

2008 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)

By Lauren Djakovac

A new study released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveals two facts sure to shock the education fraternity to the core:

- There's a shortage of qualified teachers, and worldwide;
- Australian teachers are least likely to be rewarded for being good teachers.

'The Teaching and Learning International Survey' (TALIS) is the first international study comparing data on conditions affecting school teachers. It polled 23 countries; 200 schools per country; 20 teachers per school.

The survey also highlights that appraisal and feedback are strong and positive influences on teachers, and that it can increase their development and job satisfaction.

The study found that fewer than 10% of Australian teachers receive incentives (pay rise or other reward) to improve their teaching strategies, compared to an international average of 27% - Australia ranked 20th for rewarding teachers for improved performance.

Again Australia leads the back of the pack, with only 10% of Australian teachers believing they would be rewarded for innovation, compared to the international average of 27% - Here, Australia ranked 21st.

Both these results indicate that Australia has one of the weakest systems for rewarding teachers for their performance, either through monetary (e.g. pay rise) or non-monetary (e.g. career promotions) forms.

The survey also highlights that appraisal and feedback are strong and positive influences on teachers, and that it can increase their development and job satisfaction. This is irrelevant, however, for the 30% of Australian teachers who say they have never received appraisal or feedback from their principal.

It is now considered an axiom that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on student learning. Not surprisingly, the TALIS study reveals a need for teachers to continuously update their knowledge and skills ... which will obviously be a problem for the 30% of Australians receiving no feedback.

While 97% of Australian teachers claimed they had carried out 'some form' of professional learning in the 18 months prior, 55% said it had not been enough.

In relation to the criteria for school evaluations, out of a

possible 17 categories, teachers believe that the factors their principal considers most important are:

- Student outcomes
- Relations between teachers and students
- Feedback from parents
- Student discipline and behaviours
- Professional development undertaken by teachers
- Student test scores

Astonishingly, a teacher's knowledge of their main subject ranked 4th last; participating in school plays and sporting activities, being considered slightly more important.

Surprisingly, nearly 30% of Australian teachers believe that staff in their school will be dismissed because of sustained poor performance ... which would be particularly harsh if it's the 30% who've never received any feedback to tell them that they are performing poorly.... ■