



# Barriers for Professional Development (PD) attendance among South African junior secondary school teachers: A quantitative analysis with 2018 TALIS data

**Manda Kisimba Benjamin**

Ph.D student, Faculty of Education  
Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China  
Email: ben.manda92@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *This article investigates the impediments to professional development faced by South African teachers using data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS; 2018). According to the study, South Africans identified "the lack of incentives for participating in Professional Development" and "the lack of employer support for participating in PD" as their two main obstacles to professional development. This article discusses the study's limitations and potential future research areas while outlining implications for the creation of an efficient professional development program for South African teachers.*

**Key Words:** *Barriers, professional development, South Africans teachers, TALIS.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

The need for PD training in a developing country such the Republic of South Africa (RSA) is a critical area for teacher education authorities. This includes improving their abilities in the areas such as behaviors, knowledge, emotions, and thinking (Borko, 2004). Being rare, those training face some barriers of all kinds: difficulty access to the area due to geographical and transport conditions, rural-urban development gap especially for online networking, relatively low expenditure in particular on teacher salary, etc. Therefore, teachers find themselves isolated from all types of modernity, with the direct consequence of a very significant impact on students' academic outcomes. So, this is a crucial issue; whose solution lies first in improving living conditions before thinking technically about PD teacher training in RSA.

All students whether in urban or rural areas have the right to quality education. This requires upstream a well-trained teaching staff able to meet the different needs of the students of this century (Rotherham and al., 2008). We cannot talk about education for all without giving central importance to the question of training for all teachers. Because all teachers, whether from urban or rural areas, are all entitled to qualified in PD training.

PD training is thus a critical element in successful educational systems, enhancing teacher quality, organizational effectiveness and student outcomes.

Why did we choose this research area? We have observed by browsing the literature that few research works exist in South Africa on the field of PD for Teachers, and the barriers that hinder those training. South Africa is therefore a virgin ground that requires research in the sector: There is still a very significant lack of rigorous research carried out to understand better the reality of the barriers to attend PD training in South Africa. Therefore, based on TALIS data 2018, this empirical research manuscript aims to establish an inventory of critical aspects of the barriers that South Africans' junior secondary school teachers face for attending PD training, by asking this general question: "What are the possible barriers for participating in PD among South African teachers?"

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

### 2.1 Importance of PD: Evidence-based

The pioneers of the field of PD perhaps did not imagine the magnitude that teachers' PD training could have in teacher education. Pre-service training itself, in a world in perpetual change, cannot provide teachers with all the necessary knowledge to go from a good teacher to a top teacher. The goal therefore is to improve student outcomes (Guskey 2002; Yoon K.S. and al., 2007).



The problem under investigation has a privileged link with teacher education because it is part of the two components of teacher education (pre-service upstream, and in-service downstream). On this, facing an increased lack of in-service training, South African teachers therefore have incomplete training, which has direct repercussions on student outcomes.

From what follows, the impact that Teacher Professional Development trainings have in teacher training is not to be discussed. Although this area is new (Evans, 2002), its importance has changed a lot over time. The more we want students to learn new things in accordance with the various changes linked to current realities and the challenges of the 21st century, the more we directly (or indirectly) ask or encourage teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills in order to be able to teach these things to students. In other words, to re-evaluate their professionalism (Andy Hargreaves, 2000).

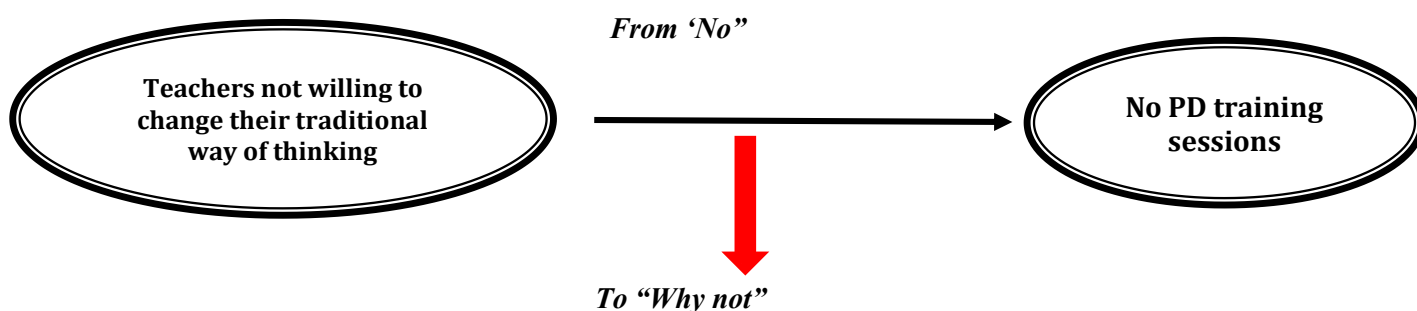
Several researchers have studied the importance and impact that Teacher Professional Development has in teacher training, and each differs from the other according to the angle of approach (behavior, knowledge, emotions, thinking, etc.). But at the end, they are all unanimous on the fact that participation in Teacher Professional Development sessions is a major indicator for classifying a "good teacher"; beside the teacher educational attainment, certification status, classroom teaching performance and student learning outcomes (Liao & Zhou, 2020).

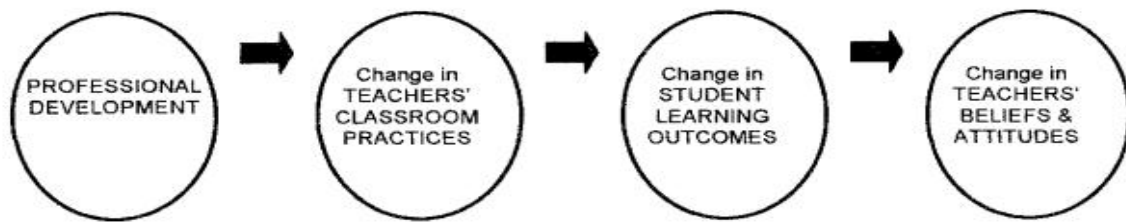
As mentioned by Yoon K.S. and al. (2007), "few rigorous studies address the effect of professional development on student achievement. There is more literature on the effects of professional development on teacher learning and teaching practice". Never mind, in their research paper titled *"Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement"*, they stipulated that: "Of the more than 1,300 studies identified as potentially addressing the effect of teacher professional development on student achievement in three key content areas, nine meet What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards, attesting to the paucity of rigorous studies that directly examine this link. This report finds that teachers who receive substantial professional development—an average of 49 hours in the nine studies— can boost their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points".

In addition, a study conducted in Niamey (Niger) by Zakaria Mahamadou (2017) on 595 grade 4 students and 25 teachers demonstrated that there is a statistical link between the number of in-service training received by teachers and student academic performance; and that academic performance increases with the number of in-service training received by the teacher. Indeed, thanks to the Chi-square test, the results of this research stipulate that students held by teachers who have received more in-service training show a low academic performance of 6.99% against respectively 42.66% and 50.35% of those with average and high academic performance. However, students held by teachers who have benefited from only one in-service training show a low academic performance of 36.14% against respectively 49.7% and 14.16% of those who have an average and high academic performance. On the other hand, the pupils held by the teachers who have not benefited from any in-service training show a low academic performance of 54.17% against respectively 37.5% and 8.33% of those who have an average and high academic performance.

There is no shortage of divergent opinions when it comes to implementing a public policy or a new concept with the aim of improving the living conditions, or even more specifically the professional development of teachers. Whether in terms of capacity building or a new curriculum to apply, human nature tends to cast doubt on the applicability of what has been resolved. Some teachers, even before applying a concept, categorically oppose it for one reason or another. On the one hand, it can be the fear of failure, because applying a new concept that is supposed to be beneficial for both teachers and students is not easy, especially if teachers are experienced ones: 10, 20 or 30 years of teaching experience. On the other hand, when the results are mixed by noticing them from other colleagues' practices, i.e., use of ICT in the teaching of French/English language for grade 1 students, whether he/she is a novice or experienced, doubts arise as to the importance of participate in such training. The extremists no longer even doubt; they declare the concept ineffective in the exercise of their teacher profession.

To remove doubts or opposite opinions, Guskey (2002) offers a simplistic and useful scheme to change the opinions of pessimists. That is to say, to go from "No" to "Why not" as the scheme below shows.





Model of Teacher change (Guskey, 2002)

## 2.2 Barriers for PD Participation

Being aware of the fact that the most valuable factor that contribute on student good performance is the quality of teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000), PD training is a mean for teachers to learn new knowledge and skills. However, they may face several barriers that hind them to attend those training sessions. According to Alice and Betty (2014), on their study focusing on the perception of Ugandan secondary school teachers on PD sessions and the barriers they face on attending them, the authors found that the barriers included a shortage of time, lack of motivation, lack of funds to enable education leaders to expose teachers to them, lack of moral and financial support by head teachers and government. The authors also found that teachers use their own savings to participated in PD sessions, making that strategy in conflict with household expenses, being aware of the fact that the majority of them are underpaid. Moreover, there is a lack of institutionalized teacher professional development which would otherwise be cheap for teachers. Hence teachers who attempt to undertake PD sometimes are denied leave.

Using 2013 TALIS data, Guangbao and al. (2021) study focused on the Australia and Shanghai secondary school teachers' needs, support and barriers revealed that, in terms of barriers, Australian and Shanghai teachers reported two significant barriers that conflicted with their participation in professional development: "working schedule" and "a lack of incentives to take part." Moreover, for Abdal-Haqq (1998) the lack of time to attend PD trainings being in conflict with their working time and financial considerations essential barriers to teachers' attendance in PD.

Johnson (2006) proposed a three-dimensional framework to describe the barriers to teachers' participation in professional development: *Technical barriers* (e.g., reliance on textbooks, lack of instructional skills), *political barriers* (e.g., lack of support from principals, lack of leadership), and *cultural barriers* (e.g., teachers' beliefs about professional development).

## 3. METHOD :

### 3.1 Data Source

To study teachers' instruction and the working conditions in schools, the OECD introduced the TALIS in 2008. In 2013, the study was conducted once again, this time including 10 non-OECD countries in addition to 24 OECD nations. Being an extensive worldwide study that focuses on school administrators and teachers, the subjects that TALIS is interested in include principal management, school environment, classroom teaching practice, teacher self-efficacy, and professional growth for teachers. The professional development of teachers has been evaluated in many research utilizing TALIS data, including Guangbao and al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2019). We consequently expect that the TALIS 2018 data may address our research issues. Due of this, this research makes use of the TALIS 2018 data from South Africa.

As for other researches using TALIS data, countries are selected based on some considerations. For Guangbao and al. (2021), the selection was based on a high demand for teachers' professional development and levels of students' academic outcomes. For this current study, we therefore based on those criteria by adding the fact that is the first time that South Africa participated in TALIS survey compared to many other countries (in OECD countries, a lot of studies have been carried out, which already have a great deal of knowledge and they have already established facts about teacher professional development). Moreover, this chosen country is the first country participating in such worldwide survey.

For, 1901 South African teachers including 59.4 % of male teachers (n=1130) and 40.6 % of female counterparts (n=771) took part in the survey.

### 3.2 Key measures

The 2018 TALIS survey questionnaire served as the instrument for the quantitative method employed in this research. Teachers were required to provide information on seven barriers to taking part in professional development



programs. The answers have a Likert scale with four possible outcomes: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). Below is the 2018 TALIS questionnaire related to the question of barrier in professional development programs attendance.

**28. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the following present barriers to your participation in professional development?**

*Please mark one choice in each row.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) I do not have the pre-requisites (e.g. qualifications, experience, seniority). ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
b) Professional development is too expensive. ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
c) There is a lack of employer support. ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
d) Professional development conflicts with my work schedule. ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
e) I do not have time because of family responsibilities. ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
f) There is no relevant professional development offered. .	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
g) There are no incentives for participating in professional development. ....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

Source : OECD 2018, TALIS Report/ Teacher questionnaire

### 2.3 Data Analysis

In order to find schools and teachers and then gather their data, the TALIS headquarters staffs used a two-stage stratified probability sampling approach, where the problem of sample weights is crucial. The calculation of sampling errors gets very complex due to the sampling weights. (Rutkowski et al., 2010; Guangbao and al. 2021).

Data analysis for this research employed SPSS 22.0. To specifically respond to our study general question, parametric and nonparametric statistical analyses were carried out. An interval scale was used to evaluate teachers' PD barriers.

### 4. RESULT :

The variable took in account for this descriptive analysis is the “barriers for attending PD”; to check what are the barriers that hind South African teachers to attend PD. The summary of the results is as shown on the table 1 below:

Table 1. Teachers' perception of barriers

Barriers to PD	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I do not have the pre-requisites	1901	1	4	1.66	.880
Professional development is too expensive	1901	1	4	2.30	.925
There is a lack of employer support	1901	1	4	2.48	.932
Professional development conflicts with my work schedule	1901	1	4	2.38	.866
I do not have time because of family responsibilities	1901	1	4	1.99	.843
There is no relevant professional development offered	1901	1	4	2.14	.866
There are no incentives for participation in professional development	1901	1	4	2.62	.936

As for many developing countries, South African teachers lack incentives and employer support for participating in PD activities. In term of ranking, the barriers are listed as follow: Lack of incentives for PD participation





(SD=.936), lack of support (SD=.932), PD too expensive (SD=.925), lack of prerequisites (SD=.880), PD conflicts with work and schedule and PD not irrelevant (SD=.866 each), and no time because of family responsibilities (SD=.843).

#### 4. DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study is similar to studies reviewed in the literature (Alice and Betty, 2014; Guangbao and al., 2021) in emphasizing that “the lack of incentives for participating in PD” (Mean=2.62), and “the lack of employer support for participating in PD” (Mean= 2.48) are the two significant barriers for South African Teachers in attending PD training sessions. However, we might notice that the costs of participating in professional development is only the 4th higher barriers (Mean=2.30). This trend is almost different from most developing countries in general and in particular African ones, which can consider the lack of financial means as one of the biggest barriers to the participation in PD training sessions as described by Alice and Betty (2014) and Abdal-Haqq (1998). This may be due to the fact that the good economic position that South Africa occupies in Africa places its teachers in conditions that are clearly superior to teachers in other African countries. In regard to the lack of time to attend PD trainings being in conflict with their working time, South African teachers placed that barrier as the 3th one (Mean= 2.38); as mentioned by Guangbao and al. (2021) and Abdal-Haqq (1998) in their respective studies.

#### 5. CONCLUSION:

This research, barriers in PD participation for South African teachers are examined. The results imply that South African teachers face comparable obstacles to those in other developing nations, which may vary from those in OECD countries. The South African government should think about providing more money to enhance teachers' PD programs. At the same time, while planning them, school administrators and other representatives of the educational system must take teachers' fundamental qualifications into account (the issue of teacher education being another research to be query).

This study adds to the body of successful PD research by identifying the many kinds of hurdles that South African teachers encounter when trying to participate in PD, as shown by the 2018 TALIS data. However, it's important to recognize that this research has four limitations. First, it is a secondary data analysis. Second, other variables could be added such as teachers' needs and support. Third, a comparison between two or three countries could be made, to further understand the differences between the teaching jobs within the compared countries; and Four, As the statistics were gathered in metropolitan areas, they cannot accurately reflect the whole nation. As a result, it is not possible to extrapolate nationwide the results of this research.

Further research should be done to further this study's findings by gathering primary data at a nationwide level, examining the reasons behind teachers' views of barriers to PD engagement, and assessing potential temporal implications on these beliefs. This will allow us to provide effective advice to address the problem in accordance with the realities of each region of the country.

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