TEACHING in Focus

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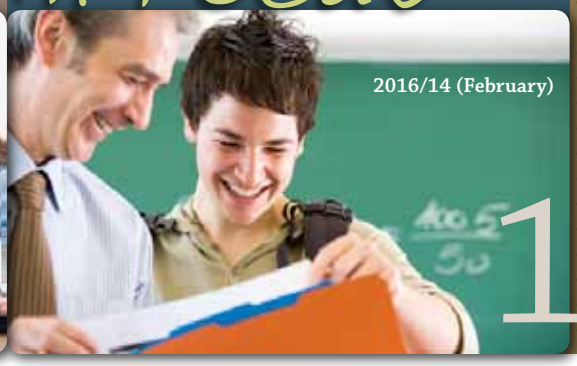


Teacher Professionalism

- A new OECD report, *Supporting Teacher Professionalism*, based on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), conceptualises teacher professionalism as being comprised of: knowledge base, defined as necessary knowledge for teaching; autonomy, defined as teachers' decision-making over aspects related to their work; and peer networks, defined as opportunities for information exchange and support needed to maintain high standards of teaching.
- Education systems differ in terms of the emphasis placed on each of the teacher professionalism domains. Across all systems there is a particularly positive relationship between knowledge and peer network domains and teacher satisfaction, self-efficacy and perceptions of the value of the teaching profession in the society.
- Practices supporting teacher professionalism are less common in schools with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged students. However, investing in teacher professionalism can be particularly beneficial in these schools as the positive relationship between knowledge, peer networks and teacher satisfaction is amplified in challenging schools.

What is TALIS?

TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) is the first international survey examining teaching and learning environments in schools. It asks teachers and school principals about their work, their schools and their classrooms. The cross-system analysis helps countries and economies identify others facing similar challenges and learn about their policies.

TALIS 2013 focused on lower secondary education teachers and their principals. It sampled 20 teachers in 200 schools in more than 30 countries.

More information is available at: *www.oecd.org/talis*

TALIS

TALIS

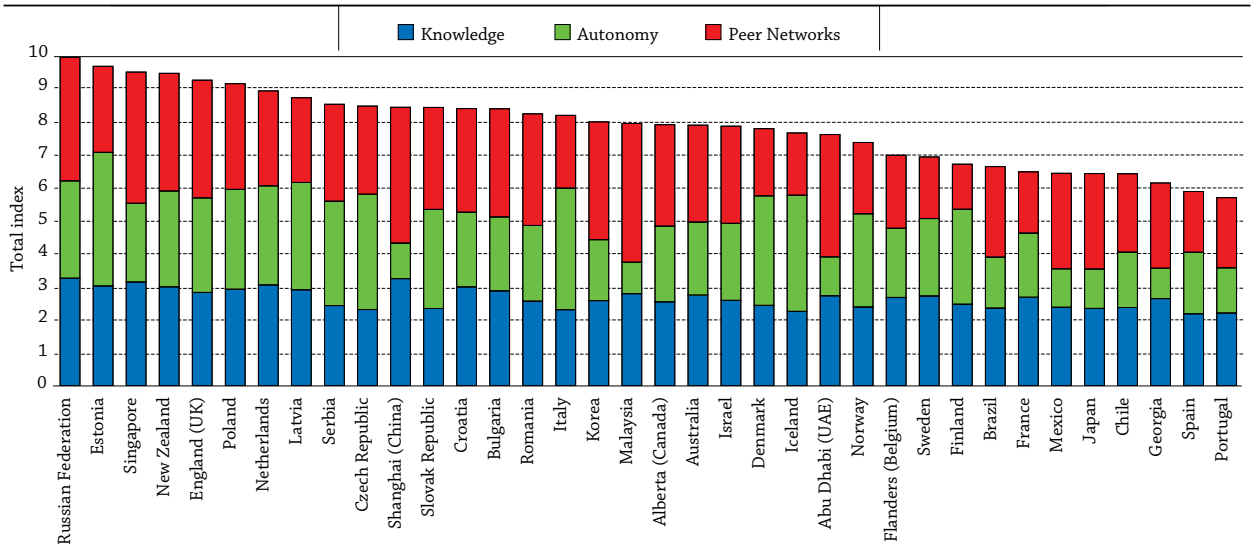
Teacher professionalism domains

The provision of quality, professional teaching staff is essential for equipping students with important life skills. The new report, *Supporting Teacher Professionalism*, uses results from TALIS 2013 to provide insight into how to support teacher professionalism. It conceptualises teacher professionalism as being comprised of three domains:

- **Knowledge base.** This is necessary knowledge for teaching and includes formal teacher education, and whether the teacher has incentives for professional development (e.g. receives time release during professional hours) and participates in professional development.
- **Autonomy.** This is defined as teachers' decision-making power over aspects related to their work, such as: content, course offerings, discipline practices, assessment and materials.
- **Peer networks.** These are defined as opportunities for the information exchange and support needed to maintain high standards of teaching. They include: participation in induction and mentoring programmes, network of teachers, receiving feedback from direct observations.

Figure 1 illustrates how systems differ in the way they support teacher professionalism.

Figure 1 • **Teacher professionalism index across TALIS systems**

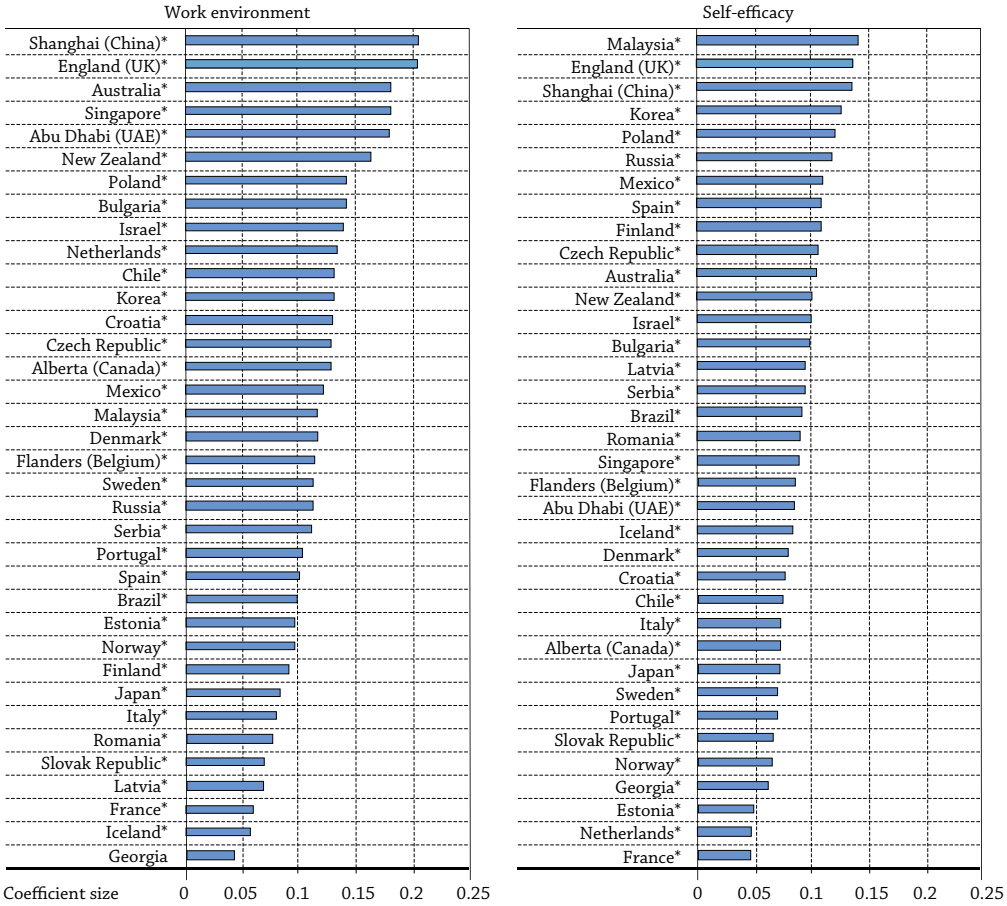


Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database.

The link between teacher professionalism and teachers' confidence and satisfaction with work and the work environment

Teacher professionalism is positively associated with a number of important teacher outcomes, in particular: job satisfaction, confidence in the ability to teach (self-efficacy) and perceptions of the status of the teaching profession. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between teacher professionalism, teachers' satisfaction with the work environment, and teachers' self-efficacy.

Figure 2 • **The relationship between teacher professionalism and teacher satisfaction with the work environment and teacher self-efficacy**



Notes: 1) * designates coefficient is statistically significantly different from zero ($p<0.05$).
2) Systems listed in descending order by the size of the coefficient.

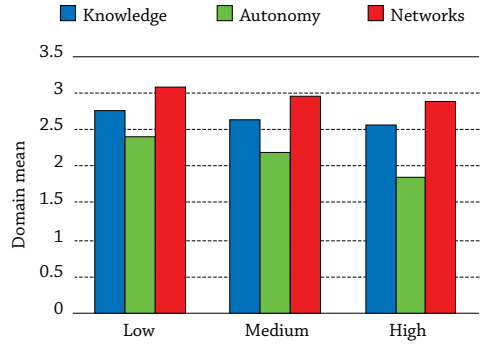
Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database.

Teachers' knowledge base and peer networks show larger and more consistently positive associations than teacher autonomy with teachers' perceptions in nearly every surveyed country and economy. This shows that support for practices such as teacher professional development, teacher collaboration, mentoring or induction programmes boosts teacher professionalism and is beneficial for job satisfaction.

The importance of teacher professionalism in socio-economically disadvantaged schools

The TALIS report shows that support for teacher professionalism may be particularly needed in challenging schools, such as those with a high proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged students. Unfortunately, practices supporting teacher professionalism are generally less common in socio-economically disadvantaged than in advantaged schools. Figure 3 shows that as the proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged students in schools increases (where low means less than 10%; medium: 11-30%; and high: more than 30% of the student body), there is a decrease in teacher professionalism support across all domains. This is particularly important because the association between teacher professionalism and job satisfaction is stronger in these schools than in schools with a more privileged student body. Therefore, investing in teacher professionalism in ways such as supporting teacher professional development activities or networks of teachers could be a particularly good mechanism for boosting teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy in challenging schools.

Figure 3 • **Teacher professionalism domains at different levels of socio-economic disadvantage in schools**



Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database.

What this means in practice

TALIS systems differ in the way they support teacher professionalism, with most systems putting a different emphasis on teacher knowledge, autonomy or peer networks. However, across all systems teacher knowledge and peer networks emerge as particularly important to teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of confidence (self-efficacy). This relationship is amplified in schools with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged students, where teachers generally express lower job satisfaction than teachers in advantaged schools. Support for teacher professionalism practices, such as channelling resources to boost teacher collaboration or induction and mentoring programmes, can be an important way to boost teachers' jobs satisfaction. This is particularly important for high-needs schools.

The bottom line The *Supporting Teacher Professionalism* report shows that although teacher professionalism differs across countries and economies, it has an important relationship with teacher job satisfaction and teachers' confidence in their ability to teach. Practices supporting the development of teacher knowledge and peer networks are particularly strongly linked with positive outcomes for teachers. This is especially the case in schools with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged students. Policy makers, teachers and school leaders should focus their attention on the support of teachers' pre- and in-service professional development, collaborative practices, and participation in networks of teachers.

Visit
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To learn more

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