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# Overview of TALIS

This chapter introduces the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and provides information about the participating countries and economies and the teachers and schools surveyed. It describes the objectives of TALIS as well as the main themes covered by the survey and this report, and provides information to explain why these themes were chosen as a policy focus for this study. This chapter also provides an outline of the report to follow.



## WHAT IS TALIS?

The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is an international, large-scale survey that focuses on the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools. TALIS aims to provide valid, timely and comparable information to help countries review and define policies for developing a high-quality teaching profession. It is an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in key areas and is a collaboration between participating countries, the OECD, an international research consortium, social partners and the European Commission.

Understanding that recruiting, retaining and developing teachers is a priority in school systems worldwide, TALIS examines the ways in which teachers' work is recognised, appraised and rewarded. TALIS assesses the degree to which teachers' professional-development needs are being met. The study provides insights into the beliefs and attitudes about teaching that teachers bring to the classroom and the pedagogical practices that they adopt. Recognising the important role that school leadership plays in fostering an effective teaching and learning environment, TALIS describes the role of school leaders and examines the support that they give their teachers. Finally, TALIS examines the extent to which certain factors may relate to teachers' feelings of job satisfaction and self-efficacy.

The first cycle of TALIS was conducted in 2008 and surveyed teachers and school leaders of lower secondary education in 24 countries. The initial report, *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, published in 2009, provided valuable findings that are still being used today. Two thematic reports were also written using the TALIS 2008 data. They were *The Experience of New Teachers: Results from TALIS 2008* and *Teaching Practices and Pedagogical Innovation: Evidence from TALIS*.

## TALIS 2013

TALIS 2013 has expanded to include additional countries (Figure 1.1). While maintaining the focus on lower secondary education (ISCED level 2, as classified by the International Standard Classification of Education [ISCED 1997], which identifies comparable levels of education across countries), TALIS 2013 also gave countries the option of surveying teachers in their primary (ISCED level 1) and upper secondary (ISCED level 3) schools. Some countries chose to gain additional insights by conducting the survey in schools that participated in the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) through an option that is referred to as the TALIS-PISA link. (Figure 1.2 shows a complete list of countries and economies participating in all TALIS 2013 options.)

■ Figure 1.1 ■

**Countries and economies participating in TALIS 2013**

OECD Countries and Economies		Partner Countries and Economies	
Alberta (Canada)	Flanders (Belgium) <sup>1</sup>	Netherlands	Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)
Australia	France	Norway	Brazil
Chile	Iceland	Poland	Bulgaria
Czech Republic	Israel <sup>1</sup>	Portugal	Croatia
Denmark	Italy	Slovak Republic	Cyprus <sup>2, 3</sup>
England (United Kingdom)	Japan <sup>1</sup>	Spain	Latvia
Estonia	Korea <sup>1</sup>	Sweden	Malaysia <sup>1</sup>
Finland	Mexico	United States <sup>4</sup>	Romania
			Serbia <sup>1</sup>
			Singapore <sup>1</sup>

**Note:** Cells shaded in light blue indicate countries and economies that also participated in TALIS 2008.

1. See Annex A for notes about interpreting the data from these countries.

2. Note by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

3. Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

4. The data from the United States are located below the line in selected tables in this report and is not included in the calculations for the international average. This is because the United States did not meet the international standards for participation rates. See Annex A for more information.



■ Figure 1.2 ■

### Countries and economies participating in TALIS options

ISCED 1	ISCED 3	TALIS-PISA link
Denmark	Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)	Australia
Finland	Australia	Finland
Flanders (Belgium)	Denmark	Latvia
Mexico	Finland	Mexico
Norway	Iceland	Portugal
Poland	Italy	Romania
	Mexico <sup>1</sup>	Singapore
	Norway	Spain
	Poland	
	Singapore <sup>1</sup>	

1. See Annex A for notes about interpreting the data from these countries.

## THE AIMS OF TALIS

The overall objective of TALIS is to provide robust international indicators and policy-relevant analysis on teachers and teaching in a timely and cost-effective manner. These indicators help countries review and develop policies in their efforts to promote conditions for high-quality teaching and learning. Cross-country analyses provide the opportunity to compare countries facing similar challenges to learn about different policy approaches and their impact on the learning environment in schools.

The guiding principles underlying the survey strategy are as follows:

- *Policy relevance.* Clarity about key policy issues and a focus on the questions that are most relevant for participating countries are both essential.
- *Value added.* International comparisons should be a significant source of the study's benefits.
- *Indicator-oriented.* The results should yield information that can be used to develop indicators.
- *Validity, reliability, comparability and rigour.* Based on a rigorous review of the knowledge base, the survey should yield information that is valid, reliable and comparable across participating countries.
- *Interpretability.* Participating countries should be able to interpret the results in a meaningful way.
- *Efficiency and cost-effectiveness.* The work should be carried out in a timely and cost-effective way.

## The population surveyed

The international sampling guidelines and other operational parameters applied in TALIS for the core (ISCED 2) survey are shown in Box 1.1. Further details, including teacher and school participation rates by country, are given in Annex A.

### Box 1.1. The TALIS Design

**International target population:** Lower secondary education teachers and leaders of mainstream schools.

**Target sample size:** 200 schools per country; 20 teachers and 1 school leader in each school.

**School samples:** Representative samples of schools and teachers within schools.

**Target response rates:** 75% of the sampled schools, together with a 75% response rate from all sampled teachers in the country. A school is considered to have responded if 50% of sampled teachers respond.

**Questionnaires:** Separate questionnaires for teachers and school leaders, each requiring between 45 and 60 minutes to complete.

**Mode of data collection:** Questionnaires filled in on paper or on line.

**Survey windows:** September-December 2012 for Southern Hemisphere countries and February-June 2013 for Northern Hemisphere countries.



The sample size for the ISCED 1 and ISCED 3 options is the same as the sample size for ISCED 2: 200 schools per country and 20 teachers and 1 school leader per school. For the TALIS-PISA link, 150 schools per country were surveyed, with an oversample of mathematics teachers in each school. The target response rates for all TALIS survey options were the same as those for the core ISCED 2 sample, delineated in Box 1.1. Further details on the sample for all target populations can be found in Annex A.

### Who is a TALIS teacher?

TALIS defines a teacher as one whose primary or major activity in the school is student instruction, involving the delivery of lessons to students. Teachers may work with students as a whole class, in small groups or one-to-one inside or outside regular classrooms. They might also share their teaching time among more than one school.

For the purposes of TALIS, the definition of a teacher does not include the following school-staff categories:

- Teacher aides: Non-professional or paraprofessional staff who might support teachers in providing instruction to students.
- Pedagogical support staff: Those who provide services to students to support the instructional programme, such as librarians or guidance counsellors.
- Health and social support staff: Health professionals such as doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers.

The following profiles of teachers are also excluded from the target population of teachers: substitute, emergency or occasional teachers; teachers teaching adults exclusively; and teachers on long-term leave. However, different from TALIS 2008, eligible teachers in TALIS 2013 also include teachers in regular schools who instruct students with special needs.

### TALIS 2013 policy themes

The themes selected for study in the second cycle of TALIS were chosen as part of a priority rating exercise by the countries participating in TALIS 2013. Countries decided to retain some topics that were covered in TALIS 2008 and added some new questions and indicators as well. The participating countries chose the following policy themes for TALIS 2013:

- School leadership, including new indicators on distributed or team leadership.
- Teacher training, including professional development and new indicators on initial teacher education.
- Appraisal of and feedback to teachers.
- Teachers' pedagogical beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices, including new indicators on the profile of student-assessment practices.
- Teachers' reported feelings of self-efficacy, their job satisfaction and the climate in the schools and classrooms in which they work.

A conceptual framework was developed by subject-matter experts, the international research consortium and the OECD Secretariat and was approved by participating countries. The purposes of the conceptual framework were to steer development of the TALIS instruments and serve as a guide for future TALIS cycles.

The *Teaching and Learning International Survey: Conceptual Framework* (OECD, 2013) is based on the concept of effective teaching and learning conditions. According to the OECD, effectiveness refers to the extent to which the stated objectives of a given activity are met (OECD, 2007). Thus, the concept of effectiveness is simultaneously broad and dependent on context. In the case of TALIS, effective teaching and learning environments are environments that contribute to student learning. The TALIS 2013 themes and the individual items that they comprise represent the elements that participating countries and economies agree contribute to student learning. These include some elements that have yet to be proven to be related to positive student outcomes. Of course, effective teaching and learning may include many other factors that cannot be examined through TALIS or any self-reported instrument.

An Instrument Development Expert Group (IDEG) was established to translate the policy priorities into questionnaires to address the policy and analytical questions agreed to by the participating countries and economies. Separate questionnaires for teachers and school leaders were prepared. Considerable effort was devoted to achieving cultural and linguistic validity of the survey instruments, and stringent quality assurance mechanisms were applied both for their translation and for the sampling and data collection. (See the *TALIS 2013 Technical Report* [OECD, 2014] for more details.)



## Administering TALIS

The development of TALIS has been the result of productive co-operation between the participating member countries of the OECD and partner countries. A Board of Participating Countries, representing all of the countries and economies taking part in TALIS, set out the policy objectives for the survey and established the standards for data collection and reporting. A key partner in both cycles of TALIS has been the European Commission, which has provided not only support for European Member States participating in TALIS but also expertise and further analyses of the TALIS data in particular areas. Engagement with bodies representing teachers and regular briefings and exchanges with the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) at the OECD have been very important in the development and implementation of TALIS. In particular, the co-operation of the teachers and school leaders in the participating schools has been crucial in ensuring the success of TALIS.

Participating countries implemented TALIS at the national level through National Project Managers (NPMs) and National Data Managers (NDMs), who adhered to rigorous technical and operational procedures. The NPMs played a crucial role in helping to secure the co-operation of schools, validate the questionnaires, manage the national data collection and process and verify the results from TALIS. The NDMs co-ordinated the data processing at the national level and aided in the cleaning of the data.

The co-ordination and management of implementation at the international level was the responsibility of the appointed contractor, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The study's implementation was led by the IEA's Data Processing and Research Center (DPC). The IEA Secretariat was responsible for overseeing the verification of translations and for quality control of the data collection. Statistics Canada, as a subcontractor of the IEA, developed the sampling plan, advised countries on its application, acted as the sampling referee, calculated the sampling weights and advised on the calculation of sampling errors.

The OECD Secretariat had overall responsibility for managing the programme, monitoring its implementation on a day-to-day basis and serving as the secretariat of the Board of Participating Countries. (See Annex D for a list of contributors to TALIS.)

## Interpretation of the results

TALIS results are based on self-reports from teachers and school leaders and therefore represent their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and accounts of their activities. This is powerful information because it provides insight into how teachers perceive the learning environments in which they work, what motivates teachers and how policies that are put in place are carried out in practice. But, as with any self-reported data, this information is subjective and therefore differs from objectively collected data. The same is true of school leaders' reports about school characteristics, which may differ from descriptions provided by administrative data at a national- or local-government level.

In addition, as a cross-sectional survey, TALIS cannot measure causality. For instance, in examining the relationship between school climate and teacher co-operation, it is not possible to establish whether a positive school climate depends on good teacher co-operation or whether good teacher co-operation depends on a positive school climate. The perspective taken in the analysis – i.e. the choice of predicted and predictor variables – is based purely on theoretical considerations, as laid out in the analytical framework. When a reference is made to “effects”, the reference should be understood in a statistical sense – i.e. an effect is a statistical parameter that describes the linear relationship between a predicted variable (e.g. job satisfaction) and a predictor variable (e.g. participation in professional development activities) – taking effects of individual and school background as well as other independent variables into account. Thus, the effects reported are statistical net effects even if they do not imply causality.

Additionally, the cross-cultural validity of the results is an important feature of the analysis, particularly with regard to the international scales and indices (see Annex B). The analysis indicates the extent to which the scales can be compared among countries; where there appear to be limitations on the comparability of the scales, this is noted in the text. Full details of the cross-cultural validity analysis are provided in the *TALIS 2013 Technical Report* (OECD, 2014).

Finally, even for those countries that participated in the TALIS-PISA link, the intention of TALIS is not to measure the effects of teaching on student outcomes. Neither the design of PISA nor the design of TALIS is amenable to analyses of teacher and teaching effectiveness, and the purpose of the TALIS-PISA link is to use school-level data from PISA to contextualise teachers' responses in TALIS. Because TALIS cannot measure teaching effectiveness directly, it looks at themes that are not only policy priorities for participating countries but have also been shown in the research literature to be associated with high-quality teaching.



## Organisation of the report

The following chapters of this report present the analyses, results and policy recommendations emerging from TALIS 2013. The report aims to tell a story that begins with the profiles of teachers and school leaders and continues with the reports of the conditions in which they work and the factors influencing their work, with an aim of providing a more detailed picture of the learning environments in these countries. While this report focuses mainly on lower secondary teachers, each chapter also presents some data and analyses for key indicators from primary and upper secondary teachers as well.<sup>1</sup>

- Chapter 2 presents a description of the characteristics of the lower secondary teacher populations and the schools in which they work. In doing so, it provides an important context for the later analytical chapters.
- Chapter 3 has at its centre the key role played by school leaders in ensuring that teachers receive the support they need to be as effective as possible. It will look at the profile of leaders in these teachers' schools and will also set the stage for the introduction of key factors in supporting teachers in their work.
- Chapter 4 looks at the issue of professional development as a tool to improve teaching and studies the data on teachers' experiences with professional development, whether they still have development needs and how any unsatisfied needs for professional development might be met.
- Chapter 5 examines the importance of the appraisal and feedback that teachers receive on their teaching along with the impact it has on their practice.
- Chapter 6 focuses on the teaching itself by exploring the relationships between various factors and a teacher's reported practices. It makes connections between many of the themes in previous chapters and how they influence the way a teacher teaches. Teachers' beliefs about student learning and instruction are also investigated.
- Chapter 7 returns to the various factors examined in the previous chapters and describes how they can come together to influence the teaching and learning environment. It looks at the effects of these and other factors on a teacher's feelings of self-efficacy and levels of job satisfaction.

## Note

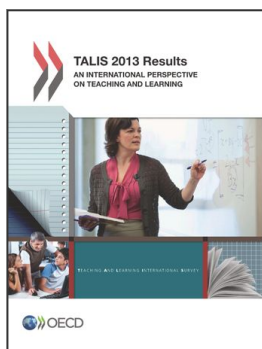
1. The TALIS-PISA link survey option will be discussed in a separate report. A full report on the ISCED 1 and 3 options will be released separately.

### A note regarding Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

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