Professional Development and Training for Young Teachers in Russia

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Abstract. Based on TALIS-2013 results, we analyze the formal education of young teachers in Russia, their allocation, induction, professional development, the challenges they meet in teaching, and their satisfaction with the feedback they receive from their colleagues and school administration. We show that Russian teachers are not a homogeneous whole, as evaluations made by teachers of different ages differ greatly in all areas. Young teachers face challenges in professional communication and barriers to participation in professional development. At the same time, they are not prepared to solve practical teaching tasks and have insufficient knowledge of modern teaching techniques. We come to the conclusion that young teachers need more opportunities for professional development, particularly for active learning methods and learning in groups. Their chances of successful adaptation to school teaching standards could be increased by providing them with a specific induction and adaptation period to support their basic motivation and prevent the flight of young teachers from school due to low job satisfaction.

Keywords: school, young teachers, professional development, feedback, job satisfaction, professional competencies.

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There is a growing ageing population among the school workforce, as discovered by Russian and foreign comparative studies. A major effort has been made over recent years at both national and regional level to support young teachers, increase their salaries, provide mentorship and foster the development of their professional competencies.

We use TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) to acquire information on the problems faced by young teachers, their professional needs and deficiencies. The TALIS-2013 data allowed us to analyze the state of the Russian teacher community with due regard to the age of the respondents and to the social context they work in. The analysis revealed that Russian teachers should not be treated as a homogeneous and consolidated group with the same professional attitudes and views on the current situation in education. The teachers are differentiated by their social context (workforce characteristics) and age, with a number of problems being most overtly reported by specific categories of teachers, in particular by young teachers.

Formal education of teachers

The results of TALIS-2013 allow for a conclusion that the problems faced by young teachers have their roots in formal education or, rather, in the lack of some vital components to this education.

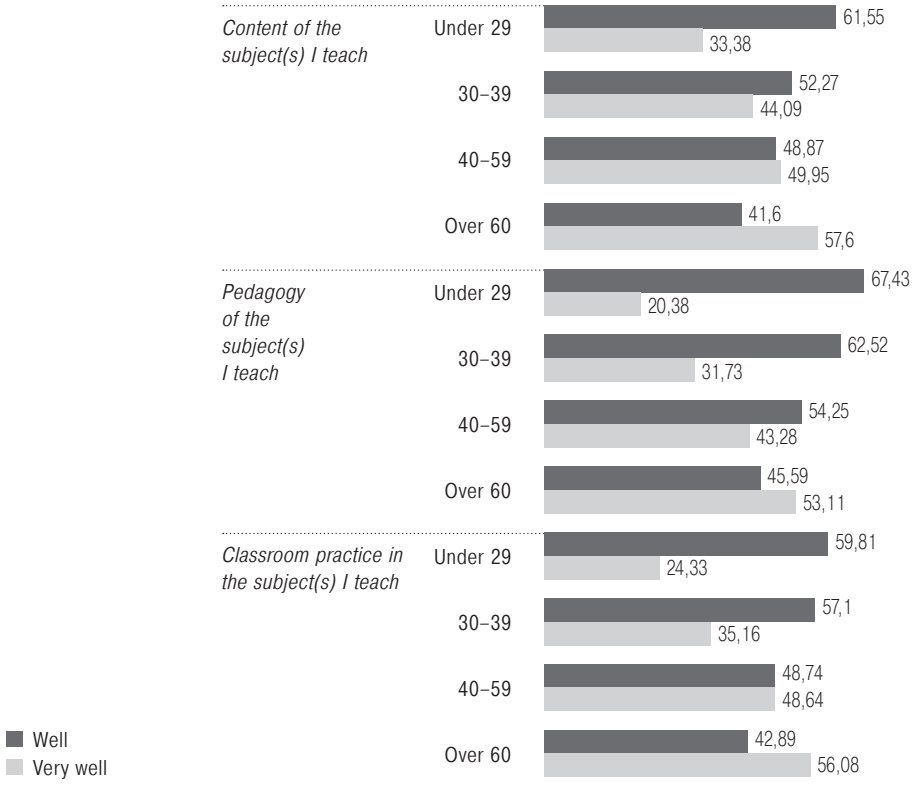
Despite the lack of large-scale studies, there is enough evidence of the efficiency of the field experience teacher education component. Upon four years of research on 28 teacher training schools and departments in the U.S., Arthur Levine describes the most successful programs as follows: “These teacher education programs are committed to preparing excellent teachers and have clearly defined what an excellent teacher needs to know and be able to do. The field experience component of the curriculum is sustained, begins early, and provides immediate application of theory to real classroom situations. There is a close connection between the teacher education program and the schools in which students teach, including ongoing collaboration between academic and clinical faculties. All have high graduation standards.” [Levine, 2006. P. 81]

This connection between theory and practice, university and school, is what is missing in the formal education that Russian teachers have been obtaining.

All researchers admit that clinical preparation during studies is a crucial requirement in making a good teacher. The US National Research Council identifies such clinical preparation (or “field experience”) as one of the three “aspects of teacher preparation that are likely to have the highest potential for effects on outcomes for students” along with content knowledge and the quality of teacher candidates [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010].

Having acknowledged the role of quality field experience, it is important to identify what builds this quality. Linda Darling-Hammond believes that the most powerful programs require students to spend extensive time in the field throughout the entire program, including at least a full academic year of student teaching under the direct supervision of one or more teachers who model expert practice with students who have a wide range of learning needs [Darling-Hammond, 2006]. International experts in teacher education also stress that su-

Figure 1. **The proportion of teachers in different age groups who feel well or very well prepared in specific elements of teacher education**



pervised clinical experiences should be integrated with more formal coursework [Cooper, Alvarado, 2006]. Such experiences give young teachers the opportunity to learn vital professional competencies required for quality teaching such as classroom management skills, and the ability to use assessment instruments and assessment result analysis techniques.

Young Russian teachers surveyed by TALIS-2013 reported feeling very well prepared much less often than teachers in any other age group (Fig. 1). We compared the answers of teachers aged over 60 and those under 29 to the question on the elements included in their formal education or training (Fig. 2). If what the respondents say is true, the formal education obtained by the oldest teachers differs little from that of the youngest ones. That is to say, it has little changed over 30 years, and there has been no substantial redistribution of time spent on different education elements.

Meanwhile, international research shows that formal education of today's young teachers is hugely different from the training received by their senior colleagues in that it offers more field experience. Today,

Figure 2. **Elements of teacher education.** Evaluations by Russian teachers as compared to the international means

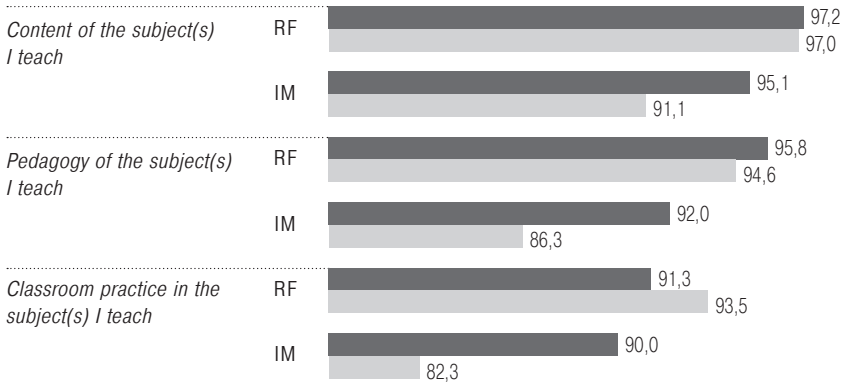


Figure 3. **The proportion of teachers who feel well or very well prepared in specific elements of teacher education.** Evaluations by Russian teachers as compared to the international means

prospective teachers focus less on the content and engage more in pedagogy and clinical practice. However, the field experience element has slightly shrunk in Russian teacher training programs.

The gap in feeling prepared between young and experienced teachers in Russia is much wider than the average in the international sample, particularly in pedagogy (Fig. 3).

What stands out in this figure is the overall higher self-assessment of Russian teachers over 60. Additional research is required to find out the reasons for such overconfidence, but this circumstance does not negate the problem identified regarding the organization of teacher education.

The proportion of teachers with no higher education is greater among the younger workforce (Table 1). Graduates of teacher training

Table 1. **The highest level of formal education completed by teachers in different age groups** (%).

	Age			
	29 or younger	30–39	40–59	60 or older
Secondary or elementary education	0.12	2.00	1.72	0
Secondary vocational education	15.51	4.38	7.94	6.70
Higher education	84.04	92.55	89.94	92.33
Candidate or doctor degree	0.32	1.07	0.39	0.97

colleges have actively headed to schools over the recent years. Some of them might have been distance students at the time of the survey.

Allocation

A definitely positive trend is that most young and inexperienced teachers in Russia are allocated to advantaged schools, which is rarely true for the other TALIS countries [OECD, 2015]. The OECD report says that new and less experienced teachers are more likely to work in challenging schools, where they cannot cope with the challenges they face. As a result, student performance gets worse and the proportion of young teachers in the profession drops [Ingersoll, 2002]. Russian schools, however, are lucky to avoid such allocation patterns. Among teachers under twenty-five, 50.34% work in the least challenging schools, 39.17% in medium-challenging schools and only 10.48% in the most challenging schools.

Professional development

Andreas Schleicher's report *Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession. Lessons From Around the World* prepared for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession in 2011 shows that contemporary education programs for new teachers in many countries focus not so much on content but rather on on-site training to combine theory and practice effectively. Apart from an academic course with emphasis on research methods and ultramodern teaching practices, a prospective teacher should undertake over a year of classroom practice in a school that keeps in touch with the university. This classroom practice is designed to help teachers develop and try out innovative methods and techniques and, of course, engage in their own research on learning and teaching practices.

The levels of professional teacher education, induction programs and professional development should be interconnected to provide continuous learning for teachers.

In many countries, teacher education is not restricted to building a comprehensive subject-related knowledge database and teaching

Table 2. **The proportions of teachers participating in induction programs by age group (as a percentage of the total population of the relevant cohort)**

	Age			
	29 or younger	30–39	40–59	60 or older
I participate(d) in an induction program for new teachers	43.67	50.77	64.36	65.39
I participate(d) in informal induction activities for new teachers which are not part of an induction program	38.37	42.67	50.89	49.60
I participate(d) in a general and/or administrative introduction to the school for new teachers	58.96	57.68	66.53	61.12

pedagogy and related sciences. Instead, it also implies the development of analytical and research skills to be applied in the classroom. Education systems in Finland and Shanghai illustrate how prospective teachers develop research competencies which are considered to be the foundation of professional training [Schleicher, 2011]. The ability to analyze student learning mechanisms and conditions allows teachers to adjust to the needs of students who fall behind, have conflicts with peers or need support in any other way.

Mentoring is widely used in providing clinical practice for teachers. According to research, mentoring of new teachers has close to zero effect on performance outcomes [Hattie, 2009]. However, it does have an effect on attitudes, motivation [Ibid.] and the well-being of new teachers [Totterdell et al., 2004]. Ultimately, mentoring results in growing new teacher retention rates and reduced teacher attrition costs [Darling-Hammond, 2003].

About one-third (30.3%) of Russian teachers under 30 report having mentors, which is a much lower proportion than that accepted by contemporary international teacher training and induction programs. Young teachers believe that they fall behind their senior colleagues in the quality of professional development right from the the beginning of their induction period (Table 2).

Formal induction programs for teachers are quite widespread, covering over 60% of new teachers. The proportion of new teachers engaged in formal induction programs is higher in the countries considered to be exemplary in terms of professional teacher education: over 80% in Canada, over 90% in the Netherlands, Australia and Japan, and nearly 100% in Singapore.

According to the survey results, young teachers have less access to various professional development activities while already working, as compared to other age groups (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. **The proportions of teachers in different cohorts who participated in any of the listed professional development activities during the last 12 months**

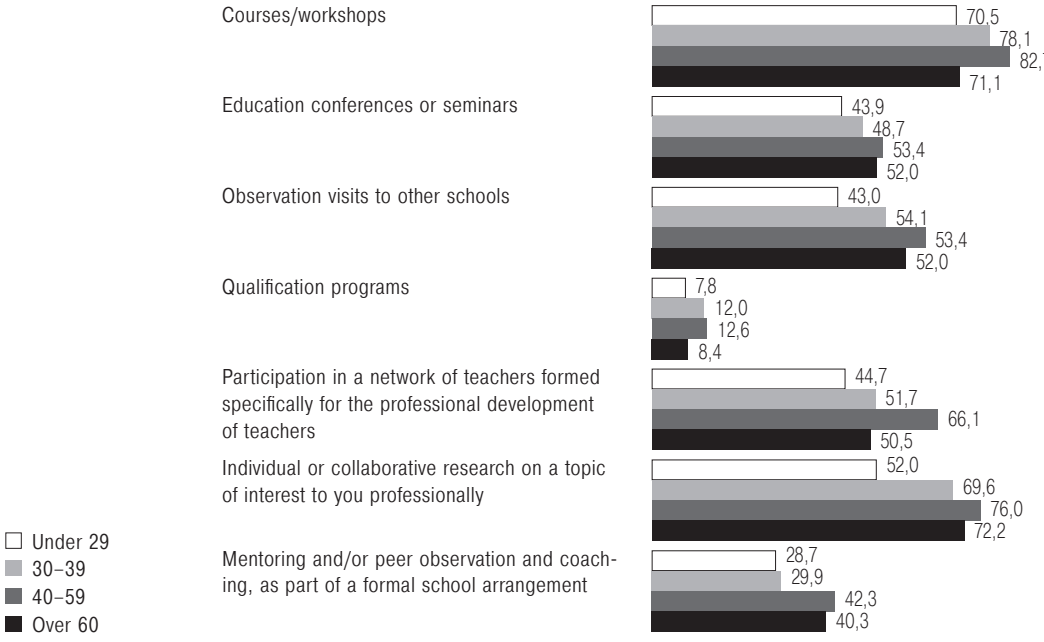


Table 3. **Participation of teachers in professional development programs by age group** (as a percentage of the total population of the relevant cohort)

	Age			
	29 or younger	30–39	40–59	60 or older
Pedagogical competencies in teaching my subject field(s)	79.74	89.66	88.66	87.85
Student behavior and classroom management	78.63	82.29	78.18	80.35
School management and administration	15.21	25.39	22.13	11.91
Approaches to individualized learning	56.29	66.14	69.93	74.23
Teaching students with special needs	25.79	29.11	29.02	37.79
Approaches to developing cross-occupational competencies for future work or future studies	54.52	62.44	67.81	64.23
Student career guidance and counseling	35.41	46.29	58.05	60.46

Young teachers confirm participation in professional development programs less often than any other age group in nearly all activities, including those that conform to the Federal State Education Standard and the Occupational Standard in Teaching (Table 3).

Figure 5. **Professional development activities that teachers of different ages took part in during the last 12 months**

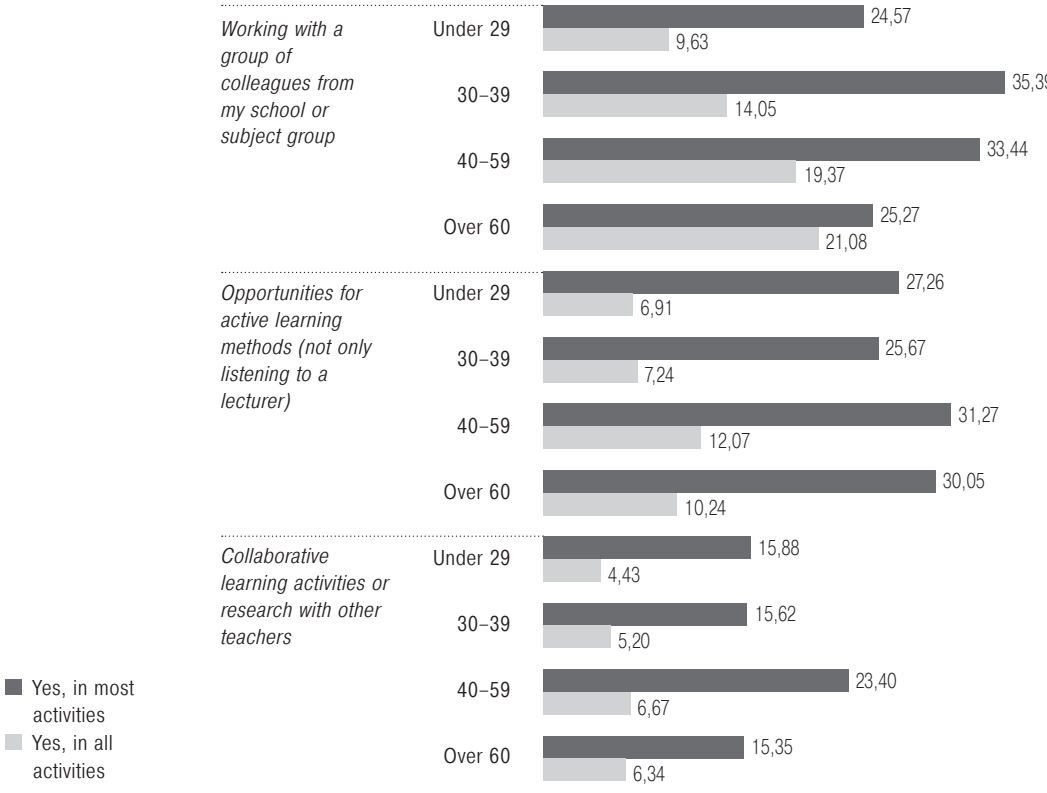
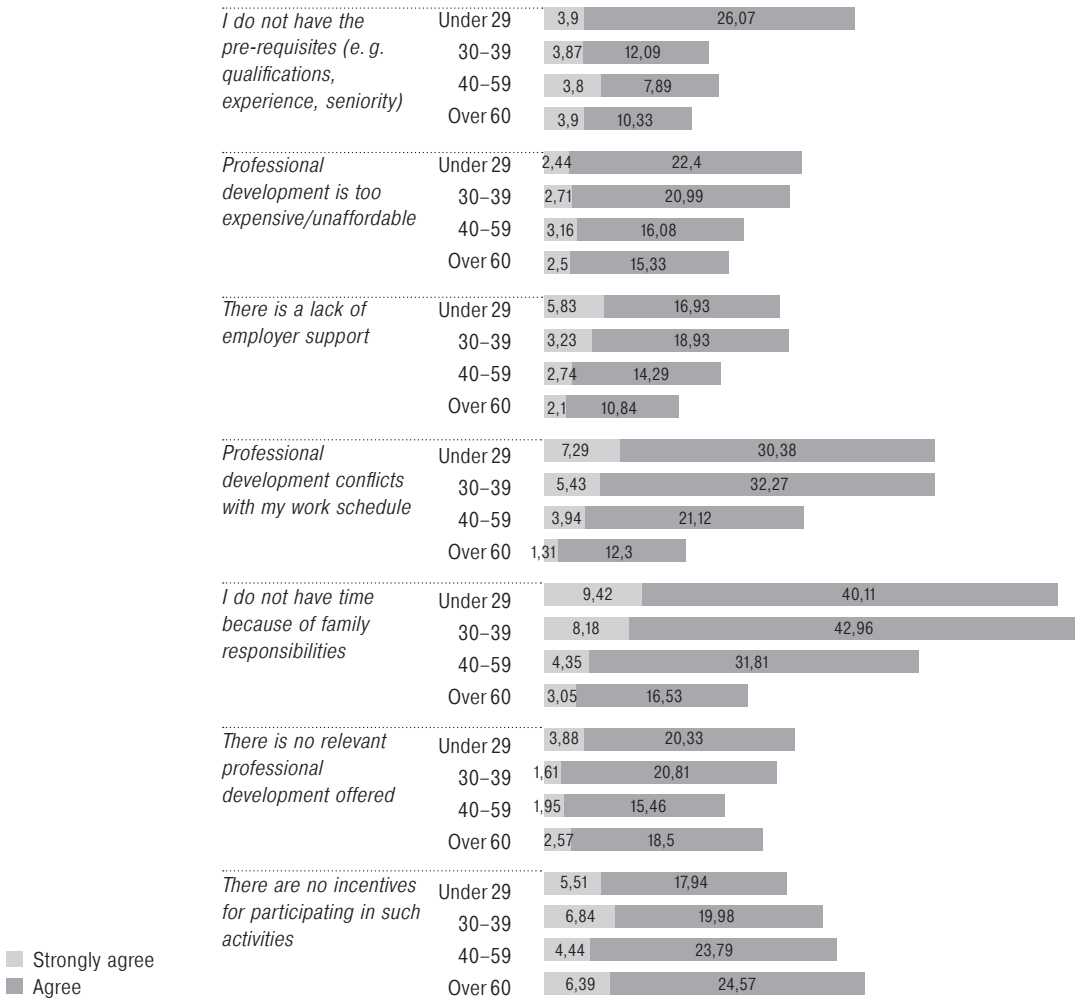


Table 4. **School administration's support for the professional development of teachers by age group (as a percentage of the total population of the relevant cohort)**

	Age			
	29 or younger	30–39	40–59	60 or older
I received scheduled time for activities that took place during regular working hours at this school	52.79	54.04	60.73	51.88
I received a salary supplement for activities outside working hours	34.55	32.22	34.52	32.50
I received non-monetary support for activities outside working hours (reduced teaching, days off, study leave, etc.)	25.22	23.27	24.46	21.99

Figure 6. **The proportions of teachers who agree that the listed factors present barriers to their professional development**

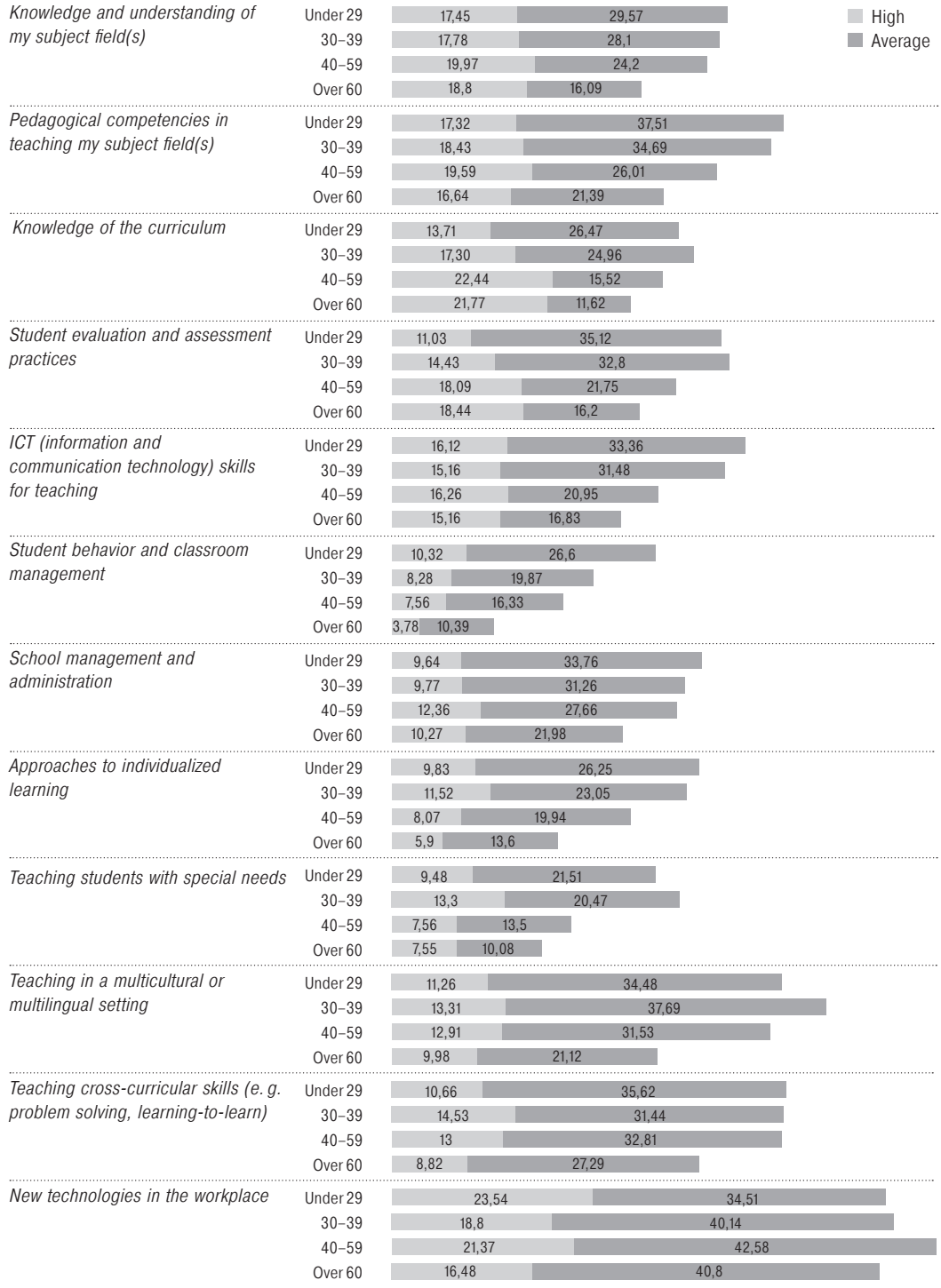


Young teachers were the least likely to confirm participation in the most active forms of professional development based on collaboration and involving research (Fig. 5).

Meanwhile, no considerable difference was revealed between reports of young teachers and teachers from other age groups on incentives and support for professional development provided by the school administration. Table 4 proves that new teachers are supported just as well as their more experienced colleagues.

However, young teachers report more often about barriers to their professional development than their senior colleagues, despite the support received (Fig. 6).

Figure 7. **High and average demand for advanced teacher training in various elements across different age groups**



According to young teachers, the lack of time because of family responsibilities and an inconvenient work schedule are the major barriers to their professional development. At the same time, they are the least likely to agree that there are no incentives for participating in professional development activities.

Young teachers have high demands for professional growth and development (Fig. 7). The survey shows that they also assess their professional deficiencies more adequately.

The nature of teachers' demands measures the efficiency of contemporary higher education for teachers. The lack of classroom management skills and the advantage in ICT skills are understandable and natural for new teachers. However, when young teachers who have just completed their formal education lack pedagogical and teaching competencies required by the Federal State Education Standard and the Occupational Standard in Teaching (such as approaches to individualized learning or teaching students with special needs), it is clear that the teacher education system is seriously failing somewhere.

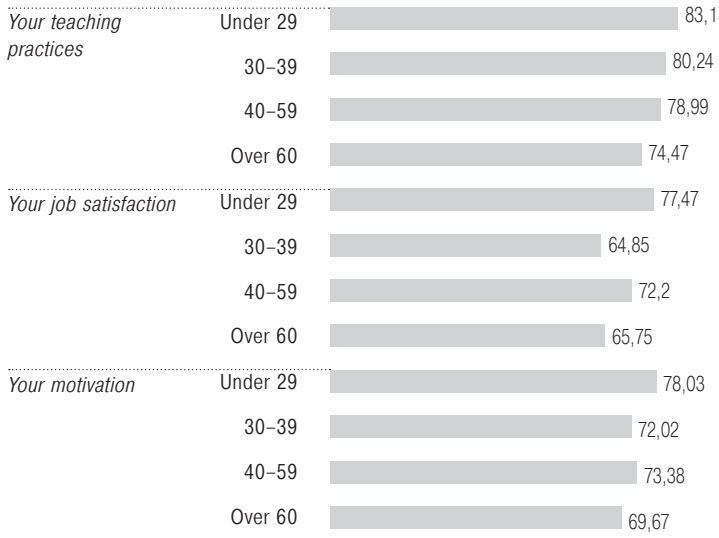
Teacher feedback

Young teachers are the least satisfied with the feedback they receive about their work from colleagues and school administration. Those who feel less prepared and explicitly demand professional development are more likely to be unhappy with the lack of specific feedback, which means that they do not receive teaching and pedagogical support in the workplace. Many young teachers have assigned mentors. However, the proportion of those who get feedback from mentors amounts to just 27.8% in one aspect, " Feedback following direct observation of your classroom teaching". Feedback from mentors following an assessment of content knowledge is provided to 22.3% of young teachers, while other types of feedback, including feedback following analysis of students' test scores, are only provided to 10–15%.

Young teachers rate the emphasis placed on various aspects of their professional activities by their colleagues and school administration much lower than teachers in other age groups. In particular, 28% of young teachers report that "collaboration or working with other teachers" was considered as low importance or not considered at all. Only 10.6% of middle-aged teachers provided the same answer. We can clearly see the lack of professional communication suffered by a large proportion of young teachers.

In addition, the effect of feedback on motivation is much more critical for young teachers than for their senior colleagues. Young teachers are more likely to believe that the feedback they have received has led to moderate or large positive changes in their motivation and job satisfaction. They are also a trifle more likely to see positive changes in their teaching practices (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. **The proportions of teachers in different age groups who see positive changes caused by the feedback they have received**



A we can see, young teachers are the most likely to show an interest in teacher feedback, and aswith professional development, they are the least satisfied with how their demands are met.

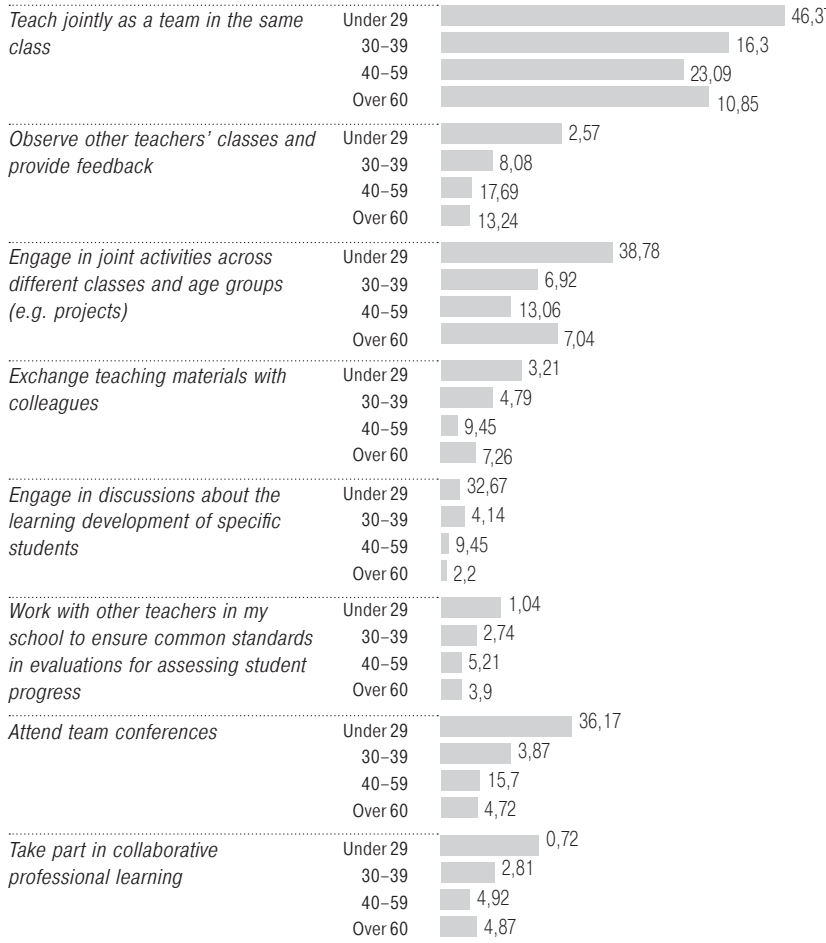
Young teachers are more critical about the quality and productivity of teacher appraisals in their schools. For instance, they are less likely to agree that the best performing teachers receive the greatest recognition and are more likely to report that teacher appraisal and feedback are largely done to fulfill administrative requirements and have little impact upon the way teachers teach in the classroom. Besides, they believe less often, as compared to their senior colleagues, that feedback is provided to teachers based on a thorough assessment of their teaching or helps improve their teaching, e. g. by serving as the basis for a development or training plan.

Teaching

Young teachers are apparently not satisfied with the organization of professional communication in teaching, just as in any other aspects of school life, choosing “Never” to the question “How often do teachers in your school work in close collaboration?” more often than their senior colleagues (Fig. 9). The proportion of those who never take part in collaborative professional learning is much higher among young teachers, even though this is what they need the most. The most positive answers were provided by middle-aged teachers.

Young teachers assess their teaching skills to be lower in all aspects than their colleagues in other age groups (Fig. 10).

Figure 9. **The proportions of respondents who chose "Never" to the question on participating in various professional communication activities by age group**



Managing student behavior and classroom time presents difficulties for young teachers, who spend more time on administrative tasks and keeping order in the classroom than on actual teaching (Table 5).

Figure 11 demonstrates that young teachers find student behavior and classroom management more challenging than their more experienced colleagues.

Young teachers possess a restricted repertoire of teaching skills, so their students have fewer opportunities for independent active work in the classroom. At least this is the feedback from the answers of young teachers to the question about the classroom activities that happen throughout the school year (Fig. 12).

Figure 10. **The proportions of teachers who report having specific classroom skills by age group**

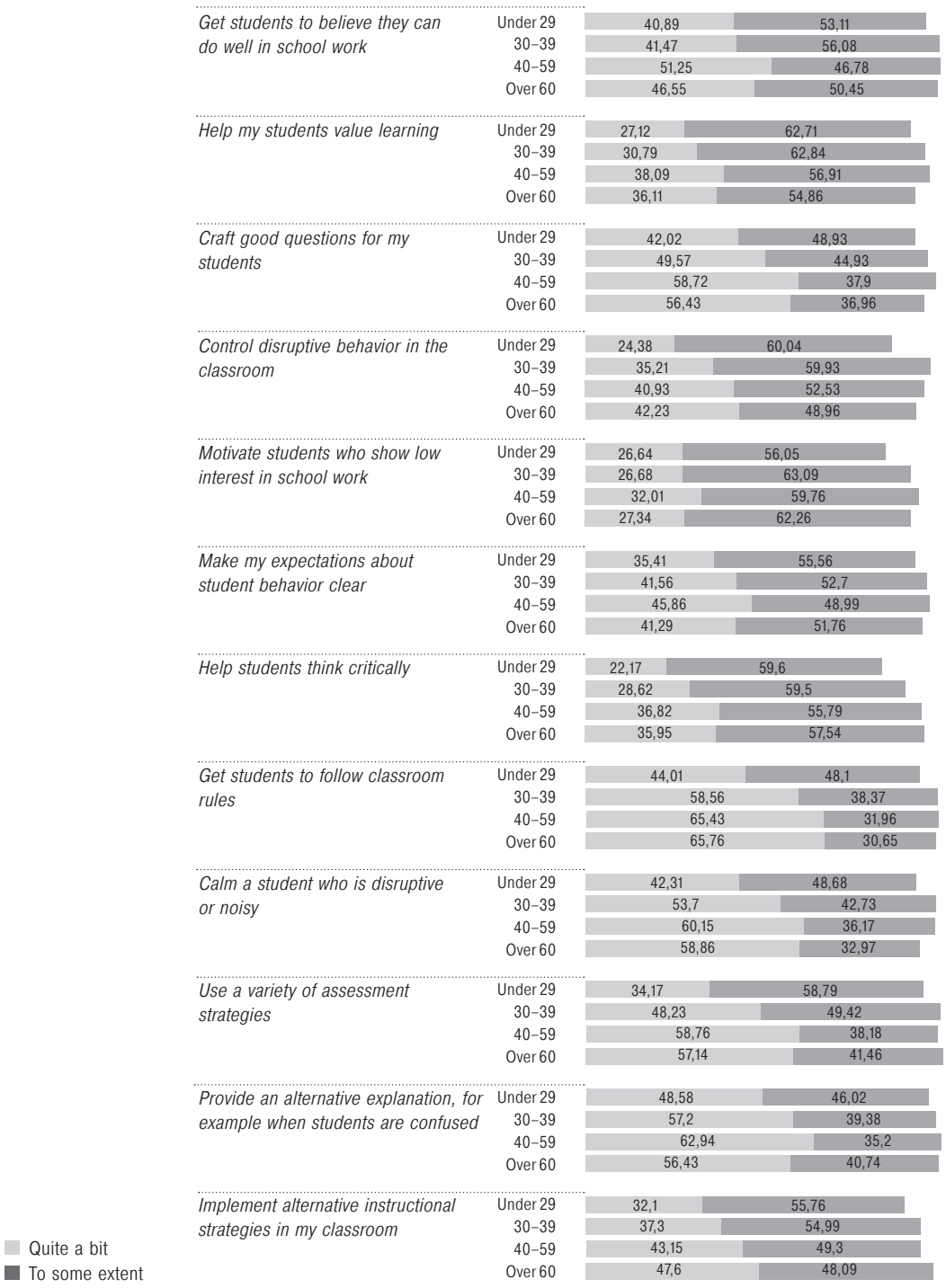


Figure 11. **Assessment of challenges in student behavior and classroom management by teachers of different age groups**

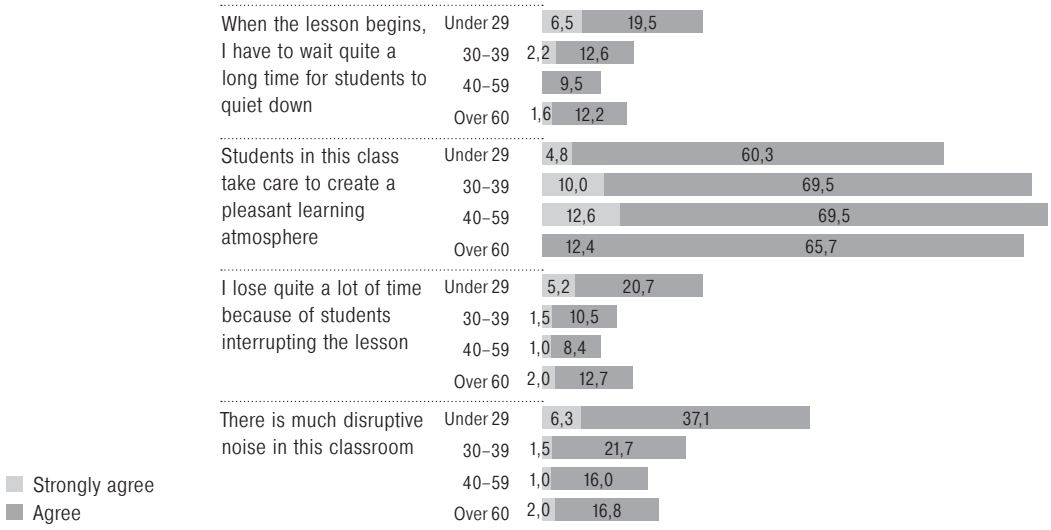


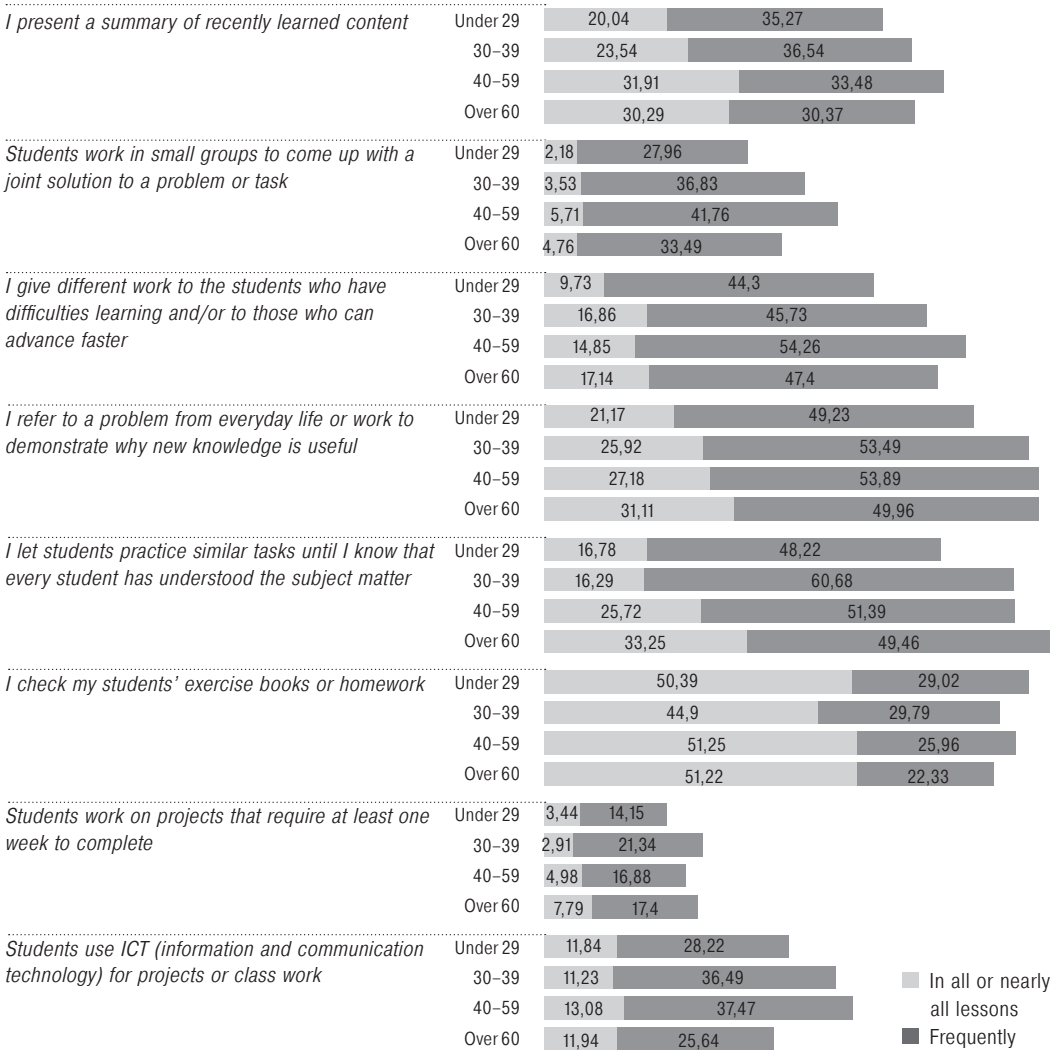
Table 5. **Distribution of classroom time by teachers of different age groups**

	Age			
	29 or younger	30–39	40–59	60 or older
Administrative tasks (e. g. recording attendance, handing out school information/forms	9.35	7.79	6.10	5.64
Keeping order in the classroom (maintaining discipline)	12.35	7.23	4.96	5.18
Actual teaching and learning	77.65	84.79	87.63	88.66

Paradoxically, the survey reveals that young teachers report not only less opportunity for their students to work in small groups and practice tasks independently but also a lower level of ICT use, the paradox being that at their age they should enjoy an obvious advantage in ICT skills.

Young teachers do not feel confident using assessment instruments other than conventional marking: Figure 13 compares how often they use such instruments as compared to the average Russian sample frequency and the international mean. Young teachers are more likely to say “Never” to the questions on using their own assessment system, providing written feedback on student work in addition to a mark, and encouraging students to evaluate their own progress.

Figure 12. **Frequency of various classroom activities undertaken by teachers of different ages**



Job satisfaction

On average, young teachers find the school climate in more favorable than their senior colleagues (Fig. 14). As for their job satisfaction, the data is conflicting. On the one hand, young teachers tend to value the prestige of the teaching profession higher than older teachers: 58.7% of young teachers believe that the teaching profession has a high social value, as compared to only 41% of middle-aged teachers. On the other hand, 32–33% of all teachers under 40 wonder if it would have been better to choose another profession, while the proportion is only 18% among middle-aged teachers (Fig. 15).

Figure 13. **The proportions of teachers using specific student assessment methods** (Russian sample mean, international mean, mean for Russian teachers aged under 30)

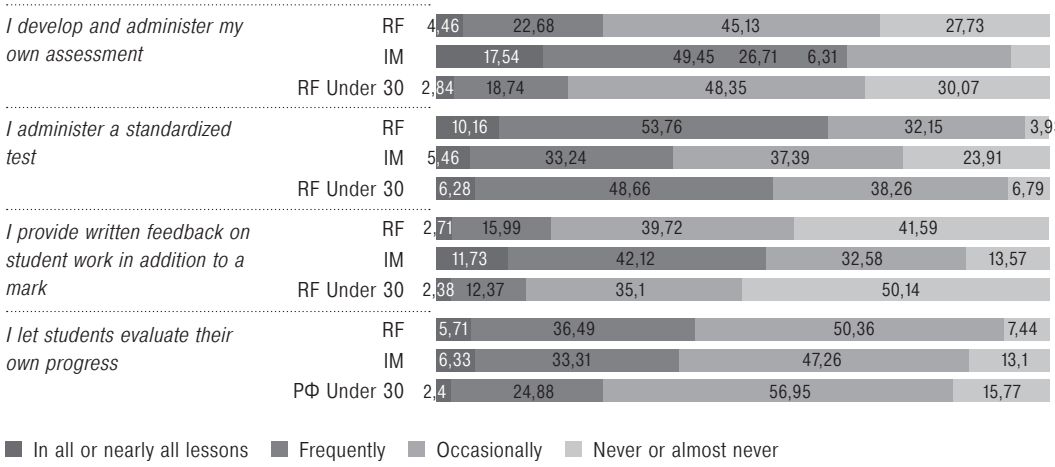
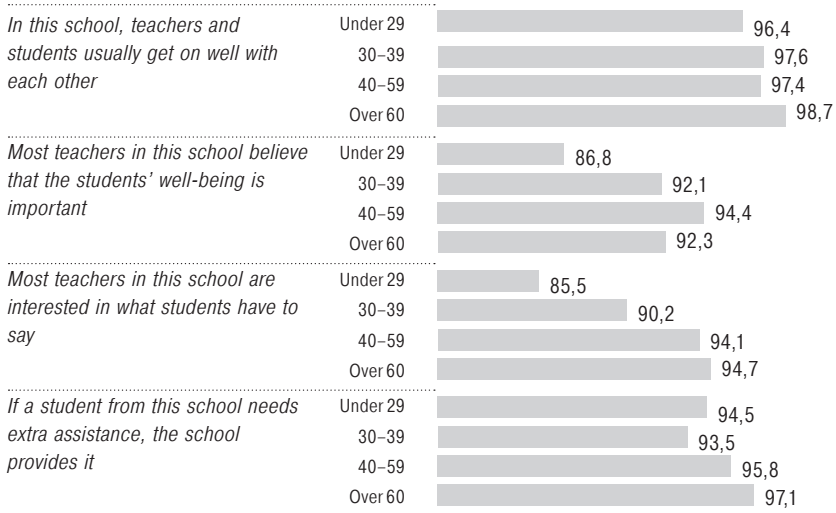
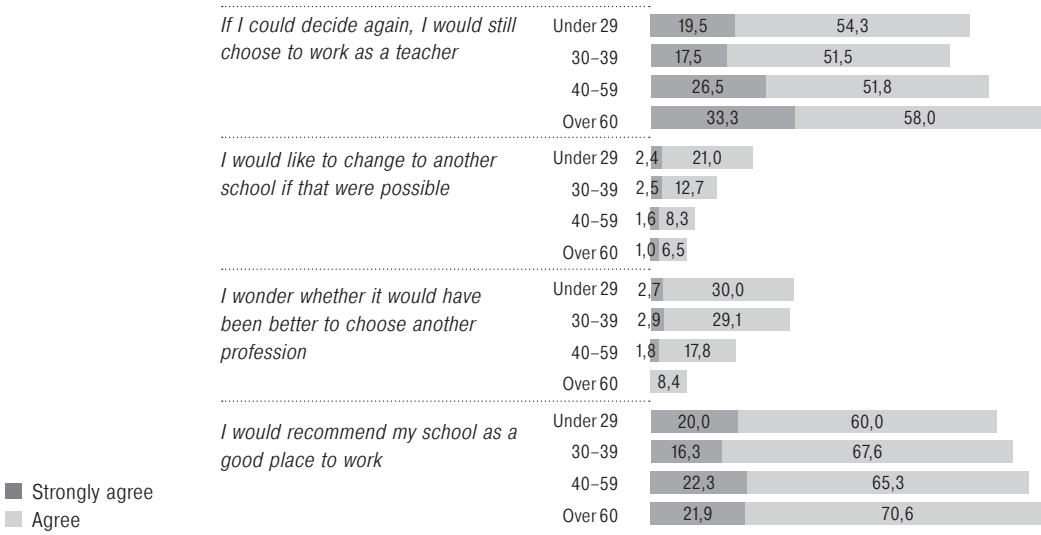


Figure 14. **Assessment of school climate by teachers of different age**



The survey results make it clear that the Russian teachers cannot be regarded as a monolithic and homogeneous whole. There is obvious differentiation between the attitudes and assessments of teachers in different age groups, the youngest teachers being the most critical. Hence the question: what if this critical attitude is a typical feature of young teachers who do not depend on the peculiarities of the national education system and policies? To answer this question, we compared the answering patterns of TALIS respondents of different ages in the Russian and international samples.

Figure 15. **Job satisfaction of teachers in different age groups**



Comparing the results in the Russian sample to the international means

We compared the indicators for different age groups in the Russian and international samples measured on complex TALIS scales that integrate answers to specific questions in the major survey units. The diagrams below show the average results on the scales with a 95% confidence interval.

Young teachers in Russia display much lower job satisfaction than their foreign peers, whereas assessments in the other age groups are pretty close to the international mean values. On the whole, age-specific satisfaction patterns in Russia are obviously different from the average TALIS ones (Fig. 16).

Differences are also found in the age-specific patterns of assessing the opportunities for professional collaboration and professional development as well as one's classroom management skills. Conversely, evaluations of young teachers in Russia are close to those of their international peers, while more experienced teachers evaluate professional collaboration, opportunities for professional development and discipline in the classroom considerably higher than the average international indicators in their age groups (Fig. 17, 18, 19).

In all of the cases, the curves of the international means look much smoother than those of the Russian sample, which means that the differentiation of opinions across the age groups is less pronounced and the evaluations of young teachers are not starkly different from those of their experienced colleagues.

The curves showing how teachers evaluate their self-efficacy and their demand for professional development look slightly less different (Fig. 20, 21).

Figure 16. **Job satisfaction of school teachers by age group in the Russian sample as compared to the international mean values**

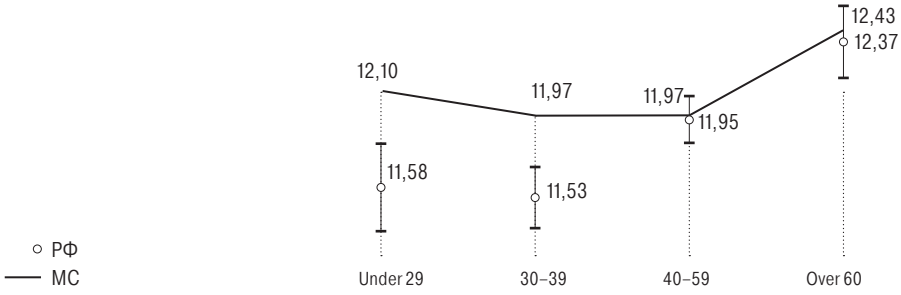


Figure 17. **Evaluation of professional collaboration by teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**

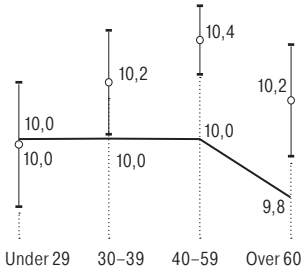


Figure 18. **Evaluation of the quality of professional development by teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**

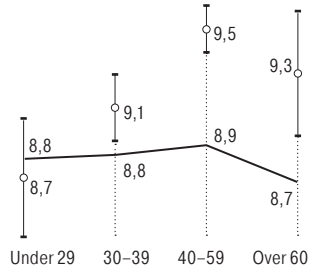


Figure 19. **Evaluation of discipline in the classroom by teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**

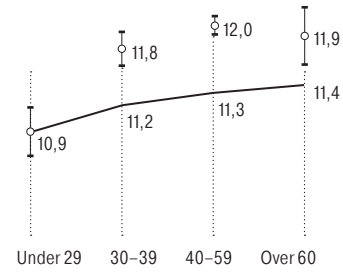


Figure 20. **Self-efficacy evaluated by teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**

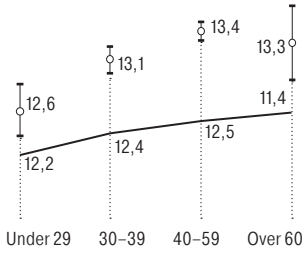


Figure 21. **Demand for professional development evaluated by teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**

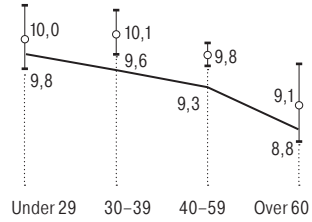
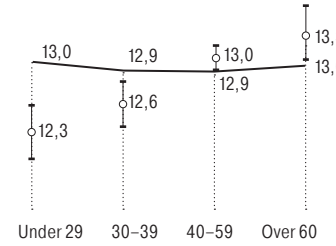


Figure 22. **Constructivist orientation of teachers in different age groups in the Russian sample as compared to the international means**



For these two parameters, the evaluations of Russian teachers are higher than the international means in all age groups, the patterns being quite similar. Therefore, young teachers in Russia as well as in other TALIS countries assess their performance lower than their senior colleagues and express a higher demand for professional development.

Constructivism scale measures teachers' orientation to using activity-based approaches to classwork to encourage student involvement. According to the international indicators, such orientation is equally typical of teachers in all age groups in TALIS countries (Fig. 22). As for the Russian sample, commitment to advanced teaching methods grows in tandem with the age of teachers, the youngest teachers being the least committed.

The credibility of the survey data on age-specific differences between teachers' evaluations and attitudes should be verified by testing a reasonable hypothesis: could it be that Russian teachers are likely to overestimate themselves with age, indulging in wishful thinking? This question provides a starting point for further research.

Conclusion

Summing up the major TALIS results describing the status of young teachers in Russian schools:

- of teachers aged under 30 claim that they did not take part in activities with a group of colleagues from their school or subject group during the last 12 months, as compared to only 3% of teachers aged 40–59;
- of teachers aged under 30 report that the professional development activities they took part in did not include opportunities for active learning methods, as compared to only 9% of teachers aged 40–59;
- of teachers aged under 30 believe that they do not have the pre-requisites for professional development (e.g. qualifications, experience, seniority), as compared to only 15% of teachers aged 30–39 and 10% of teachers aged 40–59;
- young teachers experience difficulties in classroom management; they are not prepared to use advanced teaching methods, holding a more traditional orientation than their senior colleagues;
- of young teachers do not agree that students learn best by finding solutions to problems on their own, as compared to only 9% of teachers aged 40–59;
- of young teachers say that their students never use ICT for projects or class work, as compared to only 10% of teachers in the oldest age group;
- only 25% of young teachers report that their students often analyze and evaluate their own progress, as compared to 40% of teachers aged 40–59.

Thus, as we can see, young teachers face challenges in professional communication and barriers to participation in professional development. At the same time, they are not prepared to solve practical teaching tasks and have insufficient knowledge of modern teaching techniques. The education that they complete does not enable them to teach in compliance with the present-day active learning requirements, neither does it provide them with the teaching skills required by the Federal State Education Standard and the Occupational Standard in Teaching.

Young teachers need more opportunities for professional development, particularly in active learning methods and learning in groups. Their chances of a successful adaptation to school teaching standards, especially with challenging classrooms, could be increased by providing a specific induction and adaptation period to support their basic motivation and prevent the flight of young teachers from schools due to low job satisfaction.

Of course, these measures do not exclude the need to modernize teacher education and increase the field experience element. Quite naturally, the synchronization of training and advanced training programs for teachers with the occupational standard requirements will affect all groups of teachers, not only the youngest.

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