Responsiveness of schools to student needs

Responsiveness in education involves adapting teaching methods to the needs of different students, but also maintaining good communication with parents (or guardians of children) and interactions with community groups that might also provide support to the successful completion of basic education for all children.

Teaching students with special needs

Providing more responsive and student-centred education requires that teachers not only have the pedagogical skills to manage their classes generally, but also that they have the specific competencies to effectively deal with students with special needs. This is one of the area where teachers themselves report the greatest need for further professional development.

In the TALIS survey of 2013, about one in five lower secondary teachers on average across participating countries reported that they did not feel fully prepared to respond to these challenges, compared to about one in ten only reporting a need for further professional development for managing classes more generally. Teachers in Mexico (47%) and Japan (41%) were more likely to report greater training needs for teaching students with special needs, while this proportion was lower in the Flanders (Belgium) (5%) and in England, (United Kingdom) (6%).

Caution is required in interpreting these data, as a bigger percentage might reflect, for instance, greater integration of special needs' students in regular classrooms or relatively higher expectations of teachers in terms of quality and adapted education. The definition of a student with special needs might also differ from one country to another.

Interactions between schools and parents (or guardians)

Student success can be enhanced when the efforts of teachers are complemented by strong, ongoing support from parents. School principals often play a critical role in maintaining proper communications between the schools, students and their parents or guardians.

On average across OECD countries that participated in TALIS in 2013, school principals reported spending 11% of their time interacting with parents or guardians of their students. School principals in Italy, Chile and Spain (about 14%) reported spending a relatively bigger share of their time with parents or guardians, whereas principals in Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Estonia spent less than 10% of their time doing so.

On average, among all participating countries to TALIS, about two third of school principals (66%) reported providing parents or guardians with information on students school performance. In countries where school principals reported low interactions with parents or guardians, it is possible that the responsibility for communicating with parents lies more with teachers or with other school representatives.

Interaction between schools and the local community

High levels of interactions between schools and groups in the local community can also contribute to the reduction of the number of early school leavers and improve the transition to post-secondary education or to the labour market. On average across OECD countries that participated in the 2013 TALIS, about 71% of teachers worked in schools in which principals reported high levels of co-operation between their school and the local community (local businesses, NGOs and other associations). This percentage is relatively higher in some countries such as Korea (91%) whereas it is lower (below 50%) in most Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) as well as in the Netherlands (21%).

Methodology and definitions

Data for the three indicators come from the OECD 2013 Teaching And Learning International Survey (TALIS). TALIS is an international, large-scale survey that focuses on the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools. There are four subnational entities participating in TALIS 2013: Alberta (Canada), Flanders (Belgium), England (United Kingdom) and Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates).

Data refer to the percentage of lower secondary education teachers who call for a high level of need for professional development in teaching students with special needs. Special needs students cover those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. Often, special needs students will be those for whom additional resources (personnel, material or financial) have been provided to support their education. Gifted students are not considered to have special needs under this definition.

Data refer to the average proportion of time lower secondary education school principals report spending on interactions with parents or guardians (including both formal and informal interactions).

Data refer to principals reporting that they "agree" and "strongly agree" with the statement "There is a high level of co-operation between the school and the local community".

Further reading

OECD (2014), *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en*.

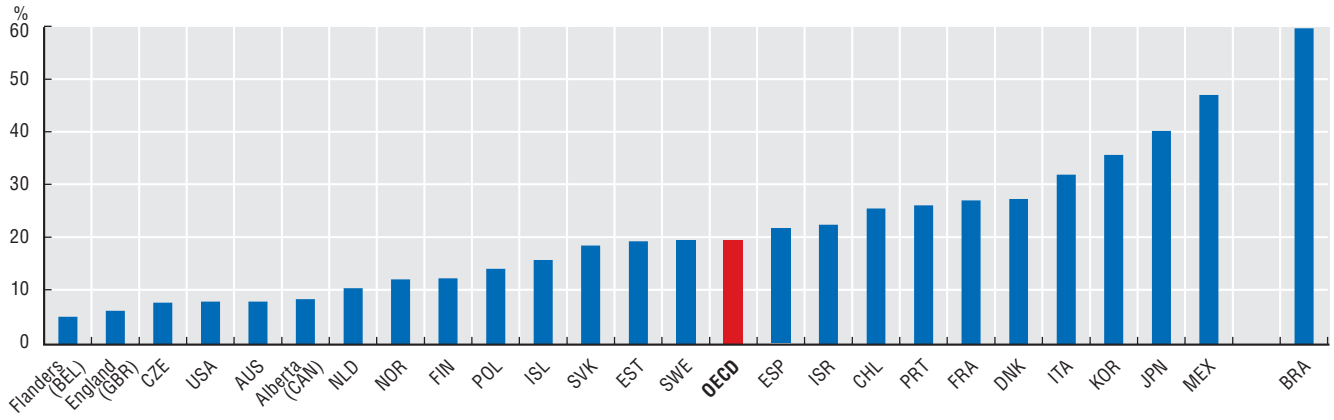
Figure notes

In all three figures, the United States is excluded from the OECD average because it did not meet the international standards for participation rates.

12.17: A translation issue led to the removal of the data for Norway.

Information on data for Israel: *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602*.

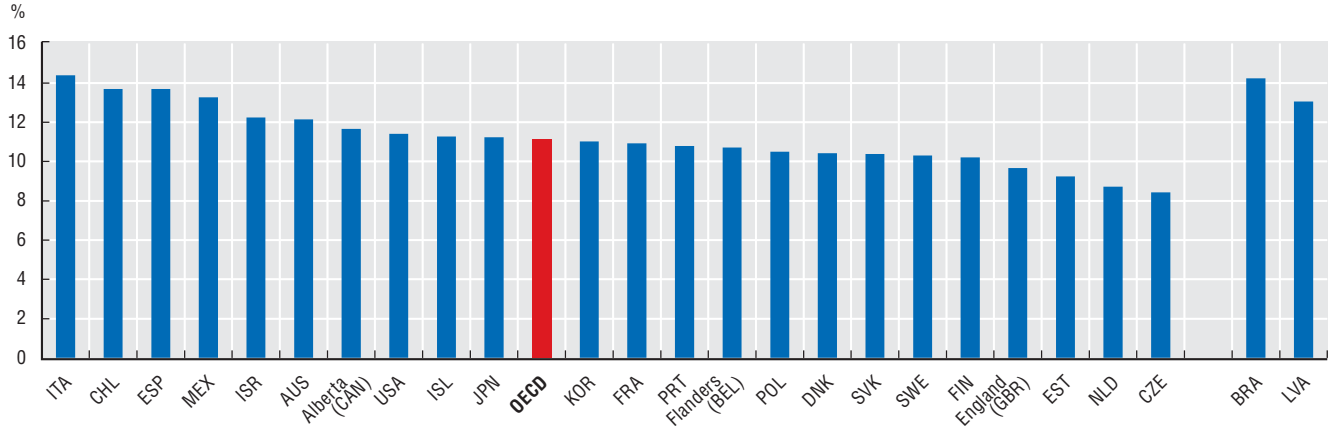
12.16. Lower secondary education teachers' needs for professional development for teaching students with special needs, 2013



Source: OECD (2013), *TALIS Database*, OECD, Paris.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249497

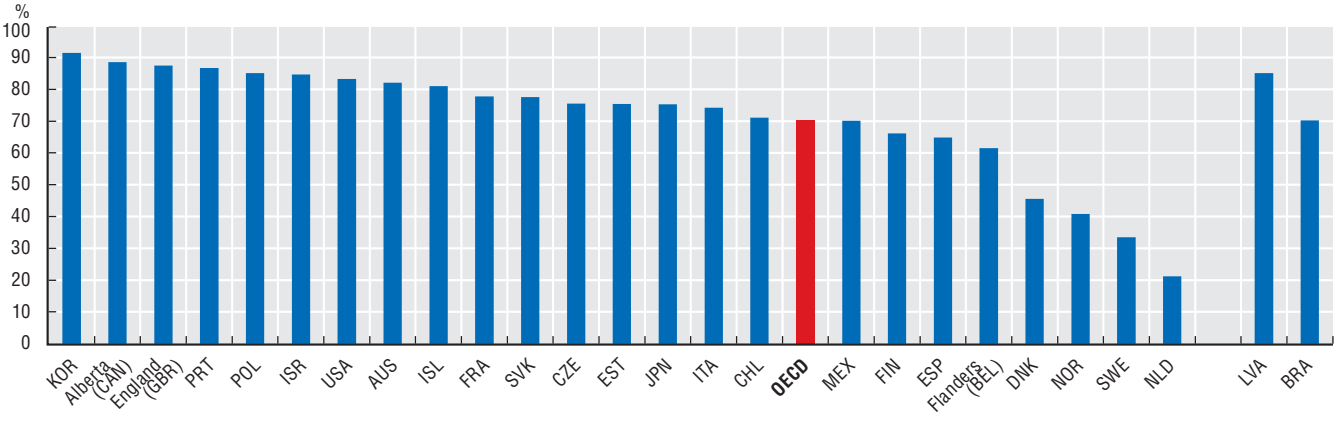
12.17. Average proportion of time that lower secondary schools' principals spend interacting with parents or guardians, 2013



Source: OECD (2013), *TALIS Database*, OECD, Paris.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249507

12.18. Percentage of lower secondary education teachers whose school principal reports a high level of co-operation between the school and local community, 2013



Source: OECD (2013), *TALIS Database*, OECD, Paris.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249517

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