Foreword

In today's complex world, our quality of life depends on the knowledge and skills of professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world in a dramatic way, with millions of casualties and a lot of human suffering, but how much more disastrous would it all have been without the professional expertise, dedication and indefatigable diligence of medical doctors, nurses and biomedical researchers who provided the world with effective vaccines? In everyday life, when we cross a bridge we unreservedly trust the knowledge and skills of the civil engineers who designed and constructed it, or when we consume our daily meals we implicitly put confidence in the farmers and the bio-engineers who produce and process the food. Scientific knowledge has penetrated many spheres of life and has transformed work into knowledge-intensive professional activity.

Likewise, when we entrust schools with what is dearest to us, our children, we are not only confident that they will be looked after as careful as possible, but also that they are educated to fulfil our dreams and reach their full potential. That's not a simple task. It also requires sophisticated knowledge and skills. And, much like for many other professions, the increasing complexity of the task and the amount of scientific knowledge available require ever higher levels of knowledge and skills. Yet, that's not a universally shared view. Many people, even those in the policy field, still see teaching as a kind of 'art', driven by some vague inborn ability. Or they still hold to the view that with a minimal of training every person can become a qualified teacher. It is disappointing that the status of teaching as a profession has long been under scrutiny. Critics have commonly argued that teaching is not a full profession as teachers are unable to speak in a uniform voice about "what works, when and why" in teaching. According to them, teaching lacks a common body of knowledge that informs professional judgements, decision-making and action in the classroom.

This publication collates many good arguments rebutting such criticism. It sets out for an in-depth exploration of teaching as a knowledge profession, in particular by focusing on general pedagogical knowledge. To successfully promote student learning, socio-emotional development and well-being, teachers need to mobilise a highly specialised body of knowledge in their daily practice. Effective teachers are not only experts of the subject matter they teach but also of how students learn, how to assess learning progress and how to design engaging and enriching learning experiences for students. This type of knowledge – pedagogical knowledge – distinguishes the teaching profession from other professional knowledge (e.g. a maths teacher from a mathematician).

General pedagogical knowledge, which informs teaching independent of the subject taught, is unique as it provides teachers from different subjects with a common reflection ground on teaching and learning. It represents, therefore, a powerful tool for reflecting on how to improve teaching as well as learning experiences of students across subjects. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated yet again the power of collaboration within and among schools and of jointly creating solutions in times of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic has also shown how vital a strong and updated knowledge base is for autonomous decision-making and adaptive, flexible teaching. Constant change and uncertainty, including abrupt transformational challenges similar to the one resulting from the pandemic, are likely scenarios for

the future of education. To master the challenges of teaching now and in the future, teachers need to be owners of deep professional knowledge.

There is, therefore, a high pressure on teachers to enlarge and enrich their knowledge to be more effective in their daily practice, and on policy- and decision-makers to improve the support systems enabling this. Acquiring pedagogical knowledge and keeping it updated is challenging: It requires teachers to learn about established pedagogical theories and principals while keeping abreast of emerging research on teaching and learning, and adapting this knowledge to the context of their classrooms. Teachers need to know how to engage students from diverse backgrounds and how to best integrate the latest educational tools and technologies in their teaching. To enable this, education systems need to offer teachers effective learning opportunities during initial teacher education and beyond. Systems also need to motivate teachers to continuously learn and reflect on effective pedagogies - independently as well as jointly in their professional communities.

In the next cycle of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the optional Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS) assessment module will provide impetus for an evidence-based reflection on teacher knowledge and teachers' opportunities to acquire and refine pedagogical knowledge. The Survey assesses teacher knowledge and investigates how it relates to teachers' professional learning, their competences and their teaching across education systems. It was originally designed as a stand-alone survey by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)'s Innovative Teaching for Effective Learning (ITEL) project.

To support the Survey's implementation as an optional module in TALIS, this publication brings together leading experts on teacher knowledge and large-scale assessments to share their ideas on how to study general pedagogical knowledge across education systems. It provides arguments for considering teaching a profession with teachers' pedagogical knowledge as its main pillar, and emphasises the role of empirical data, in particular of international comparative data, in guiding attempts to strengthen the knowledge among the teaching profession.

This publication was edited by Hannah Ulferts from the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and emerged from the Innovative Teaching for Effective Learning (ITEL) project. Tracey Burns was the leader of the project and supported this publication. The work on the Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS) and its integration into the into the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) was guided by the CERI and TALIS Governing Boards, which were also invited to a meeting to discuss the topics covered in this publication. Alison Burke, Matthew Gill and Leonora Lynch-Stein contributed to the final stages of preparation for publication.

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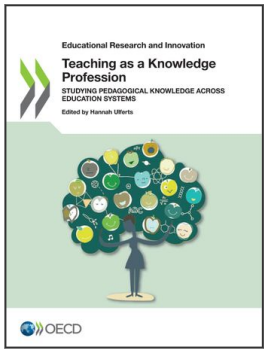
Hannah Ulferts



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