences within and between school systems, it is necessary that they be consistently and unambiguously defined.
2. Relationships between the characteristics of teachers and learner achievement feature in research literature and policy deliberations. Analyses of data from international studies that include matched data from learners, and their teachers serve to highlight the characteristics of teachers surveyed in TALIS. Based on TIMSS 2011 data for the fourth grade from 47 countries, Blömeke, Olsen and Suhl (2016[524]) suggested that there were positive associations among teachers' experience, educational level, whether the teachers had a major study in mathematics or mathematics education, and students' mathematics achievement.
3. Other studies suggest that these effects were consistent across subjects, levels of schooling, and countries (Blömeke and Olsen, 2019[525]; Toropova, Johansson and Myrberg, 2019[422]). Baumert et al. (2010[239]) showed that there were positive relationships between teachers' coursework in mathematics, student perceptions of teaching quality and student achievement in mathematics (in TIMSS 2011).
4. Teaching experience was found to be related to student achievement in a non-linear pattern, with the effect increasing until the middle years of experience and then declining slowly (Toropova, Johansson and Myrberg, 2019[422]). Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012[526]) argue that information about initial teacher education (ITE) needs to be interpreted in the context of when teachers completed their ITE because there have been changes over time in ITE and changes in the characteristics of student teachers recruited into the profession (Alatalo, Hansson and Johansson, 2021[527]; Johansson, 2023[257]). For that reason, information about teacher age and teaching experience may be important for interpretations of findings about teaching practices.
5. Evidence regarding teacher gender and approaches to teaching is less clear. Research findings have shown differences in teacher qualifications that are associated with gender (e.g. a smaller percentage of female teachers have qualifications in mathematics than is the case for male teachers) and there may be differences in these patterns between countries (McDowell and Klattenberg, 2019[528]). Interestingly, data from the International Computer Information Literacy Study (ICILS) in 2013 showed that differences in experiences of, dispositions toward, and uses of information and communication technologies between female and male teachers were small and inconsistent across countries (Gebhardt et al., 2019[529]).
6. In addition to teachers' educational backgrounds, age and gender, TALIS 2024 also gathers information about language backgrounds of teachers to understand the extent of diversity in the teaching workforce.
7. Data related to the backgrounds of teachers are important for understanding how the teaching workforce has changed over the course of TALIS surveys since 2008. Employment status (whether being employed part- or full-time) is also expected to be related to different occupational perceptions, while experience of other work prior to entering the teaching profession may also be associated with differences in approaches and perceptions (Bauer, Thomas and Sim, 2017[530]).
8. Within-country variability in teacher background characteristics is generally large and usually reflects large differences in teacher profiles. These background characteristics are expected to affect learner outcomes through transmitted effects (e.g. teaching practices) rather than direct effects. The ability to describe and compare the

composition of the teaching force across countries relies on having at hand information about teacher background in terms of factors such as age, gender, employment status, and job experience. This information is also important for anyone conducting complex analyses of the antecedents of outcomes or when undertaking profile analyses.

9. Several characteristics of schools are of interest in relation to both teaching and learning processes and to student achievement. One of the most well-documented findings is concerned with the socio-economic context of schools. Schools enrolling learners predominately from households with higher socio-economic levels have higher average achievement scores than schools enrolling predominantly students from households with lower socio-economic levels (Davoli and Entorf, 2018[531]; Hopfenbeck et al., 2018[532]; OECD, 2019[533]; Sirin, 2005[534]). However, it is evident that the strength of these compositional effects varies among countries and that there are schools within countries which do not follow the general association. All this suggests that it may be important to interpret approaches to teaching and learning in relation to the schools' socioeconomic contexts. Similar considerations apply to associations with the immigrant and language backgrounds of students and the potential associations of approaches to teaching and learning in schools with different immigrant compositions (OECD, 2019[533]).
10. In several countries, it further appears that schools in rural and remote locations, as well as those in other under-resourced areas, have difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers (OECD, 2022[98]; OECD, 2019[39]; Sims and Allen, 2018[270]). For schools in rural and remote locations, there may be difficulties in infrastructure resource access, such as Internet access (Fraillon et al., 2020[127]). Information about school size may be helpful in interpreting differences among schools in approaches to teaching and learning. Egalite and Kisada (2016[535]) suggest that students' academic achievement in mathematics and reading declines as school size increases and this is most evident in upper secondary schooling. There was a strand of research from the 1960s that suggested that small high schools offered more opportunities for learners engagement than in large high schools and that this impacted learner behaviour (Barker and Gump, 1964[536]; Fowler and Walberg, 1991[537]); more recent studies continue to find this relationship (Lee and Smith, 1997[538]; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009[539]; Hendriks, 2014[540]). As an extension of this theory, it might be possible that small schools provide more opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles than large schools.
11. TALIS 2024 gathered relevant personal information about principals including their education and experience in schools. The TALIS 2018 report highlighted the key role of school leadership in promoting learners' development and achievement (OECD, 2020[400]). TALIS 2024 collected data on the background of school leaders, such as their age, gender, prior experience in teaching and leadership, as well as their length of involvement as a leader in their current school. In addition, it is relevant to know about their experience, qualifications, and experience in other fields before entering the field of education. Some countries have reported difficulties in recruiting school leaders, and information about the backgrounds of school leaders across time is relevant to inform policy (OECD, 2025[63-65]).

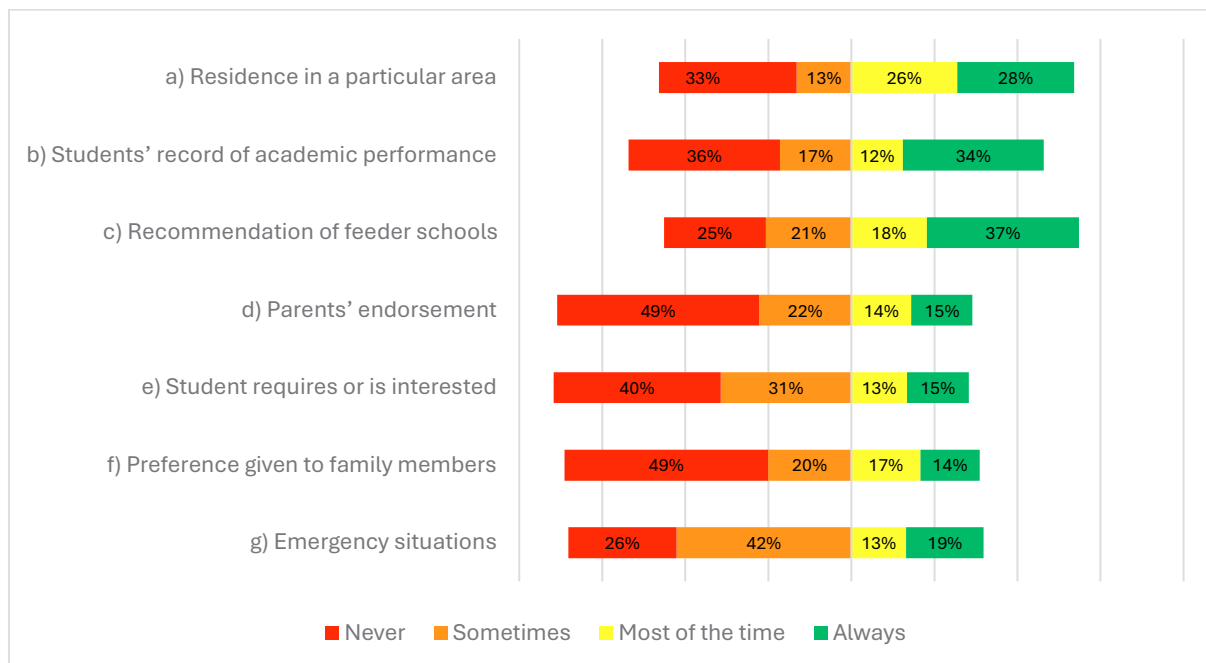
SCHOOL BACKGROUND

12. The school background data collected from principals in the TALIS 2024 core survey provides the context for understanding how factors such as school location, demographics, resourcing, school leadership influence the working environment of teachers and principals. The data enables us to understand the institutional conditions that affect learner outcomes, shape teacher behaviour and morale at the sampled school. It also facilitates a more nuanced analysis that goes beyond individual teachers or principals by providing an insight into the extent to which policy is implemented one to address systemic issues in education nationally.
 - In terms of the location of sampled schools: 10% of schools were located in large city (with more than 1 000 000 people); 17% were located in a city (between 100 001 and 1 000 000 people); 20% of schools were located in a town (with 15 001 to 100 000 people); 29% of schools were located in a small town (3001-

15 000 people) and 24% of schools indicated that they were located in a village, hamlet or rural area (with up to 3000 people).

- 87% of schools offered Grade 1-7. The majority of schools (97.92%) offered Grade 8 and 8 general education programmes compared to 83.56% of schools that offered the same programmes in Grade 10-12. Whilst 16.70% of schools offered Grade 8 and 9 vocational and technical education programmes, 16.13% of schools offered these programmes in Grade 10-1
- Sampled schools indicated the following about staff (headcount) at their schools: An average of 6.74 began work in their schools during the last 12 months. An average of 2.85 teachers had left their schools during the last 12 months and that an average of 1.46 teachers had been absent for the most recent Tuesday that the school was in session. TALIS uses a specific Tuesday to measure teacher absenteeism because it provides a consistent and comparable snapshot of a typical school day, minimising the impact of weekends, public holidays, and other unusual events that could skew the results. It avoids Monday and Friday bias since teacher absenteeism can also fluctuate depending on the day of the week, with higher rates often recorded on Mondays and Fridays. By selecting a single, ordinary school day, the survey can collect more reliable and representative data of how many teachers are absent on a typical, non-specific day, ensuring that comparisons between countries are more valid. Using the same recent weekday (Tuesday) across participating countries helps TALIS to generate more reliable and comparable data across diverse education systems.
- An average learner enrolment of 937.41 learners was reported by principals at surveyed schools.
- With regard to grades or programmes taught at the sampled schools (ISCED level 2): 25.78% of schools offered Grade RR to R; 30.63% of schools offered Grade 1-7. The majority of schools (97.92%) offered Grade 8 and 8 general education programmes compared to 83.56% of schools that offered the same programmes in Grade 10-12. Whilst 16.70% of schools offered Grade 8 and 9 vocational and technical education programmes, 16.13% of schools offered these programmes in Grade 10-1

Figure 16: Factors considered when learners are admitted to sampled schools



- Figure 16 illustrates a lack of uniformity in the implementation of learner admissions policies nationally and across provinces. While some provinces prioritise geographic proximity, others appear to adopt more flexible or varied criteria. This inconsistency may reflect differences in population density, school capacity, or the content and focus of provincial education policies on learner admissions.

- Nationally 28% of schools always considered residence in a particular area, whilst 33% of schools never considered residence when admitting learners. 47% of schools in KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo provinces never considered residence in a particular area whereas Northern Cape (49%) and Gauteng (47%) always considered this factor.
- Nationally 36% of schools never considered learners' records of academic performance whereas 34% of schools always considered these records of academic performance. Provincially, the deviation is higher with 69% of schools in Limpopo province never considered learners' records of academic performance for admission purposes, 65% of Northern Cape schools always considered this factor for admission purposes.
- Country wide 37% of schools always considered the recommendation of feeder schools, 25% of schools never considered the recommendation, however at a provincial level the inconsistency is higher with 55% of schools in the Northern Cape and 54% of schools in the Eastern Cape always considering the recommendation of feeder schools whilst 41% of schools in Limpopo province never considered this factor for admission purposes.
- Nationwide 49% of schools never considered parents' endorsements when admitting learners to their schools, and 15% of schools always considered the endorsement of parents. Provincial variation is seen in Gauteng (23%), and Mpumalanga (22%) that always considered parents' endorsement when admitting learners to schools whilst 64% of schools in Limpopo province reported that they never considered this factor for admission of learners.
- Nationally, 40% of schools never considered what a learner required or was interested in for admission to their schools yet 15% of schools indicated that they always considered the requirements and interests of the learner for admission purposes. Provincially, 49% of schools in Kwazulu Natal never considered what a learner required or was interested in as a factor for admission purposes, but the Northern West (24%) and Eastern Cape (23%) always considered this factor for admission of learners.
- Whilst 14% of schools always gave preference to family members for admission to their schools, 49% of schools never considered family ties to admit learners to their schools. In provinces, 33% of schools in North West reported always giving preference to family members for admission to their schools whilst in KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo, 60% of schools indicated that they never used this factor for the admission of learners.
- Across South African schools surveyed, 42% indicated that emergency situations were sometimes considered as a factor in admitting learners to their schools, 26% of schools never considered this as a factor. In the Western Cape province 38% of schools never considered emergency situations as a factor for admission of learners, whilst 34% of schools in Mpumalanga province always used this as a factor for admission of learners.

CURRENT WORK OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

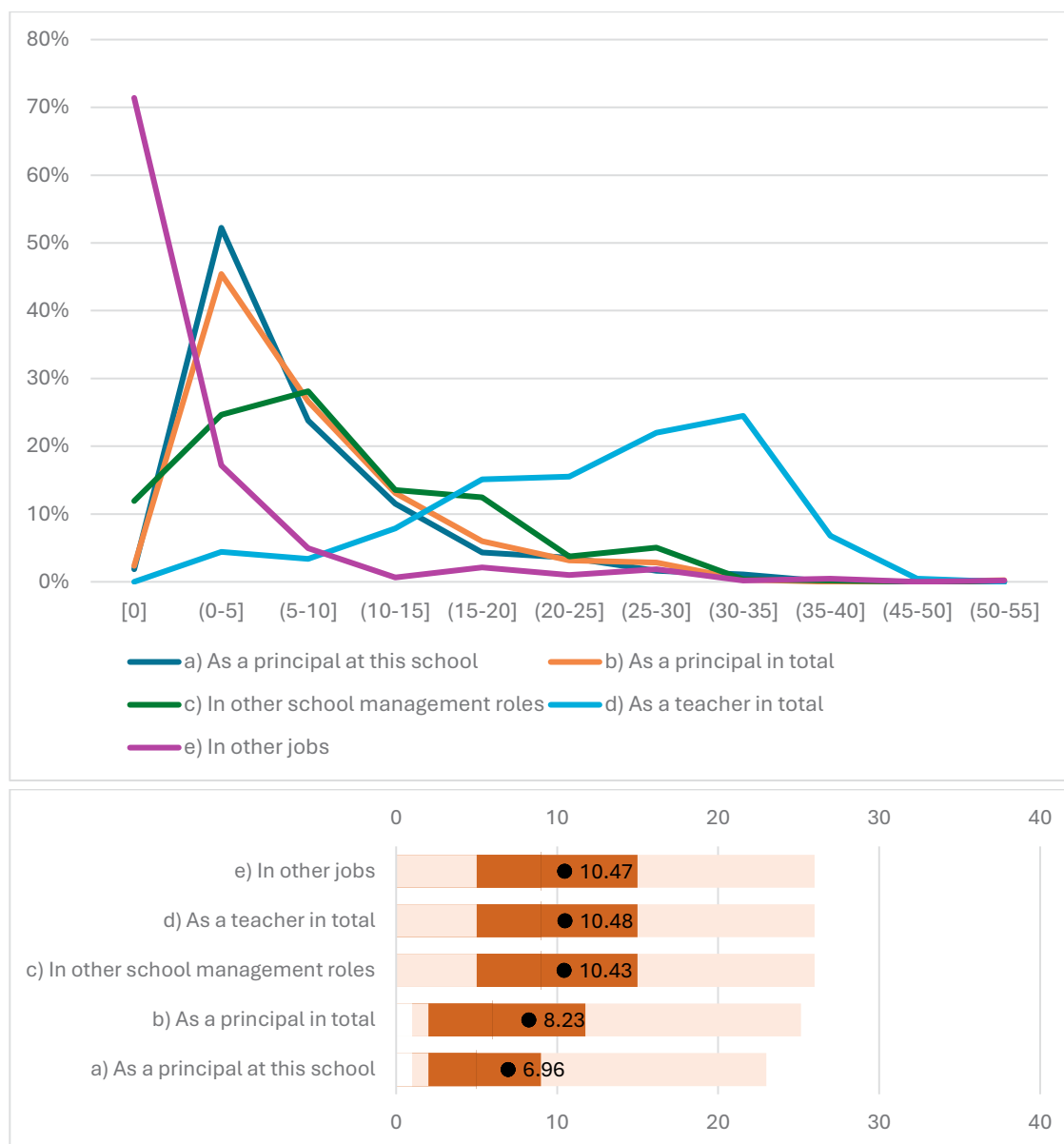
Employment status of teachers and principals

14. In terms of employment status at the sampled schools, 88% of teachers were permanent employees. 7% were employed on a fixed term contract for less than 1 school year and 5% of teachers were employed on a fixed term contract for more than 1 school year. 97% of principals indicated that they were in permanent positions with more than 90% of full-time hours. 8.2% of principals did not clarify their employment status and indicated “other”.
15. In terms of part-time status as principals: 2% worked 71-90% of full-time hours; None worked 50-70% of full-time hours in this role and 1% indicated that they worked less than 50% of full-time hours in this role. Part-time roles as principals could be attributed to school managers that might be in an acting position at their school whilst fulfilling their workload and duties in the post level they had been employed (e.g. Departmental Head or Deputy Principal).
16. 87 % of teachers surveyed indicated that they were not currently working at another school as a teacher of Grade 8 or 9, whereas 13 % of teachers indicated that they did work at other schools. However, this is quite rare since the appointment of teachers is highly regulated. South African teachers may work at other schools temporarily via an official transfer for a stated period, often because their original post is declared in excess to the school's needs, based on the Post Provisioning Norm which is used to determine the number of educator posts allocated to each public school based on its learner enrolment. Both a permanent transfer or promotion at a different school, requires a formal process, including the post being advertised, the teacher applying, and the recommendation of the governing body of the receiving school. Working at a second school without official approval would violate employment regulations and could lead to disciplinary action.

Number of years of experience of teachers and principals at their current school

17. Internationally, teachers have around 17 years of experience, on average. Some 18% of teachers have less than or equal to 5 years of teaching experience, 45% have between 6 and 20 years of experience, and 37% of teachers have more than 20 years of experience. Nearly one-third (over 30%) of teachers in Austria, Morocco and South Africa have less than or equal to five years of teaching experience. In contrast, over 60% of teachers in Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal have more than 20 years of experience
18. South African teachers surveyed reported their number of years of experience they had regardless of whether they worked full-time or part-time, as follows:
 - The average number of years as a teacher at their current school was 9 years, with 50% of teachers having 5 years or less experience at their current school.
 - The average number of years as a teacher in total, was 13, with 50% of the teachers having less than 10 years of experience in total.
 - Whilst an average of 1 year in other education roles was reported, more than 75% of teachers reported having had no experience in other education role. Teachers also reported an average of 2 years was spent in other non-education roles.

Figure 17: Number of years of work experience of principals regardless of whether they worked full time or part time



- Principals surveyed indicated that the average number of years of experience as a principal at their current school was 7 years, with 50% of the principals having less than 5 years of experience.
- The average number of years of experience as a principal in total was 8, with 50% of principals reporting 6 years or less experience in this regard.
- The average number of years of experience in other school management roles was 10.43, with 50% or more of principals having had less than 9 years.
- The average number of years in experience in total as a teacher was 10.48, with 50% or more of principals having had less than 9 years.
- The average number of years of experience in other jobs was 10.47, with 50% or more of principals having had less than 9 years.

Current work of teachers

19. Since school timetables varied widely across participating TALIS countries (some 45-minute lessons, others 50-or 55-minute lessons), the uses the 60-minute hour as a standardised unit to ensure consistent, comparable data collection on teacher time across different countries and educational systems, facilitating the analysis of teaching workloads and time allocation. This standard unit allows the survey to capture precise data on statutory teaching time, which is the officially scheduled time a teacher spends with learners thus enabling a clear international comparison of teaching responsibilities and related activities especially to analyse how much time teachers spent on (actual) instruction, classroom management, and other tasks. This approach helps policymakers and researchers make fair comparisons across education systems, identify inefficiencies, and better understand how teaching time is allocated globally. Teachers surveyed, have provided valuable insight how they allocate their time to teaching, planning, marking and administrative tasks so that education systems get a sense of not just how many hours teachers work, but how those hours are distributed and experienced.
20. The 60-minute hour (as a standardised time measure rather than the duration of a lesson as this can vary) helps us see the big picture and provides a lens through which we can have a better understanding of the intensity and complexity of teachers' work that includes the juggling of multiple tasks, emotional impact of various tasks, and interruptions to their teaching time, without simplifying the lived experience of teachers. Education systems are reminded to pay attention to the workload of teachers in different school contexts and consider both the volume and the emotional weight of both teaching and non-teaching tasks and these impact on teacher stress, burnout, and time poverty.
21. To get a sense of how South Africa compared on the tasks teachers spent time on in the classroom we to other countries, we selected countries that were economically similar to South Africa, had education systems that were similar and those with education systems that performed better than South Africa's. Additionally, we included the only other African country participating in TALIS 2024 and a BRICS country.

Table 6: International Level: Approximately how many 60-minute hours teachers spent on the following activities

COUNTRY	60-minute hours in the most recent calendar week				
	Teaching at this school	Individual planning or preparation of lessons	Teamwork and dialogue with colleagues within school	Marking/correcting of student work	General administrative work
Australia	19,3	8,2	3,7	5,4	4,4
Brazil	23,6	8,0	3,8	5,5	1,8
Colombia	26,0	8,9	3,6	5,8	3,0
Estonia	20,7	7,0	2,2	3,9	2,1
Finland	21,6	4,7	2,2	3,2	1,4
Japan	17,4	8,0	3,6	4,2	4,9
Morocco	21,4	7,4	1,9	5,9	0,5
Netherlands*	16,2	5,1	3,8	3,8	2,8
Singapore	17,6	8,2	3,6	6,4	3,9
South Africa	26,6	7,4	4,1	7,1	4,9
TALIS average-49	21,0	7,4	3,2	4,7	2,8
United Arab Emirates	23,7	7,6	3,6	5,4	3,0
United States	27,4	7,2	3,1	4,5	2,8
OECD average-27	21,2	7,1	3,0	4,4	2,8
	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average				
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average				
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average				

22. In terms of workloads, international comparisons showed that U.S. teachers reported the heaviest classroom hours (27.4%), followed by Colombia (26.0%) and South Africa (26.6), whereas the Netherlands (16.2%) and Japan (17.4%) reported fewer teaching hours, often balanced by more administrative work (Japan 4.9 hours versus Finland's 1.4). Compared to the OECD average of 21.2% hours, South African teachers face comparatively higher loads (26.6%).

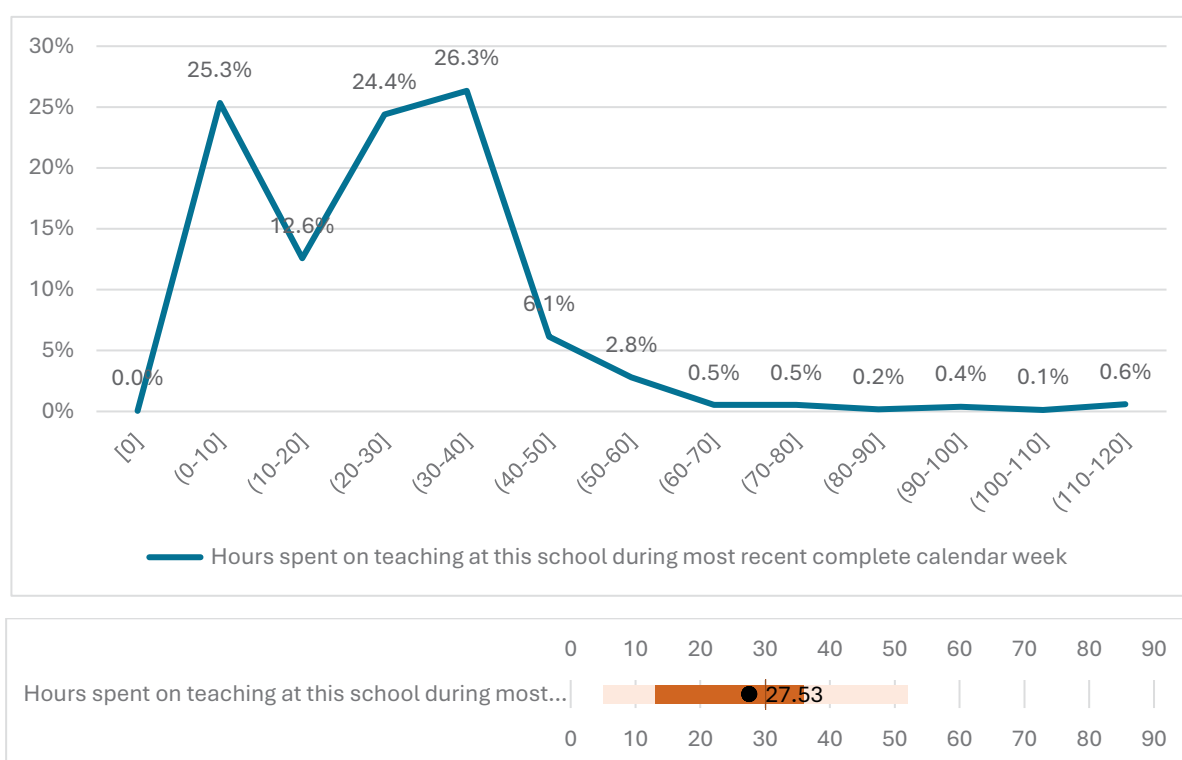
Table 7: Provincial Level Approximately how many 60-minute hours teachers spent on the following activities

PROVINCE	60-minute hours in the most recent calendar week				
	Teaching at this school	Individual planning or preparation of lessons	Teamwork and dialogue with colleagues within school	Marking/ correcting of student work	General administrative work
Eastern Cape	26,4	7,0	3,8	6,6	4,2
Free State	28,8	8,8	5,5	9,3	5,7
Gauteng	28,9	7,8	4,6	7,1	4,8
KwaZulu Natal	23,8	6,4	3,6	6,7	4,7
Limpopo	25,0	7,9	4,6	7,4	5,4
Mpumalanga	25,1	8,9	4,1	8,3	4,4
Northern Cape	30,9	7,3	4,2	7,4	4,6
North West	31,7	8,5	4,7	6,5	5,1
Western Cape	28,4	7,4	3,6	6,3	5,4
National	26,6	7,4	4,1	7,1	4,9

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

23. Provincially, North West (31.7 hours) and Northern Cape (30.9 hours) provinces reported the highest weekly teaching hours, with Free State teachers also burdened with heavy marking and correction duties (9.3 hours). By contrast, Eastern Cape (26.4 hours) and KwaZulu-Natal (23.8 hours) report lighter loads.

Figure 18: 60 minutes hours spent in most recent complete calendar week



24. Nationally, teachers surveyed indicated that they spent an average of 27.5 (60-minute) hours teaching at their schools during their most recent complete calendar week. About 60% of teachers had spent 30 hours or less on teaching at their schools.
25. In terms of their most recent complete calendar week, teachers at the surveyed schools indicated that they spent an average of 38 (60-minute) hours in total on tasks related to their job at the sampled schools. The data showed that 25% of teachers spent 20 hours or less on tasks related to their job; 50% spent 40 hours or less on tasks related to their job and 75% of teachers spent 50 hours or less on tasks related to their jobs.
26. Teachers reported time spent in terms of 60-minute hours on the following tasks during their most recent complete calendar week, in their jobs at the sampled schools:
 - An average of 7,6 hours on individual planning or preparation of lessons, with 84% of teachers spending 10 hours or less on this task.
 - An average of 4.36 hours on teamwork and dialogue with colleagues within their schools, with 90% spending 10 hours or less on this task.
 - An average of 7.2 hours on the marking or correcting of learners' work, 84% spending 10 hours or less on this task.
 - The average number of hours teachers spent on counselling of learners was 4.1, with 87% spending 10 hours or less on this task.
 - Teachers spent an average of 3.6 hours participating on school management, with 23% not participating on school management tasks at all. Further, 70% of teachers spent 10 or less hours on school management tasks.
 - An average of 5 hours was spent by teachers on general administrative work at their schools, with 91% of teachers having spent 9 hours or less on this task.
 - Teachers reported spending an average of 5.5 hours on professional development activities during their

most recent complete calendar week, with 10% of teachers spending no time of professional development activities, whilst 78% spent 10 hours or less on this task.

- An average of 2.9 hours was spent on communication and co-operation with parents, with 9% having spent no time on this task and a further 87% having spent 10 hours or less communicating and cooperating with parents per week.
- Teachers spent an average of 4 hours on extracurricular activities per week at their schools, with 16% of teachers not being involved with extra-curricular activities at their schools, and a further 79% having spent 10 hours or less per week on this task.
- An average of 3 hours was spent by teachers on other work tasks per week at their schools, with 18% not having other work tasks and a further 78% having spent less than 10 hours on other work tasks.

Table 8: Time spent in terms of 60-minute hours on the following tasks during their most recent complete calendar week

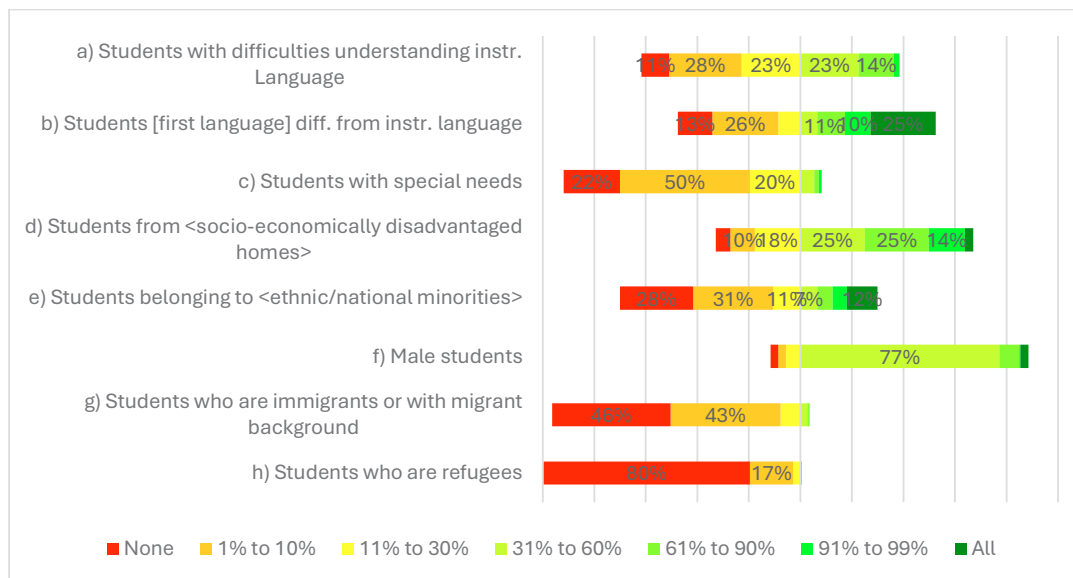
Teacher Tasks	Average Hours per Week	% with 0 < Hours ≤ 10	% with No Time Spent
Individual lesson planning or preparation	7,65	84,0%	0,8%
Teamwork and dialogue with colleagues	4,36	90,2%	4,1%
Marking or correcting learners' work	7,24	84,4%	1,6%
Counselling of learners	4,14	86,7%	7,3%
Participation in school management	3,57	70,1%	23,9%
General administrative work	5,04	87,2%	4,9%
Professional learning activities	5,52	78,4%	10,5%
Communication and cooperation with parents	2,93	87,1%	9,6%
Extracurricular activities	4,02	78,6%	16,4%
Other work tasks	3,00	78,1%	18,8%

27. This data illustrates the complex and demanding nature of teachers' weekly responsibilities, with a clear emphasis on core instructional tasks. Individual lesson planning and marking or correcting learners' work dominate the workload, averaging 7.65 and 7.24 hours respectively, and engaging over 84% of teachers for up to 10 hours each week.
28. A second tier of duties comprising administrative work, professional learning, and collaboration also commands substantial time, though with slightly more variation in participation. Notably, professional learning averages 5.52 hours, yet 10.5% of teachers reported no involvement, suggesting disparities in access or prioritization. Teamwork with colleagues, while averaging a lower 4.36 hours, sees the highest participation rate at 90.2%, indicating its embedded role in school culture.
29. Tasks considered more discretionary, such as school management, extracurricular activities, and parent communication, show the widest range in engagement and the lowest average time commitments. Extracurricular activities and other work tasks average 4.02 and 3.00 hours respectively, with notable percentages of teachers opting out. Communication and cooperation with parents demanded the least of their time, averaging 2.93 hours, though only 9.6% reported no involvement. Participation in school management stood out with nearly a quarter of teachers reporting no involvement and an average of just 3.57 hours for those teachers who are involved.
30. Overall, the data underscored a workload heavily concentrated on preparation and assessment, with additional responsibilities in professional learning, collaboration, and learner support contributing significantly to the total hours worked and highlighted the diverse and uneven distribution of teachers' time across the range of their professional responsibilities.
31. 24% of principals surveyed indicated that they did not have a teaching obligation as part of their work as a principal; 52% principals indicated that up to 50% of their working hours were due to a teaching obligation and 24% indicated that more than 50% of their working hours was due to having a teaching obligation as part of their work as a principal.

LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS IN SAMPLED SCHOOLS

32. Sampled schools were able to estimate the broad percentage of Grade 8&9 learners with the following characteristics shown in the figure that follows:

Figure 19: Estimated broad percentages of Grade 8&9 learners characteristics



Regarding the characteristics of grade 8 and 9 learners at the surveyed schools:

- The national and provincial data on learner demographics and educational challenges revealed significant disparities across South African schools. Language of instruction (LOLT) remains a barrier for many, with 11% of schools nationally estimating no learner difficulties, while Gauteng reported the highest such estimation at 21%. Conversely, North West was the only province where all learners were estimated to struggle with LOLT.
- A quarter of schools nationwide indicated that all learners spoke a first language different from the LOLT, with KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo leading at 29%. Eastern Cape had the highest proportion (22%) of schools estimating no such language mismatch.
- Regarding special education needs, 22% of schools nationally reported none, with Free State topping at 38%, while North West had the highest proportion (2%) of schools where all learners required special support. Socio-economic disparities were also evident: only 3% of schools nationally estimated all learners were disadvantaged, while 6% reported none, with Limpopo and Free State showing the highest extremes. Ethnic and national minority representation varied, with 28% of schools estimating no minority learners and 12% estimating full minority representation; Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga led these respective categories. Such homogeneity may influence efforts toward social cohesion and inclusive identity-building.
- Gender distribution showed that only 3% of schools had all-male learners in grades 8 and 9, yet male representation ranged from 31% to 60% across provinces. Migration status was another factor, with 44% of schools nationally estimating no immigrant or migrant-background learners, and Eastern Cape reporting the highest at 70%.
- Refugee representation was minimal, with 80% of schools nationally estimating none, and North West reaching 94%. These findings underscore the complex and varying educational landscape, highlighting the need for targeted policies that address linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural diversity in South African schools.

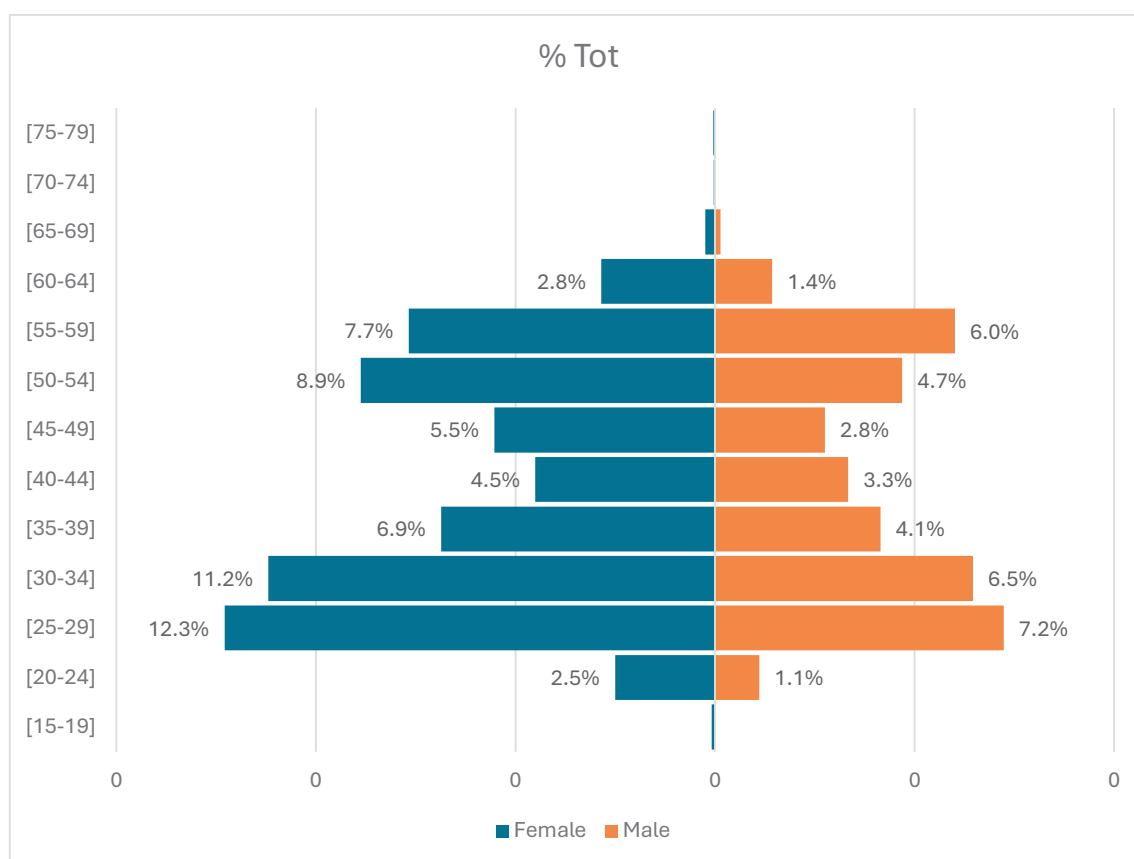
33. This data revealed significant disparities in learners' experiences across provinces—particularly in language of instruction, socio-economic status, special education needs, and cultural diversity. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted, data-driven policies to promote inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive education. Homogeneity in some provinces may limit exposure to diversity, affecting social cohesion and national identity formation.

TEACHERS' BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS

Gender: Teachers

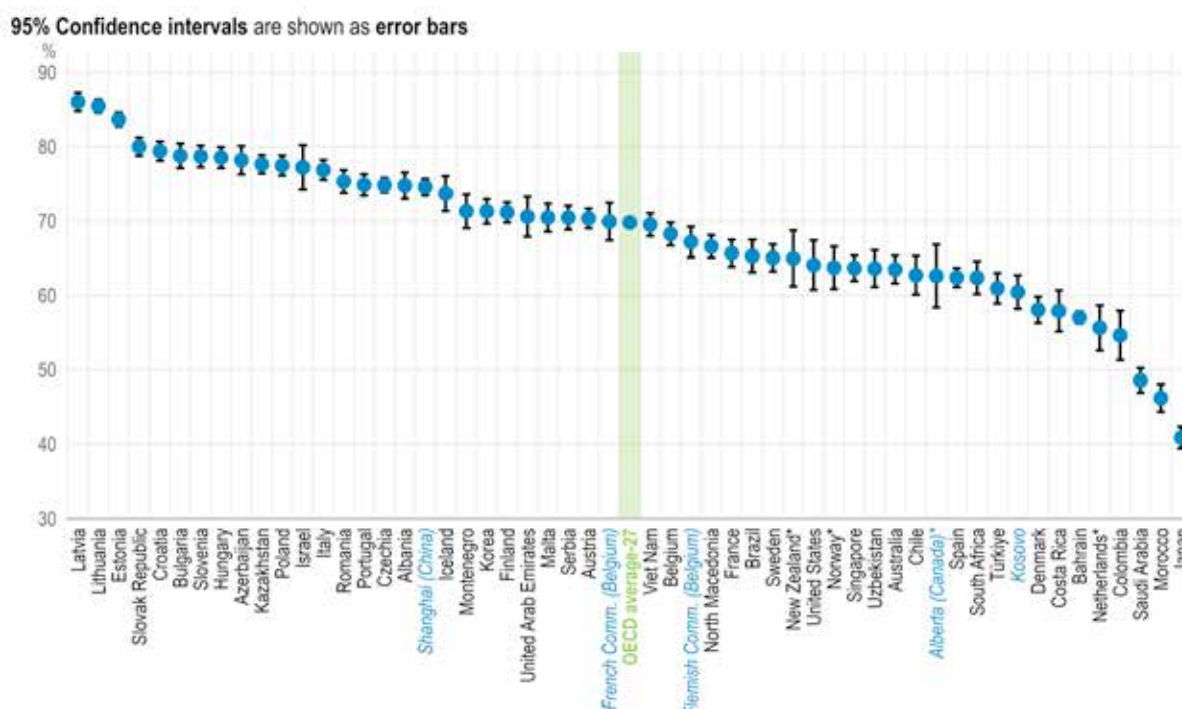
34. In 2024, 62% of South African participants from the surveyed schools were female compared to the OECD (27 countries) average at 69.8%, the European Union (22 countries) average of 71.6% and the TALIS (49 countries) average of 69.0%. In the 2018 cycle, 59.8% of South African teachers surveyed were female but the OECD cautioned that the estimates for TALIS 2018 and the change between TALIS 2018 and TALIS 2024 should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.
35. Nationally, in no age group interval in the sample of teachers at lower secondary (Grades 8 or 9 level) were there more males than females. This trend was also observed in all provinces. However, with a smaller margin (<10%) only in Limpopo province.

Figure 20: Gender-Age distribution of Teachers



36. As indicated in the International TALIS report, women make up the majority of the teaching profession at lower secondary level, representing around seven out of ten teachers across education systems that participated in TALIS (hereafter “education systems”). This is most pronounced in Latvia (86% are female teachers), Lithuania (85%) and Estonia (84%). In contrast, Japan (41% female teachers), Morocco (46%) and Saudi Arabia (49%) were the only education systems where female teachers are in the minority in 2024.
37. TALIS data suggests that these gender patterns have remained relatively consistent over the last six years, with some notable exceptions. There was an increase in female teachers between 2018 and 2024 in the United Arab Emirates (8 percentage points), Türkiye (5 percentage points) and Korea (4 percentage points). In contrast, the percentage of female teachers dropped between 2018 and 2024 in Brazil (-4 percentage points), Saudi Arabia (-4 percentage points), the French Community of Belgium (3 percentage points) and Latvia (-3 percentage points) (Table BIN.TR1.TQ01).
38. Large gender imbalances in the teaching profession are a policy concern as research suggests that gender balance can influence student career aspirations and attitudes toward specific disciplines, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (Dulce-Salcedo, Maldonado and Sánchez, 2022^[2]). A lack of diverse role models within certain fields could make it harder for students to envision success in those fields in later life (Stearns et al., 2016^[3]; Sevilla, Bordón and Ramirez-Espinoza, 2023^[4]).
39. A highly feminised profession can also, paradoxically, lower the perceived impact of the profession due to long-held gender biases (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001^[5]). This could then have a snowball effect where men are less likely to aspire to join the profession as it is perceived as feminised. Cacouault-Bitaud (2001^[5]) argues that this feminisation of professions followed by lower value perceptions has occurred in a wide variety of professions including teaching, legal careers (such as judges and magistrates) and in some medical career pathways (such as general practitioners). (OECD: 2025[5-6]).

Figure 21: Percentage of female teachers at lower secondary schools



Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD (2018), TALIS 2018 Database; OECD (2024), TALIS 2024 Database, Table CON.TR2.TQ02.

40. To get a sense of how the gender distribution compared in other countries, we selected countries that were economically similar to South Africa, had education systems that were similar and those with education systems that performed better than South Africa's. Additionally, we included the only other African country participating in TALIS 2024 and a BRICS country.

Table 9: Distribution of principals and teachers in selected international countries

COUNTRY	Percentage of female principals	Principals' average age in years	Principals' average years of working experience	Percentage of female teachers	Teachers' average age in years	Teachers' average years of working experience
Australia	46,2	52,6	8,2	63,5	42,2	15,1
Brazil	75,0	47,7	9,4	65,3	41,9	14,8
Colombia	53,3	51,6	12,7	54,6	44,0	16,4
Estonia	72,4	52,7	11,5	83,6	49,3	21,1
Finland	57,3	52,3	11,5	71,2	45,6	16,1
Japan	7,0	58,1	4,7	40,9	41,8	16,9
Morocco	19,0	50,7	9,9	46,2	38,8	12,1
Netherlands*	53,1	51,5	11,3	55,6	41,9	14,5
Singapore	50,7	51,8	9,3	63,6	41,8	16,0
South Africa	32,5	52,1	7,7	62,4	40,8	13,6
TALIS average-49	52,8	51,5	9,0	69,0	43,9	16,6
United Arab Emirates	54,5	51,9	9,5	70,6	38,7	12,5
United States	42,6	49,3	7,9	64,1	42,6	14,2
OECD average-27	54,7	52,5	9,4	69,8	44,9	17,2

	Countries/economics where indicators are above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economies where indicator is below OECD average

41. The data confirmed a phenomenon often referred to as the “gender leadership gap” where women dominated the teaching profession but were significantly underrepresented in senior management. South Africa exhibited a high degree of “feminisation of teaching” but a lower representation of female principals compared to the OECD average (54.7%) and several other countries (UAE, Finland, Colombia, Singapore and the United States). In terms of Teacher gender parity, South Africa's percentage of female teachers (62.4%) within the OECD average (69.8%) and other comparable countries like Singapore, Brazil, Colombia and the United States. This confirmed that teaching was a female-dominated profession in South Africa and aligned to global trends.
42. The gender gap between the proportion of female teachers and female principals in South Africa was approximately 30 percentage points and is notably larger than the average OECD gap (15.1 percentage points), although it is less severe than in Japan (33.9 percentage points). Brazil had the highest proportion of female principals (75.0%), higher than the female percentage of teachers (65.3%) demonstrating that the gender disparity was not always universal and that women could have higher representation in both roles.

Table 10: Distribution of Female principals and teachers in provinces

PROVINCE	Percentage of female principals	Principals' average age in years	Principals' average years of working experience	Percentage of female teachers	Teachers' average age in years	Teachers' average years of working experience
Eastern Cape	29,8	51,7	7,5	59,4	43,5	16,1
Free State	62,1	51,9	7,0	69,4	37,4	10,6
Gauteng	27,4	52,5	9,9	69,5	39,5	12,8
KwaZulu Natal	23,7	50,2	8,2	64,4	41,0	13,7
Limpopo	32,6	54,0	7,1	52,0	43,4	14,8
Mpumalanga	43,1	51,5	5,7	55,9	41,1	13,4
Northern Cape	52,2	53,2	6,3	56,9	38,6	12,2
North West	16,9	50,2	7,7	64,0	38,8	12,9
Western Cape	34,5	53,6	8,6	67,7	39,2	12,7
RSA	32,5	52,1	7,7	62,4	40,8	13,6

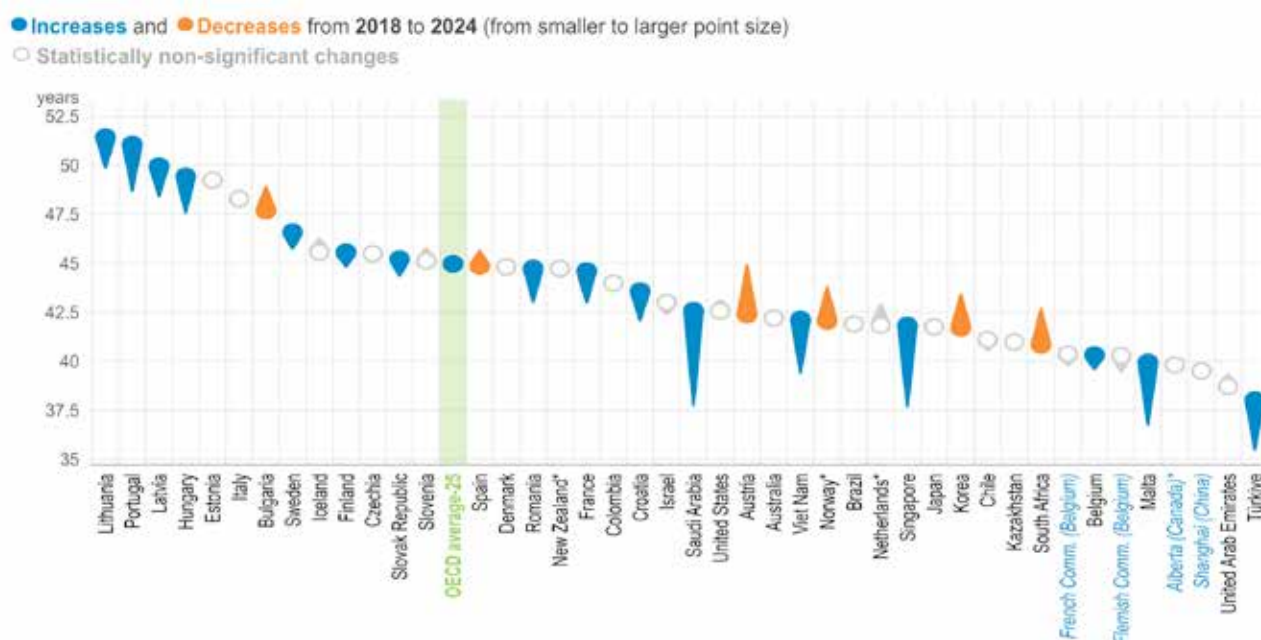
	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

43. The massive disparity in female principal representation between provinces (Free State's 62.1%, Northern Cape's 52.2%, North West province's 43.1% compared to North West's 16.1%) suggests that the efficacy and implementation of recruitment policies aimed at gender equity in management is highly inconsistent across provincial education departments. This translates to unequal opportunities for female teachers into leadership roles (as principals) depending on the provinces in which they are employed.

Age : Teachers

44. TALIS 2024 showed that more than one out of two teachers were 50 or older in Lithuania, Portugal, Latvia, Hungary and Estonia. These education systems may face the challenge of replacing large numbers of teachers in the next 10-15 years as half of them reach retirement age. These systems also had a relatively small share of teachers aged 30 and under, potentially exacerbating this issue. At the other end of the spectrum, Japan, Morocco, Shanghai (China), South Africa and Uzbekistan have 20% or more of their teachers under 30. For these education systems, professional development and the range and depth of teaching experience within each school will likely become a systemic challenge.
45. Across OECD countries, the share of the population aged 65 and over has doubled, from under 9% in 1960 to 18% in 2021 (OECD, 2023[6]). Increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates are driving rapid population ageing. The age of teachers in many countries mirror this trend. In 2024, the average age of teachers was around 45 years-old on average across OECD countries with available data (hereafter, "on average"). In Lithuania and Portugal, the average age was 51, and in Latvia, it was 50. Conversely, the average age of teachers in Türkiye was 38 years old, and around 39 in Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan. Compared to 2024, the average age of teachers has increased by two or more years in Malta, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Türkiye, and Viet Nam. The average age of teachers has decreased by around two years in that time in Austria, Korea, Norway and South Africa.

Figure 22: Change in the average age of teachers since 2018



Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD (2018), TALIS 2018 Database; OECD (2024), TALIS 2024 Database, Table CON.TR2.TQ02.

46. The average age of South African teachers participating in TALIS for the first time in 2018 was 42.7 years compared to 2024 cycle, where there was a change of -1.8 years as average age teachers surveyed was 40.6 years with 23.2% of teachers under the age of 30, 44.9% between 30-49 years and 31.9% being 50 years or older.
47. Whilst the median age was 39 years, it must be noted that the age distribution of teachers was bimodal with the higher peak at the younger cohort between 25-30 years. This trend persisted in most of the provinces except in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo where the higher peak is for the older cohort at 50-55 years suggesting that these provinces might be struggling to attract younger teachers into the profession.
48. Figure 20 shows that in certain age groups the imbalance was more than double e.g. new graduates between the ages of 20-24 (2.5. compared to 1.1) suggesting that teaching is likely to remain more attractive to females than males.
49. 0.4% of the 2024 teachers surveyed (both male and female) were at retirement age. It is encouraging that 19.6% of female teachers and 19.4% of male teachers were between 25-29 years of age and 17.9% of females suggesting an increase in newly qualified teachers entering the system. The highest average of teachers was 43 years in Limpopo province and the lowest being 37 years in the Free State.

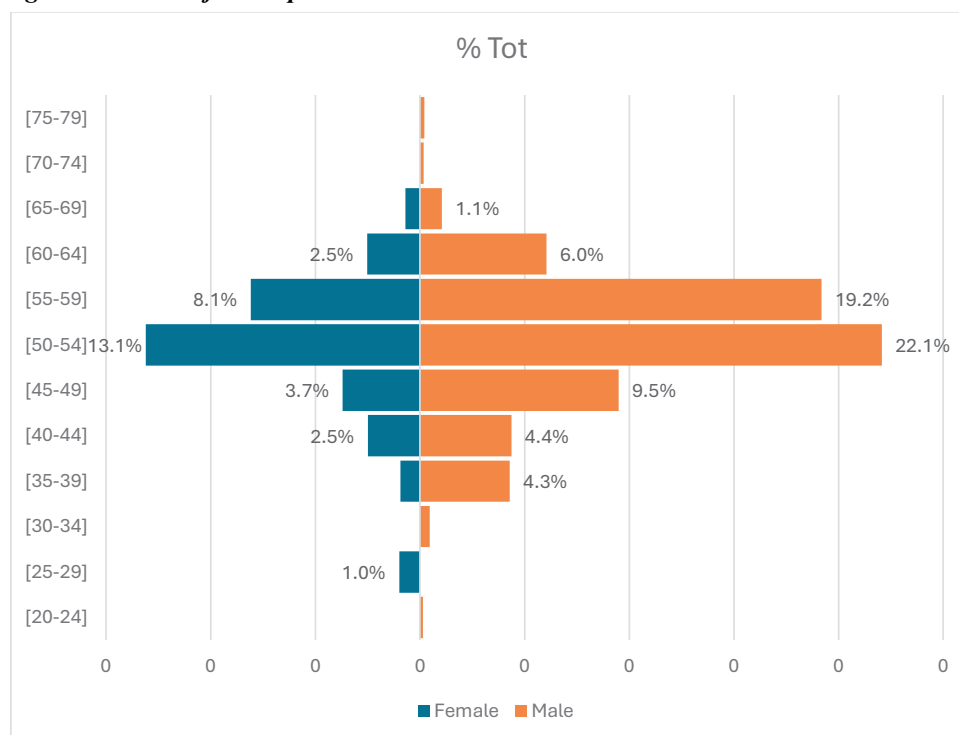
Gender: Principals

50. In stark contrast, Figure 23 shows that 65.93 % of principals were male and 34.07% were female suggesting that the appointment of females into school management leadership was still lagging in most provinces except Free State (62%) and Northern Cape (52%). The trend of more male than female principals is more apparent in the North West where less than 17% of principals were female with a ratio of almost 1:5 (followed by Kwa Zulu Natal with less than 24% of female principals at a ratio of more than 1:3).

Age: Principals

51. The average age of principal respondents was 52 and the median age was 53 years. In total, 63% of principals were older than 50 years of age. About 10% were older than 60 years of age which made them eligible for retirement.

Figure 23: Gender-Age distribution of Principals



Highest level of education completed

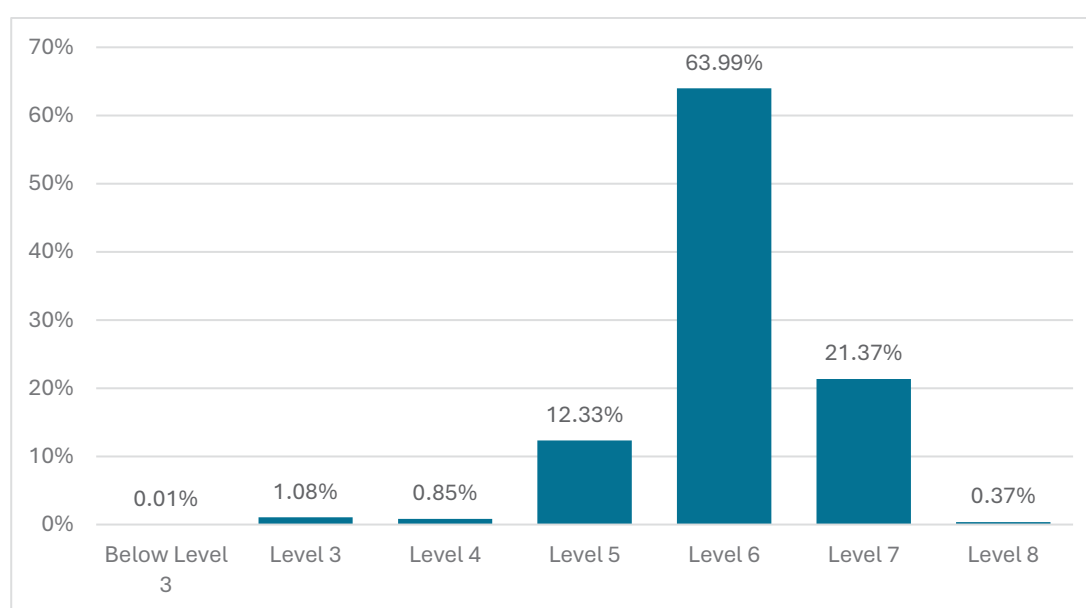
Table 11: The relationship between the South African 10-level NQF system and REQV levels for educators and the ISCED 2011 classifications

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Typical Qualification Type	Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV)	International Standard Classification of Education, 2011 revision.
SOUTH AFRICA			UNESCO FRAMEWORK
10	Doctoral Degree (PhD)	17	8 (Doctoral or equivalent)
9	Master's Degree	16	7 (Master's or equivalent)
8	Honours Degree; Postgraduate Diploma	15	6 (Bachelor's or equivalent) *
7	Bachelor's Degree; Advanced Diploma	14 / 15	6 (Bachelor's or equivalent) *
6	National Diploma; Advanced Certificate	13 / 14	5 (Short-cycle tertiary education)
5	Higher Certificate	13	5 (Short-cycle tertiary education)
4	National Senior Certificate (Grade 12/ Matric)	10	3 (Upper secondary education)
3	Grade 11 or equivalent vocational qualification	10	3 (Upper secondary education)
2	Grade 10 or equivalent vocational qualification	10	2 (Lower secondary education)
1	Grade 9 or General Education and Training Certificate	10	2 (Lower secondary education)

*Note on ISCED Levels 6 and 7: ISCED Level 6 generally captures first degrees (like a three or four-year bachelor's degree) but also includes qualifications like the Honours Degree and Postgraduate Diploma (NQF Level 8), which are considered equivalent to the first stage of the second cycle of tertiary education in the ISCED framework.

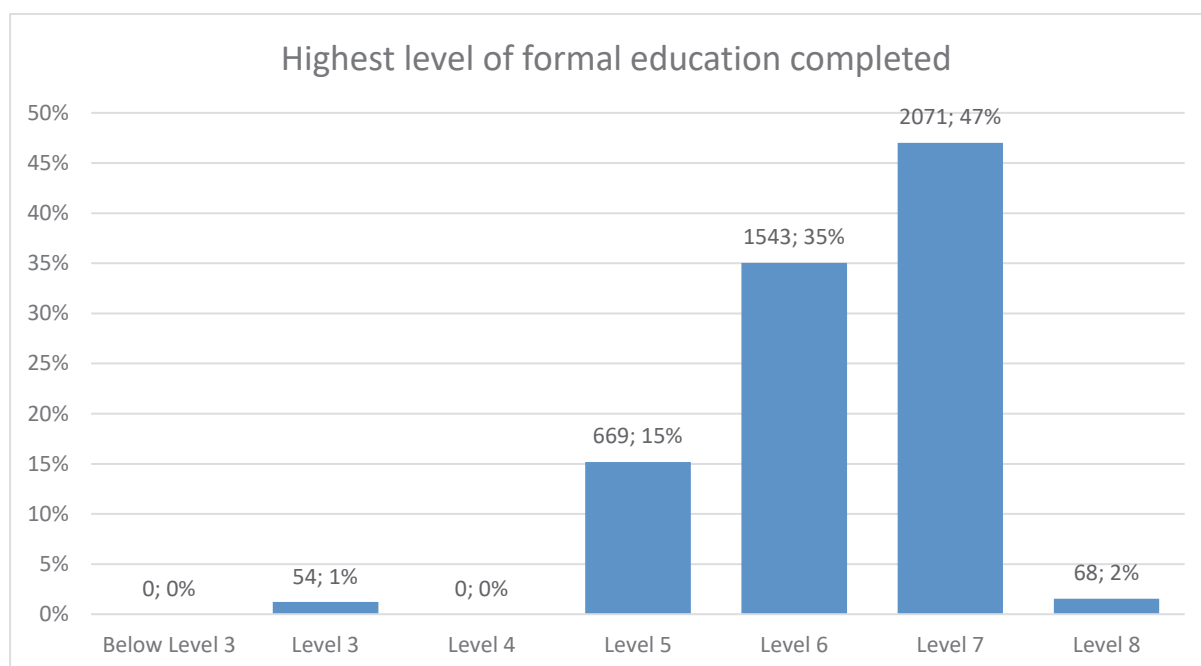
52. In the context of TALIS, education (qualification) categories are based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011). Programmes at ISCED levels 6 (Bachelors' degree) and 7 (Masters' degree) are generally longer and more theory-based, while ISCED level 5 (Short cycle tertiary education) programmes are typically shorter, more practical, and skills-oriented. With regard to South African teachers surveyed: an average 1.9% reported a qualification that was below level ISCED Level 5, i.e. a Certificate or Diploma in Education. This was negligibly higher than averages for the OECD (1,7%), the European Union (1.0%) and the TALIS countries average of 1.8%.
53. An average of 12.3% of teachers had a ISCED Level 5 qualification which was higher than the averages for the OECD, European Union and TALIS countries. An average of 64% of teachers had an ISCED Level 6 qualification which was also higher than the averages of the OECD, European Union and TALIS countries. An average of 21,4%% of South African teachers indicated that they had an ISCED Level 7 qualification which was lower that the OECD average of 57.0% and the European Union average of 75.1% but was higher than the 44.4% average of the TALIS countries. Only 0.4% of South African teachers surveyed had a Level 8 qualification, lower than the averages of the OECD (1.7%), the European Union (2.9%) and TALIS (1.5%) countries.

Figure 24: Highest level of education completed by teachers



54. Figure 24 indicates the highest levels of formal qualifications completed among the teachers that participated in the survey: 1.17% of had a level 3 (national certificate) qualification; 0.93% had a level 4 or national senior certificate and 10.73% had completed a Higher Certificate, or Level 5 qualification. Most teachers' (63.99%) highest level of formal qualification was at Level 6 (a National Diploma) whilst 21,37% had completed a bachelor's degree (Level 7), with Limpopo having the highest percentage (31%) and Mpumalanga with the lowest (13.6%). Nationally 0.37% of teachers had completed a Level 8 (Honours degree or postgraduate certificate) with none of the provinces exceeding 1% in this regard.
55. Figure 25 shows that of the principals that participated in TALIS 2024, 1% had a level 3 (national certificate) qualification, 15% had a Level 5 or Higher Certificate qualification, 35 % had a National Diploma (Level 6). In comparison to teacher qualifications at Levels 7 and 8, 47% of school principals had completed a bachelor's degree and 2% had completed an Honours degree or postgraduate certificate. At a provincial level 66% of principals in the surveyed schools in Limpopo had a degree (Level 7), only 28% in the Eastern Cape had the same qualification. The highest percentage of principals with a level 8 qualification was in Gauteng (5%), followed by 3.5% in the Free State. None of the principals in the surveyed schools in KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Norh West had completed an Honours or post graduate certificate. In the surveyed schools in the Northern Cape at least 10% of the principals had a level 3 qualification (National Certificate).

Figure 25: Highest level of education completed by principals



56. A cautionary tale from several education systems is that formal qualifications alone didn't guarantee higher levels of management and leadership competency and should be considered alongside the in-service capacity building programmes and support structures such as mentoring or participation in peer networks and professional communities. The successive cycles of TALIS reiterate that experience and ongoing professional development play a crucial role in the competency of principals in that principals with more years in a leadership role often reported greater confidence and effectiveness even if their formal qualifications were similar to newer principals. The TALIS 2024 Conceptual Framework discusses the relationship between principals' qualifications, leadership training, and their competencies in areas such as instructional leadership and strategic planning suggesting that higher qualifications and targeted leadership training are generally associated with stronger management competencies, especially in instructional leadership and strategic planning. (OECD: 2025)

Information Box 1: Key Framework Descriptions: NQF, REQV and ISCED 2011

KEY FRAMEWORK DESCRIPTIONS		
SOUTH AFRICA		UNESCO
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV)	ISCED 2011
The NQF is a comprehensive system for the classification, registration, and publication of quality-assured national qualifications in South Africa. It consists of 10 levels, where qualifications are pegged based on the complexity of learning achievements. - NQF Levels 1-4: General and Further Education and Training (Schooling and TVET pre-tertiary). - NQF Levels 5-10: Higher Education (Tertiary qualifications).	The REQV system is specific to the evaluation and standardization of educator qualifications in the South African public education sector. It is used to determine an educator's salary scale and career progression. - REQV 13: Generally, the minimum level for a professionally qualified educator (e.g., a three-year diploma in teaching, or an NQF Level 5 qualification with the required teaching credits). - REQV 14: Typically, a four-year qualification, such as a B.Ed. or an Honours degree after an appropriate three-year degree (NQF Level 7). - REQV 17: The highest REQV level for a professional educator, corresponding to a Doctoral degree (NQF Level 10).	The ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) is a framework used by UNESCO to organize and present educational statistics and qualifications internationally. This allows for cross-country comparison of educational attainment. - ISCED Level 3: Corresponds to the completion of high school (Matric). - ISCED Level 5: Short-cycle tertiary education (like a Higher Certificate or Diploma). - ISCED Level 6: Bachelor's or equivalent level, which covers both the South African NQF Level 7 (bachelor's degree) and NQF Level 8 (Honours/Postgraduate Diploma). - ISCED Level 7: Master's or equivalent level (NQF Level 9). - ISCED Level 8: Doctoral or equivalent level (NQF Level 10).

**Note on ISCED Levels 6 and 7: ISCED Level 6 generally captures first degrees (like a three or four-year bachelor's degree) but also includes qualifications like the Honours Degree and Postgraduate Diploma (NQF Level 8), which are considered equivalent to the first stage of the second cycle of tertiary education in the ISCED framework.*

CHAPTER 3: Teachers learning and development



CHAPTER 3: TEACHERS' LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter focuses on teachers' education from initial teacher education to professional learning throughout their careers as this is central to our understanding of effective teaching and learning.

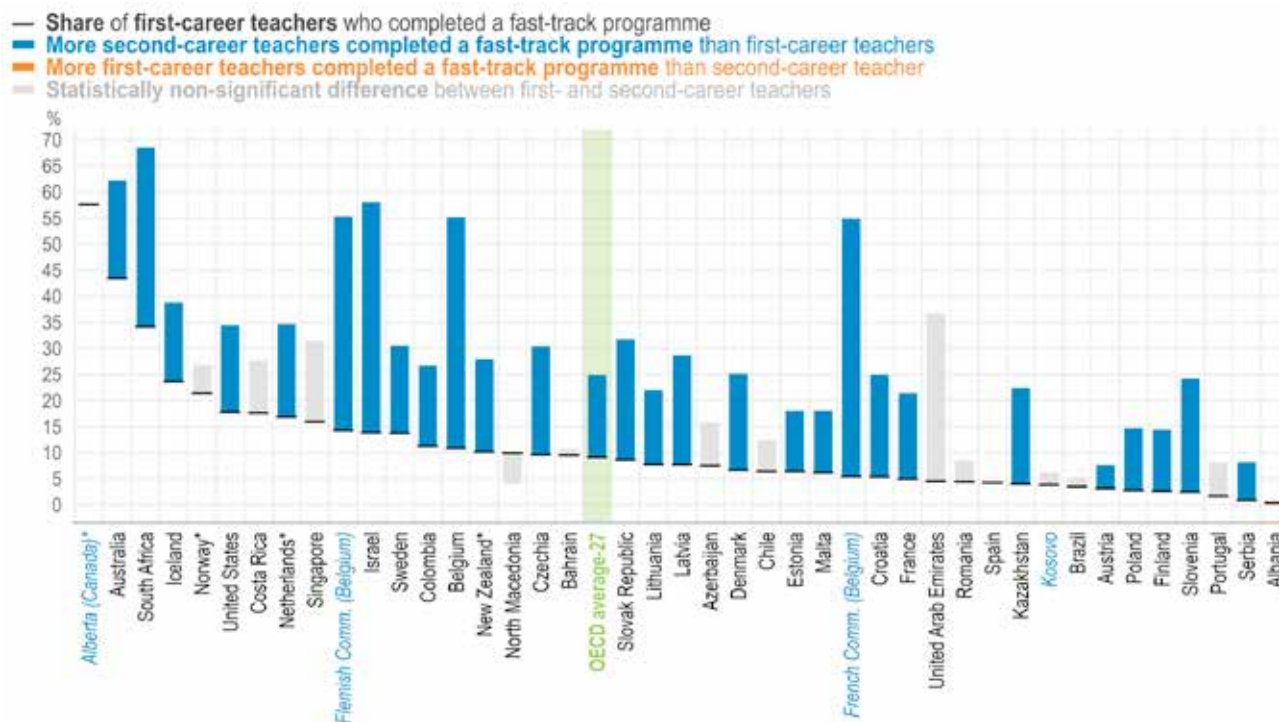
57. These teacher-level issues understood in conjunction with school level issues of school management and leadership and school climate provide us with potential explanations about how teachers enter and leave the teaching profession.
58. It is widely acknowledged that teachers' ongoing professional learning and development is a cornerstone of a strong education system not only because it benefits individual teachers and professional learning communities, but it also impacts on the quality of the entire teaching and learning ecosystem. Whilst what constitutes teachers' learning and how that learning is developed continues to be debated by researchers, policy makers and practitioners, (Shulman 1986, 1987) provided a widely embraced description of three main areas of knowledge relevant to teaching: content knowledge (mastery of core components in a subject domain; pedagogic content knowledge (ways in which content is represented and formulated to make comprehensible to learners) and general pedagogic knowledge (the broad principles of teachers' classroom management, lesson planning and assessment that go beyond subject matter). In addition to these three knowledge types, teachers needed competencies related to curricula, learners and their characteristics and the educational context in which they worked. (Guerrero, 2017 and Shulman, 1987).
59. In this chapter we will provide some background information on the TALIS 2024 teacher and principal participants and share information on how South African teachers developed their knowledge through two key domains, namely: Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and through their continuing professional development (CPD). (ACER, QED, IAE:2025:36-37). TALIS 2024.

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

60. Research has found that untrained or unqualified teachers are less effective than trained teachers (Metcalf, 1992[2]; Bressoux, Kramarz and Prost, 2009[3]). In the context of TALIS, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is the first domain of focus in terms of teachers learning and development because it is a foundational building block that shapes the broader landscape of teaching and learning. South Africa's first participation in TALIS 2018 provided critical insights into how teachers perceived their preparation for the classroom. While most teachers valued their training, they indicated that there was a lack of a more responsive and practice-oriented ITE system with a deeper focus on inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and classroom readiness across South African ITE programmes. Improving Initial Teacher Education is essential for building a resilient, skilled, and motivated teaching workforce in South Africa will ensure that new teachers entering the profession are better equipped to meet the diverse and changing needs of learners and schools and contribute meaningfully to improve the quality of learning outcomes in the basic education sector.
61. Nationally 62% of teachers surveyed indicated that Teaching was their first-choice career, an increase from 49% of teachers that indicated it was their first-choice career in 2018. Mpumalanga province had the highest proportion (75%) and the Western Cape having had the lowest proportion (52%) of respondents indicating that Teaching was their first-choice career.

62. In terms of the types of education completed for their first teaching qualification: Nationally, 47% of teachers had completed a regular teacher education or training programme with Mpumalanga having the highest proportion of teachers (59%) and the Western Cape the lowest (31%) in this category. 37% of respondents had completed a fast-track or shorter specialised teacher education and training programme (e.g. the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) that is typically completed in one year full time) with 54% of teachers in the Western Cape having completed a fast track or shorter specialised teacher education or training programme and Mpumalanga having had the lowest proportion of teachers (27%) having completed a fast track or shorter option.
63. According to the OECD, the use of fast-track programmes is gaining popularity in many education systems as a way to more quickly prepare new teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016_[4]). About 18% of recent graduates (teachers who obtained their first teaching qualification within the five years prior to the survey) completed a fast-track programme as their first teaching qualification, compared to 9% of older graduates, on average across OECD countries and territories with available data (hereafter, “on average”).
64. The TALIS international report also indicates that recent graduates of regular programmes are on average more likely than graduates of fast-track programmes to report that their initial education provided them with a strong understanding of the subjects they teach. However, such difference may well be due to fast-track programmes having a different focus, especially if they are catered to the needs of teachers who have already acquired strong subject-matter knowledge through other means.
65. On the other hand, graduates of fast-track programmes are more likely than graduates of regular programmes to report satisfaction with other aspects of their initial teacher education. They are for example more likely (by 7 percentage points, on average) to report that their programme had a good balance between theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. Nine in ten recent graduates from fast-track programmes in Estonia reported so, compared to about six in ten graduates of regular programmes; similar differences are observed in Czechia (67 versus 40%).
66. Graduates from fast-track programmes are also more likely (by 5 percentage points on average) to report that their initial education provided them with ideas for managing classroom behaviour successfully. On this dimension, differences are especially pronounced in Czechia (27 percentage points), the United States (21 percentage points) and Sweden (20 percentage points). There are some indications that the perceived quality of regular programmes is deteriorating. Older graduates (teachers who completed their initial teacher education more than five years prior to the survey) are more likely than recent graduates, on average, to report that the quality of their initial education was high. (OECD: 2025 [16-17])
67. In nearly half of education systems, the difference between recent and older graduates exceeded 5 percentage points. In Iceland, for example, 50% of recent graduates completed a fast-track programme, compared to 24% of older graduates. Similarly, in Latvia and Lithuania almost 40% of recent graduates completed such programmes, compared to 5% of older graduates.

Figure 26: Percentage of lower-secondary teachers who completed a fast-track programme as their first teacher qualification

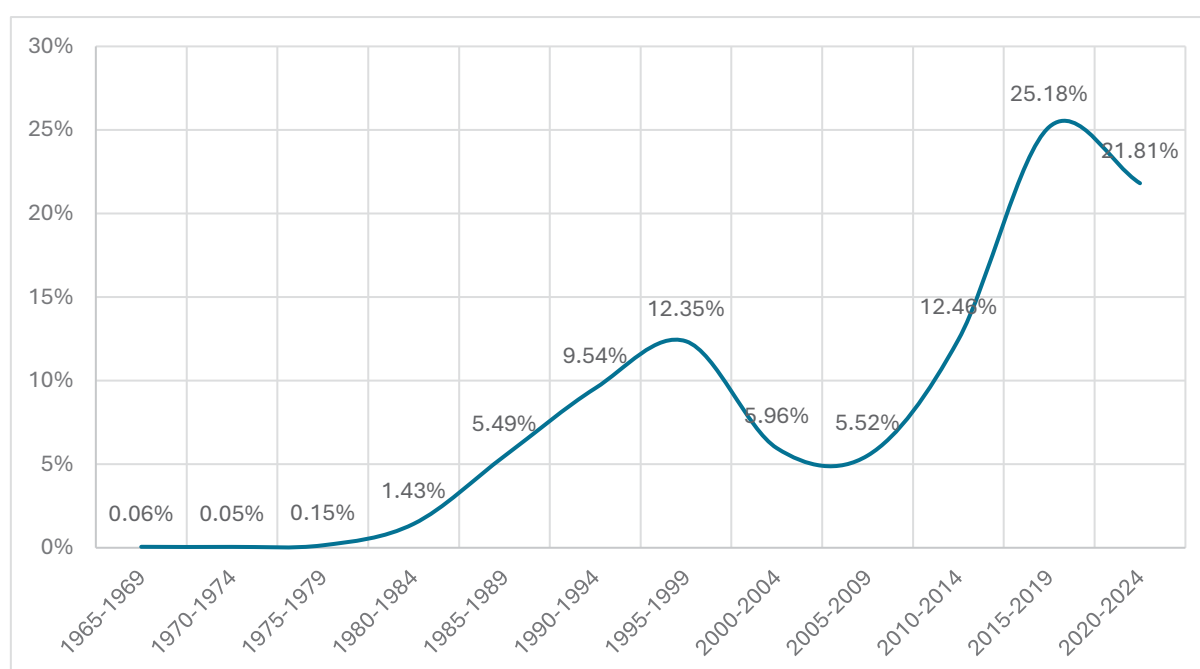


Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD, TALIS 2024 Database, Table BMUL.UND.2C_TQ04

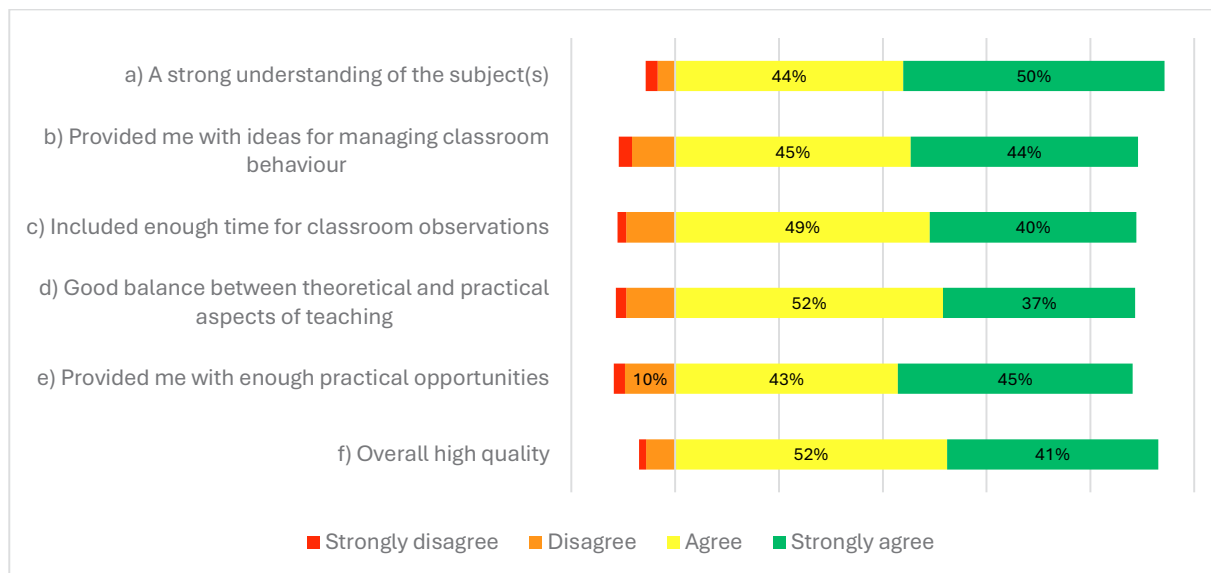
68. In South Africa 9% of teachers surveyed indicated that they had completed subject specific formal education or training with the highest proportion of teachers in the Northern Cape (13%) and Gauteng having had the lowest proportion (6%) of teachers in this category. 2% of teachers surveyed indicated that they did not have a formal qualification related to the subject they were teaching or to any type of pedagogical education with 4% of teachers in Limpopo province indicating this. Nationally 6% of teachers indicated that they did have another formal qualification that did not match the list provided in the survey.

Figure 27: Year in which teachers completed their first teaching qualification



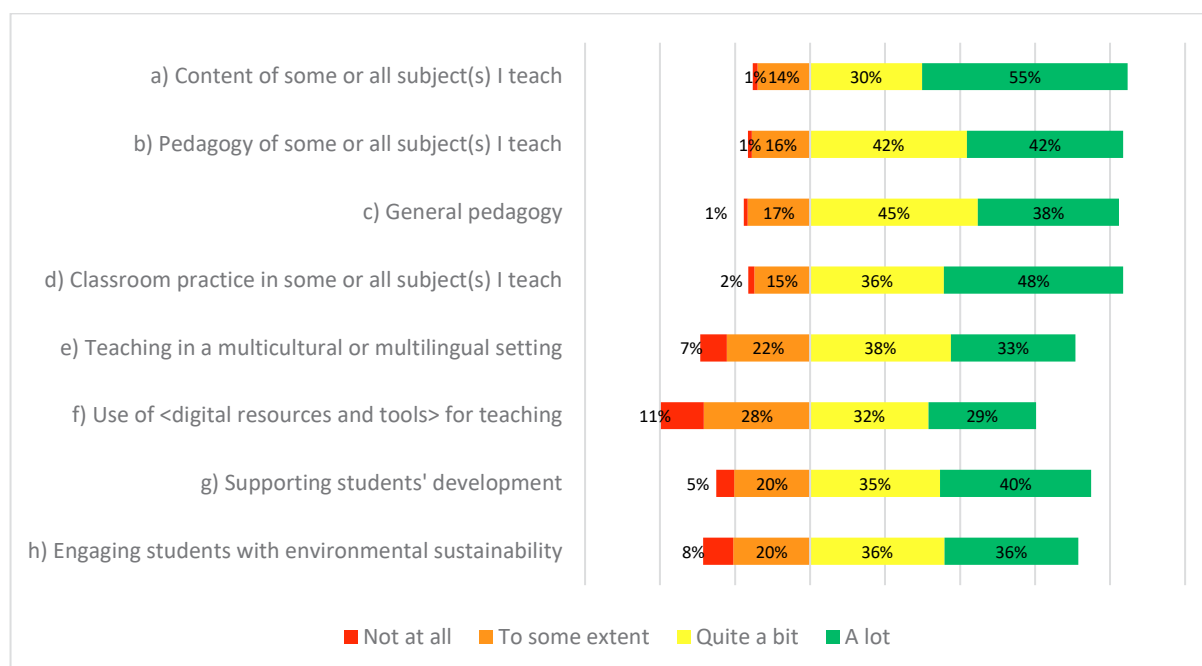
69. 57% of South African teachers surveyed had completed their first qualifications over the past 14 years (up to 2024). Whilst there was a sharp decline in the number of teachers achieving their first qualification between 2001-2010, there was a resurgence in the next decade (2011-2020) of teachers completing their first qualification. In the cohort of teachers surveyed in 2024, it was observed that more teachers had completed a first qualification between 1991-2000 (23,26%) than those that had completed a first qualification between 2001-2010 (10.64%). This is consistent with the age distribution of teachers that participated in the survey. All provinces showed a similar trend during the decades in which surveyed teachers had completed their first teaching qualification.

Figure 28: Teachers' perceptions of their first teaching qualification



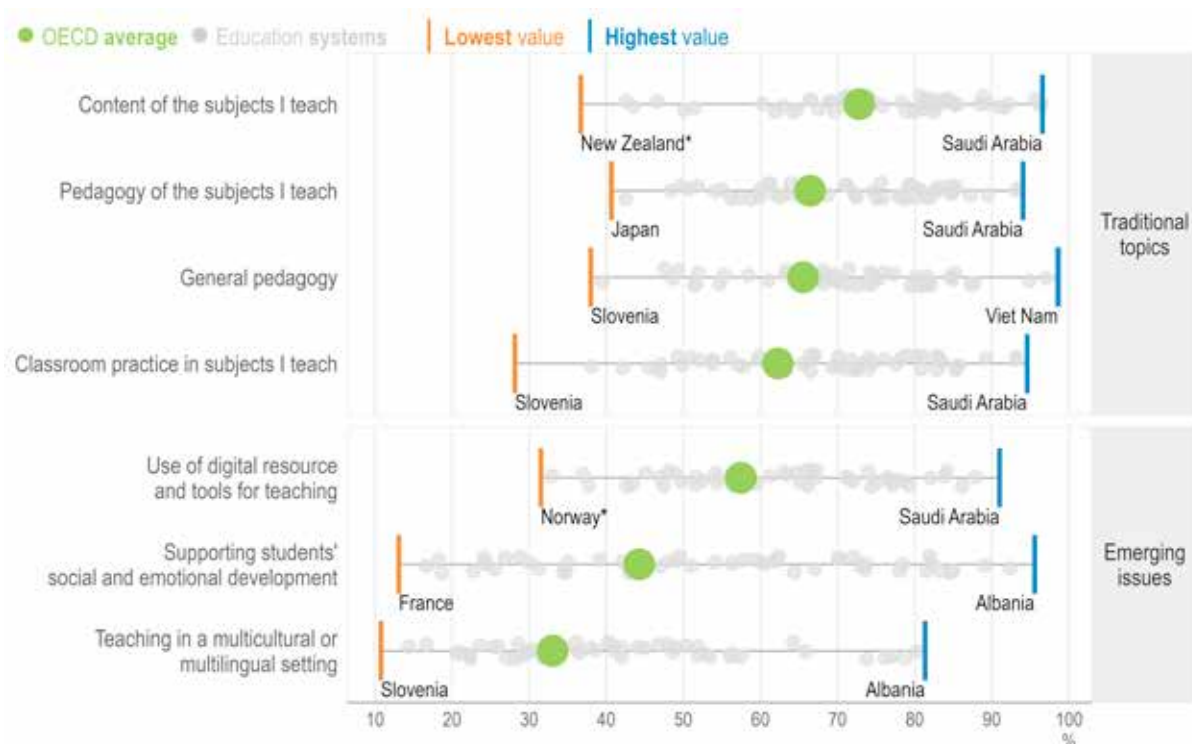
70. Teachers overwhelmingly viewed their first teaching qualification as a strong foundation for their professional practice. This highlights the perceived effectiveness and comprehensive nature of initial teacher training since a majority indicated the following levels of agreement:
- 50% of teachers strongly agreed and 44% agreed that their first qualification provided a strong understanding of the subject (s).
 - 44% strongly agreed and 45% agreed that it provided them with ideas for managing classroom behaviour.
 - 40% strongly agreed and 49% agreed that their first qualification had included enough time for classroom observations.
 - 37% strongly agreed and 52% agreed that their first qualification had a good balance between theoretical and practical aspects of teaching.
 - 45% strongly agreed and 43% agreed that their first qualification provided them with enough practical opportunities.
 - 41% strongly agreed and 52% agreed that their first qualification was of overall high quality.

Figure 29: The extent to which their formal education and training had prepared teachers for aspects of their teaching in 2024



71. A majority of teachers (55%) felt well-prepared in subject content, while 42% reported strong preparation in subject-specific pedagogy and another 42% felt quite prepared. General pedagogical readiness was also high, with 38% feeling very prepared and 45% quite a lot. However, preparedness for teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings was lower (33%), and only 32% felt quite prepared to use digital tools. Support for learners' social emotional development was moderate (40%), whilst only 36% felt well-equipped to teach environmental sustainability. These findings suggest that while foundational teaching skills were well-covered, areas such as diversity, use of digital resources and tools and teaching about environmental sustainability needed greater emphasis in teacher education.
72. This is consistent with the international findings, that a large majority of teachers across OECD education systems reported that their initial education made them feel prepared "quite a bit" or "a lot" on core traditional aspects of teaching, such as subject content, subject-specific and general pedagogy, and classroom practice in the subjects they teach. On these metrics there are generally not large differences between recent and older graduates, suggesting that the ability of initial teacher education programmes to deliver on these core aspects of teaching has not changed much over time. A partial exception to this pattern is on teachers' sense of preparedness on the content of the subject they teach. In about a third of education systems, recent graduates reported lower sense of preparedness on this aspect than older graduates. Differences were especially pronounced in New Zealand (where 37% of recent graduates feel prepared on subject content, compared to 56% of older graduates), Estonia (62% versus 75%), Malta (60% versus 72%), Iceland (50% versus 61%) and the Slovak Republic (69% versus 80%).
73. Comparative to the perception of South African teachers on the extent to which their formal education had prepared them for aspects of their teaching, Figure 11 below shows this in terms of highest and lowest values across other education systems.

Figure 30: Percentage of lower-secondary teachers who reported that their formal education made them feel prepared “quite a bit” or “a lot” with various aspects of their teaching

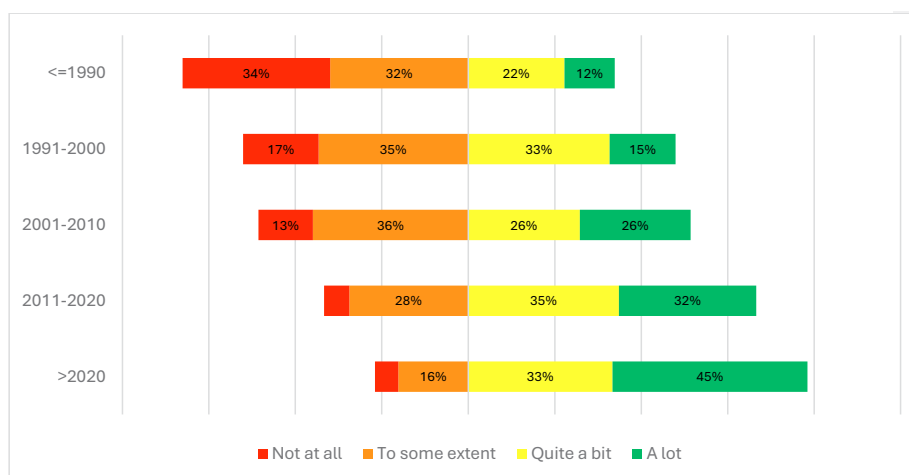


Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD, TALIS 2024 Database, Table BMUL.TQUAL. TQ07

74. TALIS has previously indicated that the years in which teachers had completed their first teaching qualification indicated that the year in which a teacher obtained their qualification does have a notable impact on their ability to use digital resources and tools in the classroom. Teachers who qualified more recently tend to be better prepared to integrate digital technologies into their teaching, as newer teacher education programs increasingly include training in digital pedagogy, ICT tools, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. This could be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the modality of teaching as many teachers moved to Moodle and Google Classroom as online teaching platforms. In contrast, teachers who qualified earlier often reported lower confidence and competence in using digital tools, largely because their initial training did not emphasize technology integration.

Figure 31: The extent to which teachers' formal education had prepared them for the use of digital resources and tools for their teaching in 2024



75. The following findings emerged for South African teachers:

- 34% of teachers trained up to 1990 indicated that their formal education had not prepared them at all for the use of digital resources and tools. 17% of teachers trained between 1991-2000 and 13% trained between 2001-2010 said their formal education had not prepared them at all for the use of digital resources and tools.
- However, increasingly, teachers trained up to 2010 (26%) , those trained between 2011-2020 (32%) and after 2020 (45%) felt that their formal education had prepared them a lot for the use of digital resources in the classroom thus confirming what TALIS has highlighted: that younger teachers and those with more recent qualifications are more likely to have received formal instruction on using digital tools, while older cohorts rely more on self-directed learning or in-service training to build these skills. This generational gap underscored the importance of continuous professional development to ensure all teachers, regardless of when they qualified, can effectively use digital resources to enhance learning outcomes.

76. Internationally the OECD has observed that teachers felt far less prepared in terms of other emerging areas, however. Only 33% of recent graduates, on average, report feeling prepared to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting; 44% feel prepared to support students' social and emotional development; and 57% feel prepared to use digital resources and tools for teaching. Further, fewer than one in five recent graduates feel prepared to teach in a multicultural or multilingual context in Slovenia (11%), France (15%) and Japan (17%). Similarly, fewer than one in five recent graduates feel prepared to support students' social and emotional development in France (13%), the French Community of Belgium (17%), Norway (18%) and Austria (19%). Recent graduates felt more prepared to teach in multicultural context than older graduates in 16 education systems. Differences are particularly large in Denmark (44% of recent graduates feel prepared, compared to 20% of older graduates) and Iceland (33% versus 13%). Similarly, recent graduates report feeling more prepared than older graduates to support students' social and emotional development in 15 education systems, particularly in Costa Rica (73% versus 54%), the United States (51% versus 35%), Alberta (Canada) (42% versus 27%) and the Flemish Community of Belgium (47% versus 34%). In seven other education systems, however, the opposite seems to be true, with older graduates feeling more prepared than recent graduates to support students' social and emotional development (OECD:2025[17]).

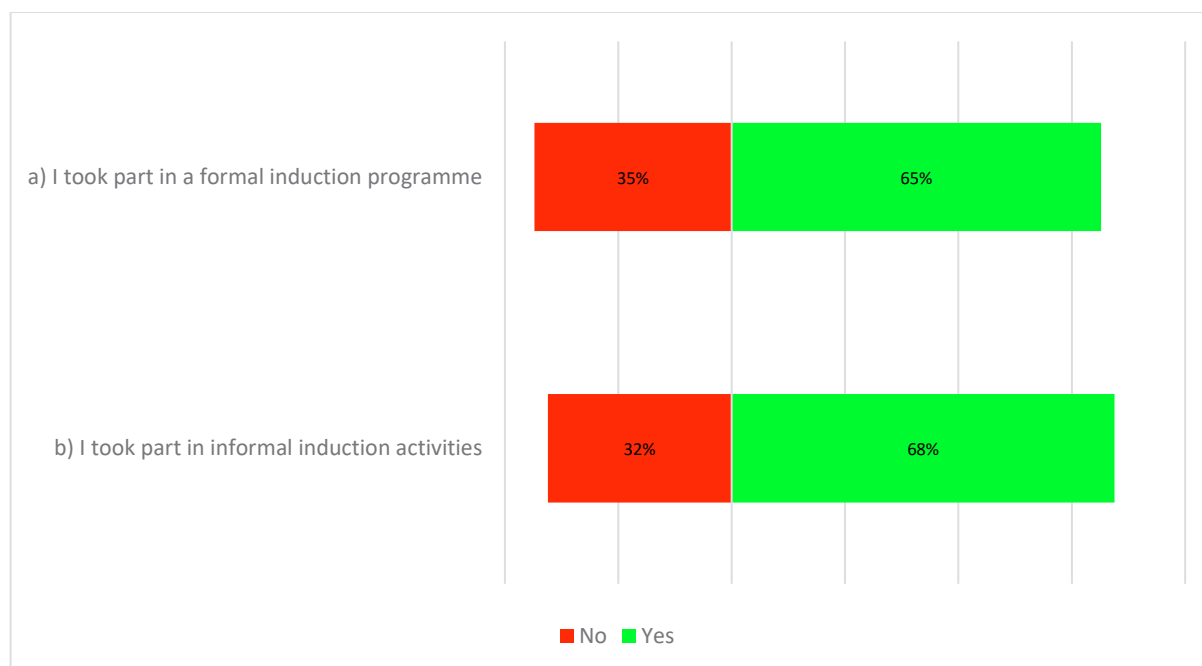
77. Principals from surveyed schools indicated the following about the formal training they had completed, its content or focus and whether this was before or after they had taken up their position as principals:

- School Administrator or principal training programme: 24.45% of principals had completed this type of formal training after they took up the position of principal; 31.66% of principals had completed a training programme before they took up the position of principal; 29.04% indicated that they completed such training programmes before and after they had accepted the position of principal and their schools and 14.85% had never had any formal training in this regard.
- Teacher training/ education programme or course: 2.01% of principals had never completed this type of programme; 64.85% of principals had completed formal training before they took up their position as principals compared to 4.99% who completed this type of training after they took up their positions. 28.15% of principals indicated that they had completed a teacher training / education programme before and after their appointment as principals.
- Instructional leadership training course: 27.69% of principals had completed this formal training course before they took up their position as principals whilst 27.33% reported having done so after they took up their positions. 28.32% of principals completed instructional leadership training before and after they took up their positions as principals and 16.66% indicated that they had never completed formal training in this regard.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

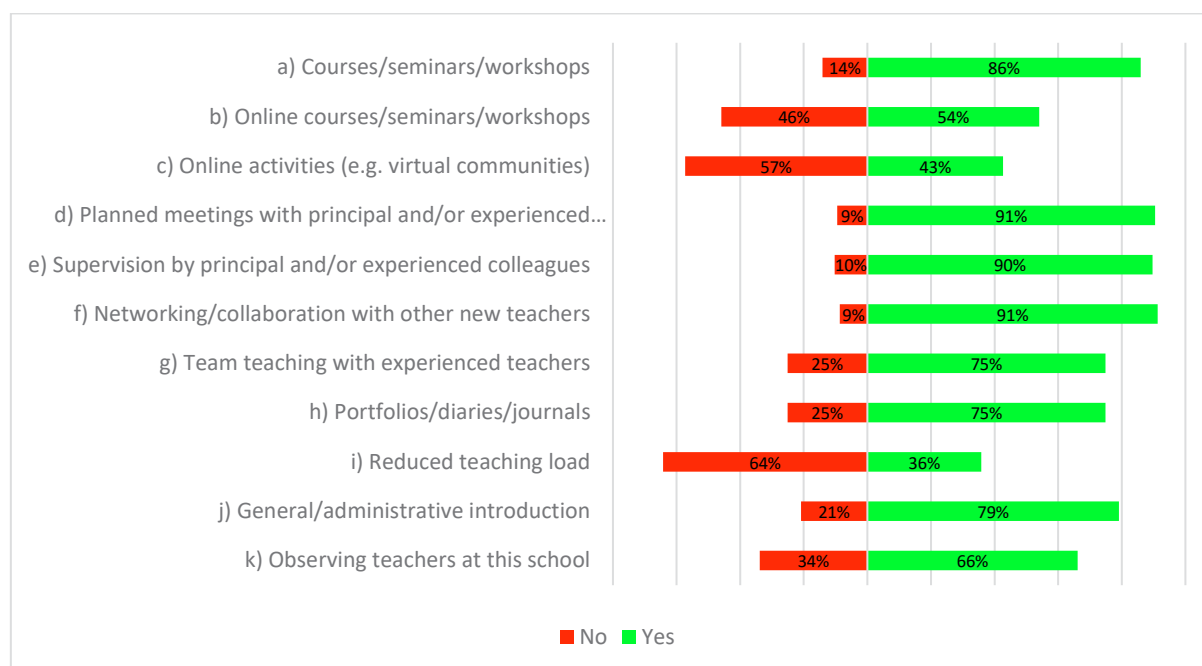
78. The second domain related to teachers' continuing professional learning has been demonstrated to have a strong impact on students' learning (Hattie, 2009[285]). Several studies suggest that teacher knowledge can be developed through professional learning activities – e.g. Copur-Gencturk (2015[254]); Kennedy (2016[286]); Steele et al. (2013[287]). However, there are different opinions about the desired focus of such activities. For example, Kennedy's (2016[286]) review of the literature suggests that programmes including aspects of PCK and GPK can improve teachers' effectiveness, while programmes that focus exclusively on CK tend to have less effect on student learning – see also Ball and Bass (2000[288]). Yet, other authors suggest CK as the main requirement for professional learning activities, e.g. Desimone (2009[289]); Greenleaf et al. (2011[290]); Heller et al. (2012[291]); Niess (2005[292]); Yoon et al. (2007[293]). Still other researchers have proposed that the pedagogical part of teacher knowledge is difficult to develop through education and that these skills are better developed by way of work experience, e.g. Chingos and Peterson (2011[99]). However, a fair share of the literature suggests positive effects of professional learning, especially in relation to GPK and PCK. Some authors emphasise the importance of professional learning communities, or collective participation, for professional learning to be effective, e.g. Desimone et al. (2003[294]); Loucks-Horsley and Matsumoto (1999[295]); Yoon et al. (2007[293]); de Vries, et al. (2016[296]). Results with respect to this attribute tend to be consistent across subjects; as with mathematics – see, for example, Copur-Gencturk (2015[254]) – teachers' knowledge about reading improves through intensive, extended programmes of professional development in literacy (Carlisle, Cortina and Katz, 2011[297]; McCutchen et al., 2002[298]).
79. A caution to participating countries was that self-reported survey data cannot evaluate the objective quality of teachers' professional learning, nor how it relates to teaching quality. For example, some governments removed barriers to professional learning after prior TALIS reports and yet implementations of professional learning and their impact on teaching and learning remained unknown, as stated by OECD (2020[299]), who also argues that teacher generated professional learning may have more impact than system-mandated professional development. A meta-analysis of research on teacher coaching as a form of professional learning concludes that it has moderate effects on teaching and small effects on student achievement (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018[300]). TALIS 2024 captures data on the extent to which teachers engage in professional learning broadly. From previous TALIS cycles, it is evident that teachers reporting that professional learning positively impacts their teaching relates to higher levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. (OECD:2025[41-42]).

Figure 32: Teacher participation in formal induction and activities at school level



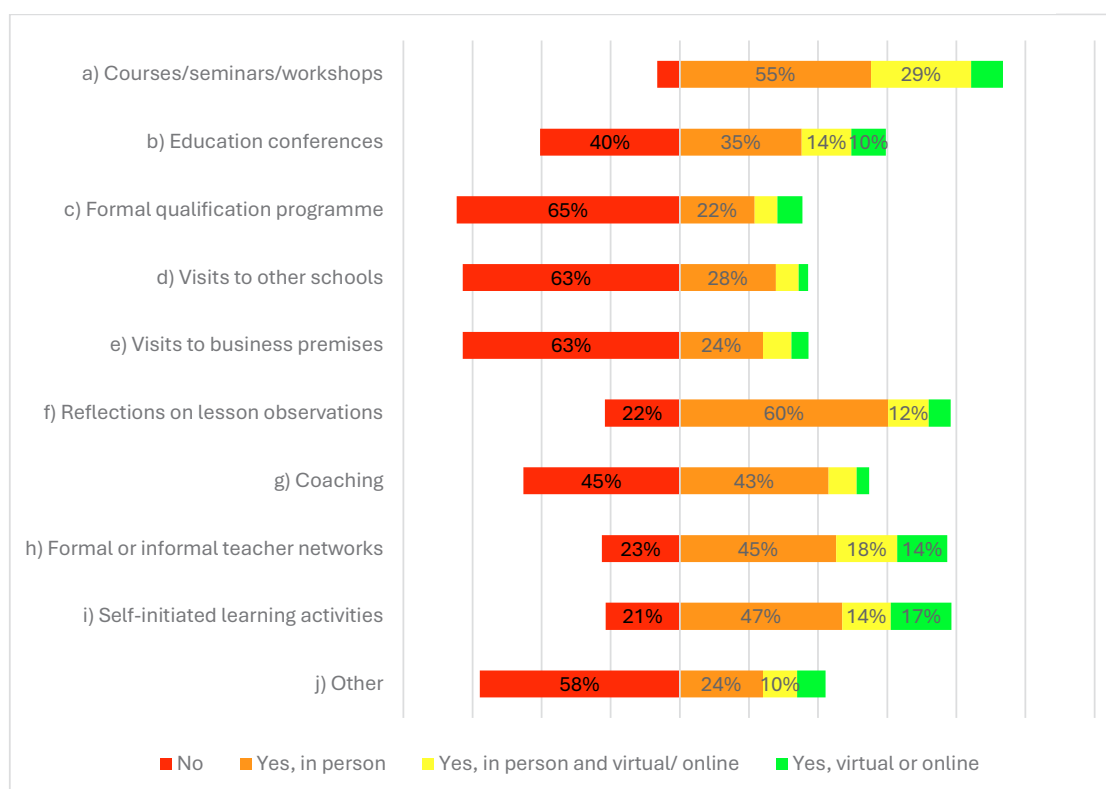
80. 65% of teachers reported participating in a formal induction programme at their current school. This suggests a strong institutional commitment to onboarding and early-career support for teachers. 68 % of teachers reported that they had participated in informal induction activities (e.g. informal mentoring, where experienced teachers offer guidance; peer collaboration, like sharing lesson plans or co-planning lessons; inclusion in school-wide social events to build cohesion in the school community; informal conversations with experienced members of staff about school norms and ethos so that new teachers feel welcomed, reduce their isolation, and build their confidence in a more relaxed and authentic way).

Figure 33: Provisions that were part of teachers' induction when they began work at their school



81. The data revealed that South African teachers actively engaged in professional development and collaborative practices when they began work at their schools. A significant majority (86%) participated in workshops, seminars, or courses, with over half (54%) attending these online, although 56% had not engaged in virtual communities. Most teachers (91%) attended planned meetings with principals or experienced colleagues, and 90% received supervision from them. Peer collaboration is strong, with 91% networking with fellow new teachers and 75% participating in team teaching. Additionally, 75% maintained reflective portfolios or journals. However, only 36% received a reduced teaching load, suggesting limited structural support during induction. Administrative introductions were common (79%), and 66% of teachers were inducted through classroom observation, highlighting a hands-on approach to onboarding.
82. In terms of being involved in any mentoring activities as part of formal arrangements at their schools, 42% of teachers indicated that they did not have an assigned mentor to support them and 42 % of teachers in the survey also indicated that they were currently an assigned mentor for one or more teachers.

Figure 34: Teachers' participation in professional learning activities in the last 12 months



83. Over the past 12 months, South African teachers engaged in a variety of professional learning activities, predominantly through in-person modalities. More than half (55%) attended courses, seminars, or workshops in person, while 29% combined in-person and virtual participation. Education conferences saw moderate attendance, with 34% attending in person and 40% not participating. Formal qualification programmes had lower engagement, with 67% not participating and only 20% attending in person. Visits to other schools and business premises as a professional development activity were also limited, with 65% not participating in either activity. However, 58% of teachers reflected on lesson observations, and 12% did so both in person and virtually. Teacher networks attracted 43% in-person participation and 18% blended participation. Notably, self-initiated learning activities had the highest virtual engagement, with 44% participating and 23% not involved. 22.
84. Visits to other schools and business premises as a professional development activity were also limited, with 65% not participating in either activity. However, 58% of teachers reflected on lesson observations, and 12% did so both in person and virtually. Teacher networks attracted 43% in-person participation and 18% blended participation. Notably, self-initiated learning activities had the highest virtual engagement, with 44% participating and 23% not involved.

85. Overall, professional development remains largely in-person, with virtual modalities gaining traction in self-directed learning. This modality could be appealing and rewarding for teachers because it allows them flexibility and autonomy and allows them to fit learning into their personal schedules, explore topics that genuinely interest them, rather than following a mandated course, they can focus on professional development areas they want to improve and work at their own pace. They can participate in formal or informal online teacher networks that offer webinars, and peer groups where teachers can share ideas and learn from each other globally and be exposed to diverse teaching strategies and perspectives that could spark innovation in their own classrooms.
86. Teachers can take ownership of their professional learning and boost their motivation and professional esteem and for those that are increasingly technology savvy virtual learning helps them to stay current and hone their use of digital tools to help them stay abreast of the latest educational / pedagogic trends. Most importantly, by engaging in self-initiated (self-directed) learning, teachers are also setting a powerful example for their peers and learners and where they participate in formal or informal networks, they can build collaborative capacity and reduce isolation, especially in under-resourced schools or remote areas

Figure 35: Topics included in Teachers professional learning activities during the last 12 months



87. Teachers reported that several critical topics were insufficiently addressed in professional learning activities over the past year. The most neglected area was teaching learners with special educational needs (59%), followed by integrating artificial intelligence into teaching (49%) and multicultural or multilingual education (38%). Other underrepresented themes included technical digital skills (30%), sustainability education (34%), individualized learning and school management (32%), social and emotional learner support (31%), teacher-parent collaboration (27%), and classroom behaviour management (23%). These gaps highlight the need for more targeted and inclusive professional development to equip teachers for evolving classroom demands.

88. In the past 12 months, most teachers reported that professional learning activities had a meaningful impact on their teaching practice. Specifically, 39% felt a significant impact, 30% experienced a moderate effect, and 27% noted some influence. Only 4% of teachers indicated that these activities had no impact at all. This suggests that professional development is largely effective in enhancing teaching practices, though the degree of impact varies among educators.
89. To compare the characteristics of professional learning that were important to South African teachers, we selected countries that were economically similar to South Africa, had education systems that were similar and those with education systems that performed better than South Africa's and Morocco, the only other African country participating in TALIS 2024.

Table 12: International Level: Professional Learning characteristics that were important to teachers

COUNTRY	Percentage teachers that found the characteristic "A lot" important to them in professional learning			
	Built on my prior knowledge	Focused on content needed to teach my subject	Addressed my school's needs	Involved most colleagues from this school
Australia	40,0	38,7	28,7	13,1
Brazil	41,7	56,3	44,1	30,4
Colombia	33,6	36,8	33,2	21,6
Estonia	32,1	46,6	19,2	11,1
Finland	22,7	34,6	17,2	3,5
Japan	30,4	29,8	21,6	8,6
Morocco	60,8	50,0	30,4	21,2
Netherlands*	41,1	35,3	19,7	9,9
Singapore	33,2	35,1	24,8	14,2
South Africa	70,9	69,9	44,3	40,0
TALIS average-49	39,7	43,1	30,5	20,3
United Arab Emirates	67,0	65,3	63,9	55,3
United States	34,3	43,6	34,6	17,0
OECD average-27	34,9	39,8	26,8	14,3

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

90. South African teachers placed a significantly higher importance on all four professional learning characteristics compared to the TALIS average and the OECD average. The characteristics considered most important were those related to relevance to the teacher's current skills and content (Built on my prior knowledge: 70.9%; Focused on content needed: 69.9%). The characteristic that "Involved most colleagues from this school" was the least important among the four, but at 40.0%, but it was still more than double the OECD average of 14.3%.

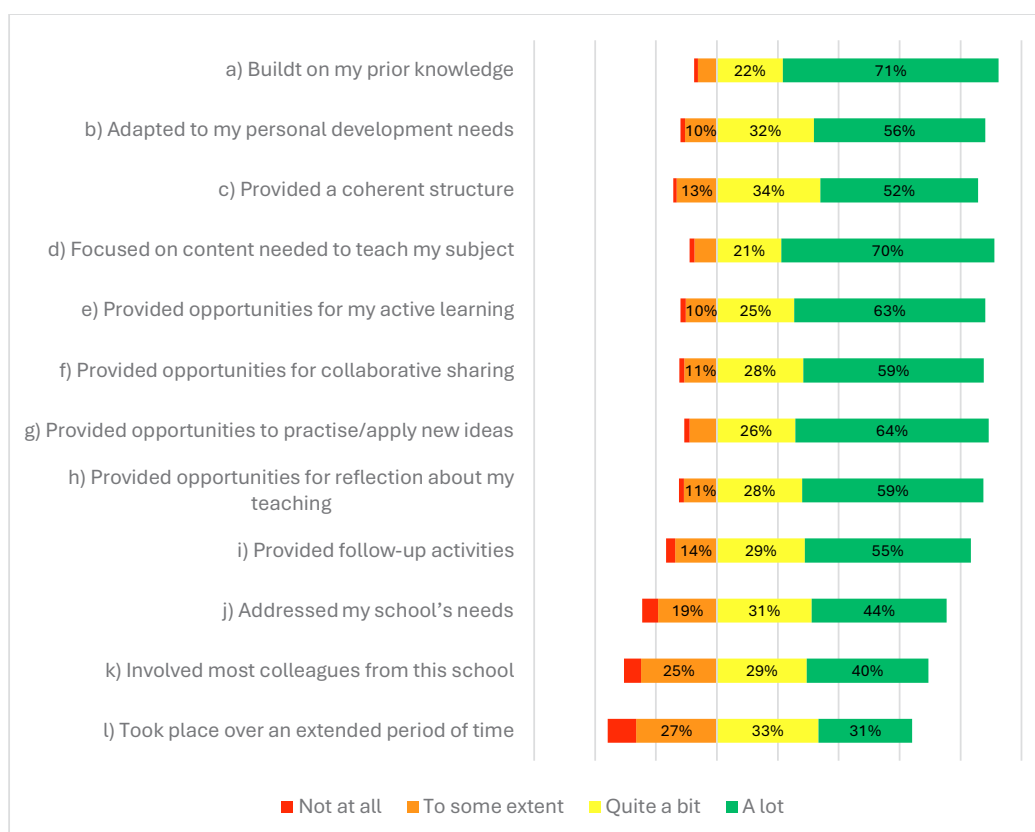
Table 13: Provincial Level: Professional learning characteristics that were important to teachers

PROVINCE	Percentage teachers that found the characteristic “A lot” important to them in professional learning			
	Built on my prior knowledge	Focused on content needed to teach my subject	Addressed my school’s needs	Involved most colleagues from this school
Eastern Cape	70,8	71,0	48,1	41,4
Free State	70,1	70,3	35,3	35,6
Gauteng	68,0	67,4	43,6	38,3
KwaZulu Natal	73,4	67,6	44,6	42,0
Limpopo	74,6	78,3	50,5	46,1
Mpumalanga	80,6	81,2	54,8	46,7
Northern Cape	78,5	76,0	50,3	45,8
North West	64,6	59,2	28,2	23,8
Western Cape	58,1	59,0	31,5	27,5
National	70,9	69,9	44,3	40,0

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

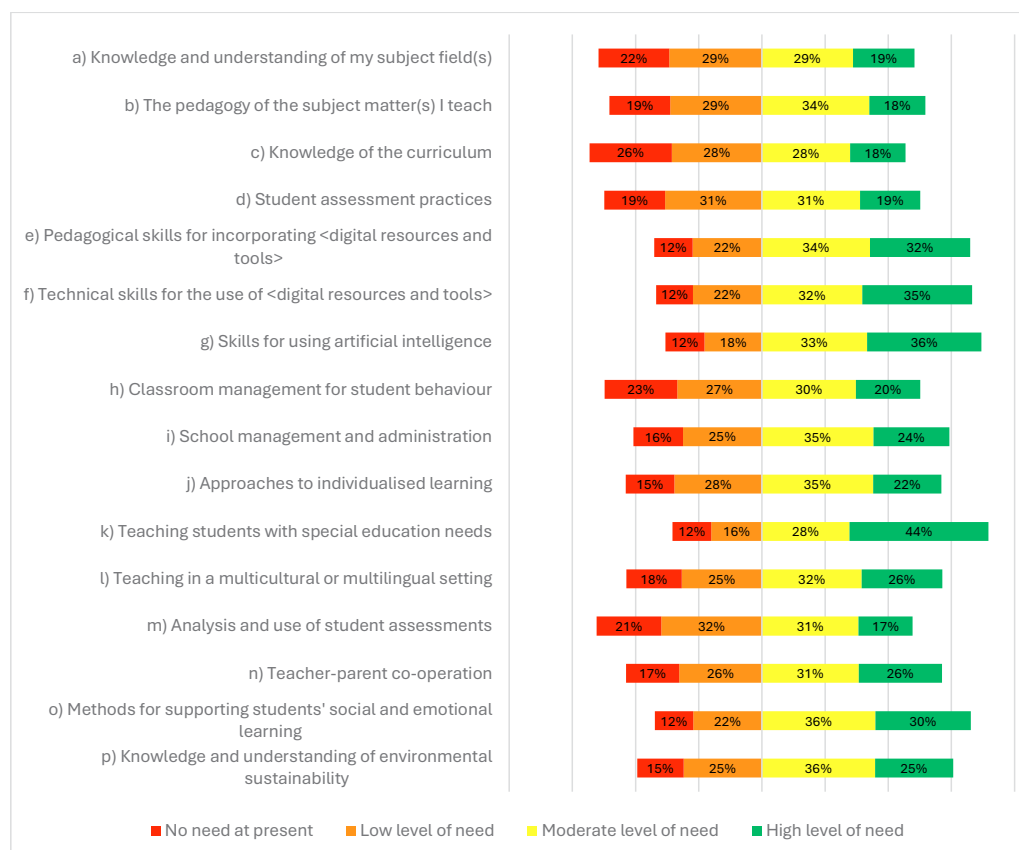
91. Mpumalanga reported the highest percentage of teachers finding the characteristics “Built on my prior knowledge” (80.6%) and “Focused on content needed to teach my subject” (81.2%) .Overall, the characteristic “Focused on content needed to teach my subject” showed the widest range across provinces, from a high of 81.2% in Mpumalanga to a low of 59% in Western Cape.

Figure 36: Characteristics of professional learning activities that were important for teachers



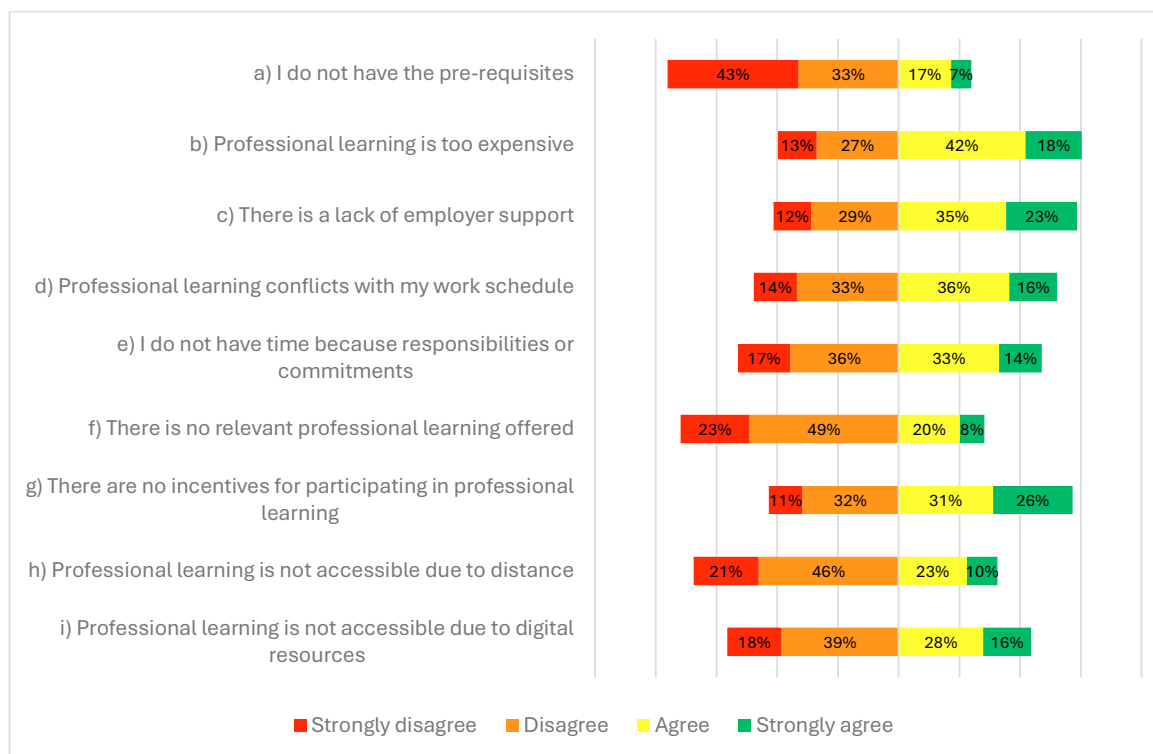
92. Teachers identified several key characteristics that made professional learning effective and meaningful. The most valued included building on prior knowledge, focusing on subject-specific content (66%), enabling active learning, and offering opportunities to apply new ideas (59%). Collaborative sharing (55%), alignment with personal development needs (53%), follow-up activities (50%), and a coherent structure (48%) were also considered important. In contrast, features such as addressing school-wide needs, involving colleagues from the same school, and extending over long periods were seen as less desirable, indicating a preference for personalized, practical, and content-focused professional development.

Figure 37: Key areas in which teachers needed professional learning activities



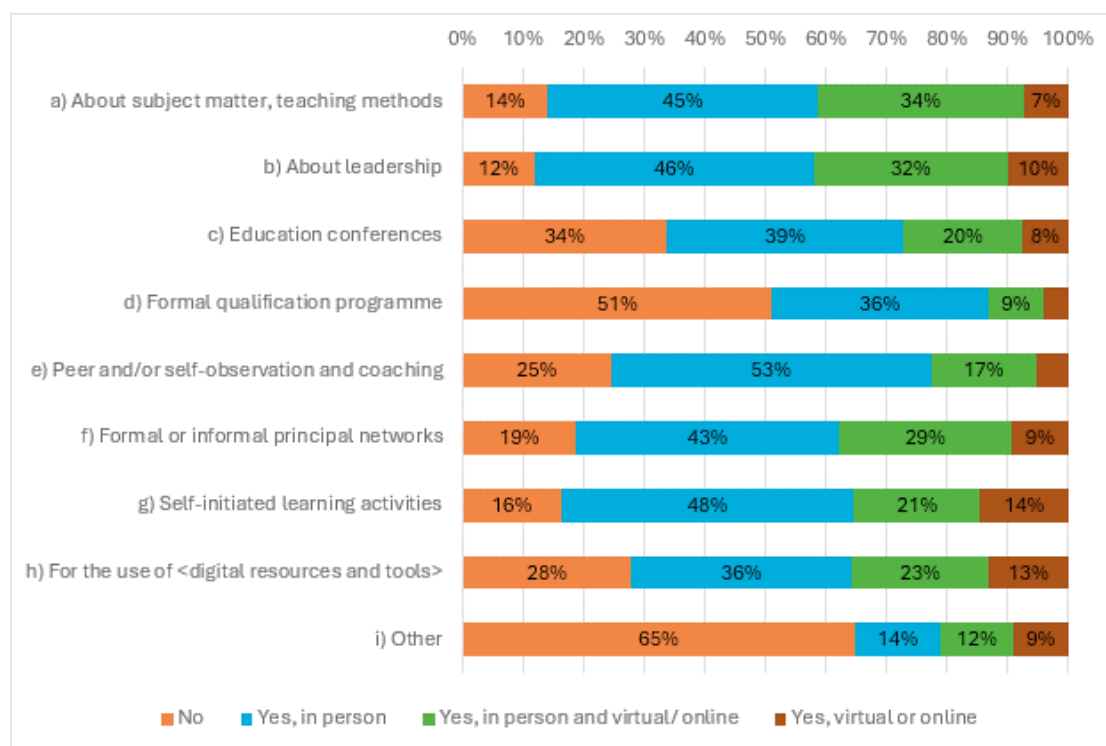
93. Teachers expressed a strong need for professional learning in several key areas, with the highest demand focused on teaching learners with special educational needs (41%). Significant interest was also shown in acquiring skills for using artificial intelligence (36%), technical digital competencies (32%), and pedagogical strategies for integrating digital tools (29%). Support for learners' social and emotional development (28%) and fostering teacher-parent cooperation were also highlighted. Other areas of need included multicultural and multilingual teaching (24%), sustainability education (23%), school management (22%), and classroom management alongside individualized learning approaches (20%). These priorities reflect a growing demand for capacity building and professional development that aligns with evolving, contemporary educational challenges and diverse classroom contexts.
94. Surveyed teachers identified several key barriers that hindered their participation in professional learning activities. The most prominent issue was the lack of incentives (26%), followed by insufficient employer support (21%) and the high cost of professional development (20%). Time constraints also played a significant role, with 17% citing scheduling conflicts and another 17% pointing to personal responsibilities. Additionally, limited access to digital resources affected 12% of teachers, highlighting challenges in engaging with online learning platforms. These barriers suggest that structural, financial, and logistical factors significantly impact teachers' ability to pursue ongoing professional development.

Figure 38: Barriers to teachers' participation in professional learning activities



95. Recognising that effective school leadership is a cornerstone of quality education systems, TALIS emphasises the continuing professional learning of principals because they play a pivotal role in shaping their schools' culture, quality of teaching and learning, teacher quality and motivation and community involvement and support. TALIS views principals not just as administrators, but as instructional leaders whose professional development directly impacts on the quality of learning outcomes, considers principals as lifelong learners because their continuing professional development goes beyond initial training and includes ongoing in-service activities that strengthen leadership, management, and pedagogical skills at their schools. Data collected on principals continuing professional development helps education systems and policy makers to understand whether current professional development capacity building programs for school management teams and principals are aligned with actual their needs and provides the opportunity for better resource allocation and more targeted leadership development strategies. Continuing from TALIS 2018, TALIS 2024 focused on the continuing professional development of principals during the past 12 months reflects a broader shift in education policy which encourages education systems to invest in school leaders as agents of change, not just as mere administrators.

Figure 39: Professional development activities that principals participated in during the last 12 months



96. Principals reported varied levels of participation in professional learning activities over the past 12 months, with in-person engagement being the most common modality. Training on subject matter and teaching methods was attended in person by 44.6% of principals, while 14.07% did not engage at all. Leadership development saw strong participation, with 46.6% attending in person and only 11.87% not participating. Education conferences had lower attendance, with 39.16% participating in person and 33.69% not attending. Over half (51.13%) did not pursue formal qualification programmes, though 35.58% attended in person. Capacity building through peer/ self-observation and coaching was attended in person by 52.84%, while 24.5% did not participate. Principal networks were popular, with 43.38% engaging in person and only 18.76% not participating. Self-initiated learning was undertaken by 48.39% in person, though 16.25% did not engage. Training on digital tools had the lowest participation, with only 36.34% attending in person and 27.91% not participating at all. Overall, principals favoured in-person professional development, though notable gaps remain in digital and formal qualification engagement.
97. Surveyed principals indicated that they had participated in the following professional learning activities aimed at them as a principal:
- 56% of principals had participated in professional learning activities on Knowledge and understanding.
 - 57% of principals had participated in professional development activities on how to improve their schools' environmental sustainability practices.
 - 47% of principals had participated in professional development activities on how to support teachers to teach.

Table 14: International Level: Current professional development needs of principals

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals who found the following areas to be “High level of need” in professional learning activities					
	Knowledge of new developments in leadership research and theory	Using data for improving the quality of the school	Designing professional learning for/ with teachers	School management (HR, finance)	Develop strategy to use digital resources and tools for teaching	Promoting staff well-being
Australia	5,3	8,9	13,3	16,2	9,7	20,8
Brazil	30,9	32,8	31,8	26,4	40,8	30,5
Colombia	22,1	34,5	32,6	31,1	37,4	21,0
Estonia	24,6	29,9	24,3	37,4	15,5	45,9
Finland	3,8	6,9	10,6	15,3	8,6	29,6
Japan	52,9	44,4	34,3	60,4	46,0	57,5
Morocco	48,2	55,9	48,5	42,1	51,0	51,2
Netherlands*	15,7	25,7	24,3	21,4	7,7	16,4
Singapore	9,7	7,5	10,0	7,3	12,0	5,4
South Africa	41,8	45,3	39,9	38,8	55,1	43,1
TALIS average-49	21,1	30,3	24,9	28,0	27,0	30,5
United Arab Emirates	12,5	19,2	8,4	10,4	11,0	15,4
United States	0,5	13,7	23,9	3,2	6,0	8,8
OECD average-27	14,8	25,1	20,1	24,7	20,3	28,0

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

98. Principals in Morocco (48.2%–55.9%) and Japan (52.9%–60.4%) reported the highest need for training across leadership research and theory, data use, school management, and digital strategies. South Africa was indicated high levels of need, with 41.8% needing knowledge of new developments in leadership research, 45.3% data use for improving the quality of the school, and 55.1% capacity building on how to develop strategy to use digital resources and tools for teaching, all above the OECD averages (14.8%–25.1% for most categories). By contrast, developed countries such as Finland (3.8% leadership, 15.3% management) and Singapore (9.7% leadership, 7.3% management) reported much lower needs.
99. Globally, principals responded differently to having a high level of need for professional learning activities. South Africa consistently reported higher-than-average needs across all areas, especially in digital resource strategy (55.1%) and school management (38.8%), surpassing both the OECD and TALIS averages. Countries like Japan and Morocco also showed elevated needs, while nations such as Finland, Singapore, and Australia reported significantly lower levels of need, suggesting stronger existing professional learning support systems or differing professional development priorities and opportunities for principals.

Table 15: Provincial Level: Current professional development needs of principals

PROVINCE	Percentage of principals who found the following areas to be “High level of need” in professional learning activities					
	Knowledge of new developments in leadership research and theory	Using data for improving the quality of the school	Designing professional learning for/ with teachers	School management (HR, finance)	Develop strategy to use digital resources and tools for teaching	Promoting staff well-being
Eastern Cape	43,0	47,4	53,7	56,6	75,3	57,8
Free State	39,3	41,3	44,3	27,6	39,4	21,1
Gauteng	8,4	20,3	22,3	32,9	36,5	35,1
KwaZulu Natal	52,6	50,8	33,6	32,6	61,5	41,7
Limpopo	57,2	60,3	47,8	42,1	61,0	43,5
Mpumalanga	44,6	45,6	38,2	31,5	36,6	52,4
Northern Cape	44,9	34,7	41,3	41,4	47,8	46,6
North West	36,7	37,4	42,5	31,4	53,2	44,7
Western Cape	15,5	42,3	31,0	31,0	35,4	23,4
National	41,8	45,3	39,9	38,8	55,1	43,1

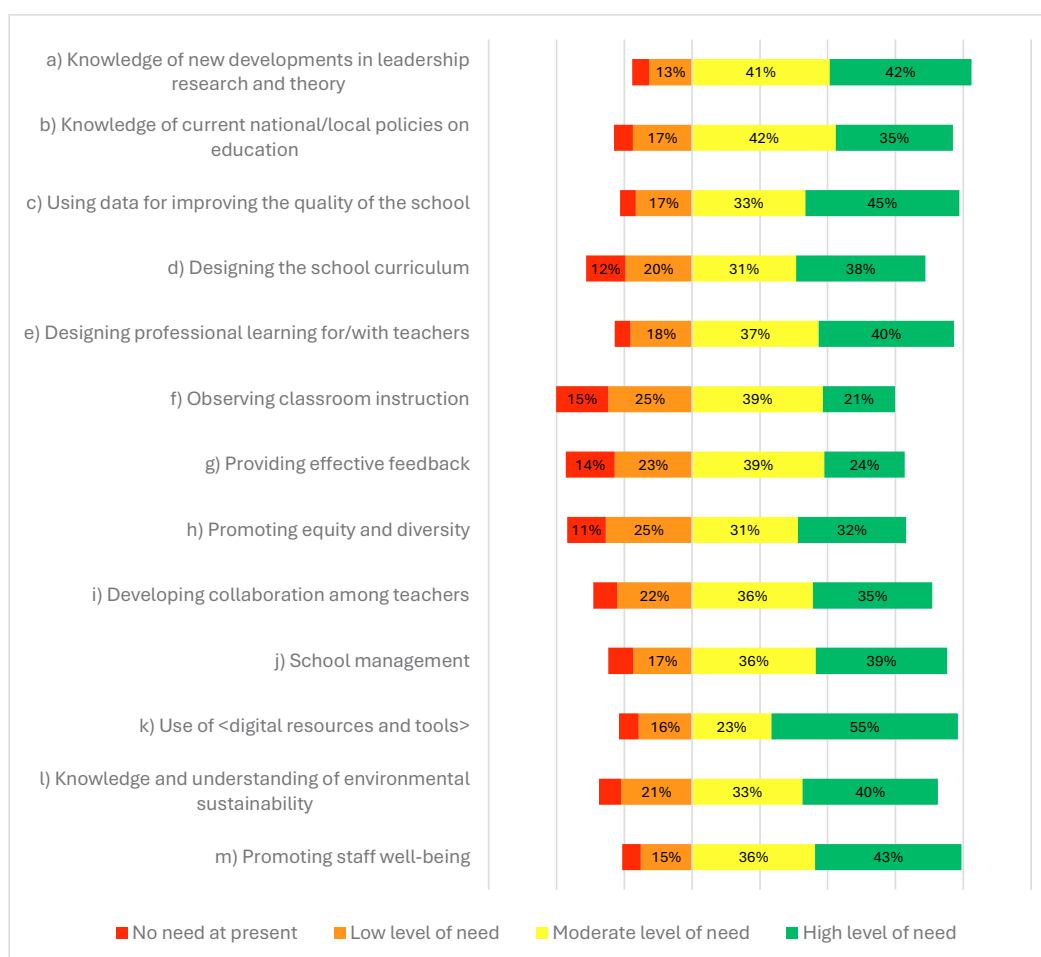
	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

100. The Eastern Cape and Limpopo stood out as provinces where principals consistently reported significantly higher levels of need that were above the national average across most or all six areas. The Eastern Cape had the highest need in four of the six categories. Limpopo has the highest need in two of the six categories. These provinces require urgent and concentrated intervention. Resources, specialist support, and funding should be disproportionately allocated to address the compounded challenges faced by principals in these areas, ensuring foundational leadership and management skills are reinforced before advanced areas of focus were introduced.
101. In contrast, the Western Cape and Gauteng generally reported lower levels of professional development needs, sometimes significantly below the national average. The system should evaluate professional development practices for school managers and leaders in these provinces to identify and potentially replicate successful models of principal professional development or support. As such the system should prioritise the development of a national, scalable professional development programme for school principals/ SMTs focusing on digital leadership and pedagogical technology integration. This includes not just technical skills, but strategic planning for resource deployment, security.
102. There are substantial differences in the level of professional development needs reported by principals across provinces, indicating that a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development will be ineffective. For instance:
- The need for *Developing digital strategy* is 75.3% in the Eastern Cape but only 35.4% in the Western Cape.
 - The need for *School management (HR, finance)* is 56.6% in the Eastern Cape but as low as 27.6% in the Free State and 3.2% in the United States (as per the international comparison).
103. As such professional development for principals and SMTs should be decentralised or highly customised to respond to provincial needs indicated. Provincial education departments will need the autonomy and resources to commission or develop programmes that directly address their unique and statistically high-level professional development needs in the areas highlighted by principals.

104. Nationally, principals indicated a high level of current professional development needs and the level of need in the following areas:

- How to use digital resources and tools (55%).
- Using data for improving the quality of the school (45%).
- Promoting staff well-being (43%)
- Knowledge of new developments in leadership (42%)
- Designing professional learning for/ with teachers and Knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability (40%)
- School Management (39%)
- Designing the school's curriculum (38%)
- Developing collaboration among teachers and Knowledge of current national / local policies on education (35%).

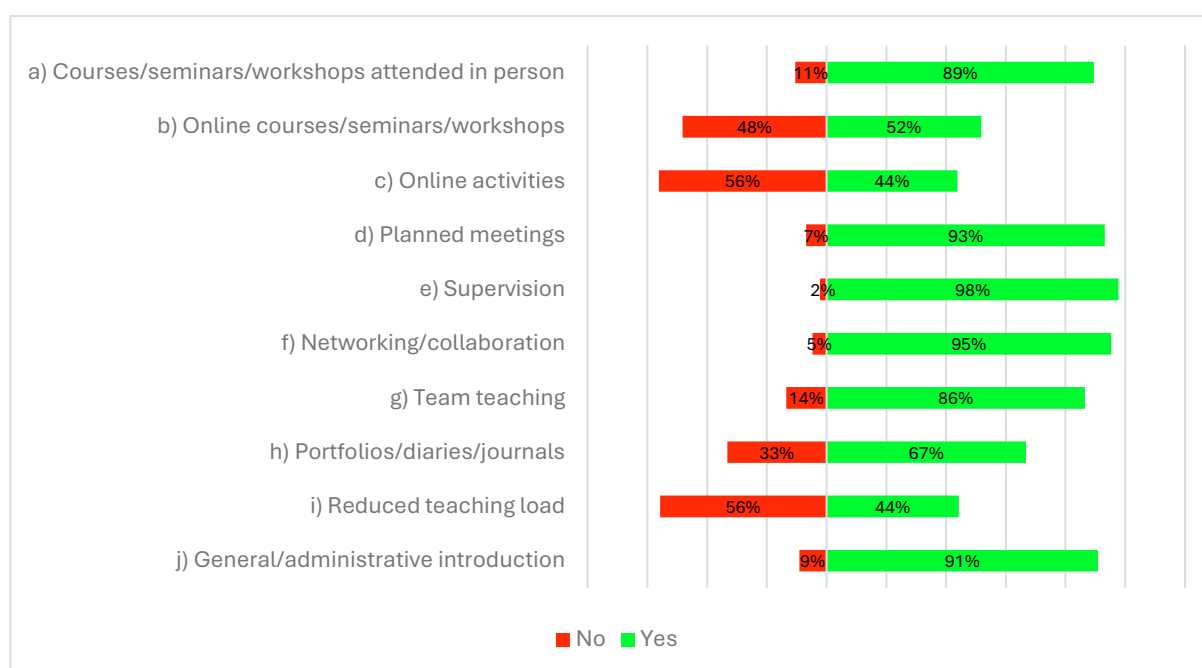
Figure 40: Current professional development needs of principals in specific areas



Teacher Induction Programmes

105. Teacher Induction, mentoring and formal appraisal are powerful contributions to a teacher's professional learning journey. They offer both support and structure, helping teachers to grow in confidence, competence, and creativity. When implemented alongside a meaningful formal teacher appraisal process, they create a balanced professional learning ecosystem for teachers. When school management teams integrate teacher induction, mentoring and teacher appraisal, staff will feel supported (through mentoring) and challenged and motivated (through appraisal) so that their professional growth and learning is continuous and is a shared responsibility within the school community. In this regard the principals provided the following insights on the integrated components of teachers' professional journey and the extent of implementation at the surveyed schools.
106. Regarding a formal induction programme: 38% of principals indicated that only teachers new to their schools to such a programme, 50% indicated that all teachers new to their schools had a formal induction programme and 12% of schools had no formal induction programme. (This is concerning since the new Teacher Induction Programme was implemented in all provinces in 2024). 25% of principals indicated that informal induction programmes were provided only for teachers new to their schools; 64% indicated that all teachers new to their schools had a formal induction programme and 12% reported that there was no informal induction programme available at their schools.
107. Principals reported that teacher induction programmes at their schools included some of the following predominant provisions:
- Supervision (98%)
 - Networking/collaboration (95%)
 - Planned meetings (93%)
 - General/ Administrative introduction (91%)
 - Courses /seminars/workshops attended in person (89%)
 - Team teaching (86%)
 - Portfolios/diaries/journals (67%)

Figure 41: Provisions included in teacher induction at surveyed schools



108. Teacher induction programmes provided less provision for reduced teaching loads and online activities (44%) compared to the predominant provisions.

Mentoring Programmes

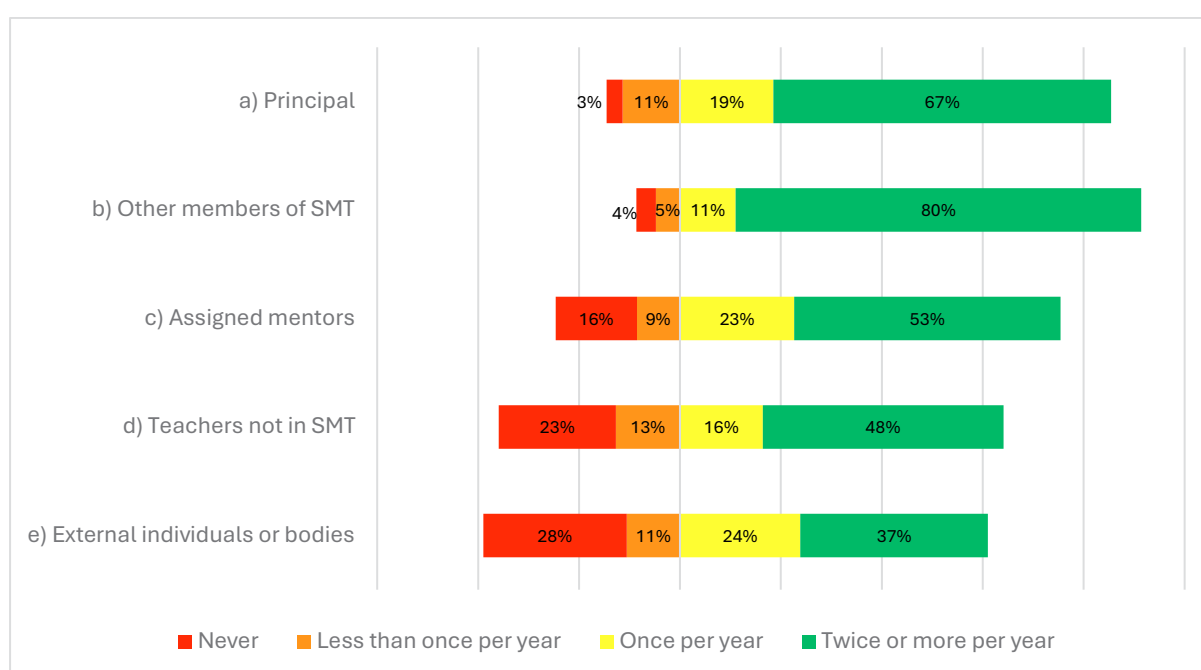
109. We can think of mentoring as the scaffolding that supports teachers as they build their professional lives and it is essential to build their skills and experience and help them to translate pedagogical theory into classroom practice so that they develop effective strategies for classroom management, lesson planning, and learner engagement and also encourage teachers to reflect on their methodologies, decisions, and outcomes achieved in their work at schools. This reflective practice leads to continuous improvement and a deeper understanding of teaching as a craft. Mentoring also strengthens relationships between colleagues, promotes a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared learning and empowers and encourages teachers to take on leadership roles and contribute to school-wide improvement.
110. In light of this perspective, 37% of principals indicated that all teachers at their schools had access to a mentoring programme, 23% of principals confirmed that a mentoring programme is available for all teachers who were new to their schools, 26% of principals indicated that access to an induction programme is only for teachers who were new to teaching (i.e. have less than one year paid employment as a teacher) and 14% principals reported that there was no access to a mentoring programme at their schools. This is a concern since mentoring is a component of the DBE's new induction programme implemented in 2024.
111. 76% of principals indicated that most of the time, the mentor's main subject specialization was the same as that of the teacher being mentored, 21% of principals indicated this was the case sometimes and 3% of principals indicated that the mentor and teacher being mentored was rarely or never the same.

Teacher appraisal

112. Teacher appraisal, the act of evaluating teacher performance, typically serves two main functions. The first is formative: helping teachers to improve their practice by identifying strengths and areas for development. The second is summative (oriented towards accountability): determining how effective teachers are and holding them accountable (Santiago and Benavides, 2009[5]). While appraisal systems are designed to support professional practice, they can also introduce new demands or increase existing pressures and be a source of stress for teachers especially if they were linked to learner outcomes or implemented unevenly (OECD, 2013[6]).
113. Across OECD countries, appraisal was nearly universal. On average, 88% of teachers were formally appraised at least once per year by their school principal. Only in Finland and Italy did less than two-thirds of teachers work in schools where this was the case (62% and 59% respectively). In most systems, the responsibility is shared by school management teams (66%) or assigned mentors (61%), while appraisal by fellow teachers was less common – on average, about 45% of teachers were appraised by their peers according to principals' reports. This latter form of appraisal was particularly rare in Finland and the French Community of Belgium (less than 10%) but highly prevalent in Shanghai (China) and Viet Nam, where nearly all teachers report being appraised by their peers.
114. In terms of appraisal methods, classroom observation remained the most widespread. According to school principals, 96% of teachers worked in schools that used classroom observation as a formal appraisal method. This proportion was above 90% in almost all education systems, except for Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Spain, although even in these systems the proportion is over 70%. The use of this method has remained relatively stable since 2018, with few countries reporting significant changes

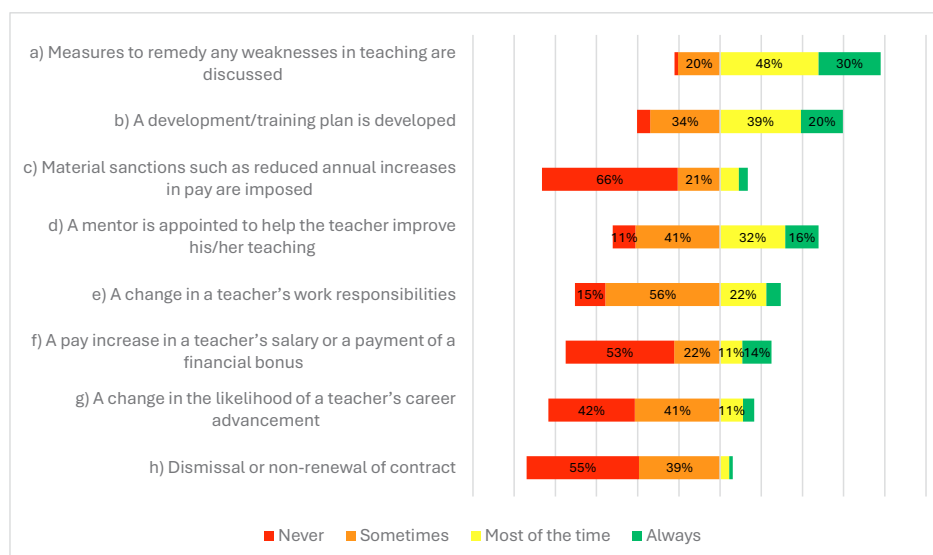
115. In contrast, the use of learner performance data in appraisal was declining. Since 2018, 16 education systems reported a significant decrease in the use of external student results (e.g. national examinations) and 14 systems showed a decline in the use of internal performance measures (e.g. school or classroom-based results). These trends were particularly pronounced in the French Community of Belgium, Iceland, and Malta, where the use of both types of student data in appraisal has fallen by more than 20 percentage points. These shifts may reflect a broader rebalancing of how performance evidence is used in teacher evaluation and professional learning. In recent years, evaluation models that prioritised formative feedback, classroom observation and dialogue have gained traction as more holistic alternatives (OECD, 2020[7]; Tuytens and Devos, 2016[8]).
116. When all stakeholders shared a common understanding of what “good teaching” looked like, then teacher appraisal becomes more effective. In South Africa, this shared understanding is central to the Quality Management System (QMS), the national teacher appraisal framework.
117. The QMS requires teachers to be appraised twice a year, aligned with the academic calendar. Appraisals are conducted by immediate supervisors such as Departmental Heads, Deputy Principals, Principals, or Circuit Managers, depending on the school's line function. Therefore, principals' responses about appraisal frequency and responsibility offer valuable insight into how the QMS may be perceived and implemented in schools.

Figure 42: The frequency of individual teacher appraisal by different stakeholders



118. Teacher appraisal in South African schools is conducted with varying frequency by different stakeholders. Principals appraised individual teachers twice or more per year in 67% of schools, while 19% did so annually and 3% never conducted appraisals. Other members of the School Management Team (SMT) were more active, with 80% conducting appraisals twice or more annually. Assigned mentors appraised teachers twice or more per year in 53% of cases, though 16% of principals reported no mentor-led appraisals. Teachers not in the SMT conducted appraisals twice or more per year in 48% of schools, but 28% never participated in this process. Overall, SMT members play the most consistent role in teacher appraisal, while involvement from mentors and non-SMT teachers is more variable.

Figure 43: Responses to the outcomes of formal teacher appraisal at schools



119. On a national level, the data on formal teacher appraisals confirmed a strong emphasis on developmental, rather than punitive outcomes, aligning with the OECD's observation that this approach has gained traction. The most prevalent response/action that followed an appraisal in 78% of cases was implementation of corrective measures to discuss weaknesses in teaching, underscoring the system's focus on improvement and support. Similarly, the creation of development or training plans (59%) and the appointment of mentors to help teachers (89% across varying frequencies) reflected a supportive ecosystem aimed at professional growth. In contrast, negative consequences such as salary reductions (65% "Never") and contract termination (55% "Never") were notably rare, suggesting that appraisals are not typically used as disciplinary tools. Interestingly, even positive incentives like pay increases (62% "Never") and promotions (42% "Never") were infrequent, indicating that appraisals were more about maintaining standards than rewarding excellence. Overall, the appraisal process seems to prioritise constructive feedback and capacity building over either punishment or reward.



Information Box 2: OECD's definition of a Teacher

Definition of a “teacher”

Unless indicated otherwise, the term “teacher” as used in this report is based on the definition adopted by the OECD's Indicators of Education Systems (INES) project in its data collections, which provide much of the data used in this report.

A teacher is defined as a person whose professional activity involves the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are stipulated to students enrolled in an educational programme.

This definition does not depend on the qualification held by the teacher nor on the delivery mechanism. It is based on three concepts:

1. Activity, thus excluding teachers without active teaching duties – although teachers temporarily not at work (e.g. for reasons of illness or injury, maternity or parental leave, holiday or vacation) are included.
2. Profession, thus excluding people who work occasionally or in a voluntary capacity in educational institutions.
3. Educational programme, thus excluding people who provide services other than formal instruction to students (e.g. supervisors, activity organisers, etc.).

Teaching staff refers to professional personnel directly involved in teaching students, including classroom teachers; special education teachers; and teachers who work with students as a whole class in a classroom, in small groups in a resource room, or in one-to-one teaching inside or outside a regular classroom. Teaching staff also includes chairpersons of departments whose duties include some amount of teaching (*i.e.* at least 0.25 of full-time equivalent), but it does not include non-professional personnel who support teachers in providing instruction to students, such as teachers' aides or other paraprofessional personnel. Also, in general, school principals, vice principals and other administrators *without* teaching responsibilities in educational institutions, as well as teachers without active teaching responsibilities for students in educational institutions, are not classified as teachers.

The data reported on teachers' salaries are for full-time classroom teachers only.

In *vocational and technical education*, teachers of the “school element” of apprenticeships in a dual system are included in the definition. Trainers in the “in-company element” of a dual system are excluded.

Full-time and part-time teachers

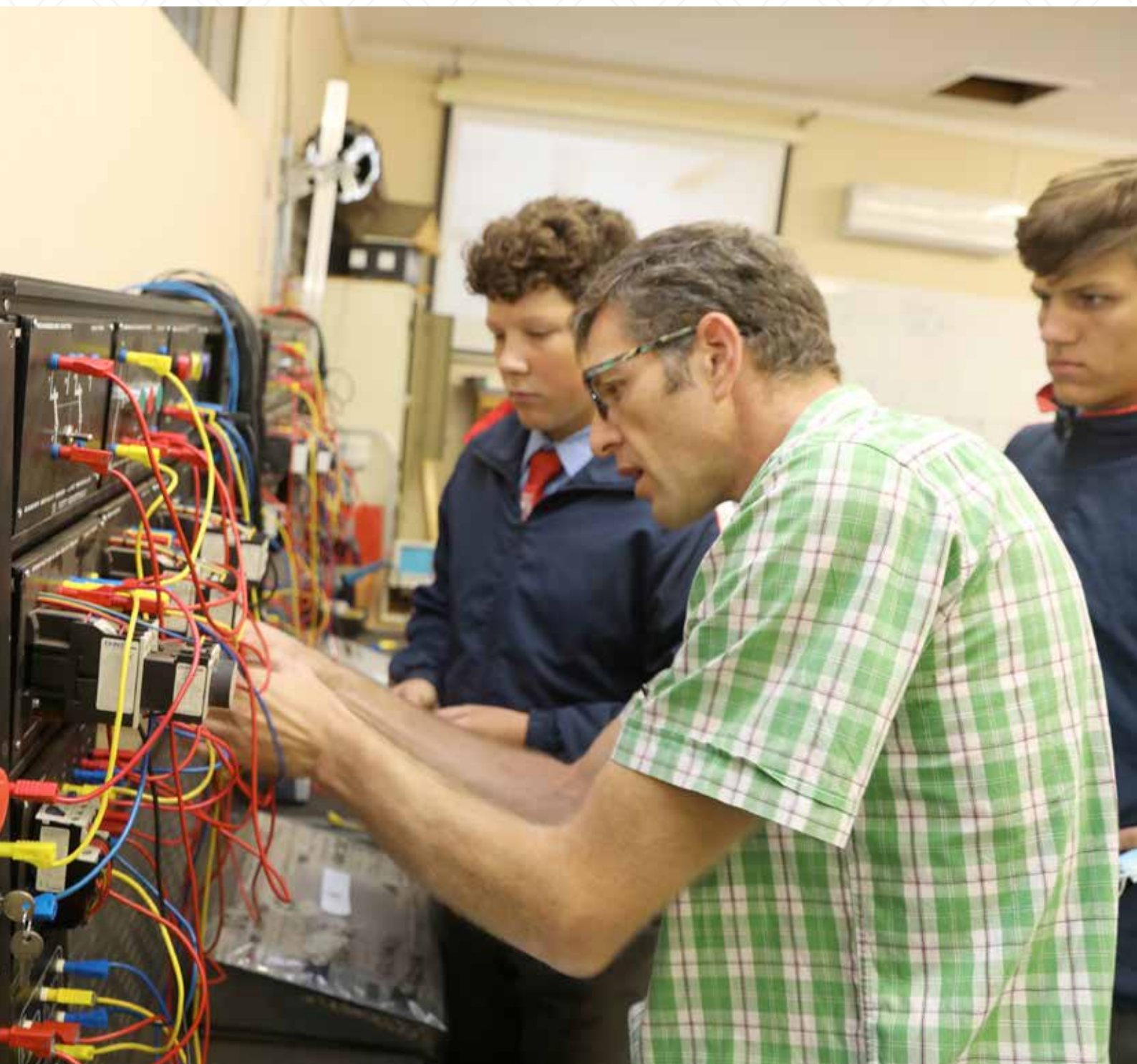
The classification of educational personnel as “full-time” and “part-time” is based on a concept of *working time*. The stipulation of full-time employment is usually based on “statutory hours” or “normal or statutory working hours” (as opposed to actual or total working time or actual teaching time). Part-time employment refers to individuals who have been employed to perform less than the amount of statutory working hours required for a full-time employee.

A teacher who is employed for at least 90% of the normal or statutory number of hours of work for a full-time teacher over the period of a complete school year is classified as a *full-time teacher*. A teacher who is employed for less than 90% of the normal or statutory number of hours of work for a full-time teacher over the period of a complete school year is classified as a *part-time teacher*.

More detailed information on these general definitions and conventions is provided in More detailed information on these general definitions and conventions is provided in Education at a Glance, OECD Indicators 2004. (See also www.oecd.org/edu/eag2004)

Source: TEACHERS MATTER: ATTRACTING, DEVELOPING AND RETAINING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS – ISBN 92-64-01802-6 © OECD 2005

CHAPTER 4: Teachers' work practices



CHAPTER 4: TEACHERS WORK PRACTICES

This chapter provides an insight into the teaching and professional practices that shape the work that teachers do at schools.

1. TALIS 2024 investigates two domains of teachers work practices: teaching and professional practices. While teaching practices pertain to the work that teachers do inside the classroom and in other direct interactions with learners, professional practices capture aspects of teachers' work beyond their regular classroom duties. The latter term also relates to conditions under which teachers work that influence their individual professionalism and the status of their profession, in general. Teaching practices are critical for learner learning and professional practices are critical for teachers' professionalism within and outside of the school. OECD: 2025: [42-43]).

TEACHING PRACTICES

2. Although teacher characteristics (e.g. knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions) contribute to learner learning, it is what teachers do in the classroom that has been shown to have a pivotal role in what learners learn. This domain focuses on teaching practices, defined as what teachers "...do, constantly and habitually" (Lampert, 2010, p. 25[282]) and whose "...proficient enactment [...] is likely to lead to comparatively large advances in learner learning." (Ball et al., 2009, p. 460[279]).
3. According to Cohen (2011: 305) Teaching is a complex endeavour, therefore, it is not surprising that, over the past decades, several frameworks and models have been proposed to capture different components of teaching practices and teaching quality. Broadly speaking, research has focused on two categories of teaching practices: those that cut across different subject matters – often identified as content- or subject generic – and those that are unique to teaching specific subjects or content areas or "...have a particular functioning and specialised manifestations when occurring in the teaching of these areas."
4. However, covering content-specific practices in a single survey intended for teachers teaching different subject matters would be unrealistic. Therefore, the TALIS 2024 survey, in line with the TALIS 2018 survey, focuses on generic practices. Focusing on generic practices still yields a wide array of practices to consider (See, for example, Creemers and Kyriakides, (2007[311]); Danielson (2013[312]); Klieme et al. (2009[313]); Pianta and Hamre (2009[314]); van de Grift (2014[315]). Despite the plethora of different frameworks, recent syntheses identified practices attended by several teaching frameworks (Maulana et al., 2021[316]; Praetorius and Charalambous, 2018[317]).
5. The practices identified in these studies include classroom and time management, clarity of teaching, cognitive activation, formative assessment and feedback, adaptation, supporting learners' social and emotional learning, and support for consolidation. The first five practices were considered in the TALIS 2018 survey. The sixth practice can be linked to teacher support that was included in TALIS 2018. In TALIS 2024, there is a more explicit focus on supporting learner social and emotional learning rather than learning in general. The seventh practice is a new addition to TALIS 2024 to complement the focus on cognitive activation by providing opportunities for learners to reinforce their procedural knowledge and skills by working on tasks. As such, in TALIS 2024, there are seven sub-dimensions that are considered as indicators for the teaching practices proposed (OECD: 2025[46-47])
6. In developing these indicators, TALIS 2024 draws on and complements the respective items from the "Teaching in General" and "Teaching in the Target Classroom" sections of the TALIS 2018. To measure teaching practices for social and emotional learning, situational judgement test items included in TALIS 2024 elicit both the implicit and explicit beliefs and values influencing teachers' decision making and judgements in the classroom (Durksen and Klassen, 2018[363]; Klassen et al., 2018[364]).

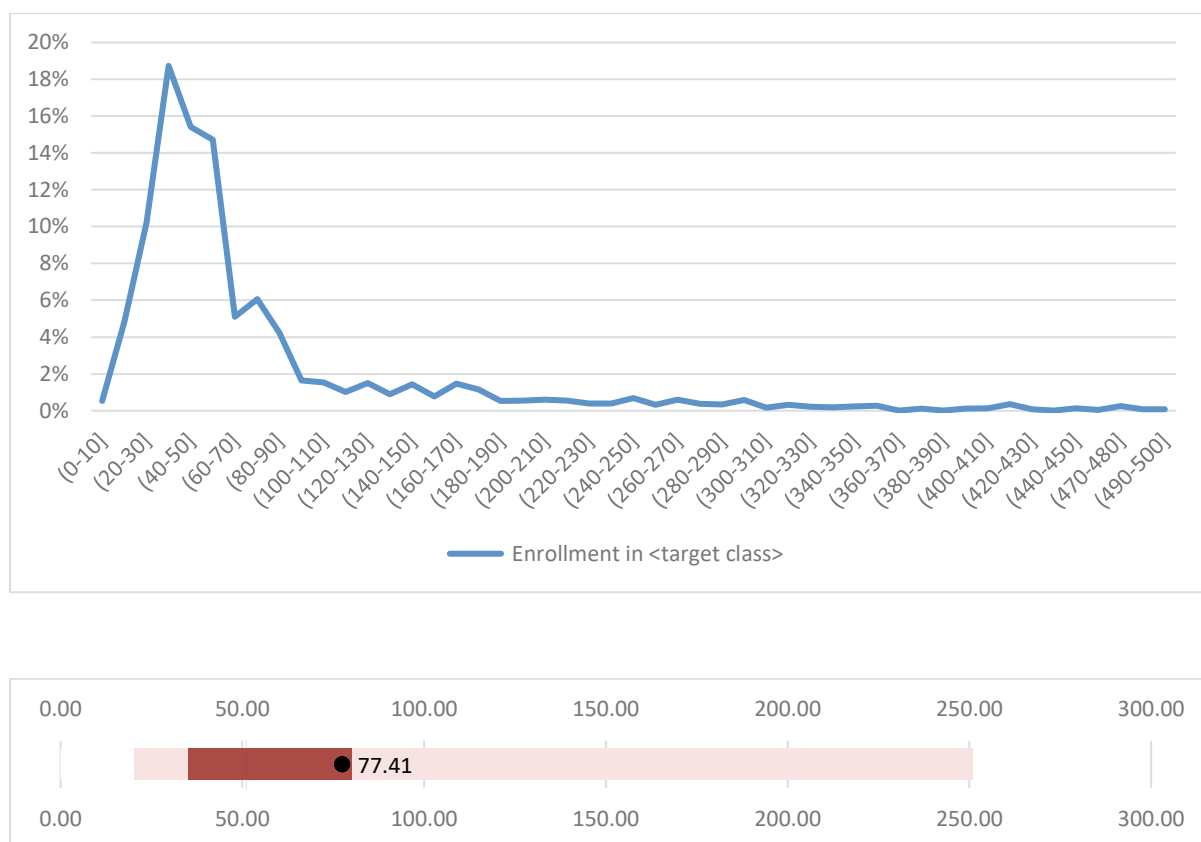
Figure 44: Seven Sub-domains proposed as indicators for teaching practices in TALIS 2024



TEACHING IN THE TARGET CLASS

Number of learners in the target class

Figure 45: Number of learners currently enrolled in the target class

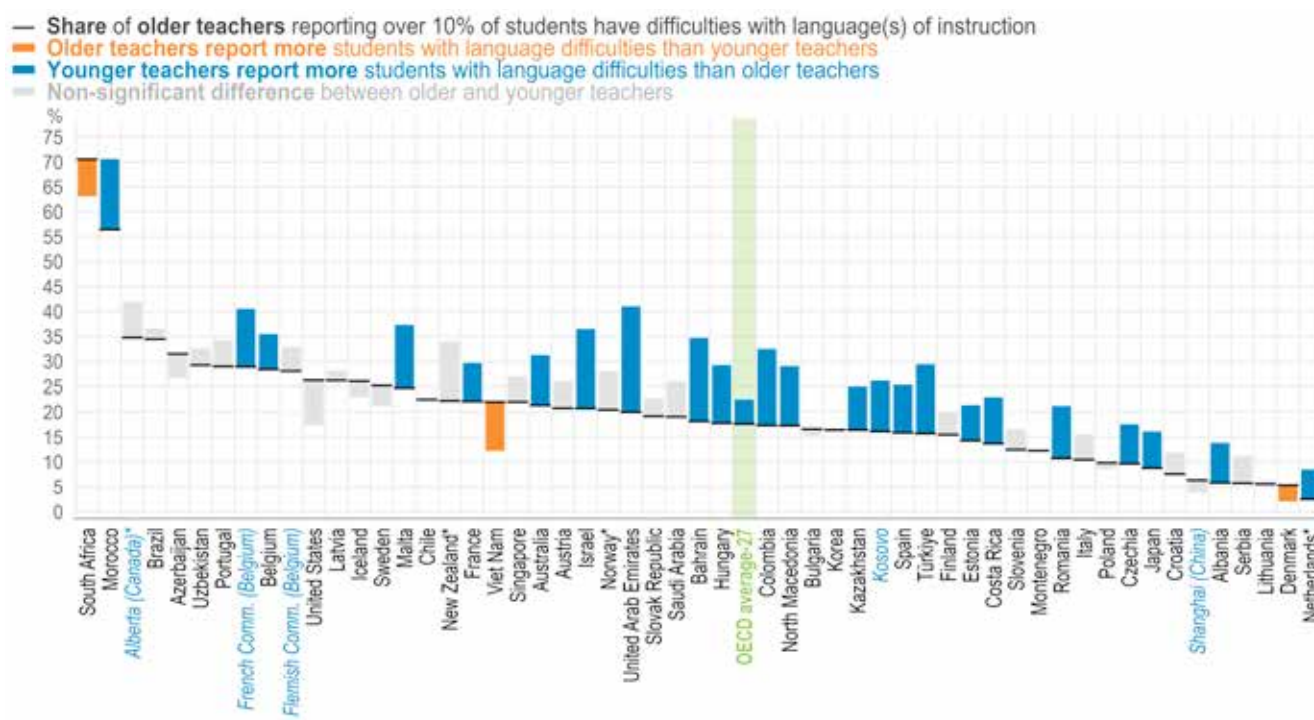


7. Nationally, teachers in the surveyed schools indicated an average enrolment of 77.4 learners in the target class. Four provinces, viz.: Eastern Cape (86.3), Free State (92.65), Limpopo (94.16) and Northern Cape (81.58) reported higher averages for learner enrolment in their target class could be attributed to both demographic and systemic factors that may contribute to high enrolment in grades 8 and 9. Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Free State have higher rural populations than the Northern Cape with all of these provinces typically having large geographic areas, lower urbanization rates, and economies that are either built around agriculture or mining.
8. Systemically, schooling in South Africa is compulsory up to Grade 9 or the age of 15, as mandated by the South African Schools Act of 1996. This policy ensures that every child receives a foundational education that equips them with basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills. This legal framework is reinforced by the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools, sets guidelines for age-grade placement and compulsory attendance education in the Basic Education sector. Schools are therefore required to accommodate all learners up to Grade 9, often leading to overcrowded classrooms with higher teacher-learner ratios, resulting in strained teacher capacity, heavier workloads, difficulties completing the curriculum and impacting teacher burnout and attrition at schools especially in these rural provinces.
9. Whilst there aren't universal norms and standards for the ideal teacher -learner ratio in South Africa, an Ideal Maximum Class Size (IMCS) is used across different subjects. The Department of Basic Education also uses a formula-driven Post-Provisioning Model (PPM) to allocate teacher and SMT posts to schools based on factors such as the total number of learners at the school, the number and types of subjects offered and the number of learners with special educational needs. Ratios of 40:1 for primary and 35:1 for secondary schools have been suggested but these are not fixed ratios. Instead, the actual learner-to-teacher ratio varies across schools and provinces. This variance can be seen in the learner enrolment averages for the target class in surveyed schools in provinces which exceeds the 40:1 ratio for secondary schools.

Composition of the target class

10. TALIS 2024 acknowledges that classrooms are becoming more diverse in terms of language, socio-economic background, ethnicity, special education needs, and migration status so it is vital for education systems to explore how well teachers feel prepared to address this diversity, in terms of their training and professional learning, classroom practice and attitudes to learner diversity. As such the OECD stresses that learner diversity must be met with inclusive teaching strategies and adequate support systems to ensure all learners thrive. Inclusive education refers to the capacity of schools to provide quality learning opportunities for all learners, taking into account their diverse needs, abilities and expectations. Teachers face a wide range of demands arising from the need to support learners with different academic profiles, learning needs and linguistic backgrounds. These demands can have a significant impact on how teachers experience and manage their daily work. (OECD:2025[16]).
11. An inclusive approach in the classroom includes differentiated instruction, cultural responsiveness, and collaboration with families and communities. To explore how well-prepared teachers feel to teach in diverse classrooms, a look inside the classroom provides useful insights. TALIS data shows that, on average among OECD countries, about one in five teachers reported that more than 10% of their learners had difficulties understanding the language of instruction. While this is relatively low in systems such as Albania, Croatia, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, and Shanghai (China), it rises to about 25% in Bahrain, Latvia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, and exceeds 50% in Morocco and South Africa. OECD:2025 [17-18]).
12. Internationally, South Africa has the highest estimation from older teachers who reported that over 10% of learners have difficulties understanding the language of instruction. In addition, it is also older South African teachers that report more learners with language difficulties than younger teachers as shown in Figure 35.

Figure 46: Teachers reporting that more than 10% of learners have difficulties understanding the language of instruction, by age



Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

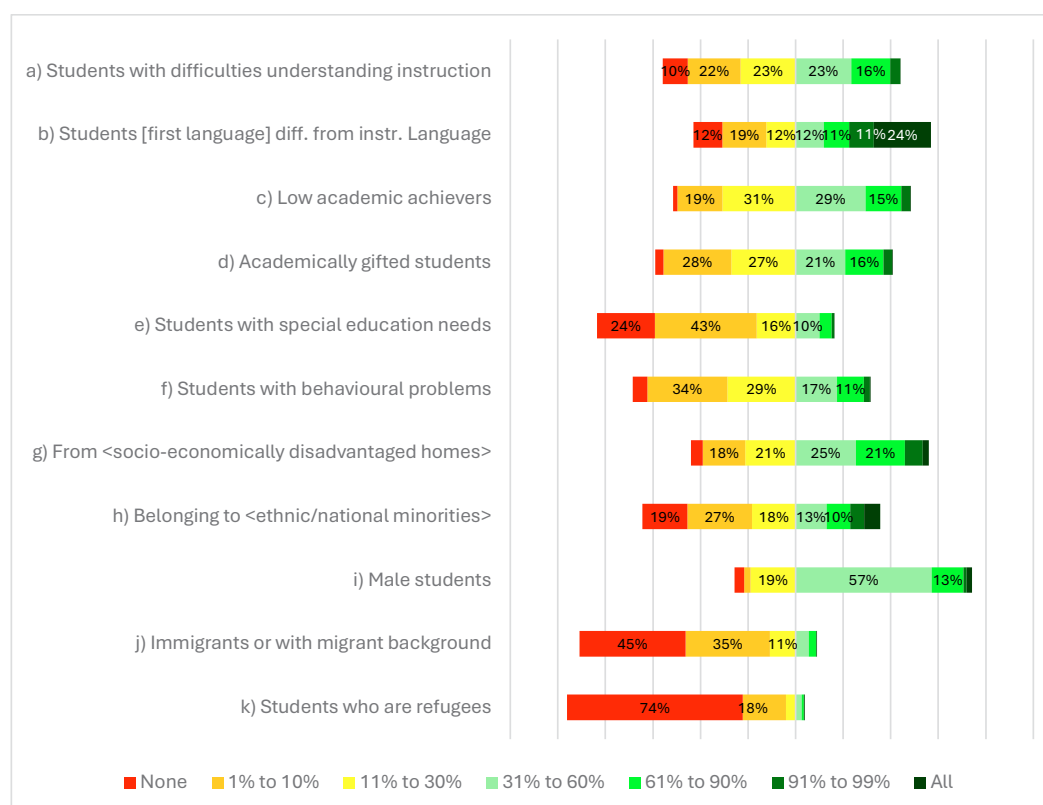
Source: OECD (2024), TALIS 2024 Database, Table BIN.TCH.TQ47a

13. Internationally TALIS 2024 data shows that at least half of teachers in all but seven participating education systems reported having to deal with academic diversity in the classroom, with an average of 72% across OECD

countries. More than one in five teachers across the OECD reported that over 30% of their learners are low academic achievers—a figure that exceeds 40% in the French Community of Belgium, Morocco, and South Africa.

14. Academically diverse settings are also more likely to experience classroom disruption. TALIS results show that the proportion of low-achieving learners is more consistently associated with classroom disruption than other learner intake characteristics such as class size, language difficulties, or special educational needs. This highlights a difference in how different types of diversity affect classroom dynamics: while behavioural and support needs may increase teachers' stress levels, low academic achievement appears to be more strongly linked to classroom climate and the organisation of teaching.
15. Delivering curriculum content to academically diverse classrooms required increased instructional adaptation and differentiation - tasks that place high demands on teachers' time, focus and pedagogical agility. These demands increased when academic diversity intersected with other complex learner needs. This may lead to increased disruption as more time and effort is required to manage differentiated instruction and maintain engagement in the classroom.
16. To get a picture of the composition of the target class, South African teachers estimated the broad percentage of learners with a range of diverse characteristics in their classrooms.

Figure 47: Composition of the target class in surveyed schools



17. A notable proportion of South African teachers reported that many learners struggled with understanding instruction—only 10% said none had difficulties, while 16% estimated that over 60% of their class faced such challenges. Language barriers were prevalent, with 24% of teachers indicating that all learners spoke a first language different from the language of instruction. Academic performance varied widely: while no teachers reported all learners as low achievers, 15% estimated that over 90% were, and 16% said most were academically gifted.
18. Special education needs were present in most classes, though only 1% reported all learners had such needs. Behavioural issues affected many learners, with 29% of teachers estimating that up to 30% of their class

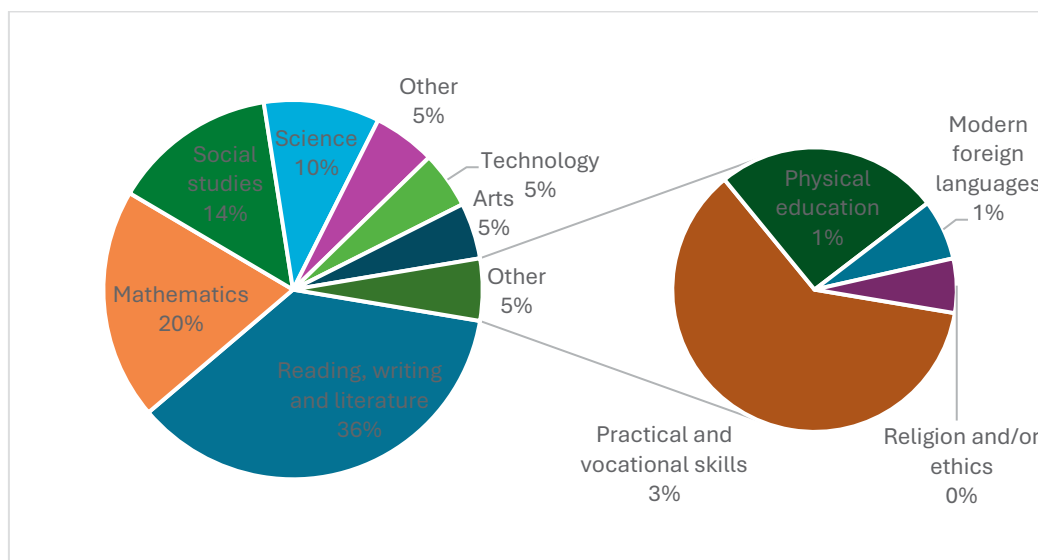
experienced such problems. Socio-economic disadvantage was widespread, with 56% of teachers estimating that at least a third of their learners came from such backgrounds.

19. Ethnic and national minority representation was also high, with only 19% of teachers reporting none in their class. 57% of schools reported that 61%-90% of learners were male while 74% of schools did not have immigrant and refugee learners, they were present in a minority of classrooms.
20. Provinces estimated the proportion of learners with specific characteristics as follows:
 - 23.47% of schools in the Eastern Cape Province estimated that none of their learners had difficulty understanding the LOLT compared to Mpumalanga where only 1.33% of schools estimated that all their learners experienced this difficulty.
 - 37.29% of schools in the Northern Cape estimated that all learners had a different language from the LOLT whilst 20.75% of Eastern Cape schools estimated that none of their learners had a different language from the language of instruction.
 - 32.39% of Gauteng schools estimated that none of their learners had special education needs compared to only 0.62% of schools in Northwest province.
 - Regarding behavioural problems, 8.35% of schools in the Western Cape estimated they had none, 40.69% Free State schools estimated between 1% to 10% of learners had behavioural problems, 40.45% of Northern Cape schools estimated between 11% to 30% of learners had behavioural problems, 28.52% of Mpumalanga schools estimated between 31%-60% of learners had behavioural problems and 26.10% of Free State schools estimated between 61%-90% of learners had behavioural problems.
21. These findings underscore the need for inclusive, differentiated teaching strategies and robust support systems at provincial, district and school level to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Primary subject categories in the target class

- Surveyed teachers indicated that 36% of learners in the target class studied reading, writing and literature as a primary subject in the target class.
- 20% of learners took Mathematics and 10% took Science as a primary subject.
- 14% of learners took Social Studies in the target class and 5% studied Technology and/or Arts as primary subjects
- Primary Subjects categorised as “other” comprised Physical Education (1%), Modern Foreign Languages (1%).
- Religion or ethics as primary subjects was not studied by any learners in the surveyed schools.
- Practical and vocational skills were studied by 3% of learners at surveyed schools.

Figure 48: Primary Subject categories in the target class

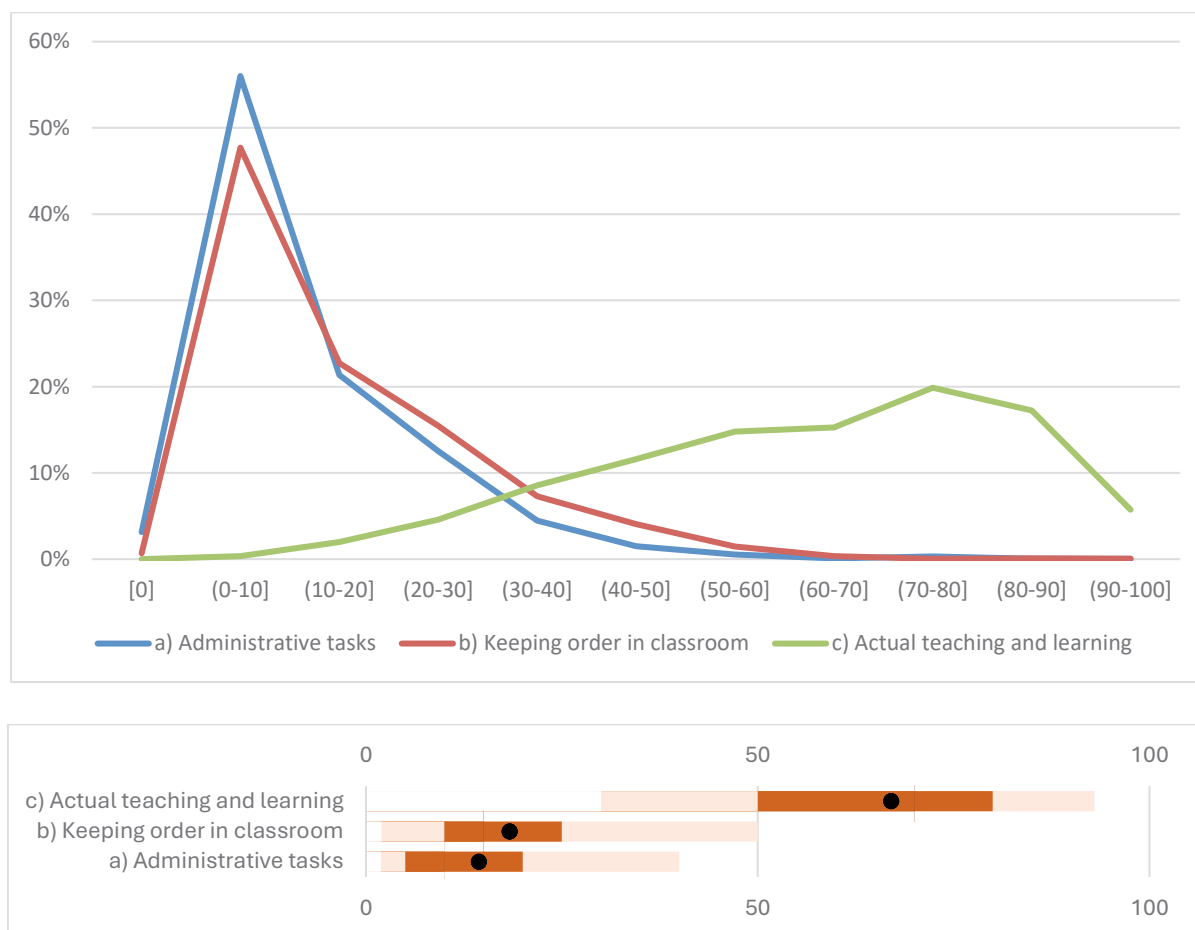


22. 72% of teachers surveyed indicated that the primary subject category of the target class was included in their formal education training and 12% indicated that it wasn't. 17% of teachers indicated that the primary subject category was "somewhat" included in their formal education training.

Percentage of time teachers spent on certain activities in the classroom

23. TALIS specifically focuses on how teachers spend their time in the classroom, on actual teaching, administrative tasks, and maintaining order because these activities directly shape the learning environment and learning outcomes. This data helps education systems to track how much time is spent on actual teaching versus time spent on other tasks teachers are required to do, identify causes of learner disruption in the classroom and factors (as overcrowding, lack of support, or learner disengagement) that impact on the quality of instruction and curriculum coverage, and gauge the volume of paperwork and other non-teaching duties which erode teachers' preparation and teaching time at school. Importantly TALIS treats time like a mirror as it reflects the pressures, priorities, and possibilities for teachers within a South African classroom.

Figure 49: Percentage of class time that is typically spent on activities



24. South African teachers spent an average of 14.94% of their time on administrative tasks which was higher than the OECD average (9.4%), the EU average (8.7%) and the TALIS average (9.9%). Most teachers (56%) spent between 1% to 10% of their time on administrative tasks, only 1.49% spent between 41% to 50% of time on these tasks and less than 1% of teachers spent more than 60% of their time on administrative tasks. The median of 10% shows that half of teachers spent 10% or less on these tasks.
25. Teachers spent an average of 18.25% of their time on keeping order in the classroom which was higher than the OECD average (15.4%), the EU average (14.8%) and the TALIS average (15%). Nearly half (47.71%) of teachers spent between 1%-10% of their time keeping order in the classroom, 22.74% spent 11% -20% and 15.47% spent 21%-30% on keeping order in the classroom.
26. Teachers spent an average of 66.44% of their time on actual teaching and learning which was lower than the OECD average (74.9%), the EU average (76.1%) and the TALIS average (74.7%). Most South African teachers spent between 60%-90%, 19.87% spent 71%-80% and 17.23% spent 81%-90% of their time on actual teaching and learning. Very few teachers spent less than 30% of their time on actual teaching and learning. With a median of median of 70% -most teachers spent most of their time on teaching and learning. The top 5% of teachers spent nearly all their time on actual teaching and learning.
27. A positive finding was that teachers' time is predominantly used for actual and learning in the classroom whilst administrative and disciplinary tasks consumed a negligible portion of time for some teachers, especially in the upper percentiles. The skewness in time spent on administrative tasks and keeping order in the classroom suggests that system should invest in interventions to reduce administrative burdens on teachers' time in the classroom.

28. Provincially, teachers in the Northern Cape spent an average of 17.15% of their time on administrative tasks compared to teachers in the Eastern Cape who spent an average of 14.52% of their time on these tasks. Teachers in the Free State spent 21.67% of their time keeping order in the classroom whilst teachers in the Eastern Cape spent 17.46% of their time in this task. On average teachers in the North West province spent 67.85% compared to teachers in the Free State who spent 61.78% of their time on actual teaching and learning.

Teaching in the target class: The frequency of teachers' specific actions

Figure 50: Frequency of strategies used by teachers in the target class

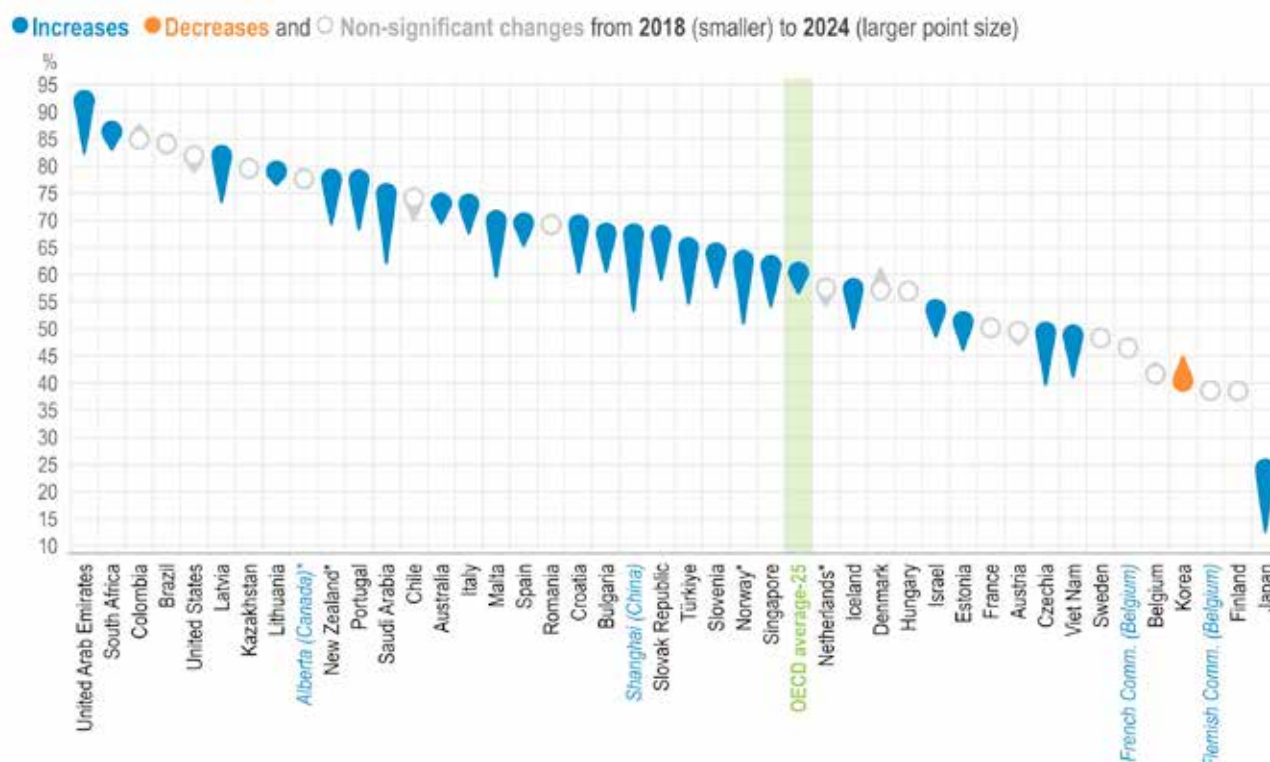


29. South African teachers employed a range of instructional and classroom management strategies with varying frequency. Most teachers consistently use structured teaching practices: 47% always presented summaries of learned content, 51% set goals at the start of the lesson/ instruction, and 68% clearly explained learning expectations. A majority also related new topics to prior knowledge and encourage rule-following and attentiveness, with over 60% always reinforcing classroom norms. In terms of cognitive activation, critical thinking was actively promoted, with 37% always assigning such tasks and 50% doing so frequently. However, more open-ended and collaborative approaches—such as presenting tasks without obvious solutions or encouraging learners to devise their own procedures were less consistently applied.
30. Only 24% of teachers always used unsolved tasks, and 22% always promoted learner autonomy in problem-solving. Group work was common but not universal, with just 23% of teachers always using it. Teachers also integrated real-world relevance and long-term projects, though only a quarter consistently assigned week-long tasks. While most teachers encouraged questioning and critique of arguments, a small proportion never or rarely did so. Overall, the data suggests a strong foundation in structured pedagogy, with opportunity to expand on learner-centred and inquiry-based practices in the classroom.

Cognitive activation strategies used by teachers

31. Cognitive activation comprises a multidimensional concept and is associated with opportunities to develop deep conceptual understanding and to solve problems (Praetorius et al., 2014[325]; Schlesinger and Jentsch, 2016[326]). It is typically related to the type and level of thinking required and the cognitive processes utilised by the learners as they interact with content (Kunter et al., 2013[258]; Stein et al., 2009[327]; Tekkumru-Kisa and Stein, 2015[328]).
32. Cognitive activation has been operationalised in different ways in the past, including aspects such as using challenging tasks and questions, exploring and activating prior student knowledge, exploring students' ways of thinking, co-constructing learning with students, generic-Socratic teaching, and supporting metacognition – cf. Praetorius et al. (2018[329]). Regardless of these different operationalisations and despite the different terms often used to capture this construct, research has consistently pointed to the role that cognitive activation plays for learners' cognitive – e.g. Baumert et al. (2010[239]); Hattie (2023[330]); Jackson et al. (2013[331]); Li, Liu, Zhang and Liu (2021[332]) – and affective – e.g. Boaler and Staples (2008[333]); Förtsch et al. (2017[334]); Lazarides and Buchholz (2019[335]) learning outcomes.
33. In TALIS 2018, only about half of the teachers reported that they engaged in cognitive activation practices (OECD, 2019[39]).
34. The OECD Education GPS published research in 2025 on the link between cognitive activation, as identified in the TALIS survey, and learner performance in PISA 2022 (prior links between TALIS and PISA data, such as the 2012/2013 cycle, also exist). This report specifically highlighted how teachers' cognitive activation practices, such as encouraging reasoning and different problem-solving methods, were linked to learner confidence and achievement in mathematics. However, its effectiveness could vary depending on factors such as the socio-economic background and school culture. Cognitive activation has also been linked to higher academic achievement, especially when learners were challenged to make connections, explain their reasoning, and engage in meaningful discourse.
35. Further, it also stimulated learner curiosity, promoted ownership of learning through the active construction of knowledge, encouraged collaborative learning through peer interaction and connected learning in the classroom to real life experiences. When done well by teachers, cognitive activation strategies provided the appropriate level of difficulty to expand opportunities to apply without overwhelming learners.

Figure 51: Change in teachers who gave critical thinking tasks, from 2018 to 2024



Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD (2018), TALIS 2018 Database; OECD (2024), TALIS 2024 Database, TABLE BMUL.TR3.TQ51

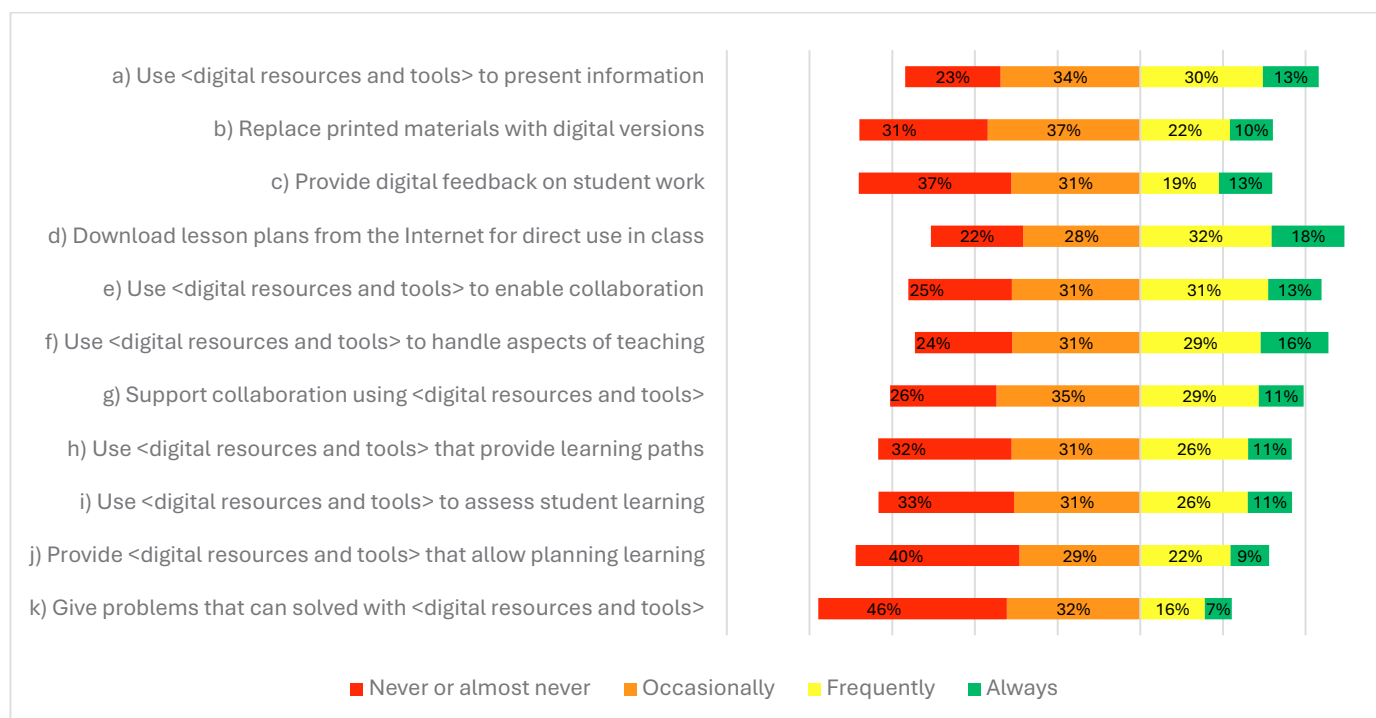
36. The changes from 2018 to 2024 in the percentage of lower secondary teachers who reported that they “frequently” or “always” gave tasks that required learners to think critically. Compared to TALIS 2018, South Africa is one of the countries that showed an increase in the proportion of teachers using more cognitively activating practices in classrooms in 2024. These practices included giving learners tasks that required learners to think critically (37% always and 55% of teachers did this frequently); asking learners to decide in their own procedures for solving complex tasks (22% always and 41% frequently did this) and had learners work in small groups to come up with a solution (23% always and 40% frequently did so).
37. At Provincial level: North West Province had the highest proportion of teachers (61,93%) that frequently gave learners tasks that required critical thinking skills and Limpopo Province had the highest proportion of teachers who always used this cognitively activating practice). Gauteng had the highest proportion (46.75%) of teachers who frequently had learners work in small groups to come up with a solution whilst Mpumalanga province had the highest proportion of teachers (31.57%) who always used this strategy in the classroom.
38. Limpopo province had the highest proportion of teachers (30.91%) who always asked learners to decide on their own procedures for solving complex task whilst the highest proportion of teachers (46.17%) who frequently used this pedagogic strategy were from the Northern Cape.

Use of digital tools by teachers for lesson delivery in the target class

39. Digital tools and resources can be used for a variety of pedagogical practices such as whole-class instruction or individualised instruction or assessment. TALIS 2024 asked teachers about the extent they could do certain activities in their target class with digital tools and resources that had the potential to enhance the quality of learning. Teachers were asked about their ability to adapt these resources to different classroom activities and the

extent to which they were able to learn to use technology that was new to their work. Teachers were also asked teachers about their attitudes towards opportunities and challenges with using digital tools and resources for their work and to indicate their experience with Artificial Intelligence and their beliefs around this specific technology. (OECD:2025:[23])

Figure 52: Tasks performed with digital resources and tools by teachers for lessons in the target class



40. Responses from surveyed teachers reveals a cautious and uneven integration of digital tools in South African classrooms. While some teachers embraced technology, only 13% consistently used digital resources to present information, and only 10% regularly replaced printed materials with digital versions. Digital feedback is similarly underutilized, with 37% of teachers rarely or never providing it. Collaboration through digital means is sporadic with only 13% of teachers always able to use it, and 26% never or almost never doing so. Planning, assessment, and personalized learning paths via digital platforms are also limited, with approximately a third of teachers reporting minimal or no use. Notably, only 7% of teachers consistently assigned problems solvable through digital resources and tools, while nearly half avoided implementing such tasks altogether. These patterns suggest that while potential to integrate digital tools exists, its adoption is hindered by factors such as infrastructure gaps, limited professional development and training of teachers or preferences for traditional pedagogical practice.
41. Strengthening digital literacy, access and skilling teachers to use this resource more effectively in the classroom could significantly enhance teaching quality and learner engagement in an increasingly tech-directed world-both inside and outside the classroom.

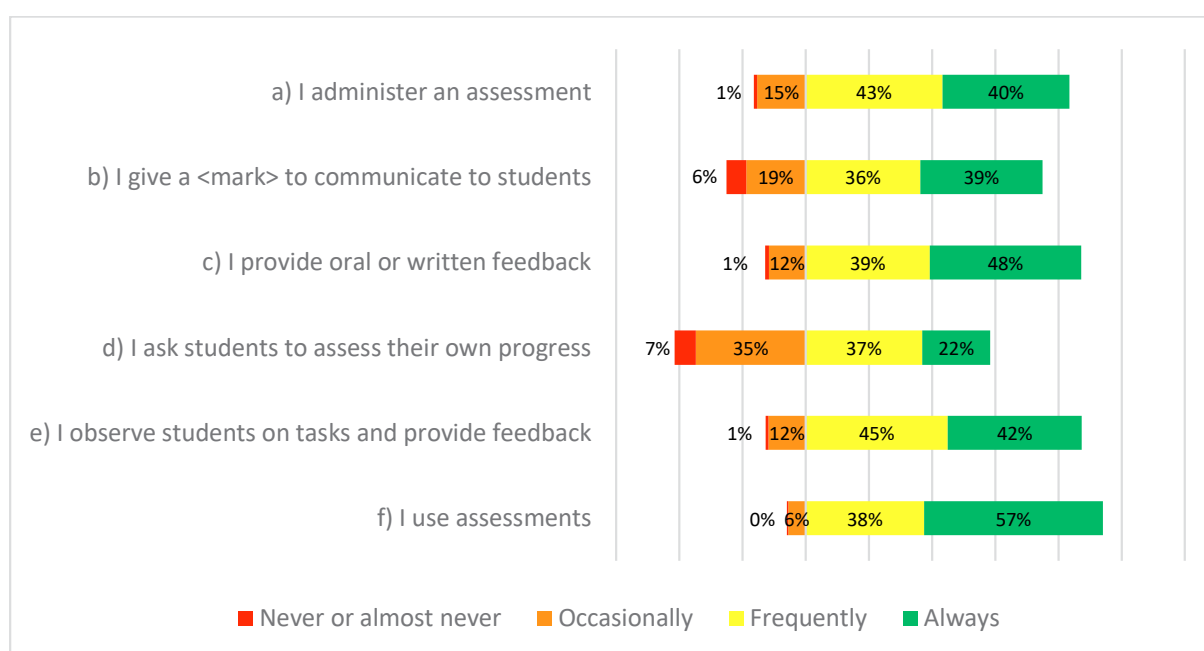
Assessment and Feedback to learners

42. Defined as the practice of gathering information about student learning to help teachers make instructional decisions to enhance student learning (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2012, p. 23[336]), assessment comprises an integral part of teaching and a critical teaching practice for advancing learning (Hattie, 2009[285]; 2023[330]; Muijs et al., 2014[302]). Both summative and formative assessment are considered pivotal for learning (Stiggins and DuFour, 2009[337]) and gauging teachers' use of the two forms is an important distinction. In addition to summarising what students retain in learning, formative assessment – or assessment for learning – has a more decisive role for advancing the quality and quantity of learning (Black and Wiliam, 2010[338]; Chappuis and

Stiggins, 2017[339]; Hattie and Timperley, 2007[340]), largely because it provides students and teachers with timely feedback that can inform and guide their next steps.

43. Three key questions are often considered in formative assessment, thus providing a means of operationalising this practice – see Black and Wiliam (2009[341]): where the student is going (i.e. learning goals or objectives), where the student is right now, and how the gap between the current student state and the targeted learning goals or objectives can be reached. In this respect, the information provided to learners and their teachers is expected to serve three functions: to sketch the reference level (feed-up), to evaluate the current level of performance (feedback), and to provide information on how to proceed to the reference level (feed-forward) (Hattie and Timperley, 2007[340]).
44. Feedback is also expected, among other things, to be provided in a timely manner, to be sufficiently detailed to help delineate next steps without, however, overloading the learner, and to be adapted to students' needs and readiness levels (Hattie and Timperley, 2007[340]; Shute, 2008[342]). Two of the assessment practices examined in TALIS 2018 were reported more frequently than others: providing learners with immediate feedback and administering one's own assessment to students (OECD, 2019[39]). Prior research findings, especially from meta-analyses, e.g. Hattie (2009[285]); Kluger and DeNisi (1996[343]), converged in pointing to the role of such feedback (and formative assessment) for promoting active learning.

Figure 53: Teachers' methods of assessing learners in the target class



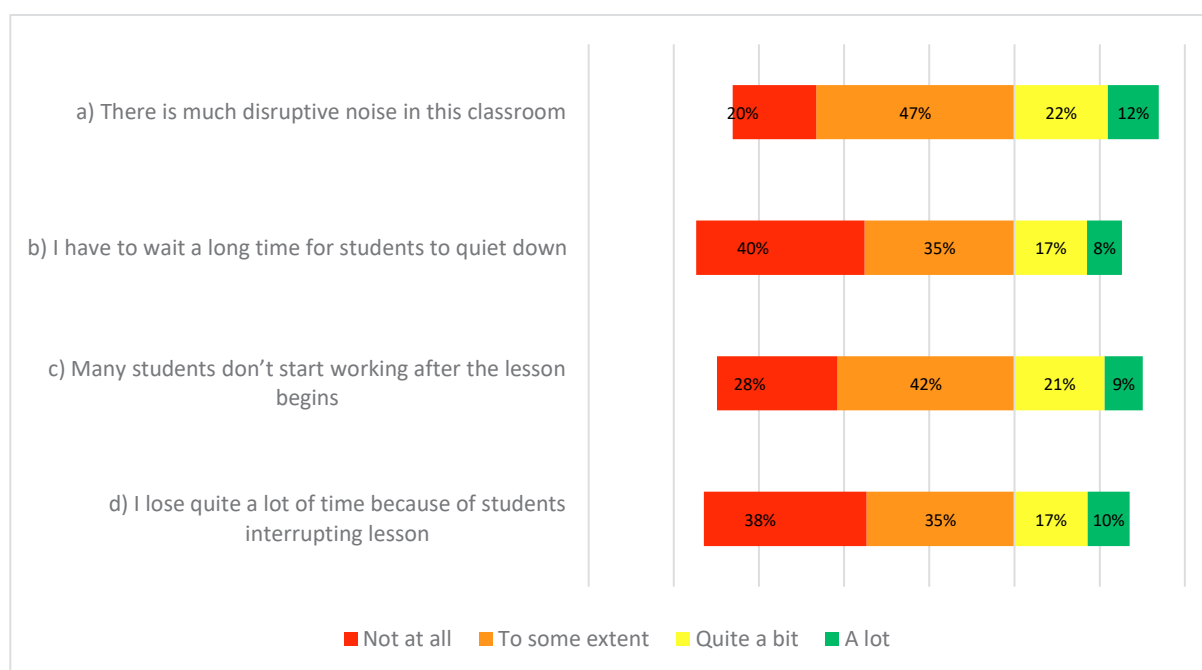
45. The TALIS 2024 data indicates that assessment practices are widely embedded in South African classrooms, though the depth and diversity of these practices varied across schools. Most teachers (57%) consistently used/ administered assessments, with 40% always administering them and 43% doing so frequently. Similarly, most teachers communicated learner performance through marks and feedback, with 48% always providing oral or written feedback and 39% doing so frequently. However, more reflective and learner-centred approaches were less prevalent as only 22% of teachers always asked learners to assess their own progress, while 7% of teachers rarely or never did so. Observation-based feedback was common, with 42% always and 45% frequently using this method to assess learners.

46. Provincially, the highest proportion of teachers that never or almost never used digital resources and tools to present information in the classroom were from Limpopo province (31.28%). Gauteng had the highest proportion of teachers who always used digital tools (18.12%). The highest proportion of teachers (26.34%) who frequently used these resources and tools were in the Eastern Cape province. 43.02% of Free State teachers never or almost never replaced paper materials with digital versions. 43.10% of Eastern Cape teachers were able to do this occasionally compared to 15.54% of teachers in Mpumalanga province who could always replace paper materials with digital versions.

Classroom management

47. Classroom and time management represent basic aspects of instructional quality and refer to ensuring an orderly environment via classroom rules and procedures, addressing disruptions, and the efficient use of instructional time during lessons (Seidel and Shavelson, 2007[307]; Van Tartwijk and Hammerness, 2011[318]). Numerous studies have documented the positive associations between good classroom management, a positive school climate, and student achievement, e.g. Korpershoek et al. (2016[319]); Wagner et al. (2016[149]); Wang and Degol (2016[113]). Besides, managing classrooms forms a prerequisite for sufficient instructional time, enabling teachers and learners to engage in cognitively activating practices, such as problem solving and scientific inquiry, e.g. Dorfner et al. (2018[320]). (OECD: 2025 [43]). Classroom and time management were among the most frequently reported practices across 48 countries in TALIS 2018 (OECD, 2019[39]).

Figure 54: The extent to which teachers managed situations that happened in the target class



48. Classroom disruptions remain a notable challenge for South African teachers, though experiences vary widely. While 20% of teachers reported no disruptive noise at all, 47% experienced it to some extent, with 12% saying it occurred a lot. Learner disengagement at the start of lessons was also prevalent 28% of teachers noted that many learners failed to begin work promptly, and 42% observed this to some extent. Despite these challenges, only 8% of teachers reported consistently waiting a long time for learners to quiet down, suggesting that most classrooms maintain a baseline for learner conduct and behavioural. However, interruptions during lessons were a moderate concern as 38% of teachers reported not losing any substantial instructional time due to learner disruptions, and 10% experienced this a lot.

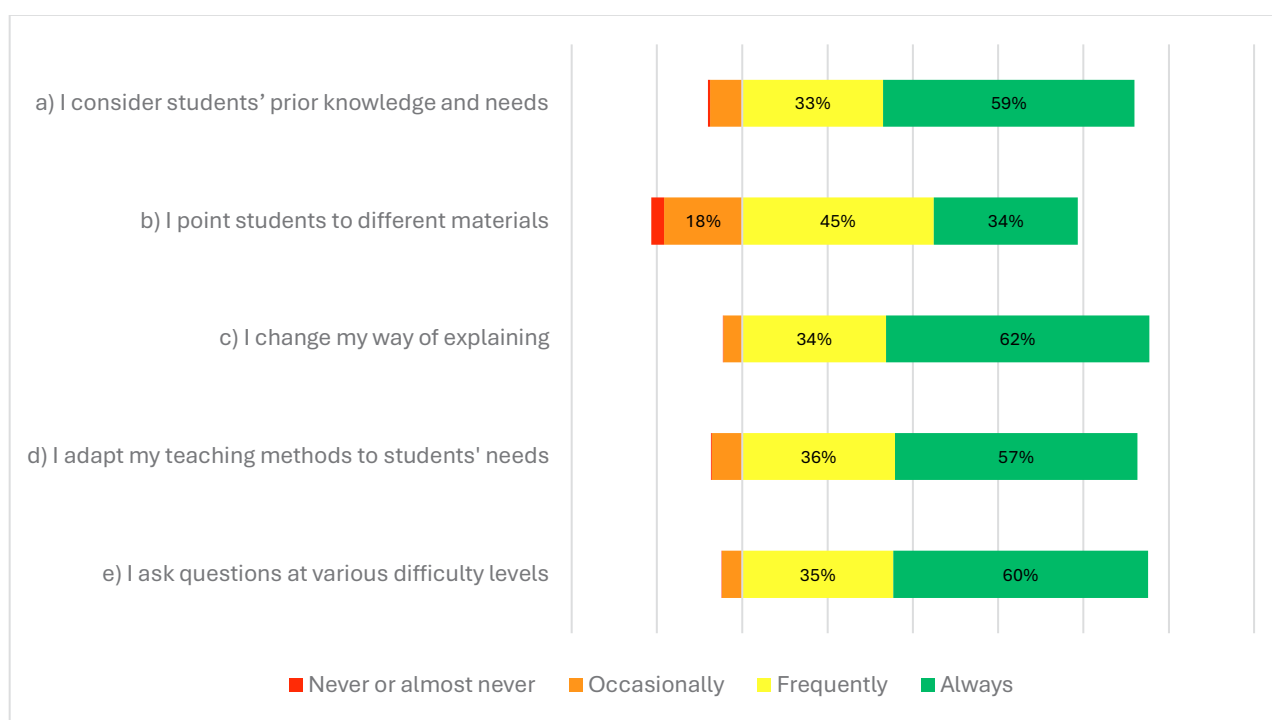
49. In provinces, 22.96% of teachers in KwaZulu Natal indicated that disruptive noise and disorder was not a problem at all whilst 20.11% of teachers in the Free State indicated that disruptive noise happened a lot in their classrooms.
50. The highest proportion of teachers (48%) who had to wait a long time for learners to quiet down were in Limpopo province. 33.55% of KwaZulu Natal teachers did not have any problems with learners starting work when the lesson began whereas 13.90% of Free State teachers experienced this a lot. 43.52% of KwaZulu Natal teachers did not lose a lot of time because learners interrupted lessons compared to 15.16% of Free State teachers who reported that they frequently lost lesson time in this situation.
51. These findings point to the need for stronger classroom management and support for targeted behavioural interventions, and strategies to boost learner engagement from the beginning of lessons.

Adaptation of teacher practice

52. Given that classrooms can differ notably in learners' background characteristics, cultural background, readiness levels, ability levels, interests, and learning styles (Parsons, 2017[58]; Tomlinson, 2017[344]), adaptation is imperative for supporting learner learning (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019[4]). In fact, research has empirically validated the importance of adaptation for the achievement of cognitive and affective learning outcomes in various settings and subject matters, e.g. Deunk et al. (2018[57]); Prast et al. (2018[59]); Simpkins, et al. (2008[345]); Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019[4]).
53. Adaptation hinges on the premise that learners can achieve their full potential when their teachers consider the diversity of their learning needs. Therefore, teachers need to adjust teaching and resources to meet learners where they are and to help them achieve maximum growth as learners (Tomlinson, 2015[346]). Therefore, adaptation is not only a key aspect of quality teaching (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2007[311]; Van Geel et al., 2019[347]), but it also emphasises current issues of equity and diversity, cf. Ainscow, (2016[348]) Although different ways of adapting teaching have been proposed, (cf. Tomlinson(1999[349]) and provided that this practice intersects with the other teaching practices, a broad operationalisation of it concerns teachers' proactive (planned) and interactive (during teaching) adaptation of learning goals, the content, the tasks chosen, the expected products, and the processes followed to reach these products.
54. Given the increased emphasis on issues of equity and diversity, this operationalisation can focus on how teachers adapt their planning and lesson enactment to meet the needs of learners from different, broadly defined cultural backgrounds.

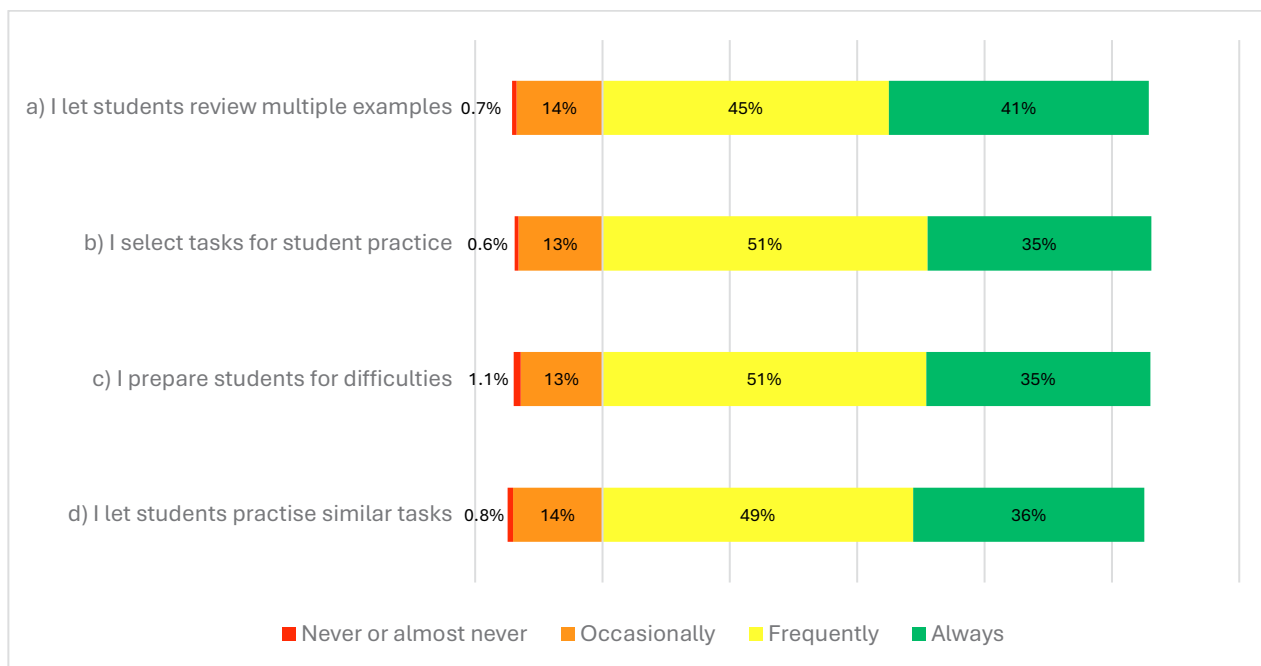
Frequency of adaptive actions teachers used in the target class

Figure 55: Frequency of actions performed by teachers to engage learners in the target class



55. There seems to be a strong commitment among South African teachers to adapt their pedagogic styles to include an adaptive, differentiated learner-centred approach in the classroom. A majority consistently considered learners' prior knowledge and needs, with 59% always doing so and another 33% frequently or occasionally doing so. Teachers also demonstrated flexibility in their approach: 62% always change their way of explaining content to suit learners, and 57% regularly adapted teaching methods to meet diverse learning needs. Questioning techniques used were varied, with 60% of teachers always posing questions at different difficulty levels to challenge and engage learners across the spectrum. While 45% frequently directed learners to alternative materials, 34% always did so. These findings suggest that South African educators are actively working to personalize learning, though there remains room to expand their repertoire of learning materials that can resource use and deepen adaptive practices.
56. The highest proportion of teachers (71.89%) that always considered learners' prior knowledge and needs were in the Northern Cape. 39.99% of Limpopo teachers always directed their learners to different materials and more than 50% of teachers in all provinces except the North West (49.88%) always changed their way of explaining in their classrooms.

Figure 56: Frequency of actions performed by teachers to vary learning and experience in the target class



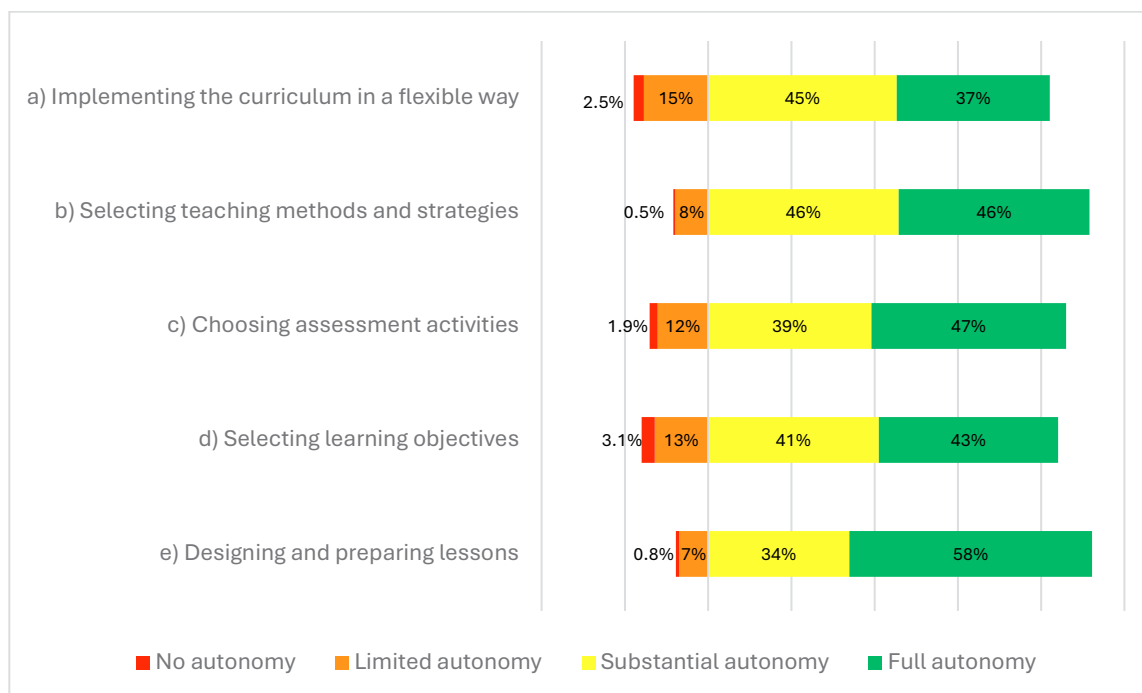
57. South African teachers are actively supporting learner development through structured practice and preparation. Many teachers consistently allowed learners to review multiple examples, with 41% always and 45% frequently doing so, highlighting a strong emphasis on modelling and reinforcement. Similarly, 51% of teachers frequently and 25% always selected tasks for learners to practice, ensuring targeted skills development. Preparation for potential learning difficulties is also a priority, with 51% of teachers frequently or 35% always equipping learners to navigate challenges. Practice with similar tasks is widely used, as 36% of teachers always and 49% frequently used this strategy during lessons to deepen understanding and build confidence.
58. At provincial level the highest proportion of teachers Limpopo based teachers (46.09%) always let learners review multiple examples for practice ,43.34% always selected tasks that gradually increased in difficulty for learners and 55.99% always learners practice similar tasks. 42.59% of Northern Cape teachers always prepared their learners for difficulties that could occur while practising in class.
59. These patterns in teacher actions suggest that their pedagogical approach appear to be grounded in scaffolding learning, and proactive support, which are essential for learners to practice and master complex concepts, apply high levels of thinking and foster learner resilience.

Teacher autonomy in the classroom

60. When teachers have autonomy, they can use their own beliefs, values, knowledge, expertise and experience to choose the educational strategies and teaching methods and resources they use in their teaching practice, and teachers need autonomy to be able to manage the myriad unforeseen circumstances that can present themselves in teaching every day (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014[392]). This includes autonomy regarding their own teaching and assessment practices, the selection and development of curriculum and content for teaching, making decisions about their own professional learning and providing input into the organisational functioning of the school (Vangrieken and Kyndt, 2020[393]). Teachers' perceived autonomy is positively associated with job satisfaction (Avanzi et al., 2013[394]; Koustelios, Karabatzaki and Kousteliou, 2004[395]) and increased feelings of empowerment and professionalism (Pearson and Moomaw, 2005[396]).

61. Teachers who feel they are more autonomous are also more likely to report that the teaching profession is valued by their societies (Price and Weatherby, 2021[397]). Teacher reports of having less autonomy have also been linked to teachers' feelings of burnout and a lower sense of accomplishment (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009[398]) as well as teachers' intentions to leave the profession (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020[399]). The level of autonomy that teachers experience in their schools has been shown to be related to the extent and possible types of collaboration. Schools with a tight, top-down control on decision making outside the classroom do not always provide staff with ample opportunities for collaboration or professional conversations (Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran, 2007[369]). Scholars argue that deep-level collaboration, while less frequently observed in schools (OECD, 2020[400]), engages teacher beliefs and, thus, is necessary for educational change (Vangrieken et al., 2017[375]). In addition, teachers' beliefs about and understanding of their own autonomy can influence how they collaborate. Vangrieken and Kyndt (2020[393]) developed three profiles of teachers based on their value of autonomy: autonomous collaborative, autonomous individualistic, and low autonomy collaborative.
62. The extent and strength of social networks, together with the nature of school structures, appear to be associated with collaboration and the likelihood of seeking advice from colleagues, although the strength of the association appears to vary among countries (Siciliano, 2015[382]; Ortego et al., 2020[380]; Schuster, Hartmann and Kolleck, 2021[381]).
63. Teacher autonomy can facilitate collaboration, but it can also act as a barrier when teacher autonomy is seen as teachers being independent or focusing solely on their own individual work (Vangrieken et al., 2017[375]). However, this does not have to always be the case and, when looking at collaboration, it is important to also consider teachers' attitudes toward working together (Vangrieken et al., 2017[375]).
64. The TALIS 2018 data supported the link between collaboration and decision making. Namely, teachers who reported being able to participate in school-level decisions were also more likely to engage more frequently in more in-depth forms of collaboration (OECD, 2020[400]). A wide range of countries noted a return to top-down regulation of teacher work as part of attempts to hold teachers accountable for the quality of education in their classrooms (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018[401]). Notions of accountability, ranging from primary inputs to outcomes, as well as investment in strengthening teacher performance evaluation, have expanded.
65. Much of the literature emphasises the potential costs and negative consequences of the frequent monitoring of teachers' work. Close surveillance and evaluation of teachers' classroom behaviour links to teacher stress (Perryman et al., 2011[402]), de-professionalisation (Zeichner, 2010[403]), decreasing attractiveness of the teacher profession (Ingersoll, Sirinides and Dougherty, 2018[387]), and teacher attrition (Borman and Dowling, 2008[96]).

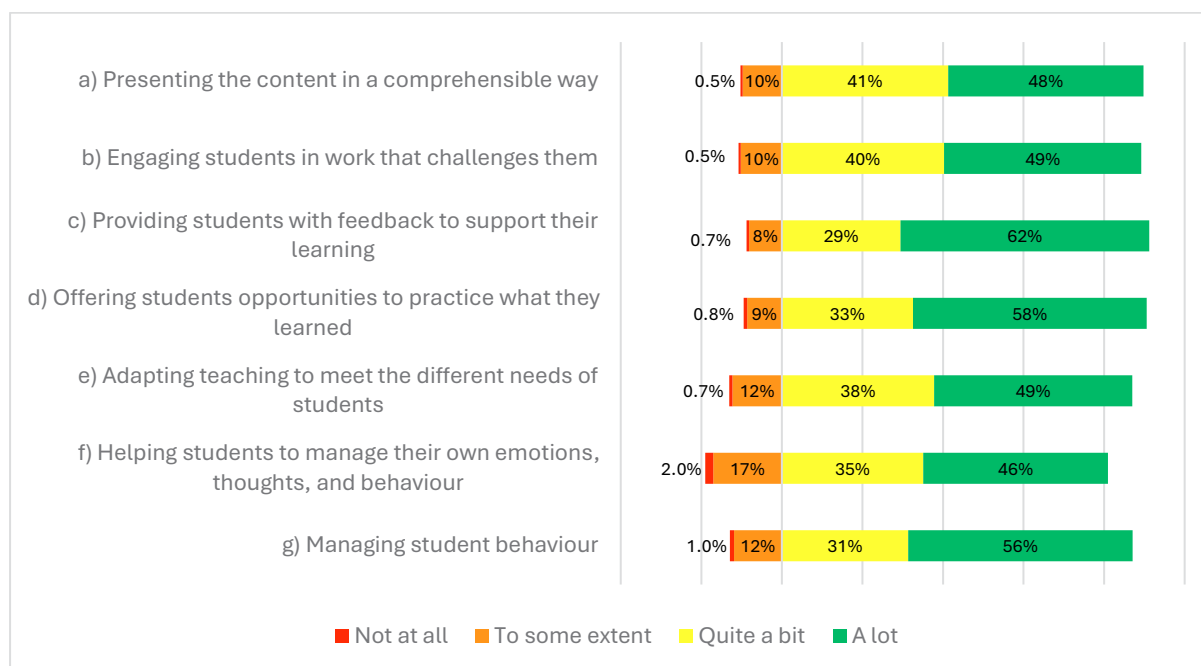
Figure 57: Teacher autonomy in aspects of planning and teaching in the target class



66. TALIS 2024 data showed that South African teachers generally experienced a high degree of professional autonomy (ranging from substantial to full autonomy) in their classrooms, particularly in lesson design and instructional decision-making. A majority (58%) reported full autonomy in designing and preparing lessons, with another 34% enjoying substantial autonomy. Flexibility in implementing the curriculum was also common, with 37% of teachers having full autonomy and 45% substantial autonomy, though 15% reported limited freedom and 2.5% had none.
67. When it came to selecting teaching methods and strategies, 92% of teachers felt empowered, split between full (46%) and substantial (46%) autonomy. Assessment practices followed a similar trend: 47% of teachers had full autonomy in choosing assessment activities, and 39% had substantial control, while only a small fraction (1.9%) lacked autonomy. In terms of selecting learning objectives, 43% of teachers had full autonomy and 41% substantial autonomy, indicating strong involvement in shaping instructional goals articulated in the curriculum.
68. Provincially, 6.2% of Free State teachers had no autonomy to implement the curriculum in a flexible manner compared to full autonomy for 47.52% of Limpopo teachers. The highest proportion of teachers who had full autonomy in selecting teaching methods (56.61%), choosing assessment activities (57.27%), selecting teaching objectives (56.44%) and designing and preparing lessons (69.67%) were in the Northern Cape- and higher than the respective national averages.
69. These findings suggested that countrywide most teachers operate with considerable professional discretion, which is essential for responsive, context-sensitive teaching—though a small minority still face constraints that may limit their potential for innovation and adaptability in their classrooms and schools.

Achievement of lesson aims in the target class

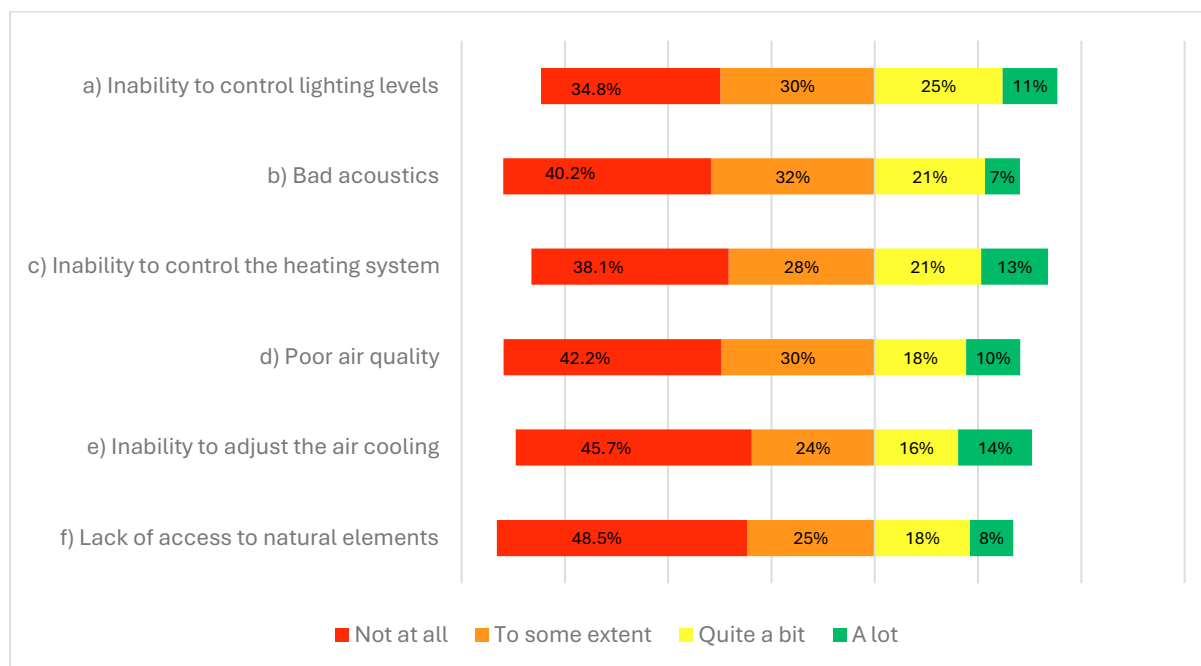
Figure 58: The extent to which the lessons taught over the past week in the target class achieved its aims



70. South African teachers seemed to be largely successful in achieving key instructional/learning and developmental goals within their classrooms. Nearly half of the teachers (48%) reported consistently presenting content in a comprehensible way, and 49% were able to engage learners in challenging work to a high degree. Feedback practices were particularly strong, with 62% of teachers frequently providing supportive feedback to enhance learning. Opportunities to practice what was learned were also well-integrated, with 58% of teachers offering learners regular chances to reinforce their understanding. Efforts to adapt teaching to diverse learner needs is evident, as 49% of teachers reported doing this a lot. Emotional and behavioural support is a growing focus with 46% of teachers having helped learners manage their emotions and behaviour effectively, while 56% were able to manage classroom behaviour with confidence.
71. A high proportion of teachers in Limpopo province were able to present content in a comprehensible way (61.60%), engage learners in work that challenged them (64.92%), help learners manage their own emotions, thoughts and behaviour (58.55%) and manage learner behaviour (68.79%)- a lot. The highest proportion of teachers (76.57%) who provided learners with feedback to support their learning were in Mpumalanga.
72. These findings reflect a teaching workforce that is committed to both academic rigor and holistic learner development, though continued support in emotional regulation and differentiated instruction could further strengthen outcomes.

Capacity of teachers to provide quality instruction in the target class and hinderances experienced

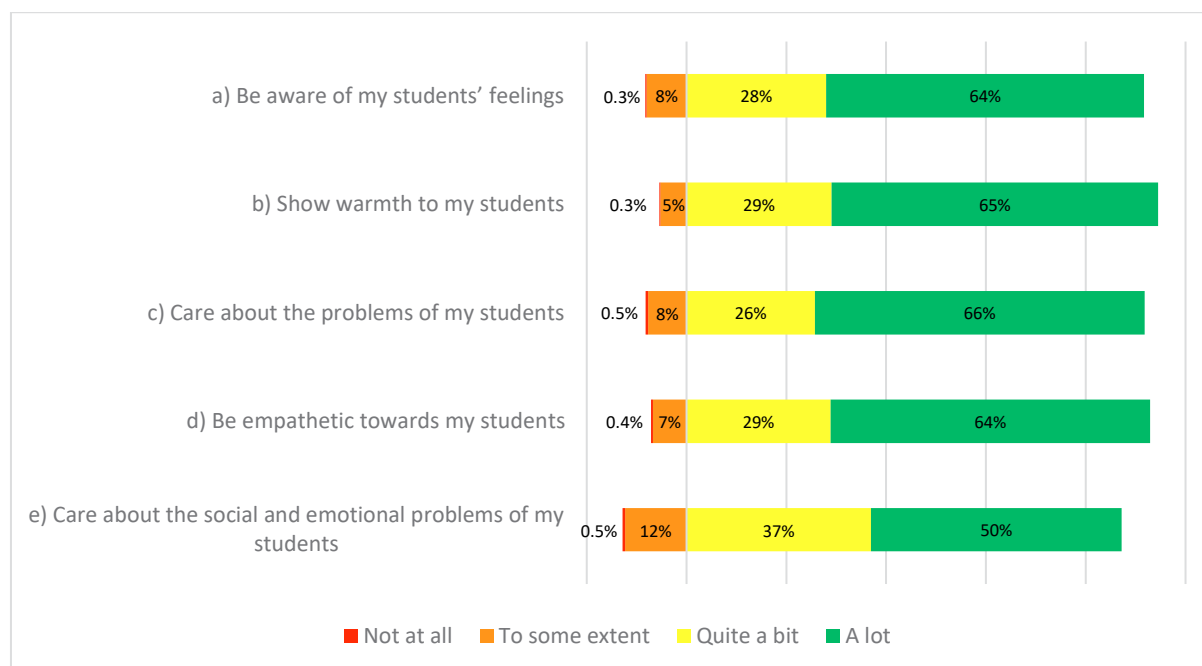
Figure 59: Specific issues that hindered teachers' capacity to provide quality instruction in the target class



73. Here teachers indicated how environmental conditions in South African classrooms—such as lighting, acoustics, temperature control, and air quality had a measurable impact on instructional quality in their classrooms. While a notable share of teachers reported no hindrance from these factors (e.g., 34.8% for lighting, 40.2% for acoustics, and 42.2% for air quality), a minority worth noting experienced considerable challenges. For instance, 13% of teachers said lack of heating control impacted their instruction “a lot,” and 30% noted that poor air quality affected them to some extent. Acoustics and air cooling also emerged as serious concerns, with 32% and 24% of teachers respectively reporting some extent of instructional disruption.
74. These findings, including at the provincial level suggested that while many classrooms may be adequately equipped, a significant number still faced infrastructural limitations that compromised teaching effectiveness. Addressing these environmental factors could enhance both teacher performance and learner outcomes, particularly in under-resourced schools.

Extent to which teachers can model social emotional learning in the target class

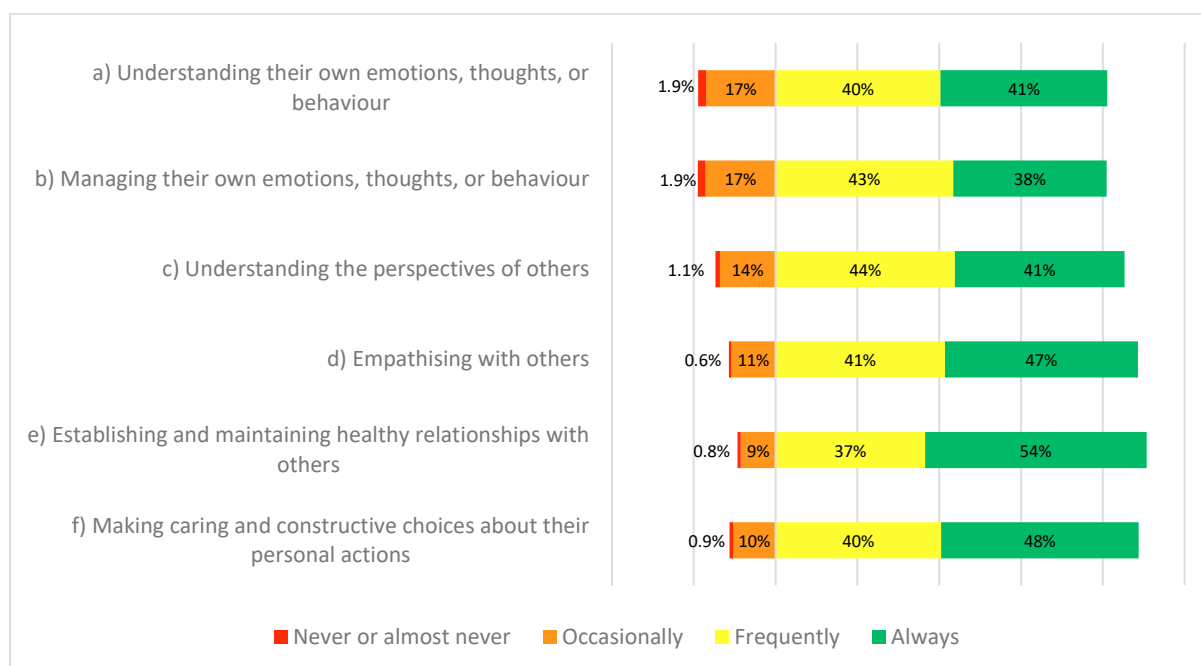
Figure 60: Extent to which teachers can model SEL in the classroom



75. Responses suggested a strong emotional connection between South African teachers and their learners, underscoring the importance of relational and socio-emotional dimensions in education. Many teachers, 65%, reported being highly aware of their learners' feelings and consistently showing warmth and empathy in the classroom. Similarly, 66% of teachers expressed a deep concern for learners' personal challenges, and 64% demonstrated high levels of empathy. While emotional support for learners was widespread, slightly fewer teachers (50%) reported being able to care a lot / deeply about learners' social and emotional problems, though an additional 37% did so quite a bit. These findings suggest that most teachers are not only focused on academic outcomes but are also attuned to the emotional well-being of their learners, which is critical for fostering inclusive, supportive learning environments.
76. Limpopo province consistently had the highest proportion of teachers (65,05%) who were aware of their learners' feelings showed warmth to their learners (76.53%), cared about the problems of their learners (80.465), be empathetic towards their learners (75.79%) and care about the social emotional problems of their learners (76.42%).

Teachers focus on developing learners' skills in the target class

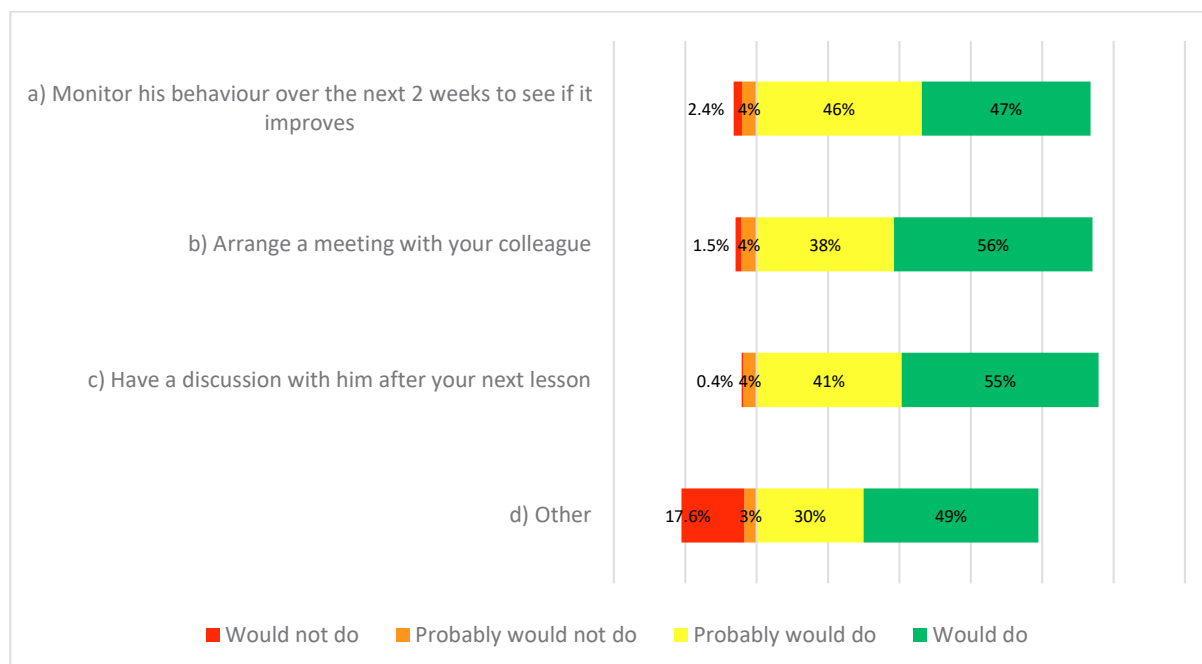
Figure 61: Frequency of teachers focus on developing learners' skills in the target class



77. The TALIS 2024 data revealed a strong emphasis among South African teachers on fostering learners' social-emotional competencies. Most teachers consistently focus on helping learners understand and manage their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, with 38% always and 40% frequently addressing these skills. Similarly, 41% of teachers always promoted the understanding of others' perspectives and 47% always cultivated empathy, indicating a deep commitment to interpersonal development. The ability to build and maintain healthy relationships was also prioritized, with 54% of teachers always focusing on this area and 37% doing so frequently. Moreover, 48% of teachers consistently supported learners in making caring and constructive personal choices.
78. Limpopo province once again had the highest proportion of teachers who could focus on the SEL of learners a lot, which suggests that these teachers have a holistic approach to teaching at their schools, where emotional intelligence and relational skills were integral to learner success and well-being.
79. TALIS 2024 also included scenarios involving male and female learners' social and emotional learning (SEL) in a deliberate effort to explore how teachers perceived and responded to gender-related dynamics in their target classrooms. The teacher responses helped the participating education systems to understand any teacher biases or beliefs and explore the extent to which teachers hold different expectations or apply different strategies based on gender. This helps identify implicit biases that may affect learner outcomes in the target class. These scenarios enable an evaluation of whether teachers are equipped to support all learners equitably, regardless of gender, and can guide education systems in the development of professional development programmes and policy decisions aimed at improving social and emotional learning implementation across varied classroom contexts.
80. Teachers were provided with a scenario and asked what they would do:

"You have a good rapport with all learners in the target class, except for a male learner. He often ignores you and provides one-word answers. However, when seeing him interact with one of your colleagues, you notice that he does not display the same behaviour with your colleague as he does with you".

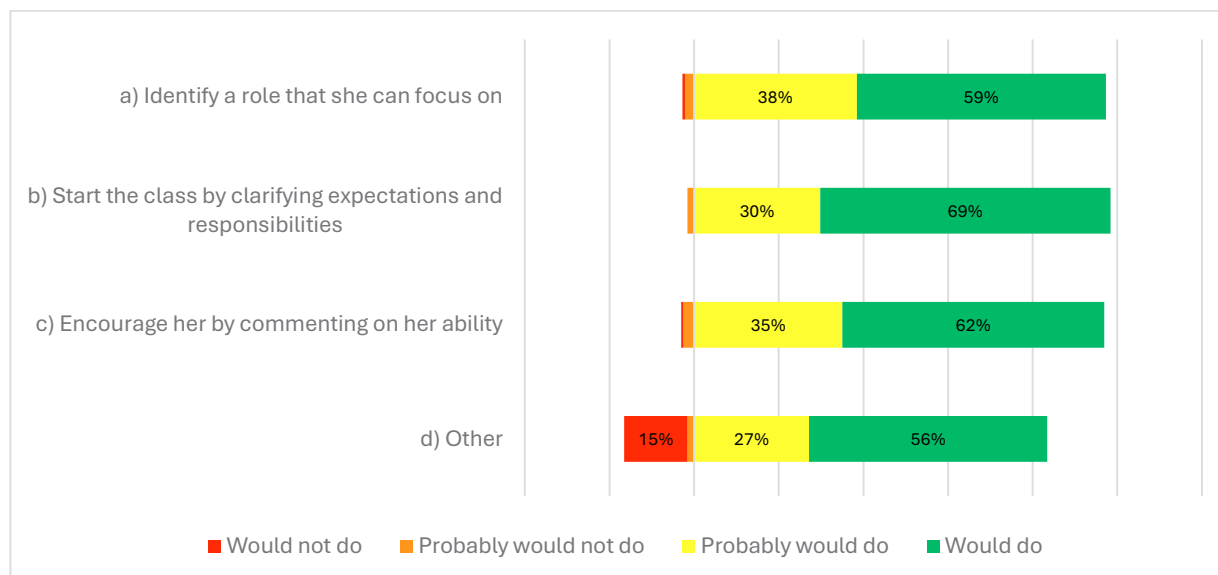
Figure 62: Teacher actions to improve rapport with a male learner



81. Generally, South African teachers responded to the learner's behaviour challenges with a proactive and reflective mindset. Nearly all teachers (47% would and 46% probably would) monitor the learner's behaviour over a two-week period, showing a strong commitment to observation and improving the situation. Collaboration was also a key strategy, with 56% of teachers willing or likely to arrange a meeting with a colleague to address the issue.
82. Direct engagement with the learner was widely favoured, as 55% of teachers said they would or probably would (41%) initiate a discussion with the learner in the next lesson. While 49% of teachers expressed openness to exploring alternative strategies, a notable 17.6% reported they would not consider other options, suggesting some resistance to adaptive approaches. Overall, the data reflects a teaching workforce that values communication, teamwork, and ongoing behavioural support, though there is room to encourage greater flexibility in problem-solving.
83. Teachers were provided with a second scenario and asked what they would do:

"In the target class, group work is an essential learning strategy for most of your topics. "A female learner really dislikes group work and is known for making group work unpleasant for others. As you plan for tomorrow's activity, you are reminded of the complaints you have received from learners about her – that there is conflict when she doesn't do her fair share. What would you do?"

Figure 63: Teacher actions to encourage a female learner to like group work



84. Similar to the first scenario, most teachers probably would (59%) or would have identified a role that the female learner could focus on. 69% probably would and 30% would take an inclusive approach and start the class by clarifying expectations and responsibilities (of all learners) in a group. Most teachers would build the learner's esteem by commenting on her ability. These teacher responses portray a teaching community that was deeply invested in the learner's well-being, confidence and esteem by helping her to develop a sense of belonging in the larger class group.
85. The OECD's Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (Social and Emotional Skills for better Lives) published in 2023 supports policymakers to identify conditions and practices that foster or hinder the development of social and emotional skills and assess how equitably these skills are distributed among learners. In an increasingly complex world, education systems should assess how well their learners are prepared for the demands of society and adapt schools as learning environments to meet new social challenges.
86. Learners need knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to maximise their potential and fully participate in society, while schools must provide education and training that address the needs of a technology-driven, lifelong learning environment. Effective social participation depends on learners developing appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to meaningful real-life applications, as well as continuous adaptation and improvement. Learners need skills, and attitudes that foster well-being, resilience, and social cohesion beyond academic knowledge to prepare them to navigate a rapidly changing society. Globally, social and emotional skills – such as self-control, stress resistance, co-operation, sociability, and curiosity – are competencies that support key life outcomes, including health and well-being, academic achievement, and job performance.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

87. Teachers' work does not only include their teaching practices in classrooms, as discussed, but also those professional practices that contribute to their own sense of professionalism and the professionalisation of their teaching in general. It is important to examine these professional practices, as they are related to other teacher outcomes, such as teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and teachers' perception of the value of the profession in society. (OECD: 2025 [47-48])
88. Professional practices, such as the ability to make decisions at a school level and collaborate with peers, as well as teachers' perceptions of having autonomy over their own classroom teaching practice, are some of the characteristics that distinguish teaching as a knowledge profession (Guerriero, 2017[232]; Price and Weatherby, 2018[365]) rather than a semi-profession (Ingersoll and Collins, 2018[366]).
89. Teacher professionalism involves the individual, psychological characteristics of the teacher that allow them to be labelled a professional (Tschannen-Moran, 2009[367]). Teachers' autonomy and power to make decisions over their own work, and their ability to collaborate with colleagues as part of peer networks along with possessing and continually updating the knowledge required for their work are further characteristics of an individual teacher's professionalism (OECD, 2016[368]).
90. This domain includes a focus on three aspects of professional practice that were included in past TALIS cycles and are also addressed in TALIS 2024, namely collaboration (with teacher colleagues or with parents and other key stakeholders outside school), teachers' roles in decision making, and teachers perceived autonomy regarding their work seek to understand their intersection with each other and their relationships to other teacher outcomes.
91. Teacher collaboration (with colleagues), decision making, and autonomy have been measured in past TALIS surveys. TALIS 2024 examines some of the same issues that were examined in TALIS 2018, namely:
- What do teachers and principals perceive to be teachers' roles in school decision making?
 - What do teachers and principals perceive to be teachers' roles in leadership?
 - In what ways does collaboration stimulate and support teaching practice?
92. The 2024 theoretical framework considers the relationship between the professional practices of collaboration, decision making, and autonomy themselves, as well as, between these practices and other areas in TALIS. While some of these relationships were explored in the 2018 cycle, TALIS 2024 considered some additional relationships between variables:
- relationships between teachers' autonomy and their level of collaboration with peers
 - connections between teachers in-depth and surface-level collaboration and professional learning and school climate
 - influence of teachers' perceptions of their appraisal and feedback on their perceptions of autonomy
 - relationships between teachers' professional practices and the perception of the value of the teaching profession within society

TEACHING IN GENERAL

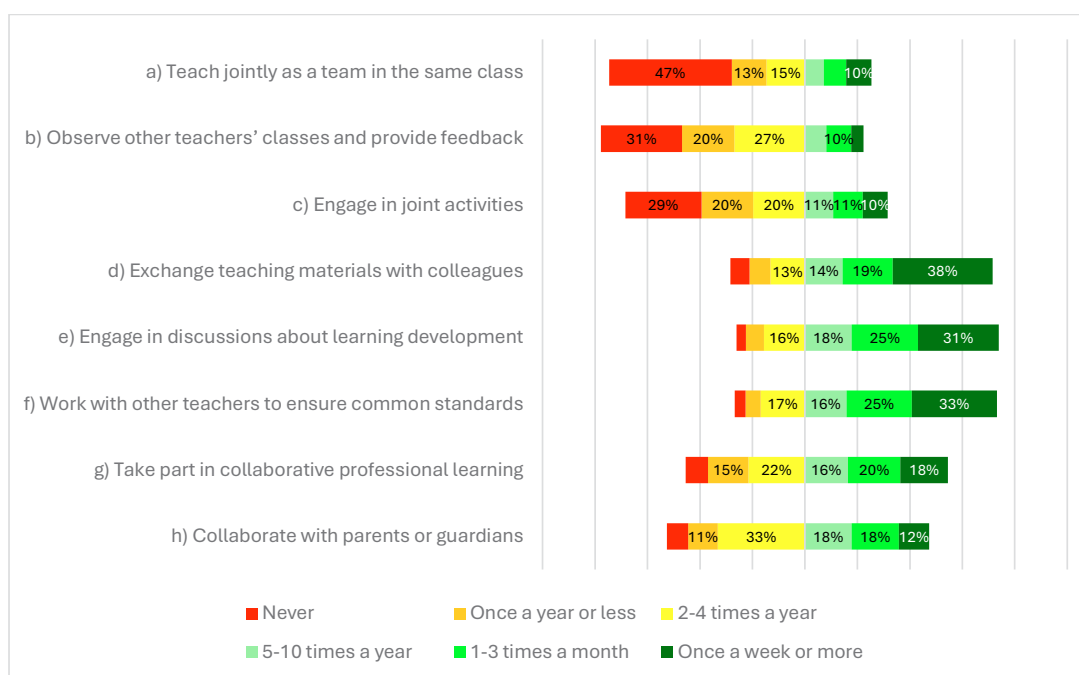
93. Here we get insight into how teachers engage with their profession, their learners, and their colleagues at schools. This encompasses their classroom practices (how learning is structured, consideration of learner needs, adaptation of teaching methods and encouraging cooperative learning and active participation) and the teacher practices extend beyond classroom instruction such as use of technology in teaching or assigning projects that require critical thinking. Teachers' participation in professional learning communities helps an education system to analyse how teachers' professional behaviours relate to the broader professional outcomes like job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and school climate. The 2024 TALIS data can also inform policy by highlighting the current gaps in support for teacher professionalism, especially in disadvantaged schools.
94. Profound environmental, social, and economic changes are reshaping societies. learners must be prepared for navigating future with uncertainties. In the knowledge economy, success demands more than memorising facts or performing repetitive tasks; AI-driven tools are set to replace many traditional skills. Individuals need to understand complex concepts, apply knowledge practically, analyse diverse information, think critically, make evidence-based decisions, innovate, adapt to new technologies, collaborate, and communicate effectively. Furthermore, in an uncertain society, building resilience is also essential.
95. Lifelong learning beyond traditional school years is increasingly important for personal and professional growth, enabling individuals to adapt to the shifting landscape and create new knowledge and values. As such lifelong learning for a South African teacher is officially supported by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) through a mandatory Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system. This system requires all registered teachers to earn professional development points within a three-year cycle by participating in endorsed training and learning activities.
96. Lifelong learning for South African teachers is a compulsory, structured process that requires teachers to earn 150 CPTD points over a three-year cycle by participating in a variety of professional development activities to stay current with new teaching methods, technologies, and curriculum changes. This commitment to lifelong learning aims to develop teachers' skills, model continuous growth for student teachers, and adapt to the evolving educational landscape.



Teacher collaboration

97. Teacher collaboration manifests itself in many ways in schools, depending on factors such as school climate/culture, school size, and school location, as well as with whom teachers collaborate and the purposes of the collaboration (Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran, 2007[369]). It can include the forms of in-depth co-teaching or more superficial exchanges of resources or ideas (Vangrieken et al., 2015[372]) that have been explored by TALIS in the past. There is evidence that teacher collaboration can positively influence student achievement, teacher self-efficacy (Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran, 2007[369]), innovation, teacher absenteeism and work-related enjoyment (Vangrieken et al., 2015[372]). The act of teachers making connections with their peers can also support teacher well-being (Durksen, Klassen and Daniels, 2017[373]). Another aspect of collaboration extends beyond peers to include semi-professionals in schools (e.g. teaching assistants) and other specialist professionals (such as social workers and nurses).
98. When teachers collaborate, they are also sharing knowledge, which can contribute to their own professional learning (Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran, 2007[369]). This kind of collaborative professional learning allows teachers to co-construct, rather than passively receive, knowledge (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikahmadi, 2016[374]) and positively relates to teachers' own professional motivation (Durksen, Klassen and Daniels, 2017[373]). In recent years, research has paid more attention to teacher collaboration (Vangrieken et al., 2017[375]), expanding it to include forms of collaboration for professional learning that include professional learning communities (Blankenship and Ruona, 2007[376]), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998[377]) and teacher networks (online or otherwise) (Schlager et al., 2008[378]).
99. Teachers can collaborate by observing and offering feedback on the teaching practice of their peers, which can be productive when it is used as professional learning, rather than as a form of teacher evaluation (Cosh, 1999[379]). An aspect of teacher collaboration that may influence teachers' learning and development involves teacher consultations with peers or school leaders for advice or guidance (Ortego et al., 2020[380]; Schuster, Hartmann and Kolleck, 2021[381]) which is less likely to occur when teachers perceive a competitive school environment (Siciliano, 2015[382]). Teacher collaboration has also been linked to school climate, and there is evidence that overall patterns of social relationships within schools can help to understand why and whether teachers collaborate (Moolenaar, 2012[383]).
100. Engaging with parents and other key stakeholders outside of the school is an increasingly important professional practice for teachers (Guerriero, 2017[232]). Parents play a vital role in the learning of their children from birth and a child's home life and structure can influence students' academic achievement in school (Dumont, Istance and Benavides, 2010[384]; Hattie, 2009[285]). Working with parents to help them support their children's in-school learning has been linked to greater achievement gains for students as well as skill-building for parents and more positive relationships between the school and community (Hattie, 2012[385]).
101. Over the course of a school year, children spend a low percentage of their overall time in school compared to their time at home or in the community. Connecting in-school learning with the community in which the students live is an important part of students' overall development (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005[386]) and necessitates teacher collaboration with others outside their schools. (OECD: 2025: Page48-49)

Figure 64: Frequency of professional collaboration and engagement at school



102. The data shows distinct patterns and a hierarchy in collaborative teaching practices among teachers: while resource sharing and curriculum alignment are deeply embedded, direct collaboration on teaching /instruction remains rare. Low-frequency activities included joint team teaching, with nearly half (47%) of educators never engaging in it and only 6% doing so weekly or more, suggesting barriers such as timetabling or lack of management or institutional support. Similarly, peer observation is underutilised, with 31% never participating. Moderate engagement is seen in joint activities and collaborative professional learning, which show more balanced distributions but still lack consistency, with only 10% of educators participating weekly. High-frequency activities are more embedded in daily practice such as exchanging teaching materials with colleagues, with 38% doing it once a week or more and only 7% never participating.
103. Discussions about learning development and ensuring common standards are also widespread, with 33% engaging once a week or more. Collaboration with parents or guardians is notably strong, with 18% participating 1-3 times monthly and 18% doing so 1-3 times a month and only 8% never doing so. Overall, resource sharing and curriculum alignment are the most frequent collaboration activities, while direct instructional collaboration remains rare, which could be attributed to structural or capacity challenges at schools. Collaborative professional learning is moderately practiced and could benefit from increased regularity, and the recognition of its importance in contributing to better learner outcomes.
104. To foster a more integrated teaching culture, schools must address structural barriers and invest in sustainable, teacher-led professional development.

Teacher Self-efficacy: Teaching Strategies

105. Teacher self-efficacy beliefs reference specific teaching practices, knowledge, and skills. TALIS 2018 defined three associated core dimensions of instruction, including general instruction, student engagement, and classroom management, for which teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed they could perform. In addition, self-efficacy develops over time with teachers' experience and can predict the quality of teachers' instruction (Zee and Koomen, 2016[443]).

106. Teacher self-efficacy also includes teachers' beliefs regarding their capacity to apply "modern" teaching practices, such as online teaching (intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic) and hybrid teaching (Mentzer, Krishna and Mohandas, 2023[444]). These teaching practices aim to create quality instruction and presence in digital settings (Gurley, 2018[150]; Howard et al., 2020[136]; Koehler et al., 2014[445]; Voogt et al., 2013[446]).
107. Self-efficacy can also differ for specific job duties, such as teaching for equity in multicultural and diverse classrooms, teaching about environmental sustainability, or teaching social and emotional skills to students. Self-efficacy also reflects teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks, influencing learner behaviour and performance. Higher teacher self-efficacy is linked to better pedagogical practices, instructional quality (Holzberger, Philipp and Kunter, 2013[39]), and improved learner outcomes (Caprara et al., 2006[40]; Woolfolk Hoy and Davis, 2006[41]). TALIS views teacher self-efficacy as multidimensional, assessing the extent to which teachers can perform goal-oriented actions and focusing on three key areas: classroom management, instruction, and learner engagement.

Figure 65: Extent to which teachers implemented certain teaching strategies

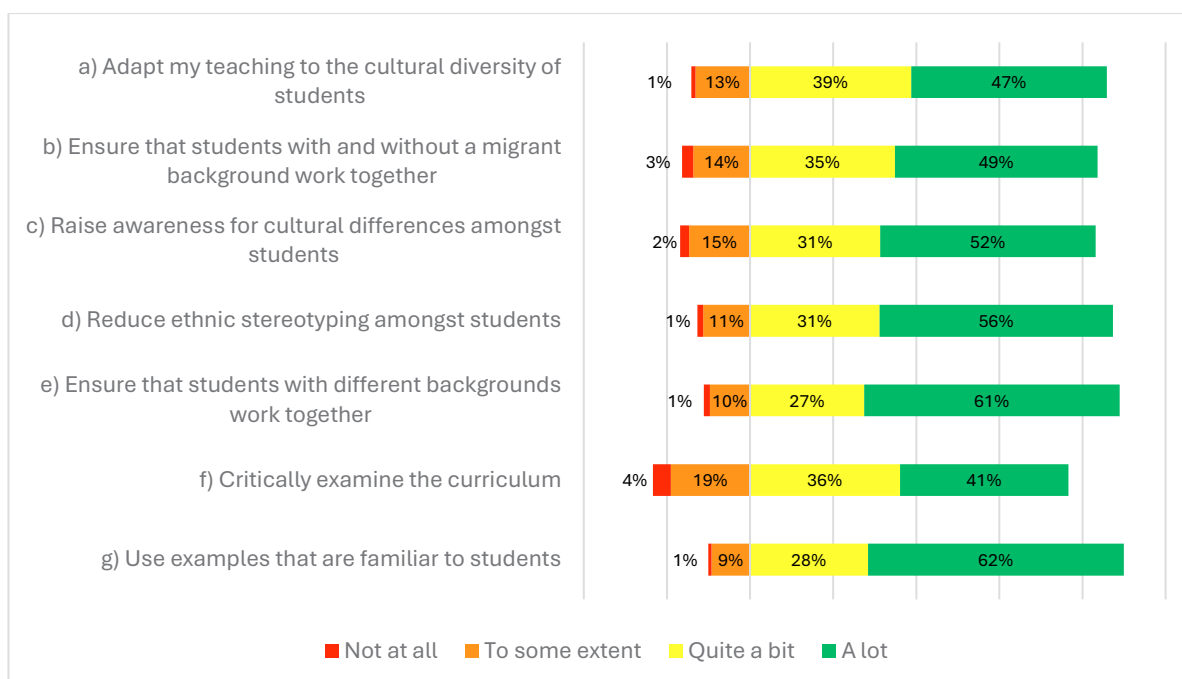


108. The data indicates high levels of multidimensional self-efficacy by South African teachers in implementing most teaching and assessment strategies a lot in their classrooms a lot of the time in the classroom, especially getting learners to believe they can do well in school work (74%) , helping learners value learning and being able to provide an alternative explanation for example when learners are confused (73%) and making their expectations of learner behaviour clear (69%)’ 63% of teachers nationally could frequently calm a learner who was disruptive or noisy . On the other teachers were not able to support learning a lot through the use of digital resources (36%), reduce achievement gaps among learners (44%) and support learning about environmental sustainability. On average the teachers in Limpopo province (40.66%) and Northern Cape 40.19%) were better able to support learning through the use of digital resources a lot in their classrooms.
109. Provincially, the highest proportion of teachers who were able to get learners to believe they could do well in schoolwork were from Limpopo province (85.278%), Mpumalanga (84.63%) and Northern Cape (80.04%). The highest proportion of teachers who were able to help learners value learning were from Limpopo (87.47%), Mpumalanga (85.25%) and Northern Cape provinces. 78.59% of teachers in Limpopo province could help learners to think critically a lot of the time and a high proportion (55.51%) of teachers in the same province indicated that they could frequently reduce achievement gaps among learners.

Teacher Self efficacy: Working in Multicultural Classrooms

110. Teachers from TALIS countries reported varied levels of self-efficacy when teaching in multi-cultural environments. On average, around seven out of ten teachers felt confident that they can facilitate students with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds working together, reducing ethnic stereotyping among students, and raising awareness about cultural differences among students. However, only around one in two teachers felt that they could critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforced negative cultural stereotypes. Also, teachers working in schools with a higher share of students from ethnic or national minority groups, or Indigenous communities, reported higher self-efficacy across all aspects of multicultural pedagogy. Compared to those teaching in schools without such learner populations, they are 8 percentage points more likely to feel confident in promoting co-operation across cultures, 7 percentage points more likely to adapt teaching to cultural diversity; and 6 percentage points more likely to use culturally familiar examples

Figure 66: Extent to which teachers used learner centred culturally responsive teaching approaches

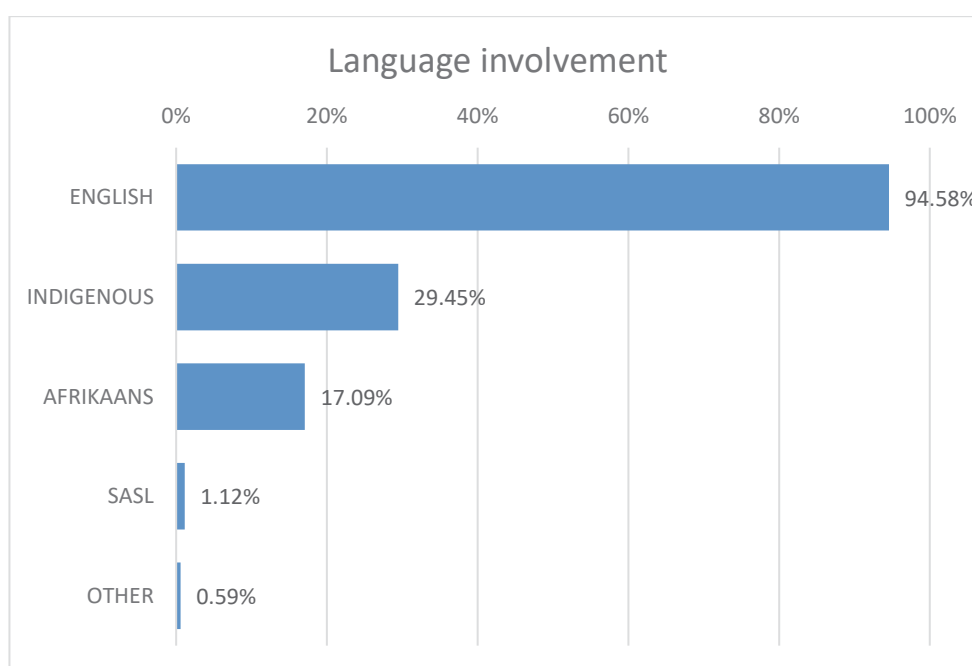


111. Nationally, an average of 47% (a lot) and 39% (quite a bit) of teachers could more frequently adapt their teaching to the cultural diversity of their classroom, raise awareness for cultural awareness (52% a lot and 31% quite a bit). A much higher proportion of teachers were more frequently able to exercise self-efficacy by ensuring learners with different backgrounds worked together and were able to use examples that were familiar to learners. More teachers felt that they could critically examine the curriculum frequently.

Use of language to read, write and communicate regularly

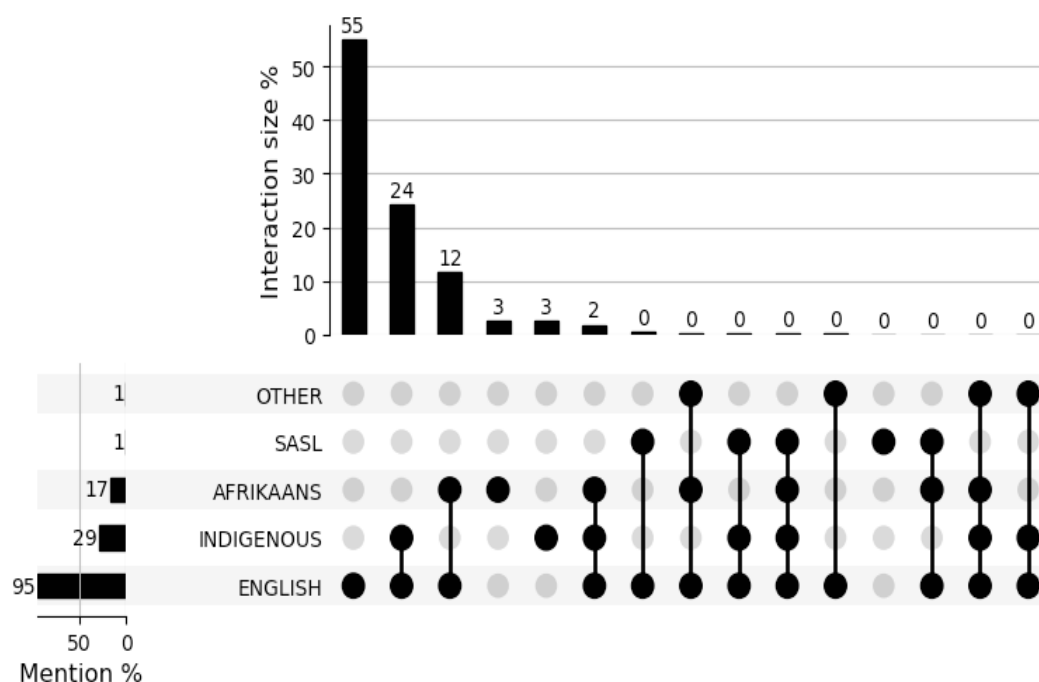
112. South Africa has 12 official languages, including South African Sign Language (SASL). These languages reflect the country's ethnic diversity and are used in government, education, and media. However, English and Afrikaans still dominate formal domains like business and higher education. It is estimated that over 1.2 million South Africans speak non-official languages such as Shona, Portuguese, and Chichewa. Khoi, Nama, and San languages are still spoken by a small number of people mainly in the Northern Cape.

Figure 67: Teachers use of South African Languages



113. Nationally 94.58% of South African teachers used English, 29.04% used an Indigenous language, 17.09% used Afrikaans, 1.12% used SASL and 0.59% indicated that they used other languages to read, write and communicate regularly. Teachers in seven of the nine provinces indicated that they used English to read, write and communicate regularly, whilst teachers in North West (44.82%) and Western Cape (41.23%) used Afrikaans predominantly for communication purposes.

Figure 68: Languages teachers used to read, write and communicate regularly



114. The combined matrix plot and a bar chart, confirms the frequency of languages used by South African teachers. The single most common usage was English alone, which by 55% of teachers, which suggests that over half of the productive usage (reading, writing, speaking) involved only English language. Further, English is dominant both in the percentage of teachers who use it (95%) and in the most frequent single-language use (55% of all interactions).
115. Teachers' bilingualism/multilingualism is evidenced by the combinations of languages, notably of English and Indigenous languages as a substantial part of their language usage, making up almost one-quarter (24%) of the interactions. 12% of teachers used combinations of English and Afrikaans, 3% used Afrikaans exclusively and the same proportion of teachers used an Indigenous language exclusively. 2% of teachers used a combination of English, an Indigenous Language and Afrikaans. While South African Sign Language (SASL) and Other Languages are used by a small percentage of teachers (1% each), no single-use interactions involving these languages appear in the top bar chart (0%). They only appear in combinations with English, Indigenous, and/or Afrikaans, suggesting that they are rarely used in isolation for reading, writing, and communication.

Table 16: Language combinations used by South African teachers to read, write and communicate regularly

Two-Language Combinations	English and Indigenous combination is the second most frequent, making up 24% of the interaction. This suggests a significant tendency for teachers to use both English and an Indigenous language (likely for code-switching or communication purposes) in the classroom. English and Afrikaans is the third most frequent combination, accounting for 12% of the use by teachers.
Three-Language Combinations	English, Indigenous and Afrikaans makes up 3% of the combined use of the three most popular languages used by teachers. The triple combination of English, Indigenous and SASL have the same proportion of use by teachers
Other combinations	Other Language combinations (2% or less): One combination, including English and Afrikaans and SASL, accounts for 2% of teachers' usage. All other language combinations, including the use of four or five languages, as well as the use of single languages other than English, contribute less than 1% of the total usage by teachers.

116. The data shows a significant discrepancy between the language/s used by teachers in practice (in the classroom) and what is often the policy for language of learning and teaching (LOLT) which promotes English-only instruction from Grade 4 onwards, thereby supporting the need for a formal, structured Mother Tongue Bilingual Based Education (MTBbE) policy.
117. The data also shows that a substantial portion of teacher interaction is already bilingual, demonstrating the practical need and existing capacity for multilingual teaching. Significant bilingual Interaction is happening in the combination of English and Indigenous languages accounting for the second-largest share of all language usage by teachers. Given that 29% of teachers mentioned using Indigenous languages and 17% used Afrikaans, the human resources (teachers) capable of implementing MTBbE already exist in the system.
118. The current practice is already a form of informal translanguaging or code-switching, which MTBbE seeks to formalize and structure for better learning outcomes. TALIS data validates that South African teachers operate in multilingual spaces and use a variety of language combinations, including three-language usage. The combination of English, Indigenous, and Afrikaans along with combinations involving SASL, shows that multilingualism is not just an ideal but an active reality in the schools.
119. Since teachers are already code-switching and using multiple languages informally in the classroom, introducing a formal MTBbE policy would legitimise and structure these practices, turning them into a pedagogical tool rather than an ad-hoc practice and ensure that Indigenous languages are used effectively to support cognitive development and subject content learning, not merely for classroom management or translation during lessons.
120. As a form of redress and policy reform the implementation of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA) Bill supports multilingualism and gives schools more flexibility in choosing their LOLT which is anticipated to help promote indigenous languages and improve inclusivity at all schools. The Department of Basic Education began the pilot of Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) , at the beginning of the 2025 academic year through a pedagogic approach enabling learners to be taught in their home language from Grade R to Grade 4 and then gradually transition to English in subsequent grades.
121. This pedagogic approach is intended to improve Literacy and Numeracy especially since studies have shown that children learn better when taught in their mother tongue, during the foundational years. This policy shift will support cultural preservation through the teaching of indigenous languages, help preserve South Africa's rich linguistic heritage and promote pride in cultural identity, ensure social equity and inclusivity by making learning more accessible to non-English speakers at all schools.

Growth mindset of teachers: Perceptions of intelligence and learning

122. TALIS explores how teachers' beliefs, practices, and environments influence how learners learn and achieve learning outcomes, which may indirectly be related to their cognitive development. Teachers were asked about their perceptions of their learner's potential, including whether they believed intelligence is fixed or can grow with effort and learning. This question is linked to the growth mindset theory, which suggests that learners who believes intelligence could be developed tended to perform better academically. Hence TALIS explores how classroom practices such as inquiry-based learning, teacher feedback, and differentiated instruction supported deep cognitive engagement since these teacher practices are designed to stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving, which are cognitive skills often associated with intelligence.
123. Growth mindset refers to the belief that intelligence is malleable and can be developed through effort, perseverance and support from others (Dweck and Yeager, 2019[46]). Research shows that teachers' growth mindset can improve students' academic achievement, particularly for students at risk of falling behind (Bostwick et al., 2020[47]; Claro, 2021[48]; Dweck, 2010[49]).

124. TALIS 2024 asked teachers whether they believed that intelligence is not malleable and cannot be developed (i.e. fixed mindset) or the opposite (i.e. growth mindset): Around four in five teachers on average “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with the statement that people’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change very much, ranging from less than 50% in Kosovo, South Africa and Viet Nam to over 90% in Australia, Chile and New Zealand. Similarly, around four in five teachers on average “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with the statement that everyone has a certain amount of intelligence and no one can really do much to change it. However, in Lithuania, Montenegro, Shanghai (China), South Africa, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam, more than half of teachers shared this view.
125. Two out of three teachers on average “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with the statement that someone can learn new things, but people cannot really change their basic intelligence, ranging from below 40% in Czechia and Shanghai (China) to 85% in Chile and New Zealand. While many education systems encouraged teachers to foster a growth mindset in students, few addressed teachers’ own beliefs. Singapore and South Africa offered examples of how growth mindset principles could be embedded more broadly within the education system. From South Africa, the Western Cape Education Department’s “Transform to Perform” strategy which aimed to foster a growth mindset among learners, teachers, non-teaching staff, and school leaders, was cited.
126. Relatedly, teachers’ growth mindset (the belief that intelligence is malleable) can improve students’ academic achievement, particularly for students at risk of falling behind (Bostwick et al., 2020[30]; Claro et al., 2021[31]; Dweck, 2000[32]; 2010[33]; Farrington et al., 2012[34]).
127. TALIS has consistently found that teachers who believed learners could improve with effort were more likely to use inclusive and adaptive teaching practices; teachers with a growth mindset tended to emphasise perseverance, feedback, and learner engagement rather than labelling students as “intelligent” or “not intelligent” and encouraged learners’ efforts over innate ability, and that classrooms led by growth-minded teachers often showed better learner motivation, resilience, and academic performance.
128. In TALIS 2018, over 90% of teachers across 48 participating countries agreed that “students can learn anything if they work hard enough.” This belief was linked to:
- Greater use of formative assessment
 - More differentiated instruction
 - Higher teacher job satisfaction¹. This focus has since led to the inclusion of a new areas such as artificial intelligence in education, which may involve adaptive learning systems that respond to learners’ cognitive profiles. So, while TALIS 2024 doesn’t measure intelligence directly, it does explore how teachers’ attitudes, teaching strategies, and school environments shape learning often in ways that intersect with the cognitive development of their learners.
129. Overall, the data suggested a large divide, with some countries showing an extremely strong belief that intelligence is a fixed, unchangeable trait, while others demonstrated a low endorsement of this view, which aligns more with a growth mindset. The OECD averages for the three statements are relatively low: 2.8% for “Everyone has certain amount of intelligence is something about them that they can’t change” (30a), 2.3% for “People’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change” (30b), and 5.4% for “Someone can learn new things but can’t change their intelligence” (30c). However, several countries show a percentage of teachers strongly agreeing with fixed-mindset beliefs that was far greater than the OECD average, indicating a strong fixed mindset is prevalent among their educators.
130. The findings from the comparison of the perceptions of South African teachers’ growth mindset to that of teachers from economically similar counties and education systems as well as from education systems that performed better than South Africa’s, follow.

Table 17: International Level: How strongly teachers agreed with statements related to intelligence and learning

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Strongly agree” that:		
	Everyone has certain amount of intelligence	People’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change	Someone can learn new things but can’t change their intelligence
Australia	0,7	1,1	1,7
Brazil	4,5	3,8	4,7
Colombia	3,4	2,9	4,1
Estonia	1,5	1,0	3,8
Finland	1,7	1,7	6,3
Japan	1,5	1,4	2,1
Morocco	10,5	6,1	9,9
Netherlands*	2,4	1,6	8,7
Singapore	2,7	1,8	3,6
South Africa	21,2	17,1	21,1
TALIS average-49	6,0	4,5	7,8
United Arab Emirates	6,9	4,9	9,7
United States	2,3	1,5	2,5
OECD average-27	2,8	2,3	5,4

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average



131. South Africa stood out as an extreme outlier, with roughly ten times the OECD average across all statements. The percentages are exceptionally high: 17.1% for statement 30a, 21.2% for 30b, and 21.1% for 30c. This data suggests that a very large proportion of South African teachers strongly believe that intellectual capacity is an inherent limit that cannot be fundamentally altered. Morocco also showed a strong endorsement, particularly for the statement that “People’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change” (30b), at 10.5%—over four times the OECD average of 2.3%.
132. Other non-OECD countries like the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, and Colombia also have teacher populations with a significantly higher proportion strongly agreeing with fixed beliefs than the OECD average.
133. Conversely, many countries fall well below the OECD average, suggesting that only a minimal percentage of their teachers strongly hold a fixed mindset, which is a key characteristic of a growth-oriented teaching culture. Australia had the lowest on all three measures (0.7%, 1.1%, and 1.7%), demonstrating the weakest strong agreement with the fixed mindset statements among all countries listed. Japan, Estonia, and the United States also showed very low percentages, consistently hovering between 1.0% and 3.8% across all statements. These low percentages suggested that in countries like Australia, Japan, and the United States, teachers are much less likely to strongly believe in inherent, unchangeable intellectual limits for their students.
134. Overall, this data showed us that there is not a uniform global perception of intelligence among teachers. The stark contrast between countries like South Africa and Morocco (high fixed-mindset belief) and Australia and the US (low fixed-mindset belief) suggested that cultural, systemic, or policy factors heavily influenced the core beliefs teachers held about the potential for intellectual change in their learners.
135. The analysis of the mean percentage of teachers who “Agreed/Strongly agreed” with fixed-mindset statements revealed significant differences in the perception of intelligence and learning across countries, indicating varying degrees of a fixed or entity mindset in the teaching profession. Globally, the TALIS average showed the highest mean agreement (38.5%) for the statement, “Someone can learn new things but can’t change their intelligence”. This is the most prevalent perception, suggesting that a large portion of teachers internationally separated the ability to learn specific new content from the belief that one’s underlying intellectual capacity remained unchangeable.



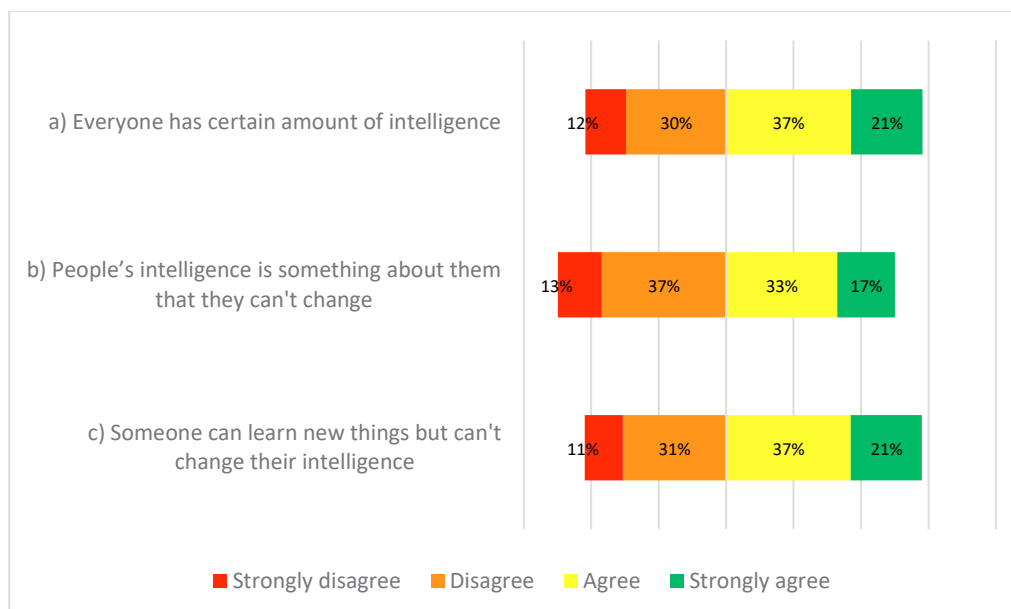
Table 18: International Level: Average Percentage of teachers who strongly agreed on statements about intelligence and learning

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Agree/Strongly agree” that;		
	Everyone has certain amount of intelligence	People’s intelligence is something about them that they can’t change	Someone can learn new things but can’t change their intelligence
Australia	9,6	9,1	15,7
Brazil	17,2	13,7	20,3
Colombia	20,0	20,8	26,6
Estonia	15,9	18,0	35,0
Finland	20,3	20,0	36,3
Japan	18,6	19,1	25,9
Morocco	35,8	25,2	35,5
Netherlands*	30,8	28,4	46,4
Singapore	20,4	17,5	28,9
South Africa	58,2	50,1	58,1
TALIS average-49	30,9	28,3	38,5
United Arab Emirates	27,4	24,6	35,2
United States	11,3	9,8	17,4
OECD average-27	22,6	21,6	32,7

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

136. In a comparative view, South Africa once again stood out dramatically, with the highest mean percentages across all categories; 58.2% of teachers in the country agreed/strongly agreed that people’s intelligence was something they couldn’t change and that learning new things did not change one’s intelligence (58.1%). This represented the strongest collective endorsement of a fixed mindset among the countries listed. In sharp contrast, the United States and Australia exhibited the lowest mean agreement for all three statements, with percentages consistently below 18%. This implies that teachers in these countries are the least likely to view intelligence as a fixed trait, suggesting a greater prevalence of a growth mindset where intellectual capability is seen as something that can be developed and changed in learners.

Figure 69: Teachers' views on intelligence and learning



137. At a national level, the highest proportion of teachers that strongly disagreed that everyone had a certain amount of intelligence were in the Western Cape (21%) whilst the highest proportion of teachers who strongly disagreed with this statement were in the Northern Cape (31.59%). In Gauteng 17.67% of teachers strongly disagreed that that people's intelligence was something about them that can't be changed whilst 24.26% of Northern Cape teachers strongly agreed with this belief statement. The highest proportion of teachers (15.40%) who strongly disagreed that someone could learn new things but couldn't change their intelligence, were based in the North West province whilst the highest proportion of teachers (31.29%) who strongly agreed with this statement were from the Northern Cape.
138. Overall, the provincial breakdown of teachers' beliefs about intelligence revealed significant provincial variation in fixed versus growth mindsets. The Northern Cape stood out as the province with the strongest endorsement of fixed intelligence beliefs, with the highest proportion of teachers strongly agreeing that intelligence cannot be changed (24.26%) and that learning new things did not alter intelligence (31.29%). This suggested a deeply entrenched view of intelligence as static among teachers in that province. In contrast, provinces like Gauteng and North West showed more openness to growth-oriented perspectives. Gauteng has a notable proportion (17.67%) of teachers who strongly disagreed with the idea that intelligence was unchangeable, while North West leads in rejecting the notion that learning does not affect intelligence (15.40% strongly disagreed). Interestingly, the Western Cape and Northern Cape both showed high levels of disagreement with the idea that everyone has a fixed amount of intelligence (21% and 31.59%, respectively), indicating some internal contradictions in belief systems within provinces. Overall, the data suggested that while fixed beliefs about intelligence persisted nationally, their intensity and consistency varied significantly across provinces, with the Northern Cape exhibiting the most rigid views and other provinces showing more flexibility.

Teachers' use of digital resources and tools in the classroom

139. The educational use of technology in TALIS refers to the use of digital devices (hardware), software, or online resources for the purposes of teaching and learning. Apart from the issue of providing sufficient resources for education, which remains varied across, as well as within, countries (Fraillon et al., 2020[127]), the successful implementation of any technology resource in schools is also highly reliant on teachers. Schools can purchase software and devices to improve educational outcomes, but any transformation depends on teachers' individual adoption of technology in their teaching practice. If teachers are not using the technology, or do not use it appropriately or effectively, it is less likely that desired outcomes of the educational use of technology will be achieved (Straub, 2009[128]). Thus, it is important for education leadership at a system and school level, as well as programmes of initial teacher education and professional learning, to understand why some teachers choose to adopt a new technology while others resist.
140. Understanding catalysts and barriers to technology adoption at the level of teachers enables support structures to be put in place at schools to influence the adoption of technology. For the purposes of TALIS in its focus on the educational use of technology, artificial intelligence (AI) is defined as: the capacity for computers to perform tasks traditionally thought to involve human intelligence. This can include making predictions, suggesting decisions, or generating text.
141. This definition is a simplified version of one adopted by the OECD in their recent Digital Education Outlook (OECD, 2021[129]). AI technologies are many and varied and include the following: natural language processing (NLP) and speech recognition, learning analytics and data mining, image recognition and processing, autonomous agents (such as avatars and smart robots), among others (Miao et al., 2021[126]). Notably, the TALIS definition goes beyond generative AI or large language models, such as ChatGPT.
142. Much of the research on teachers' intention to use technology is also relevant to the use of artificial intelligence tools in their teaching practice. Research on the adoption of AI in schools also suggests that other factors may predict teachers' intended engagement with such tools. These include the understanding and minimising of any related ethical issues; teacher trust in the underlying AI; whether the AI tool generates any additional workload for teachers; the provision of additional teacher support in using AI in their practice; and principals' digital leadership (Cheng and Wang, 2023[155]; Cukurova, Miao and Brooker, 2023[156]).
143. Technology in education is related to several enduring features of teaching and learning hence TALIS 2014 focused on teachers' self-efficacy in this regard. The expertise that a teacher needs to teach includes content knowledge for the domain they wish to teach, pedagogical knowledge in general, and an intersection of content and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986[130]). A more recent line of research emphasises teachers' knowledge and skills to teach with technology – the so-called Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which has extended the traditional domains of teacher knowledge (Archambault and Crippen, 2009[131]; Schmidt et al., 2009[132]). Teacher competence in these areas could be linked to high instructional quality and, ultimately, improved student learning (Blömeke, Gustafsson and Richardson, 2015[133]). In addition, the TPACK model plays an important framework in teachers' ability to design high-quality learning content for distance learning (Moore-Adams, Jones and Cohen, 2016[134]), increasingly relevant in the period since TALIS 2018.

144. From an international perspective, teachers in the UAE were the most digitally confident across all measures for self-efficacy in the use of digital resources in the classroom far exceeding the OECD and TALIS averages (with 70% able to identify digital resources, 72.5% able to present content differently with technology, 69.1% able to adapt the use of digital resources and tools to different teaching activities, 64.2% able to communicate with parents using digital resources and tools and 63% able to learn technology that was new to them).
145. The South African teachers' averages in three measures except being able to communicate with parents using digital resources and tools (29.1%) were above the TALIS average and above the OECD averages, noting that the TALIS average was below the OECD in this specific measure of self-efficacy. Japan reported the lowest digital adaptability, with only 12% identifying digital resources and 9.8% adapting them to teaching activities, consistently scoring below the TALIS and OECD averages, most especially in parent communication (5.4%) and learning how to use technology that was new to them (9.9%) suggesting major gaps in digital integration.
146. Agreement on being able to "Communicate with parents" tended to score lower than other dimensions, in Morocco and Singapore (15.7%) "Learn new technology" scores were generally higher than the OECD averages in several countries, indicating that teachers may be more confident in acquiring new skills than applying them in diverse contexts

Table 19: International Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities "A lot" with digital resources and tools

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that can do the following tasks "A lot" with digital resources and tools				
	Identify digital resources and tools to support the subject(s) I teach	Use digital resources and tools to present concepts differently	Adapt the use of digital resources and tools to different teaching activities	Communicate with parents using digital resources and tools	Learn to use technology that is new to me
Australia	33,2	30,0	26,2	30,5	32,2
Brazil	34,1	33,7	29,1	28,7	43,3
Colombia	25,1	24,8	22,9	26,4	25,9
Estonia	22,6	20,0	16,2	29,6	18,7
Finland	29,9	11,9	16,7	47,3	18,1
Japan	12,0	12,2	9,8	5,4	9,9
Morocco	41,7	40,2	35,6	15,7	44,7
Netherlands*	33,6	31,6	23,3	33,6	31,6
Singapore	24,2	21,2	21,8	15,7	22,1
South Africa	34,4	30,4	30,0	29,1	43,7
TALIS average-49	32,2	30,6	28,2	32,1	33,4
United Arab Emirates	70,0	72,5	69,1	64,2	63,0
United States	34,0	35,7	32,5	32,7	36,3
OECD average-27	29,7	27,4	24,3	34,1	28,5

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

147. The UAE teachers stood out with scores above 86% across all measures, indicating exceptional digital confidence. Japan consistently scored below 45%, especially in parent communication (22.2%) and adapting the use of digital tools to different teaching activities (35.1%), suggesting major gaps in digital integration. “Communicate with parents” tended to score lower than other measures, especially in countries like Australia, Brazil, Morocco, Singapore and Japan. South Africa average scores were lower than the OECD averages in 4 specific measures except for learning how to use technology new to them (77.1%). Self-efficacy in digital competency in the classroom, revealed the widest international divide with the UAE teachers emerging as the most digitally confident.

Table 20: International level: Means: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities “A lot” with digital resources and tools

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that can do the following tasks “Quite abit/A lot” with digital resources and tools				
	Identify digital resources and tools to support the subject(s) I teach	Use digital resources and tools to present concepts differently	Adapt the use of digital resources and tools to different teaching activities	Communicate with parents using digital resources and tools	Learn to use technology that is new to me
Australia	78,2	74,8	69,6	69,4	76,2
Brazil	84,8	83,0	79,6	69,2	86,7
Colombia	70,6	68,2	64,7	66,7	68,3
Estonia	68,1	62,4	52,6	70,0	56,5
Finland	76,9	43,3	59,0	81,5	54,0
Japan	40,3	42,1	35,1	22,2	36,8
Morocco	80,0	77,5	72,3	39,8	79,7
Netherlands*	81,7	76,9	67,3	75,3	72,0
Singapore	75,8	69,7	70,8	59,6	71,5
South Africa	71,4	67,6	67,9	60,4	77,1
TALIS average-49	76,3	73,3	70,9	69,8	74,8
United Arab Emirates	92,1	92,0	89,5	87,3	86,2
United States	75,8	75,7	71,5	71,9	74,1
OECD average-27	75,2	71,6	68,1	72,6	71,5

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

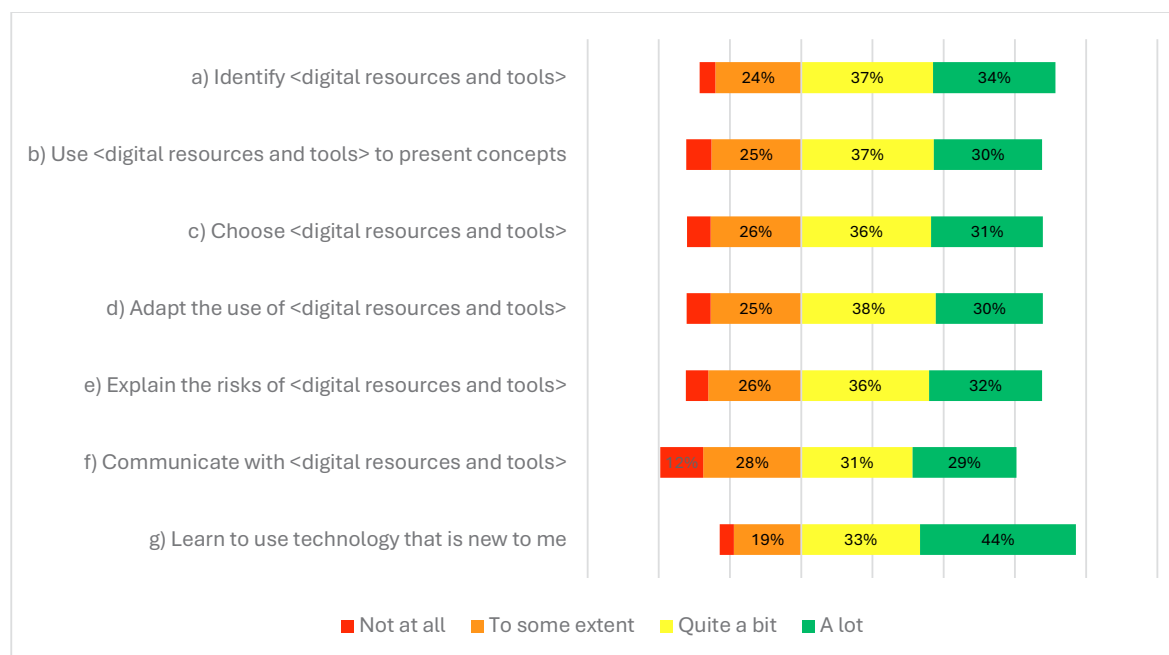
Table 21: Provincial Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following activities “A lot” with digital resources and tools

PROVINCE	Percentage of teachers that can do the following tasks “A lot” with digital resources and tools				
	Identify digital resources and tools to support the subject(s) I teach	Use digital resources and tools to present concepts differently	Adapt the use of digital resources and tools to different teaching activities	Communicate with parents using digital resources and tools	Learn to use technology that is new to me
Eastern Cape	21,0	16,3	20,3	20,8	36,7
Free State	30,6	32,9	32,6	32,2	45,2
Gauteng	34,0	33,0	32,0	33,4	44,6
KwaZulu Natal	35,3	28,7	31,2	33,7	47,3
Limpopo	47,2	39,1	35,6	27,6	51,3
Mpumalanga	38,4	40,8	37,9	31,3	48,8
Northern Cape	34,8	31,7	31,6	23,7	47,4
North West	27,7	27,8	20,3	22,4	35,1
Western Cape	29,4	26,6	23,4	26,2	28,3
National	34,4	30,4	30,0	29,1	43,7

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

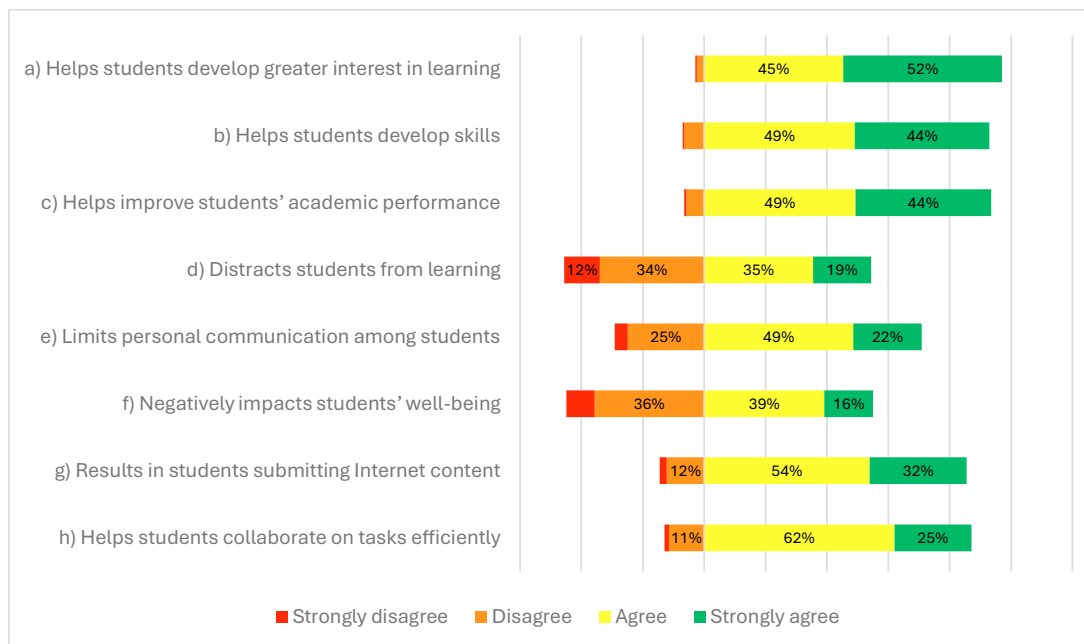
148. Provincially, Limpopo (47.2%) and Mpumalanga (38.4%) showed the highest digital adaptability of teachers identifying digital resources to support the subjects that taught. 51.3% of Limpopo teachers, higher than the national average, reported being able to learn to use new technology. Western Cape, surprisingly, showed much lower agreement, with only 29.4% of teachers being able to identify digital resources and tools in the subjects they taught and 28.3% reporting confidence in learning new technology. This suggests that even provinces with better digital infrastructure may lag in teacher self-efficacy to identify, use and adapt digital resources and tools in their classrooms compared to provinces actively adapting despite infrastructure and resource limitations.

Figure 70: Teacher's self-efficacy in the use of digital tools and resources



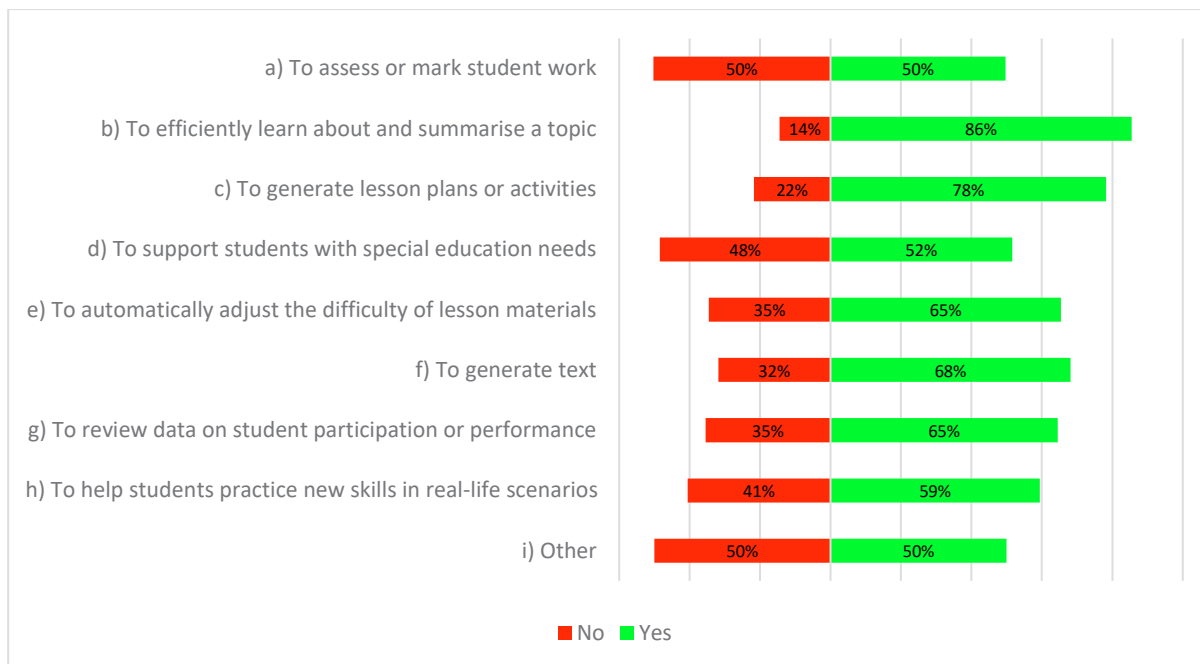
149. Nationally, the data revealed a generally positive trend in the adoption of digital tools among South African teachers, with most reporting frequent use across various educational functions. Notably, 77% (44% a lot and 33% quite a bit) of teachers expressed strong confidence in their ability to learn new technologies, a factor closely linked to their willingness to experiment and integrate these tools into their teaching practices. However, disparities emerge at the provincial level. For instance, while 35.27% of KwaZulu-Natal teachers used digital tools extensively to support subject teaching, 10.54% of Eastern Cape teachers reported no usage in this area. Similarly, Mpumalanga showed high engagement, with 40.82% of teachers using digital tools to present new concepts, contrasting with 10.01% of Free State teachers who did not use them at all for this purpose. Limpopo also demonstrated strong adoption, with 42.45% of teachers selecting tools that enhanced learning, whereas 11.99% of Free State teachers did not engage in this practice. These figures suggest that while national efforts and attitudes toward digital integration are largely positive, provincial disparities in usage and access remain significant and warrant targeted support.
150. While a high proportion of South African teachers showed strong self-efficacy (ranging from some extent to a lot) for learning new technology and general use of digital tools often, their instructional and pedagogical self-efficacy (the belief they could use the tools effectively in their teaching) varied across provinces possibly due to the uneven digital infrastructure across and within provinces. The provincial gaps suggest that simply having the desire to learn isn't enough, teachers need access to resources and targeted professional development to convert their enthusiasm into agency in the classroom.

Figure 71: Teachers views on the use of digital resources and tools



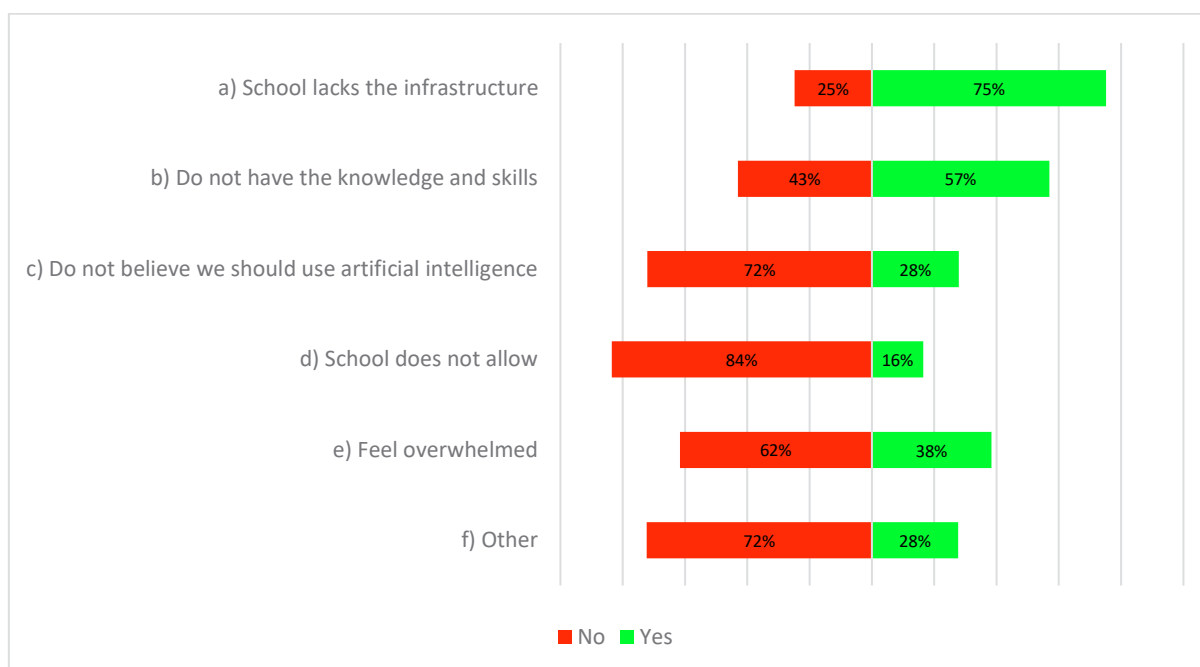
151. The data reveals a strong national consensus among teachers regarding the positive impact of and use of digital resources and tools: it helped learners develop greater interest in learning (97%); it helped learners develop skills (93%) and helped improve learners' academic performance and helped learners to collaborate on tasks efficiently (87%). However, 16% of teachers strongly agreed that digital resources and tools negatively impacted on learners' well-being and 39% agreed that this was the case. Many teachers (32% strongly agreed and 54% agreed) that the use digital resources and tools resulted in learners submitting internet content suggesting that learner are not able analyse and synthesise the information before submitting to teachers. This view was supported by over 50% of teachers in 6 out of 9 provinces (Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Northern Cape and Western Cape). At a provincial level, high proportions of teachers from Limpopo strongly agreed with the following uses of digital resources and tools: the use of digital resources and tools helped develop learners' interest in learning (65.28%), helps improve learners' academic performance (55.30%), helped learners to collaborate on tasks efficiently (34.72%). While there is a strong desire among South African teachers to leverage digital tools in the classroom, their ability to do so is severely hampered by systemic challenges related to digital infrastructure, professional development opportunities, and support. (OCED: 2025 [14-15]).

Figure 72: Ways in which teachers used AI in the classroom



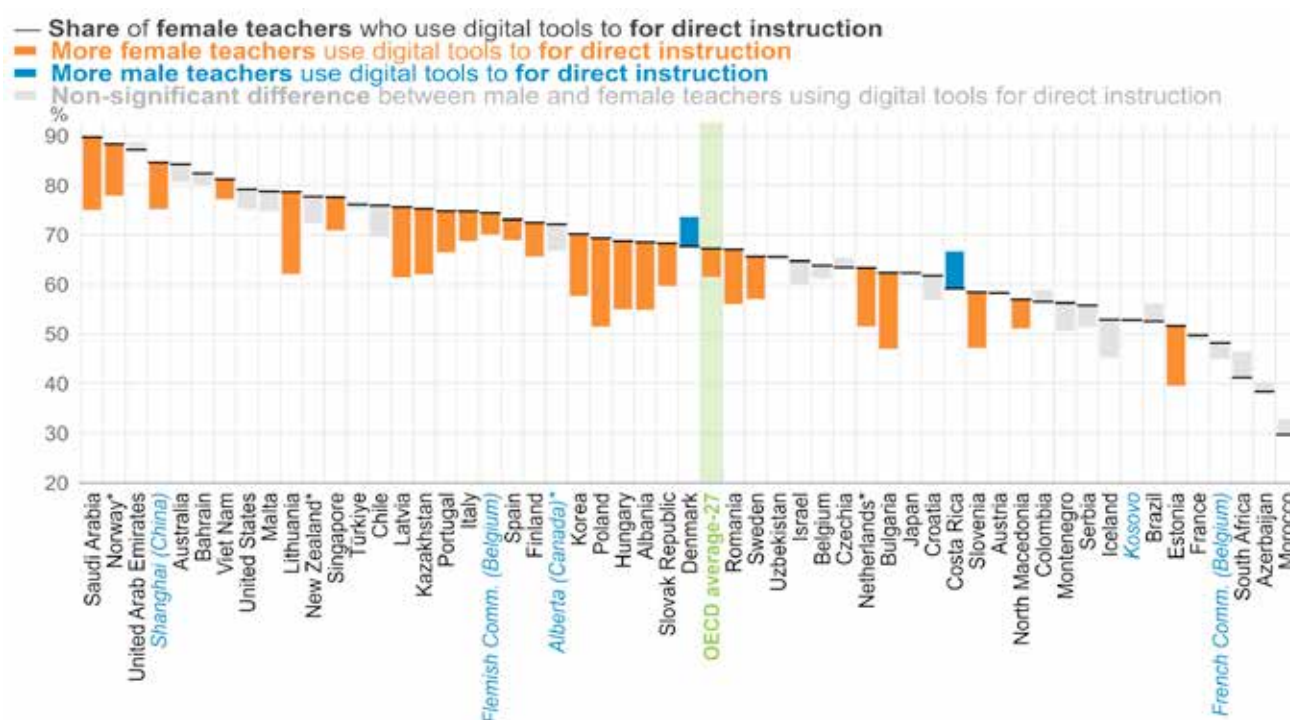
152. South African teachers are increasingly integrating AI into their classrooms to enhance teaching efficiency and learner support. A significant majority (86%) used AI to quickly learn about and summarise topics, streamlining their preparation process. AI is also widely adopted for instructional design, with 78% of teachers using it to generate lesson plans and activities tailored to their curriculum. Beyond planning, 68% relied on AI to produce educational texts, while 65% leveraged it to analyse learner participation and performance data, enabling them to automatically adjust lesson difficulty to suit individual learner needs. Importantly, 52% of teachers used AI to support learners with special educational needs, highlighting its role in fostering inclusive education. These trends reflect a growing confidence among teachers in AI as a versatile tool for personalised, data-driven, and adaptive teaching.

Figure 73: Reasons why teachers do or don't use AI to facilitate learning



153. The most significant reasons why teachers did not use AI to facilitate learning were that the “School does not allow” (84% and “Do not believe we should use artificial intelligence” (72%). A substantial percentage also indicated that they “Feel overwhelmed” (62%), or “Other reasons” (72%). While still a factor, fewer teachers cited a lack of knowledge and skills (43%) compared to the belief/policy barriers, and the least cited reason for not using AI was that the “School lacks the infrastructure” (25%). Overall, the data suggests that institutional policy/attitudes and personal beliefs/emotional factors are the primary barriers, with infrastructure and skills being less frequent obstacles. The data also suggests that, for the teachers surveyed, the primary barriers to using AI were institutional, attitudinal, and slightly emotional, rather than purely logistical or skill based.
154. The data can also be interpreted by looking at what were not barriers to the use of AI e.g. since 75% of teachers do not cite infrastructure as a reason for not using AI, it implies that in three-quarters of cases, the infrastructure is deemed adequate for AI use. Similarly, 57% of respondents did not cite a lack of knowledge and skills as a barrier, suggesting over half the teachers feel they possessed the necessary competence to use AI- it was up to the education system to close gaps and harness the teachers’ interest to use AI as a resource to enrich teaching and learning.
155. Female teachers, on average, are more likely to report using digital resources and tools “frequently” or “always” to present information through direct instruction (67% of female teachers compared to 62% of male teachers) and allowed students to plan and monitor their own learning (61% of female teachers compared to 58% of male teachers). On the other hand, male teachers report using digital resources and tools “frequently” or “always” to provide personalised learning paths for students (36% male teachers compared to 33% female teachers) and to replace printed materials (24% male teachers compared to 19% female teachers).

Figure 74: Percentage of lower secondary teachers who “frequently” or “always” use digital tools to present information through direct instruction



Note: *Estimates should be interpreted with caution due to higher risk of non-response bias.

Source: OECD (2024), TALIS 2024 Database, Table BMUL.TGND. TQ52

156. To examine the share of female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction in countries that were economically similar, had similar education systems or had education systems that performed better than South Africa's, the data showed that only Brazil (53%), Colombia (56%) South Africa (41%) and Morocco (30%), didn't have a larger share of female teachers were using digital tools for direct instruction. The share of female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction (67%) Australia (84%) the United States (79%), Singapore (78%), Finland (73%) exceeded the OECD and TALIS averages, confirming the positive adoption of digital use by women (67% Female vs. 61% Male) and indicating that across many developed and participating nations, female teachers were leading the way in the adoption of digital tools in the classroom.

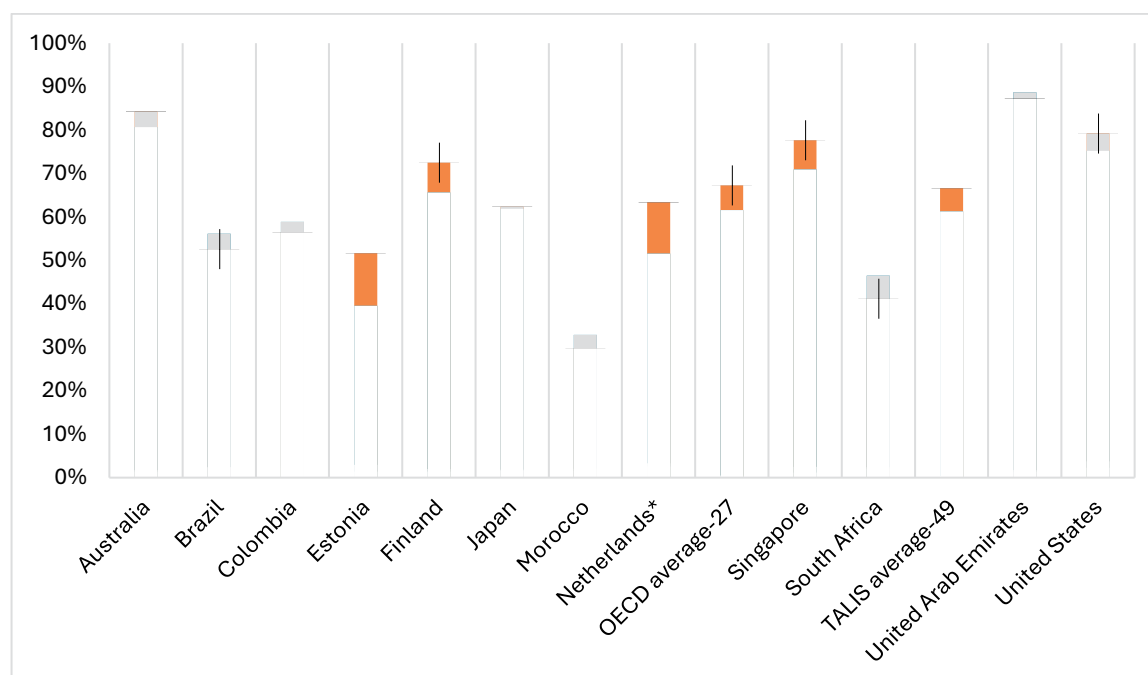
Table 22: International Level: Share of female teachers who use digital tools for direct instruction

- **Share of female teachers** who use digital tools for direct instruction
- **More female teachers** use digital tools for direct instruction
- **More male teachers** use digital tools for direct instruction
- **Non-significant difference** between male and female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction

Country	Female	Male
Australia	84%	81%
Brazil	53%	56%
Colombia	56%	59%
Estonia	52%	40%
Finland	73%	66%
Japan	62%	62%
Morocco	30%	33%
Netherlands*	63%	52%
Singapore	78%	71%
South Africa	41%	47%
TALIS average-49	67%	61%
United Arab Emirates	87%	89%
United States	79%	75%
OECD average-27	67%	62%

157. Despite the growing potential of AI in education, many South African teachers face significant barriers to its adoption in the classroom. A majority (75%) cite inadequate infrastructure in their schools as the primary obstacle, highlighting systemic challenges in access to technology. Additionally, 57% of teachers report lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively use AI, pointing to a need for targeted professional development. Emotional and cognitive overload also plays a role, with 38% feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of integrating AI into their teaching. Furthermore, 28% of teachers express philosophical or pedagogical reservations, believing AI should not be used to facilitate learning. Institutional restrictions compound these issues, as 16% of schools explicitly prohibit AI use in classrooms. Together, these factors reveal a complex interplay of logistical, educational, emotional, and ideological hurdles that must be addressed to unlock the full potential of AI in South African education.

Figure 75: Countries with more female teachers using digital tools for direction



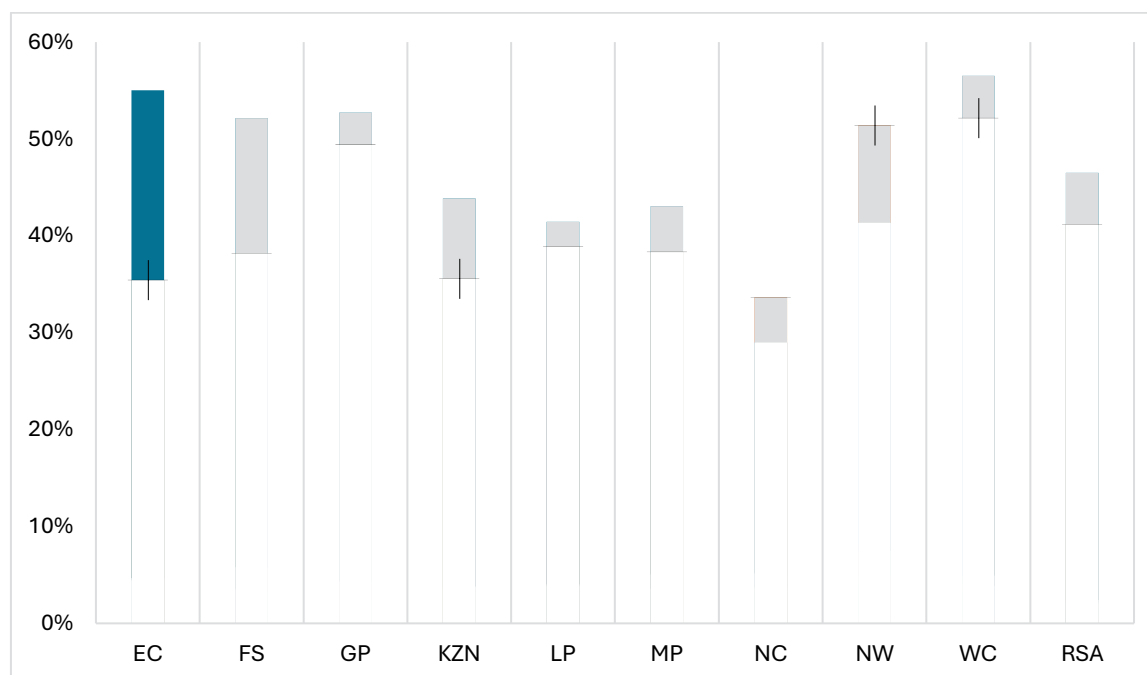
158. Education systems in countries where male teachers lead (e.g., United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Colombia, Morocco) need to investigate and remove the barriers for female teachers' use of digital tools for teaching. In countries with a higher share of female digital tool use (e.g., Australia, Estonia, Finland, United States), the education systems should focus on sustaining this adoption, ensuring that support and training keep pace with this higher rate of integration and technological advancements. Understanding of equivalence in Japan other education systems can analyse the policies and models of professional development that have resulted in gender equality in usage.

Table 23: Provincial Level: Share of female teachers who use digital tools for direct instruction

Province	Female	Male
Eastern Cape	35%	55%
Free State	38%	52%
Gauteng	49%	53%
KwaZulu Natal	36%	44%
Limpopo	39%	41%
Mpumalanga	38%	43%
Northern Cape	34%	29%
North West	51%	41%
Western Cape	52%	57%
National	41%	47%

159. Comparatively, South Africa shows an opposite trend to the international one as there was a smaller share of female teachers (41%) using digital tools for direct instruction compared to male teachers (47%) at a national level. This indicates a potential systemic issue where female teachers, who form the majority of the teaching force, may face greater barriers to digital tool integration at schools. Only two provinces, North West (51%) and Northern Cape (34%), showed a higher share of female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction. The majority of provinces showed a higher share of male teachers using digital tools for direct instruction. The Eastern Cape showed the largest provincial gap with 35% females and 55% males using digital tools in direct instruction. The Western Cape had the highest female share (52%) in the country, but male teachers' share was slightly higher at 57%. Provinces with the smallest gap included Limpopo province where gender gap was the narrowest, in favour of male teachers (41%) with female teachers at 39%. The North West had a difference in favour of females (51%) compared to 41% of male teachers' share of digital tools for direct instruction.

Figure 76: Provinces' share of female teachers using digital tools for direct instruction



160. The data suggests that the South African education system should focus on addressing the significant gender gap that generally favours male teachers' use of digital tools for direct instruction. The differences are magnified at the provincial level. In provinces like Eastern Cape (EC), the difference is substantial (35% Female and 55% Male). This suggests that professional development and resource allocation for technology integration and capacity building need to be significantly improved and potentially gender-targeted in most provinces. The system should investigate the factors driving the high male use in provinces like Eastern Cape, Free State, and Western Cape (all 52% or higher for males) and apply those lessons to support female teachers in those same areas. Lessons can be drawn from provinces with a high share female teachers using digital tools for teaching to examine what factors contributed to this higher use by female teachers in North West (51% female compared to 41% male) and Northern Cape (34% female compared to 29% male) to replicate the approach or strategy in other provinces.
161. Most of all, the data signals a need for South Africa to address a gender gap favouring males in digital tool use, while most other countries must continue to support a trend where a greater share of female teachers are integrating digital tools into the classroom.

CHAPTER 5: Occupational perceptions



This chapter focuses on the domains of occupational wellbeing, stress intensity, job satisfaction, the perceived value of teaching, self-efficacy and teacher mobility at schools.

1. The societal value of the teaching profession is determined by a complex web of social relations regarding occupational organisation and control. Sociologists see occupations as a social enterprise and highlight the importance of understanding the way that occupations are organized and controlled (Abbott, 1988; Evetts, 2013; Freidson, 2001). The degree and kind of specialisation required by an occupation in relation to other occupations in the social hierarchy are used to establish their social, symbolic, and economic value, and justify the privilege and trust from the general public (Freidson, 2001). According to Ingersoll and Collins (2018), professionalization is “degree to which occupations exhibit the structural or sociological attributes, characteristics, and criteria identified with the professional model”; and professionalism is “attitudinal or psychological attributes of those who are considered to be, or aspire to be considered as, professionals” such as “commitment to a career and to public service” (p. 201).¹ Professionalism, as studied by sociologists, represents a distinctive form of decentralized occupational control and regulation (Evetts, 2013).
2. Professionalism characterises the profession—knowledge-based service occupations with “discretionary specialisation” that requires a body of working knowledge (practical knowledge) and formal knowledge (discipline-based theories and concepts) obtained through tertiary education, vocational training, and experience (Freidson, 2001). The normative value system of professionalism in an occupation—how to think and act—is reproduced at the micro level in individual practitioners and in their workplaces through social interactions (Abbott, 1988). Educational researchers have examined the professional status of teaching based on the level of complexity of work and knowledge required (Rowan, 1994), organization of teachers’ work (Ingersoll & Collins, 2018), and public perception of the occupation (Dolton et al., 2018; Hargreaves, 2009; Ingersoll & Collins, 2018). Rowan (1994) argued that making teachers’ work more complex helps professionalise teaching and increases its occupational prestige and earning. Considering the major variation in the social status of teachers across countries (Dolton et al., 2018), it is important to consider how certain aspects of teacher policy across education systems might influence teachers’ perception of their occupational value, their working conditions, and the relationships among all stakeholders.
3. There have been growing concerns about the increasing complexity of the teaching profession (OECD, 2019[404]). Some profession-related factors identified as contributing to this rising complexity include high workload, changes in policy priorities toward teaching quality improvement, disruptive student behaviour, negative relationships with students and colleagues, and increases in accountability and compliance (Harmsen et al., 2019[405]; OECD, 2019[404]). Although teachers’ main work has remained broadly similar over time, their roles have extended beyond classroom processes, including to collegial coaching and co-operation, teacher leadership, and engagement in continuous professional learning (Maulana, Kington and Ko, 2023[406]; Van der Lans et al., 2024[407]). Consequently, their feelings about themselves as teachers may be changing along with changes in personal and contextual factors. Among other constructs, job satisfaction, well-being and perceived value of teaching, as well as self-efficacy, continue to receive growing attention. TALIS 2024 distinguishes between two domains reflecting distinct types of occupational perceptions: (i) Job satisfaction, well-being and perceived value of teaching, and (ii) teacher self-efficacy. TALIS 2024 also addresses related aspects such as teacher motivation and commitment to the profession. Interrelationships between these constructs have been highlighted in research showing a connection between self-efficacy and aspects of well-being, teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and teachers’ learning (Helms-Lorenz and Maulana, 2016[247]; Klassen and Tze, 2014[408]).

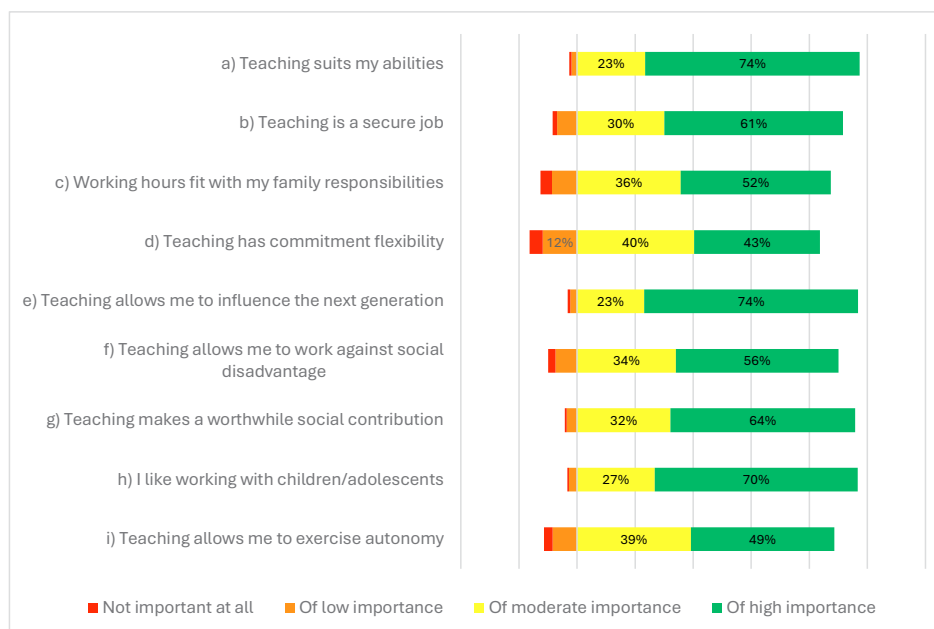
4. Occupational perceptions – teachers’ feelings about themselves as teachers and teaching as a profession – are strongly tied to their perceptions of job demands and resources. Some aspects of occupational perceptions, like negative emotion and job dissatisfaction, can result in poor teaching quality and teacher attrition (Harmsen et al., 2018[246]). Occupational perceptions can also be linked to aspects of school leadership and institutional climate. School leadership also relates to school-wide learning climate and classroom teacher practices. For example, effective school leadership can promote a positive school climate (Price and Moolenaar, 2015[432]; Price, 2012[433]), thus, creating better workplace conditions and improving teachers’ job satisfaction can be key to preventing teacher turnover and promoting teachers’ self-efficacy, particularly among novice teachers (Kraft, Marinell and Shen-Wei Yee, 2016[434]; Ladd, 2011[435]; Meristo and Eisenschmidt, 2014[436]; OECD, 2016[368]; Weiss, 1999[437]).
5. Teacher well-being refers to positive and effective functioning at work (Collie and Martin, 2016[409]). Job satisfaction is also recognised as a key component of teachers’ well-being (Viac and Fraser, 2020[177]). Job satisfaction can have many facets, two of which refer to satisfaction (i) with the teaching profession and (ii) the school as a work environment – the latter also reflecting perceptions of school climate and school leadership. Information about job satisfaction has the potential to reveal the effects of the possible challenges (e.g. stress, dissatisfaction) teachers are facing. One prominent indicator often associated with job dissatisfaction is workload (e.g. administrative work) or lack of resources (Viac and Fraser, 2020[177]). Therefore, attention to teachers’ well-being has policy implications and can highlight job-related factors contributing to professional satisfaction (Collie, 2021[416]). To proactively address the stresses of teaching, initial teacher education programmes have recently increased their focus on promoting well-being through building resilience – see Fokkens-Bruinsma et al., (2021[248]) – and developing and nurturing the overall social and emotional competence of prospective teachers. Teacher recruitment and selection practices are also seeking valid and reliable ways to assess important non-academic skills, often with emotional intelligence measures – see AITSL (2015[417]); Kankaraš and Suarez-Alvarez (2019[170]); Turner and Stough (2020[418]). Teacher-specific situational judgement tests and scenario-based learning across several countries also provide evidence on how to measure teachers’ non-academic competencies like empathy and resilience (Klassen et al., 2018[364]).
6. Teachers’ satisfaction – both the levels and changes – is strongly correlated with teaching performance (Banerjee et al., 2017[427]) and teacher attrition (Canrinus et al., 2012[428]; Carver-Thomas and Darling-ammond, 2017[429]; Ingersoll, 2001[430]; Whipp and Geronime, 2015[431]).
7. Job satisfaction is related to instructional quality, well-being, sense of belonging, engagement, commitment to activities in a school, and stress (Collie, 2021[416]; Harmsen et al., 2018[246]; Granziera and Perera, 2019[419]; Reeves, Pun and Chung, 2017[420]; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011[421]; Toropova, Johansson and Myrberg, 2019[422]). Research finds teachers satisfied with aspects of their work, but less than satisfied with their work conditions, such as access to learning resources, treatment by others as professionals, and applicable professional development (Crossman and Harris, 2006[423]; Dinham and Scott, 1998[424]; National Academy of Education, 2008[425]; OECD, 2013[426]; OECD, 2025 [51-53]).
8. In South Africa, teachers matter. They represent one of the largest professional groups in the public sector. According to the Department of Basic Education’s (DBE) Annual Report 2023/24 approximately 410,000 teachers were employed in public schools nationwide. In Stellenbosch University’s Research on Teacher Demographics (2023) a study by Martin Gustafsson offered detailed projections and analysis of teacher supply and demand, estimating the total number of educators (including public and private) to be around 403,000 to 428,000, depending on the scenario. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimated the total employed labour force at about 15.9 million in 2023. Which allowed them to calculate that teachers constituted roughly 2.6% to 3.5% of the total workforce, depending on whether private and post-secondary educators were included.

9. In TALIS 2018 South African teachers reported high stress levels, often due to large class sizes, administrative burdens, and resource constraints. While many teachers felt a strong sense of purpose, satisfaction with salary and public recognition was notably lower than the OECD average. Teachers expressed pride in their role as lifelong learners but felt undervalued by society. Only about half of South African principals had completed formal training in school administration before assuming their roles. Only 22% of novice teachers had assigned mentors, compared to higher rates in other OECD countries. Teachers felt they had fewer opportunities for high-quality professional development, and collaboration time was limited. 81% of teachers had received training in pedagogy and classroom practice, aligning with global averages.
10. The following responses in TALIS 2024 from surveyed teachers and principals on their occupational perceptions provides the education system and stakeholders with an insight and understanding of:
 - Teacher and principal well-being (their job satisfaction, stress levels, and emotional well-being) since these factors influence performance, absenteeism, and long-term commitment to the profession.
 - Retention and recruitment to understand how teachers and principals perceived their roles can help policymakers address issues such as burnout, low morale, and attrition, which are global challenges in education.
 - Professional identity and motivation of teachers and principals to understand their purpose, autonomy, and societal value. These perceptions shape their engagement and effectiveness in the classroom.
 - Policy changes required since TALIS provides actionable insights for education systems to improve the working conditions, support systems, and professional development opportunities for all educators.

TEACHERS OCCUPATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

Perceived value of teaching

Figure 77: Factors that are important for teachers



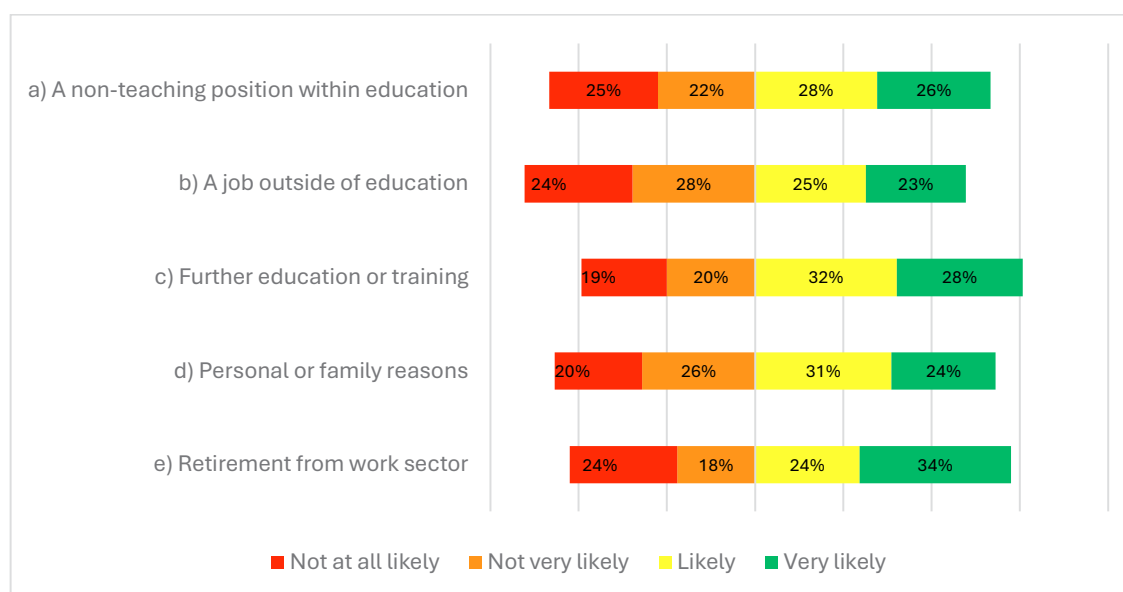
11. For surveyed teachers the following primarily non-financial and purpose-driven factors were of high importance in their jobs: Teaching suited their abilities, and Teaching allowed them to influence the next generation (74%), They liked working with children and adolescents (70%) Teaching made a worthwhile social (64%) and Teaching was a secure job. The least important intrinsic factor was the job's commitment flexibility (40%) and that Teaching allowed them to exercise autonomy (39%).

Figure 78: Number of years teachers wanted to continue to in the profession



12. Half of South African teachers indicated that they planned to work 1–10 more years, 24% expected to work for 11–20 more years, and 15% expected to work between 21–30 years in the profession. Very few (less than 3%) planned to work beyond 40 years (less than 3%). The 95th percentile (38 years), shows a small group planned to work much longer than average. The average (15.32 years) was higher than the median, suggesting a right-skewed distribution (i.e. that fewer teachers planned very long careers) in the profession. Most teachers saw their remaining years in teaching as a career as short to medium-term (≤ 20 years). A minority of teachers (top 5%) planned extremely long careers, thus pulling the average upward. This has implications for retirement planning, succession planning, and teacher retention strategies in the basic education sector.

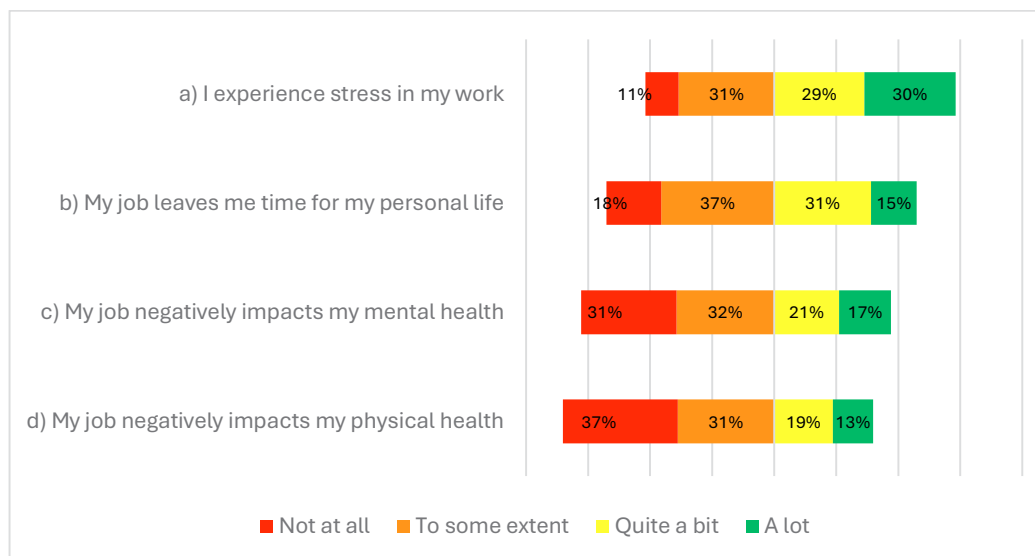
Figure 79: Factors that would cause teachers to leave the profession in the next 5 years



13. Many teachers (based on combined responses of very likely and likely) indicated the following the main causes of their leaving teaching in the next 5 years Further Education and Training (58%), Retirement from work sector (58%), Personal or family reasons (55%) and a non-teaching position within education (54%).

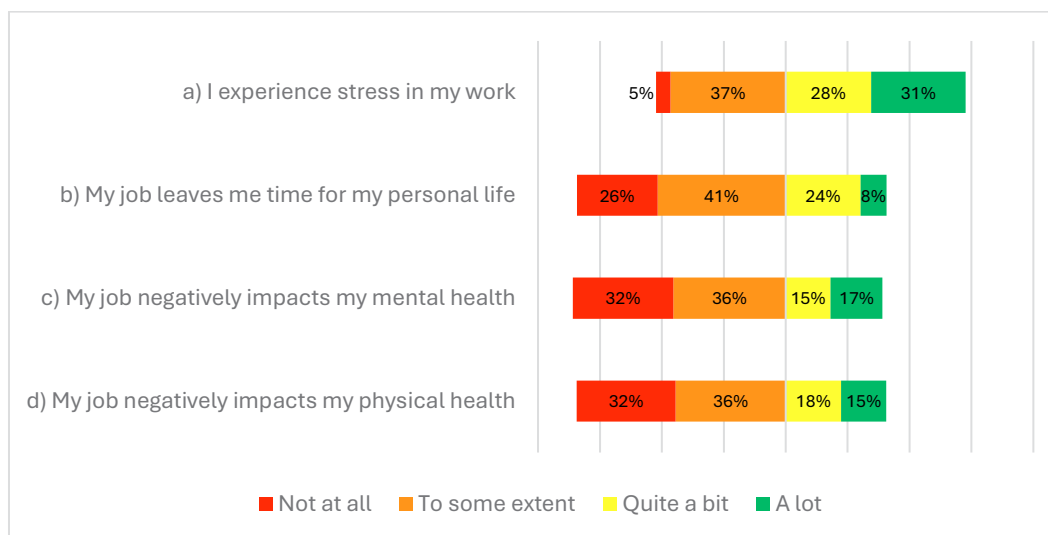
Occupational well being

Figure 80: Factors that impact on the wellbeing of teachers



14. Stress experienced in their work is the main factor that impacted on teachers' wellbeing (59%), the job negatively affected their mental health (38%) and the job negatively affected their physical health (32%). Only 18% of teachers indicated that the job left them with little time for their personal lives.

Figure 81: Factors that impact on the wellbeing of principals



15. Comparatively, most principals (59%) indicated that stress experienced in their work was the main factor that impacted on their wellbeing, 26% of principals indicated that their jobs left little time for their personal lives, negatively impacted their mental and physical health.

Stress Intensity: Sources of stress experienced by principals and teachers

16. Stress levels among principals varied widely. When examining the percentage of principals who reported experiencing stress in their work “A lot”, South Africa ranked among the countries with the highest intense stress levels globally :South Africa reported at a rate significantly higher than the international averages, underscoring an elevated stress environment in the country’s school leadership, (30.6%) compared to both the TALIS and OECD averages and significant impacts on mental and physical health. Only a few countries (United States, Australia and Estonia) reported a higher rate of intense principal stress, placing South Africa in the upper tier of high-stress work environments for school leaders. In contrast, countries like Colombia and Singapore reported lower stress levels.
17. This high percentage suggests that, for nearly one-third of principals in South Africa, stress is not a minor inconvenience but a major, pervasive feature of their daily professional lives. This intense stress level aligns with the principals’ reported heavy administrative workload and high burden of accountability, as detailed in other parts of the occupational perceptions survey.

Table 24: International Level: Percentage of principals reporting that certain factors happened to them a lot at their schools

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals where the following occurs “A lot” to them at this school			
	I experience stress in my work	My job leaves me time for my personal life	My job negatively impacts my mental health	My job negatively impacts my physical health
Australia	44,3	1,3	17,2	16,3
Brazil	20,3	10,3	14,4	9,0
Colombia	9,6	5,9	3,6	2,7
Estonia	36,2	4,4	6,7	4,4
Finland	24,9	5,4	6,8	5,7
Japan	22,3	11,2	8,7	5,4
Morocco	23,5	5,4	4,9	13,4
Netherlands*	11,1	22,8	2,2	1,6
Singapore	14,2	3,1	3,3	1,1
South Africa	30,6	8,4	16,7	14,7
TALIS average-49	23,3	6,5	8,4	8,1
United Arab Emirates	23,6	9,3	8,2	5,9
United States	45,9	8,0	20,4	21,7
OECD average-27	27,6	6,4	9,7	9,2

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

Table 25: International Level: Mean percentage of principals where the following factors occurred “Quite a bit” or “A lot” to them at their schools

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals where the following occurs “Quite a bit” or “A lot” to them at this school			
	I experience stress in my work	My job leaves me time for my personal life	My job negatively impacts my mental health	My job negatively impacts my physical health
Australia	78,5	19,5	38,9	33,9
Brazil	57,9	53,9	40,5	37,4
Colombia	27,1	44,6	15,3	15,5
Estonia	75,9	38,4	28,8	18,0
Finland	58,9	35,2	17,4	21,3
Japan	50,4	48,3	30,5	19,8
Morocco	51,8	39,1	19,4	30,4
Netherlands*	35,0	68,9	10,0	8,8
Singapore	50,0	32,0	13,7	16,2
South Africa	58,1	32,6	31,2	32,5
TALIS average-49	54,0	34,0	24,4	25,2
United Arab Emirates	53,4	40,5	24,0	23,3
United States	72,9	24,8	30,5	32,8
OECD average-27	61,0	34,0	27,9	27,7

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

18. Based on the mean percentages for South Africa compared to the other listed countries and averages, principals in South Africa experienced relatively high levels of work-related stress and its negative impacts, while having less time for their personal lives. The percentage of South African principals who experienced stress in their work (“Quite a bit” or “A lot”) is 58.1%, which is slightly higher than the TALIS average (54.0%) but lower than the OECD average (61.0%). However, only 32.6% of principals reported that their job left s them time for their personal life, which was notably lower than both the TALIS average (34.0%) and the OECD average (34.0%) and among the lowest percentages overall.
19. Furthermore, the negative impact on health is relatively high in South Africa, with 31.2% reporting a negative impact on mental health and 32.5% on physical health. These figures are significantly above the TALIS averages (24.4% and 25.2%, respectively) and the OECD averages (27.9% and 27.7%, respectively), placing South Africa near the top for both negative health impacts, similar to countries like Australia and the United States. This suggests that while work stress is an issue globally, its detrimental effects on personal life balance and health appear particularly pronounced for principals in South Africa.

Table 26: Provincial Level Percentage of principals Percentage of principals reporting that certain factors happened to them a lot at their schools

PROVINCE	Percentage of principals where the following occurs “A lot” to them at this school			
	I experience stress in my work	My job leaves me time for my personal life	My job negatively impacts my mental health	My job negatively impacts my physical health
Easter Cape	16,3	6,0	12,3	8,5
Free State	51,5	11,0	17,9	16,4
Gauteng	36,0	8,7	17,4	21,3
KwaZulu Natal	38,2	15,3	26,7	23,4
Limpopo	23,3	8,2	13,7	11,9
Mpumalanga	23,5	4,5	13,7	9,2
NC	40,6	7,1	21,4	18,0
North West	61,2	2,5	23,4	18,2
Western Cape	26,1	0,0	0,0	0,0
National	30,6	8,4	16,7	14,7

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

20. At a Provincial level, South African school principals’ stress levels across eight provinces reveals significant variation, with the North West and Free State provinces showing the highest self-reported levels of job-related stress, while KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) reports the most significant negative impacts on health. The lowest reported level of high job stress was reported by principals in the Eastern Cape. There is a high stress disconnect showing the North West province has the highest reported stress (61.2%), but the highest reported impact on mental and physical health was in KwaZulu-Natal (26.7% and 23.4%, respectively). This suggests that while principals in North West province felt stressed more, principals in KwaZulu Natal were more likely to experience clinical or tangible health-related consequences as a result of their work.
21. On work-life balance and whether the job “leaves me time for my personal life” revealed the most severe strain. A low percentage here means very few principals felt they have time for their personal lives. North West principals reported the lowest figure at 2.5%, indicating that an overwhelming majority (97.5%) of principals in the province feel their job *does not* leave them much personal time, which is consistent with their high general stress statistic. Principals in Mpumalanga also reported an extremely poor work-life balance at 4.5%. The Eastern Cape principals showed the lowest percentage for experiencing stress (16.3%), mental health impact (12.3%), and physical health impact (8.5%).
22. An analysis of the self-reported sources at surveyed schools revealed that both principals and teachers face heavy burdens related to accountability, administration, and discipline, but the severity and nature of the high frequency stressors differ significantly between the two roles.
23. Nationally, whilst both groups operated in highly demanding environments, their primary sources of stress differed, yet there were some overlapping sources of occupational stress sometimes experienced by both teachers and principals, due to the nature of their distinct responsibilities. Principals seemed to experience higher overall stress levels from administrative accountability than teachers who faced the heaviest burden from instructional demands.

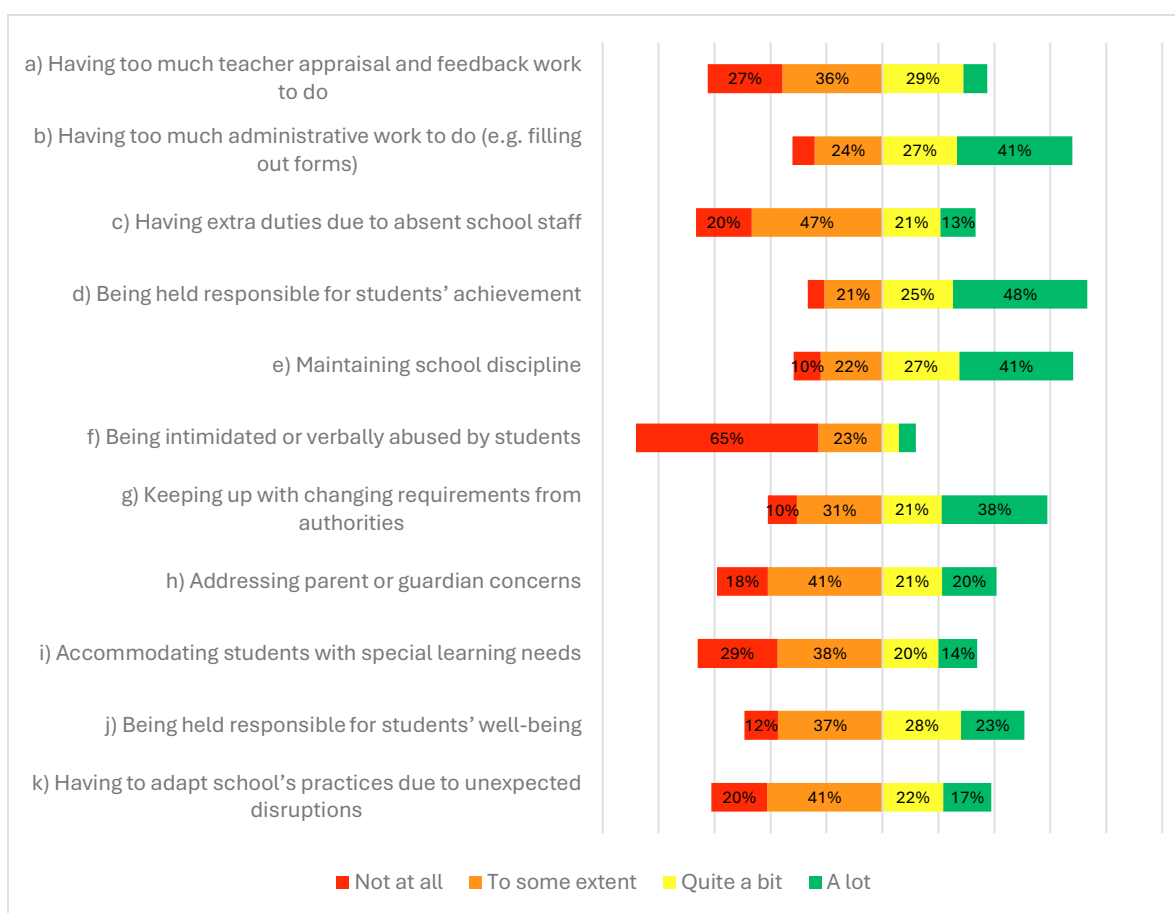
Figure 82: Sources of Teachers' stress at schools



24. Countrywide, teachers' main stressors were classroom and instruction focused. Teacher stress was heavily concentrated on the demanding, day-to-day instructional workload and managing the classroom environment as highlighted by the data. The most intense stressors were excessive lesson preparation (49%), marking (44%), and heavy teaching loads (38%), all pointing to a system where instructional duties were not only time-consuming but also emotionally taxing. Compounding this was the challenge of maintaining discipline (36%) and enduring intimidation and verbal abuse from learners (28%). This illustrates the dual role teachers play as both teachers and emotional caretakers in the classroom. The emotional effort required to support learners, especially in environments where behavioural issues were prevalent, intensified the psychological burden that teachers also must bear. Furthermore, differentiated instruction for learners with special education needs, cited by 73% of teachers as a stressor, adds another layer of complexity to lesson planning and delivery. Collectively, these findings suggest that teacher stress is not limited to the classroom only but is systemic, driven by structural expectations that demand high cognitive, emotional, and physical investment in the teaching and learning environment but with limited support.

25. **Overlaps and Shared Burdens:** Both groups faced significant stress from systemic and operational issues, particularly administrative duties and external changes. Both teachers (44% “A lot” stress) and principals (41% “A lot” stress) reported high pressure from having too much administrative work. Similarly, both groups dealt with the strain of extra duties due to absent staff. However, teachers were more exposed to direct conflict and abuse, with 31% reporting a high degree of stress from being intimidated or verbally abused by students, compared to only 12% of principals. Conversely, principals reported slightly higher stress (38%) than teachers (32%) when it came to keeping up with changing requirements from authorities, reflecting their responsibility for policy compliance and implementation at school level.
26. Whilst the most acute stressors for teachers were tied directly to instructional workload, a stressor unique to the principal’s role was having too much teacher appraisal and feedback work, with 38% reporting it as a high source of stress.

Figure 83: Sources of Principals stress at schools

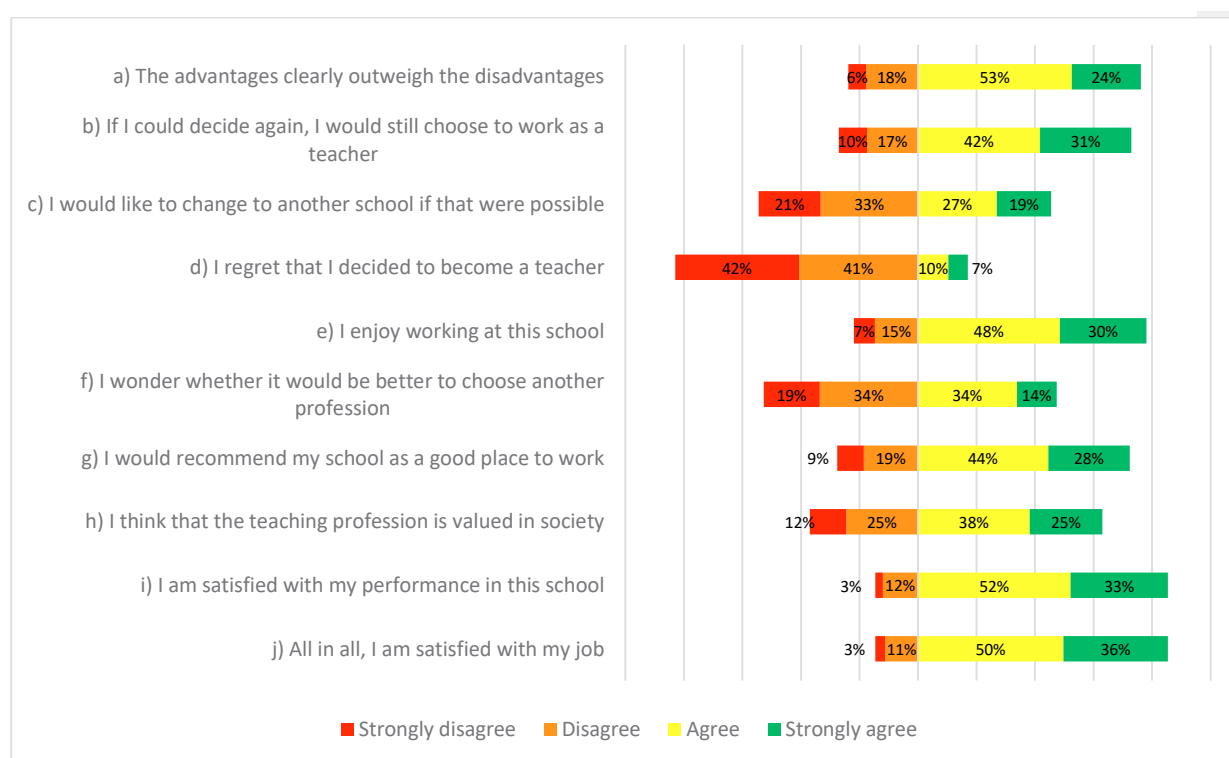


27. Principals’ stress derived primarily from their leadership role, as such, core accountability was high for principals at surveyed schools, especially since the principal as the Accounting Officer carries the ultimate responsibility for learner performance, however, accountability for learner achievement was similar and implied accountability: Principals (73% included responses for Quite a lot and A lot) compared to teachers (70% included responses for Quite a lot and A lot). In terms of keeping up with changing requirements from authorities, principals were the primary implementers of new policies, making this a major stressor at 38%, compared to 27% for teachers.
28. A high proportion of principals across multiple provinces may have the following contributory stressors in their work/ school environments included:
- **Overwhelming Workload and Administrative Duties:** Principals reported their time was largely consumed by administrative tasks and bureaucratic requirements, often involving duplicate reporting to district, provincial, and national departments.

- **Inadequate Resources:** Stress was often caused by a lack of essential resources, including inadequate funding, staff shortages, and poor infrastructure. This issue is particularly acute in disadvantaged schools.
- **Conflicting Demands and Accountability:** Principals must navigate the tension between the directives of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), districts and the interests of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and the community. They face enormous pressure from the system to meet academic standards and annual targets and implement continuous systemic interventions to catalyse improvements in learner outcomes.
- **Provincial Challenges:** High stress in provinces might be due to their struggle with low principal retention and high attrition, budgetary constraints and a lack of support systems that severely impact on principals' mental health.

Job satisfaction, commitment and intrinsic motivation

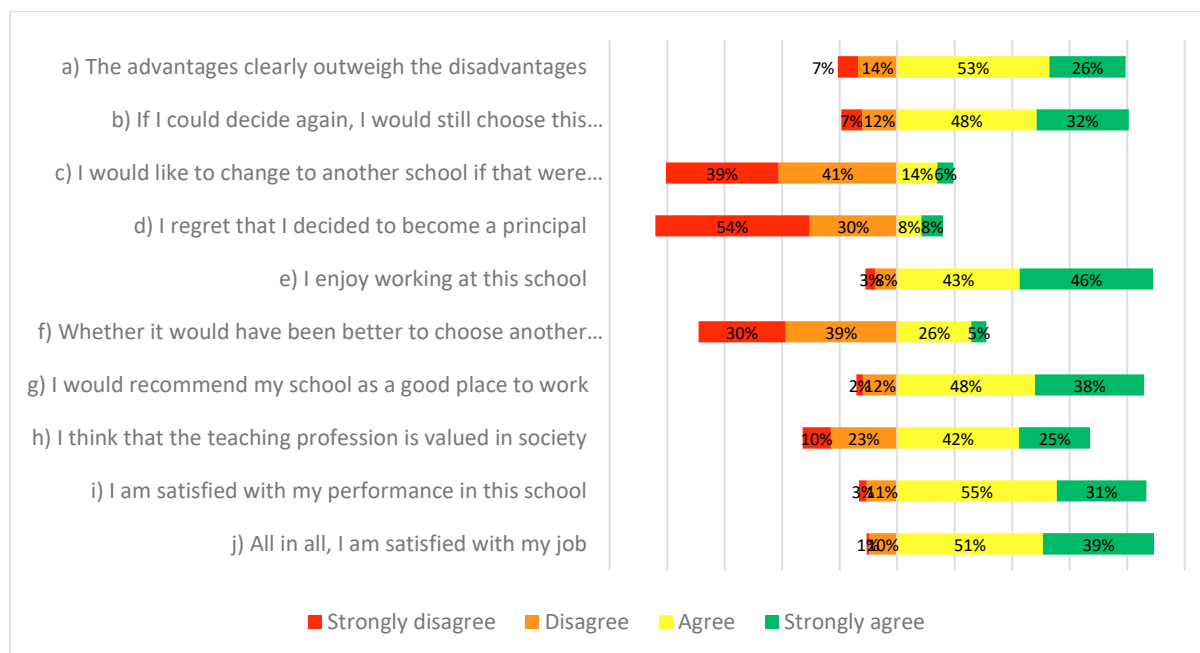
Figure 84: How teachers generally felt about their jobs



29. Both principals (79%) and teachers (77%) – from combined responses (Strongly Agreed and Agreed), felt that the advantages of their jobs clearly outweighed the disadvantages. Responses from principals about how they generally felt about their jobs revealed higher job satisfaction and less regret about their career choice than teachers, despite reporting higher overall stress levels in their specific roles. The data suggests that the satisfaction of principals is higher at the personal career level, while the satisfaction of teachers is more tied to the immediate school environment.
30. In terms of career commitment and regret: Principals showed a slightly higher commitment to their profession compared to teachers: 54% of principals (who “Strongly disagreed” or “Disagreed”) that they decided to become a principal, compared to a 42% of teachers.
31. Choosing the job again: A higher percentage of principals (80% combined “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed”) stated they would still choose this job/position if they could decide again, compared to 73% of teachers who would still choose to work as a teacher.

32. **Considering Another Profession:** A smaller group of teachers (53% combined “Strongly disagreed” or “Disagreed”) wondered whether it would be better to choose another profession, compared to 69% of principals. (Note: The principal question was phrased as a negative: “Whether it would have been better to choose another profession” and the teacher’s as: “I wonder whether it would be better to choose another profession.” The interpretation was based the percentage who disagreed with this statement, meaning they did not wonder if they should change).

Figure 85: How principals generally felt about their jobs



33. **Nationally, job satisfaction and school environment:** Considering the combined (Strongly Agreed and Agreed) responses: 90% of principals compared to 86% of teachers expressed job satisfaction and a greater enjoyment of their current school; 89% of principals compared to 78% of teachers enjoyed working at their schools, 86% of principals and 72% of teacher said they would recommend their schools as a good place to work ; 52% of teachers compared to 60% of principals said they would like to change to another school if that were possible.
34. **Satisfaction and enjoyment of the work:** Principals consistently reported higher percentages of agreement across measures of overall satisfaction and enjoyment of their specific school environment.
35. **Desire to leave the school:** A higher proportion of principals (80% combined “Strongly disagreed” or “Disagreed”) compared to teachers (54% combined “Strongly disagreed” or “Disagreed”) wouldn’t like to change to another school.
36. **Perception of the Profession:** Both groups shared a similar, somewhat divided view on the social value of the profession: Both teachers and principals reported that the profession is valued to a similar degree. 63% of teachers (“Agreed” or “Strongly agreed”) compared to 67% of principals.

Principals' job satisfaction

Table 27: International Level: How strongly principals expressed satisfaction about aspects of their work

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals that "Strongly agree" with the following statements.				
	I am satisfied with the salary I receive from my work	Apart from salary, satisfied with my contract/employment	Satisfied with support from the staff in my school	I need more support from authorities	I cannot influence decisions that are important for my work
Australia	16,1	19,1	36,6	19,6	4,0
Brazil	8,8	18,0	29,1	31,3	5,0
Colombia	22,1	29,8	37,5	44,2	5,7
Estonia	4,4	16,2	30,2	13,8	3,6
Finland	18,2	13,8	28,6	14,6	7,4
Japan	2,0	0,7	14,0	34,7	2,5
Morocco	14,5	13,3	24,1	41,0	9,7
Netherlands*	17,1	15,3	20,5	20,9	1,6
Singapore	29,5	29,8	31,2	12,2	5,0
South Africa	4,6	8,5	22,9	32,2	11,0
TALIS average-49	10,1	13,0	30,8	26,6	7,0
United Arab Emirates	13,0	17,0	44,0	17,7	5,7
United States	8,1	23,4	26,1	26,0	1,7
OECD average-27	8,2	11,9	28,9	27,3	7,6

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

35. At the international level, principals' job satisfaction levels were mixed. Only 4.6% South African principals strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their salary, below the OECD average (8.2%) and far below job satisfaction of principals in Singapore (29.5%). This was similar to the job satisfaction of principals in Estonia (4.4%) but higher than that of principals in Japan (2.2%). South African principals expressed a higher need for more support from authorities/officials (32.2%) than the TALIS average (26.6%). Staff support satisfaction at schools in South Africa was relatively low (22.9%) compared to the UAE (44%) and Colombia (37.5%) and below both the TALIS and OECD averages. Japan's satisfaction in this regard was drastically the lowest at 14.0%.

Table 28: International Level: Percentage of principals that “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” with statements on job satisfaction

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals that “Agree” or “Strongly agree” with the following statements.				
	I am satisfied with the salary I receive from my work	Apart from salary, satisfied with my contract/employment	Satisfied with support from the staff in my school	I need more support from authorities	I cannot influence decisions that are important for my work
Australia	65,1	71,4	92,2	60,3	36,3
Brazil	40,4	68,0	89,2	83,2	43,1
Colombia	75,7	92,6	93,6	88,7	33,1
Estonia	37,6	83,1	89,8	51,1	23,8
Finland	75,8	68,1	92,0	51,9	35,9
Japan	33,7	51,1	81,4	88,2	16,1
Morocco	51,0	47,6	87,1	90,7	38,7
Netherlands*	82,2	87,1	86,7	67,4	6,5
Singapore	79,6	88,4	96,7	55,9	12,7
South Africa	33,1	51,5	87,6	88,6	47,9
TALIS average-49	51,3	66,1	92,2	74,5	35,8
United Arab Emirates	68,2	76,1	96,3	66,3	24,2
United States	59,8	90,8	84,3	51,1	26,6
OECD average-27	49,0	66,1	90,6	69,9	36,1

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

37. Principals' satisfaction dropped considerably when factoring in contractual terms and salary, with the OECD average for salary satisfaction at only 49.0%. Contract Satisfaction (excluding salary): Agreement on “Apart from salary, satisfied with my contract/employment” averaged 66.1%. Countries like Colombia (92.6%) and the United States (90.8%) showed the highest contract satisfaction, whereas Japan (33.7%) and South Africa (33.1%) reported the lowest. Agreement on salary satisfaction of principals was lowest in Brazil (40.4%), while principals in Singapore (79.6%) and Finland (75.8%) reported the highest satisfaction with the salary they received.
38. Most principals internationally felt they needed more support, and a significant portion felt a lack of influence. The feeling of needing more support from authorities/ officials was widespread, with an average of 74.5% (TALIS average) agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. The need was highest in Morocco (90.7%), Colombia (88.7%), South Africa (88.6%), Japan (88.2%) and Brazil (83.2%). On average, 36.1% (OECD average) of principals agreed that they “cannot influence decisions that are important for my work”. This feeling was most prevalent in South Africa (47.9%) and Brazil (43.1%) but was minimal in the Netherlands (6.5%) and Singapore (12.7%).

Table 29: Provincial Level: International Level: How strongly principals expressed satisfaction about aspects of their work

PROVINCE	Percentage of principals that “Strongly agree” with the following statements.				
	I am satisfied with the salary I receive from my work	Apart from salary, satisfied with my contract/employment	Satisfied with support from the staff in my school	I need more support from authorities	I cannot influence decisions that are important for my work
Eastern Cape	4,2	4,2	22,1	24,9	8,4
Free State	6,7	6,3	16,3	54,4	20,4
Gauteng	7,1	19,3	15,6	22,5	12,8
KwaZulu Natal	1,5	2,4	38,1	31,7	7,5
Limpopo	8,7	13,0	20,2	51,5	5,8
Mpumalanga	0,0	3,1	23,8	26,9	21,6
Northern Cape	7,8	8,0	13,2	32,3	15,5
North West	0,0	18,5	23,7	10,4	15,1
Western Cape	1,5	10,7	12,5	20,5	14,1
National	4,6	8,5	22,9	32,2	11,0

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

39. Across provinces, principals' job satisfaction varied significantly. Satisfaction with salary and contract/employment apart from salary were much lower nationally, at 4.6% and 8.5%, respectively. At the provincial level, Limpopo principals reported the highest job satisfaction with salary (8.7%) and staff support (20.2%) but a high need for support from authorities (51.5%). Free State principals expressed the highest need (54.4%) for support from authorities despite moderate satisfaction with staff support (16.3%) at their schools. Whilst principals in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal reported the lowest salary satisfaction (1.5%), the principals in KwaZulu Natal expressed higher satisfaction (38.1%) with staff support at their schools.

TEACHER SELF EFFICACY

40. The TALIS 2024 conceptual framework includes a focus on Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory which highlights that TSE is a central cognitive mechanism that drives a teacher's motivation, instructional choices, and resilience, which in turn significantly influences the learning environment and student outcomes. Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capabilities of teaching and facilitating learning (Bandura, 1993[441]; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998[442]).
41. Teachers' self-efficacy combines domains of self-confidence in teaching that motivates how they relay information on content-based material, manage classroom behaviours of learners, modify lessons to fit the diverse learning needs of learners, and reflect on the effectiveness of current practices in efforts to improve teaching expertise (Bandura, 1997[159]; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998[442]). Teacher self-efficacy beliefs reference specific teaching practices, knowledge, and skills.
42. TALIS 2018 defined three associated core dimensions of instruction, including general instruction, learner engagement, and classroom management, for which teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed they could perform within those dimensions. In addition, self-efficacy develops over time with teachers' experience and can predict the quality of teachers' instruction (Zee and Koomen, 2016[443]).

43. Teacher self-efficacy also includes teachers' beliefs regarding their capacity to apply “modern” teaching practices, such as online teaching (intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic) and hybrid teaching (Mentzer, Krishna and Mohandas, 2023[444]). These teaching practices aim to create quality instruction and presence in digital settings (Gurley, 2018[150]; Howard et al., 2020[136]; Koehler et al., 2014[445]; Voogt et al., 2013[446]). Self-efficacy can also differ for specific job duties, such as teaching for equity in multicultural and diverse classrooms, teaching about environmental sustainability, or teaching social and emotional skills to students. (OCED:2025 [54]).
44. While conceptually generalised, in TALIS, teacher self-efficacy is typically measured across several task-specific measures such as self-efficacy in classroom management e.g., controlling disruptive behaviour; self-efficacy instruction e.g., providing an alternative explanation or clarifying information for learners and self-efficacy for learner engagement e.g., getting learners to believe they can do well in schoolwork and achieve better results academically.
45. In essence, the TALIS framework uses self-efficacy as a key motivational characteristic of teachers, proposing that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to set higher goals for themselves and learners, persevere in the face of obstacles, and adopt more creative, responsive and innovative teaching methods, including in their classrooms. In this regard, insights provided by teachers at an international and provincial level, follows.

Table 30: International level: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that do the following “A lot” in their teaching			
	Adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students	Raise awareness for cultural differences amongst students	Reduce ethnic stereotyping amongst students	Critically examine the curriculum
Australia	17,2	24,3	27,7	20,5
Brazil	52,8	68,2	65,0	48,5
Colombia	20,0	35,5	37,5	19,4
Estonia	10,9	19,4	32,2	11,9
Finland	9,8	18,1	22,6	5,1
Japan	4,3	4,6	4,1	3,5
Morocco	37,2	54,0	65,8	35,2
Netherlands*	18,5	21,1	16,5	14,0
Singapore	21,3	26,4	25,6	20,0
South Africa	47,1	51,8	56,2	40,6
TALIS average-49	26,6	33,4	35,7	24,8
United Arab Emirates	67,7	67,1	68,9	61,5
United States	26,1	29,7	31,8	31,3
OECD average-27	18,7	26,2	28,8	18,0

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

46. At the international level, countries such as Brazil, Morocco, UAE, and South Africa showed high engagement in adapting teaching to cultural diversity and reducing stereotypes. By contrast, Finland, Estonia, and Japan reported lower engagement, likely reflecting more homogenous learner populations. South Africa ranked above the OECD and TALIS averages on all dimensions focused on an inclusive approach to teaching culturally diverse learners. Teachers in the UAE, Brazil and South Africa had agency and autonomy in being able to critically examine their respective curricula.

Table 31: International level: Means: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that do the following “Quite a bit/A lot” in their teaching			
	Adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students	Raise awareness for cultural differences amongst students	Reduce ethnic stereotyping amongst students	Critically examine the curriculum
Australia	58,2	65,9	69,7	54,7
Brazil	95,6	96,1	95,1	90,1
Colombia	68,0	85,1	81,4	60,1
Estonia	45,5	63,4	74,0	36,3
Finland	35,7	54,1	61,1	15,3
Japan	27,1	29,1	24,8	22,4
Morocco	79,6	84,9	88,4	71,1
Netherlands*	59,6	63,7	61,0	43,9
Singapore	66,8	73,7	73,8	61,3
South Africa	85,9	83,2	87,4	76,6
TALIS average-49	70,1	75,5	76,6	62,3
United Arab Emirates	93,5	91,3	90,5	86,2
United States	67,1	64,2	72,6	64,4
OECD average-27	62,7	70,6	72,6	54,4

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

47. At the international level, Brazil, UAE, South Africa, and Morocco consistently scored above 80% across all three measures of self-efficacy, in handling diversity in the classroom. On the other hand, Japan (22.4%) and Finland (15.3%) showed the lowest scores, especially in being able to critically examine the curriculum, indicating limited engagement with critical multicultural pedagogy. Both the TALIS and OECD averages at around 60–75%, reflect moderate global teacher efficacy in diverse classrooms. A notable gap was in teachers being able to critically examine their (country) curriculums as these scores are generally lower than other classroom diversity dimensions, suggesting that this might be the most challenging area for teachers globally. Finland and Japan's scores were significantly below the OECD average across all indicators, pointing to a potential need for professional development in diversity education. Estonia also reported lower engagement, likely reflecting its more homogenous population. Australian teachers reported lower self-efficacy than the OECD average in all three specific measures of teaching diverse learners which could be due to systemic pressures on teachers, particularly excessive administrative workload, and challenges related to the practical application of skills in diverse and complex classroom settings.

Table 32: Provincial Level: Extent to which teachers could do the following “A lot” a classroom of diverse learners

PROVINCE	Percentage of teachers that do the following “A lot” in their teaching			
	Adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students	Raise awareness for cultural differences amongst students	Reduce ethnic stereotyping amongst students	Critically examine the curriculum
Eastern Cape	40,8	51,4	47,6	32,9
Free State	46,3	45,6	48,3	34,2
Gauteng	44,2	51,8	58,0	41,2
KwaZulu Natal	51,2	55,2	61,9	48,0
Limpopo	58,1	57,3	61,9	49,5
Mpumalanga	52,4	60,4	63,3	39,3
Northern Cape	55,0	51,6	60,7	35,2
North West	28,0	40,6	48,2	25,8
Western Cape	31,3	39,0	42,4	29,4
National	47,1	51,8	56,2	40,6

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

48. Limpopo province had the strongest engagement, with 58.1% of teachers adapting to cultural diversity and 49.5% critically examining curricula. Mpumalanga follows closely, with 60.4% (though not significantly different from the national average) raising awareness of cultural differences and 63.3% reducing stereotyping. In contrast, Western Cape showed much lower engagement, with only 31.3% of teachers adapting to diversity and 29.4% critically examining curricula, suggesting uneven application of inclusive practices across provinces. Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal reported the strongest use of culturally responsive teaching strategies, aligning with their highly diverse learner populations. The Western Cape showed much lower engagement, with only 31.3% adapting their teaching the cultural diversity of their learners and 29.4% being able to critically examine the curriculum, suggesting uneven application of inclusive practices across provinces.

Table 33: International Level: The extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Strongly agree” with the following statements		
	Comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills	Taking care of students’ social and emotional needs comes natural to me	Informal lessons in social and emotional learning part of my regular teaching practice
Australia	31,1	33,2	27,9
Brazil	25,2	19,9	19,7
Colombia	35,4	35,8	15,6
Estonia	18,5	24,4	20,7
Finland	21,1	26,7	16,4
Japan	9,8	16,6	12,7
Morocco	36,1	38,8	20,9
Netherlands*	37,1	31,2	25,7
Singapore	24,8	28,5	35,1
South Africa	43,6	45,5	39,2
TALIS average-49	32,0	36,3	27,3
United Arab Emirates	53,2	59,2	40,6
United States	33,1	36,5	25,1
OECD average-27	28,5	33,8	25,6

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

49. Teachers in the UAE, led with 53.2% strongly agreeing they were comfortable teaching Social Emotional Skills, followed by South Africa at 43.6%. In contrast, Japan showed the lowest agreement at 9.8%. The OECD and TALIS averages were lower (28.5%), indicating that South Africa performed above many developed systems in embracing and integrating SEL into their practice.

Table 34: International Level: Means: Extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Agree/Strongly agree” with the following statements		
	Comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills	Taking care of students’ social and emotional needs comes natural to me	Informal lessons in social and emotional learning part of my regular teaching practice
Australia	88,1	85,8	78,0
Brazil	82,8	70,1	69,5
Colombia	91,7	92,7	62,5
Estonia	86,4	89,5	86,1
Finland	74,6	84,2	57,2
Japan	71,4	87,1	75,4
Morocco	89,9	91,6	63,6
Netherlands*	90,3	86,0	68,2
Singapore	93,1	88,8	94,9
South Africa	95,6	94,0	89,5
TALIS average-49	88,9	90,0	80,7
United Arab Emirates	97,0	97,1	88,7
United States	85,8	82,0	75,1
OECD average-27	85,8	87,9	78,1

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

50. The UAE, South Africa, Singapore, and Colombia showed very high agreement (above 90%) in comfort and natural integration of SEL. Finland and Brazil scored lower in informal SEL practice (Finland: 57.2%, Brazil: 69.5%), suggesting that SEL may be more formalized or less embedded in daily routines. The TALIS and OECD averages were high across the board (above 85%), indicating strong global teacher confidence in SEL. Most countries showed relatively consistent scores across all three dimensions, suggesting that comfort with SEL often translates into practice in most countries.

Table 35: Provincial Level: The extent to which teachers “Strongly Agreed” with statements about their teaching of Social and Emotional Skills

PROVINCE	Percentage of teachers that “Strongly agree” with the following statements		
	Comfortable providing instruction on social and emotional skills	Taking care of students’ social and emotional needs comes natural to me	Informal lessons in social and emotional learning part of my regular teaching practice
Eastern Cape	36,5	46,0	39,7
Free State	45,2	47,9	39,4
Gauteng	36,6	40,6	36,9
KwaZulu Natal	49,3	47,8	43,2
Limpopo	54,1	54,6	43,5
Mpumalanga	48,2	48,8	49,3
Northern Cape	48,2	43,9	35,8
North West	28,0	32,9	24,5
Western Cape	32,3	35,1	28,0
National	43,6	45,5	39,2

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

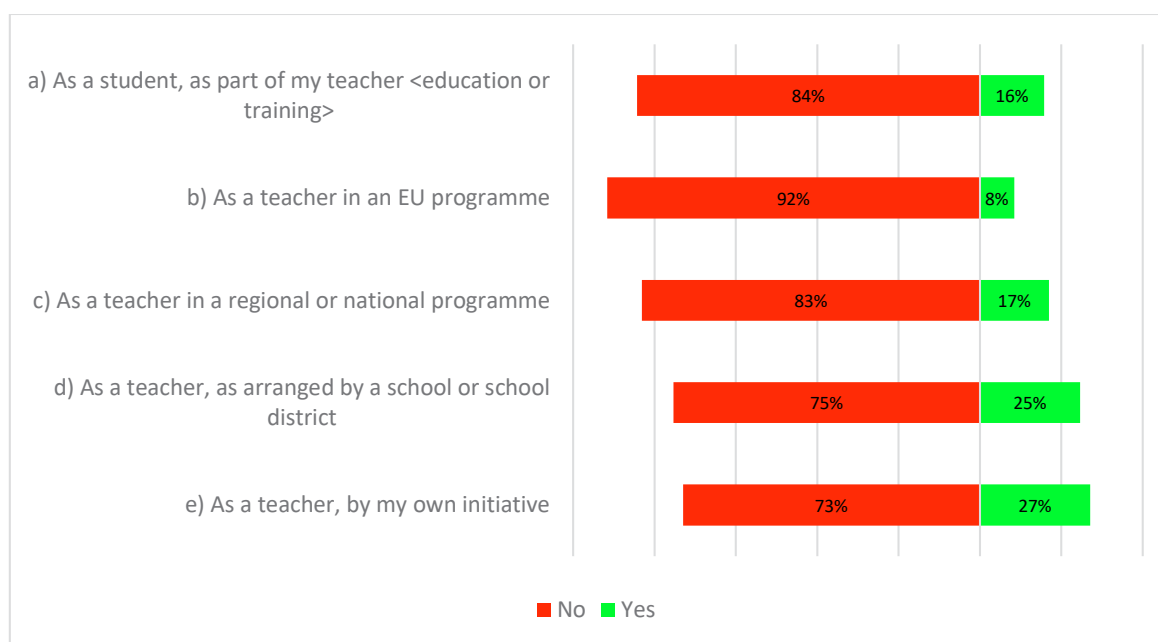
51. At the provincial level, Limpopo led, with 54.1% of teachers strongly agreeing they were comfortable teaching SEL and 54.6% agreeing it came naturally to them. Mpumalanga and Northern Cape teachers also reported high levels of agreement (48.2%) with being comfortable teaching SEL. By contrast, teachers in North West and Western Cape provinces lagged behind, with only 28% and 32.3% of teachers, respectively, feeling comfortable teaching SEL. This could suggest stronger engagement by teachers in provinces facing higher social-emotional challenges among learners even with fewer resources at their disposal.

TEACHER MOBILITY

52. TALIS collects data on teacher mobility to help participating countries create policies that improve teaching conditions and promote effective education. Teacher mobility—the movement of teachers between schools and out of the profession—is a critical area of study because it can affect the stability of schools, the quality of teaching, and learner achievement. The data helps policymakers and researchers to:
- Identify retention challenges. High rates of teacher mobility can signal underlying problems in the teaching profession, such as job dissatisfaction, burnout, or a lack of support. TALIS data reveals factors like workload, stress, and compensation that influence a teacher’s intent to stay in the profession.
 - Understand equity issues in schools. Research on teacher mobility shows that experienced and effective teachers tend to move to more affluent schools with higher-achieving learners, while less experienced teachers disproportionately serve schools with more disadvantaged learners. By collecting data on teacher movement, TALIS can help education systems understand and address these inequities in teacher distribution.
 - Explore career pathways. Tracking teacher mobility provides insight into career trajectories within the education system. This helps to examine what career opportunities exist for teachers and how different career paths may influence retention and motivation.

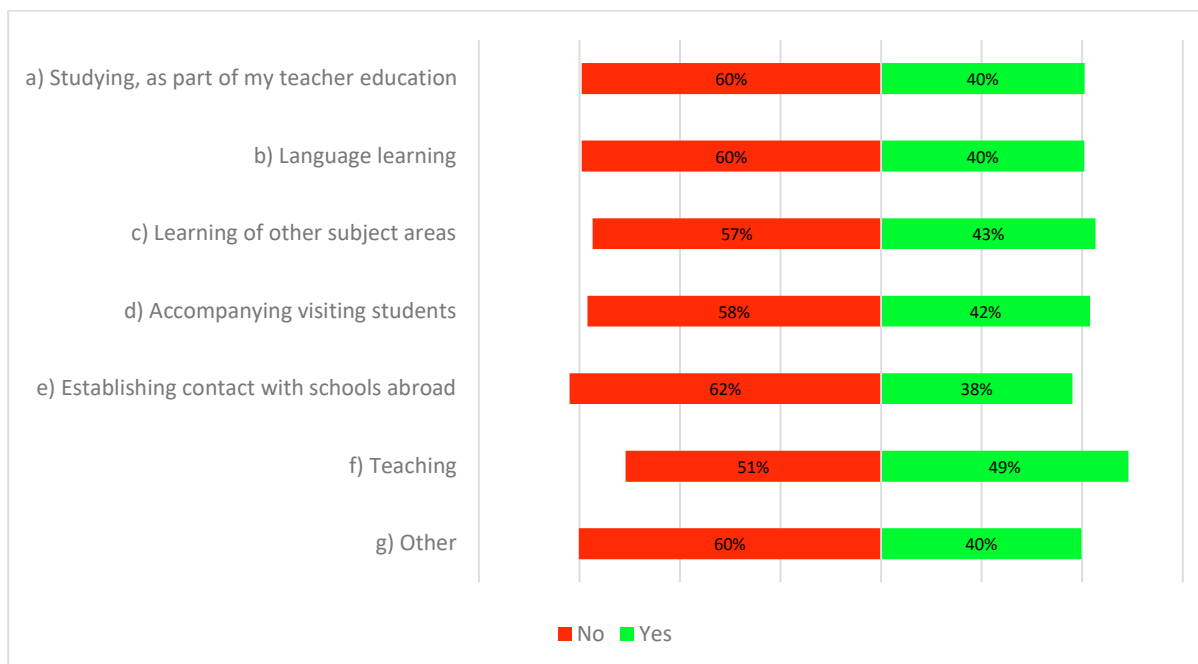
- Improve school organisational conditions. TALIS data reveals that working conditions, such as supportive leadership, a positive school climate, and collaborative environments, are major factors in teachers' decisions to stay or leave a school. With this information, policymakers can focus on strategies to improve school-level conditions that promote teacher retention.
- Inform policy to improve teachers' working conditions. The data allows policymakers to review existing policies and design new ones to better support the teaching profession. Examples of policy considerations include improving working conditions, offering more attractive compensation, and providing opportunities for professional development.

Figure 86: Teachers travelling abroad for professional purposes in their career as a teacher or during their teacher education training



53. South African teachers' responses on teacher mobility indicated that while a small portion of the teacher workforce has participated in professional experiences abroad, the vast majority have not, suggesting limited engagement with international professional development or education. A clearer picture emerged of low participation rates in professional mobility opportunities. The highest reported participation is through a teacher's own initiative (as a teacher), with only 27% responding "Yes" to having gone abroad for professional purposes. Programmatic and institutional arrangements show even lower engagement: Only 17% have participated in a mobility program as a teacher in a regional or national programme, just 16% participated as a student as part of their teacher education or training, participation in a school or school district arrangement is slightly higher at 25% and mobility as a teacher in an EU programme is the lowest at 8%.

Figure 87: Purpose and duration of professional experience travel abroad



54. For those teachers who did travel, their professional activities were varied but focused on skills acquisition:
- The most frequent professional purpose was Language learning, reported by 60% of those who went abroad.
 - Learning of other subject areas was also a primary purpose for 43% of participants.
 - Accompanying visiting students and studying as part of teacher education were reported by 42% and 40%, respectively.
 - Direct Teaching abroad was less common, reported by 38%.
55. Regarding the duration of these stays, the overwhelming majority were short-term, with 67.9% of respondents reporting that their total time spent abroad for professional purposes was less than 1 month. Only 10% spent between 1 and 3 months, and even fewer for longer periods, reinforcing the idea that professional mobility is generally limited to brief training, study tours, or visits rather than extended teaching or residency programmes.

Brain Drain: Why is there a demand for South African teachers globally?

56. South African teachers are highly sought after globally, often due to their reputation as being well-trained, dedicated, and native English speakers. The most popular and sought-after destinations for South African teachers looking to work abroad generally fall into the following categories:
- High-Salary and Benefit Destinations (The Middle East/Gulf States)
 - United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Dubai, Abu Dhabi), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait Oman, Bahrain are often chosen for their high tax-free salaries and generous benefits packages, which commonly include free accommodation, annual flights home, and health insurance.
 - Popular Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) destinations in Asia/Far East: These countries have a high demand for English teachers, often offering competitive salaries, especially in major cities.: China (Highest paying in this region, with strong saving potential), South Korea (Known for established teaching programs like EPIK, and strong expat communities), Japan (Highly competitive but prestigious opportunities, like the JET Program), Vietnam (Appealing for its low cost of living and growing market), Thailand (Known for a great work-life balance and tropical lifestyle), Taiwan

- Skilled Migration and Cultural Familiarity Destinations: These countries are attractive for those seeking a more permanent move, often due to cultural or language similarities. Australia: High demand for skilled educators, especially in STEM and remote areas. The academic calendar is similar to South Africa's, and the shared language and cultural familiarity make the transition smoother. United Kingdom (UK): Qualified South African teachers are often sought after and may be eligible for specific visa and relocation support programs. European and Other Popular Destinations that offer an excellent European lifestyle, travel opportunities, and a strong demand for English teachers: Spain: Highly popular in Europe, with opportunities in language academies and government programmes, Poland, France, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico
- It is worth noting that a significant factor drawing South Africans to many international teaching positions is the country's status as an official English-speaking country for TEFL purposes, which opens far more opportunities than are available to non-native English speakers.

Why South African Teachers Leave: The possible push factors

✓ Professional Challenges

- Low Salaries: Many teachers feel underpaid relative to their workload and qualifications.
- Poor Working Conditions: Overcrowded classrooms, high workloads, and lack of resources are common complaints.
- Limited Career Progression: Teachers often face stagnant career paths with few opportunities for advancement.
- Ineffective Curriculum and Management: Frustration with outdated curricula and poor school leadership contributes to dissatisfaction.

✓ Socio-Political Issues

- High Crime Rates: Safety concerns for themselves and their families are a major motivator.
- Government's affirmative action recruitment policies: Some teachers feel disadvantaged by affirmative action policies, especially in promotions and access to opportunities.
- Religious or political intolerance: Some teachers might cite discomfort with religious or political dynamics in schools and communities.

✓ Economic and Systemic Pressures

- The broader economic instability and lack of investment in education push skilled professionals to leave.
- Tax Burden and Declining Services: As public services deteriorate, the incentive to stay weakens.

Why South African Teachers Choose to Work Abroad: The possible pull factors

✓ **Better Compensation and Benefits**

- Salaries: Countries like the UAE, UK, and Australia offer significantly better pay packages.
- Tax-Free Income: In places like Abu Dhabi, teachers benefit from tax-free earnings.

✓ **Improved Work Environment**

- Smaller Class Sizes: More manageable teaching loads and better student-teacher ratios.
- Modern Facilities: Access to better teaching resources and infrastructure.

✓ **Career and Lifestyle Opportunities**

- Professional Development: Opportunities for training, growth, and international experience.
- Safe Living Conditions: Lower crime rates and better healthcare systems.
- Global Exposure: The chance to travel, experience new cultures, and provide better futures for their families.

57. Ideas for turning Brain Drain into Brain Circulation to offset the challenge of teacher migration (Brain Drain), particularly for qualified and sought-after teachers could include as an incentive for recruitment, making professional mobility opportunities a core part of a teacher's career path (e.g. funded fellowships, exchange programmes) that could serve as a powerful non-financial incentive to attract high-achieving youth into the profession. To retain the sought after teachers, the sector could give teachers opportunities to develop professionally and travel so that their job satisfaction and perceptions of being valued by society would increase and keep them motivated. Since "by my own initiative" (27%) was the most common manner teachers were able to travel abroad for professional purposes, highlights their proactiveness and intrinsic motivation – so educator sector recruitment strategies should specifically target these teachers and integrate this initiative-taking ability into selection criteria in Initial Teacher Education programmes across higher education institutions in the country.



Teacher Preferences and Job Satisfaction in South Africa

University of Stellenbosch, Research on Socio-Economic Policy (RESEP), 2024

A national study conducted by Stellenbosch University has revealed a worrying trend in South Africa's education system: 50% of teachers are considering leaving the profession within the next 10 years. Contrary to common belief, it's not unruly learners driving them away—but the overwhelming administrative workload and chronic stress. The “Teacher Preferences and Job Satisfaction in South Africa” report, based on data from over 1,500 teachers and interviews with 80 more, paints a vivid picture of a profession under strain. Teachers are increasingly burdened with tasks that go far beyond their core responsibility—educating learners.

Administrative Burdens Are Breaking Educators

One of the most striking findings of the study is that 70% of teachers cite administrative responsibilities as their main source of stress. From endless paperwork to redundant documentation, many teachers feel their time and energy are being drained by tasks that don't support their teaching objectives. These administrative duties often take priority over lesson planning, student engagement, and assessment. As a result, classroom effectiveness suffers, leading to further frustration and burnout.

Irony in Resources: Well-Funded Schools Create More Stress

Surprisingly, teachers in better-resourced, affluent schools report higher stress levels than those in underfunded institutions. This paradox is largely due to intense pressure from parents and school leadership to deliver top academic results. While one might assume that more resources would ease the burden, the high expectations in these environments often lead to longer work hours, increased micromanagement, and a constant sense of urgency.

Urban Preference: Teachers Avoid Rural Posts

The study also reveals that 40% of teachers would not consider a rural post, no matter the incentive. The reasons are clear: poor infrastructure, lack of resources, and limited opportunities for professional growth. These factors contribute to chronic teacher shortages in provinces like Limpopo and the Eastern Cape. In contrast, urban provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape are the most preferred locations, thanks to better facilities, more support, and improved living conditions.

Teachers Are Doing More Than Teaching

The modern South African teacher is expected to wear multiple hats—not just as an educator, but also as a counselor, caregiver, and social worker. This multifaceted role is particularly demanding in low-fee and no-fee schools, where teachers must support learners grappling with poverty, trauma, neglect, and violence. Without access to school psychologists or mental health professionals, teachers are left to navigate these emotional minefields alone, often at the expense of their own mental wellbeing.

Burnout Is Real: The Call for Mental Health Support

The report underscores the urgent need for mental health services tailored to teachers. Emotional exhaustion, coupled with a lack of institutional support, is pushing many educators toward career burnout.

Dr. Heleen Hofmeyr, one of the report's lead authors, warns: "While we don't expect 50% of teachers to actually resign, these findings clearly indicate the need for systemic change to prevent further attrition."

Five Strategic Recommendations to Save the Profession

To address the teacher retention crisis, the authors of the report made five practical recommendations:

- Expand mental health support for both teachers and learners to reduce emotional strain.
- Cut back on administrative tasks to allow educators more time to focus on teaching.
- Introduce incentives for rural teaching posts, such as housing allowances and professional development opportunities.
- Equip teachers with remedial teaching tools to better support learners with academic challenges.
- Enhance classroom management training to empower teachers and improve the learning environment.

The data is clear: South African teachers are overworked, overwhelmed, and under-supported. If these challenges go unaddressed, the country risks losing thousands of passionate educators, further destabilizing the education system. By reducing administrative loads, investing in mental health, and providing meaningful incentives, we can begin to turn the tide. It's time to put the well-being of teachers back at the centre of education policy—because when teachers thrive, so do learners.

The education system is in need of urgent reform

Information Box 4 Teacher migration: a case study of South African teachers migrating to Abu Dhabi.

Teacher Migration: A case study of South African teachers migrating to Abu Dhabi.

Vester Tatum Marshay 2018. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

Abstract

The global migration of teachers has been raised as an area of growing concern, particularly as developing countries struggle to retain teachers. South Africa (S.A.) is no exception, as previous migration studies show an exodus of teachers, thus neglecting to address the exit of teachers may have detrimental consequences for the development of South Africa, warranting further research into the migration of South African teachers (Manik, 2005). In response to this call, this sub-study explored migrant teachers' reasons for leaving South Africa and the reasons why they were choosing to migrate specifically to Abu Dhabi.

Categorised as qualitative research, this study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm as it was useful in understanding how South African teachers constructed their decision-making to exit

S.A. and migrate to Abu Dhabi. A Case study methodology was used which placed the migrant teachers as the unit of analysis within the study. Data was elicited through five semi-structured interviews with teachers. Additionally, online documentary analysis gathered data on the strategies used by international teacher recruitment agencies to attract South African teachers to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Additionally, a reflexive field note journal was maintained to enhance the validity of this study.

The findings revealed that teachers felt forced to exit South Africa due to low salaries, a high crime rate, religious intolerance and race-based policies, which denied teachers and their families' access to opportunities. Additional push factors revolved around teachers' working conditions as they were frustrated with the large class sizes and high workloads, a lack of career progress, an ineffective curriculum, a lack of student discipline and poor school leadership and management. Furthermore, personal relationships, that is, strained marriages and friendships played an underlying role in the decision to migrate, including teachers' need for personal development. Spousal influence was not a reason for migration from South Africa, but it emerged as an important consideration, especially in terms of the degree to which the nature of hierarchical structures within the family influenced the decision-making of migrant teachers.

Teachers were attracted to Abu Dhabi due to high salaries linked to the achievement of financial goals, a low crime rate, religious acceptance and perceived non-race-based policies that provided access to opportunities. Additionally, the receiving country's level of economic and social development also influenced teachers' decisions, and it was established that recruitment agencies played a role in steering South African teachers specifically towards Abu Dhabi as a teaching destination.

<https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/17585>

Information Box 5: South African Expatriate Teachers in the Gulf Arab States: Push and Pull Factors for Leaving

SAGE JOURNALS, Volume 13, Issue 2

Aneesa Mohamed <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0997-0420>, Nazreen Dasoo, and Hilda IsraelView all authors and affiliations

Abstract

This study explored the experiences of South African teachers who relocated to teach at schools in the Gulf region (Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait). Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used with 25 educational professionals. Research was guided by the Expectancy-Value Theory and Herzberg's Motivational Theory in order to situate the findings. Participants revealed that the inability to earn a reasonable salary and lack of professional growth opportunities were two of the main reasons that they left South Africa. Education researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders will benefit from the understanding of how to effectively meet the needs of South African teachers in order to stop further brain drain after qualified teachers graduate; how to acknowledge the challenges of teaching in South Africa in university curricula; and how to encourage recent graduates to stay in South Africa in order to take advantage skills and education.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/21632324241306845>



Information Box 6: Case Study: Push and Pull Factors Influencing South African Teachers to Migrate to Abu Dhabi”

Case Study

Conducted by Dr. Mpho M. Magabane and Dr. M. M. Mampuru. titled “Push and Pull Factors Influencing South African Teachers to Migrate to Abu Dhabi”

South African Journal of Higher Education.

Their research focused on the experiences of South African teachers who migrated to Abu Dhabi, exploring the push and pull factors that influenced their decision to leave South Africa and work abroad.

The study highlighted key motivations such as:

- Better salaries and working conditions in Abu Dhabi
- Frustrations with South Africa’s education system
- Safety concerns and socio-political dynamics at home
- Safe and modern living environments
- Career advancement opportunities

Purpose of the Study

The research aimed to explore the motivations behind South African teachers emigrating to Abu Dhabi, focusing on both the push factors (reasons for leaving South Africa) and pull factors (attractions of the destination country).

Methodology

- Qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews.
- Participants were South African teachers currently working in Abu Dhabi.
- Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns in their responses.

Push Factors (Reasons for Leaving South Africa)

- Poor working conditions: Overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching resources, and administrative burdens.
- Low remuneration: Salaries were not commensurate with qualifications or workload.
- Safety concerns: High crime rates and general insecurity affected teachers’ quality of life.
- Limited career growth: Few opportunities for professional development or promotion.
- Political and social dissatisfaction: Some participants expressed frustration with government policies and perceived instability.

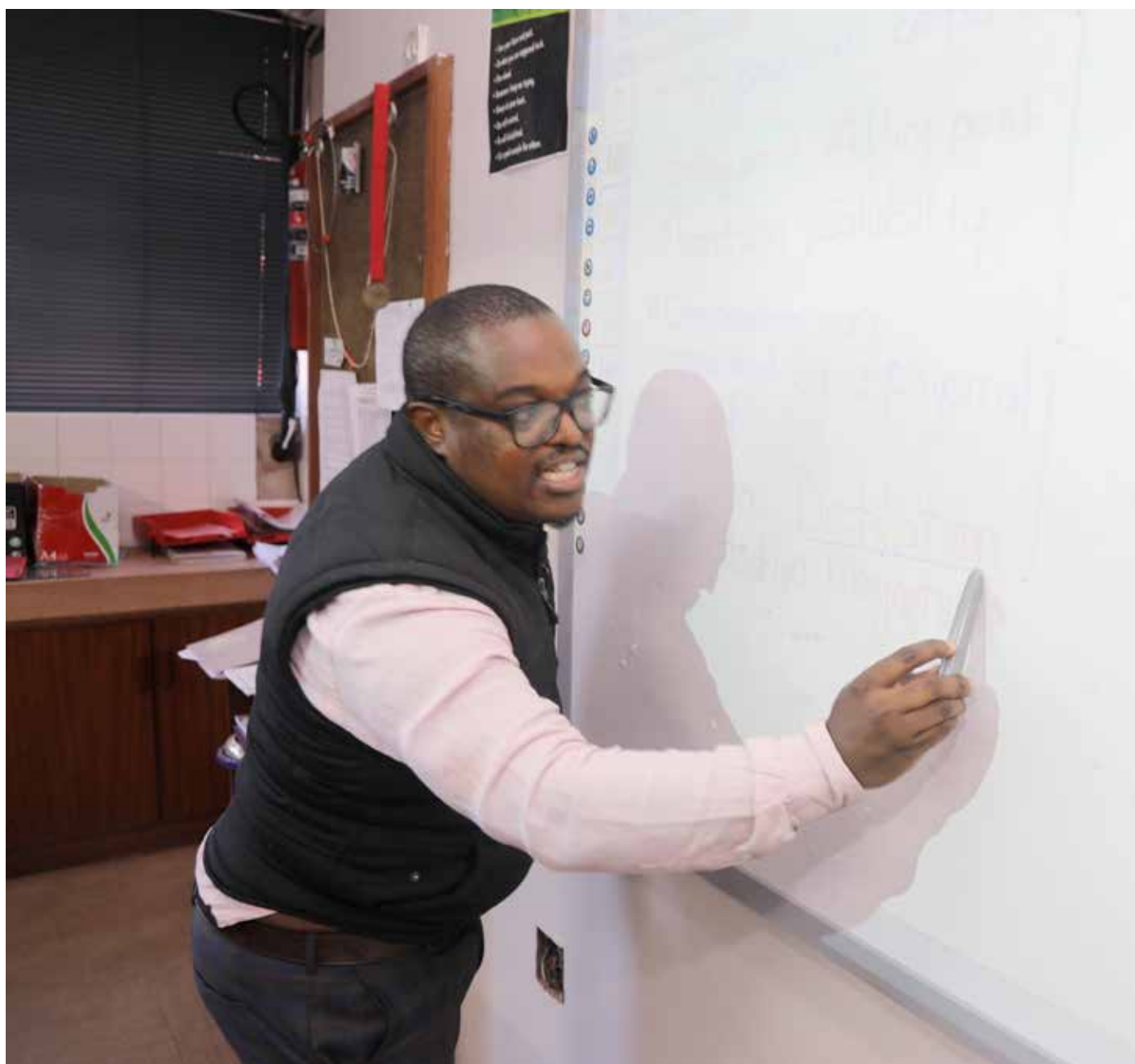
Pull Factors (Reasons for Choosing Abu Dhabi)

- Higher salaries and benefits: Competitive compensation packages, often tax-free.
- Modern infrastructure: Well-equipped schools and better teaching environments.
- Professional respect: Teachers felt more valued and respected in their roles.
- Safe and stable living conditions: Lower crime rates and better public services.
- Opportunity for travel and cultural exposure: Living abroad offered personal enrichment and global experience.

Key Insights

- Migration was not just economically motivated—it was also driven by a desire for professional dignity and personal safety.
- Teachers viewed migration as a form of empowerment and escape from systemic challenges in South Africa.

Many expressed long-term intentions to remain abroad or seek further international opportunities.



CHAPTER 6: Institutional environments for teaching



CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR TEACHING

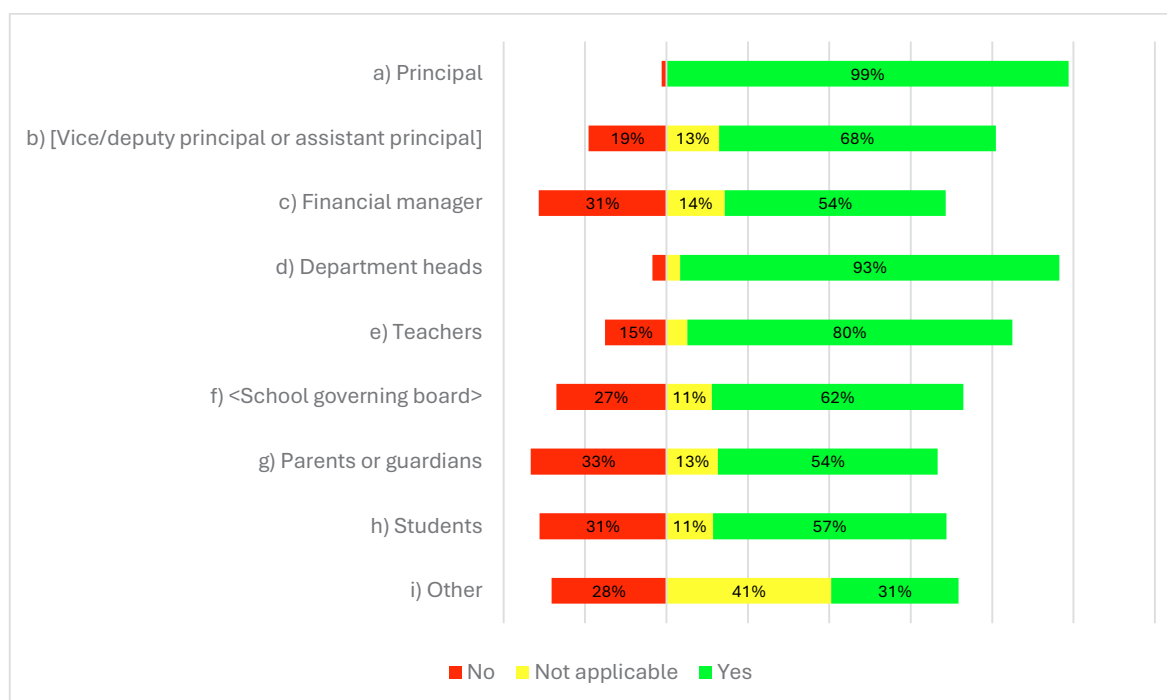
This chapter focuses on school leadership and the roles of principals in establishing and maintaining a school climate that is collaborative, embraces learner diversity, supports social emotional learning, integrates technology and implements sustainable practices.

1. TALIS explores the roles and functions of school managers, examining how their practices and support systems affect teachers' work and professional development, and School climate which encompasses the psychosocial environment of a school, including teacher well-being, morale, and workplace stress, is crucial to teacher retention and effectiveness. A positive school climate, characterised by trust and cooperation, is associated with more positive teacher perceptions and, in turn, better learner behaviour and academic achievement.
2. By focusing on the institutional environment for teaching, TALIS helps education systems to identify associations between teaching environments and learning outcomes and to explore whether a positive school climate is a predictor of achieving positive learning experiences, since high stakes testing and restrictive curricula can limit learning opportunities and contribute to rote learning.
3. Whilst the primary focus of TALIS is to share the voice of the teachers across countries and education systems, the survey included principals as well (or otherwise referred to as school leaders) for two reasons: (i) to collect data about the school as an organisation, and (ii) and collect information about the principal as a school leader. The first three TALIS surveys (2008, 2013, and 2018) kept the concepts of school leadership and management quite distinct, and TALIS 2024 continues to do so. TALIS 2024 asks principals about their leadership as well as their management. The teacher questionnaire focuses on the principals' leadership practices and relationships with staff, parents, guardians and students. While an effective school leader sets the strategic direction, adjusts the alignment of staff to organisational needs, and motivates people (Algahtani, 2014[479]), a well-functioning school also needs school leaders with management skills to navigate specific teaching and learning issues. Adjusting to the remote learning and digital classrooms since the pandemic era, for example, necessitated school leaders' management as well as their leadership skills. Ideas about leadership that involve a level of agency by the principal, such as their style as a leader, are asked of the principals and the teachers in their respective questionnaires. Other questions regarding leadership, such as the authority of the principal to implement policy based on the local context of their school, are only asked of the principal. Principals are also asked questions about resources and management flexibility which may impact leadership, such as the authority to hire teachers or implement their own testing measures.
4. TALIS 2024 conceptualised school leadership in terms of six key dimensions:
 - who principals are in terms of qualifications and development of principals.
 - what principals do in terms of their roles, functions and work, instructional leadership terms and conditions, workload, hours, autonomy, and actions.
 - how leadership and teacher leadership roles are distributed, as well as teachers' perceptions of these shared powers.
 - school leadership and individual and organisational job satisfaction and commitment.
 - school leadership and targeted professional development.
 - school leadership engaging diversity, inclusiveness, social and emotional learning of students, and the world climate change. (OECD:2025 [57-58]).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

5. The TALIS 2024 principal's questionnaire not only asked principals at sampled schools about their work but also endeavoured to connect the work of principals to the achievement of learning and broader educational outcomes. Leadership styles in schools vary widely across participating countries and the data collected enables principals, education systems and policymakers to see how their approaches compare globally, encouraging reflection and growth in school leadership and investing in responsive professional development and support of school principals.

Figure 88: Current representation on the School Management Team



6. Self-reported data by principals revealed the following about School Management Teams:
- 99% of sampled schools confirmed that they had a School Management Team (SMT) and surveyed principals indicated the following about the representation of their School Management Teams:
 - 99% of schools had a principal
 - 68% of schools had a vice/deputy/assistant principal,
 - 54% of schools had a financial manager on the SMT, 14% of schools indicated that this was not applicable to the composition of their SMT and 31% of schools did not have a finance manager.
 - 93% of schools had departmental heads on their SMTs whilst 3% of schools did not.
 - 80% of schools indicated that they had teachers on their SMT whilst 15% of schools did not. 5% of schools indicated that having teachers on their SMT was not applicable in their particular context.
7. 62% of schools currently had a School Governing Board represented on their School Management Team, 54% of schools confirmed currently having parents or guardians on the school management teams. 57% of schools indicated that learners/ students were currently represented on their SMTs whereas 31% of schools did not have learners/ students on their SMTs and 11% of schools indicated this was not applicable to the current composition of their SMTs.

8. The presence of School Management Teams (SMTs) in 99% of surveyed schools reflected a robust high degree of structure in school leadership, with Departmental Heads playing a prominent role. The inclusion of teachers in 80% of SMTs signals a commitment to participatory leadership, fostering collaboration and shared decision-making within schools. To fully understand the implications of SMT composition, it is essential to distinguish their function from that of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), as defined by the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996. This legislation enshrines democratic governance and community involvement in education, mandating that SGBs—comprising parents, educators, non-teaching staff, learners (in secondary schools), and the principal—serve as a conduit for grassroots participation. By requiring parents to hold the majority, the Act ensures that community voices remain central to school governance. This dual structure of SMTs and SGBs exemplifies South Africa's unique approach to educational leadership, balancing professional management with inclusive, community-driven oversight to address historical inequities and promote quality, locally responsive education.

Principals work at their current schools

9. TALIS uses a 12-month period for collecting data on principals' activities because it provides a comprehensive view of a principal's leadership experience within a typical annual (academic) cycle and allows for the analysis of trends and variations in their participation in professional networks, mentoring, research, and professional development activities over a relevant timeframe. Table 36 illustrates the range of such activities reported by principals during the 12-month timeframe (up to August 2024) which was aligned with the practical realities of a school year, making it easier for principals from participating countries to provide consistent and accurate data on their professional growth and school leadership practices within their respective school contexts and education systems.
10. To gauge how South Africa compared on the frequency of principals' activities during the last 12 months in their current schools, we selected countries that were economically similar to South Africa, had education systems that were similar and those with education systems that performed better than South Africa's. Additionally, we included the only other African country participating in TALIS 2024 and a BRICS country.



Table 36: International Level: Frequency that principals engaged in management activities related to teachers during the last 12 months

COUNTRY	Percentage of teachers that “Very often” engaged in the following activities in the last 12 months				
	Collaborated with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems	Provided feedback to teachers based on my observations	Supported co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices	Ensured teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills	Ensured teachers feel responsible for their students’ learning outcomes
Australia	22,3	18,7	24,4	25,3	26,6
Brazil	39,9	24,0	22,6	25,2	22,9
Colombia	37,5	21,9	21,7	24,6	27,8
Estonia	8,8	6,1	3,4	5,5	7,1
Finland	35,1	6,5	7,3	1,7	1,8
Japan	19,1	21,1	8,9	15,3	12,5
Morocco	62,0	18,5	27,0	24,6	31,5
Netherlands*	7,0	7,2	1,7	10,9	18,9
Singapore	11,1	15,5	12,6	12,0	19,5
South Africa	44,8	27,6	27,6	31,8	43,7
TALIS average-49	35,7	24,0	21,0	21,3	24,5
United Arab Emirates	29,0	49,6	40,8	38,7	45,4
United States	51,7	48,1	38,9	39,5	34,9
OECD average-27	32,9	15,5	15,1	15,9	17,7

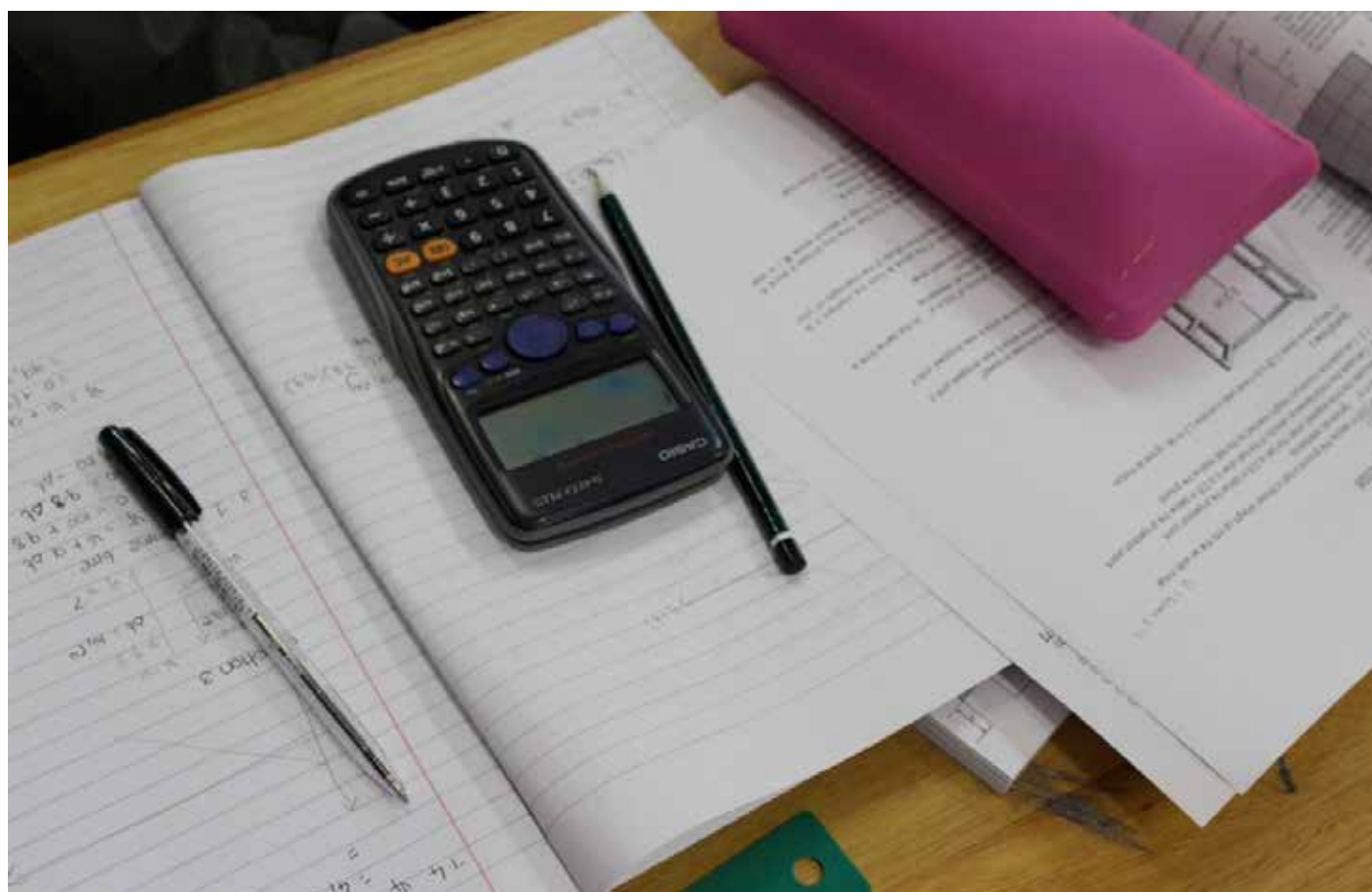
	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

11. South Africa ranked among the top countries for principals frequently engaging in leadership activities such as teacher collaboration and feedback, well above the TALIS and OECD averages. South African principals were relatively active: 44.8% reported “very often” collaborating with teachers to solve discipline problems, compared to only 8.8% in Estonia and 19.1% in Japan. The United States and Morocco showed strong principal engagement with teachers to solve discipline problems. On providing feedback, 27.6% of South African principals did so very often, close to Brazil (24%) but far lower than the U.S. (48.1%) and UAE (49.6%). For supporting cooperation in teaching practices, South Africa (27.6%) matched the TALIS average (21%), while ensuring teacher responsibility for student learning was much stronger in South Africa (43.7%) than the OECD average (17.7%).

Table 37: International Level: Means: Frequency that principals engaged with these activities during the last 12 months

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals that “Often” or “Very often” engaged in the following activities in the last 12 months				
	Collaborated with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems	Provided feedback to teachers based on my observations	Supported co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices	Ensured teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills	Ensured teachers feel responsible for their students’ learning outcomes
Australia	54,1	39,6	59,5	69,1	69,9
Brazil	81,8	71,9	75,0	77,0	84,5
Colombia	78,8	70,4	68,4	66,4	73,1
Estonia	45,9	28,7	39,8	43,5	48,0
Finland	84,8	36,7	46,7	34,0	40,5
Japan	47,4	55,1	35,4	51,8	41,0
Morocco	86,0	49,0	55,3	67,6	79,9
Netherlands*	36,4	54,1	28,3	55,6	78,5
Singapore	44,3	57,2	56,1	63,3	68,8
South Africa	81,0	77,5	74,5	82,0	90,8
TALIS average-49	74,3	68,1	68,3	70,0	74,4
United Arab Emirates	64,3	92,2	89,7	91,6	93,3
United States	89,0	84,1	76,3	67,4	86,7
OECD average-27	73,1	55,9	60,3	62,0	66,2

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average



12. The data showed high frequency engagement by South Africa's principals above both the TALIS average-49 and the OECD average-27 for all five activities. The activity with the highest mean percentage for South Africa was ensuring teachers felt responsible for their learners' learning outcomes (90.8%) comparable to the high rates reported in the United Arab Emirates (93.3%) and the United States (86.7%). This was also higher than the TALIS and OECD averages. South African principals reported lowest frequency engagement in supporting co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices (74.5%), though this was still above both international averages. In Collaborating with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems (81.0%), South Africa was similar to Brazil (81.8%) and Finland (84.8%), but lower than the United States (89.0%). South Africa's principals also reported lower engagement in providing feedback to teachers based on their observations (77.5%) than principals in the United Arab Emirates (92.2%) and the United States (84.1%).

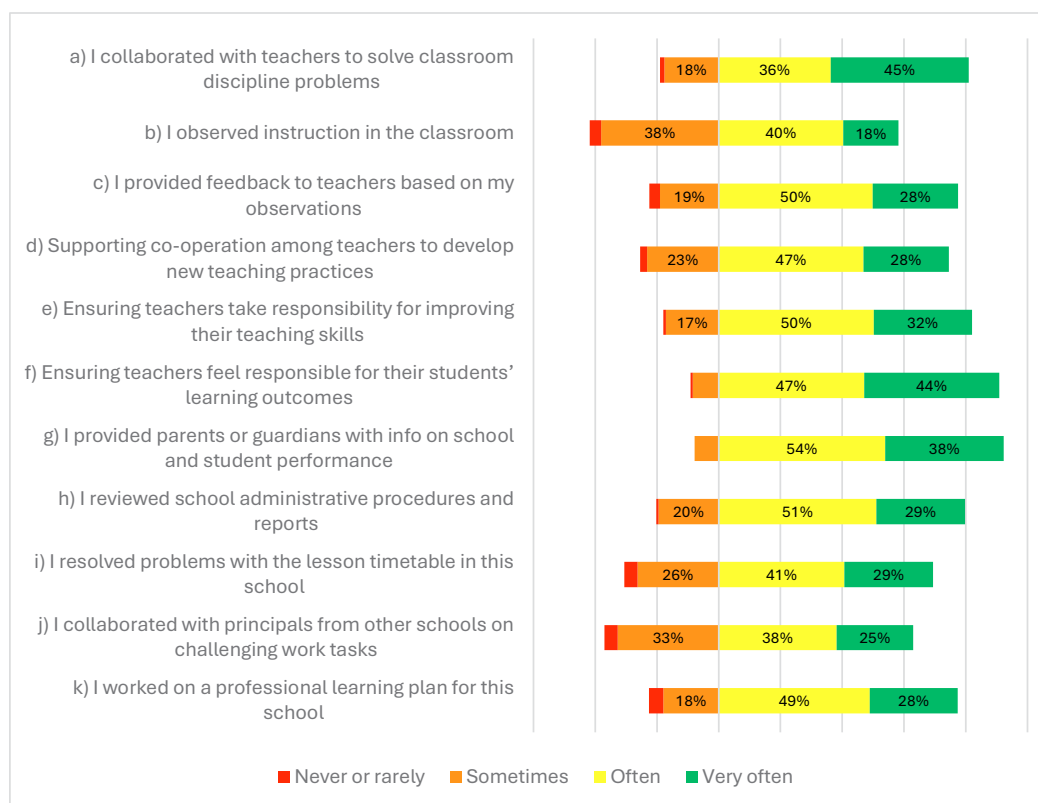
Table 38: Provincial Level: The frequency which principals engaged with these activities during the last 12 months

PROVINCE	Percentage of principals that "Very often" engaged in the following activities in the last 12 months				
	Collaborated with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems	Provided feedback to teachers based on my observations	Supported co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices	Ensured teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills	Ensured teachers feel responsible for their students' learning outcomes
Eastern Cape	37,6	30,3	22,1	31,3	41,1
Free State	81,4	41,5	23,4	20,9	55,2
Gauteng	40,6	39,6	36,6	39,4	52,9
KwaZulu Natal	47,2	25,7	24,1	29,1	50,1
Limpopo	49,3	26,4	34,0	25,9	42,6
Mpumalanga	47,2	38,6	47,4	61,5	44,5
Northern Cape	43,4	15,6	24,0	21,6	34,0
North West	50,2	2,5	9,3	39,9	35,2
Western Cape	21,9	5,0	9,8	23,5	19,1
National	44,8	27,6	27,6	31,8	43,7

	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

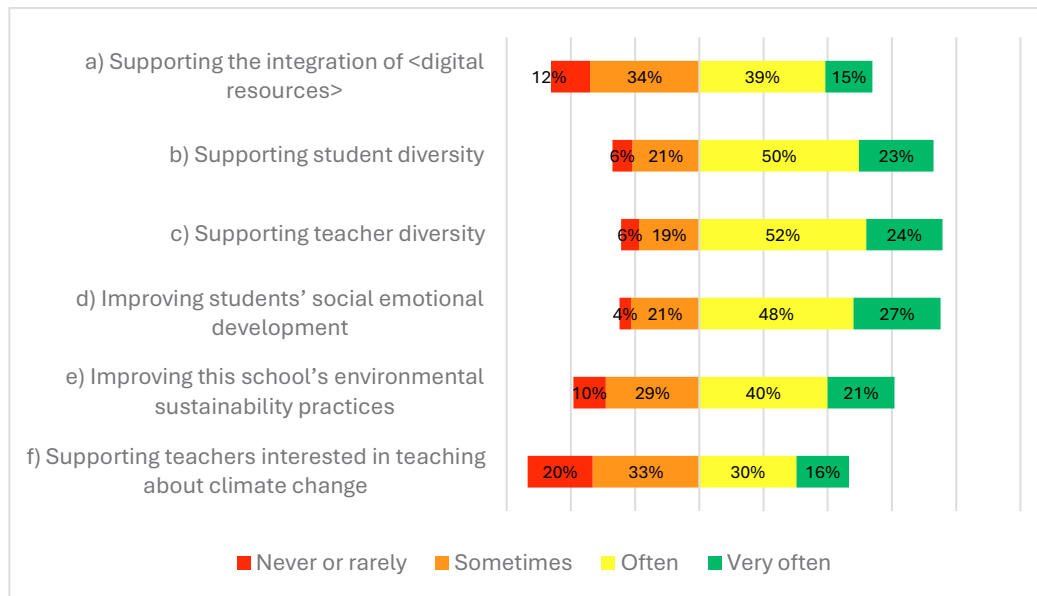
13. The Free State stood out, with 81.4% of principals reporting that they collaborated with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems "Very often." This was the highest percentage across all provinces and activities, suggesting an exceptionally high priority focus on discipline. Mpumalanga principals reported the highest frequency for ensuring that teachers took responsibility for improving their teaching skills (61.5%), indicating a strong emphasis on professional development accountability. North West and Western Cape provinces consistently reported the lowest "Very often" engagement, particularly for providing feedback to teachers based on their observations, e.g. only 2.5% of principals in the North West and 5.0% in the Western Cape reported that they provided feedback to teachers based on my observations "Very often." This suggests that frequent, formal, observation-based feedback was extremely rare in these two provinces.
14. Whilst many South African principals prioritised high-frequency accountability and learner discipline focused activities, the actual practice of frequent, intensive instructional leadership (like providing observation-based feedback) remained inconsistent and notably low in certain provinces

Figure 89: Frequency of principals' engagement in the following activities in their current schools during the last 12 months.



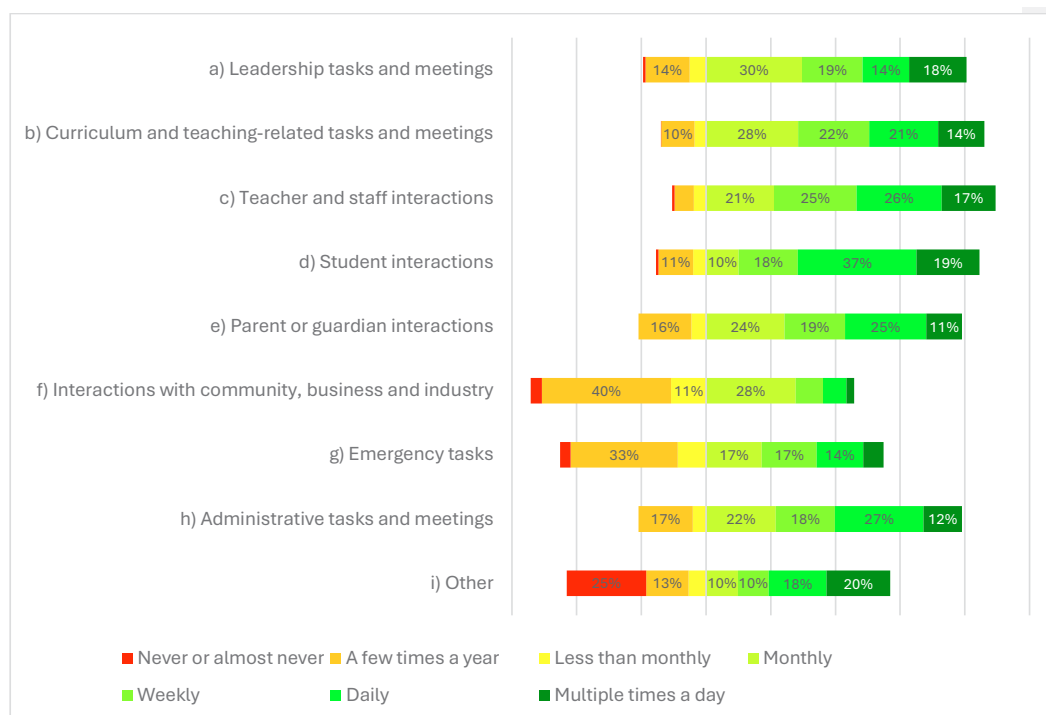
15. Nationally, principals' responses on the frequency of their activities in the last 12 months provided a nuanced understanding of how school leadership practices vary across provinces, highlighting both strengths and areas that need targeted support and professional development. The data showed notable disparities in the frequency of school leadership activities across provinces, despite the general and positive national trends. Nationally, principals demonstrated strong engagement in collaborative and instructional leadership, with 45% very often addressing classroom discipline with teachers and 50% regularly providing feedback on instructional observations.
16. However, provincial data highlighted uneven implementation: Eastern Cape and Limpopo showed higher proportions of principals who rarely engaged in these practices, while provinces like Northern Cape and Free State reported more consistent involvement. Support for teacher development and accountability also varied, with 71% of Free State principals often encouraging professional growth, contrasted by 11% in Northern Cape who rarely did so. Communication with parents was robust nationwide, with no schools reporting neglect in this area, and Mpumalanga leading with 63% of principals who frequently shared performance updates. Administrative oversight and timetable management showed moderate national engagement, though Limpopo and Mpumalanga exhibited stronger participation. Inter-school collaboration remained limited, with only 25% of principals engaging very often, and the Northern Cape reflecting both the highest and lowest levels of such cooperation. Overall, while national averages suggested proactive leadership, provincial inconsistencies point to the need for targeted support and capacity-building to ensure equitable leadership practices across all regions.
17. Areas for improvement included dedicating more time to classroom / instructional observation and feedback in Limpopo province, teacher accountability and administrative review in the Northern Cape and more frequent inter-school collaboration nationally.

Figure 90: Frequency of actions taken by principals related to the following areas in this school during the last 12 months.



18. Principals' responses on specific actions over the last 12 months revealed varying frequency in their engagement across different areas, often showing significant provincial divergence. Nationally, principals exhibited strong support for diversity and social development, with 50% often supporting learner diversity and 52% often supporting teacher diversity, and 48% often working to improve learners' social-emotional development. The Eastern Cape principals led in learner diversity support (63% often), while the Western Cape's showed the highest frequency in both teacher diversity support (60% often) and improving social-emotional development (68% often).
19. However, the adoption of digital resources and climate-related actions were less frequent: only 15% of principals very often supported the integration of digital resources, and 20% had never or rarely acted to support teaching about climate change nationally. This low engagement was amplified in the Free State, where 23% of principals never or rarely acted on digital resources and a high 45% never or rarely supported teaching about climate change, indicating a provincial disparity in responding to contemporary educational and environmental challenges.

Figure 91: Time spent by principals on specific tasks at their schools

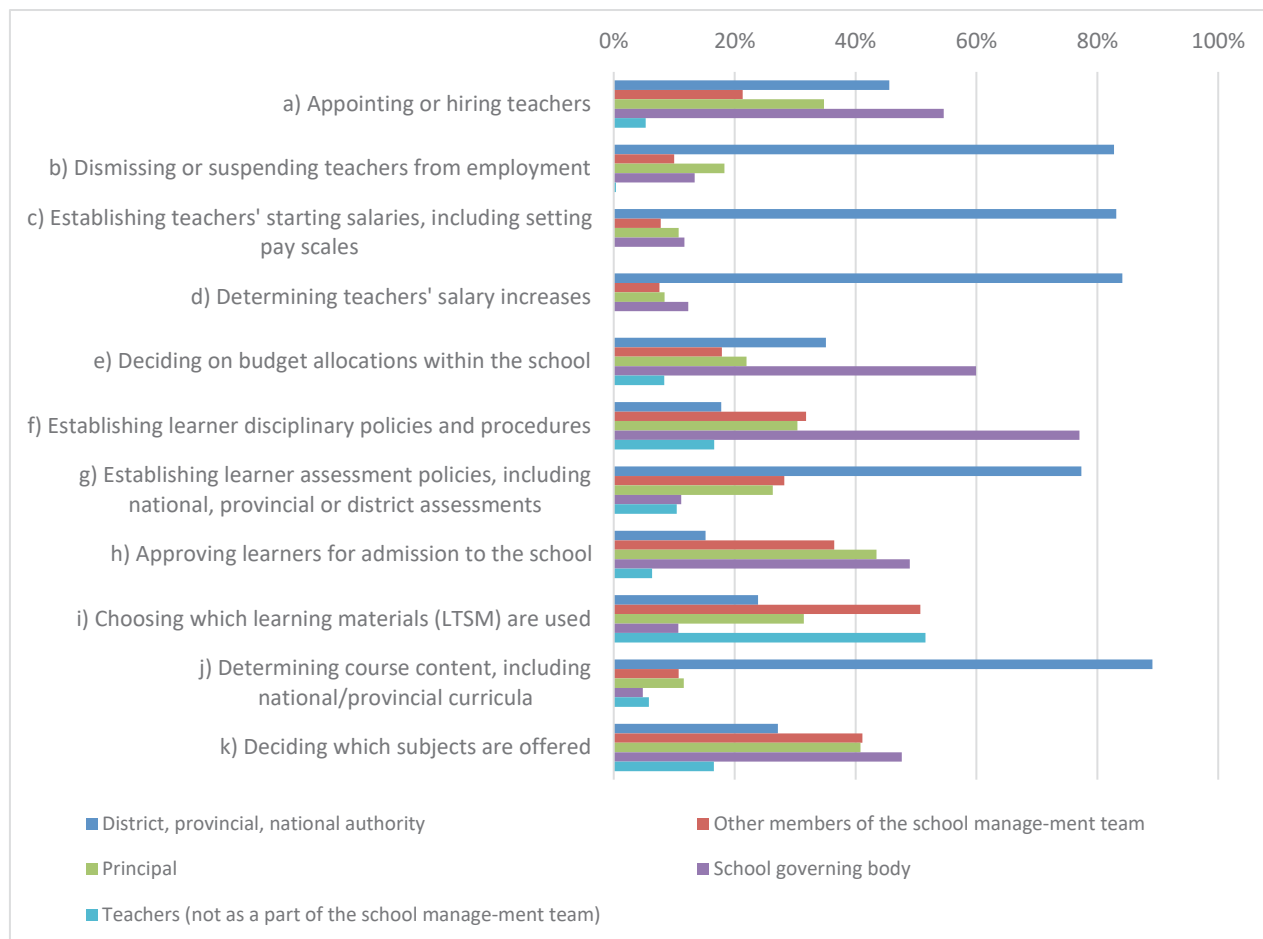


20. Principals at surveyed schools offered revealing insights into their operational priorities, indicating a heavy emphasis on internal stakeholder interactions and administrative responsibilities at the expense of external engagement. Principals were deeply immersed in the daily life of their schools, with frequent learner and staff interactions (55% and 51% respectively), and a substantial portion of time devoted to administrative tasks (45%), which reflected the bureaucratic demands placed on school management and leadership. While this internal focus supported instructional leadership—evidenced by 43% of principals engaging regularly in curriculum-related tasks—it also limited opportunities for strategic outreach and support. The minimal engagement with external stakeholders, where 43% of principals rarely or never interacted with community, business, or industry partners, suggested a structural insulation that may be hindering broader school development and resource mobilisation. Leadership tasks, though essential, were inconsistently prioritised, with 30% occurring less than monthly, and emergency tasks frequently disrupting principals' work schedules.
21. Principals' responses on the nature of their work pointed to the need for systemic reform that alleviated administrative burdens and empowered principals to balance their operational efficiency with visionary leadership and meaningful external stakeholder collaboration. Where there may be passive engagement by some principals due to factors outside of their control, and it is overlooked by the system, this could result in low staff morale, poor learner discipline, and a lack of shared vision. Where principals disengage and struggle to reconcile conflicting expectations it can lead to ineffective or inconsistent policy implementation, a lack of participatory management that involve teachers in decision making, reduced collaboration and innovation among staff, a lack of monitoring of teaching and learning and a vacuum in teacher professional development, which can hinder academic progress.
22. School principals and their management teams should be supported by the education system because they serve as the linchpin between policy and practice, ensuring that the national strategy and vision is effectively translated into school-level implementation. Their leadership directly influences the quality of teaching, the efficiency of resource management, and the overall learning environment. Support systems through professional development, dialogue, onsite visits, provision of resources, and developmental feedback can empower these school leaders to navigate complex challenges that impact on their work to enable the achievement of continuous improvement in learning outcomes.

Significant stakeholder responsibility for specific tasks at surveyed school

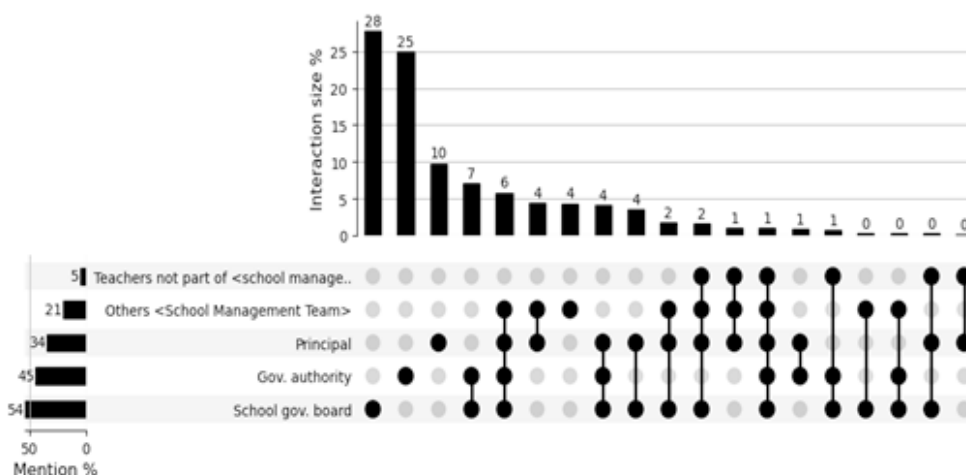
23. TALIS explores the distribution of responsibilities among school stakeholders because it directly impacts the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of education systems. By examining who is responsible for specific tasks at schools such as curriculum planning and implementation, learner discipline, continuing professional development, human resource management and resource allocation TALIS helps identify how roles are shared between teachers, principals, administrative staff, and external stakeholders such as district, provincial or national authorities. This insight is crucial for: clarifying role expectations: Understanding task distribution helps reduce role ambiguity and stress among educators, especially when responsibilities are unclear or overlapping, improving school governance, informing policies that promote collaborative decision-making and shared leadership, targeting support and training, and assisting policymakers to tailor resource allocation, professional development and support systems according to the actual responsibilities carried by teachers, school management and school governing bodies. This information can inform more efficient or equitable task allocation and contribute to building a more resilient and responsive education system that empowers teachers to achieve improved learning outcomes.
24. Principals at surveyed schools provided the following information about who had significant responsibility for certain tasks at their schools:

Figure 92: Overview of significant stakeholder responsibility for specific tasks at surveyed schools



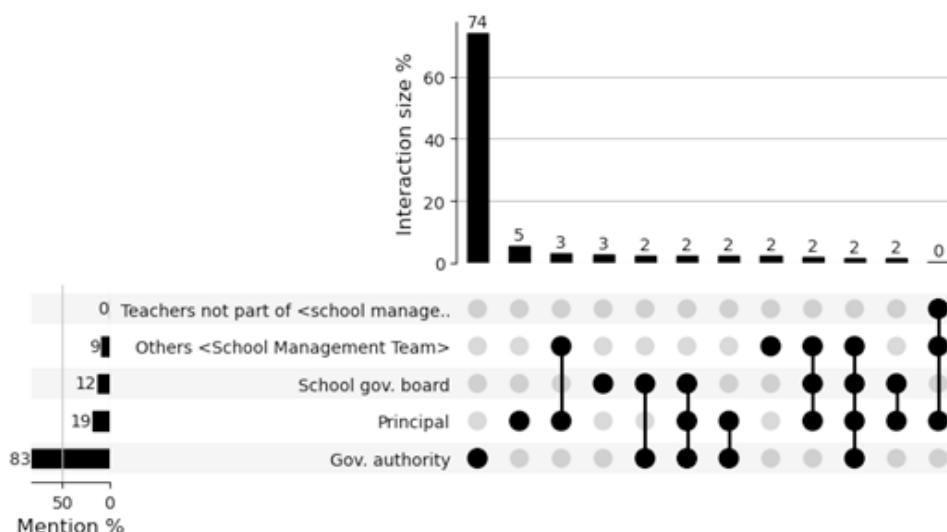
25. The distribution of responsibilities across stakeholder groups, as depicted in the figure above, reveals a layered governance structure in school management, with distinct domains of influence. Education authorities/officials at district, provincial, and national levels retain dominant control over high-stakes decisions such as teacher hiring, employment conditions, consequence management and curriculum design, underscoring a top-down approach to strategic decision making, educational policy development and implementation. In contrast, operational and context-specific decisions, including teacher hiring (presumably appointed by the School Governing Body), budget allocation within the school, learner admissions, disciplinary policy frameworks, and notable roles of the SMT and teachers in choosing learning and teaching support materials, are more localized, falling under the shared purview of school governing bodies and principals. This decentralization at the school level suggests an effort to tailor decision-making to the unique needs of individual school communities. Meanwhile, teachers and other senior management team members (SMT) play a more consultative or supportive role, particularly in pedagogical areas like selecting learning materials. This distribution of responsibility reflects a balance between centralised decision making and policy development and localised autonomy, aiming to align national education's strategic goals with school-level responsiveness, professional expertise and school community support.

Figure 93: Responsibility for appointing or hiring teachers



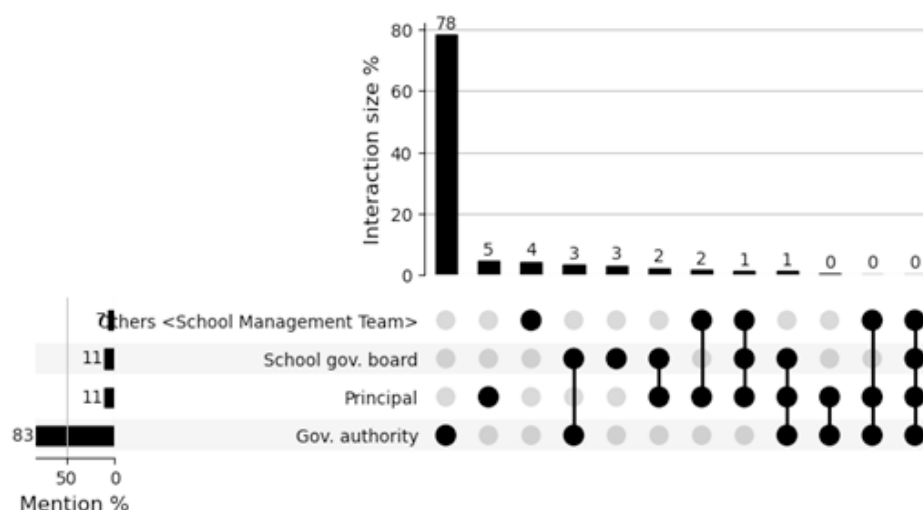
26. The responsibility for appointing or hiring teachers is notably shared among multiple stakeholders, reflecting a decentralised approach to staffing decisions. The School Governing Body (SGB) emerges as the most frequently cited actor (52%), indicating strong local involvement. However, the District, Provincial, and National Authority also plays a substantial role (44%), suggesting oversight and policy alignment from higher levels. Principals (33%) and other members of the School Management Team (SMT) (20%) contributed meaningfully, while teachers outside the SMT have minimal influence (5%). This distribution highlights a collaborative teacher hiring process, balancing local autonomy with systemic legislation and regulation.

Figure 94: Responsibility for dismissing or suspending teachers from employment



27. Dismissal or suspension of teachers is a highly centralised function, dominated by the District, Provincial, and National Authority (79%). This concentration of power underscores the seriousness and legal complexity of employment termination of teachers. Principals (18%) and the SGB (13%) have limited involvement, likely in initiating or reporting concerns/ grievances, while SMT members (10%) play a minor role. Teachers outside the SMT have no responsibility (0%), reinforcing that such decisions are reserved for higher administrative levels of the education system, including the role of teacher unions and the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), the bargaining council that serves the public education sector nationally and provincially to promote the maintenance of labour peace. The data reflects a top-down governance model for disciplinary actions in the basic education sector.

Figure 95: Responsibility for establishing teachers' starting salaries including setting pay scales



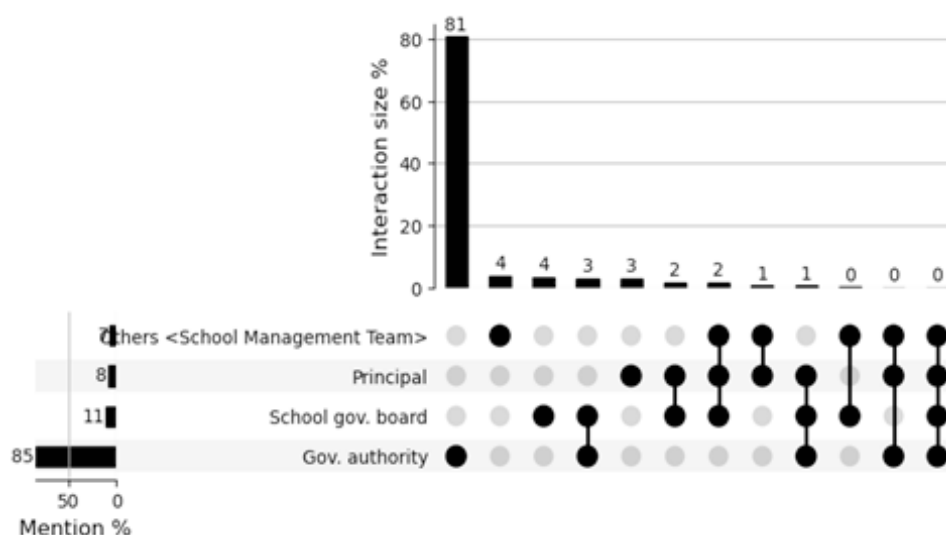
Left Visual: Few shared roles; mostly centralized.

Right Visual: District authority is the primary actor

28. Setting teachers' starting salaries and pay scales is overwhelmingly centralised, with 80% of respondents attributing this responsibility to the District, Provincial, and National Authority. School-level actors including the SGB (11%), Principal (10%), and SMT members (7%) have minimal input, and teachers outside the SMT are entirely excluded (0%). This centralised control ensures uniformity and compliance with broader fiscal policies but may limit local (school level) flexibility in attracting talent through competitive compensation.

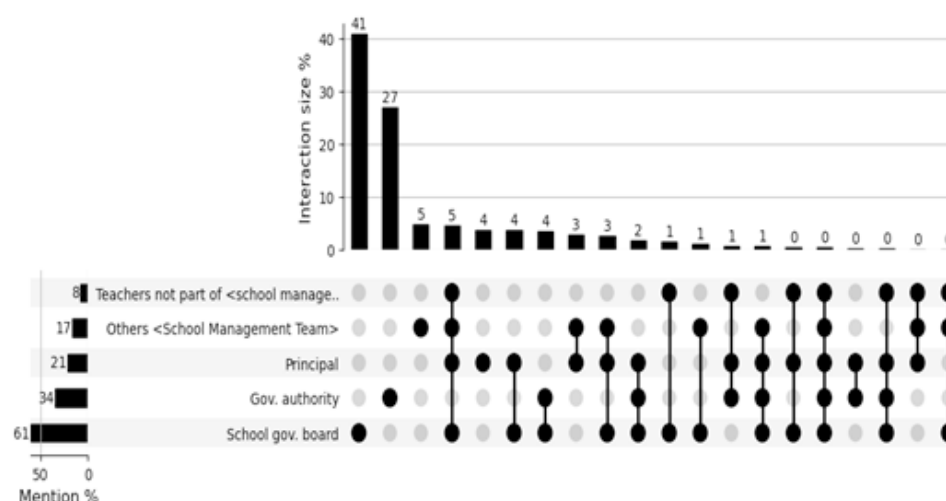


Figure 96: Responsibility for determine teachers' salary increases



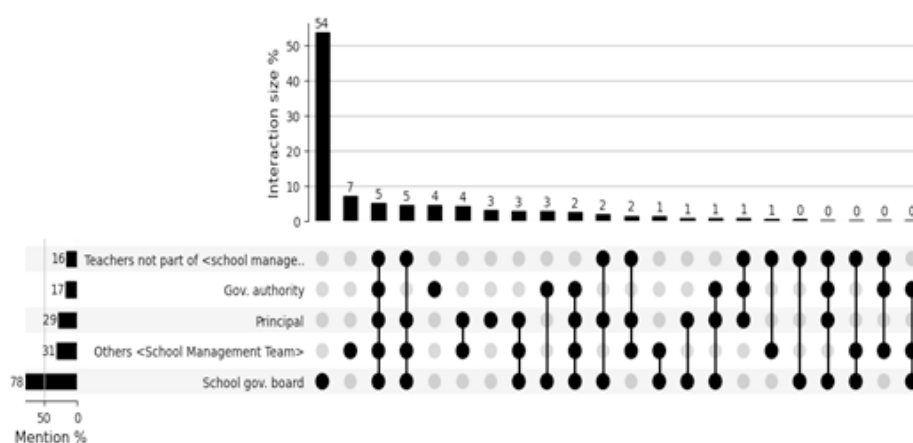
29. Salary increases for teachers follow a similar centralised pattern as that setting starting salaries. The District, Provincial, and National Authority again leads with 80%, while the SGB (14%), Principal (10%), and SMT members (7%) have marginal roles. Teachers outside the SMT are not involved (0%). This structure reflects a centralised, standardised approach to remuneration of teachers tied to annual national treasury and provincial and national department budget planning for the compensation of employees, together with performance appraisal metrics for teachers from school-level.

Figure 97: Responsibility for deciding on budget allocations within the school



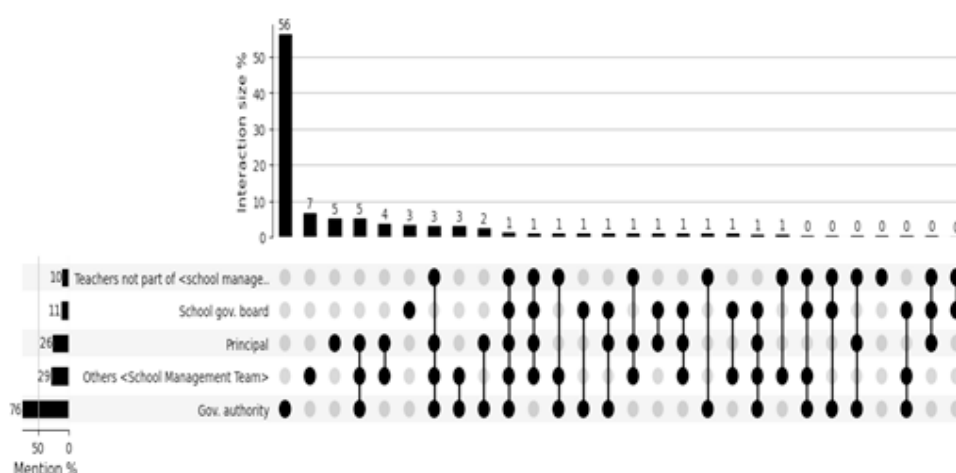
30. Budget allocation within schools is primarily managed by the SGB (58%), indicating strong local control over financial planning. The District, Provincial, and National Authority (34%) still maintains a significant role, likely in setting funding parameters. Principals (21%) and SMT members (17%) contribute operational insights, while teachers outside the SMT (8%) have minimal involvement. This distribution of involvement suggests a hybrid model where strategic financial decisions are locally driven but framed by broader national policies.

Figure 98: Responsibility for establishing learner disciplinary policies and procedures



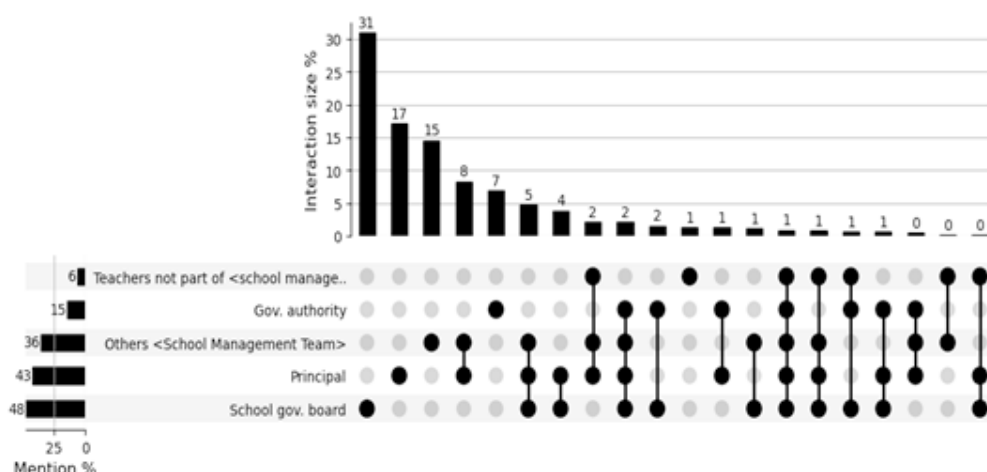
31. Learner disciplinary policies are predominantly shaped at the school level, with the SGB taking the lead (74%). SMT members (31%) and Principals (29%) also play substantial roles, reflecting the importance of internal governance in maintaining school culture and discipline. The District, Provincial, and National Authority (17%) and teachers outside the SMT (16%) have lesser involvement, indicating that while national policy frameworks do exist centrally, implementation is largely localised at school level via a school code of conduct.

Figure 99: Responsibility for establishing learner assessment policies including national, provincial or district assessments



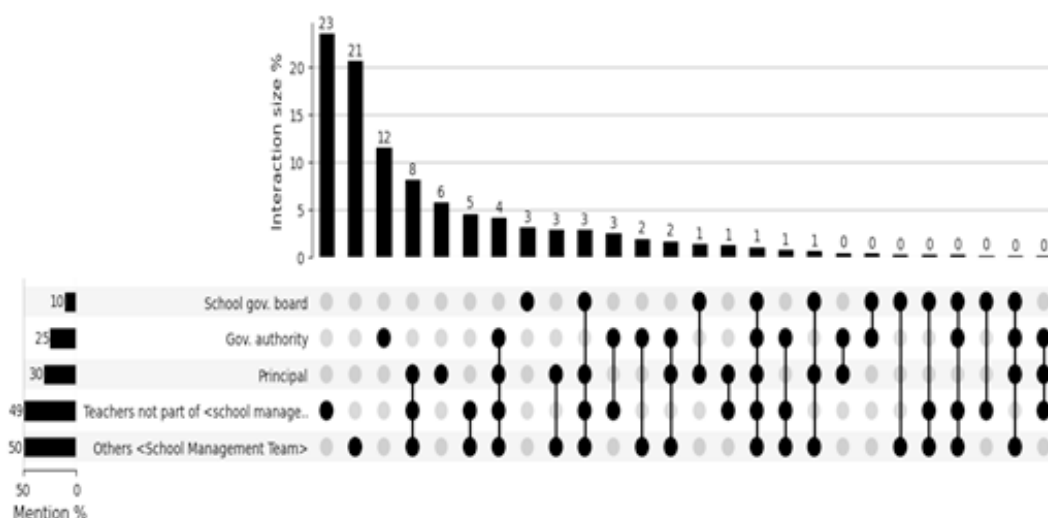
32. Assessment policy is largely centralised, with the District, Provincial, and National authorities/ officials responsible for 74% of decisions. However, SMT members (27%) and Principals (25%) are involved in adapting and implementing these assessment policies at the school level. The SGB (11%) and teachers outside the SMT (10%) have limited roles. This reflects a hierarchical and policy driven approach to standardising learner evaluation, with school-level actors facilitating execution.

Figure 100: Responsibility for approving learners' admission to the school



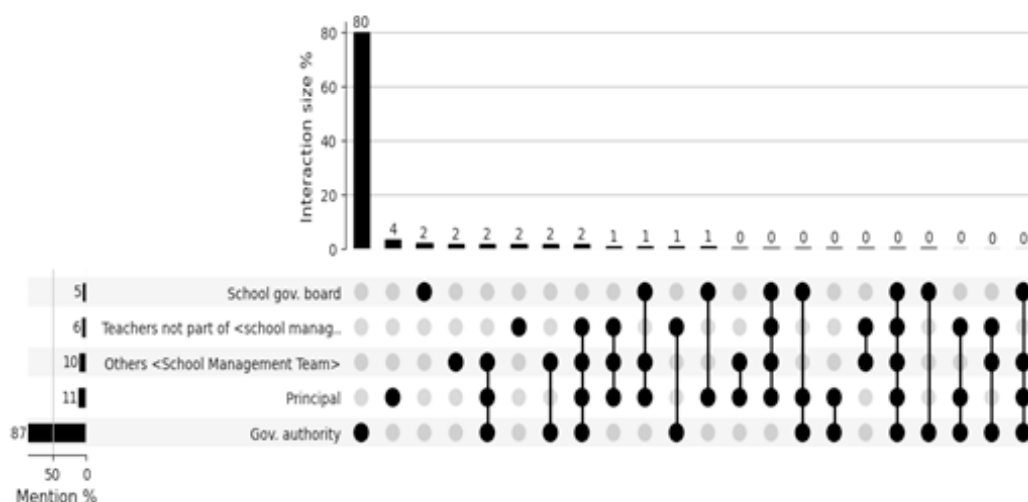
33. Admission decisions are primarily handled at the school level, with the SGB (47%) and Principal (42%) leading the process. SMT members (35%) also contribute significantly, while the District, Provincial, and National Authority (15%) plays a more peripheral role. Teachers outside the SMT (6%) have minimal involvement. This distribution underscores the importance of school-based discretion in managing enrolment and maintaining community alignment.

Figure 101: Responsibility for choosing which learning materials (LTSMs) are used



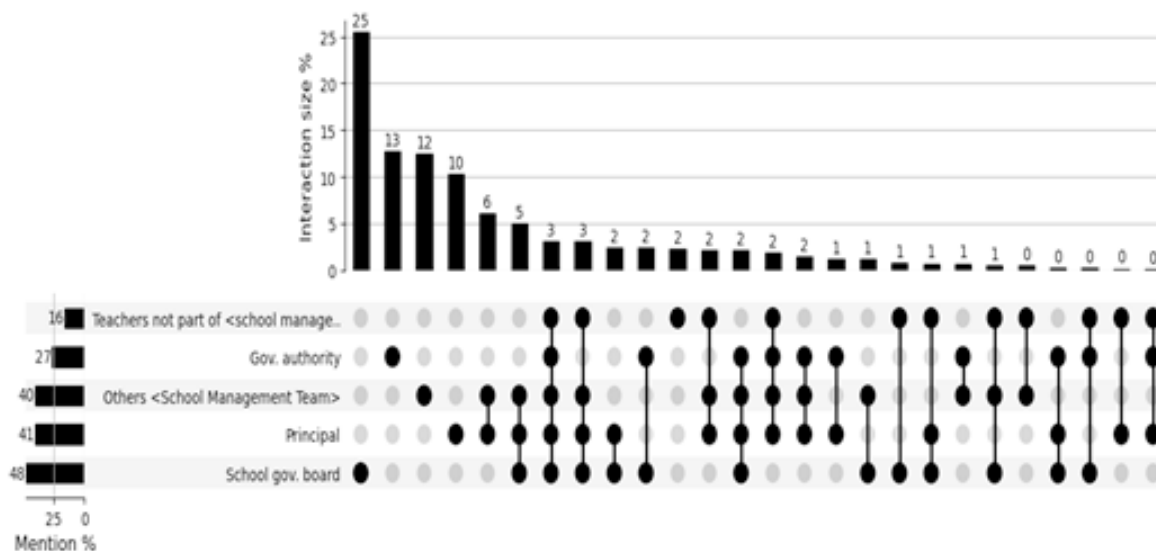
34. The selection of learning materials (LTSMs) is a school-centric task, with teachers outside the SMT (50%) and SMT members (49%) playing dominant roles. Principals (30%) and the District, Provincial, and National Authority (23%) have moderate involvement, while the SGB (10%) is least involved. This reflects a pedagogical decision-making process driven by teachers and school management who are directly responsible for teaching and learning ensuring relevance and responsiveness to classroom needs.

Figure 102: Responsibility for determining the course content including national/provincial curricula



35. Curriculum (course) content decisions are overwhelmingly centralised, with the District, Provincial, and National Authority responsible for 86% of this task. School-level actors including Principals (11%), SMT members (10%), teachers outside the SMT (6%), and the SGB (5%) have minimal input into curriculum content or design. This hierarchical approach ensures consistency in the standard of the national curriculum consistency but may accommodate local adaptation and teacher agency in content delivery in the classroom.

Figure 103: Responsibility for deciding which subjects are offered



36. Deciding which subjects are offered is largely a school-level decision, led by the SGB (46%), with Principals and SMT members both at 39%. The District, Provincial, and National Authority (26%) provides broader guidance, while teachers outside the SMT (16%) contribute to subject selection. This collaborative model allows schools to tailor offerings according to learner enrolment, teacher specialisation, learner needs and community priorities within a national curriculum framework.

37. Overall, surveyed principals' responses about which stakeholders' have significant responsibility for tasks at schools confirm a clear delineation between centrally controlled domains and those characterised by school-level autonomy and collaboration. Responsibility for tasks concerning school-level policy, finance, learner admission, human resources administration are dominated by school-based stakeholders, particularly the school governing body (SGB) and the principal. This distribution highlights that while strategic and financial policies are often centralised or SGB-led, pedagogical decision-making is devolved to the teachers as professionals within the school. School leadership in South African schools is a complex, multi-stakeholder endeavour, with the central authority maintaining firm control over high-stakes statutory matters (salaries, consequence management, curriculum design and recruitment), while the SGB and school management teams exercise considerable autonomy over the day-to-day operational and policy compliance functions of the school.

Principals' perceptions of teachers at their schools

38. TALIS incorporated principals' perceptions of teachers as a vital component for understanding the culture and operational effectiveness of a school. These perceptions serve as a direct measure of professionalism and shared leadership, assessing whether teachers take leadership roles, initiate collaborative activities, and lead their own professional growth. Furthermore, by gauging teachers' engagement in non-teaching school activities, the data should show the extent of their investment in their broader school communities and schools' ethos. This information is crucial for an understanding of the quality of principal-teacher dynamics and the effectiveness of distributed leadership at schools, allowing for cross-referencing with other data about principals' job satisfaction and stress. Ultimately, quantifying principals' views across countries enables education systems as policymakers to identify organisational features associated with effective teaching environments, that can inform teacher professional development strategies and improve school management and governance models.



Table 39: International Level: Principals agreement with statements about teachers at their schools

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals that “Strongly agree” with the following statements about teachers at this school.			
	Take leadership roles in promoting professional learning community	Initiate and lead collaborative activities	Lead their professional growth and development	Participate in non-teaching school events and projects
Australia	26,2	27,0	21,4	27,1
Brazil	15,1	18,2	19,8	11,9
Colombia	28,2	37,9	31,0	32,1
Estonia	15,0	21,6	18,3	21,8
Finland	7,6	11,7	10,8	11,3
Japan	9,9	20,3	14,8	43,9
Morocco	22,0	28,1	18,2	43,9
Netherlands*	15,9	13,0	15,6	24,1
Singapore	34,9	42,0	38,2	40,2
South Africa	36,4	29,2	32,8	28,4
TALIS average-49	24,4	29,0	28,9	30,6
United Arab Emirates	39,6	45,8	40,7	50,5
United States	27,2	28,8	23,6	22,4
OECD average-27	23,6	27,0	24,7	28,2

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average

39. At the international level, South African principals showed strong confidence in teachers’ leadership: 36.4% strongly agreed that teachers took leadership in professional learning, higher than the TALIS average (24.4%) and OECD (23.6%), suggesting a perceived culture of professional autonomy and peer-led development among South African teachers. However, they were perceived to be weaker on participation in non-teaching events and projects (28.4%) compared to Japan and Morocco (43.9%), suggesting that, while professionally engaged, their overall commitment to non-academic, community-building school activities may be perceived as weaker relative to their peers in the other countries. Principals’ perceptions of teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are that they exhibited comprehensive leadership and engagement across multiple domains. They scored highly in initiating and leading collaborative activities (45.8%), leading their professional growth (40.7%), and participating in non-teaching activities (50.5%). This indicated a highly engaged and well-rounded teaching workforce, as perceived by their school leaders.

Table 40: International Level: Means: Principals agreement with statements about teachers at their schools

COUNTRY	Percentage of principals that “Agree” or “Strongly agree” with the following statements about teachers at this school.			
	Take leadership roles in promoting professional learning community	Initiate and lead collaborative activities	Lead their professional growth and development	Participate in non-teaching school events and projects
Australia	91,4	89,7	83,1	87,1
Brazil	87,9	93,4	93,5	77,6
Colombia	85,7	95,8	91,2	87,0
Estonia	75,0	84,7	89,5	88,6
Finland	77,9	88,0	82,7	79,6
Japan	70,0	92,9	93,8	92,9
Morocco	82,3	82,9	86,8	96,5
Netherlands*	74,8	91,0	82,6	88,8
Singapore	97,8	97,2	96,7	93,9
South Africa	93,6	90,4	93,1	89,8
TALIS average-49	86,5	92,1	90,3	88,4
United Arab Emirates	97,5	95,8	93,9	98,7
United States	89,2	88,2	89,6	90,6
OECD average-27	84,8	91,0	88,2	87,2

	Countries/economics where indicator above OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicators are not statistically different from the OECD average
	Countries/economics where indicator below OECD average



40. Overall, principals in South Africa reported a remarkably high level of agreement that their teachers actively engaged in professional and non-teaching activities. Specifically, principals had high perceptions that teachers took leadership roles in promoting professional learning community (93.6%) and led their professional growth and development (93.1%). These figures ranked South Africa's principals above both the TALIS (86.5%) and OECD (84.8%) averages for teachers taking on leadership roles and leading their own professional growth, exceeded only by Singapore and UAE principals' higher perceptions of their teachers. Perceptions of teachers' capacity to take leadership roles in promoting professional learning community lagged in Estonia, Finland and Japan.

Table 41: Provincial Level: How strongly principals agreed with statements about teachers at their schools

PROVINCE	Percentage of principals that "Strongly agree" with the following statements about teachers at this school.			
	Take leadership roles in promoting professional learning community	Initiate and lead collaborative activities	Lead their professional growth and development	Participate in non-teaching school events and projects
Eastern Cape	45,7	43,4	46,8	28,9
Free State	31,9	26,2	27,4	41,6
Gauteng	34,7	21,6	44,0	28,8
KwaZulu Natal	33,2	26,7	19,9	30,8
Limpopo	37,6	30,9	30,9	23,1
Mpumalanga	43,8	37,8	41,8	40,5
Northern Cape	26,4	14,9	22,1	19,3
North West	35,6	11,3	23,5	18,5
Western Cape	26,2	21,1	27,8	21,0
National	36,4	29,2	32,8	28,4

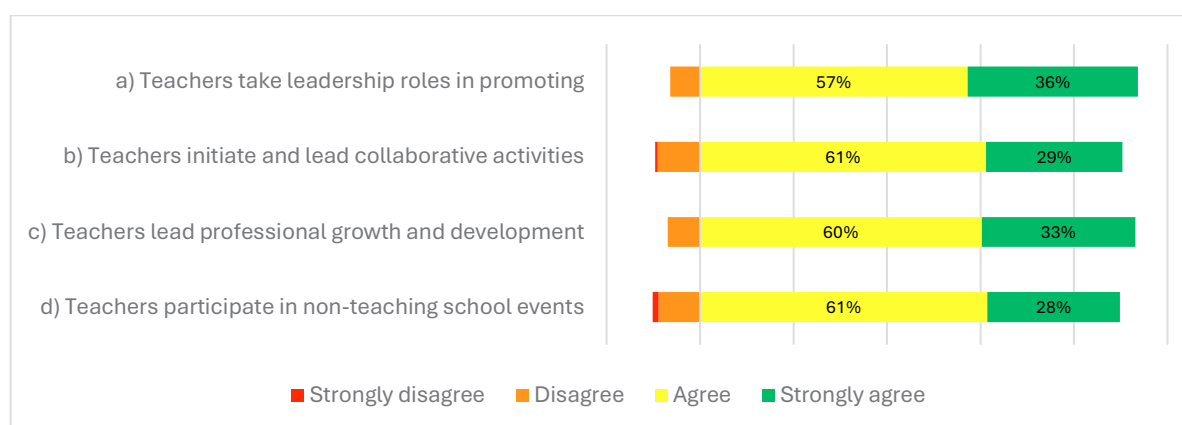
	Provinces where indicator is above South Africa average
	Provinces where indicator is not statistically different from the South African average
	Provinces where indicator is below South Africa average

41. Compared to the national average, provincial responses show substantial variation in principals' perceptions of teachers. The Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces had the highest intensity of positive perception across all measures: The Eastern Cape led in perceiving teachers to leading their professional growth and development (46.8%) and taking leadership roles in promoting professional learning community (45.7%) and Mpumalanga principals had high perceptions across the board, particularly regarding teachers taking leadership roles (43.8%)

and leading their professional growth (41.8%). In contrast, principals in the North West and Northern Cape provinces reported the lowest intensity of agreement for professional activities, suggesting were less likely to Strongly Agree that their teachers were highly proactive. The lowest reported intense agreement is in the North West, where only 11.3% of principals Strongly Agreed that teachers initiated and led collaborative activities, which is far below the national average of 29.2%.

42. In terms of participating in non-teaching school events and projects the Free State and Mpumalanga reported the highest strong agreement from principals (41.6% and 40.5%, respectively). Take leadership roles in promoting professional learning community

Figure 104: Principals agreement or disagreement with statements about teachers at their schools

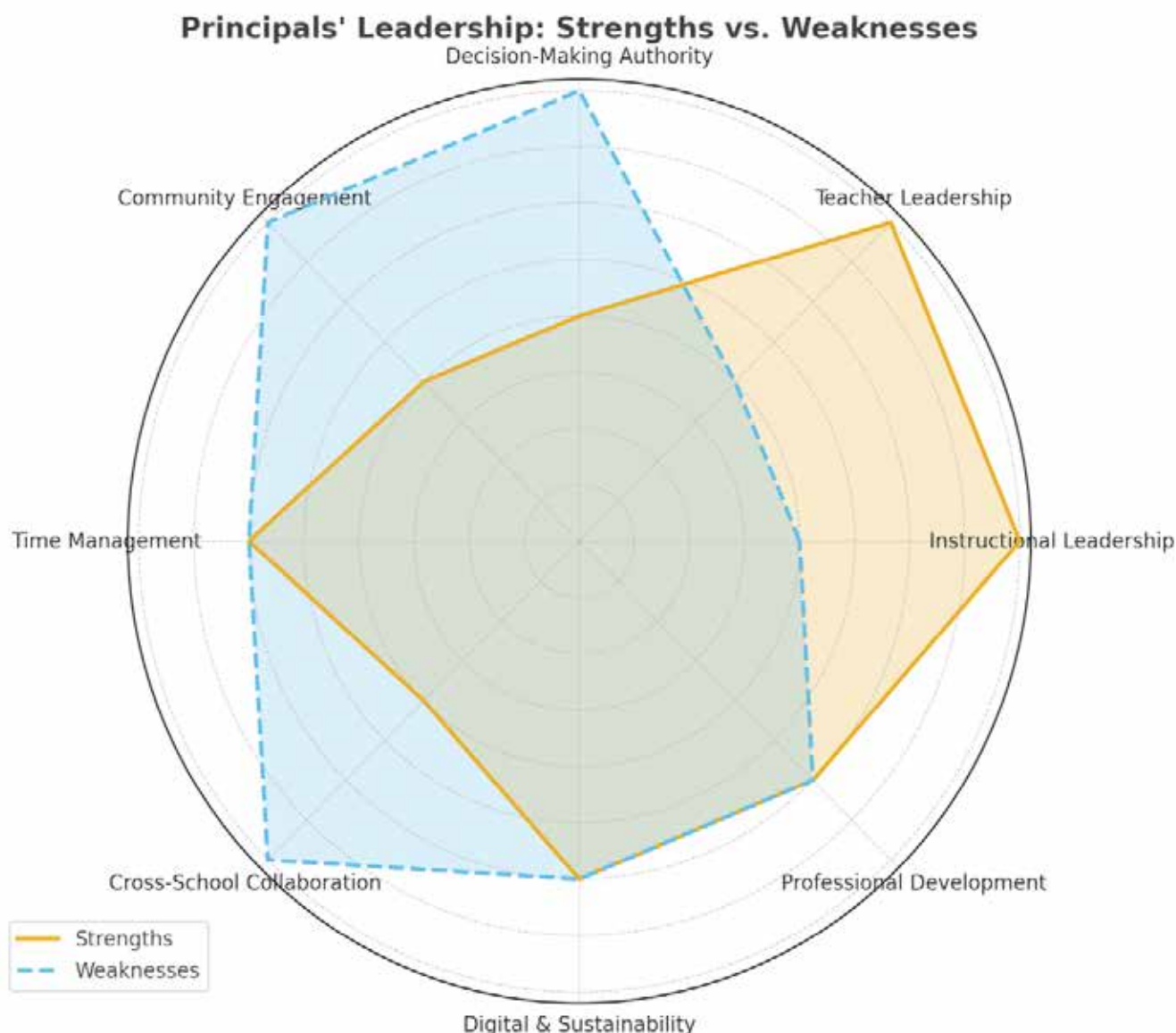


43. Overall, there is an overwhelmingly high level of agreement from principals across all four statements, with total agreement percentages (combined Agreed and Strongly Agreed responses) ranging from 89% to 93%. The statements with the highest total agreement of principals (93%) included : “Teachers take leadership roles in promoting a professional learning community (PLC)” and “Teachers lead professional growth and development”, suggesting that nationally, principals viewed teachers as highly involved in school-wide initiatives and their own/colleagues’ professional learning. Principals showed consensus by agreeing about teachers’ collaborative activities and participation in non-teaching events (61%) professional growth (60%) and for taking leadership roles (57%). Disagreement (combined responses of Strongly Disagreed and Disagreed) was minimal across the board, not exceeding 11%. The lowest disagreement (6%) was for teachers taking leadership roles in promoting PLCs” and “Teachers participating in non-teaching school events”. The high levels of agreement among principals suggested that principals perceived their teachers as active, collaborative, and professionally engaged members of the school community.

44. Principals’ positive perceptions about their teachers had the following benefits for the education system:
- Distributed leadership was present: The high agreement (93%) that teachers took leadership roles and led professional growth suggested a healthy school environment where leadership was not solely confined to the management team.
 - Culture of collaboration and engagement: 90% agreement on initiating and leading collaborative activities and the 89% agreement on participation in non-teaching events indicated that teachers were highly invested in their schools’ social and operational life beyond the classroom. The education system should foster and protect this culture by providing dedicated time for professional learning communities (PLCs) and collaborative planning, recognising that these activities were seen as integral to teachers’ professional roles and growth.
 - Positive teacher-principal relations: The consistently low level of disagreement across all statements about teachers at their schools suggested that there was a strong alignment and positive working relationship between principals and teachers on teacher responsibilities and involvement. This foundational trust was crucial for implementing large-scale educational reforms.

45. Systemic support, such as robust mentorship programs, higher levels of autonomy for teacher-led projects, and formal recognition of teachers' work, could further strengthen the positive ethos suggested through the principals' responses.

Figure 105: Overview: Where surveyed principals were effective and where they experienced notable challenges in their leadership at schools



SCHOOL CLIMATE

46. A large body of research demonstrates the vital importance of school climate on teaching and learning. Consequently, growing interest over the past decade seeks to better understand and improve school climate. Understanding and improving school climate are even more important in the contemporary (post) pandemic context, characterised by the heavy digitalisation of teaching and learning process worldwide. For a long time, the knowledge base on school climate has been dominated by research in Western and high-income countries (i.e. Australia and those in Europe and North America), but more recent evidence shows that school climate is also a relevant factor in other national contexts (Larson et al., 2020[480]). Particularly, research shows that conceptualisations and operationalisations of school climate in low- and middle-income countries are similar to those in high-income countries (Larson et al., 2020[480]). (OECD: 2025[59]).

47. 2024 continues to survey the four dimensions of school climate used in TALIS 2018, as well as updating some indicators. Some new sub-areas of interest to integrate were defined as academic rigour, bullying, inclusion, differentiation, adaptive practices, collaborative practices, infrastructure quality, and technology and digitalisation.
48. School climate is defined differently across studies and contexts, but with certain key elements (Larson et al., 2020[480]; Wang and Degol, 2016[113]). In general, school climate encompasses structure and support components (Larson et al., 2020[480]). The structure component can be equated to the school's physical environment, while the support component conceptually links to the school's social environment (Thapa et al., 2013[112]; Wang and Degol, 2016[113]). Together, school climate refers to the quality and character of school life. It is usually defined as the patterns of people's experiences at school (socially, emotionally, civically and ethically, and academically), which reflect norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organisational structures (Cohen et al., 2009[111]; Thapa et al., 2013[112]).
49. School climate is a multidimensional construct frequently operationalised through the dimensions of safety (e.g. rules and norms, physical safety, social and emotional safety, and disciplinary climate), community (e.g. respect for diversity, school connectedness/engagement, social support, peer collaboration, teacher-student relationships and relationships with families and the community), academic (e.g. social, emotional, ethical and civic learning; academic press; professional development; leadership; quality of instruction; and teachers' and students' perceptions of learning climate) and institutional environment (e.g. physical surrounding, resources and structural organisation) (Cohen et al., 2009[111]; Freiberg, 1999[481]; Thapa et al., 2013[112]; Wang and Degol, 2016[113]; Zullig et al., 2010[482]; OECD : 2025[59-60]).
50. A positive school climate can improve students' educational outcomes, both cognitive (with enduring effects on student achievement) and socio-emotional (e.g. self-esteem, self-concept, well-being, school satisfaction, engagement and persistence), as well as student behaviour and mental health, (Anderson, 1982[497]; Cornelius-White, 2007[498]; Hoy, Hannum and Tschannen-Moran, 1998[499]; MacNeil, Prater and Busch, 2009[500]; Maxwell et al., 2017[501]; Nilsen and Gustafsson, 2014[502]; OECD, 2021[503]; Thapa et al., 2013[112]; Welsh, 2000[504]) (Wubbels et al., 2012[505]; Zullig, Huebner and Patton, 2011[506]). For teachers, a positive school climate is associated with improved job satisfaction, commitment to their profession, teaching self-efficacy, collective efficacy, retention, and effectiveness (Aldridge and Fraser, 2016[507]; Dou, Devos and Valcke, 2016[508]; Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993[509]; Ladd, 2011[435]; Malinen and Savolainen, 2016[510]; Moolenaar, Slegers and Daly, 2012[511]; Price and Collett, 2012[512]; Thapa et al., 2013[112]).
51. Previous cycles of TALIS and PISA assessed several aspects of school climate, from the perspectives of students, teachers, and principals. These studies confirmed associations of school climate with students' academic, socio-emotional, and behavioural outcomes, as well as its association with teachers' practices and self-efficacy (OECD, 2023[513]; OECD, 2020[1]; OECD, 2020[400]; OECD, 2019[184]; OECD, 2015[514]; OECD, 2011[515]; OECD, 2009[516]). Moreover, the 2018 TALIS-PISA link study connected the extent of parent and community engagement in school activities (as shown above in Table 3.3) to differences in expectations and performance in school (OECD, 2021[517]). Across systems, teachers' overall evaluation of their relationships with students are extremely positive, however, there is less consensus when it comes to evaluating the quality of teachers' relationships with colleagues (2020[400]; OECD, 2019[39]; OECD: 2025[61]).
52. With new teaching and learning arrangements and modified school and classroom organisation in a world changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, students and teachers have experienced changes in school life, norms, safety, and patterns of relationships and interactions among educators, students, leadership, families, and the community. For example, we are only beginning to understand how a principal's role in fostering a positive school climate might be changing as their work tasks change in post-pandemic traditional (face-to-face), newly adapted hybrid, or fully online learning environments. Although classroom climate operates at the classroom/teacher level (Nilsen, Gustafsson and Blömeke, 2016[518]), it links to climate at the school level in that school climate influences classroom climate. Therefore, it is of interest to explore how the role of classroom climate will develop further

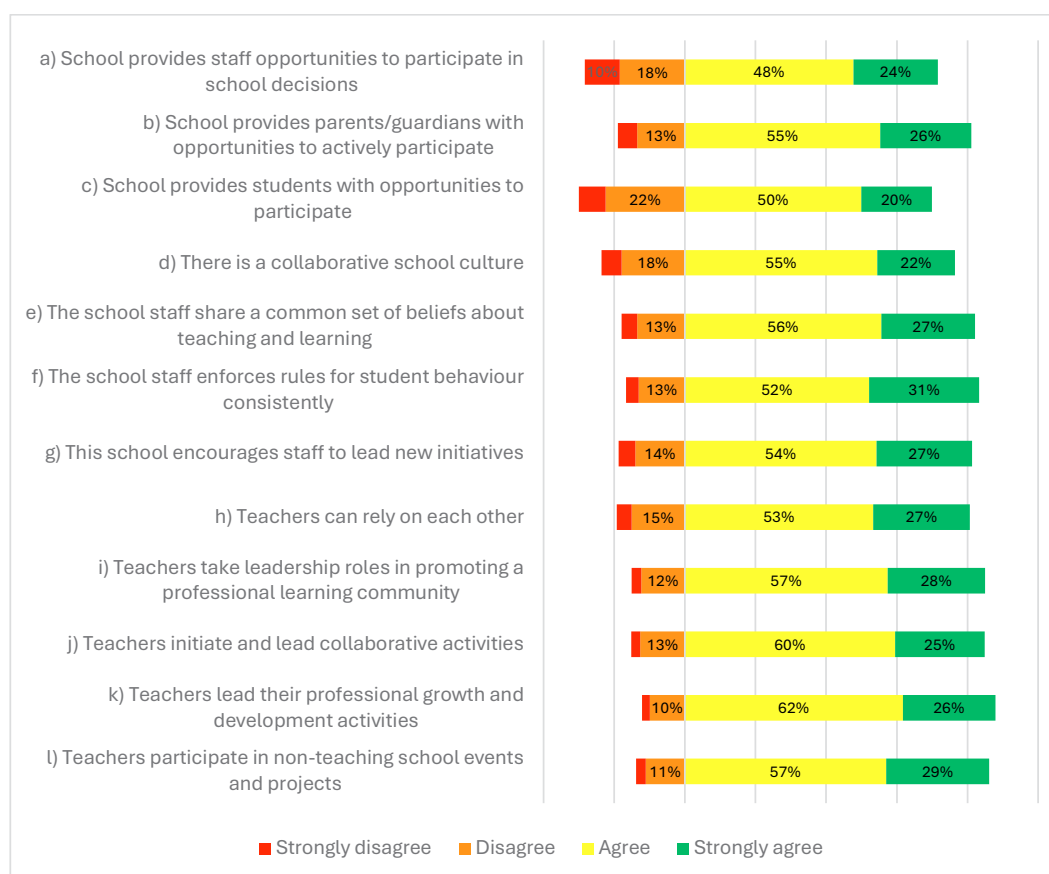
as learning is taking place more frequently in digitised classrooms with hybrid attendance options. In addition, school climate research in low- and middle-income countries has so far focused on the institutional environment dimension more than on other dimensions and the comprehensiveness of TALIS 2024 may contribute to reducing such knowledge gaps (Astor and Benbenishty, 2019[519]).

53. TALIS 2018 enabled the capture of data on critical changes in the quality and character of school life, its norms, safety, and patterns of relationships and interactions among teachers, learners, school leadership, families, and the community, especially since the global rebuilding of how schools look and feel. The existing indicators were kept as identical as possible to maximise an assessment of these changes. TALIS 2024 included an indicator related to possible improvements in the system-level environments in which teachers worked (Fullan, 2016[520]). TALIS 2024 sought the views of teachers regarding what they saw as the most important development they wanted to be implemented in their education system at the level of schooling where they taught. This question invited open-ended responses (Neuert et al., 2021[521]; Züll, 2016[522]) and aimed to capture depth and nuance that was otherwise not captured by the targeted questions, items and closed response options otherwise used in the survey. The rapid advancement of multilingual large language models (LLM, as a sub-class of artificial intelligence models) brought open question formats more into reach for cross-cultural surveys such as TALIS. The question also related to previous, and largely unsatisfactory, attempts to capture teachers' policy recommendations and priorities through ranking or forced-choice items. (OECD: 2025 [62-63]).

Teachers' perceptions on school climate

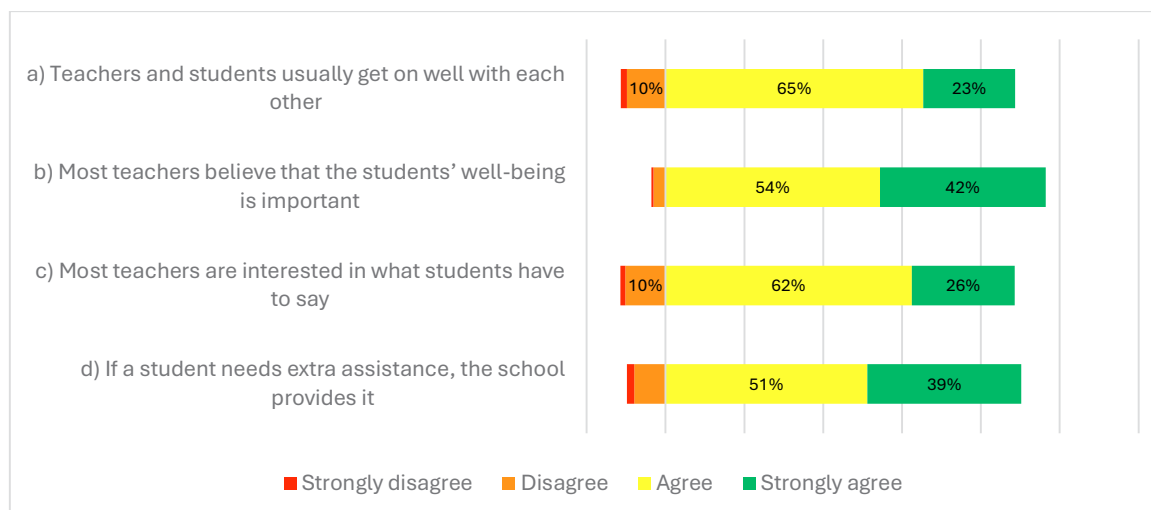
54. TALIS included teachers' perceptions of school climate for education systems to better understand how leadership, collaboration, and working conditions affect teaching quality and learning outcomes. School climate directly influences both teacher well-being and learners' success as it encompasses shared beliefs, values, relationships, and practices that shape the daily experience of teachers and learners.
55. Teachers' insights into their working conditions and school culture are essential for designing policies that are both effective and sustainable, assisting policymakers to identify strengths and weaknesses in school environments across countries so that policies to improve teacher satisfaction, retention, and performance can be strengthened. Where there might be negative perceptions of school climate this can signal deeper problems like burnout, low morale, or ineffective school leadership.
56. The OECD's focus on school climate in TALIS reflects a commitment to evidence-based improvement in education systems—grounded in the lived experiences of all teachers. The perceptions of South African teachers about specific aspects of school climate follows.

Figure 106: Teachers' agreement or disagreement with statements about leadership, participation and collaboration at schools



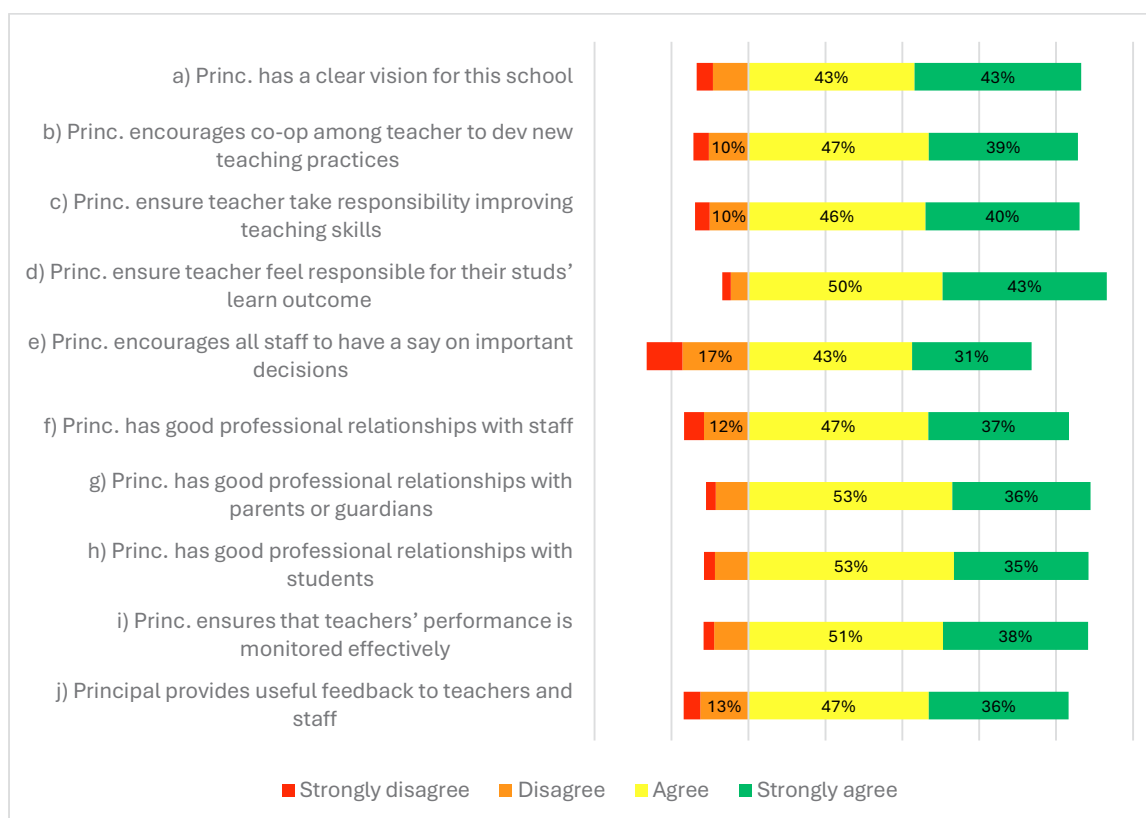
57. There was a generally positive teacher sentiment regarding participation, collaboration, and leadership within their schools, with agreement levels ranging from 72% to 88%. The strongest endorsement (88%) was for the belief that teachers led their own professional growth, indicating a high level of autonomy and engagement in professional development. Similarly, the belief that school staff shared common values (83%) suggested a cohesive institutional culture. However, the lowest agreement (72%) pertained to the provision of learner opportunities to participate, pointing to potential gaps in learner support or enrichment. While 77% of teachers affirmed a collaborative school culture, concerns emerged around discipline enforcement, where 16% expressed disagreement—despite an overall 83% agreement—highlighting inconsistencies in learner behaviour management practices. These findings suggested that while foundational elements of leadership and collaboration were strong, targeted improvements in learner support and consistent implementation of an inclusive code of conduct could further enhance school climate and effectiveness.

Figure 107: Teachers' agreement or disagreement with statements applied to their schools- Helping learners



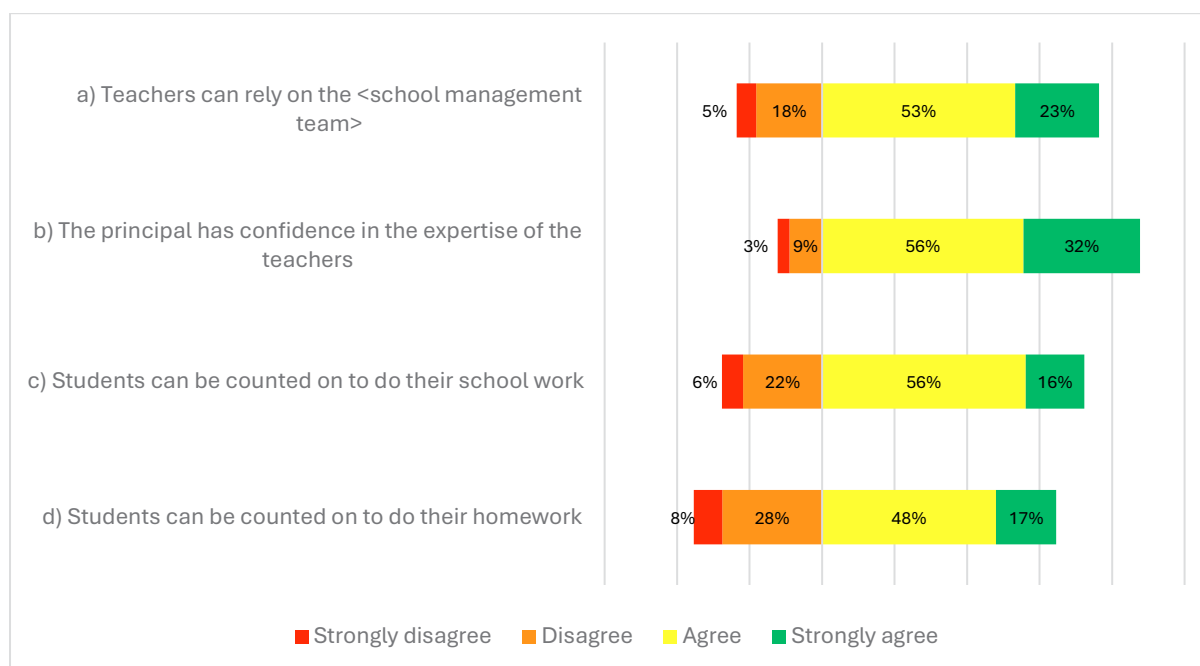
58. Teachers perceived and highlighted a strong culture of care and support within South African schools. The overwhelming agreement (96%) of combined (Agreed and Strongly Agreed) responses that learner well-being was a priority reflected a deeply rooted commitment to nurturing learners beyond academic achievement. Similarly, the high level of agreement (90%) regarding the provision of extra assistance underscored the responsiveness of schools to individual learner needs. Positive interpersonal dynamics were also evident, with 88% of teachers affirming both good relationships with learners and genuine interest in their views. These findings suggested that schools were fostering inclusive, empathetic environments where learners felt valued and supported—an essential foundation for holistic development and academic success. The data reinforced the importance of maintaining strong teacher-learner relationships and ensuring that support systems were in place to address diverse learner needs.

Figure 108: Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership



59. Teachers expressed a generally positive perception of school leadership, particularly in relation to the principal's role. The strongest endorsement (93%) of combined responses (Strongly Agreed and Agreed) was for the principal's ability to instil a sense of responsibility in teachers regarding their work, indicating a leadership style that promotes accountability and professional ownership. High agreement levels (86%) also reflected confidence in the principal's vision and efforts to foster collaboration among staff, both of which were essential for cohesive and goal-oriented school environments. However, the area of staff inclusion in decision-making presented a notable concern, with 20% of teachers expressing disagreement about being encouraged to have a say in school matters. While a majority still agreed, this gap suggested that participatory leadership may not be consistently practiced at all surveyed potentially limiting staff engagement and innovation. Addressing this issue could strengthen trust, improve morale, and enhance collective efficacy within schools.

Figure 109: Teachers' perceptions of general climate at their schools

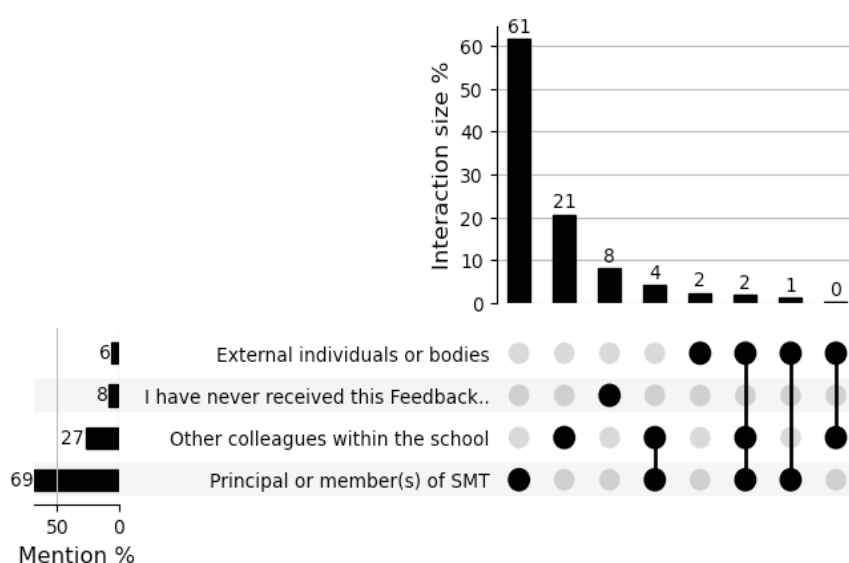


60. A nuanced picture of the general school climate is provided by teachers, highlighting strong confidence in leadership but concerns about learner reliability (being counted on). The principal's trust in teachers' expertise was affirmed by 88% of respondents (combined responses of Strongly Agreed and Agreed), indicating a supportive leadership culture that valued professional competence. Similarly, 76% of teachers felt they could rely on the school management team.
61. More striking, however, were the perceptions of learner accountability with 72% of teachers believing that learners could be counted on consistently to complete their schoolwork, but agreement dropped to 65% regarding homework reliability, with 36% of teachers expressing disagreement. These findings pointed to a disconnect between institutional leadership and learner responsibility, underscoring the need for strategies that strengthened learner engagement and self-efficacy within an enabling school culture.

Teachers' responses about the use of different types of information to provide feedback to them at schools

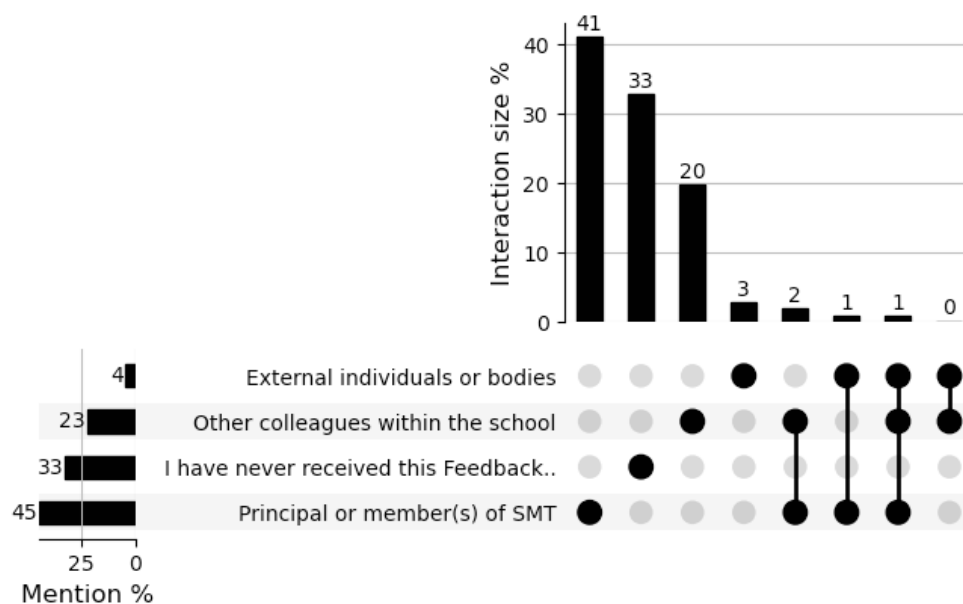
62. TALIS places a strong emphasis on the types of information used to provide feedback to teachers and recognises this as a key component of professional development, instructional refinement, and improved learning outcomes. The data enables national and provincial comparisons, supports evidence-based policy development, and promotes equitable, consistent, and culturally responsive feedback practices at schools so a more informed, adaptive, and globally effective teaching profession is strengthened and supported.
63. The responses from teachers represented on the scatter plot figures that follow, show both combined (multiple sources) and exclusive (single source) feedback received from classroom observations through to teacher self-assessment at surveyed schools.

Figure 110: Feedback from Observation of my classroom teaching



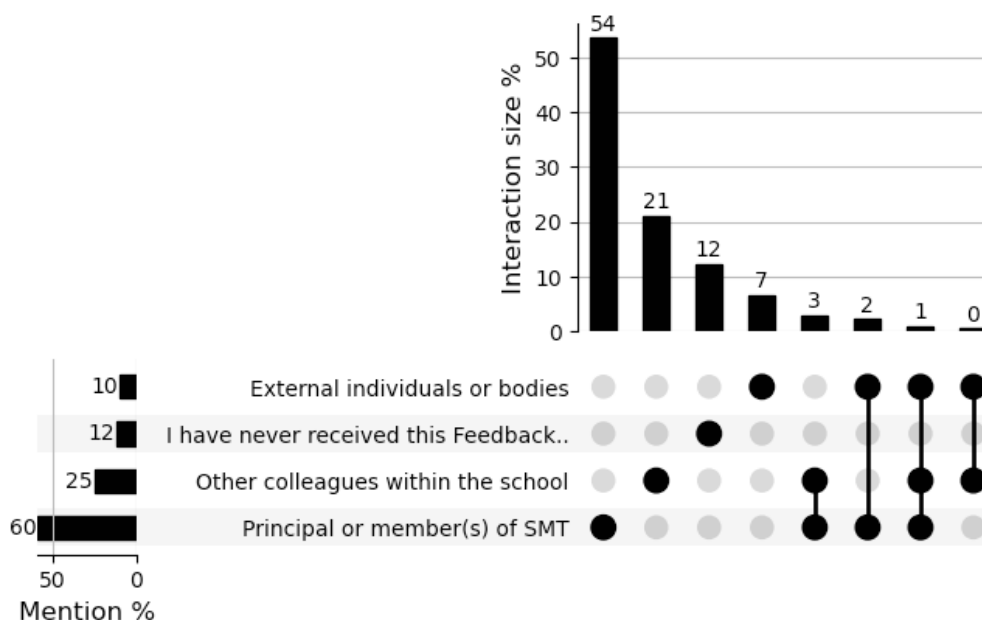
64. The principal or member(s) of SMT are the exclusive source of feedback from observation of classroom teaching for 61% of teachers. The next largest interaction, at 21%, involved feedback from other colleagues within the school and the principal or member(s) of SMT together. An exclusive feedback loop from external bodies accounted for 2% of feedback whilst 8% of teachers had never received feedback from any source or interactions at their schools. The remaining, smaller interactions involved combinations of feedback from two or three of the mentioned sources that constituted 2% or less of feedback on classroom observations.

Figure 111: Learner survey responses related to my teaching



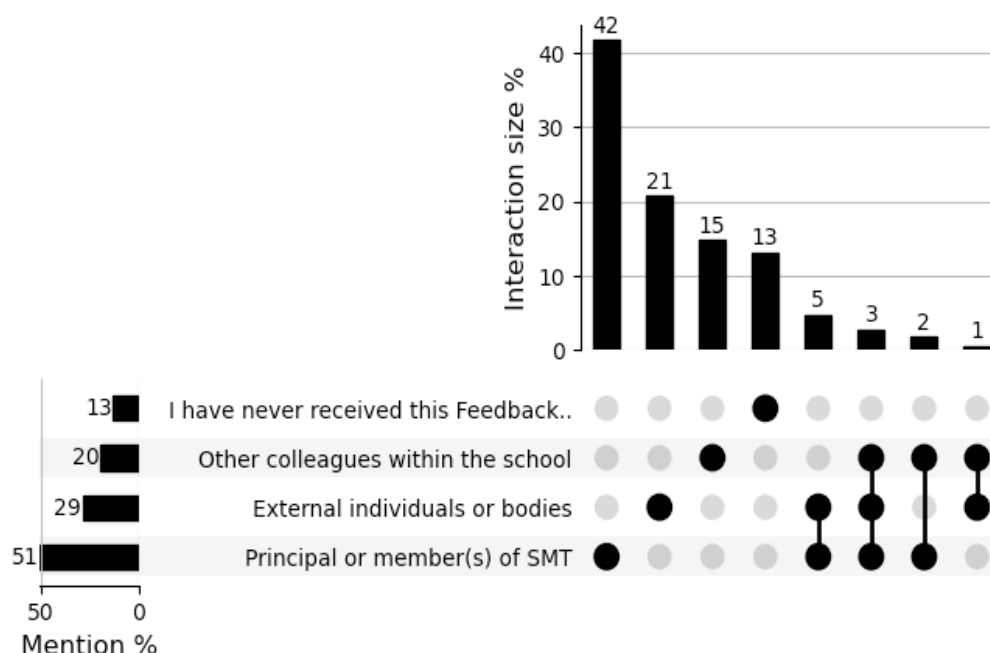
65. Teachers received feedback on Learner Survey responses, exclusively from the principal or member(s) of SMT (41%), 20% had received exclusive feedback from other colleagues within the school and 3% had received feedback exclusively from external individuals or bodies. One third of teachers (33%) reported that they had never received any feedback in this regard. Combined sources of feedback to teachers for 2% and less from interactions with other stakeholders at school level.

Figure 112: Assessment of my content knowledge



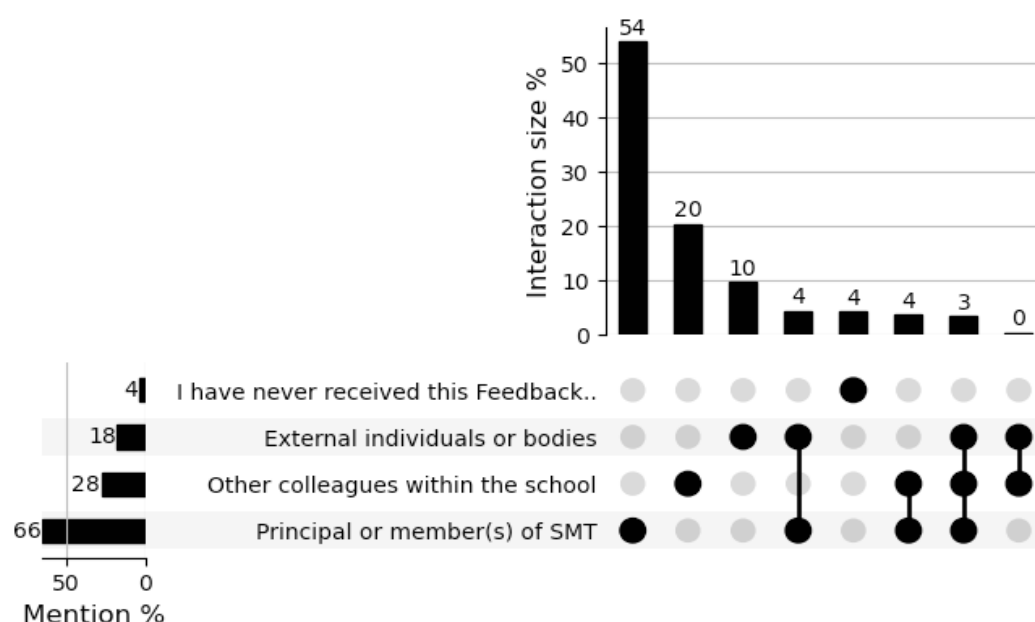
66. Regarding feedback on assessment of teachers' content knowledge, the principal or member(s) of SMT were exclusively the largest single interaction and source of feedback to 54% of teachers, 21% of teachers received exclusive feedback other colleagues within the school and 7% from external individuals or bodies. 12% of teachers reported never receiving feedback about their content knowledge from any source. Smaller proportions of feedback to teachers (between 1% to 3%) came from combined sources (i.e. other colleagues within the school and the principal or member (s) of the SMT; external individuals or bodies and the principal or member(s) of the SMT; external individuals and bodies, other colleagues within the school and the principal or member(s) of the SMT). Less than 1% of feedback on assessment of teachers' content knowledge was received by a combination of external individuals or bodies and other colleagues within the school.

Figure 113: External results of learners I teach



67. The most common and exclusive feedback to 42% of teachers on external results of learners they taught was from the principal or member(s) of SMT. 21%, of teachers had received exclusive external individuals or bodies, 15% from other colleagues within the school. The combination of feedback from the Principal or member(s) of SMT and External individuals or bodies accounts for 15% whilst 13% of teachers had never received feedback from any stakeholder on the external results of learners they taught. Combined feedback from external individuals or bodies and the principal or member(s) of the SMT was received by 5% of teachers.

Figure 114: School based and classroom-based results



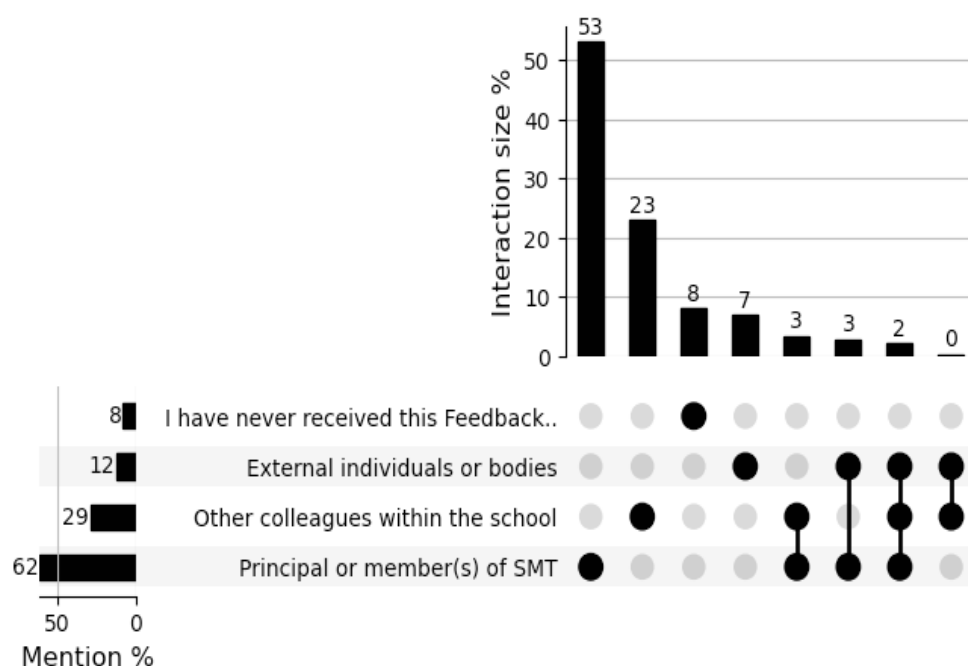
50. Regarding feedback on school based and classroom-based results, the most frequent, exclusive feedback received by 54% of teachers was from the principal or member (s) of the SMT, 20% of teachers received exclusive feedback from other colleagues within the school whilst 10% received exclusive feedback from external individuals or bodies. 4% of teachers had never received any feedback on school based and classroom-based results of learners. The other combined sources of feedback to teachers were smaller in proportion.

51. In the context of TALIS, “Self-Assessment of my work” refers to the surveyed teachers’ own reflective evaluation of their professional practice, effectiveness, and development needs as a structured part of teacher appraisal. In the South Africa, self-assessment of a teacher’s work is a mandatory component of the Quality Management System’s (QMS) Pre-Appraisal process. This reflective practice generally involved teachers:

- Critically reviewing their own instructional practices, the teaching and learning support materials they used, the assessment tasks developed and administered and their professional interactions with peers, managers, learners, parents and other education stakeholders.
- Identifying their strengths (e.g., in classroom management, depth of subject content knowledge, active engagement of learners, collaboration with colleagues) and any areas that required further professional development or support from management.
- Setting professional goals for the year, and to guide their career pathing and aspirations

68. The importance of teachers’ self-assessment lies in its function as a starting point for professional dialogue with line managers and goal setting during the academic year. When teachers receive feedback on their self-assessment, as indicated in the TALIS data, it signifies that school management or other colleagues are engaging with the teacher’s own reflection to confirm, challenge, or support their perceptions, ultimately linking this introspection to school level professional development planning articulated on the School Improvement Plan.

Figure 115: Self-Assessment of my work



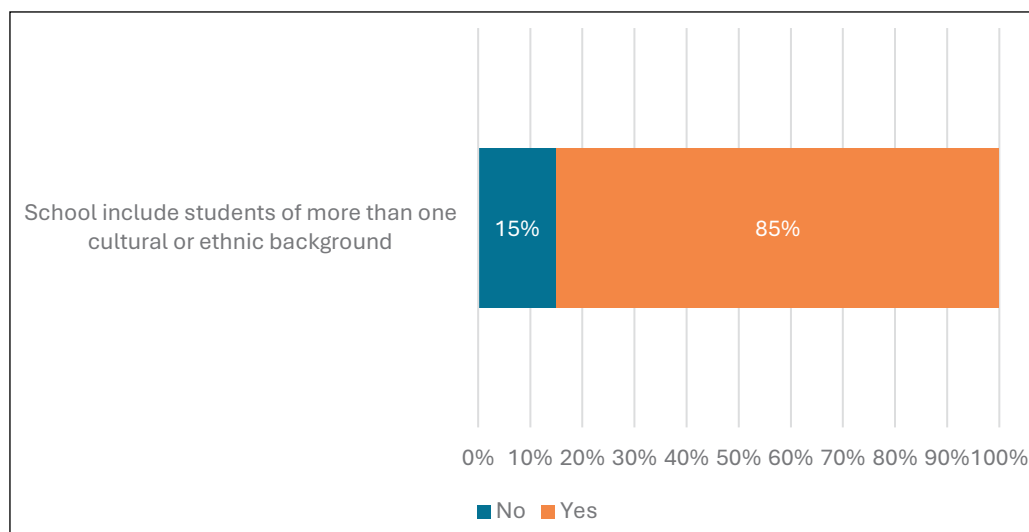
69. More than half (53%) of teachers received exclusive feedback from the principal or member(s) of the SMT on self- assessment of their 23% exclusive feedback from other colleagues within their schools and 7% from external individuals or bodies. 8% of teachers had never received feedback on self- assessment of their work. Other combination sources of feedback to teachers in this regard ranged from 3% to under 1%.
70. Teachers' responses on who uses information to provide feedback to them at school level revealed that this was predominantly the domain of the principal and members of the SMT. Whilst school management's involvement is necessary, the high rate of exclusive SMT feedback (e.g., 61% for classroom observation, 54% for content knowledge) suggested that was often hierarchical and one-way.
71. Feedback sessions should be structured to encourage triangulation of information where teachers received combined feedback (e.g. SMT and colleagues and learner data) to get a holistic and reliable perspective about their performance. The goal should be to increase the scope of the combined feedback) to foster shared accountability and richer discussion. Schools could formalise and embed processes to facilitate peer observation, team teaching, instructional coaching, and team-based analysis of learner performance data to promote a culture of shared responsibility and enable feedback grounded in subject-specific and daily practice expertise, which is often more targeted and immediate than SMT feedback.
72. Currently, learner feedback is an overlooked source of feedback to teachers and school management, but it is a rich source of information and a provides a critical perspective on the classroom environment, learner engagement, inclusive pedagogy and clarity of instruction. The SMT and teachers should be trained to collect and use this data constructively and regularly in feedback sessions.
73. Where possible, greater integration of external expertise, such as subject advisors, circuit managers, district officials, or experienced educators from other schools, should be included in specialized areas like content knowledge, assessment, curriculum delivery. Their involvement can provide an objective, system-wide perspective and introduce best practices from outside the school's immediate environment.

Schooling in diverse environments

74. Equity in education means that all students are equally likely to succeed in education regardless of their background and social and economic circumstances. This relies on students having equitable access to resources, i.e. support that takes their needs into account. Aspects of policy that are critical to achieving equity in education systems are equitable access to highly qualified and effective teachers, to high-quality learning opportunities, to a diverse group of peers, and to appropriate learning resources and technology, across the student population (Dupriez and Dumay, 2006[13]; Montt, 2016[14]; Van Langen, Bosker and Dekkers, 2006[15]; OECD, 2018[11]). To ensure equitable access to effective teachers, education systems must also consider whether teachers themselves have equitable access to support in their work. In TALIS, diversity refers to the recognition of and appreciation for differences in the backgrounds of individuals. In the context of TALIS, it refers to students and staff. In the case of cultural diversity, it refers most notably to variations in cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Accounting for diversity is a key component of equity in education, through national or school policies that emphasise the avoidance of discrimination and the fair treatment of all students.
75. Currently, in many countries, issues such as migration and refugee settlement are compelling education systems to respond to increasingly diverse populations. These developments and globalisation are also affecting teachers' experiences. Further, countries and schools also vary in terms of the strategies used to manage student diversity and the equality of educational opportunities offered across student groups (Blossfeld, Blossfeld and Blossfeld, 2016[5]; Dupriez, Dumay and Vause, 2008[6]; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010[7]). Education policies and practices can play a central role in promoting equity and social cohesion by providing high-quality learning opportunities, and fostering well-being and educational attainment for all students, and by addressing their different educational needs through diversity-related approaches to teaching and learning (Alegre and Ferrer, 2010[8]; Banks et al., 2005[9]; Borman and Dowling, 2010[10]; OECD, 2018[11]; Woessmann, 2016[12]).
76. Diversity in relation to migration, ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples, socio-economic status, geographical location, gender identity and sexual orientation, special education needs and giftedness, as well as their intersectionality, pose important challenges and opportunities for educational and social inclusion of all students (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019[4]). The extent and sources of diversity differ greatly across education systems and schools and can also change over time.
77. Addressing and accounting for diversity in all its facets, as well as their intersections, are key issues for education systems. In this regard, an important move from integration to inclusion has been promoted, which involves moving from targeting groups and schools under a deficit-centred approach to embracing, and adapting to the needs of, diverse learners. Thus, inclusive education is seen as a process by which educational communities overcome barriers that limit the presence, participation, and achievement of all students (Ainscow, 2005[21]; UNESCO, 2017[22]). Supporting and welcoming diversity amongst all learners involves promoting inclusive cultures, policies, and practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2002[23]). Also, it should be recognised that views about diversity and equity in education may differ considerably across national contexts.
78. Some of the main factors related to inclusive educational processes and equitable learning opportunities are teachers' mindsets, stereotypes, attitudes towards diversity, expectations towards different student groups, preparation to teach in diverse environments, and engagement and self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices that acknowledge and value diversity (Crozier, 2009[24]; De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011[25]; Good, Sterzinger and Lavigne, 2018[26]; Savolainen et al., 2012[27]; Tenenbaum and Ruck, 2007[28]). Indeed, educators can play a particularly important role in building resilience and raising aspirations of at-risk students through high expectations and positive teacher-student interactions (Sanders, Munford and Liebenberg, 2016[29]). Relatedly, teachers' growth mindset (the belief that intelligence is malleable) can improve students' academic achievement, particularly for students at risk of falling behind (Bostwick et al., 2020[30]; Claro et al., 2021[31]; Dweck, 2000[32]; 2010[33]; Farrington et al., 2012[34]).

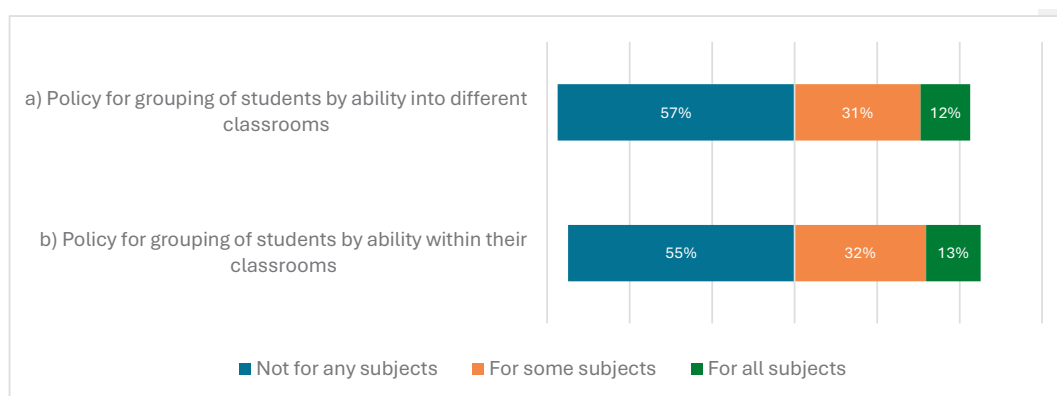
79. A diverse teaching and leadership workforce that reflects the diversity in the student population can also have positive impacts on the educational experiences of students and on educators' careers (Dekkers, Bosker and Driessen, 2000[16]; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010[7]); OECD: 2025: [17-20]).

Figure 116: Surveyed schools that included learners from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds



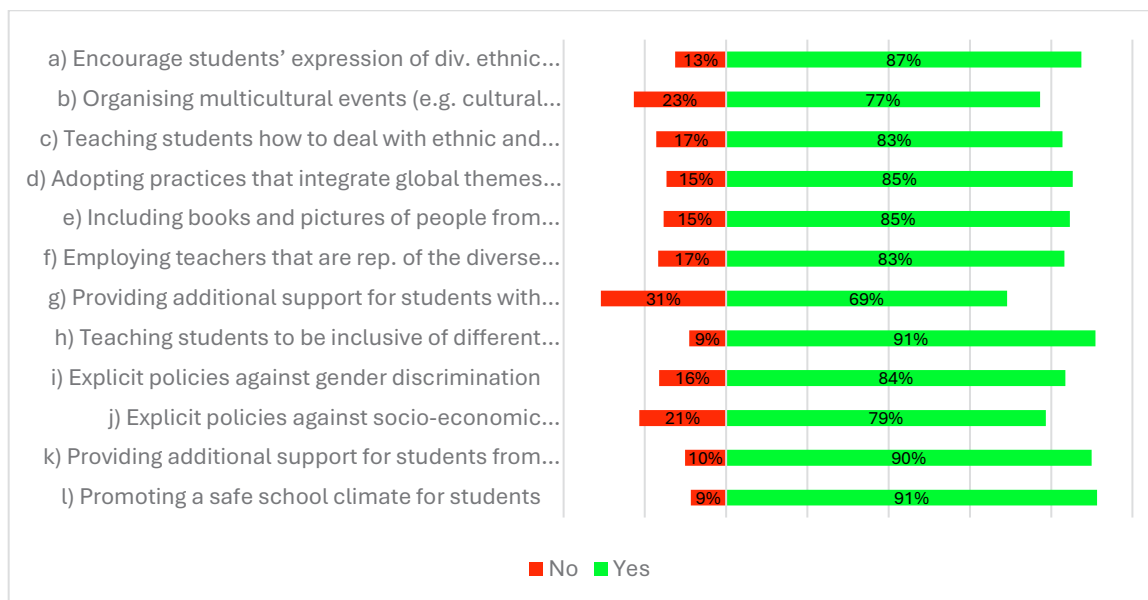
80. Principals at most surveyed schools (85%) confirmed that their learners were from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 117: School policy for grouping learners with different abilities



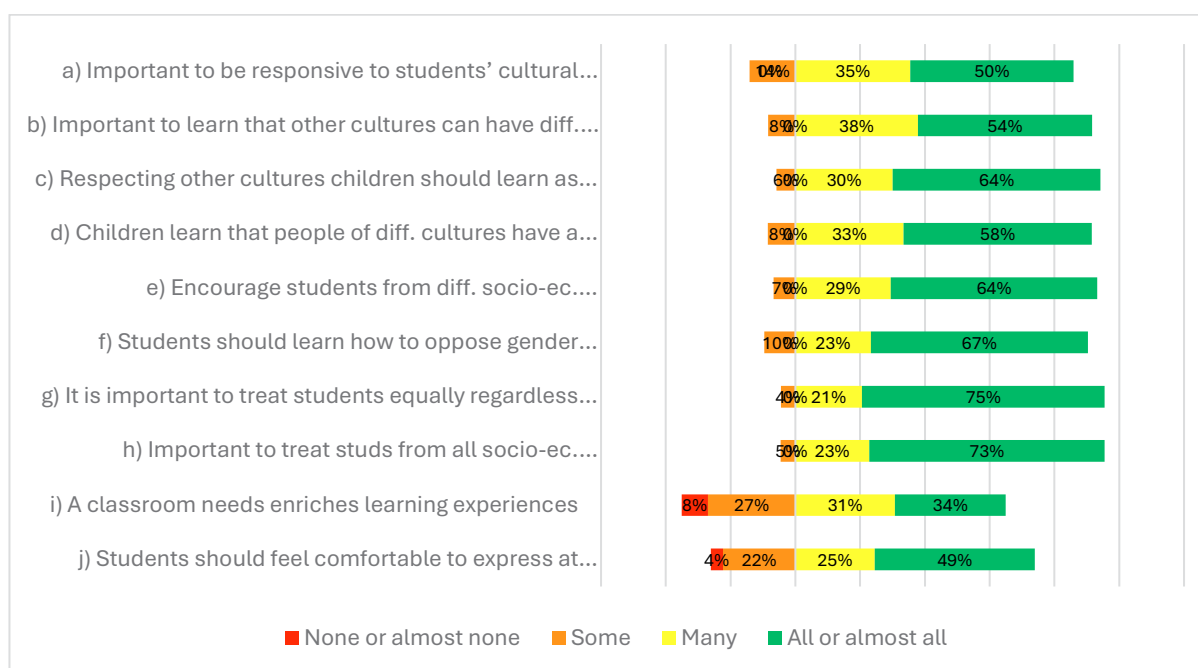
81. Regarding their school policies for organising instruction for learners with different abilities principals indicated that:
- When it came to a policy for grouping of learners by ability into different classrooms: 12% of schools were able to do so for all subjects; 31% implemented a policy for some subjects and 57% were unable to implement a policy for any subjects.
 - In terms of a policy for grouping learners by ability within their classrooms: 13% of schools implemented policy for all subjects, 32% were able to implement a policy for some subjects and the majority of schools (55%) could not implement a policy for any subjects.
82. On the modality in which learners participated in lessons at the sampled schools in the past month (August 2024): 85% of schools reported that all learners participated in person in all lessons. Only 2% of schools indicated that that all learners participated in online lessons. 80% of sampled schools indicated that learners participated in person while others participated online in no lessons.

Figure 118: Principals' responses on the implementation of policies and practices in relation to diversity at their schools



83. Principals' responses provided a clear picture of high implementation rates for policies and practices related to diversity within the school, as evidenced by the high percentage of "Yes" responses across almost all categories. The most frequently implemented practices, at 91% of schools were "Teaching learners to be inclusive of different socio-economic backgrounds" and "Promoting a safe school climate for learners". Other inclusive policies with high implementation rates (83%–90%) included encouraging learners' expression of diverse ethnic and cultural identities, integrating global themes, including diverse books/pictures, employing diverse teachers, and providing explicit policies against gender discrimination. The implementation of policies and practices with the lowest reported "Yes" responses, though still substantial, were "Providing additional support for students with special needs" (69%) and "Explicit policies against socio-economic discrimination" (79%). The data revealed widespread adoption of inclusive practices, and other practices—like integrating global themes, employing diverse staff, and enforcing anti-discrimination policies—also showed high implementation rates, suggesting strong institutional commitment to diversity at school level.

Figure 119: Principal's evaluation of teachers' perceptions of learner diversity at their schools



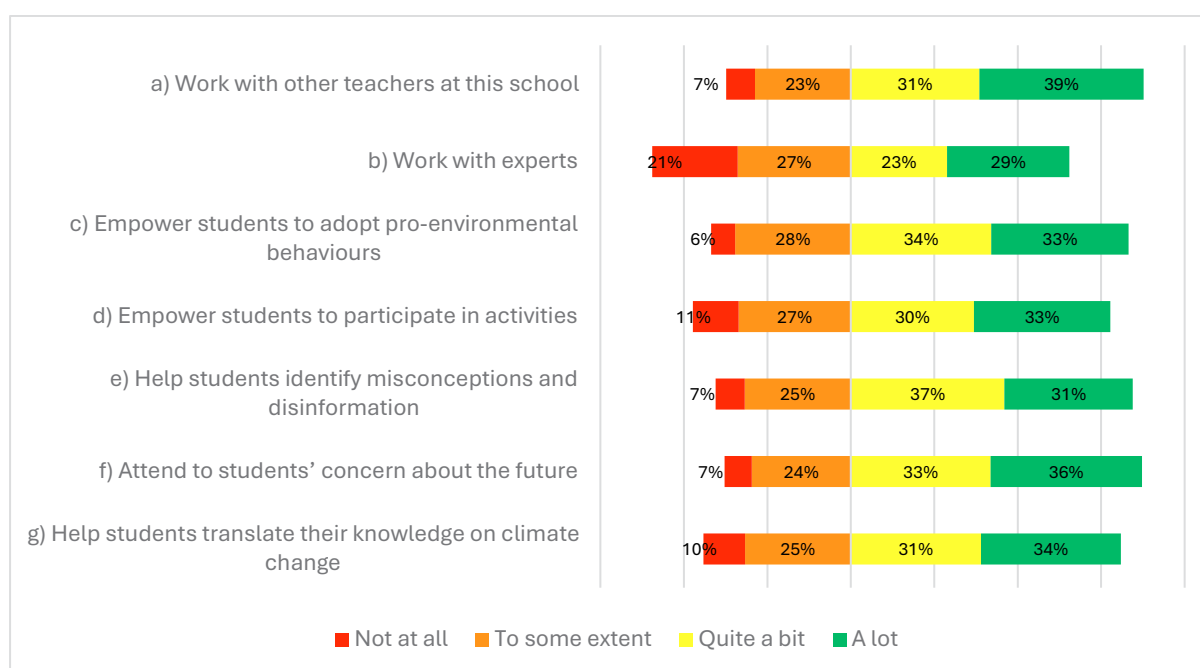
84. Principals' perspectives painted a more nuanced picture of teacher perceptions, where agreement with diversity-related beliefs was notably lower (than that of principals). While general principles of equality received high endorsement (73%–75%) from teachers, more specific pedagogical beliefs such as the importance of culturally responsive teaching and enriched classroom experiences garnered significantly less support (34%–50%). This disparity highlighted a critical gap: although schools may be structurally aligned with diversity goals, teacher buy-in, especially regarding the deeper pedagogical implications, remained inconsistent across schools.
85. In essence, while the schools' policy frameworks and initiatives were strong, the data suggests that not all teachers may have fully internalised the underlying philosophy of diversity in their daily, in-class pedagogical experience, particularly those requiring responsiveness to cultural needs or the enrichment of a diverse learning environment. The findings suggest that for diversity initiatives to be truly effective, the education system must not only implement policies but also facilitate stronger belief alignment among teachers through targeted professional development and reflective practice.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

86. TALIS 2024 gathered information about the extent to which teachers were prepared to implement Environmental Sustainability Education in schools, and how drivers and barriers affected their work. It further contributes to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) efforts by providing a detailed account of teachers' engagement with climate change across many countries. TALIS 2024 provides, for the first time, a global snapshot of teachers' engagement with climate change and their responses to growing concerns among students. It collects data on the following aspects:
87. Environmental and sustainability education (ESE) and climate change education (CCE) teaching practices include multiple domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. TALIS 2024 captured this complexity through a broad scope of indicators on teachers' engagement with ESE and CCE: integrating teaching about sustainability, talking informally about sustainability-related topics, raising awareness, addressing anxiety/concern, and empowering students to participate in individual and collective action. Given that most education systems do not (yet) have curricular standards and guidelines regarding ESE and CCE, teachers are key actors/agents in the realisation of international aspirations into formal and informal learning opportunities. Attitudes towards climate change were also measured by TALIS 2024 providing information about teachers' views of climate change, their level of concern about climate change, their familiarity with the current climate justice movement led by youth (e.g. secondary students), and their awareness of students' climate concerns.
88. Barriers to teaching about climate change education were another aspect of information collected by TALIS 2024. In order to understand why teachers decided not to teach about climate change, TALIS 2024 asked this group about the reasons behind their decision. This information provides policy makers with priorities for investment. For example, in contexts where curriculum resources are limited, policy makers and planners may want to invest in curating and developing resources in online hubs. Climate (2022[228]). Schooling in diverse environments (OECD: 2025: 37-38)].
89. TALIS 2024 also collected a rich set of items on teachers' engagement with ESE and CCE. This data allows policy makers to evaluate different domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioural, and is useful for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of national plans around ESE and CCE. Further, the data allows the exploration of variation across populations, school type, and teacher professional background (e.g. the subject they teach). This kind of analysis is useful for documenting gaps and inequalities, which is a first step towards developing improvement strategy. Finally, using classification techniques, TALIS data can be used to derive a typology of teacher engagement with ESE and CCE, the findings of which could be an important contribution to the current development of international knowledge and accountability infrastructure, and for the development of teacher training.

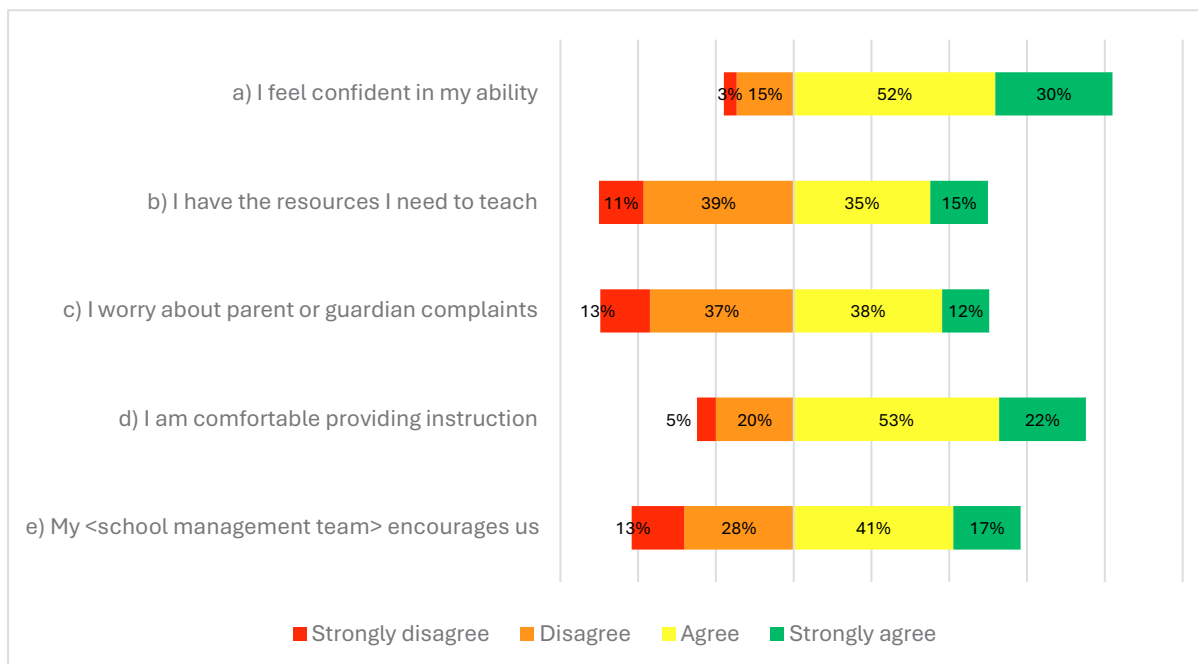
90. By asking teachers about current environmental and sustainability education (ESE) efforts schools, the education system is able to understand how well schools were equipping learners with the critical 21st century knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to address global issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development. The inclusion of questions about environmental and sustainability education (ESE) is important because these areas are vital to achieving global educational and developmental goals. ESE is directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, which emphasises the importance of education for sustainable development and global citizenship.
91. By understanding how ESE is taught, TALIS helps ensure that students are being prepared to make informed decisions and take responsible actions that support environmental integrity and social justice. Teacher responses provide valuable insights into their confidence, support, and resources, helping identify gaps and guiding improvements in training and curriculum. This data informs systemic change by showing how well ESE is integrated across schools and where further support is needed.
92. Additionally, TALIS facilitates cross-national comparisons, allowing countries to learn from each other's successes and challenges, and highlights innovative practices that can be scaled or adapted to different contexts. Ultimately, by tracking ESE efforts, TALIS empowers education systems to align with global sustainability priorities and cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious citizens.
93. Teachers from surveyed schools provided the following insights about their ESE efforts:

Figure 120: The extent that teachers could do the following activities related to environmental sustainability



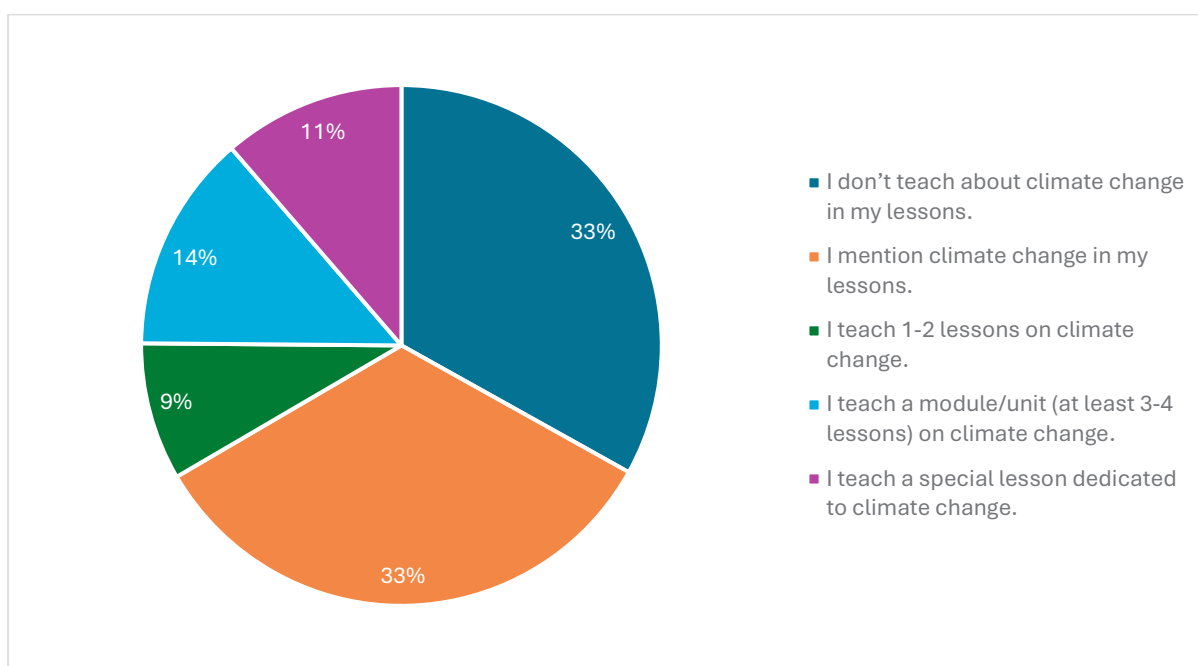
94. In their responses about their abilities to perform seven Education for Sustainable Development (ESE)-related activities, teachers expressed the highest confidence in learner centred tasks, such as addressing learners' concerns about the future (36% "A lot"), helping learners apply climate change knowledge (34%), empowering them to adopt pro-environmental behaviours and participate in related activities (both at 33%). These findings suggested that teachers felt most capable in motivational and application-focused aspects of ESE. In contrast, activities demanding collaboration or specialised expertise received lower "A lot" ratings whilst working with experts scored the lowest at 29%, with nearly half of teachers indicating limited engagement ("Not at all" or "To some extent"). Similarly, only 31% of teachers felt highly capable of collaborating with colleagues or helping learners identify misinformation- a critical skill in today's information landscape. Despite generally strong engagement in core ESE practices, the data points to a need for enhanced support in fostering both external partnerships and internal collaboration to deepen the impact of ESE initiatives at schools.

Figure 121: Extent of teachers thinking about climate change



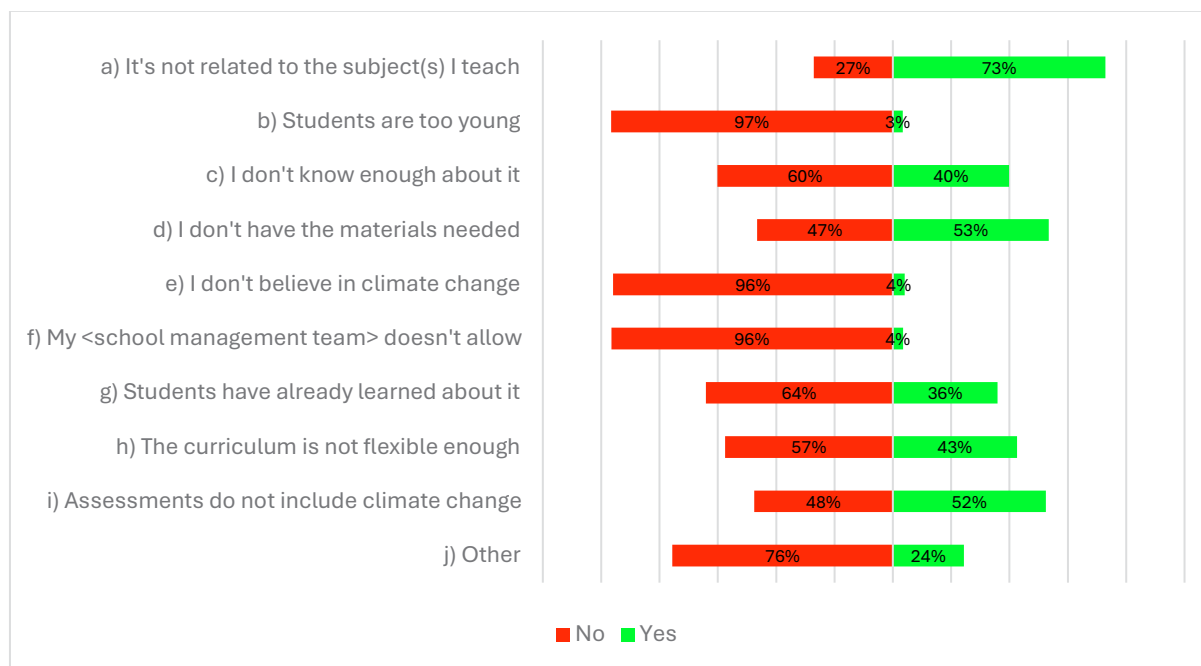
95. There was a notable contrast between teachers' personal confidence in teaching climate change and the external challenges they faced in doing so effectively. A strong majority of teachers (82%) expressed confidence in their ability to teach about climate change, and 75% felt comfortable delivering instruction, reflecting a high level of personal readiness that aligned with the activity levels reported. However, this confidence was undermined by significant barriers. Half of the teachers felt they had adequate resources, while the other half reported a lack of them, highlighting a major obstacle to effective instruction. Additionally, half of the teachers expressed concern about potential complaints from parents or guardians, which may lead to cautious or limited coverage of controversial topics. Furthermore, while 58% felt encouraged by school management, a substantial 41% did not, pointing to inconsistent institutional (management) support for Education for Sustainable Development (ESE). These findings suggested that despite strong personal conviction, teachers' ability to fully engage in ESE is constrained by systemic and environmental limitations that must be addressed to ensure meaningful and sustained implementation of ESE to be able to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 122: Teacher statements that best described their teaching about climate change in their classrooms



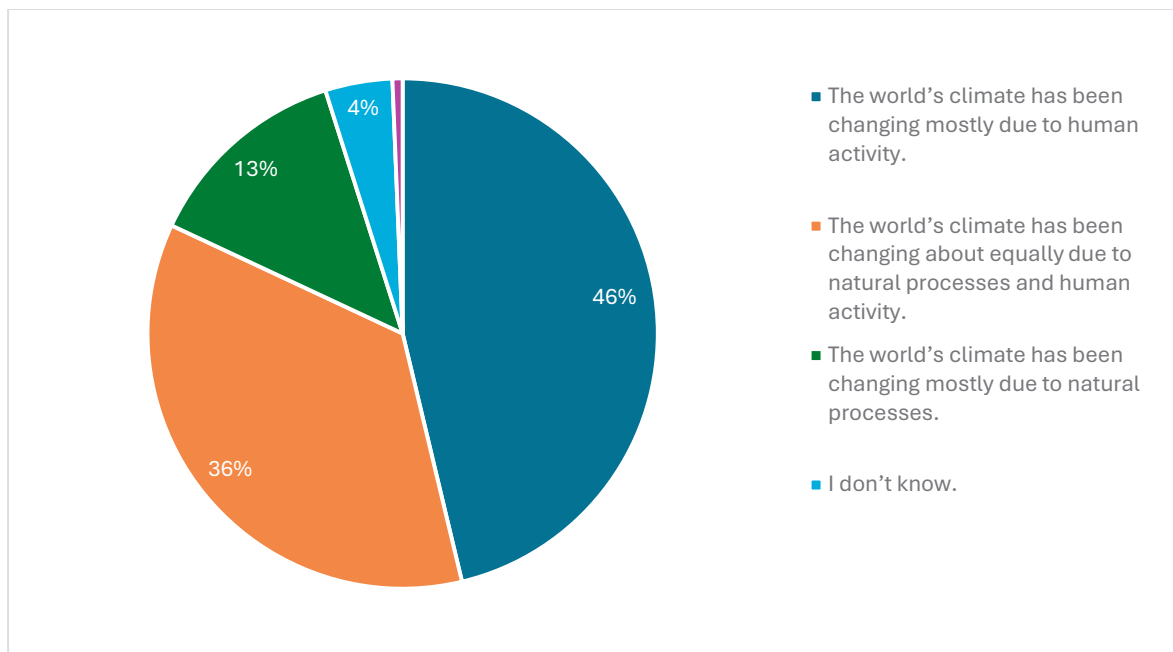
96. Teachers' responses illustrated quite a polarised approach regarding the integration of the topic of climate change into their lessons, with a significant proportion either avoiding the subject or addressing it only superficially (both at 33%) indicating limited engagement with the subject. In contrast, only a combined 34% of teachers dedicated structured instructional time to climate change (14% who taught a full module or unit, 11% who delivered a special lesson, and 9% who included 1–2 lessons). The most notable finding was the one-third of teachers just completely omitted climate change from their teaching, revealing a substantial gap in environmental education. This disparity sets the stage for examining the underlying reasons that are explored in the figure below, which delves into the challenges and constraints teachers faced in delivering climate-related content in their lessons.

Figure 123: Reasons that teachers didn't teach lessons about climate change



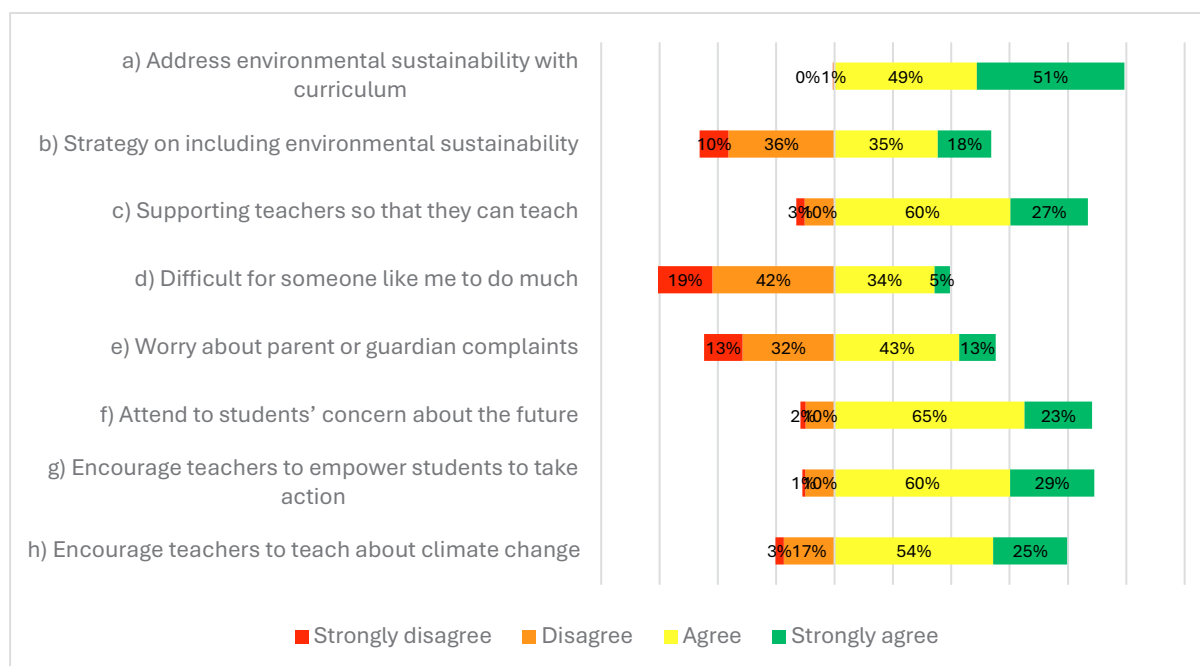
97. The primary reasons teachers said they refrained from teaching climate change were rooted in systemic and curricular constraints rather than their personal beliefs or institutional restrictions. The most frequently cited barrier, reported by 73% of teachers, was that climate change was unrelated to the subject/s they taught, indicating that many teachers, particularly those outside science or humanities disciplines did not perceive climate change as part of their instructional mandate. Practical limitations also played a significant role, with 53% of teachers lacking necessary learning support materials and 52% noting that climate change was absent from formal assessments, reducing its instructional priority. Additionally, 43% cited inflexible curricula as a limiting factor. In contrast, personal limitations such as lack of knowledge (40%) and concerns about learners' age (10%) were less commonly reported, and ideological opposition (9%) or institutional prohibition (11%) were rare. These findings suggested that the teaching gap was not driven by teacher resistance or disbelief in the value of teaching about climate change, but rather by structural factors that can be addressed through curriculum strengthening, adequate resource provision, and broader recognition of climate change as an interdisciplinary topic across the curriculum.

Figure 124: Teachers' opinions about the world's climate change in recent decades



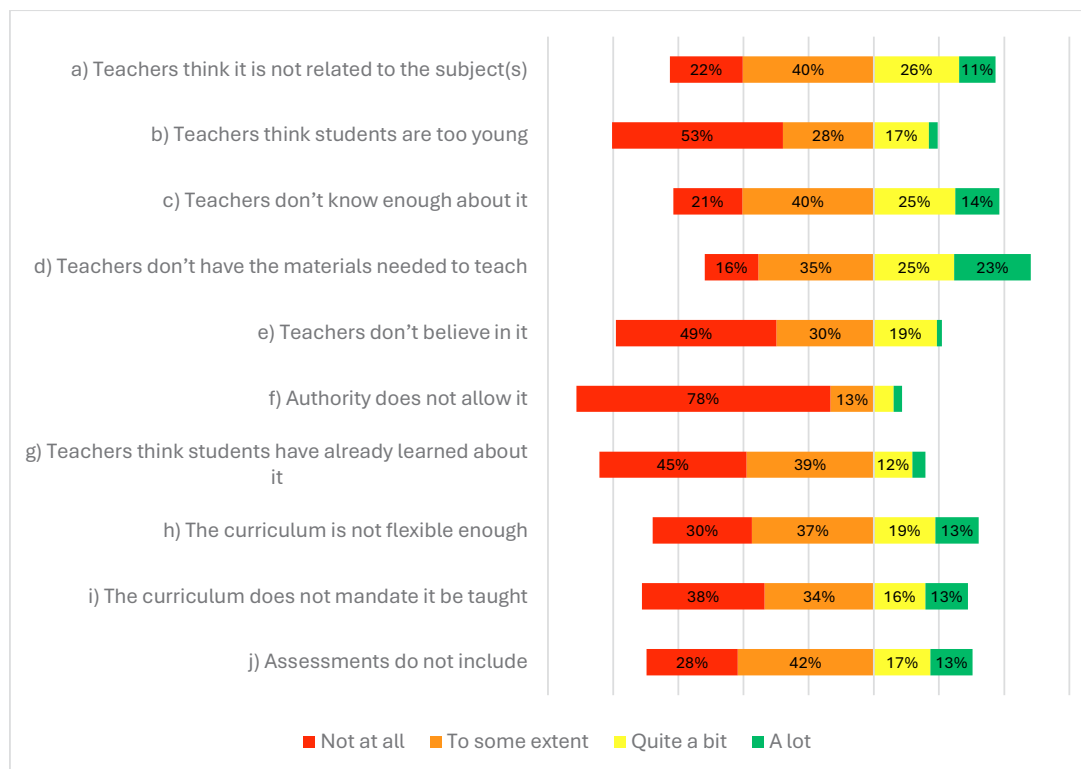
98. The data on teachers' perceptions of climate change causation revealed a generally strong recognition of human impact, though with varying degrees of attribution. Nearly half of the teachers (46%) believed climate change was primarily driven by human activity, aligning with the prevailing scientific consensus. Another 36% attributed it equally to natural processes and human actions, suggesting a more balanced, though less evidence-based view. Meanwhile, 13% saw natural processes as the dominant cause, and only 1% agreed that world's climate was not changing at all. These responses indicated that while most teachers acknowledge climate change and it being caused by humans, a significant portion held mixed or less scientifically grounded views. This variation may influence how climate change was taught in classrooms and underscores the need for targeted professional development to ensure educators are equipped with an accurate, up-to-date and scientific understanding of the subject.
99. Teachers were generally personally concerned about climate change and saw human activity as a major cause, yet they faced challenges in integrating it into their lessons due to subject relevance, lack of resources, and gaps in their own knowledge. While a significant portion of teachers engaged in climate change education to some degree, a large percentage either did not teach it or only mention it.
100. To balance the views of teachers on teaching about climate change, principals' attitudes toward their role, perceived barriers to teaching climate change, and their personal concerns about climate change, and their opinions on the causes of climate change follow.

Figure 125: The role of principals in supporting education about environmental sustainability at their schools



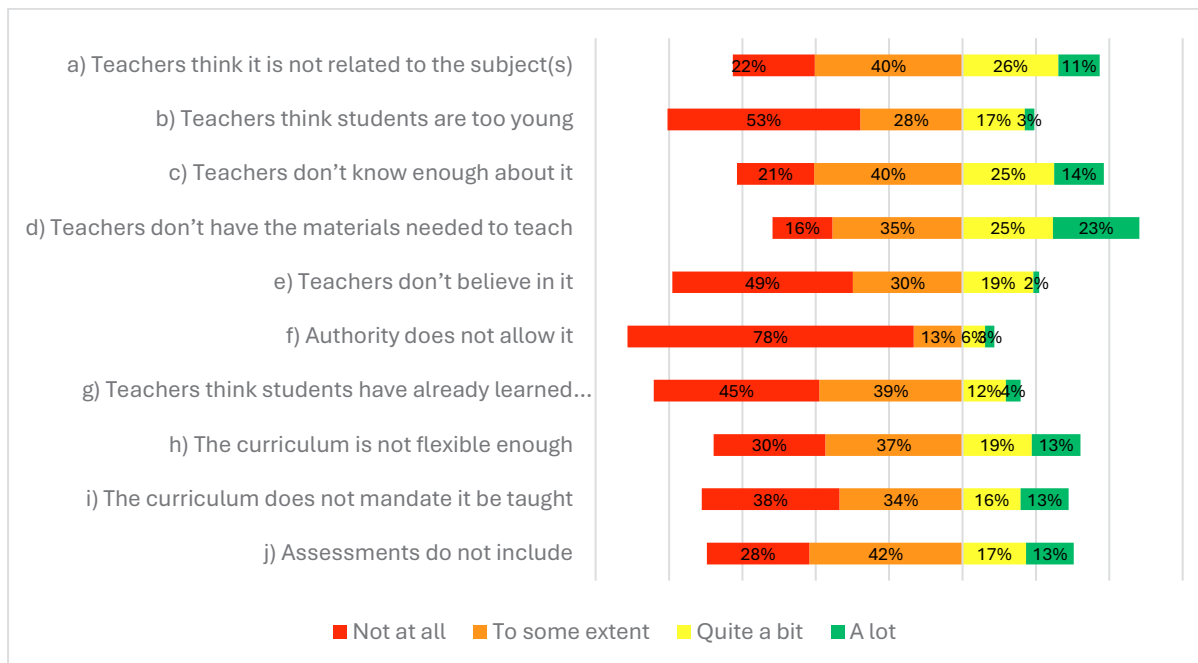
101. Principals reported a strong commitment to supporting ESE, particularly at the structural and motivational levels. An overwhelming 100% (combined responses of Agreed and Strongly agreed) of principals reported that they addressed environmental sustainability with the curriculum. This was the highest agreement, suggesting ESE was formally recognised in school planning and curriculum delivery. There was high agreement in supporting teachers so that they could teach ESE, with an 87% combined agreement. Principals showed strong agreement on encouraging teachers in active ESE pedagogy, with 89% combined agreement for encouraging teachers to empower learners to take action, and 79% for encouraging teachers to teach about climate change. Principals generally did not feel they were highly constrained. The lowest disagreement (61%) based on the highest combined Disagreed and Strongly disagreed responses, was for the statement “Difficult for someone like me to do much”, indicating principals believed they had an active and effective role. Worry about parent or guardian complaints received moderate disagreement (45%) suggesting their support it was a recognised concern. The lowest agreement item was for “Strategy on including environmental sustainability”, with only 53% (combined Agreed and Strongly agreed responses). While addressing ESE in the curriculum showed a 100% agreement, having a specific strategy for its implementation was less agreed upon among principals, suggesting implementation may be ad-hoc and not integrated into current curriculum delivery.

Figure 126: Principals' views about barriers to teaching about climate change in their schools



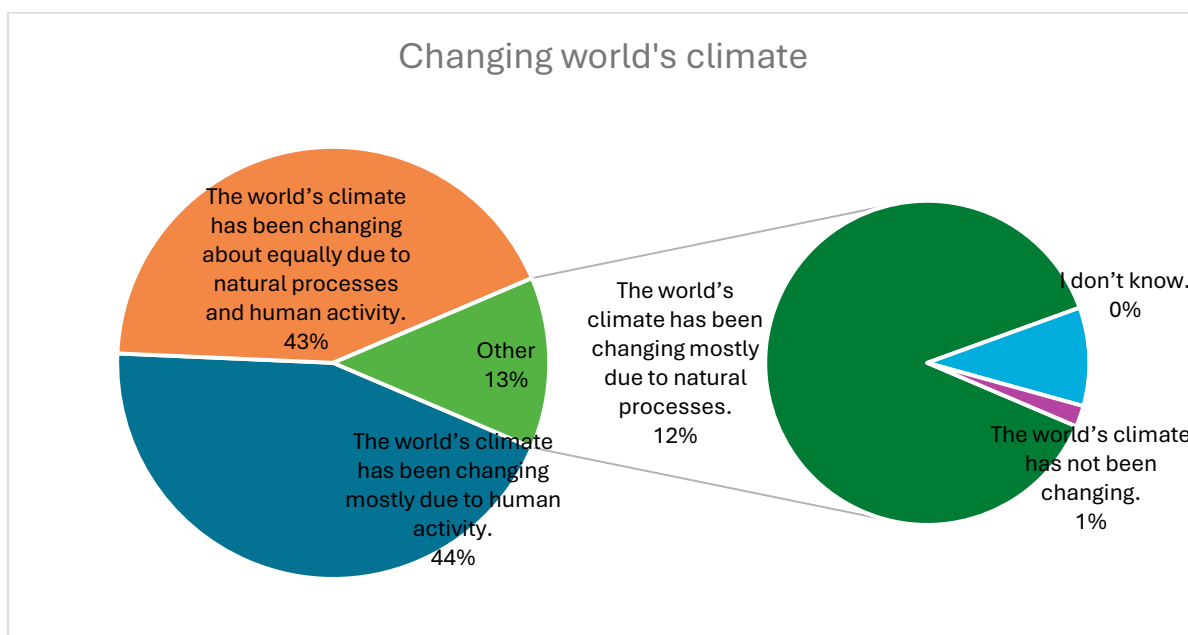
102. When asked to what extent certain factors were barriers for teaching about climate change, the data on principals' perceptions of barriers to climate change education revealed a clear emphasis on teacher-centric challenges while downplaying institutional constraints. A striking 78% of principals reported that "Authority does not allow it" was not a barrier at all, with only 6% viewing it as a major obstacle. This contrasted with teacher-reported data, which highlighted lack of management encouragement as a significant impediment, suggesting a disconnect between leadership perceptions and classroom realities.
103. Principals identified the most pressing barriers as curricular and resource-related: 48% cited insufficient teaching materials, 39% pointed to limited teacher knowledge, and 37% believed subject relevance was a concern. In contrast, ideological resistance and curricular mandates were seen as minimal issues, with only 2% viewing disbelief in climate change as a major barrier and just 13% citing the lack of curricular requirement. These findings indicated that while principals acknowledged practical challenges, they may underestimate the institutional and motivational factors that influenced teachers' engagement with climate change education. Bridging this perception gap is essential for fostering a more supportive and aligned approach to integrating climate change into school curricula.

Figure 127: Principals' personal concerns about climate change

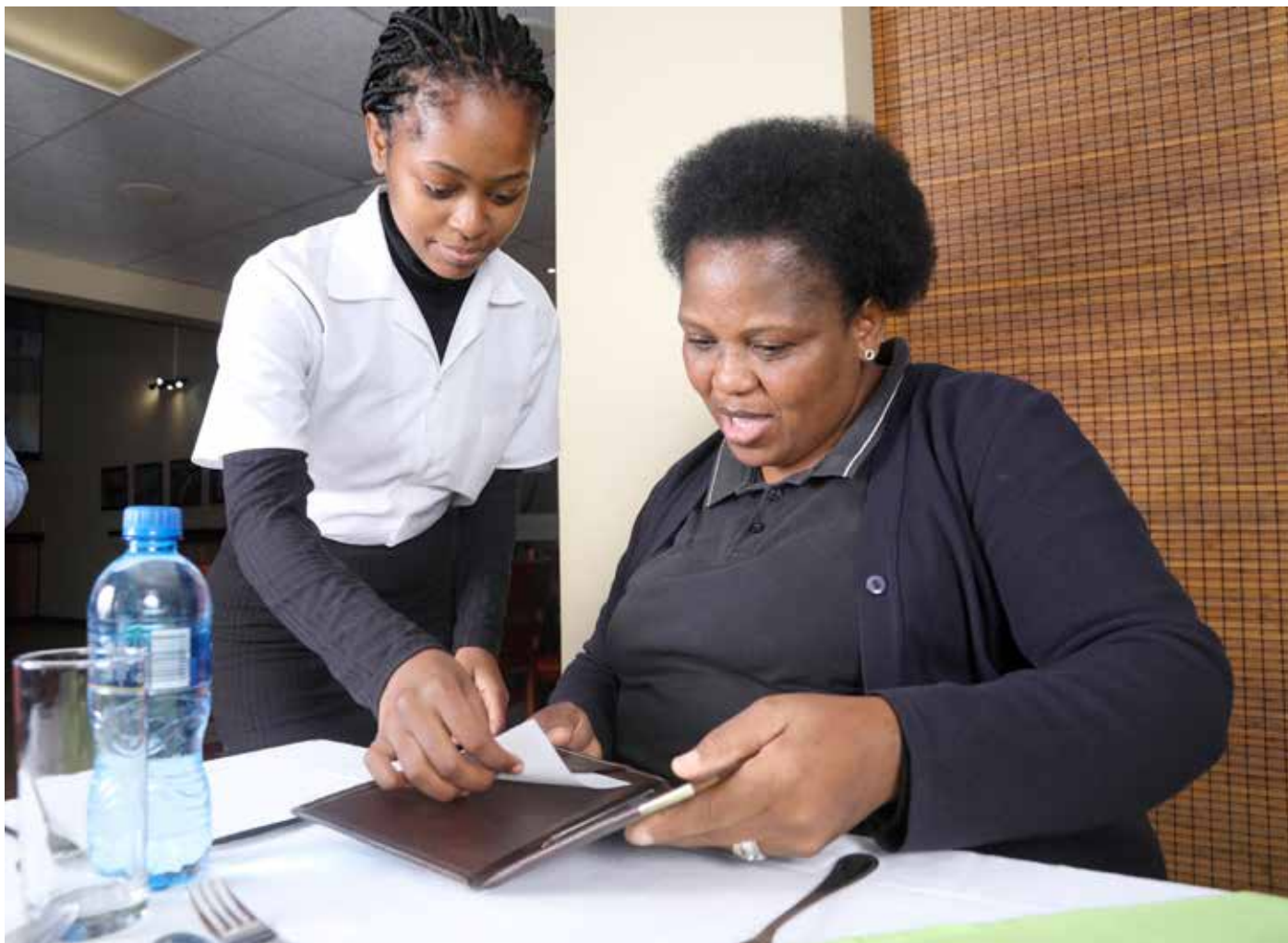


104. Principals' responses emphasised their strong personal commitment to environmental and sustainability education (ESE), as seen in their high levels of concern about climate change. An overwhelming 89% of principals reported being either "Quite a bit" or "A lot" concerned, with 64% selecting the highest level of concern. The near absence of dismissive responses (0% for "Not at all" and only 11% for "To some extent") indicated a deep and widespread personal engagement with the issue among school leaders. This high level of concern provided a foundational rationale for their support of ESE initiatives and suggested that principals were likely to be receptive to policies and practices that promoted climate education. However, this personal concern must be matched by institutional action and support for teachers to effectively integrate ESE into school curricula and pedagogic practice at schools.

Figure 128: Principals' opinions about the world's climate and the idea that it has been changing in recent decades.



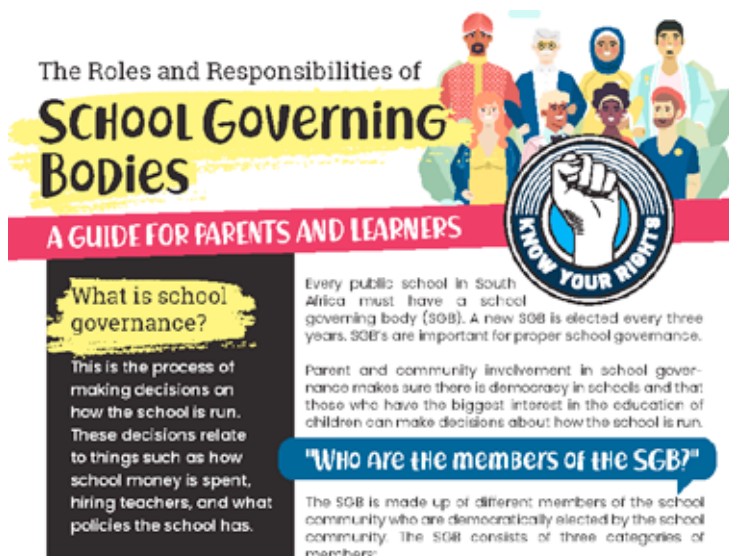
105. There was strong consensus among surveyed principals regarding the human contribution to climate change, with 87% acknowledging that human activity played a significant role. Of these, 44% believed climate change was mostly driven by human actions, while 43% attributed it equally to natural processes and human influence. Only 12% viewed natural processes as the primary cause, and virtually none denied that climate change was occurring. This widespread recognition of anthropogenic (human causation) impact among school leaders suggested a solid foundation for supporting climate education initiatives. Their collective understanding aligned closely with scientific consensus, positioning them well to advocate effectively for curriculum integration and resource allocation that reflected the urgency and relevance of climate change education at their schools.
106. Overall, the data showed that principals were personally motivated, highly concerned, and convinced of the human causes of climate change. This conviction translated into a strong commitment to ESE at the school leadership level, with high reported rates of curriculum integration and teacher encouragement. However, their perception of barriers tended to externalise the problem to teacher-centric issues (materials, subject relevance, subject knowledge) while downplaying the role of institutional policy gaps (lack of a formal strategy, management prohibition, or assessment mandate). This suggests a need for principals to move beyond high-level support and focus on formalising the integration of an ESE strategy into curriculum delivery and directly addressing teacher resource and training needs at schools. Practically, effective principals could make a start by focusing on:
- Curriculum integration for topics like climate change and biodiversity across subjects (not just science).
 - School Improvement Planning by integrating and implementing school-level climate targets, monitoring resource use, improving energy efficiency, and investing in green infrastructure (e.g., solar panels, retrofitting buildings) in their annual planning.
 - Engaging the local community in sustainability initiatives, such as local environmental clean-ups or the establishment of school or community gardens.



Information Box 7: Roles and Responsibilities of School Governing Bodies

EQUAL EDUCATION LAW CENTRE

The Roles and Responsibilities of Every public school in South Africa must have a school governing body (SGB). A new SGB is elected every three years. SGBs are important for proper school governance. Parent and community involvement in school governance makes sure there is democracy in schools and that those who have the biggest interest in the education of children can make decisions about how the school is run.



The South African Schools Act says that parents must make up the majority of representatives on the SGB of a public ordinary school. High school learners can also be members of SGBs. Learners are elected to the SGB through the school's representative council of learners' ("RCL") which represents the voice and interests of the learners in the school. The RCL members will choose who of them will sit on the SGB. The size of an SGB and how many members from each category must be included depends on things like, if the school is a primary school or secondary school, and how many learners are in the school. Your school will guide you on how many seats their SGB has. The SGB Chairperson must be a parent who is not employed by the school.



CHAPTER 6: Recommendations and Conclusion



CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS

The TALIS 2024 findings highlight both systemic pressures and promising strengths within South Africa's education system. While teachers demonstrate strong pedagogical commitment and relational depth, structural challenges—particularly class size, linguistic diversity, and leadership imbalances—pose significant risks to sustainability and equity.

Several critical issues that require a systemic response especially those related to workload and class, stress and administrative burden for teachers and principals with a disproportionately high amount of time spent on administrative tasks, leadership gaps, primarily that include a substantial gender leadership, low levels of formal training for principals and inconsistent instructional leadership by principals, ITE/CPTD Gaps that reveal low preparedness in critical 21st-century competencies, multicultural/multilingual settings, digital resources (32%), and environmental sustainability education. A major CPTD gap exists in Special Educational Needs (SEN), with 59% reporting no training in the last 12 months. A severe language barrier challenge, with 24% of teachers reporting all learners spoke a first language different from the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). South African teachers demonstrated the strongest collective endorsement of a fixed mindset globally (e.g., 50.1% agreed/strongly agreed that intelligence is something they can't change), which could negatively impact expectations for learner potential. There is potentially a high risk of mobility or attrition, with half of all teachers planning to work only 1-10 more years.

These recommendations leverage the strengths of the South African teaching profession, high levels of commitment, strong engagement in professional activities, high pedagogical autonomy, and high use of AI for efficiency to address the critical challenges identified by TALIS 2024.

1. **Enhancing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Professional Development via MRTEQ and ISPFTED:** The Department must continue to strengthen collaboration with Higher Education Institutions to strategically align ITE and Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPD) with the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) and the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) to close critical skill gaps. Expedite ITE Curriculum Modernisation to ensure that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) prioritise the review, revision, and standardisation of all B.Ed and PGCE curricula under the MRTEQ framework to ensure high-impact training in emerging pedagogical areas where preparedness is low. This must focus on multicultural/multilingual teaching strategies (only 33% felt prepared) such as Mother-Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE), Assessment for Learning implementation, effective digital resource integration (only 32% felt prepared), and Education for Sustainable Education (ESE), given the low principal action in this area.
2. **Address CPTD Skill Gaps using the revised ISPFTED and ensure continued support for teachers' Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) compliance through SACE,** with focused opportunities addressing systemic needs such as digital literacy and specifically, inclusive education/Special Educational Needs (SEN), where 59% of teachers reported no recent training, is paramount. The quality of mentorship within the practical learning components of initial teacher education must also be strengthened to better prepare beginner teachers for classroom realities. prioritising mandatory professional development in the areas of greatest need.
3. **Promote Growth Mindset among the teaching corps:** A targeted national in-service training programme should be developed to shift teacher beliefs from a fixed mindset (strongly endorsed by 50% of teachers) to a growth mindset, ensuring that teachers view intellectual capacity as malleable and capable of fundamental change in all learners. This is critical for improving learner outcomes and will validate the high levels of cognitive activation teachers reported using in the classroom.
- 4.

5. **Reducing Workload and Administrative Burden:** Addressing the severe teacher and principal workload and stress must be a national priority, enabling teachers to focus on instruction (currently only 66% of class time). This could include a systematic administrative review conducted by the national and provincial education departments. A comprehensive review to eliminate or consolidate redundant data collection systems and processes and paperwork, which is a high source of stress for both teachers (44% high stress from admin) and principals (41% high stress). Administrative time (15% of class time) must be drastically reduced towards the OECD average (9%). Systemic reforms should include reviewing and eliminating redundant administrative tasks and paperwork to simplify compliance and reporting. A centralised digital system (like an updated/modernised SA-SAMS) should be used so data is entered only once. Workload reduction is also achieved by investing in dedicated administrative support staff to free principals and teachers (including SBST members) from non-core duties like financial record-keeping and bulk photocopying.
6. At the school level, SMTs must protect teachers' time by adopting whole-school policies that move from extensive marking and written feedback methods (like verbal or whole-class feedback). Meetings must be streamlined with clear, instructional-focused agendas, and communication boundaries should be set to respect the right to disconnect. Collaborative planning time should be allocated for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to share resources and prevent individual duplication of effort. Principals must visibly model a healthy work-life balance, and technology should be utilised strategically to automate tasks and consolidate platforms, avoiding change overload when new policies are introduced.
7. **Invest in additional classroom support for teachers:** Expand programme such as the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) that places Education Assistants at schools to provide dedicated support to teachers. Provinces should review and identify sources of funding for dedicated administrative clerks and support staff in schools to take over non-teaching duties, freeing principals and teachers from excessive lesson preparation (49% high stress) and time spent on administrative tasks.
8. **Review the Post-Provisioning Model (PPM)** to allocate additional posts and support staff to alleviate negative impact of increasing levels of overcrowding at schools which pose a high risk to the quality of teaching and learning, provision of effective support to learners with special educational needs, teacher stress loads and the achievement of learning outcomes.
9. **Leverage AI and Technology at schools:** Capitalise on teachers' high adoption of AI (86% use it to summarise topics and 78% for lesson plans) to formalise the integration of AI tools for streamlining the process of marking and corrections (7 hours/week, highest internationally) and generating lesson materials, thereby reducing instructional workload stress.
10. **Strengthen Inclusive Education and Language support training and mediation of the SIAS policy** and ensure School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) are adequately capacitated and resourced to effectively implement the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy, especially considering the high workload demands already placed on these staff. This requires mandatory, practical training for all teachers and School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) on SIAS protocols and the completion of required forms. Furthermore, it necessitates dedicated funding for resources, assistive technology, and the appointment of qualified support staff and remedial teachers at school and adequate therapists, psychologists, psychometrists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, audiologists at district level. Robust provincial monitoring systems must also be established to track support and evaluate intervention effectiveness. Dedicated training is required for teachers, SMTs and SGBs to hone their management skills considering overcrowding and increasing levels of intimidating behaviour of learners to enhance school strategies that improve collective efforts manage learner discipline effectively.
11. **Promoting Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)** is recommended to leverage learners' home language as a learning resource and improve foundational outcomes. This requires significant investment in developing high-quality, culturally relevant learning and teaching materials (LTMs) in all official African languages

for subjects like Mathematics and Natural Science and Technology. Teachers, particularly in the Intermediate Phase, need specialised training to effectively use translanguaging and bilingual methodologies as outlined in the MTbBE framework. A national awareness campaign is also vital to educate parents, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and communities about the long-term cognitive and academic benefits of MTbBE.

12. **Advance Leadership and Professionalisation of school leaders:** The Department must strengthen the capacity and focus of school leadership to drive instructional quality and gender equity and the development of 21st Century competencies to implement ESE and the use of technology to enrich the quality of teaching and learning. Introduce/ Update a mandatory, nationally standardised Instructional Leadership training programme for all principals and aspiring principals, targeting the 17% who have never received this training. This training must shift the leadership focus from discipline and accountability to instructional support, increasing the frequency of formal, observation-based feedback (currently only 28% very often provide it). All levels of the system need to better coordinate support to all principals and consider differentiated support to principals to ensure their well-being and motivation are not ignored.
13. **Address Gender Gap:** Develop a national strategy under the ISPFTED to actively advance gender equity in leadership, setting targets to significantly close the 30% gap between female teachers and female principals. This should include mentorship and leadership pipeline programmes for female managers and teachers aspiring to become school leaders.
14. **Prioritise Retention of talent and expertise especially with the high risk of mobility** (half of teachers plan to work 1-10 more years), a national retention strategy must be developed. This should focus on professionalising the teaching role, improving working conditions (by addressing workload/stress), and enhancing the social value perception of the profession.

CONCLUSION

Across both cycles, South African teachers consistently demonstrated strong relational bonds with learners, prioritising social-emotional well-being and empathy in classrooms. Between 2018 and 2024, South Africa has made clear progress in pedagogy, professional development, and workforce renewal, but systemic pressures—class size, linguistic diversity, and gender imbalance—remain entrenched. The next policy goal is to translate teacher strengths into systemic equity, ensuring that structural barriers don't undermine the profession's resilience. South Africa's education system demonstrates resilience, innovation, and commitment among its teachers and principals, but systemic reforms are essential to sustain the progress noted. Addressing class size, linguistic diversity, gender equity, digital integration, and assessment practices will be pivotal in ensuring equitable, high-quality learning outcomes for all learners in the country.

Teacher

(n) pronounced tee-cher

A multitasking
Educational Rockstar
who lives to inspire &
loves to encourage.

They're kind of a big
deal!

© Learning in Foundations with Miss G

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