

FURTHER RESULTS FROM TALIS STARTING STRONG 2018

The OECD Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS Starting Strong) is an international large-scale survey of early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff and centre leaders conducted in nine OECD countries. This note presents the findings from the second volume of results on TALIS Starting Strong 2018, *Building a High-quality Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*.

Iceland

Key findings

Staff in Iceland have relatively high levels of engagement in collaborative professional practices, particularly in peer discussions about work practices or the development and needs of specific children. Yet, participation in centre-embedded training activities, such as coaching, is less common.

A consistent association between cumulative training in different areas of work and indicators of quality interactions in ECEC settings is observed for ECEC staff in Iceland. For instance, staff with cumulative training for facilitating playful learning report the strongest sense of self-efficacy for helping children to develop creativity and problem solving.

The share of ECEC staff in Iceland who agree that they are satisfied with their job is very high, but a relatively small share of staff is satisfied with their salary and feel valued by society. Perceptions are even less positive among experienced staff. The percentage of staff thinking of leaving the job for health-related issues, which may indicate possible risk of burnout, is also very high in Iceland.

Having too many children in the classroom/playgroup/group is the number one ranked source of stress for staff in Iceland. By contrast, too much administrative work and work outside hours spent with children are less of a source of stress for staff in Iceland than in other countries.

Staff perceptions of the extent to which their centre leader encourages co-operation among staff to develop new ideas in their practices are relatively high in Iceland compared to other countries. Staff perceptions of opportunities for participating in decision making in their ECEC centres are comparable with other countries.

Staff in Iceland who see their leaders as strongly engaged in pedagogical leadership report a stronger sense of self-efficacy for supporting children's development and are consistently more likely to report practices for facilitating children's early literacy and numeracy, prosocial behaviour, and emotional development.

In Iceland, staff in centres with a shortage of material resources are more likely to be stressed by a lack of resources, and more so than in other countries. On the other hand, informal communication with parents or guardians in ECEC centres with a high share of socio-economically disadvantaged children is particularly frequent in Iceland.

Highlights and policy implications for Iceland

Staff education, training and skills development

Across countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong, neither pre-service education or training focused on working with children nor pre-service practical experience are universal among ECEC staff. In Iceland, 64% of pre-primary staff completed a pre-service programme that prepared them specifically to work with children, the lowest among all of the participating countries, and the share was particularly low among novice teachers (38%). Among these staff, 71% completed practical modules as part of their training programmes. As in most other countries, in Iceland, pre-primary staff with a “practicum” covered more areas in their pre-service training than staff without such experience.

Approaches to ongoing professional development vary across countries. Participation in recent in-service training activities is relatively high in Iceland (87%), and particularly so among experienced teachers (93%). However, staff in Iceland tend to cover a smaller number of areas during such training than staff in most other countries. Induction for new staff is virtually universal across ECEC centres in all countries, but the form this takes differs. In Iceland, mentoring is among the most common induction strategy (95% of centres), while a reduced workload is less common than in other countries (31% of centres).

Collaborative professional practices provide important opportunities for informal learning, and in all countries, ECEC staff who engage more in collaboration in their centres are also more likely to participate in training activities. Staff in Iceland have relatively high levels of engagement in these practices, for instance with about one in two pre-primary staff providing feedback to other staff about their practice on a weekly or daily basis. More than eight in ten pre-primary staff in Iceland report daily or weekly discussions with colleagues on the development or needs of specific children. In turn, participation in centre-embedded training activities, such as coaching and peer observation formal arrangements are less common in Iceland.

As in other countries, ECEC staff in Iceland are most confident about their ability to promote children’s socio-emotional development, but less so about working with children from diverse backgrounds or using digital technology to support children’s learning. Similar to other countries, experienced teachers report higher levels of self-efficacy in adapting work to children’s individual needs than novice teachers, and the difference is particularly large in Iceland.

Across countries, staff who covered more areas in both their pre-service and recent in-service training tend to report a stronger sense of self-efficacy for supporting child development and to adapt their practices more to children’s needs and interests. These associations hold true for staff in Iceland.

Across countries, cumulative training in a given area tends to be more strongly associated with indicators of quality interactions in ECEC settings than more sporadic training. Iceland shows consistent associations in this respect in different areas of work with children. Moreover, Iceland is the country where pre-primary staff with cumulative training for facilitating playful learning report the strongest sense of self efficacy for helping children to develop creativity and problem solving. However, the percentage of staff covering contents related to key areas such as child development, diversity or pedagogy in both their pre-service and recent in-service training is relatively low in Iceland. For instance, 50% of staff in Iceland covered contents related to working with a diversity of children in both their pre-service and recent in-service training.

Staff working conditions and well-being

Overall, staff in all of the countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong show a high level of satisfaction with the profession and their current job. The share of staff who “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are satisfied with their job is very high in Iceland (96%). In all countries, satisfaction with salary is generally low, but particularly so among pre-primary staff in Iceland (10%). Satisfaction is even lower among more experienced staff (8%).

The way staff feel valued by others can be an important aspect of their well-being. Compared to other countries, at the pre-primary level, this perception is relatively low in Iceland, with only 33% of staff feeling valued by society. As with satisfaction with salaries, feelings of being acknowledged by society are lower among experienced staff (31%) than among novice staff (38%).

In most countries, retirement is the most likely reason to leave the role for young and older staff alike, suggesting that most staff expect to spend their entire career in the ECEC profession. Iceland is an exception to this pattern, and the country where the largest percentage of staff envisage working in a different job not in the ECEC sector (25%). Compared to other countries, the percentage of staff thinking of leaving the job for health-related issues, which may indicate possible risk of burnout, is also relatively high in Iceland (20%). Those staff in Iceland reporting the highest levels of stress are more likely to indicate this reason as the most likely one to leave their job.

Staff working hours vary notably across countries, partly driven by the time that staff spend without direct contact with children on other job tasks at the ECEC centre. Working hours of staff working full time in Iceland are relatively low and there is little variation within the country. In Iceland, full-time pre-primary staff spend on average seven working hours per week without children, which is the lowest number of hours across countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong. Results from the survey indicate that workload stress coming from work outside hours spent with children is an important source of stress in many countries, but not in Iceland.

Support from centre leadership is another aspect of the quality of working environments. In Iceland, only 25% of pre-primary staff “agree” or “strongly agree” that they need more support from their ECEC centre leader, the lowest percentage among countries.

Feelings of stress at work emerge from imbalances between job demands, resources to address these demands and rewards for effort. In Iceland, “having too many children in their classroom/playgroup/group” is the number one ranked source of stress for staff (39%), and self-efficacy does not appear to buffer the effect of working with many children, suggesting that policies to support self-efficacy such as training could help. By contrast, “having too much administrative work” is not an important source of stress for staff in Iceland (4%), and support from leaders acts as a buffer against this source of stress.

Staff shortages create tensions for both staff and leaders in multiple areas. Iceland is one of the few countries in which leaders report a lack of staff as a source of stress, but staff are less likely to do so.

Leadership and management in ECEC centres

Across most countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong, administrative leadership accounts, on average, for at least 30% of leaders’ time in ECEC centres. In Iceland, centre leaders spend slightly more time on this function (40%), but the least time on interactions with children (14%). The time spent on pedagogical leadership is similar to most other countries (28%). In Iceland, the initial preparation of 83% of pre-primary centre leaders focused on pedagogical leadership, which is relatively high compared to other countries.

In most countries, centre leaders’ pedagogical leadership is positively associated with staff’s attitudes and indicators of quality interactions in ECEC settings. In Iceland, pre-primary staff who see their leaders as being strongly engaged in pedagogical leadership, for instance by setting a clear vision for the centre or by ensuring that staff take responsibility for improving their practices, also report a stronger sense of self-efficacy for supporting children’s development and are consistently more likely to report practices for facilitating children’s early literacy and numeracy, prosocial behaviour, and emotional development.

While across countries ECEC leaders are highly satisfied with their jobs overall, they tend to report relatively low satisfaction with their salaries. In Iceland, more than nine out of ten centre leaders report being satisfied with their jobs and enjoying working in their ECEC centres, but less than four in ten declare being satisfied with their salary. All centre leaders in Iceland report having significant responsibilities for hiring staff, and the level of dissatisfaction with their degree of influence is relatively low (17%).

Findings from TALIS Starting Strong indicate that staff who perceive more opportunities for participating in decision making in their ECEC centres tend to engage more frequently in professional collaborative practices and to report higher levels of satisfaction with their job. This is also true in Iceland, where 85% of pre-primary staff agree that their centre leader encourages all staff to have a say in important decisions, which is comparable to other countries. Staff perceptions of the extent to which their centre leader encourages co-operation among staff to develop new ideas in their practices are relatively high compared to other countries (91%).

Equity

In most countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong, staff training profiles respond to the socio-economic and cultural/linguistic composition of the populations of children in the ECEC settings. In Iceland, the share of staff working in ECEC centres with a higher share of children from socio-economically disadvantaged homes who received training for working with a diversity of children in both their pre-service and recent in-service training is relatively low (31%), and not much higher than in centres with more advantaged children (3 percentage point difference). However, Iceland is one of the countries where a positive difference is observed in the proportion of pre-primary staff with cumulative training for supporting diverse groups of children between centres with a higher and smaller proportion of dual language learners.

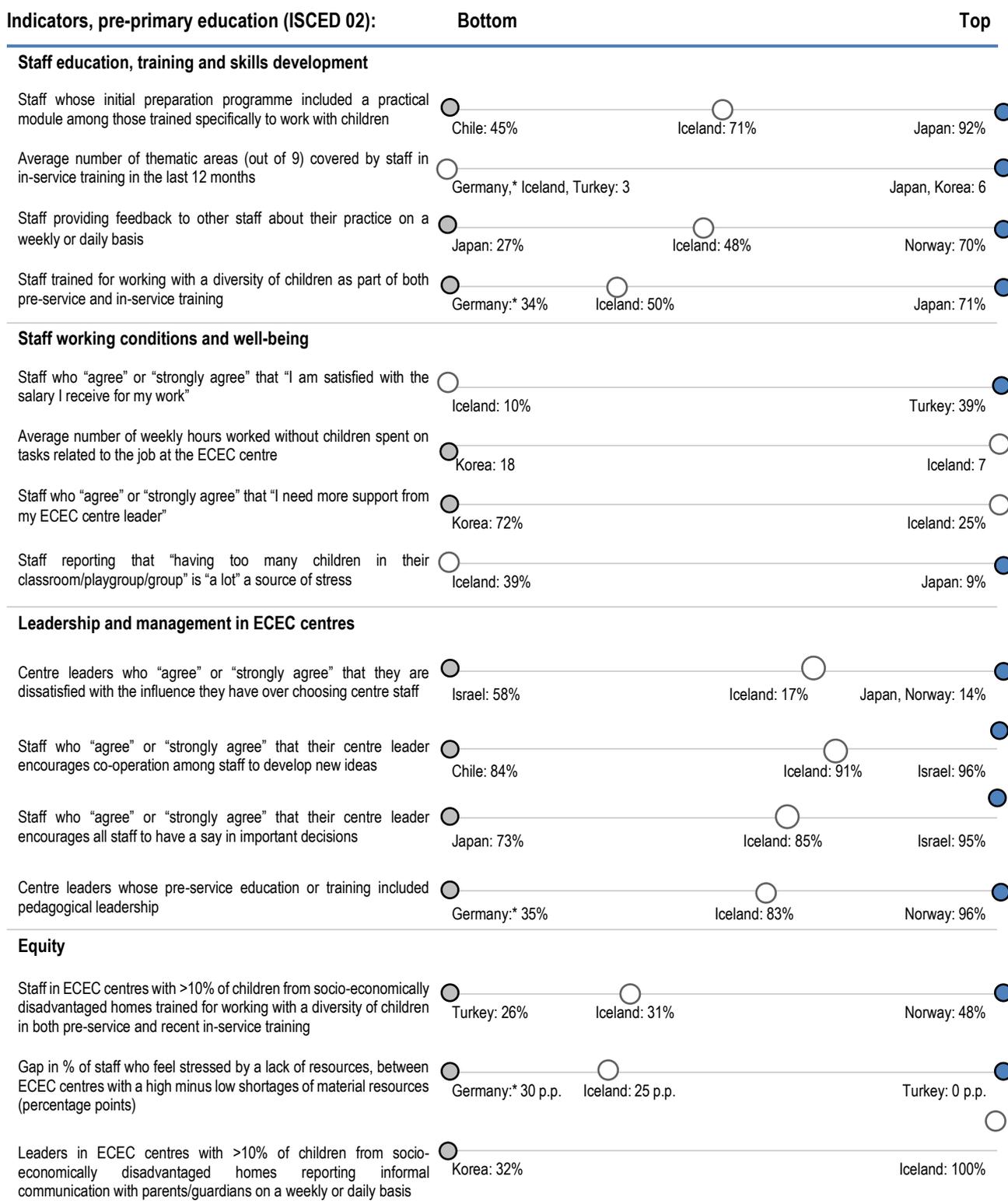
Across countries, differences between centres in terms of the composition of children or availability of resources are associated only to a limited extent with staff working conditions and well-being. In all countries, however, and especially in Iceland, pre-primary staff in centres with a shortage of material resources are more likely to be stressed by a lack of resources.

Engagement with families and communities is another dimension of quality interactions in ECEC settings with a strong equity dimension. Informal communication with parents or guardians in ECEC centres with a high share of socio-economically disadvantaged children is particularly frequent in Iceland, with all leaders reporting that this takes place on a “weekly” or “daily” basis.

Policy pointers for Iceland

- Adopt high standards for ECEC initial preparation programmes for all staff, and build on their comprehensive curricula to design in-service training activities that enable targeted skills upgrading.
- Ensure that staff benefit from a balanced set of working conditions and that unfavourable working conditions do not accumulate on some ECEC staff.
- Raise the status and reward of the profession by ensuring that staff’s salaries are aligned with their responsibilities and by better defining pathways for career progression in the ECEC sector.
- Support centre leaders in fulfilling their multiple functions by providing them with the necessary resources and quality working conditions, as well as support from staff.
- Target enhancements in working conditions in ECEC centres with lower levels of resources.

How does Iceland compare?



* Estimates for sub-groups and estimated differences between sub-groups in the TALIS Starting Strong 2018 data need to be interpreted with care.

Source: OECD (2019), TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database.

What is TALIS Starting Strong and how does it apply in Iceland?

TALIS Starting Strong is an international, large-scale survey of staff and centre leaders in early childhood education and care (ECEC). TALIS Starting Strong uses questionnaires administered to staff and centre leaders to gather data. Its main goal is to generate robust international information relevant to developing and implementing policies focused on ECEC staff and centre leaders and their pedagogical and professional practices, with an emphasis on those aspects that promote conditions for children’s learning, development and well-being. TALIS Starting Strong data are based exclusively on self-reports from ECEC staff and centre leaders and, therefore, represent their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and accounts of their activities.

TALIS Starting Strong 2018 includes nine countries: Chile, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Norway and Turkey. All of these countries collected data from staff and leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED Level 02) settings typically serving children aged 3-5. In addition, four of the nine countries (Denmark, Germany, Israel and Norway) collected data from staff and leaders in settings serving children under age 3. Only data on centre-based provision are reported in the first and second volumes of results and this country note.

The survey aims to obtain a representative sample in each participating country of staff and centre leaders for each level of ECEC in which the country participated. In Iceland, 204 staff members and 178 leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED Level 02) settings completed the TALIS Starting Strong questionnaires.

TALIS Starting Strong data analysed in the first and second international reports cover the following ECEC settings in Iceland: preschool settings (*leikskoli*), which target all children aged 1-5.

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Note regarding data from 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.

References

OECD (2020), *Building a High-quality Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce: Further Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b90bba3d-en>.

OECD (2019), *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/301005d1-en>.

OECD (2019), *TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database*, www.oecd.org/education/school/oecdalisstartingstrongdata.htm

For more information on TALIS Starting Strong 2018 visit: www.oecd.org/education/school/oecd-starting-strong-teaching-and-learning-international-survey.htm.

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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