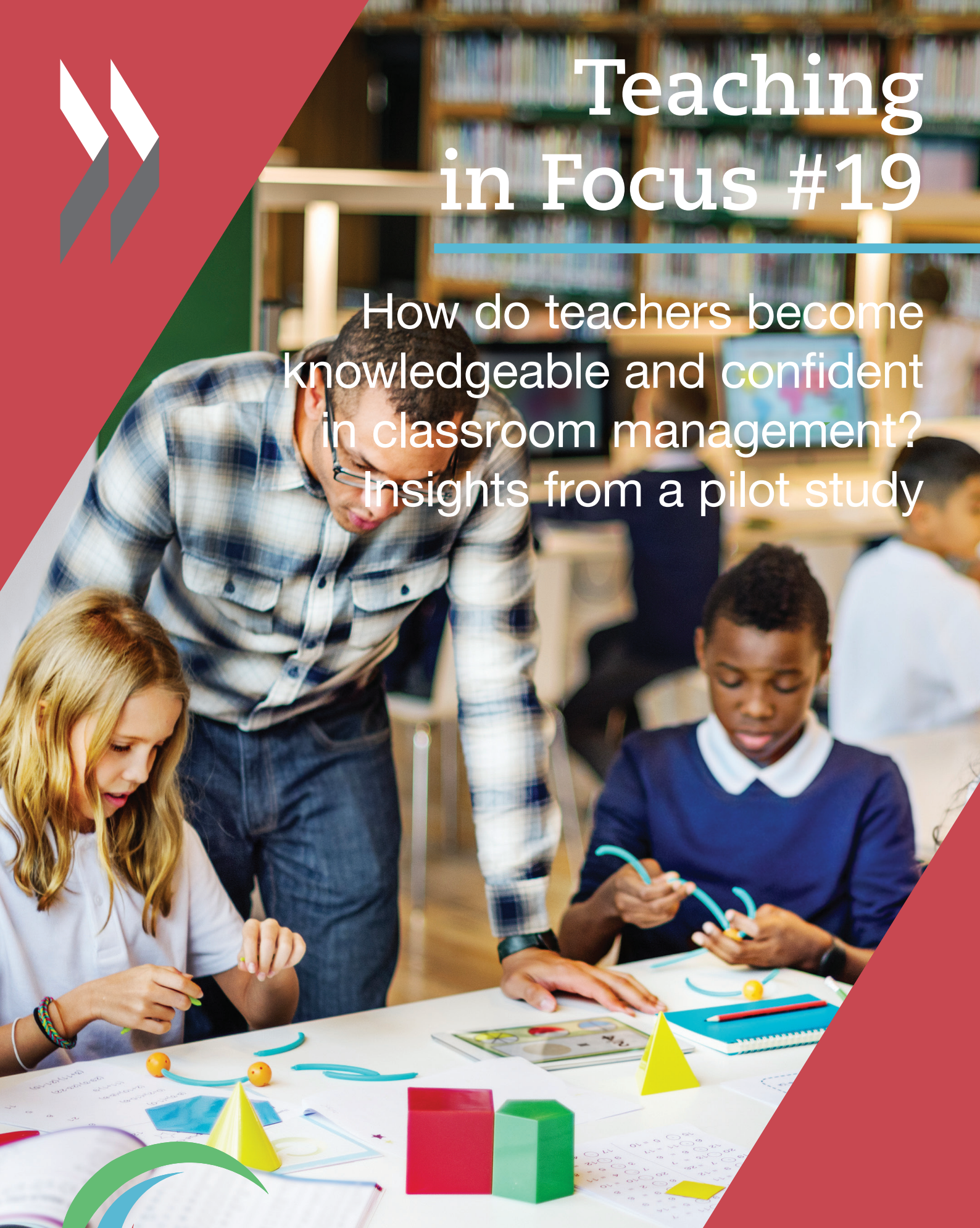
Teaching in Focus #19

How do teachers become knowledgeable and confident in classroom management? Insights from a pilot study



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How do teachers become knowledgeable and confident in classroom management? Insights from a pilot study

- The Innovative Teaching for Effective Learning (ITEL) Teacher Knowledge Survey is the first international study to explore the nature, function and development of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, i.e. what teachers know about teaching and learning.
- In-service and pre-service teachers exhibited higher knowledge on the classroom management portion of the assessment than in other areas related to instructional process, such as teaching methods and lesson planning.
- Results suggest that the more teachers learn about classroom management, the more confident they feel about mastering the teaching and learning process in general. Classroom management also seems to have a larger impact on self-efficacy than does learning about lesson planning.
- In-service teachers who report feeling confident about managing classrooms also report higher quality instructional practices in this domain.
- Knowledge related to learning and development; incorporating aspects of cognitive learning strategies, memory and information processes, is the area with most room for improvement in the pedagogical knowledge base.

What is the ITEL Teacher Knowledge Survey?

The purpose of the ITEL Teacher Knowledge Survey is to better understand the nature of teachers' pedagogical knowledge. That implies situating their knowledge base within a broader context and identifying how it is shaped and evolves. The survey, therefore, also examines learning opportunities in teacher education, including teaching practicum and professional development, motivational factors, and incentives for choosing the profession.

The pilot study samples, as reported here, are composed of 943 in-service teachers and 644 pre-service teachers from 5 countries: Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and the Slovak Republic. The pilot phase gives an indication of the potential of the instrument to inform policy about whether teachers' skills need to be upgraded, and by how much. In the future, a full study with nationally representative samples will be designed. The findings from this study will help to guide policy makers on how to improve teacher quality.

Classroom management refers to the actions teachers take to facilitate a successful learning environment and is one of the dimensions of pedagogical knowledge the Teacher Knowledge Survey explores. While the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found that the majority of teachers report being able to control disruptive behaviour, it also highlighted that 13% of teaching and learning time in an average classroom is lost to keeping order (OECD, 2009), and that teachers report a strong need for professional development related to classroom management (OECD, 2014).

Being unprepared to deal with classroom events, such as disruptive behaviour, is one of the major reasons for new teachers' "reality shock". Adequate training in classroom management is important, not only to develop knowledge and expertise, but also to increase teachers' confidence and well-being at the start of their careers (Dicke et al., 2015). As many OECD countries face high attrition rates among new teachers, this could be an important finding for policy makers. To better understand the reasons why many teachers struggle to meet the challenges of managing the classroom, the survey explores the concept from four different perspectives: 1) measuring in-service and pre-service teachers' knowledge about classroom management; 2) asking respondents whether they learned about classroom management in initial teacher education and professional development (the latter only for in-service teachers); 3) asking to what extent they feel confident about managing a classroom; and 4) asking what in-service teachers actually do in practice to manage classrooms.

Do teachers have the knowledge to efficiently manage classrooms?

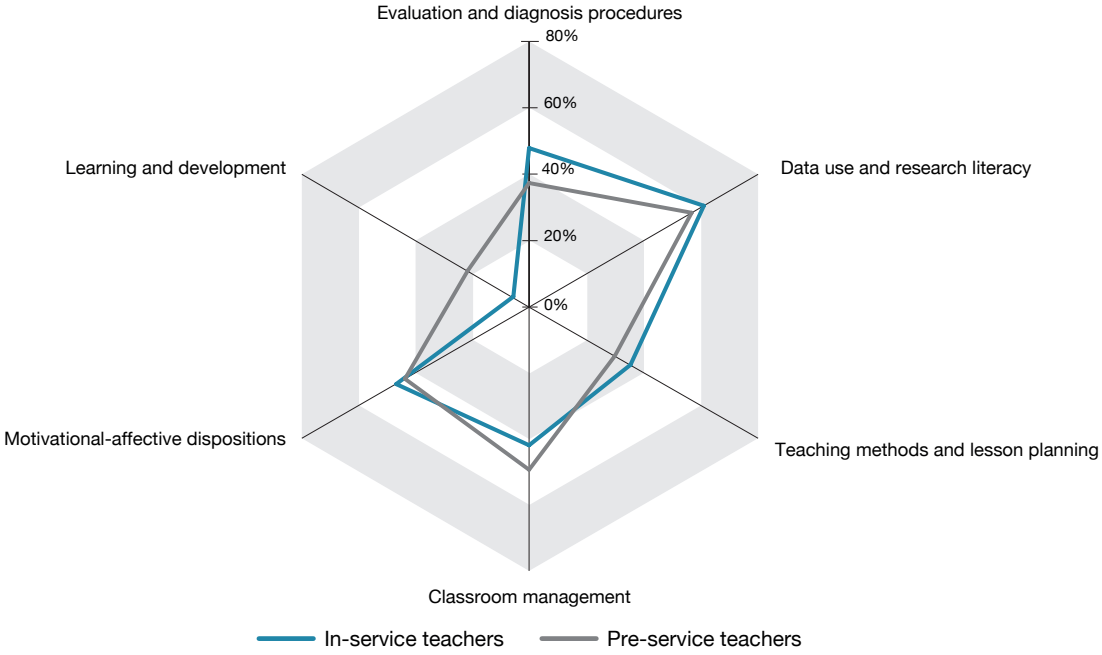
The ITEL Teacher Knowledge Survey is based on a broad conceptual framework of teachers' professional competences and examines the first of these perspectives, pedagogical knowledge, through six dimensions (Table 1). Knowledge about classroom management is assessed through items relating to how to stimulate cognitive activation in the class, teaching pace, classroom discipline, methods to maximise students' learning time, classroom rules, and concepts of positive/negative punishment and reinforcement.

Table 1. Assessment framework for the ITEL Teacher Knowledge Survey

Dimensions of general pedagogical knowledge	**Instructional process**		**Learning process**		**Assessment**	
Sub-dimensions of general pedagogical knowledge	Teaching methods and lesson planning	Classroom management	Motivational-affective dispositions	Learning and development	Evaluation and diagnostic procedures	Data use and research literacy

As Figure 1 shows, the pilot results suggest that both in-service and pre-service teachers possess a stronger knowledge of classroom management than other areas of the instructional process, such as teaching methods and lesson planning. Among pre-service teachers, classroom management is the second strongest dimension, which may seem surprising, as we would expect practical experience to matter more in a domain that pertains directly to the actions teachers take. Learning and development, on the other hand, is the dimension where both samples seem to have most room for improvement. This domain covered topics such as the functioning of the brain and memory, learning styles and learning taxonomies, critical thinking, and metacognition. While such knowledge may seem more theoretical and less directly relevant for practice, it is an important area of expertise, for example when handling heterogeneous classrooms.

Figure 1. Pedagogical knowledge of in-service teachers and pre-service teachers about the six dimensions of the assessment framework



Note: Percentage of in-service teachers and pre-service teachers who answered at least 60% of items correctly in each dimension.
Source: Adapted from Sonmark, K. et al. (2017), "Understanding teachers' pedagogical knowledge: report on an international pilot study", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 159, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/43332ebd-en.

How confident are teachers in their classroom management skills?

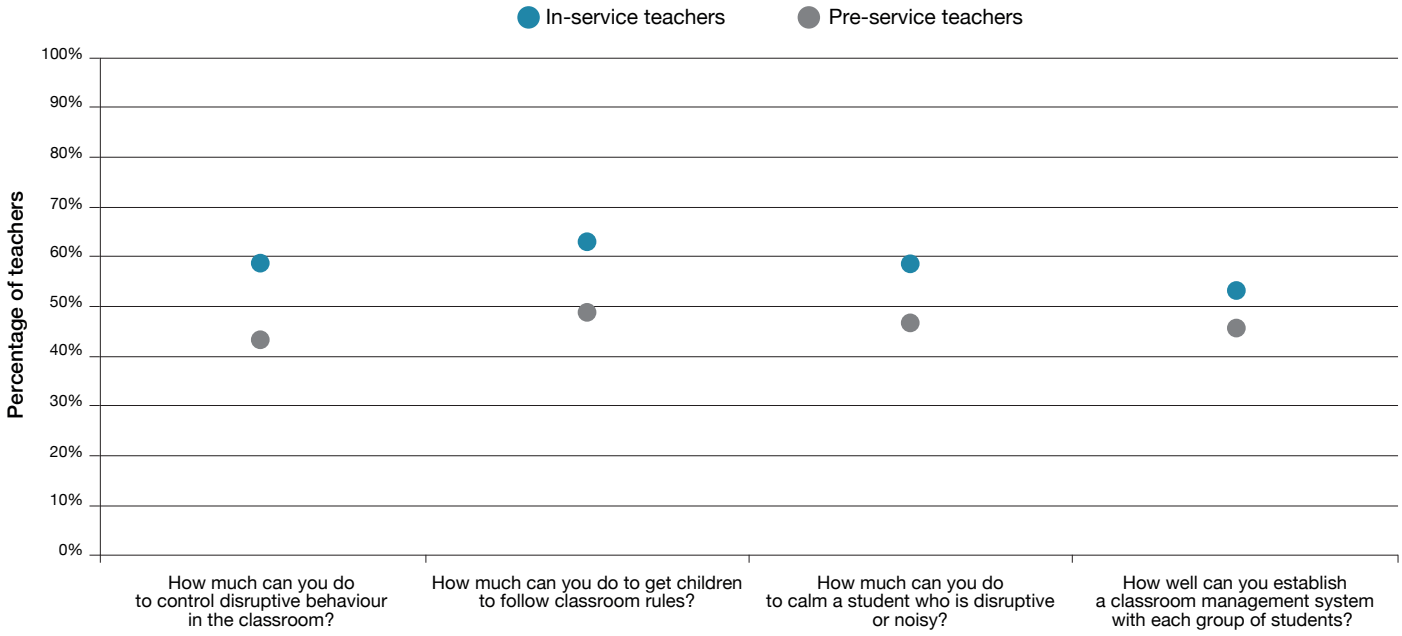
Generally, teachers' self-efficacy is positively related to student motivation and achievement, as well as teachers' enthusiasm for teaching, instructional practices, job satisfaction and commitment to the profession (OECD, 2014). The ITEL project also asked respondents about their initial training and professional development, as well as their self-reported self-efficacy and instructional quality. The results suggest that the more teachers learn about classroom management, the more confident they feel about mastering the teaching and learning process in general. Learning about classroom management also seems to have a larger impact on overall self-efficacy than learning about lesson planning. It is likely that feeling confident about managing the classroom is a crucial component teachers need to have in place before other teaching practices can take shape and be effective.

The two samples differ in an important way. Despite reporting similar opportunities to learn about classroom management in initial teacher education and professional development, in-service teachers reported higher levels of self-efficacy than pre-service teachers in all aspects of self-efficacy in classroom management (Figure 2), which is perhaps due to the influence of years of experience. This may imply that teachers do not feel fully confident until they gain substantial experience in the profession. The pilot results also show that for pre-service teachers, practicum in initial teacher education predicts how confident they will be, and obtaining early classroom experience may be of particular importance in order for new teachers to be prepared for the job as soon as possible.

The pilot results also suggest a link between confidence and teaching quality among in-service teachers. The more confident they feel about their classroom management skills, the less likely they are to report lots of disruptive noise in the classroom. In-service teachers who feel more confident about teaching are also more likely to report that they know what is happening in the classroom, that they make the rules for classroom

behaviour explicit for their students and that their students try to create a pleasant learning environment. These results suggest a need for increased practice-based learning and classroom experience for pre-service teachers during their training, and a focus on professional development activities to boost self-efficacy in classroom management – especially in the early years of a teacher's career.

Figure 2. In-service and pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management



Note: Percentage of in-service teachers and pre-service teachers reporting 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1: Not at all, 7: To a great deal).
Source: OECD (2016), *ITEL TKS 2016 Pilot Study Database*.[1]

The bottom line

These initial results of the ITEL Teacher Knowledge Survey pilot study demonstrate the analytical potential of an innovative instrument to investigate teachers' pedagogical knowledge in an internationally comparative way.

First, these results demonstrate how knowledge profiles can be used to inform teacher education policies by showing the relative strengths and weaknesses of different domains of pedagogical knowledge. Classroom management is the area where both in-service and pre-service teachers possess the strongest knowledge base compared to other forms of instructional process, such as teaching method and lesson planning.

Second, the results reveal that confidence in classroom management may be an important foundation teachers need in order for other teaching practices to evolve and be effective. Preparing pre-service teachers for the job as early as possible is particularly important. While teacher education develops a strong knowledge in classroom management, experience matters for developing skills and confidence. Therefore, practicum during training and professional development focused on classroom management during the early years of teachers' careers can be an important factor in closing the self-efficacy gap this study found between in-service and pre-service teachers.

1. Due to the pilot character of the study, findings should be interpreted with caution. The data presented aims to demonstrate the analytical potential of the instrument and exemplify analyses conducted on representative samples. A publicly available database will be provided after the Main Study data collection.

Visit

www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/innovative-teaching-for-effective-learning.htm

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To learn more

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