

OECD Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS)

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TALIS, the Teaching and Learning International Survey, is a project of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). TALIS focuses on the learning environments and teaching conditions in post-primary schools that offer programmes to Junior Cycle (lower-secondary) students (ages 12-15 years). The purpose of TALIS is to assist countries to review and develop policies to make the teaching profession more attractive and more effective. It looks at aspects of teacher professional development; teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practices; teacher appraisal and feedback; and school leadership. The 24 countries that participated in TALIS are listed below:

	OECD Member Countries		Partner Countries
Australia	Ireland	Poland	Brazil
Austria	Italy	Portugal	Bulgaria
Belgium (FL)	Korea	Slovak Republic.	Estonia
Denmark	Mexico	Spain	Lithuania
Hungary	Netherlands*	Turkey	Malaysia
Iceland	Norway		Malta
			Slovenia

*Data for the Netherlands are not included in reports on TALIS as participation rates were below required TALIS standards.

Data for TALIS were gathered in 2007 (Southern Hemisphere countries) and 2008 (Northern Hemisphere countries). In Ireland, the survey was administered on behalf of the Department of Education and Science by the Educational Research Centre. Teacher Questionnaires were completed by 2227 teachers in 142 schools, while School Questionnaires were completed by principal teachers in the same schools.

The outcomes of the TALIS study reflect high levels of commitment and professionalism among post-primary teachers in Ireland. Teachers in Ireland report stronger levels of classroom disciplinary climate, higher amounts of time on task, greater confidence in their ability as teachers and better teacher-student relations than their counterparts in most European countries in the study.

Nevertheless, TALIS identifies ways in which the effectiveness of teachers might be enhanced further. In particular, it suggests that Ireland lags behind other countries in areas such as frequency of school self-evaluations and in the frequency of teacher appraisals by principals or school management. Further, it suggests that, while teachers in Ireland hold modern constructivist views about teaching, such views are not as strong as in other European countries, and teachers in Ireland tend to favour more structured teaching approaches over student-orientated approaches that give students a stronger say in what they learn. Principal teachers in Ireland tend to adopt an administrative leadership style more often than an instructional leadership style, even though the latter has been linked more strongly with school effectiveness.

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Further information:

A summary report on TALIS outcomes for Ireland, by Gerry Shiel, Rachel Perkins and Lorraine Gilleece of the Educational Research Centre is available for download at www.erc.ie

Two reports on TALIS published by the OECD are available at www.oecd.org/edu/TALIS. These are:

- *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS. Executive Summary*; and
- *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS. Main Report*.

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Notes for Editors

Some key findings from TALIS are outlined below. The outcomes for Ireland are compared with those of 5 comparison countries, all in Europe: Austria, Belgium (Flemish-speaking region), Denmark, Norway and Poland. Reference is also made to the TALIS country average – an average based on 23 countries that met TALIS school and student participation standards.

Professional Development of Teachers

- Ninety percent of teachers in Ireland participated in some form of professional development in the 18 months prior the TALIS survey – about the same as the TALIS country average. However, on average, teachers in Ireland attended fewer days of professional development (6 days) than the TALIS country average (15 days). Forty-one percent of professional development days for Irish teachers were compulsory – fewer than the TALIS average (51%), but more than in Austria (31%), Belgium (Fl) (34%) and Denmark (35%).
- The most common form of professional development for teachers in Ireland is attendance at courses and workshops. Relative to the corresponding TALIS country averages, fewer teachers in Ireland participate in mentoring and peer observation, qualification programmes or observation visits to schools.
- Teachers in Ireland identified pressing professional development needs in the areas of teaching students with special learning needs (38%), ICT skills (34%), teaching in a multi-cultural setting (24%), and student counselling (25%). Areas in which teachers indicated lower levels of need are content and performance standards, student assessment, classroom management, subject field(s) and instructional practice.

Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Their Pedagogical Practices

- Teachers in Ireland tend to support *constructivist beliefs* about teaching (e.g., they view their role as facilitator of active learning by students) to a lesser extent than teachers in Austria, Denmark, Belgium (Fl), Norway and Poland. Conversely, teachers in Ireland hold stronger *direct transmission beliefs* (e.g., they see their role as transmitting knowledge, and providing correct solutions) than teachers in these countries.
- Teachers in Ireland report favouring *structuring teaching practices* (e.g., stating learning goals, homework review, checking student understanding) more than teachers on average across TALIS countries, and report less support for *student-orientated practices* (e.g., allowing student co-determination of lesson content, giving students individually-adapted lessons) or *enhanced activities* (e.g., assigning projects or debates, asking students to create products).
- Teachers in Ireland report spending 81% of class time on actual teaching – marginally more than the TALIS country average of 79%. In Ireland, 7% of lesson time is spent on administrative tasks and 11% on disciplinary matters.
- Relative to other TALIS countries, including comparison countries Denmark and Norway, the *classroom disciplinary climate* in classrooms in Ireland is strong. Indeed, among comparison countries, only Austria reports stronger disciplinary climate.
- Levels of *teacher self-efficacy* (confidence in one's effectiveness as a teacher) are stronger in Ireland than on average across TALIS countries. Among comparison countries, only teachers in Norway report stronger self-efficacy.

School Evaluation and Teacher Appraisal and Feedback

- Forty-four percent of teachers in Ireland work in schools in which a school self-evaluation had taken place in the five years prior to the TALIS survey. This compares with 80% on average across TALIS countries, and 90% in Poland.
- Forty-three percent of teachers in Ireland work in schools in which an external school evaluation had taken place in the five years prior to the TALIS survey. Though below the TALIS country average of 70%, the figure for Ireland is about the same as for Austria and Denmark. It should be noted that TALIS did not ask about subject evaluations. In 2008, 443 stand-alone subject inspections and 225 subject inspections within whole-school evaluations were conducted by the Inspectorate in Irish post-primary schools.
- In Ireland, 43% of teachers reported that they had never received an appraisal of their teaching and/or feedback on it from the principal teacher in their current school. The corresponding TALIS country average is 22%. Similarly, 52% of teachers in Ireland reported that they had never received an appraisal and/or feedback from other teachers or school management (TALIS average =

29%). On the other hand, 42% of teachers in Ireland reported receiving appraisal/feedback from the school principal at least once a year, and 38% reported receiving appraisal/feedback from other teachers or school management with the same frequency.

- Fewer teachers in Ireland (53%) than in Denmark (70%) or Norway (78%) report that their work has never been appraised by an external individual or body (e.g., an inspector). The correspond TALIS country average is 51%.
- Most teachers in Ireland (88%) and on average across TALIS countries (83%) report that the appraisal and feedback they receive is fair, while 79% of teachers in Ireland and across TALIS countries report that appraisal and feedback have been helpful in their development as teachers. However, only a minority of teachers in a number of countries including Norway (28%), Ireland (40%) and Austria (41%) agree that the appraisal/feedback they received contained suggestions for improving aspects of their work as teachers.

School Leadership and Management Styles

- In Ireland, principal teachers indicate a stronger engagement in *administrative leadership* than in *instructional leadership*, even though instructional leadership has been more strongly associated with effective school management in the literature. Principal teachers in Norway and Austria also espouse an administrative leadership style, while principal teachers in Poland focus more strongly on instructional leadership.

Key Factors in Developing Effective Learning Environments

- Two key aspects of effective learning environments were identified by TALIS – classroom disciplinary climate and teacher self-efficacy. Multi-level models that included a range of teacher- and school-level factors were developed for each country. The summary statements below relate to net effects (i.e., after controlling for teacher demographic and other relevant factors).
- Higher levels of student ability are associated with higher levels of classroom disciplinary climate and teacher self-efficacy in Ireland and in all comparison countries.
- Teachers reporting stronger teacher-student relations in Ireland and in all five comparison countries also report stronger levels of classroom disciplinary climate and higher self-efficacy.
- In Denmark and Ireland, teaching in a publicly-managed school is associated with lower levels of classroom disciplinary climate, while in Ireland, teaching in a publicly-managed school is also associated with lower teacher self-efficacy.
- In three comparison countries and in Ireland, teachers who receive public recognition from the principal or colleagues in relation to effective teaching have higher self-efficacy than those who do not.

Background on Schools and Teachers

- Sixty-nine percent of teachers teaching in lower secondary schools (First to Third years) in Ireland are female. This is almost the same as the TALIS country average (69%), but greater than in Denmark (58%) and Norway (60%).
- Thirty-five percent of lower-secondary teachers in Ireland have 20 or more years of experience, about the same as the TALIS country average. However, there are fewer permanently employed teachers (73%) in Ireland than on average across TALIS countries (85%).
- The ratio of teachers to pedagogical support persons in Ireland (15.8) and the ratio of teachers to administrative or management personnel (11.1) are both above the corresponding TALIS country averages, indicating fewer support or administrative personnel in Ireland. Among comparison countries, ratios are more favourable in Denmark, Norway and Poland than in Ireland.