



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Employment  
and Workplace Relations**

A decorative graphic consisting of six vertical bars of varying heights and colors: red, orange, olive green, dark green, blue, and purple. The bars are arranged in a row, with the red bar on the far left and the purple bar on the far right. The bars have a slight curve at the top and bottom.

# **Generic Work Skills used by Primary School Teachers**

**Analysis of Survey Results  
from the OECD Job  
Requirements Approach Pilot -  
Australia**

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# 1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

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This report provides results from a survey of 102 primary school teachers on the generic skills that they use at work. The survey was conducted by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), but would not have been possible without the assistance of the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). In addition to providing invaluable advice on the public primary school system in South Australia and providing input into this report, DECS staff conducted a number of essential components of the survey including facilitating contact with schools and drawing the sample of teachers.

The survey of primary school teachers formed part of a larger Job Requirements Approach (JRA) Pilot study, which also involved a survey of 500 employed householders conducted in several regions of New South Wales and Victoria. Accordingly, the survey was designed to provide general information on generic skills used at work that can be compared across all occupations. Therefore, results from the survey do not provide detailed insights into issues specific to primary school teachers.

The primary aim of the pilot was to test if survey questions on generic work skills are suitable for inclusion in the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), to be conducted in 2011 by establishing whether cross-national comparisons of skill use are feasible. To do this, the teacher and household surveys were also carried out in three other countries (France, South Korea and Greece).

The primary school teacher occupation was chosen for a more focused survey, because it was believed that the skills used to perform this job are more homogenous (and more directly comparable) between countries than those used in many other occupations.

A report *Results from the Job Requirements Approach Pilot Survey – Australia* outlining the overall findings from both surveys was sent to the OECD and will be published on the DEEWR website. Analysis of questions within Australia showed that the majority of the pilot questions performed strongly in an Australian context suggesting that they are capable of producing insightful results on the generic skills used at work. Questions that are unlikely to have produced reliable results have not been analysed in this report. These include questions using the crucially response categories 'it would have no effect on me in my job', 'I would have to change the way that I do my job', and 'I could not do my job at all'.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### 2.1. Background

This report provides information on the skills that primary school teachers use at work. Much of the information gathered on the skills used at work, particularly soft skills such as interpersonal interaction skills, has never been produced through official statistics in Australia.

It should be emphasised that the primary aim of the pilot was to test if international comparisons could be made using the JRA questions and this objective influenced the survey design. In particular, the number and representativeness of respondents, while adequate to test question performance may not always have produced statistically reliable estimates of generic skill use among primary school teachers. In particular, disaggregated results should be used with caution.

Accordingly, findings in this report should be regarded as illustrative rather than definitive.

While there were some limitations to the survey of primary school teachers (primarily associated with its limited size), results often provided clear indications of the general extent to which some skills were used by teachers as well as how their use of different skills compares with workers in other occupations.

In some cases, the analysis undertaken by the OECD has enabled comparisons of generic skill use with primary school teachers in the other three countries (France, South Korea and Greece) participating in the pilot study.

## **2.2. General Results**

The sample was reasonably representative of the regional metropolitan mix of public school teachers in South Australia and steps were taken to control for the type of primary school teacher (such as grade taught) and the level of socio-economic disadvantage of students attending the school. There was an over-representation of male teachers and teachers younger than 35 years of age (and a corresponding under-representation of female teachers and teachers 35 years of age and over).

Primary school teachers, being a relatively highly skilled occupation, undertook a significantly wider variety of reading and writing tasks than the all occupation average. Primary school teachers were near the all occupation average in their use of mathematics at work. Teachers of younger children (below grade 3) used comparatively more simple mathematics when teaching.

Teachers were asked about their computer and internet use at work. All teachers said that they used computers at work and the vast majority (97 per cent) reported using the internet in their job. Teachers most commonly said that they used computers 'up to a quarter of the time' (61 per cent), but responses ranged significantly and 15 per cent of teachers stated that they used computers 'continually' (possibly due to their use of interactive whiteboards). Most commonly, teachers use the internet for email and research purposes.

Australian primary school teachers reported using computers on significantly more complex tasks than teachers in Greece (with no significant difference found with France and South Korea). The internet and computers were used at work more frequently by Australian primary school teachers than teachers in Greece, but significantly less frequently than teachers in South Korea (again, there was no significant difference with teachers from France).

The majority (84 per cent) of primary school teachers believe that additional training or improved computer skills would make a significant difference to their job performance. The survey did not explore the extent to which their job performance would be improved, nor

how much additional training would be required to ensure a significant improvement in job performance.

Primary school teachers reported working closely with their colleagues. Despite teaching most classes individually, the majority of primary school teachers surveyed considered themselves to be working as part of a team (96 per cent). Further, more than half of all teachers said that they co-operate or collaborate with co-workers 'constantly' and share work information with co-workers 'every day' (52 per cent and 58 per cent respectively).

International comparisons show that internal interaction skills (such as listening carefully to, collaborating, and sharing work information with co-workers) are used significantly more by Australian primary school teachers than teachers in France and Greece<sup>1</sup>.

Primary school teachers are regularly required to solve problems at work reporting that they identified (64 per cent), worked out the cause of (69 per cent) and thought of solutions to (77 per cent) problems or faults at work 'every day'. Problem solving skills were used more frequently by Australian primary school teachers than teachers in Greece and South Korea.

The majority of Australian primary school teachers reported using a range of self direction skills, such as planning their own activities (94 per cent), planning their own time (89 per cent) and thinking ahead (99 per cent) 'everyday'. These skills were used slightly more than primary school teachers in France and Greece, but significantly more frequently than teachers in South Korea.

Almost one in five respondents (19 per cent) said that the skills learned while gaining the formal qualifications required to get their teaching job, were not necessary to do their job satisfactorily. This result may reflect, in part, the importance of on-the-job work experience in becoming an effective primary school teacher.

Indicators of ongoing learning, however, suggested that Australian teachers put greater effort into learning after university than their counterparts in the other three countries (particularly Greece). There was a negligible difference between indicators of ongoing learning between younger (18-39 years) and older (40-64 years) teachers. Many older primary school teachers, however, were more likely to read professional journals and other scholarly publications than their younger counterparts.

### **3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

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There are a number of methodological issues that should be considered when interpreting the Australian survey output.

The teacher survey comprised 102 interviews with teachers from public primary schools in Adelaide and Mount Gambier. Interviews were conducted at the schools between 2 and 30 May 2008.

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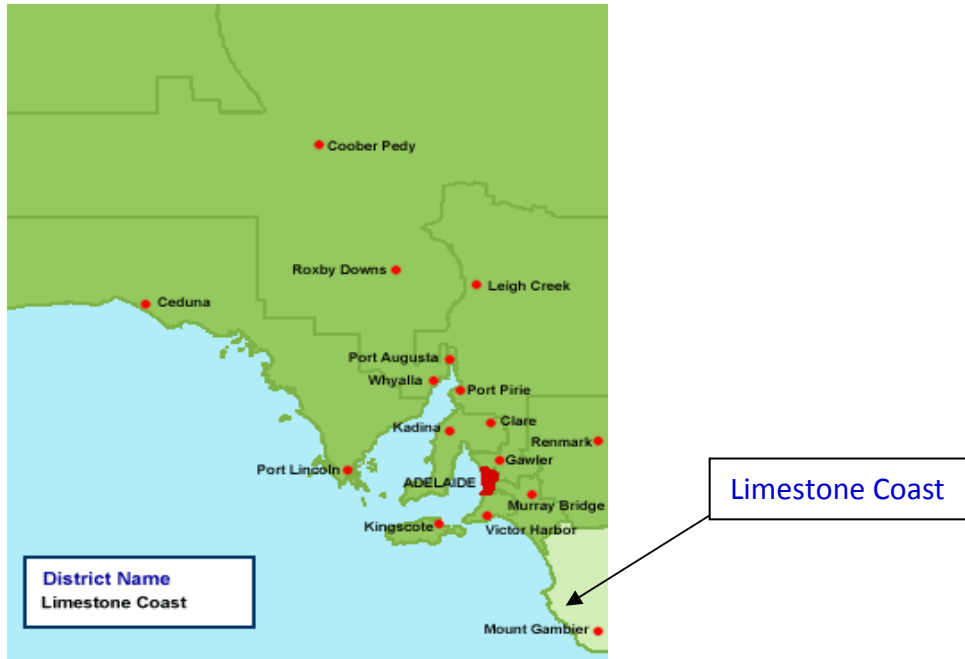
<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.



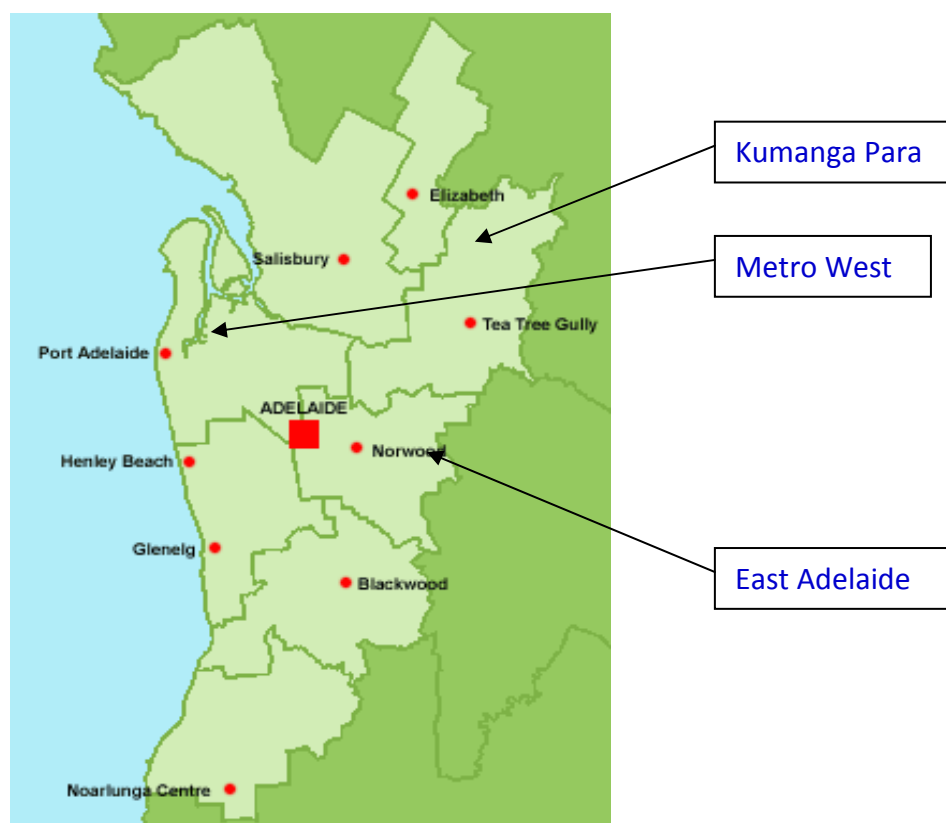
### 3.1. Survey Regions

Surveys were conducted in three Adelaide Metropolitan districts (Kumanga Para, Metropolitan West Adelaide, and East Adelaide – see Figure 2) and the Limestone Coast districts (highlighted in Figure 1, below).

**Figure 1. Regions surveyed**



**Figure 2. Regions Surveyed in Metropolitan Adelaide**



### **3.2. Sample Selection**

With the assistance of the South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS), teachers were selected from 25 schools to provide a broadly representative mix of respondents according to their personal characteristics, such as age, grade taught, gender and location (regional and/or metropolitan areas) as well as the school’s level of socio-economic disadvantage.

The provision of \$750 to each participating school to offset any costs associated with the survey (such as the cost of engaging a relief teacher) resulted in a strong response. The 102 surveys were achieved from 21 out of 25 schools approached to participate in the pilot. In a small number of cases when selected teachers were unavailable, it was agreed that the principal could nominate a substitute teacher to participate in the survey. To reduce the potential selection bias arising from this approach, DEEWR specified that the replacement teacher had to teach a similar grade or be of a similar age/ level of experience as the unavailable teacher.

The sampling methodology required to achieve the aims of the pilot set out by the OECD (which were chiefly to test to see if international comparisons were achievable) were not as rigorous as those undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Nevertheless, steps were taken to ensure that the sample was not too dissimilar from the population.

To assess the general representativeness of primary school teachers who were interviewed, a comparison has been made between the age, gender and location characteristics of respondents and public primary school teachers in South Australia<sup>2</sup>.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below show that there were some differences in the characteristics of respondents to the teacher survey and the population of public primary school teachers in South Australia. For instance, there was an over-representation of younger teachers (aged 18-35) and male teachers<sup>3</sup>. The proportion of teachers surveyed who were working in metropolitan and country regions, however, was a reasonably close representation of the population.

**Table 1. Comparison of respondents with public primary school teachers in South Australia by age**

Age	Sample	Population
<b>18-24</b>	5%	1%
<b>25-34</b>	28%	13%
<b>35-44</b>	12%	17%
<b>45-54</b>	39%	47%
<b>55-64</b>	16%	22%

**Table 2. Comparison of respondents with public primary school teachers in South Australia by gender**

Gender	Sample	Population
<b>Male</b>	28%	18%
<b>Female</b>	72%	82%

**Table 3. Comparison of respondents with public primary school teachers in South Australia by location**

Location	Survey	Population
<b>Metropolitan</b>	80%	83%
<b>Country</b>	20%	17%

<sup>2</sup> This figure does not include primary school teachers in joint primary and high schools. The population of primary school teachers, excluding principals was 3424 (Source DECS: Valeo extracts for focus/Valeo extract in access from gary/databases/HR-V2003 28 January run 17 December 2007).

<sup>3</sup> There was corresponding under-representation of female teachers, teachers aged 35-64 and teachers working in country areas.

### 3.3. Teacher Categories

Additional questions were added to the survey to distinguish between different types of primary school teaching positions (such as teachers of junior classes and teachers of older children) as it was thought that these differences were likely to influence responses to some questions.

The responses of primary school teachers to some questions differed depending on the nature of their teaching responsibilities. To address this issue, a variable 'TeachType' was derived which categorised teachers into the following three cohorts (which are also shown in Table 4 below):

- Classroom teachers only (junior primary - Reception to Grade 3);
- Classroom teachers only (senior primary - Grade 4 to Grade 7);
- Other teachers (consisting of principals, counsellors, specialist teachers, such as language and physical education teachers and teachers who had significant non-teaching duties in addition to their traditional classroom teaching role).

By dividing respondents into these three categories (which were likely to have some different job requirements), greater insights can be made into the appropriateness of responses to a number of survey questions.

**Table 4. The percentage of survey respondents in each Teacher Category**

<b>Grade Categories</b>	<b>Survey Respondents</b>
<b>Junior primary school teachers</b>	30%
<b>Senior primary school teachers</b>	30%
<b>Other primary teachers</b>	40%

## 4. LITERACY AND NUMERACY

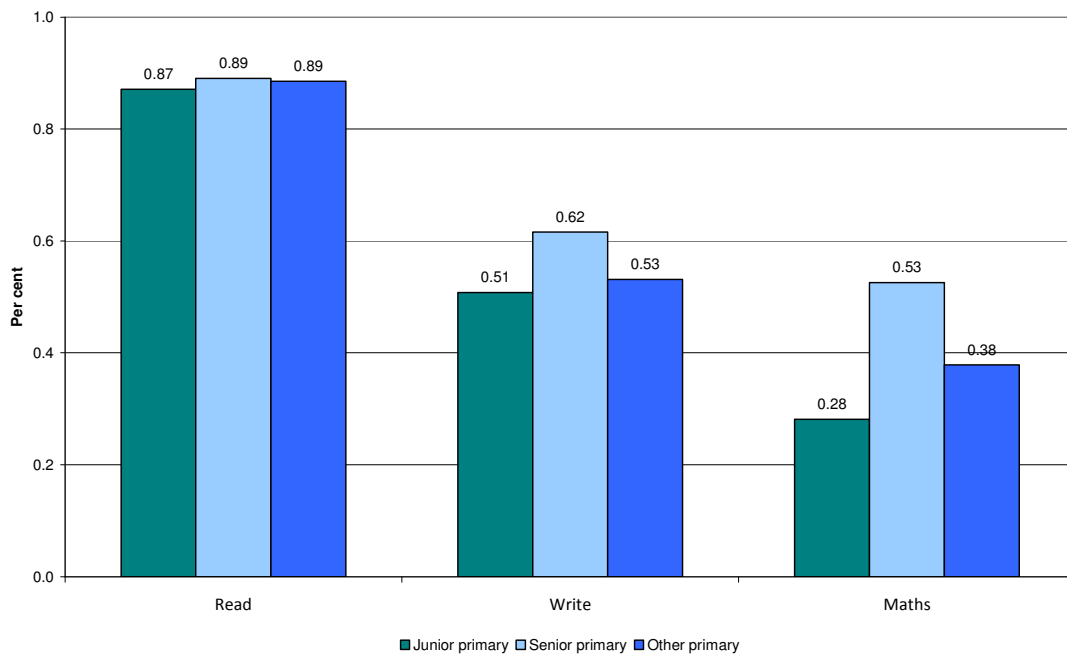
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In comparison with workers in other occupations, primary school teachers undertook a significantly wider variety of reading and writing tasks than was the case for most other workers. The breadth of mathematics skills used by primary school teachers at work, however, was similar to the average for all Australian workers.

Figure 3 below uses an index of skill use ranging from 0 (the lowest range of skill use) to 1 (the highest use of skills) to illustrate this difference in the extent of reading, writing and mathematics skills used at work. Teachers are separated into teachers of junior primary students, senior primary students and 'other' teachers (such as principals, language or PE teachers and teachers whose core duties extend beyond their teaching responsibilities).

When interpreting these results it is important to note that results reflect the skills that teachers use in their jobs, not the skills that they have.

**Figure 3. Average use of reading, writing and mathematics skills, by teacher type**



On average, senior primary school teachers used a wider variety of all three skills at work than was the case for 'other' primary school teachers and junior primary school teachers. There was only a small difference in the use of reading used at work due to the importance of teachers reading for their own learning and planning activities. There was a much larger difference in the use of mathematics skill use (which are less frequently required to be used by teachers outside their classroom activities) due to significant differences in the level of mathematics taught to children of different ages.

## 4.1. Reading

The majority of primary school teachers reported reading a wide variety of materials as a regular part of their job (see Table 5). This was the case across all 'teacher type' categories.

**Table 5. Responses to questions relating to reading in the workplace (proportion of respondents who answered 'Yes'), by teacher type**

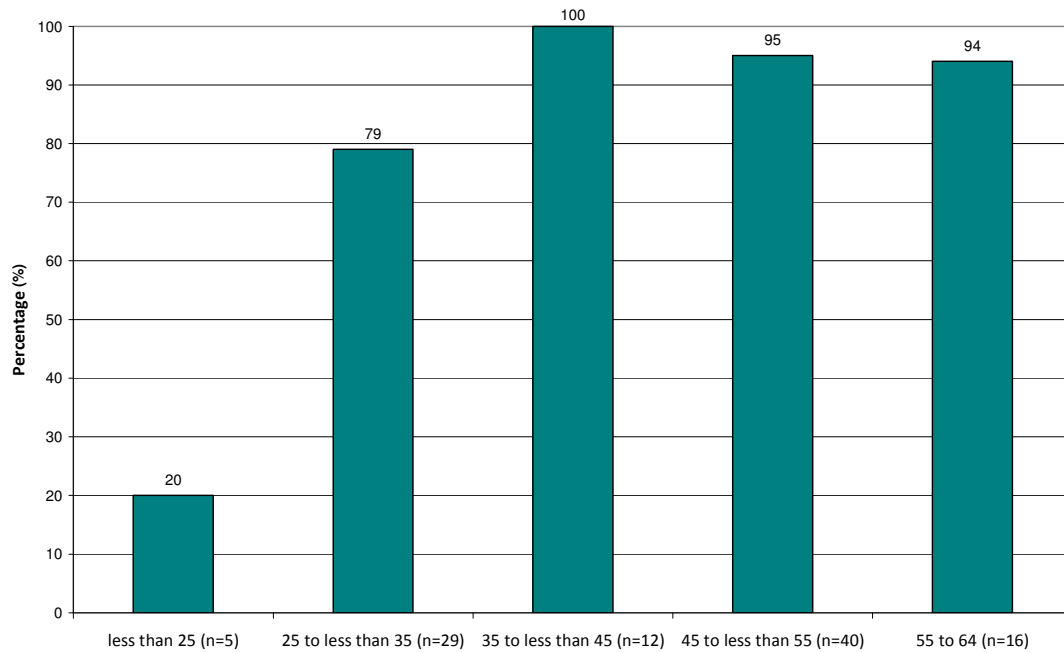
Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
Read documents which are at least 1 page long	100%	100%	100%	100%
Read documents which are at least 5 pages long	84%	87%	93%	88%
Read articles or reports in trade publications	81%	84%	98%	88%
Read articles in professional publications	94%	87%	83%	87%
Read instruction manuals or other reference materials	84%	90%	80%	84%
Read other work-related books	94%	97%	90%	93%

'Other' primary school teachers most frequently reported reading trade publications, such as magazines and newspapers, and that 'junior' primary school teachers most frequently reported reading professional publications such as journals or other scholarly or scientific publications.

Figures 4 and 5 show the proportion of primary school teachers who reported reading articles in professional publications as a regular part of their job, by age group and the number of years of paid work, since leaving full-time education. These charts show that older and more experienced workers are more likely to read professional journals than their younger counterparts.

This may indicate that once primary school teachers have gained a certain level of experience (learning by doing), they then increasingly use research based learning to continue to improve their teaching skills.

**Figure 4. Read articles in professional journals or other scholarly publications (proportion who answered 'Yes'), by age group**



**Figure 5. Read articles in professional journals or other scholarly publication (proportion who answered 'Yes'), by number of years paid work since leaving full-time education**

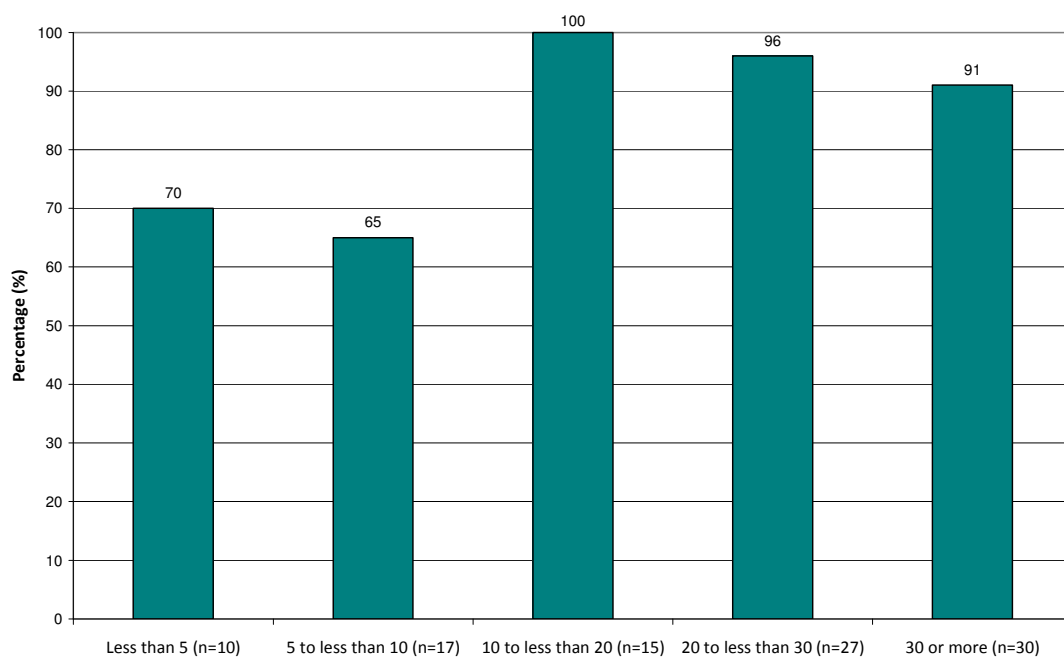


Figure 6 compares the proportion of teachers who undertake different types of reading with household survey results for workers in high, medium and lower skilled occupations.

**Figure 6. The proportion of respondents who undertook different types of reading at work, primary school teachers compared with high, medium and lower skilled workers from the Household Survey**

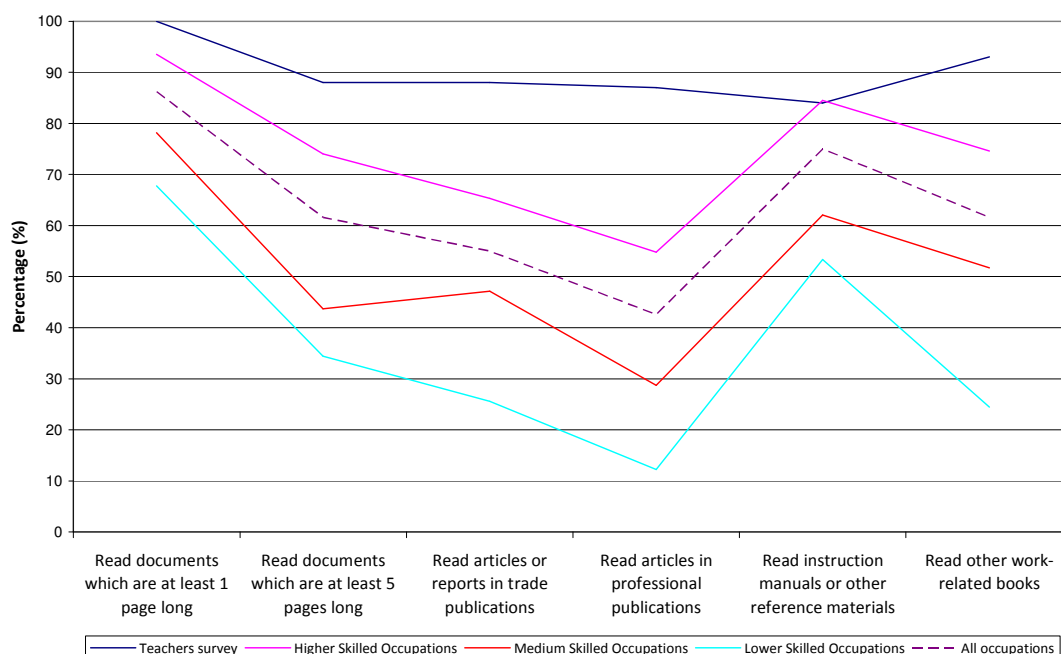


Figure 6 shows that the breadth of reading activities undertaken by primary school teachers is greater than other occupation groups and, other than for 'reading instruction manuals or other reference materials', the use of all reading tasks was more common for teachers than other higher skilled occupations<sup>4</sup>.

## 4.2. Writing

Table 6 shows that nearly all primary school teachers (96 per cent) reported that they wrote documents of at least one page in length as a regular part of their job. Around half (49 per cent) also wrote documents of at least five pages in length. Around two thirds of primary school teachers surveyed (68 per cent) reported that they wrote articles for trade publications (which include work-based publications such as newsletters).

<sup>4</sup> These consist of management and professional occupations

**Table 6. Responses to questions relating to writing in the workplace (proportion of respondents who answered 'Yes'), by teacher type**

<b>Number of observations</b>	<b>Classroom teacher – Junior</b>	<b>Classroom teacher – Senior</b>	<b>Primary teacher – Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Write documents which are at least 1 page long</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Write documents which are at least 5 pages long</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Write articles or reports in trade publications</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Write articles in professional publications</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>

### **4.3. Mathematics**

All of the primary school teachers surveyed reported using mathematics or numbers in some way in their regular job. Again, it should be emphasised that the survey provides a measure of the breadth of skills used at work and is not a direct measure of the actual mathematical abilities of teachers. Understandably, the breadth of mathematics skills used at work by junior primary school teachers is less than teachers of older students, because of the different teaching requirements for students of different ages. Table 7 below provides details on the mathematical techniques that teachers use in their job.

**Table 7. Responses to questions on mathematics and numeracy use in the workplace (proportion of respondents who answered 'Yes'), by teacher type**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
Count things	100%	100%	100%	100%
Use addition and subtraction	97%	100%	100%	99%
Use multiplication and division	90%	100%	100%	97%
Use fractions, decimals or percentages	77%	100%	85%	87%
Use simple algebra (to solve for unknown values)	10%	48%	30%	29%
Use advanced algebra (to solve complex equations)	0%	16%	10%	9%
Use geometry and trigonometry	10%	48%	18%	25%
Use probability and statistics	10%	48%	23%	26%
Use calculus or other advanced mathematics	0%	6%	0%	2%

As can be seen, senior primary school teachers typically employ more complex mathematics in their regular job than junior teachers and, to a lesser extent, other primary school teachers. This result is not surprising as more complex mathematical procedures are likely to be a part of the curriculum for these teachers.

## 5. COMPUTER USE

Teachers were asked about their computer and internet usage at work, including the complexity of computer tasks, if additional computing skills would significantly improve job performance, and the types of activities undertaken using the internet.

All teachers said that they used computers at work and the majority (97 per cent) reported using the internet in their job. Most commonly, internet skills were used for email and research purposes.

The majority (84 per cent) of primary school teachers believe that additional training or improved computer skills would make a significant difference to their job performance.

On average, international results showed that Australian primary school teachers reported using computers at a higher level than teachers in the other countries participating in the JRA pilot. The internet and computers were used at work more frequently by Australian primary school teachers than teachers in France and Greece, but less frequently than teachers in South Korea.

## 5.1. Computer Use

All primary school teachers reported that they used computers in their job and around 15 per cent said they use computers '*continually*' (many of which may have included their use of computerised whiteboards).

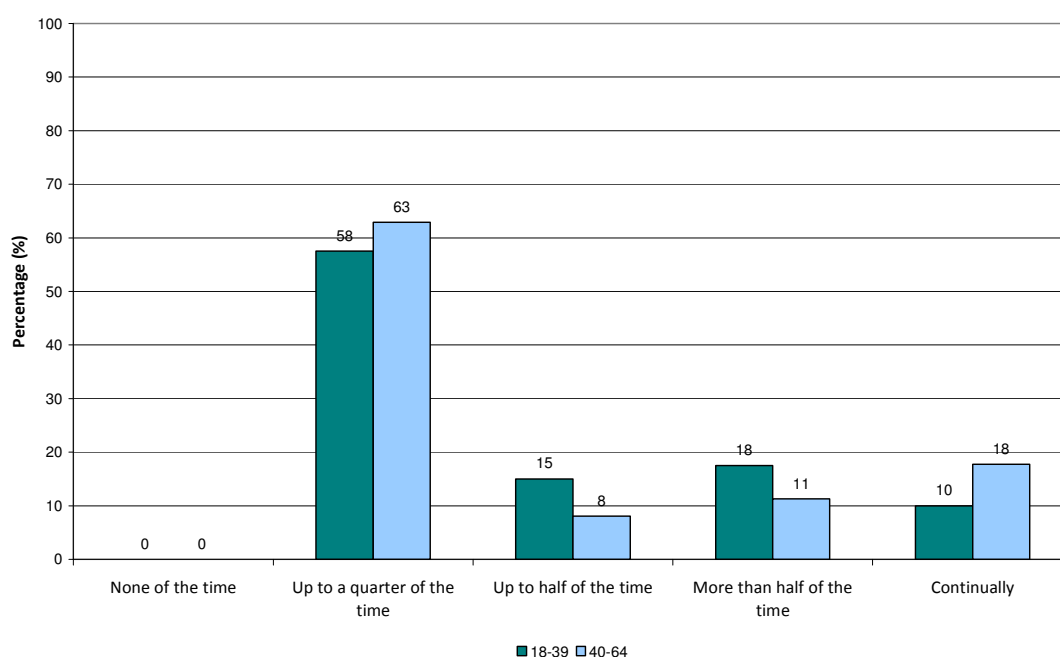
Table 8 below shows that there are no significant differences in computer use between 'junior', 'senior' and 'other' primary school teachers (as defined by the teacher type variable).

**Table 8. Proportion of time spend using a computer at work, by teacher type**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
None of the time	0%	0%	0%	0%
Up to a quarter of the time	68%	65%	53%	61%
More than a quarter but less than half of the time	13%	10%	10%	11%
More than half but not continually	3%	10%	25%	14%
All of the time/continually	16%	16%	13%	15%

Figure 7 shows that there are not significant differences in the proportion of time spent using a computer at work between younger and older primary school teachers. This result may be have been influenced by the impact that additional administrative and management duties required of many senior teachers on the overall time spent using computers.

**Figure 7. Proportion of time spent using a computer at work, by age**



Respondents were also asked about the complexity of their computer use at work. Table 9 shows that the majority (86 per cent) of teachers reported that they used computers to a 'moderate' complexity level in their job which includes activities such as word processing, spreadsheets and data-base management. Just 3 per cent of primary school teachers reported requiring more complex or advanced analytic, programming or network management tasks in their regular job. Average results for computer skill requirements are roughly the same as those for all occupations.

**Table 9. Complexity of computer tasks undertaken at work, by teacher type<sup>5</sup>**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
<b>Straight Forward</b>	3%	0%	5%	3%
<b>Moderate</b>	94%	87%	80%	86%
<b>Complex</b>	3%	7%	13%	8%
<b>Advanced</b>	0%	3%	3%	2%

<sup>5</sup> Straightforward computer use is considered to include data entry and sending and receiving emails. Moderate computer use is considered to include word processing, spreadsheets and database management. Complex computer use is considered to include using a computer for analytic or design purposes. Advanced computer use is considered to include software development, programming and network management.

Primary school teachers were asked if additional training or improved computer skills would make a significant difference to their performance of their regular job. The majority (84 per cent) of primary school teachers reported that additional training or improved computer skills would make a significant difference to their job performance.

While the survey did not allow for respondents to comment further on the degree of difference that training would make in their job, or how much training would be required to make a 'significant' difference, some respondents informally volunteered additional detail during the interview. A number of classroom teachers said that additional training in the use of equipment such as interactive whiteboards, would improve their performance.

Results indicate that most of the 'no' responses were provided by respondents in the 'other' primary school teachers category, who often work in specialised positions such as language or physical education teachers.

## 5.2. Internet Use

Almost all (97 per cent) primary school teachers reported using the internet in their job. When compared with the average results for all occupations surveyed in the household component of the JRA survey, primary school teachers tend to spend a slightly larger proportion of their time using the internet. Table 10 shows that there was no clear difference in the proportion of time spent using the internet by 'junior', 'senior', and 'other' primary school teachers.

**Table 10. Proportion of time spent using the internet at work, by teacher type**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
None of the time	7%	0%	3%	3%
Up to a quarter of the time	84%	87%	78%	82%
More than a quarter but less than half of the time	3%	3%	13%	7%
More than half but not continually	7%	7%	8%	7%
All of the time/continually	0%	3%	0%	1%

Figure 8 below shows that there is no significant difference in internet use between older and younger teachers with the majority using the internet 'up to a quarter of the time'.

**Figure 8. Proportion of time spent using the Internet at work, by age**

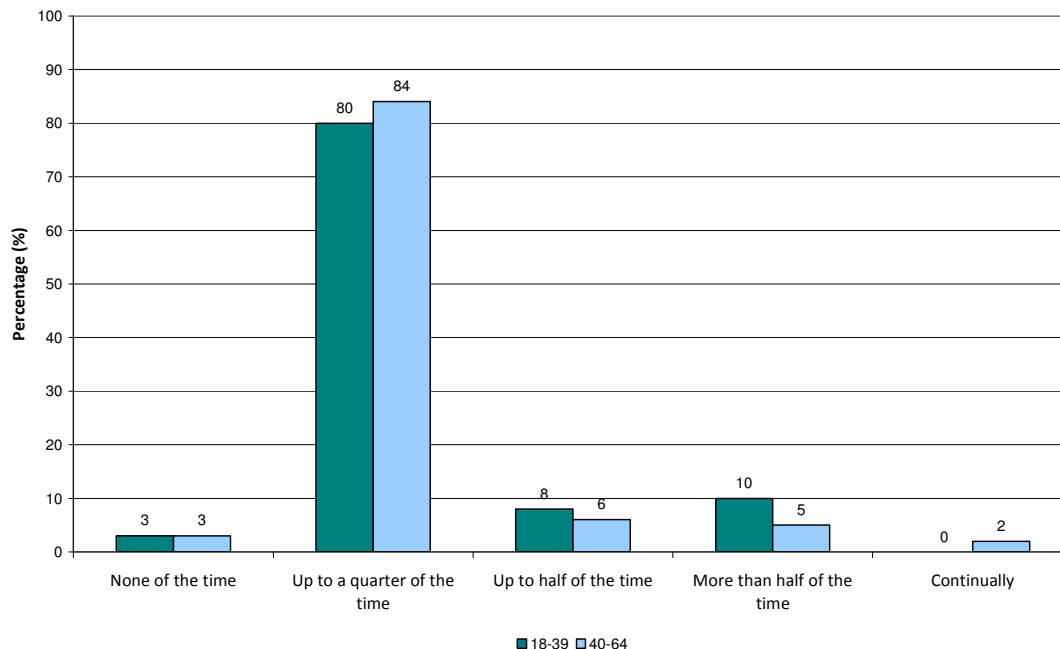


Table 11 lists the nature of internet use reported by primary school teachers. Primary school teachers were most likely to use the internet to communicate with others outside their organisation by email (88 per cent), communicate with co-workers by email (85 per cent) and seek information for research purposes (85 per cent). While answering questions relating to internet use in their job, many teachers commented that they used the internet when working from home.

When asked about the importance of using the internet at work, only 12 per cent of primary school teachers said that it would have no impact on them in their job if they could not use the internet.

**Table 11. Nature of internet use, by teacher type**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
Communicate with co-workers by e-mail	90%	81%	85%	85%
Communicate with others outside your organisation by e-mail	84%	84%	95%	88%
Seek information about your organisation	74%	71%	70%	72%
Seek information about products or services from potential suppliers	55%	52%	75%	62%
Deliver information or knowledge to clients or customers	35%	39%	55%	44%
Deliver a product or service to clients or customers	3%	19%	25%	20%
Buy or sell products or services	19%	13%	35%	24%
Update web pages	6%	23%	15%	15%
Design and construct web sites	0%	13%	8%	7%
Do an on-line training course	52%	55%	50%	52%
Seek information for research purposes	87%	81%	88%	85%
Other	13%	7%	5%	9%

## **6. WORKING WITH OTHERS**

Primary school teachers reported working closely with others. Despite teaching most classes individually, the majority of primary school teachers surveyed considered themselves to be working as part of a team, with 96 per cent of respondents reporting that they did all or part of their work in a team. Furthermore, more than half of all teachers said that they co-operate or collaborate with co-workers '*constantly*' and share work information with co-workers '*every day*' (52 per cent and 58 per cent respectively).

International comparisons show that internal interaction skills (such as listening carefully to, collaborating, and sharing work information with co-workers) were used more by primary school teachers in Australia than teachers in France and Greece, but were used less than teachers in South Korea.

## 6.1. Teamwork and Collaboration

Almost all primary school teachers surveyed considered themselves to be working as part of a team, with 96 per cent of respondents reporting that they did all or part of their work in a team. Tables 12 and 13 provide results for a number of teamwork related questions. Table 12 shows that more than half of primary school teachers reported co-operating or collaborating with co-workers *'constantly'*.

**Table 12. Proportion of time that primary school teachers co-operate or collaborate with co-workers**

How often job involves...	Number of Observations	Never	Up to a quarter of the time	More than a quarter, but less than half of the time	More than half of the time, but not constantly	All of the time/ constantly
...co-operating or collaborating with co-workers.	102	0%	25%	11%	13%	52%

Table 13 shows that more than half (58 per cent) of the primary school teachers said that their job involves sharing information with co-workers *'every day'*. While more than three quarters of primary school teachers (78 per cent) reported helping to resolve conflicts among co-workers, only 12 per cent did so *'... once a week'* or more.

**Table 13. Responses to other questions on teamwork in the workplace**

How often job involves...	Number of Observations	Never	Less than once a month	More than once a month but less than once a week	At least once a week but not every day	Every day
...sharing work information with co-workers.	102	0%	3%	5%	34%	58%
...helping to resolve conflicts among co-workers.	102	22%	43%	23%	9%	3%

## 6.2. Liaison Skills

The majority of primary school teachers reported using a range of liaison related skills ‘every day’. For instance:

- 79 per cent of primary school teachers advised people ‘every day’.
- 78 per cent reported negotiating with others inside or outside their organisation ‘every day’.
- 94 per cent of primary school teachers said that they provided emotional care or physical support for others ‘every day’.

## 7. PROBLEM SOLVING

Australian teachers reported using a range of problem solving skills at work more frequently than teachers in France, South Korea and Greece. Problem solving skills were also used more frequently by teachers, than average results across all occupations from the Household Survey.

As shown in Table 14, primary school teachers identified (64 per cent), worked out the cause of (69 per cent) and thought of solutions to (77 per cent) problems or faults at work 'every day'.

**Table 14. Responses to questions on problem solving in the workplace**

How often job involves...	Number of observations	Never	Less than once a month	More than once a month but less than once a week	At least once a week but not every day	Every day
...identifying the cause of problems or faults.	102	1%	8%	8%	18%	64%
...working out the cause of problems or faults.	102	2%	7%	3%	19%	69%
...thinking of solutions to problems or faults.	102	1%	2%	4%	15%	77%

## 8. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND AUTONOMY

The majority of primary school teachers had limited control over their working hours (due to the rigidities associated with fixed school hours). Nevertheless, there was evidence that, where required (such as in cases where a teacher may only be able to work part-time), employers facilitated more flexible working time arrangements.

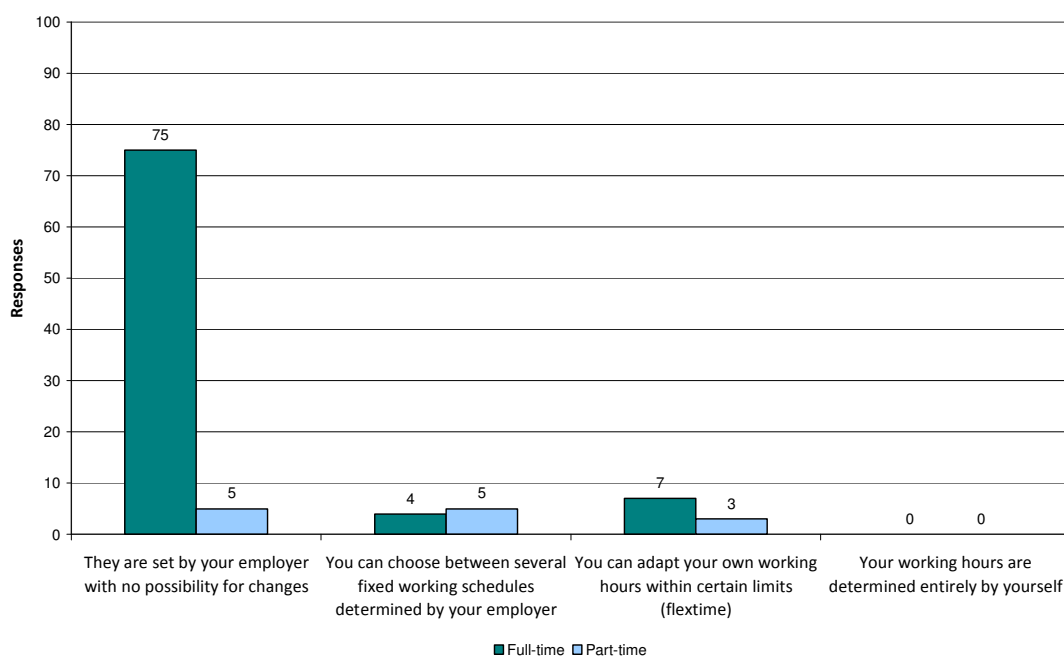
Primary school teachers reported a high degree of autonomy over other aspects of their job. Australian teachers reported using greater levels of self direction (such as planning their own

activities, time and thinking ahead) at work than primary school teachers in the other three countries participating in the pilot.

## 8.1. Working Hours

Overall, more than three quarters of primary school teachers said that their working time arrangements were set by their employer with no possibility for changes. Less commonly, teachers said that their working hours could be adapted within certain limits (10 per cent) or that they could choose between several fixed working schedules determined by their employer (9 per cent). While based upon small numbers, Figure 9 below suggests that teachers working part-time were more likely to report these latter two responses.

**Figure 9. Method of setting working time arrangements, full-time and part-time teachers**



## 8.2. Autonomy

Primary school teachers reported high levels of autonomy.

Most primary school teachers (94 per cent) plan their own activities *'every day'* (this compares with only 61 per cent of respondents in the Household Survey). Teachers who indicated they did not plan their own activities on a daily basis generally fell into the primary school teacher – *'other'* category.

The majority of primary school teachers (89 per cent) also said they organised their own time *'every day'* and 99 per cent reported that their job involved thinking ahead *'every day'*.

More than three quarters (78 per cent) of primary school teachers said that they could not interrupt their work for a while if they wished. Primary school teachers of younger children were less likely to be able to interrupt their work than other teachers.

### 8.3. Monitoring Work Quality

Most primary school teachers reported that the quality of their work was monitored by inspectors in a separate department or section (94 per cent) and records are kept on the level of faults/complaints (54 per cent). Slightly less than half (42 per cent) of teachers considered the quality of their work to be monitored by customers or clients (parents). Table 15 shows that there is also no clear relationship between teacher type and how their work is monitored.

**Table 15. Responses to questions regarding monitoring of quality, by teacher type**

Number of observations	Classroom teacher – Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
	31	31	40	102
Inspectors in a separate department or section monitor quality	94%	97%	93%	94%
Records are kept on the level of faults/complaints	52%	58%	53%	54%
Customers or clients	39%	45%	40%	42%
I monitor the quality of my own work	26%	26%	30%	27%
Managers and supervisors monitor quality	13%	13%	13%	13%
The team I work in monitors quality	3%	0%	5%	3%
Other	3%	0%	5%	3%

Inconsistent responses by primary school teachers could be explained by differences in monitoring between workplaces (schools) and the degree of awareness that respondents have about how the quality of their work was monitored.

## 9. EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE AND ONGOING LEARNING

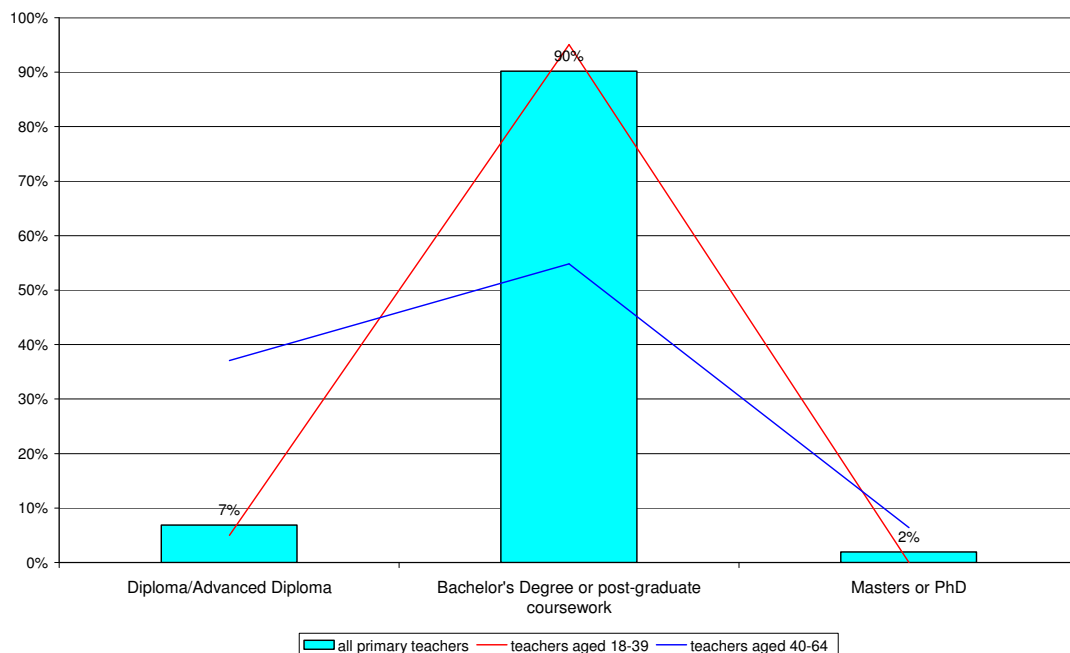
The majority of primary school teachers most commonly hold a Bachelor's degree as their highest qualification. Almost one in five respondents (19 per cent) said that the skills learned while gaining the formal qualifications required to get their primary teaching job, were not necessary to do their job satisfactorily.

Indicators of ongoing learning were higher among Australian primary school teachers than those in other countries, emphasising the high incidence of ongoing learning on the job undertaken by domestic teachers.

### 9.1. Qualifications

Figure 10 shows the highest level of formal qualifications gained by respondents for workers aged 18-39 and 40-64 (marked by the two lines) and the minimum education level required to get the job of the respondent (marked by the bars).

**Figure 10. Highest formal qualifications obtained by age group and education requirements needed to get the respondents job if they applied for it today<sup>6</sup>**



The red and blue lines on Figure 10 signify the proportion of teachers with different education qualifications for the two broad age groups. Most of the primary school teachers surveyed had obtained a Bachelor's degree (69 per cent across both age categories) or Advanced Diploma (26 per cent) level qualifications. A significant majority (90 per cent) of primary teaching positions, however, required a minimum of a Bachelor's degree to get the

<sup>6</sup> There was one person whose response was pre-primary/primary.

job (if someone was to apply today). A couple of principals said that an applicant would require a Masters degree to get the job while some specialist teachers such as language teachers only reported requiring an Advanced Diploma to get their job<sup>7</sup>.

The apparent short fall of workers with a Bachelor’s degree can largely be explained by the change in education entry requirements (up from an Advanced Diploma to a Bachelor’s degree). This has left a number of older teachers with lower qualifications than those currently required to get a traditional teaching position. Consistent with this, those with Advanced Diplomas as their highest education attained qualification are concentrated among older teachers (see blue line in Figure 10).

## 9.2. Relevance of Qualifications

Teaching course requirements are specifically designed to prepare students for teaching positions. Table 16 shows that only 80 per cent of teachers considered that skills gained through formal education requirements to be necessarily in order to do their job satisfactorily. This result may reflect the high importance that many teachers place on work experience or ‘learning by doing’.

**Table 16. Are skills gained through education requirements necessary in order to do your job satisfactorily, by teacher type**

Response	Classroom teacher –Junior	Classroom teacher – Senior	Primary teacher – Other	Total
Yes	29	21	32	82
No	2	10	7	19
Don’t know	0	0	1	1

Table 16 shows that all but two ‘junior’ primary school teachers said that the skills learned in a degree were necessary to do their job satisfactorily. A smaller majority of ‘senior’ and ‘other’ teachers stated that the skills gained during their education were necessary in their jobs.

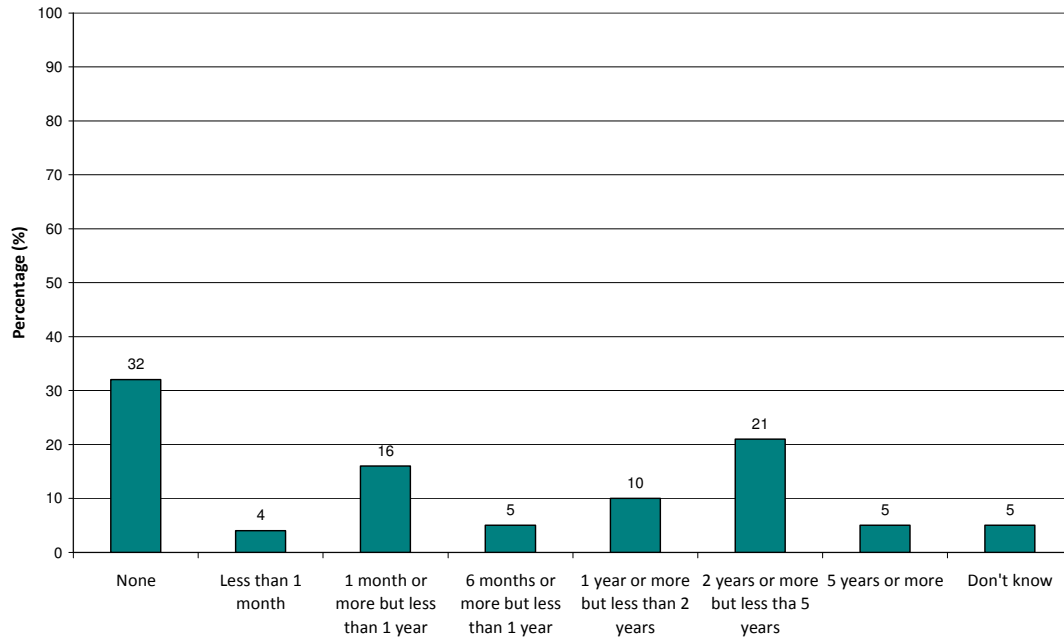
## 9.3. Work Experience

Figure 11 shows that the level of work experience required to get the primary school teaching positions of respondents was scattered across the response categories. This dispersion may, in part, reflect differences in treatment of the question by respondents, with some basing their answer on usual or normal levels of work experience that new starters

<sup>7</sup> One respondent (who responded pre-primary or primary) misinterpreted the question. At the conclusion of the interview the respondent stated that she gave this answer because she did not read all the categories on the card and automatically selected the name of the course she did at uni (i.e. a pre-primary or primary education degree).

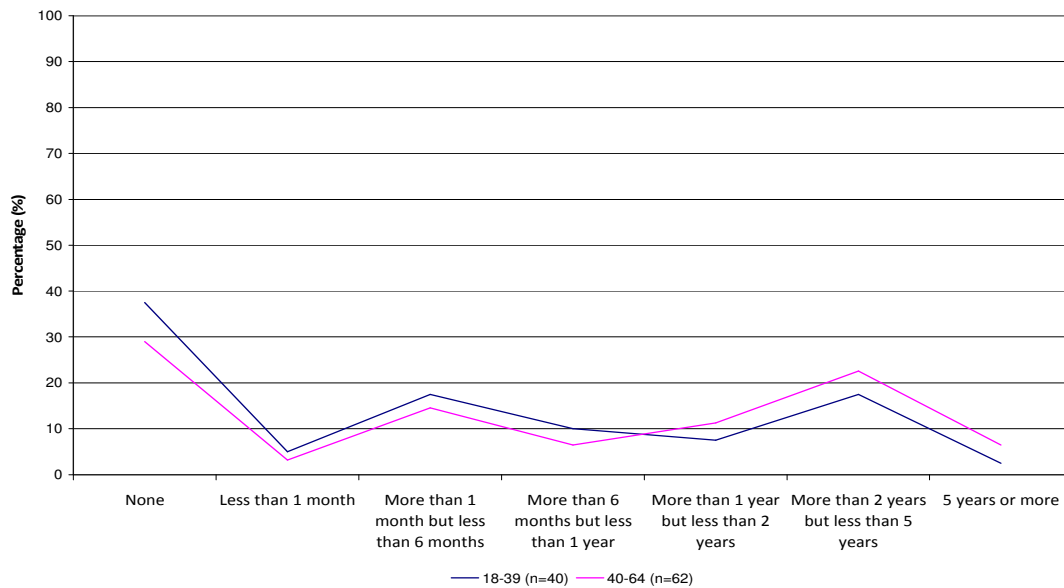
have, while others based their response on the minimum level of work experience possible to get the job.

**Figure 11. Work experience required to get your job**



Despite this possible shortcoming, Figure 12 shows that older primary school teachers (who are more likely to have higher level responsibilities) reported that greater work experience is required to get their job (albeit only slightly).

**Figure 12. Work experience required, by age group**



## 9.4. Ongoing Learning

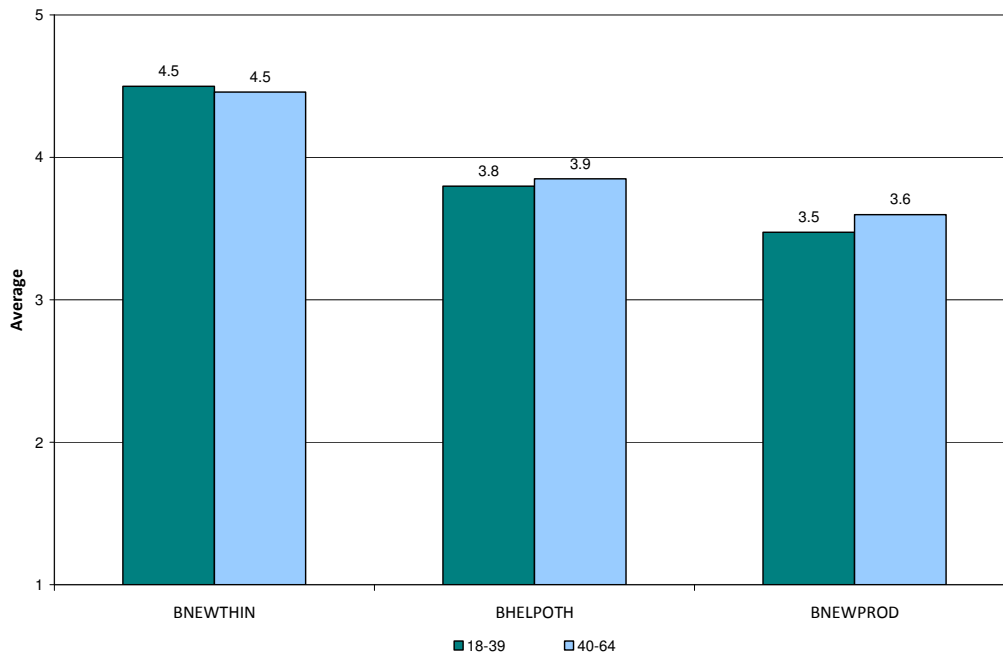
Table 17 shows that 61 per cent of primary school teachers reported learning new things 'every day'. Respondents most frequently reported helping others to learn new things (40 per cent) and that they keep up to date with new products or services (31 per cent) 'at least once a week'.

**Table 17. Responses to questions relating to ongoing learning**

How often do you...	Number of observations	Never	Less than once a month	Less than once a week but at least every month	At least once a week but not every day	Every Day	Don't Know
In your job, learn new things?	102	0%	4%	6%	28%	61%	1%
Help co-workers learn new things?	102	0%	12%	20%	40%	26%	2%
Keep up to date with new products or services?	102	0%	18%	30%	31%	21%	0%

Figure 13 shows that there was little difference in average responses to questions on learning at work between younger and older primary school teachers. This suggests that teachers continue to actively learn new things throughout their career.

**Figure 13. Responses to learning skills by age, Teacher Survey**



**Figure 14. Responses to learning skills by gender, Teacher Survey**

