

# Decoding the IB teacher professional

## A comparative study of Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and the United States

### Research summary March 2022

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### Purpose

The objective of this study was to decode the International Baccalaureate (IB) teacher professional by identifying the characteristics of IB teachers compared to non-IB teachers, using the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). This study offers a fuller picture of IB teachers' pedagogy, psychology, and descriptions of their schools, in contrast to a general population of teachers who responded to TALIS. Administered by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), TALIS is a large-scale international survey that asks teachers and school leaders about their working conditions and learning environments, providing a barometer of the profession every five years.

The study involved data from eight jurisdictions: **Australia (Australia Capital Territory and Victoria), Canada (Alberta), China (Shanghai), Denmark, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and the United States (California)**. Researchers used items from the TALIS instrument administered in 2018 to collect data from IB teachers in 2019–2020—comparing their data to non-IB teachers in the same jurisdictions. The researchers also designed additional items specifically to compare professional characteristics among IB teachers.



## Research design

First, researchers conducted a pilot study to test the survey instrument in an IB World School (IBWS) context. This phase involved responses from 110 IB teachers in one IB continuum school. The survey items addressed the following content domains of IB teachers' professional characteristics: reasons for becoming an IB teacher; professional development; professional collaboration; benefits of IB teaching; IB teacher profile; and IB-specific teaching and learning.

The main study gathered online survey data from 1,179 IB teachers from 173 schools in the eight jurisdictions. Approximately one-third of all the IBWSs in these jurisdictions participated in the study. The majority of IBWSs in the sample offered a single programme (74%). Additionally, 52% of the IBWSs were public and 48% were private.

To compare IB and non-IB teachers, researchers extracted TALIS 2018 survey data from the same jurisdictions, including 53,338 non-IB teachers from 3,165 non-IB schools.

## Key findings

### Teacher characteristics

- IB teachers consistently reported higher levels of educational attainment (holding a master's and/or doctoral degree) compared to their non-IB TALIS counterparts. Most IB teachers reported holding master's degrees, while most TALIS teachers

reported holding bachelor's degrees. Researchers found similar patterns in almost all the jurisdictions in this study.

- Another distinctive feature of IB teachers was their reporting of diverse experiences and backgrounds. **Compared to TALIS teachers, they reported having significantly more study abroad experiences, taking more diverse pathways to becoming teachers, and having more years of working in other education roles and non-education roles prior to joining the teaching profession.**

### Motivations and teaching experiences

- For IB teachers across all programmes, "personal utility"<sup>1</sup> was less of a motivation to enter the teaching profession compared to the motivations among TALIS teachers.
- While IB teachers reported higher levels of workload stress than TALIS teachers did, IB teachers also reported lower levels of stress related to student behaviour.
- **IB teachers reported more satisfaction with both their profession and current work environment than TALIS teachers did—a pattern that held across all eight jurisdictions.**
- **Additionally, IB teachers reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms than TALIS teachers did—another pattern that held across all eight jurisdictions.**

### Continuum IBWSs

- IB teachers noted both advantages and challenges to working in a continuum IBWS compared to schools that offer one or two IB programmes. In terms of challenges, IB teachers in continuum schools reported more workload stress and less pedagogical autonomy. The additional workload may be due to the need to align and collaborate across IB programmes. However, IB teachers also reported a benefit of working in a continuum school: higher engagement in professional collaboration. Some other benefits included higher rates of both participation in induction programs and having a mentor assigned from the school.

<sup>1</sup> "Personal utility" refers to the value and/or benefit that people think they can obtain from joining the teaching profession for their own sake. Value and/or benefits may include a steady career pathway, job security and a stable income.

### Benefits of teaching in an IB context

- IB teachers perceived two main benefits of teaching in an IB programme. **Across all jurisdictions, IB teachers identified the IB's progressive pedagogy as the top benefit, followed by high-quality professional development.**

### Teachers' professional practices

#### Time use

- IB teachers reported spending higher portions of their classroom time on administrative tasks but less time on keeping order in the classroom. This aligns with the finding that IB teachers showed higher levels of workload stress than TALIS teachers, but lower levels of student behaviour stress.

#### Professional development

- The top three domains of professional development that IB teachers reported focusing on included: student assessment practices; knowledge of the curriculum; and knowledge and understanding of their respective subject field(s).
- Compared to TALIS teachers, IB teachers reported more frequent participation in the following domains of professional development: student assessment practices; approaches to individualized learning; analysis and use of student assessments; teaching cross-curricular skills; teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting; and communication with people from different cultures or countries.

#### Assessment and core teaching practices

- Across all jurisdictions, IB teachers consistently indicated more frequent use of a variety of assessment practices compared to reports from their TALIS peers.
- **Compared to TALIS teachers, IB teachers indicated more frequency in using core teaching practices, such as student-centred teaching and learning, and constructivist approaches to teaching, learning, and curriculum. Researchers found this pattern across IB programmes and all eight jurisdictions.**

#### Promoting diversity

- In IBWSs, teachers reported that educational practices for diversity were much more widely

promoted compared to how TALIS teachers described their schools. Adopting teaching and learning practices that integrate global issues throughout the curriculum seemed particularly salient in IBWSs.

### Organizational learning and collaboration

- Compared to TALIS teachers, IB teachers perceived higher capacity among their colleagues for organizational learning in all jurisdictions except for China and South Korea.
- IB teachers reported more engagement in professional collaboration for lessons and teacher collaboration than TALIS teachers did. Similarly, IB teachers indicated a higher level of engagement in professional community activities than their TALIS counterparts across all jurisdictions except Denmark.

### Induction and mentorship

- IB teachers reported receiving both formal and informal induction at their current school more frequently than TALIS teachers did.
- Additionally, IB teachers reported being more actively engaged in mentor–mentee relationships in their school than TALIS teachers did.

### Characteristics of IB teachers that predict workload stress, self-efficacy and job satisfaction

#### Workload stress

- When controlling for teacher- and school-level variables, IB teachers who spent more time on teaching and learning reported less workload stress.



- Also, when IB teachers perceived more autonomy in the classroom, they reported less workload stress.

### Self-efficacy in a multicultural classroom

- IB teachers who joined the teaching profession mainly because of the profession's contribution to society ("social utility"<sup>2</sup>) tended to report higher levels of self-efficacy in a multicultural classroom.
- Further, IB-specific teaching practices associated positively with self-efficacy in a multicultural classroom.



### Job satisfaction and work environment

- "Social utility" motivation to become a teacher associated positively with IB teachers' work environment satisfaction.
- In contrast, IB teachers' workload stress and student behaviour stress associated negatively with job satisfaction with the work environment.
- **The more frequently IB teachers reported involvement in professional development, the higher they reported their job satisfaction with the work environment.**
- Pedagogical autonomy in the classroom also associated positively with IB teachers' job satisfaction with the work environment.

<sup>2</sup> "Social utility" refers to the value and/or benefit that people think they can bring to a community or broader society through the teaching profession. Value and/or benefits may include belief in positively influencing the life chances of all children, including the socially disadvantaged, and contributing to society through teaching.

## Conclusions

This study found a number of reported differences between IB teachers and their counterparts from the TALIS dataset across eight jurisdictions internationally. Compared to TALIS teachers, IB teachers reported higher levels of self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms and indicated more active engagement in student-centred and constructivist teaching practices. Furthermore, IB teachers expressed more satisfaction with their profession and work environment than TALIS teachers did. Researchers identified these patterns across all eight jurisdictions. These positive professional characteristics of IB teachers and schools should be recognized as one of the IB's strengths as an education provider that aims to "create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (IB, 2017).

## Reference

International Baccalaureate (IB). (2017). *What is an IB education?* International Baccalaureate Organization. <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/what-is-an-ib-education-2017-en.pdf>

This summary was developed by the IB Research department. A copy of the full report is available at: [www.ibo.org/en/research/](http://www.ibo.org/en/research/). For more information on this study or other IB research, please email [research@ibo.org](mailto:research@ibo.org).

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