

# SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY NOTE

Results from TALIS 2018 Volume 2



*Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*



basic education  
Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## Foreword



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

I am pleased that we have participated in the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). As the only African participant in this global study undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), we have once again positioned our country as a learning system eager and willing to measure our capabilities among the best in the world. We do so knowing that many of them have far more robust and advanced education settings but we are committed towards building an excellent education system that stands up to high international benchmarks and standards. In this regard, TALIS aims to provide valid, timely and comparable information to help countries review and define policies for developing a high-quality teaching profession. The study provides an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in key areas.

Teachers are frontline actors in improving learning outcomes. While we recognise and appreciate that we are a “system on the rise” we are cognizant of work that needs to be done in addressing early learning gaps on reading comprehension and functional numeracy. Equipping the teacher with adequate knowledge and skills to deal comprehensively with these foundational hallmarks of learning must become the priority of an integrated teacher recruitment and retainment strategy from initial teacher education to continuous professional development. Given the import role our teachers and principals play, our education systems must take greater interest in the professional views of teachers as experts on teaching and learning. Surveys such as TALIS, which foregrounds the teacher perspective on their working conditions, professional knowledge, instructional quality, and the changing landscape will strengthen our efforts to re-engineer the education system to achieve the best possible outcomes.

In Volume 1, the TALIS results showed that that many of our teachers have a high self-efficacy and are motivated by an intrinsic need to influence learners’ development and contribute to society. In Volume 2, under the broad theme of Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals in South Africa, the results focus on societal respect for teachers, stress load and the attractiveness of the profession, job satisfaction, and proficiency on using technology and innovation. Findings on these areas are important for teacher recruitment, retainment and building the profession; if not considered can lead to tensions and policy collisions, which can undermine education reform and the best intentions of government.

*“Teachers are key in today’s knowledge economy, where a good education is an essential foundation for every child’s future success” (Andreas Schleicher, OECD).*

Programmatic determinations on the Integrated Quality Management System, Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign, Professional Learning Communities, and the development of professional standards for teachers and principals are an effort to build and enhance the teaching profession. As we continue to extend on systemic progress in the 6<sup>th</sup> administration, we want to realise elements of a ‘new dawn’ for teachers underpinned by a merger of collaboration and accountability within an enabling policy climate.

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

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



**Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP**  
**Minister of Basic Education**

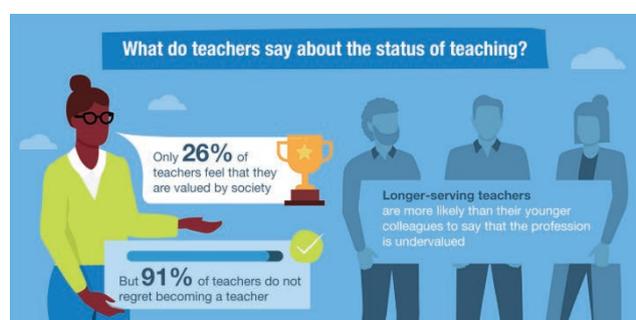
## RESULTS FROM TALIS 2018: VOLUME II

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

## South Africa

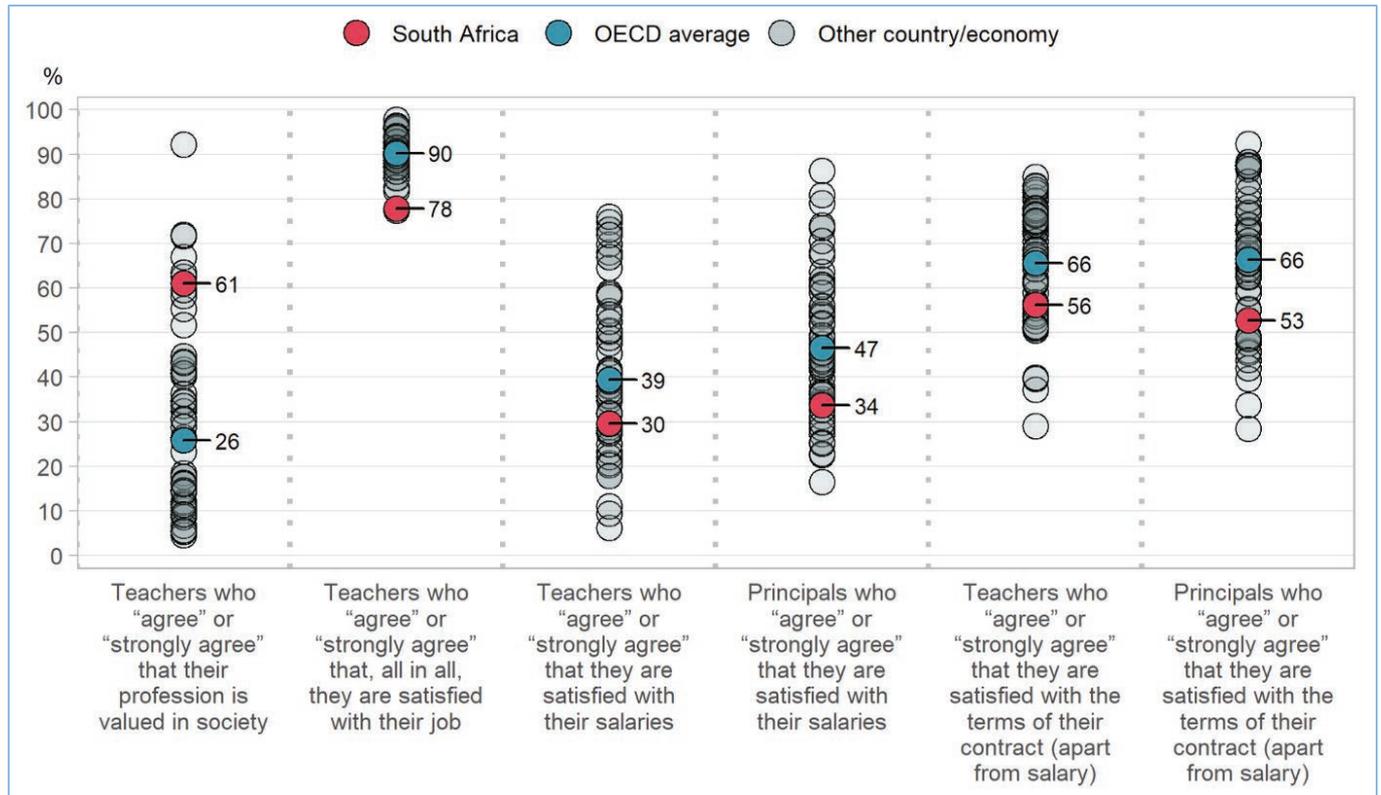
### I. What teachers and school leaders say about their jobs

The status of the teaching profession can be an important factor for recruiting and retaining teachers. To get a sense of the perceived status of the teaching profession, TALIS 2018 asked teachers whether the teaching profession is valued in society. South Africa is one of the countries with the highest share of teachers feeling that their profession is valued in society across TALIS; 61% of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that their profession is valued in society, which is significantly higher than the average across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (26%). In South Africa, the share of teachers who think that their profession is valued in society is higher in schools located in rural areas or villages (65%) than the share in schools located in cities (52%).



**Figure 1. Teachers' and school leaders' satisfaction with their jobs**

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



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

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables II.2.1, II.2.16, II.3.56, II.3.65, II.3.59 and II.3.66.

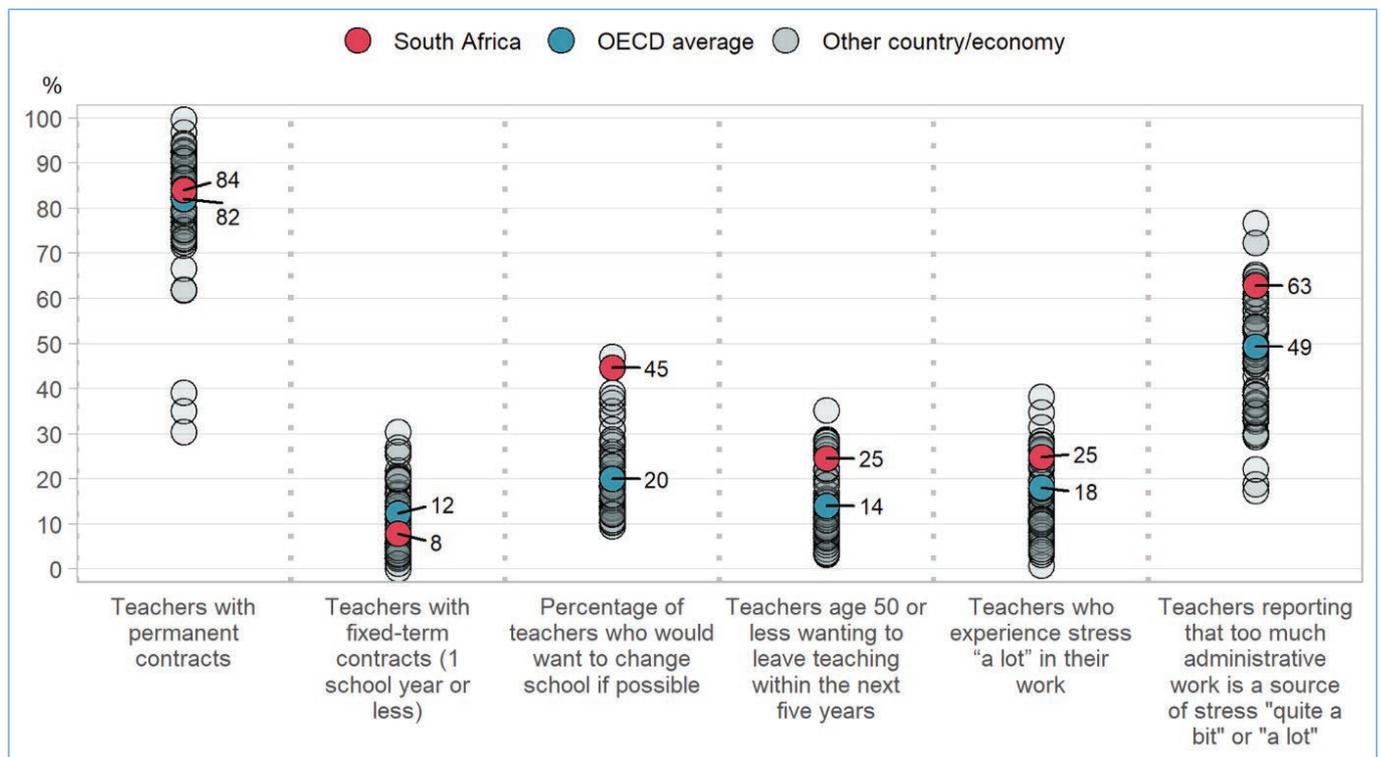
- Between 2013 and 2018, the percentage of teachers reporting that the profession is valued in society has increased in almost half of the countries and economies with available data.
- Teachers in South Africa have comparatively lower levels of satisfaction compared to the OECD countries participating in TALIS. Eighteen percent of teachers regret having decided to become a teacher and 51% wonder if it would have been better to choose another profession, in contrast to an OECD average of 9% and 34%, respectively. In South Africa, a higher share of teachers working in publicly managed schools (53%) than in privately managed schools (34%) wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession.
- TALIS defines job satisfaction as the sense of fulfilment and gratification that teachers get from their work. Job satisfaction may have a positive association with teachers' attitudes towards their work and with their performance. In South Africa, 78% of teachers report that, all in all, they are satisfied with their job (OECD average 90%). Moreover, 56% of teachers are satisfied with the terms of their teaching contract (apart from salary) (OECD average 66%). In South Africa 30% of teachers report being satisfied with their salaries, which is lower than the OECD average (39%).
- In South Africa, 87% of school leaders report that, all in all, they are satisfied with their job (OECD average 95%). Moreover, 53% of school leaders report being satisfied with the terms of their contract (apart from salary) (OECD average 66%). In South Africa 34% of school leaders are satisfied with their salaries, which is lower than the OECD average (47%).
- As was the case for teachers, South Africa also has a comparatively high share of principals stating that they wonder if it would have been better to choose another profession; 33% of principals express this sentiment in contrast to 20% on average across the OECD.

## II. Working conditions, career mobility and risk of attrition

- What factors could be shaping teachers' satisfaction? As well as career stability, mobility and working conditions could be playing a large role in teachers' reported levels of satisfaction. Regarding career stability, commitments to increase the financial remuneration of teachers and principals and to secure it through permanent contracts can compete with the need to limit costs and ensure flexibility in government expenditure.

Figure 2. Teachers' working conditions, mobility and risk of attrition

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers



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

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables II.3.1, II.2.16, II.2.63, II.2.36 and II.2.43.

- In South Africa, 84% of teachers have a permanent contract (an ongoing contract with no fixed end-point before the age of retirement) (OECD average 82%). At the same time, 8% of teachers in South Africa are employed on contracts of one year or less, which is lower than the average in the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (OECD average 12%). In South Africa, teachers who are employed on this type of contract tend to report lower levels of self-efficacy for teaching.
- Regarding teacher mobility, in South Africa, 45% of teachers would like to change to another school if that were possible (OECD average 20%). South Africa is among the TALIS countries and economies with the largest share of teachers wanting to change to another school, only exceeded by Saudi Arabia (47%). In South Africa, the share of teachers in schools in rural or village areas expressing this sentiment (59%) is higher than the share of teachers in city schools (40%).
- On average across the OECD, teachers who would like to change to another school are less satisfied with the profession, did not pick teaching as a first-choice career and are slightly younger and less experienced in their current school than other teachers. They are also more likely to work full-time and to report teaching in a target class with a slightly higher concentration of disadvantaged students, low academic achievers and students with behavioural problems.

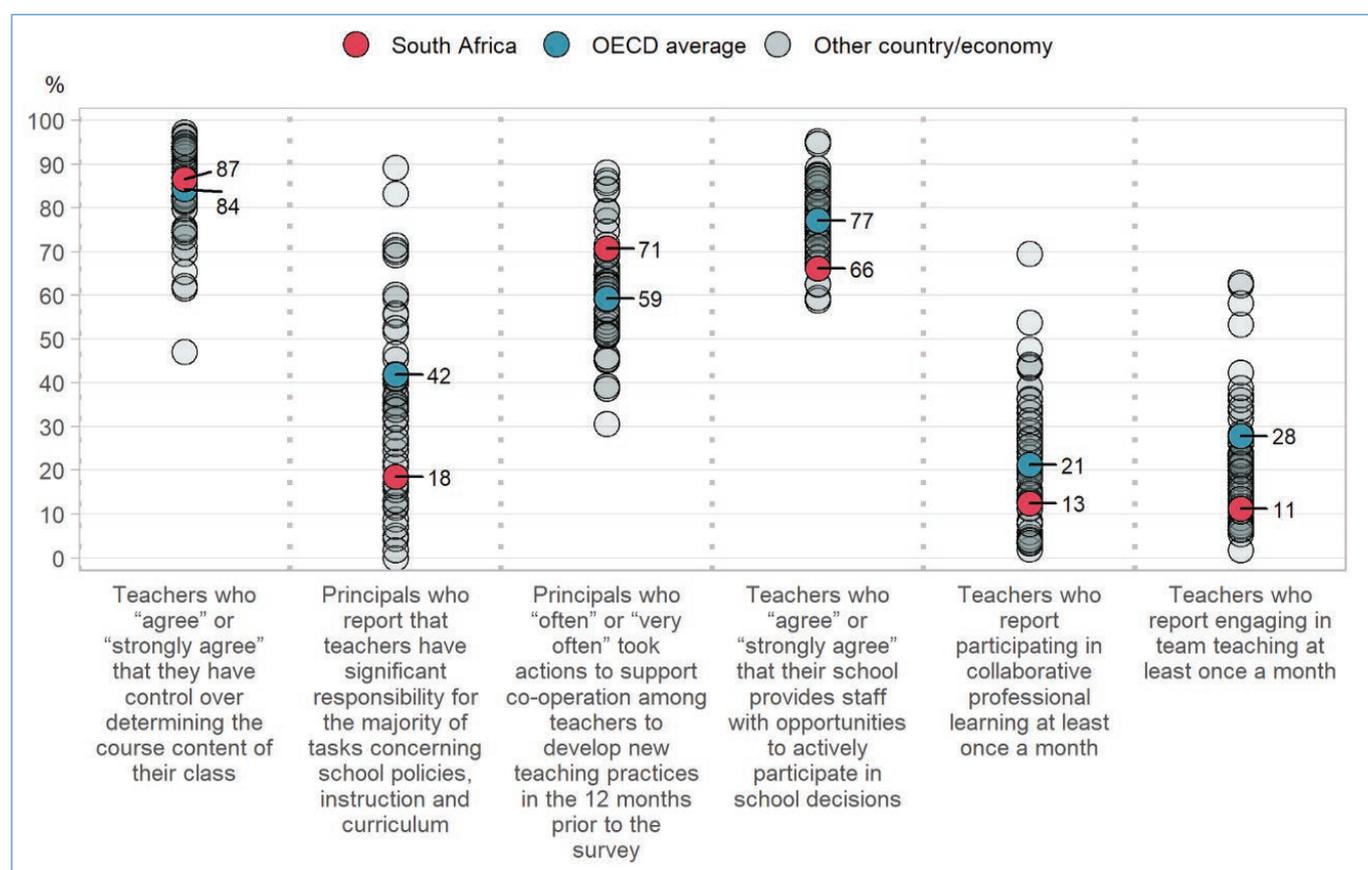
- Attrition is another factor related to teachers' mobility. Attrition among teachers may affect student achievement by having a negative impact on the school climate and on implementation of the curriculum. Attrition can also lead to significant financial costs for educational systems brought by the need to replace qualified teachers in affected schools. As a proxy measure for the risk of attrition, TALIS uses the intention of teachers to remain in teaching. In South Africa, 30% of teachers report that they would like to leave teaching within the next five years (OECD average 25%). Furthermore, 25% of teachers age 50 or less in South Africa would like to leave teaching in the next five years, which is higher than the OECD average (14%). A higher share of teachers age 50 or less in city schools (30%) than the share in rural or village schools (20%) want to leave teaching within the next five years.
- Acute stress at work can be associated with teachers' job satisfaction and their intention to continue teaching. Furthermore, stressful environments and situations may affect the practices and motivation of teachers and principals, and even student achievement. In South Africa, 25% of teachers report experiencing stress in their work "a lot", which is higher than the OECD average (18%). Interestingly, in South Africa, the share of teachers experiencing stress in their work "a lot" is higher in city schools (28%) than in schools in rural or village areas (15%).
- Furthermore, TALIS also asked teachers about the extent to which their job negatively affects their mental and physical health. In South Africa, 12% of teachers report that their job negatively impacts their mental and physical health "a lot", in contrast to OECD averages of 7% and 6%, respectively. Another indicator of the impact of teachers' stress is whether the work leaves room for the individual's own personal time. In South Africa, 18% of teachers consider that their work never leaves room for their personal life (OECD average 6%).
- Almost half of the teachers in the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS report that having too much administrative work is a source of stress they experience at work "quite a bit" or "a lot". In South Africa, the three most prevalent sources of stress teachers experience at work "quite a bit" or "a lot" are being held responsible for students' achievement (75%, in contrast to the OECD average of 44%), having too much marking (73% in contrast to OECD average of 41%) and administrative tasks (63%, in contrast to the OECD average of 49%). For principals, the three most prevalent sources of stress are maintaining school discipline, having too much administrative work to do and being held responsible for students' achievement.
- On average across the OECD countries and economies in TALIS, teachers who report experiencing stress in their work "a lot" are twice as likely as colleagues with lower levels of stress to report that they will stop working as teachers in the next five years. In South Africa, teachers who report experiencing stress at their work "a lot" are 40% more likely to want to leave teaching in the next five years.

### III. Supporting professional autonomy, collegiality and collaboration

- TALIS shows promising directions to take to make the job of teachers more rewarding and fulfilling. Teachers' autonomy is an important factor for promoting experimentation in the classroom. In South Africa, 87% of teachers report having control over determining course content in their class, compared to 84% on average across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS. In South Africa, teachers reporting higher levels of control over their class are more likely to report working in innovative school environments.
- Opportunities for teachers to have a voice in developing the school vision and goals are an integral component of teacher leadership. In South Africa, 18% of principals report that their teachers have significant responsibility for the majority of the tasks related to school policies, curriculum and instruction, which is lower than the OECD average (42%).
- Teachers' input does not necessarily have to be tied only to the school, as their voice could also influence policy making. In South Africa, 52% believe that they can influence education policy in contrast to 24% of teachers on average across the OECD.

Figure 3. Autonomy, collegiality and collaboration

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



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

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables II.5.32, II.5.31, II.5.12, II.4.24 and II.4.1.

- Innovation in schools requires the support of peers and the guidance of school leaders. In South Africa, 73% of teachers say that they work in a collaborative school culture characterised by mutual support (OECD average 81%). Furthermore, 71% of principals in South Africa took actions on a regular basis to support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices in the 12 months prior to the survey, which is higher than the OECD average (59%). South Africa is the only country among TALIS participants that has a significantly higher proportion of principals in rural schools (90%) than in city schools (57%) who report that they took "actions to support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices.
- Principals in South Africa are also committed to the improvement of students' learning, as 91% of principals report that they took actions to ensure that teachers feel responsible for students' learning outcomes (OECD average 68%).
- School leaders can foster collegial and participative working environments. In South Africa, 66% of teachers report that their school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in school decisions (OECD average 77%). On average across the OECD, teachers reporting that their school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in school decisions tend to engage more often in some forms of collaboration.
- South Africa also showcases important levels of between-school collaboration. In South Africa, 66% of principals report that they "often" or "very often" collaborated with principals from other schools on challenging work tasks, in contrast to 37% on average across the OECD.

- School-level autonomy can be an important factor for innovation and collaboration. On average across OECD countries and economies, a majority of principals state that they have significant responsibility for issues regarding school policies. In South Africa, 38% of principals report having significant responsibility for establishing student disciplinary policies and procedures (OECD average 76%) and 32% report the same for establishing student assessment policies (OECD average 60%).
- Another important aspect of the role of principals concerns their capacity to establish working networks with other schools. Principals in South Africa seem to excel in this; 66% report “often” or “very often” engaging in collaboration with principals from other schools on challenging work tasks in the 12 months prior to the survey, compared to only 37% of principals on average across the OECD.

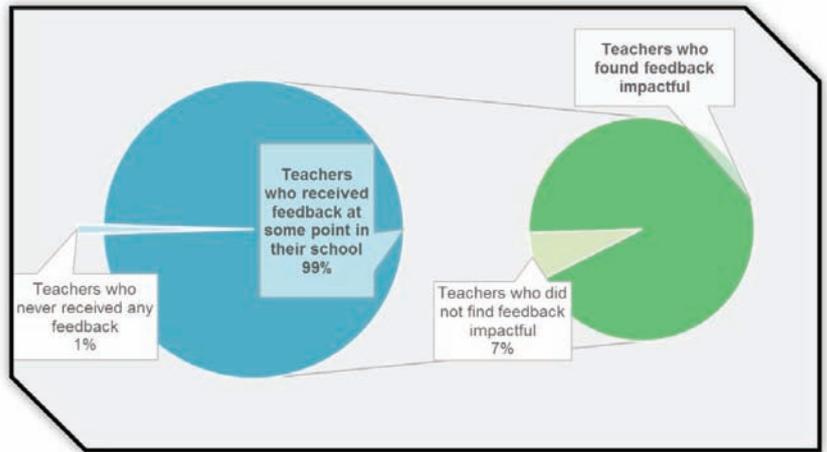


- Collaboration can take multiple forms, such as having teachers regularly discuss the development of students with colleagues at least once a month (47% of teachers in South Africa engage in this form of collaboration, in contrast to 61% on average across the OECD) and exchanging teaching materials once a month (47% of teachers in South Africa engage in this activity, which is the same as the OECD average).
- Nevertheless, deeper forms of collaboration are implemented less frequently. Professional collaboration can become a solid foundation for innovative and effective practices. On average across the OECD, teachers who engage in professional collaboration, which involves a higher degree of interdependence among teachers, also tend to report more frequent use of effective teaching practices such as cognitive activation. However, professional collaboration is not a frequent practice across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS. In South Africa, 13% of teachers report participating in collaborative professional learning at least once a month (OECD average 21%), 11% engage in team teaching with the same frequency (OECD average 28%) and 9% observe other teachers’ classes and provide feedback (OECD average 9%).

#### IV. Making the most of feedback and appraisal systems

- Teacher feedback is an important lever for improving teaching quality, since it aims to improve teachers’ understanding of their methods and practices. Feedback can improve teachers’ effectiveness by both recognising teachers’ strengths and addressing weaknesses in their pedagogical practices. In South Africa, 1% of teachers report that they have never received feedback in their schools (OECD average 10%). In other words, feedback in South Africa is almost universal. On average across the OECD, the forms of feedback most commonly used are based on classroom observations and students’ school-based and classroom-based results.
- In South Africa the forms of feedback most commonly used are based on school-based and classroom-based results, observation of the teacher’s classroom teaching and self-assessment of the teacher’s work. School-based and classroom-based results feedback is the most direct feedback method indicative of student learning and is particularly high in South Africa; 97% of teacher report receiving feedback under this method, in contrast to 70% of teachers on average across the OECD.

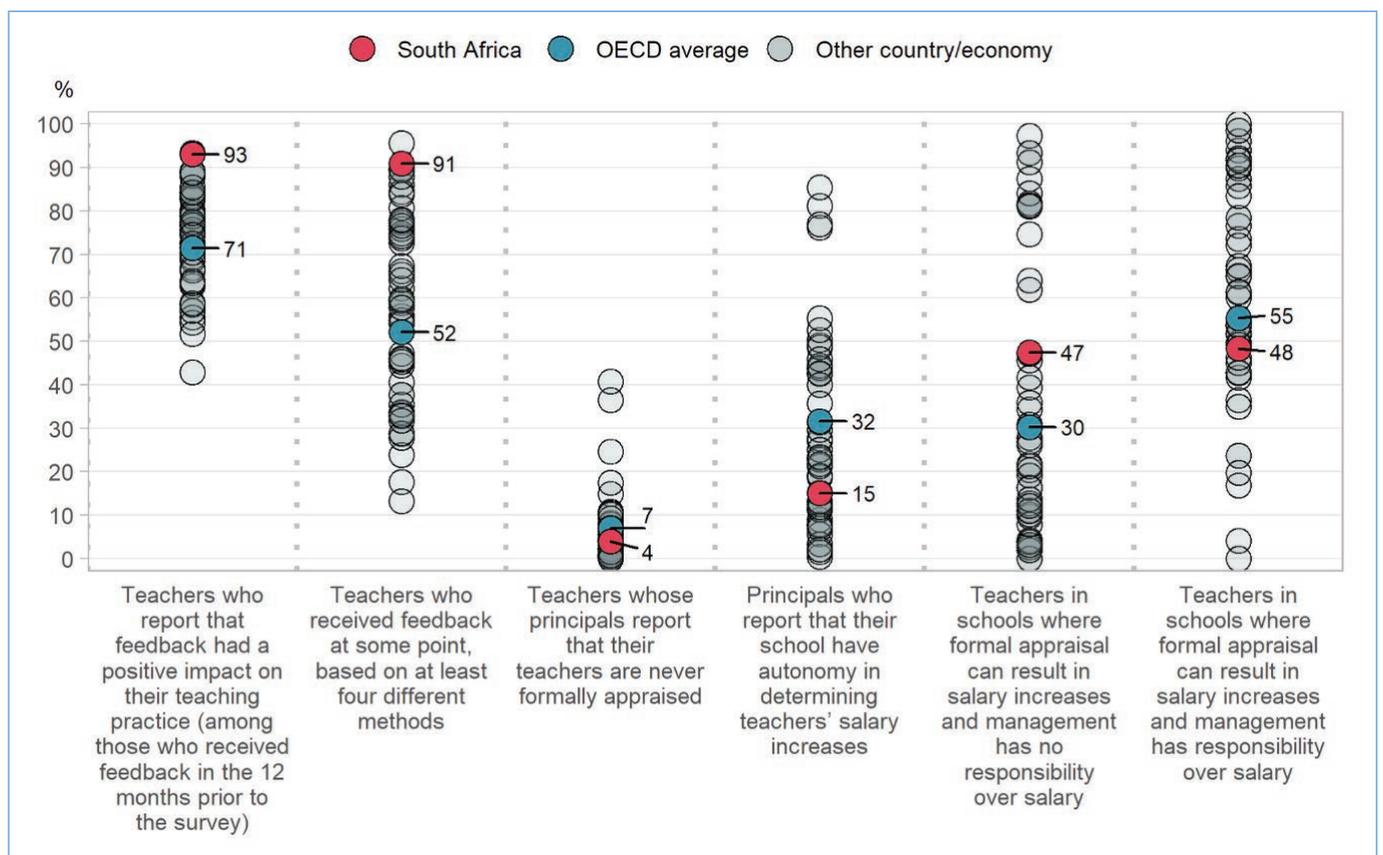
- In South Africa, 93% of teachers who received feedback in the 12 months prior to the survey report that it had a positive impact on their teaching practice (OECD average 71%). In all countries and economies participating in TALIS, including South Africa, teachers who report receiving feedback based on multiple methods are more likely to find that the feedback they received had a positive impact on their teaching.



Furthermore, 91% of teachers report having received feedback at some point, based on at least four different types of methods, which is higher than the OECD average (52%). The results suggest that feedback in its multiple forms is more ingrained in the school culture in South Africa than in the average school across the OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS.

**Figure 4. Feedback and appraisal**

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers and principals



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

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database, Tables II.4.48, II.4.47, II.3.30, II.5.1 and II.3.48.

- Appraisal systems, used to formally evaluate teachers, encourage continuous improvement of their practice by providing opportunities to acknowledge and reward teachers for their efforts. In South Africa, 4% of teachers are in schools where school principals report that their teachers are never formally appraised, which is statistically not significantly different from the OECD average (7%).

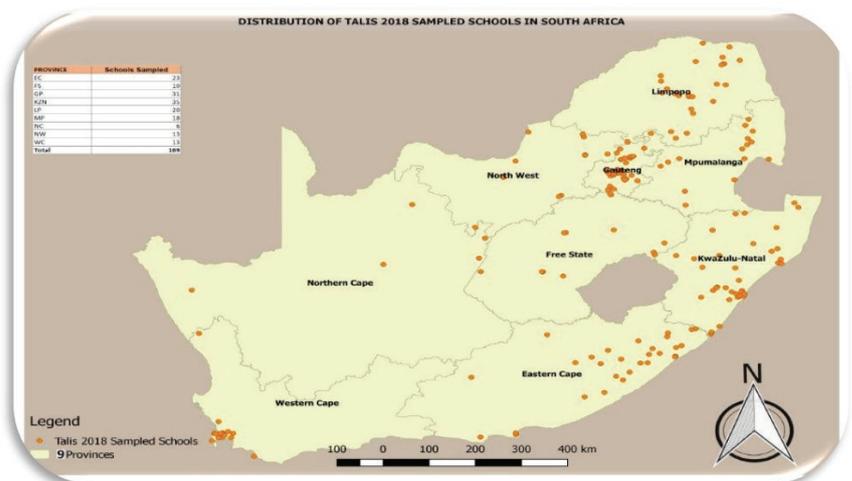
- For appraisal to be effective, it must lead to the right consequences. For example, consequences such as appointing a mentor to improve teaching or drafting a plan for professional development are well aligned with the formative function of appraisal. In South Africa, 93% of teachers work in schools where the elaboration of professional development or a training plan is a common occurrence after an assessment (OECD average of 90%), and 80% of teachers work in schools where the appointment of a mentor is a common occurrence after an assessment (OECD average of 71%).
- Based on principals' responses, in South Africa, 15% of schools have autonomy over determining salary increases or bonuses for teachers, which is lower than the OECD average (32%).
- In South Africa, the proportion of teachers who work in schools where appraisal can result in a salary increase or financial bonus is 48% in schools where school management has responsibility over salaries (OECD average 55%). In South Africa, in schools where management does not have autonomy over salaries, the proportion of teachers where appraisal can result in a salary increase or financial bonus is 47% (OECD average 30%).

## V. Results for South Africa by province

*The quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and principals...and the quality of teachers and principals cannot exceed the quality of their education, their opportunities to collaborate and develop and the quality of their working conditions (TALIS 2018, Volume 1).*

The pursuit of quality in education in the South African context resides in the concurrent responsibilities of the national department and the nine provincial education departments. The nine provincial education departments (Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape, and Western Cape) are beholden to enhance the teaching profession and institutionalise professional learning communities to support ongoing development of and collaboration among teachers.

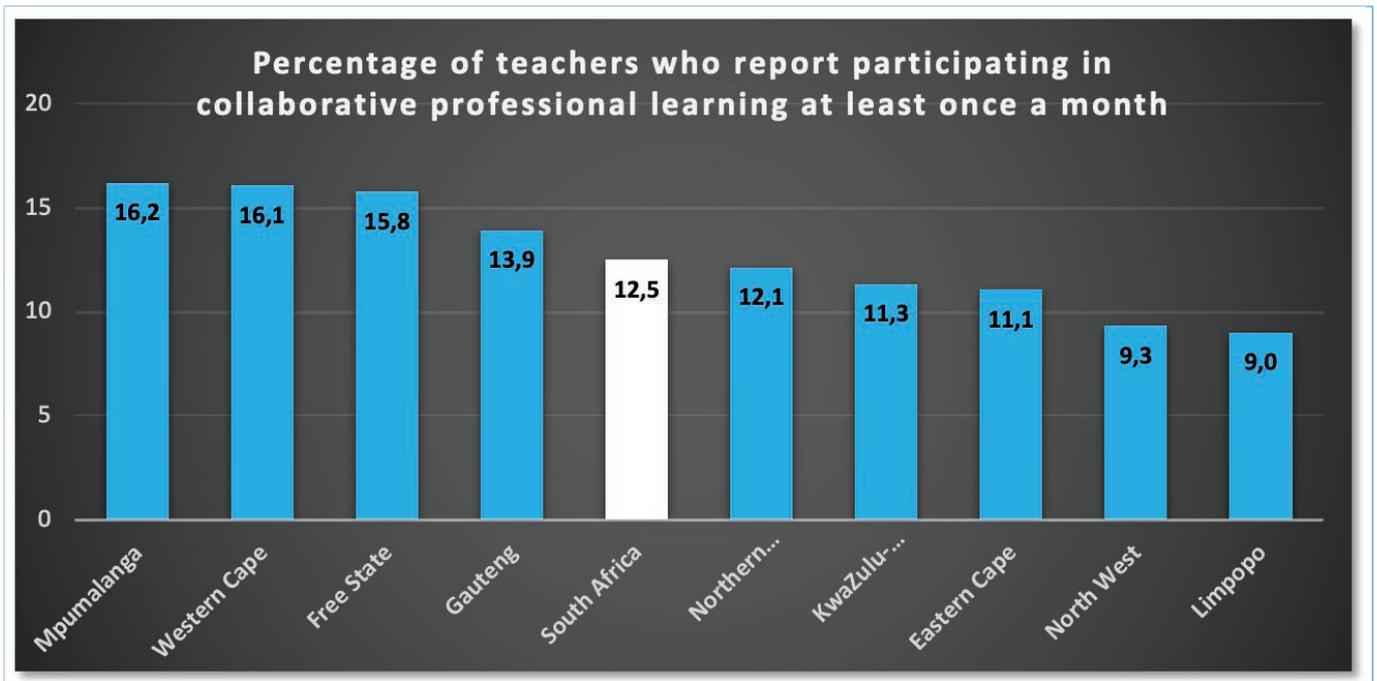
In this section a snapshot of the TALIS 2018 Volume 2 results are disaggregated by province. It features provincial comparisons on professional collaborative learning, actions by principals to support



co-operation and development among teachers, teachers' views on the value of their profession, teacher satisfaction and stress levels, and those that want to leave the profession. A proportional number of provincial schools made up the national sample of 169 schools with the highest representation (35 schools) coming from the KwaZulu-Natal province and the lowest (6) coming from the Northern Cape province. Low provincial stratifications should be considered in the patterns observed and interpretations drawn, notably the small sample size in the Northern Cape.

The TALIS results showed that higher forms of teacher collaboration occur in the Mpumalanga and Western Cape provinces. In five provinces teachers coming together to collaborate on work activities at least once a month are lower than the national average. In the Limpopo and North West province, this average is less than 10%. The point has been made earlier that nationally less than one in five teachers find it necessary to collaborate on work matters and deeper forms of teacher collaboration are needed and should be building on the various feedback mechanisms that are in place at the school. The lack of a collaborative culture among teachers can be observed across the nine provinces, notably in the more rural areas of the country.

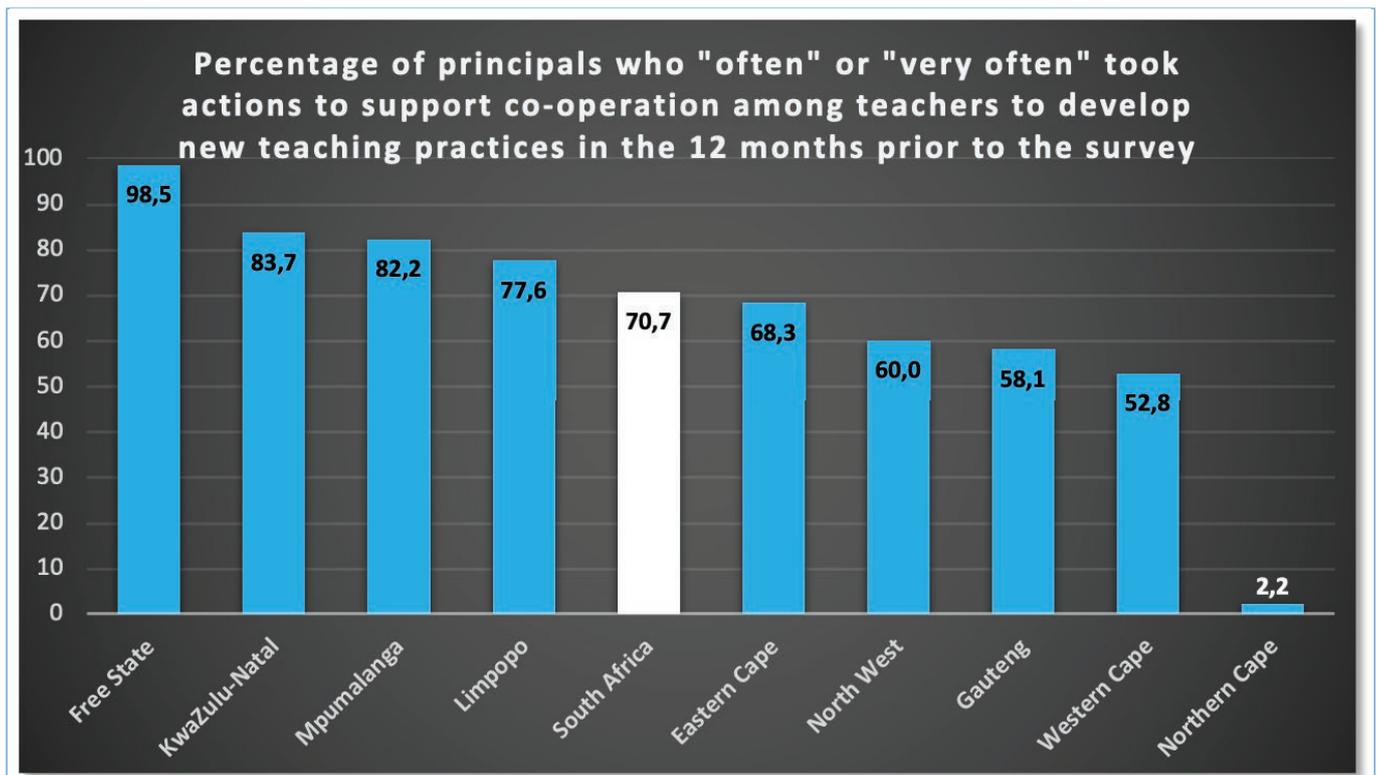
Figure 5. Collaborative professional learning



Despite lower levels of cooperation among teachers, school principals were shown to be very supportive (more than 70%) of taking actions to support teachers to develop new teaching practices. In the 12 months prior to the survey, almost all principals in the Free State province indicated that they considered this activity to be an important focus area and the province has made great strides in creating an enabling environment for the use of ICT strategies in the classroom. This support by principals in the Free State province is significantly higher than the other eight provinces. In contrast, only two percent of the sampled principals in the Northern Cape indicated they took actions to support teachers to develop new teaching practices. It could be inferred that those principals did not consider this form of support as an important focus area in their leadership activities. It is encouraging that teachers are highly supported by their school principal in several provinces and this bodes well for teachers adapting to rapidly changing education environments and the skilling of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.



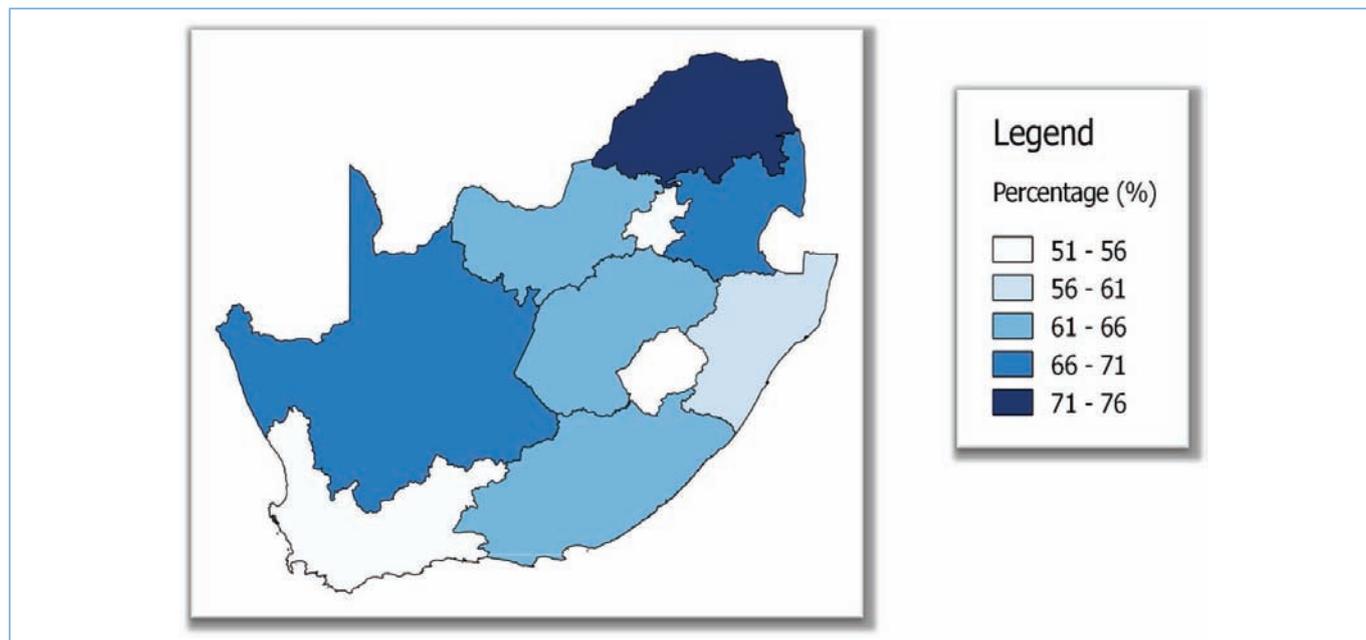
Figure 6. Percentage of principals who “often” or “very often” took actions to support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices in the 12 months prior to the survey



A key theme in Volume 2 of the results is how teachers see themselves as valued professionals in society. It was significant to point out earlier that South Africa is one of the countries across TALIS with the highest share of teachers feeling that their profession is valued in society; with 61% of teachers agreeing that their profession is valued in society. It was also noteworthy that in South Africa, the share of teachers who think that their profession is valued in society is higher in schools located in rural areas or villages than the share in schools located in cities. In one of the most rural parts of South Africa, the Limpopo province, more than 75% of participating teachers considered their profession valued by society and the community they serve. In similar rural provinces such as the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and the North West, more than 60% of teachers considered their profession valued. In contrast in the two provinces that are considered largely urban (Gauteng and the Western Cape), the value of the profession in society is lower for teachers. A geographic representation of this spread is provided in **figure 7**.



Figure 7. Percentage of teachers who think that their profession is valued in society

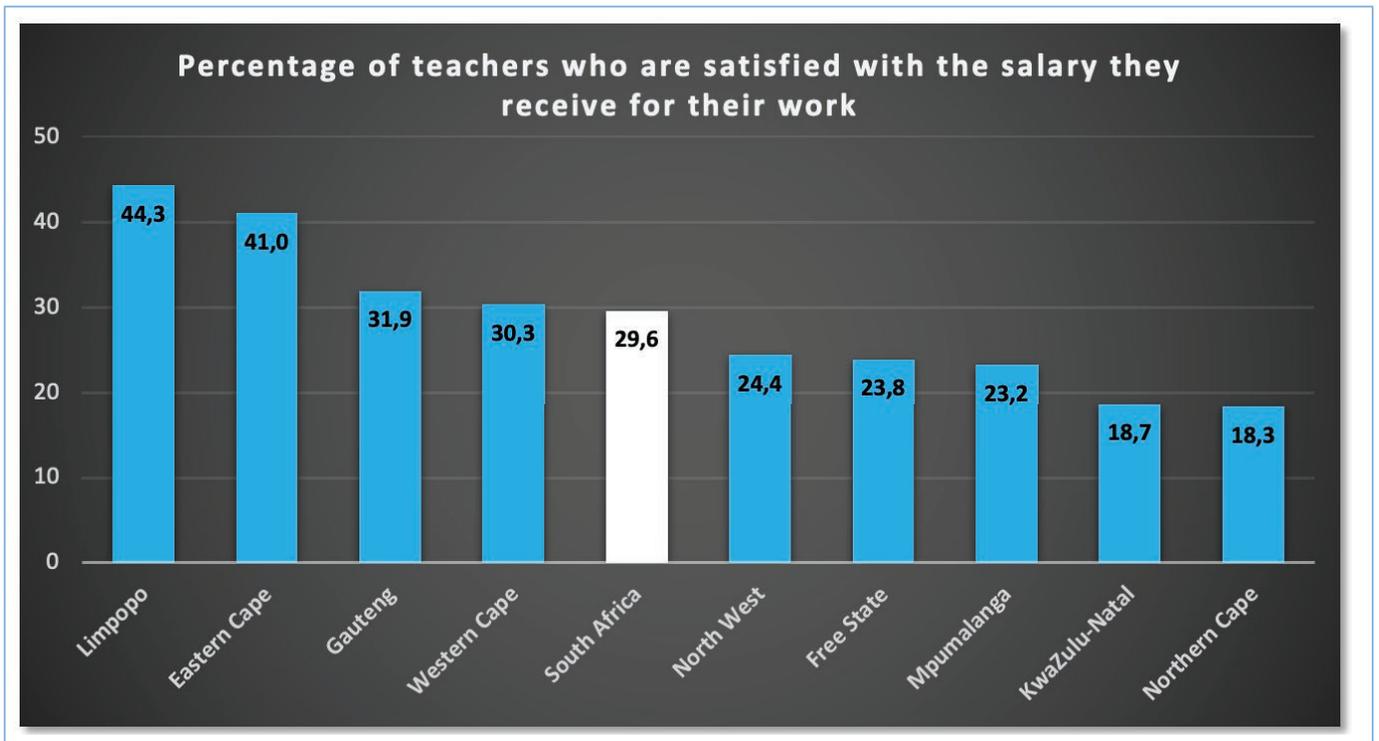


Although teachers and school leaders enjoy reasonably good working conditions in South Africa (84% are in permanent contract) and the profession is well respected, the satisfaction of teachers with the profession and their current working environment is lower than the OECD average. Possible reasons for this include teacher satisfaction with their salary levels, their stress levels at work, and the possibility of leaving the profession. Figures 8, 9, and 10 highlight the national and provincial picture of teacher satisfaction in South Africa.

While High stress and administrative overload may threaten the attractiveness of the teaching profession, teacher satisfaction with their salaries is a primary factor and in the South African context collective bargaining on salary adjustments and increments often dominate budget priorities and considerations in medium term expenditure frameworks. In Volume 1 of TALIS, 85% of teachers indicated that improving teacher salaries in South Africa should be a priority for government. Across the nine provinces, less than 50% of teachers were satisfied with their salary levels with slightly more than 40% of teachers in Limpopo and in the Eastern Cape satisfied with the salary they receive for work. These were the highest of the provincial satisfaction levels with teachers in the Northern Cape (18.3%) the least satisfied.



Figure 8. Teacher satisfaction with salary levels



Teachers across participating countries in TALIS point towards increasing levels of stress in the profession. About 1 in 5 teachers reported experiencing a lot of stress. In South Africa, this proportion increases to about 1 in 4. Stress emerges when teachers spent a considerable amount of time on tasks other than their core work and TALIS data points towards too much administration as the most cited source of stress for about 50% of teachers. Among the nine provinces, Free State (37%) had the highest percentage of teachers that indicated they experience stress a lot in their work. Free State teachers also had the highest form of support from principals to develop new teaching practices and this may be a contributing factor but one that requires further analysis before any correlations can be drawn. About half of the Free State percentage of teachers reported they had work stress in the Northern Cape. Teachers in the North West, Western Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal also reported levels of stress in the workplace that were higher than the national average.

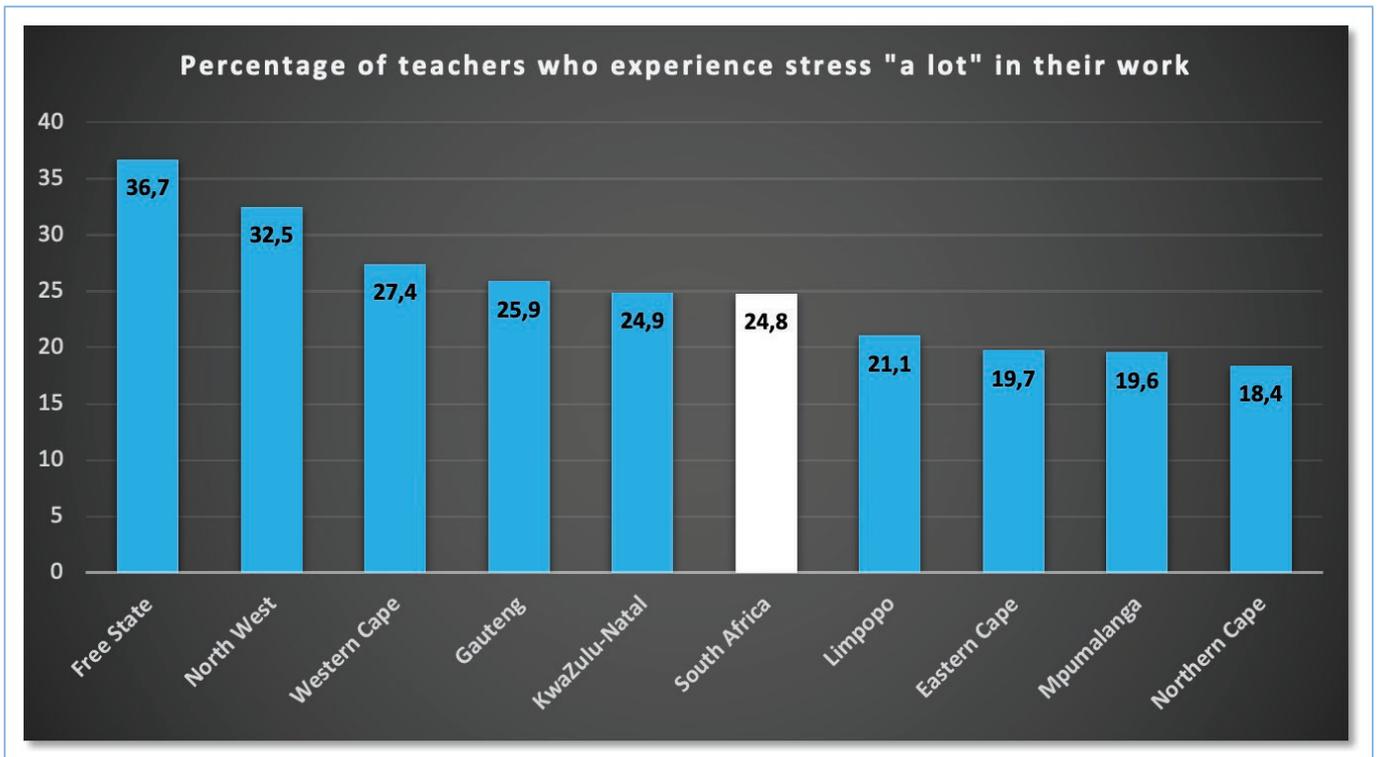
**Are high stress levels making teaching less attractive as a profession?**

High stress is an issue for around **1 in 5** teachers

**Stressed-out teachers** are twice as likely than their less-stressed colleagues to say they want to leave teaching in the next five years

**Too much admin** is the most commonly cited source of stress for around half of teachers.

Figure 9. Teacher stress levels

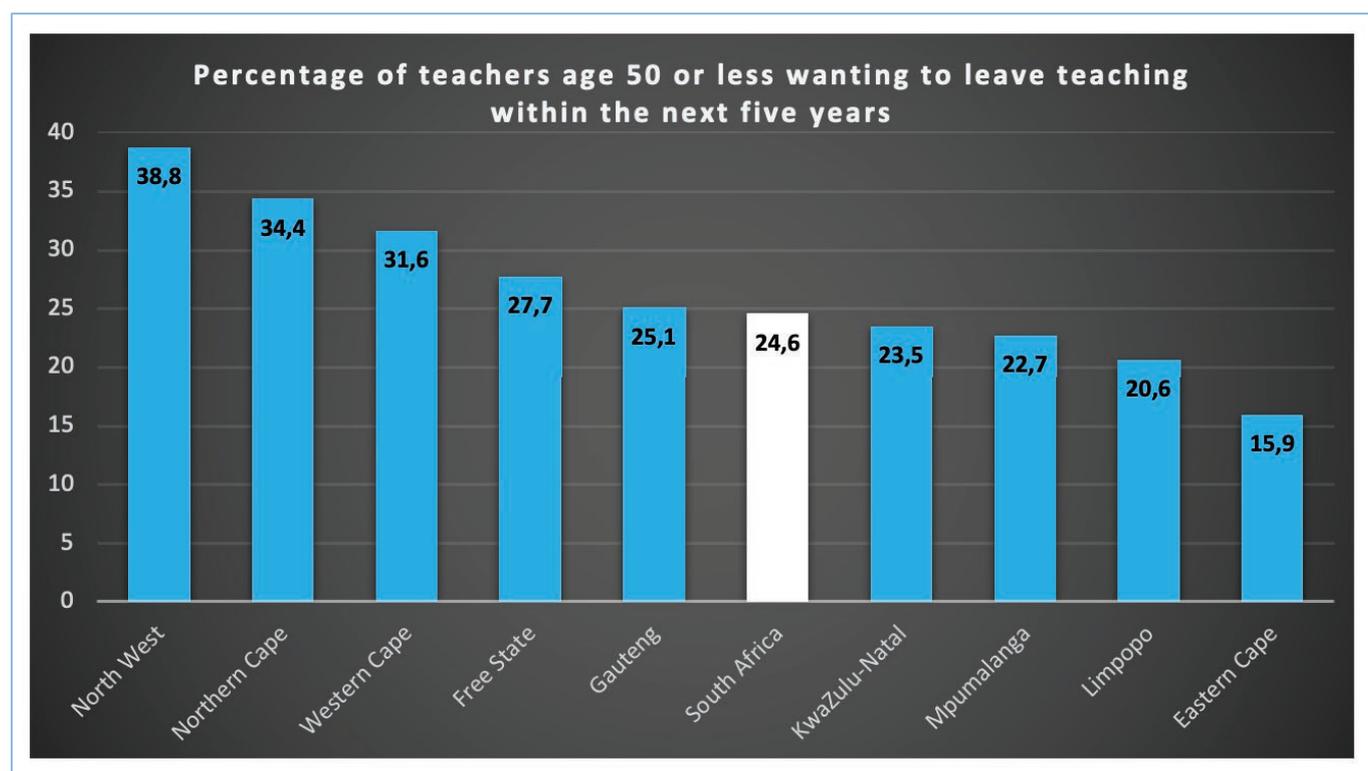


In South Africa, teachers who report experiencing stress at their work “a lot” are 40% more likely to want to leave teaching in the next five years. However, after accounting for factors like job satisfaction, self-efficacy and motivation the relationship is no longer significant in South Africa

Given the severity of the current COVID-19 health crisis, its dramatic impact on school operations (with school closures in a majority of countries), and the complete overhaul of teachers’ ways of working it has forced with little warning and planning, it is likely that this is now a low estimate of current levels of stress. Add to that technical glitches with technology platforms and the separation from students, there is no issue that teachers are likely to be under high levels of stress.

Salary levels and stress should be seen as important factors to mitigate against teachers leaving the profession. Across TALIS participants, significant numbers of teachers consider leaving teaching over the next 5 years. In South Africa, 30% of all teachers report that they would like to leave teaching within the next five years (OECD average 25%). Furthermore, 25% of teachers age 50 or less in South Africa would like to leave teaching in the next five years, which is higher than the OECD average (14%).

Figure 10. Percentage of teachers age 50 or less wanting to leave teaching within the next five years



Among the nine provinces TALIS data points towards the retention of teachers as being of critical importance in the North West, Northern Cape and Western Cape, where more than a third of teachers aged 50 or less indicated a willingness to leave the profession. In contrast, only 16% of teachers in the same category wanted to leave the profession in the Eastern Cape. Viewed nationally, some of the key concerns for teachers experiencing stress and hence willing to leave the profession included having too much marking and being held responsible for learners' achievement – issues that currently foreground teacher accountability and professionalism.

## VI Key features of TALIS 2018

TALIS uses questionnaires administered to teachers and their school principals to gather data. Its main goal is to generate internationally comparable information relevant to developing and implementing policies focused on school leaders, teachers and teaching, with an emphasis on those aspects that affect student learning.

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

- Nine main themes were selected for inclusion in the TALIS 2018 survey: teachers' instructional practices; school leadership; teachers' professional practices; teacher education and initial preparation; teacher feedback and development; school climate; job satisfaction; teacher human resource issues and stakeholder relations; and teacher self-efficacy. Two cross-cutting themes were added to this list: innovation; and equity and diversity.
- The international target population for TALIS is composed of lower secondary teachers and their school leaders in mainstream public and private schools. TALIS 2018 offered three additional options: 15 countries and economies also surveyed teachers and school leaders in their primary schools (ISCED level 1), 11 countries and economies did so in their upper secondary schools (ISCED level 3) and 9 countries and economies conducted the survey in schools that participated in the 2018 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

- In each country, a representative sample of 4 000 teachers and their school principals from 200 schools was randomly selected for the study. Across all survey components, approximately 260 000 teachers responded to the survey, representing more than 8 million teachers in 48 participating countries and economies. In South Africa, 2 046 lower secondary teachers and 169 principals completed the TALIS questionnaires.
- The first volume of TALIS 2018, *Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, published on 19 June 2019, explored the knowledge and skills dimension of teachers and school leaders' professionalism. The second volume, *Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, published on 23 March 2020, explored prestige, career opportunities, collaborative culture and autonomy.
- All data reported in this note comes from the second report.

## VII Conclusion

*Teachers play a significant role in the upliftment and transformation of our society. They bear the weight and responsibility of teaching, and, apart from parents, are the main source of knowledge and values for children (DBE, 2020).*

The importance of TALIS for South Africa lies in the important teacher dimensions the study reveals for better understanding the extent to which learners are taught by qualified, professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers. This global study involving 260 000 teachers in 15 000 schools representing more than 8 million teachers across 48 countries provides South African policy makers and researchers a rich array of data on relevant variables and indices on local and international contexts of teaching.

A summary of the key findings in Volume 2 of the study point towards the following for South African teachers:

- a) the teaching profession is becoming more respected in a number of countries and its particularly high in South Africa;
- b) In South Africa, almost 80% of teachers and 90% of school principals report that, all in all, they are satisfied with their job,
- c) One in five teachers regret becoming a teacher;
- d) High stress and administrative overload may threaten the attractiveness of the teaching profession, with teachers in city schools (28%) experiencing higher stress levels in their work than teachers in rural or village area schools (15%).
- e) A quarter of teachers, age 50 or less would like to leave teaching in the next five years, especially those who experience a lot of stress in their work.
- f) In South Africa, the three most prevalent sources of stress teachers experience at work are being held responsible for students' achievement (75%), having too much marking (73%) and administrative tasks (63%);
- g) Teachers in South Africa embrace feedback and a variety of methods are used. More than 90% of teachers who received feedback reported that it had a positive impact on their teaching practice.
- h) A high percentage of teachers report enjoying a lot of autonomy in their class and working in a collaborative culture with peer support. Teachers who have a lot of autonomy also report working in innovative school environments.
- i) 94% of principals report providing parent or guardians with information on the school and learner performance compared to 55% of teachers on average across the OECD.

TALIS also shows promising directions to make the job of teachers more rewarding and fulfilling, and there are a number of useful strategies that could be employed. Firstly, the findings show that teachers in South Africa have embraced a mindset of lifelong learning. Fostering a culture of career-long professional learning supported by formative peer feedback, could help foster such a mindset and maximise the impact of feedback that teachers receive. Teacher feedback is an important lever for improving teaching quality, since it aims to improve teachers' understanding of their methods and practices. Feedback can improve teachers' effectiveness by both recognising teachers' strengths and addressing weaknesses in their pedagogical practices. Significantly, feedback in South African schools is almost universal.

Secondly, the study shows that there is value in supporting professional autonomy, collegiality and collaboration to encourage innovative practices among teachers. TALIS results show the importance of autonomy to promote experimentation in the classroom, and professional collaboration to use innovative teaching practices. But while in South Africa teachers report enjoying a lot of autonomy in their class and working in a collaborative culture with peer support, there is room for more active support from principals, and deep forms of collaboration are still low. This should be strengthened since teachers who frequently use these forms of professional collaboration are more likely to use innovative teaching practices in class, and to report overall satisfaction with their work.

Thirdly, the education sector should maximise the use and impact of feedback and appraisal systems. This would involve pertinent, timely and effective feedback as a crucial aspect for teachers' development as professionals, and TALIS shows that teachers in South Africa who report receiving feedback based on multiple types of information are more likely to find that the feedback they received had a positive impact on their teaching practice. Appraisal systems are another way to encourage teachers' continuous improvement of their practice, by providing opportunities to acknowledge and reward them for their efforts. Although South African schools often lack autonomy over the consequences of appraisals, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is an institutionalised program designed to support and develop teachers within their working environments and professional support groups. The implementation of the IQMS should be strengthened and teachers should be able to see tangible benefits of participating in the program beyond sector compliance.

The findings of Volume 2 follow on from the key findings of Volume 1 and together the complete study has important policy implications for the professional development of teachers. The direct policy implications for the DBE arising out the results of Volume 2 include:

- 1) Providing high-quality continuous professional development, with a focus on high-need areas and tailor support for integrating information and communications technology (ICT) teaching and dissemination of good practices
- 2) Develop a collaborative culture within schools by:
  - fostering a collegial climate within schools to encourage voluntary collaboration among teachers; and
  - building on a collaboration of champions and distributed leadership within schools.
- 3) Make the most of the peer feedback culture by:
  - fostering a growth mindset and a culture of formative feedback within the profession; and
  - encouraging and mainstreaming the most impactful forms of feedback according to teachers
- 4) Foster the intellectual fulfilment of the profession to boost job satisfaction by:
  - developing the conditions for boosting job satisfaction;
  - targeting policies to the different profiles of teachers and specific challenges; and
  - focusing efforts on retaining teachers in the most difficult schools.

A desired policy direction for South Africa is to use the TALIS study as a sub-programme within the National Assessment Framework and link the findings to targeted interventions on improving learning outcomes.

The conclusion drawn is that research studies such as TALIS are a step in the right direction towards better understanding the day-to-day experiences of teachers and principals. It also tells us the prevailing working conditions and levels of access that enable or constrain teachers to be efficient in their work. It presents a shift away from the focus on performance data. It enables interested stakeholders to learn about how the work of the teacher and how teacher identity and practice can affect learning outcomes. Critically, the study shows the prevailing working environment of teachers that existed before the Covid-19 crisis and the areas to better equip teachers to face the challenges of a rapidly changing educational landscape. Significantly, this learning comes through the voice of the teacher and principals.

*TALIS is the only global survey of teachers' views. As such it provides vital evidence for the countries' teacher policies. In fact we know that teachers' voices are vital in the development of sustained and effective education reforms. Since TALIS focuses on the day to day reality of teachers' working lives it is very much in the interest of the teaching profession to participate in TALIS. Teachers and their unions have high hopes for TALIS 2018 and hope that has many countries as possible support it.*

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Chair of the OECD's trade union advisory committee working group on Education, Training and Employment Policy

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## References

OECD (2020), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en>.

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

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

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

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