4. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How much time do teachers spend teaching?

- The number of teaching hours per year in public primary schools averages 812, but ranges from fewer than 650 hours in Denmark and Turkey to 1 080 in the United States.
- The average number of teaching hours per year in upper secondary schools is 667, but ranges from 364 in Denmark to 1 080 in the United States.
- The way teachers' working time is regulated varies substantially among countries.

Significance

This indicator examines the time teachers spend teaching and doing non-teaching work, such as preparing lessons and assessing students. Although working time and teaching time only partly determine teachers' actual workload, they do provide valuable insight into differences in what is demanded of teachers in different countries and so may be related to the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. The amount of time teachers spend teaching is also one of the factors that affect the financial resources countries need to allocate to education.

Findings

Primary teachers tend to spend more hours teaching than secondary teachers, although the size of the gap varies between countries. In France and Korea, a primary teacher is required to teach over 220 hours more than a lower secondary teacher and 250 hours more than an upper secondary teacher. By contrast, the gap is less than 50 hours or almost non-existent in Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, Scotland and the United States.

The composition of teachers' annual teaching time, in terms of days, weeks and hours a day, varies considerably between countries. For instance, while teachers in Denmark teach for 42 weeks a year (in primary and secondary education) and teachers in Iceland for 3 to 36 weeks a year, teachers in Iceland actually put in more hours of teaching over the year than counterparts in Denmark. Korea is the only country in which primary teachers teach more than five days a week, on average; yet their total annual teaching time is below the average because they teach, on average, fewer hours per day.

While some countries formally regulate contact time only, others also set working hours. Indeed, in most

countries, teachers are formally required to work a specified number of hours each week, including teaching and non-teaching time, to earn their full-time salary. These hours vary between countries, as does the allocation of time to teaching and non-teaching activities. Usually, the number of teaching hours is specified, but some countries also regulate, at the national level, the amount of time a teacher must be present in the school.

In Belgium (Fr.), Finland, France, Italy and New Zealand, there are no formal requirements for how much time teachers should spend on non-teaching duties. However, this does not mean that teachers are given total freedom to carry out other tasks.

Definitions

Data are from the 2007 OECD-INES Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum and refer to the 2005-06 school year. Teaching time is defined as the number of hours per year that a full-time teacher teaches a group or class of students. Working time refers to the normal working hours of a full-time teacher and includes time directly associated with teaching and hours devoted to teaching-related activities, such as preparing lessons, counselling students, correcting assignments and tests, and meeting with parents and other staff.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2008* (Indicator D4).

Areas covered include:

- Organisation of teachers' working time.
- Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education.

Further reading from OECD

Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (2005).

4. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How much time do teachers spend teaching?

Figure 4.8. **Annual teaching hours by education level, 2006**

This figure shows the variation in teaching hours for teachers in different levels of education.

Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table D4.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402318043535>.

Figure 4.9. **Percentage of teachers working time spent teaching, 2006**

This figure shows the amount of their working time that teachers spend teaching. Contact time with students is a major part of teachers' workloads, but duties also include preparing classes and correcting assignments.

Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table D4.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402318043535>.

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