



Understanding the Invisible Workforce:

Education Support Personnel's Roles,
Needs and the Challenges They Face

Philippa Butler

Massey University
Institute of Education –
Te Kura o Te Mātauranga
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Education International

Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.



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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	v
Foreword	Viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Executive Summary	x
Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Literature review	2
Case studies	3
Ethics	5
Presentation of responses	5
Literature Review	6
Characteristics of ESP in the Case Study Countries	11
Brazil	11
Characteristics of the ESP	11
Workplace	11
Role	12
Employment conditions	12
Canada (Quebec)	15
Characteristics of the ESP	15
Workplace	15
Role	16
Employment conditions	17
France	18
Characteristics of the ESP	18
Workplace	18
Role	19
Employment conditions	19

New Zealand	22
Characteristics of the ESP	22
Workplace	22
Role	23
Employment conditions	23
The Philippines	26
Characteristics of the ESP	26
Workplace	26
Role	26
Employment conditions	27
The United States of America	30
Characteristics of the ESP	30
Workplace	30
Role	31
Employment conditions	31
Zimbabwe	34
Characteristics of the ESP	34
Workplace	34
Role	34
Employment conditions	35
Nationality	37
Academic qualifications	38
Employment and Working Conditions of ESP	40
Experience as an ESP	40
Employment agreement or contract	41
Job description	41
Pay	43
Job security	44
Respect for ESP role	47
Respect from teachers	47
Respect from leaders	48
Respect from students	50
Respect from parents	52



Status of ESP role	54
Independence of the ESP role	55
Workplace culture	57
Opportunities as part of the ESP role	61
Professional learning and development	64
Appraisal	73
Satisfaction	74
Confidence	75
Making a difference	76
Plans for the future	78
ESP and Unions	80
Union leadership survey in Brazil	80
Union leadership survey in Canada (Quebec)	80
Union leadership survey in France	81
Union leadership survey in New Zealand	82
Union leadership survey in the Philippines	83
Union leadership survey in the United States of America	84
Union leadership survey in Zimbabwe	85
ESP perspectives on union support	86
Summary and Recommendations	89
References	92
Appendix A: Survey of Education Support Personnel	95
Survey of Education Support Personnel in [Country]	95
Appendix B: Survey of Union Leadership	106
Survey of unions representing education support personnel	106
Appendix C: Income Data for the Case Study Countries	109

List of Tables

Table 1:	Responses to the Education Support Personnel surveys	4
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List of Figures

Figure 1:	Age of ESP respondents from Brazil	11
Figure 2:	Roles taken by ESP in Brazil	12
Figure 3:	Employment tenure of ESP in Brazil	13
Figure 4:	Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in Brazil	13
Figure 5:	Employment benefits received by ESP in Brazil	14
Figure 6:	Age of ESP respondents from Quebec, Canada	15
Figure 7:	Roles taken by ESP in Quebec, Canada	16
Figure 8:	Employment tenure of ESP in Quebec, Canada	17
Figure 9:	Age of ESP respondents from France	18
Figure 10:	Roles taken by ESP in France	19
Figure 11:	Employment tenure of ESP in France	20
Figure 12:	Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in France	20
Figure 13:	Employment benefits received by ESP in France	21
Figure 14:	Age of ESP respondents from New Zealand	22
Figure 15:	Roles taken by ESP in New Zealand	23
Figure 16:	Employment tenure of ESP in New Zealand	24
Figure 17:	Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in New Zealand	24
Figure 18:	Employment benefits received by ESP in New Zealand	25
Figure 19:	Age of ESP respondents from the Philippines	26
Figure 20:	Roles taken by ESP in the Philippines	27
Figure 21:	Employment tenure of ESP in the Philippines	27
Figure 22:	Monthly pay (before tax) of ESP in the Philippines	28
Figure 23:	Employment benefits received by ESP in the Philippines	29
Figure 24:	Age of ESP respondents from the United States of America	30
Figure 25:	Roles taken by ESP in the United States of America	31
Figure 26:	Employment tenure of ESP in the United States of America	32

Figure 27: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in the United States of America	32
Figure 28: Employment benefits received by ESP in the United States of America	33
Figure 29: Age of ESP respondents from Zimbabwe	34
Figure 30: Roles taken by ESP in Zimbabwe	35
Figure 31: Employment tenure of ESP in Zimbabwe	35
Figure 32: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in Zimbabwe	36
Figure 33: Employment benefits received by ESP in Zimbabwe	36
Figure 34: Nationality of ESP survey respondents, across the case study countries	37
Figure 35: Academic qualification related to ESP role, across the case study countries	39
Figure 36: Experience as an ESP, across the case study countries	40
Figure 37: Employment agreement status, across the case study countries	41
Figure 38: Job description status, across the case study countries	42
Figure 39: Job description updated regularly, across the case study countries	43
Figure 40: Sense of fair pay, across the case study countries	44
Figure 41: Sense of job security, across the case study countries	45
Figure 42: Sense of respect from teachers, across the case study countries	47
Figure 43: Sense of respect from school or institution leaders, across the case study countries	49
Figure 44: Sense of respect from students, across the case study countries	51
Figure 45: Sense of respect from parents, across the case study countries	53
Figure 46: Sense of status of Education Support Personnel, across the case study countries	55
Figure 47: Sense of autonomy in ESP role, across the case study countries	56
Figure 48: Ability to participate in decision-making, across the case study countries	57
Figure 49: Sense of discrimination in the workplace, across the case study countries	58
Figure 50: Access to a safe and healthy workplace, across the case study countries	59
Figure 51: Opportunities for promotion or higher responsibilities, across the case study countries	61

Figure 52: Opportunities for study within current role, across the case study countries	62
Figure 53: Access to formal professional learning and development, across the case study countries	64
Figure 54: Frequency of formal PLD opportunities, across the case study countries	67
Figure 55: Access to informal professional learning and development, across the case study countries	68
Figure 56: Frequency of informal PLD opportunities, across the case study countries	71
Figure 57: Access to regular appraisal, across the case study countries	74
Figure 58: Satisfaction with education support role, across the case study countries	75
Figure 59: Confidence in carrying out education support role, across the case study countries	76
Figure 60: Sense of making a difference for teachers, across the case study countries	77
Figure 61: Sense of making a difference for students, across the case study countries	78
Figure 62: Likelihood of being in the same job in five years' time, across the case study countries	79

Foreword

Education Support Personnel play a vital role in realising the right to education and ensuring quality education for all. They contribute to fostering positive, safe learning environments, and ensuring that schools and, indeed, all educational institutions function effectively for all students. Yet we don't know enough about this diverse group of workers, whose roles range from bus drivers to counsellors, administrators to teaching assistants, and many more. Who are ESP? What kind of working conditions do they have? What challenges do they face? This research, launched on World ESP Day 2019, seeks to better understand this too often invisible workforce.

The over 3000 ESP who responded to EI's survey have confirmed that the situation is serious. ESP representatives in every region feel undervalued and unrecognized for their work. The majority of ESP are female and most ESP are poorly paid, earning less than the average wage for their country. Many have precarious employment conditions; their positions are often outsourced and put at risk because of cuts to education budgets. In addition, ESP have little opportunity for career progression or professional development.

This is unacceptable and we must act now.

We must demand that ESP have better working conditions including job security and permanent positions, access to benefits, and higher salaries. We must lobby for more frequent and more relevant professional development opportunities for ESP, as well as clear career pathways. Furthermore, as trade unions, we should answer our ESP members' call for more information about their legal rights, and ensure that they are supported in the profession. It is vital that ESP are organised and that unions defend their labour rights.

As EI, we see and recognise ESP and their work. Taking action is the only way we can redress the mismatch found in this research between the poor working conditions and low status of ESP, and the vast impact they have on students, teachers and the provision of inclusive quality education. This research will underpin EI's defence and promotion of the status and the rights of ESP over the coming years, and I hope you will join us in this effort.

David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International

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I would like to thank Education International for funding this research on Education Support Personnel, and for providing support and guidance along the way.

I would also like to thank the members of the Education International ESP Task Force for facilitating the ESP survey in their home countries, and the union officials who supported this process.

Finally, many thanks to the Education Support Personnel and union leaders in each of the seven case study countries who responded to the surveys.

Executive Summary

Education Support Personnel (ESP) play a vital role in promoting quality education, fostering a safe and positive learning environment for all students, and ensuring that schools and educational institutions function effectively. ESP cover a wide range of people working in the education sector, such as teaching and learning assistants, librarians, school nurses and counsellors, office staff, maintenance staff, and security staff, among others. Despite being an essential part of the education workforce, the work that ESP do is often unrecognised and undervalued.

This research made use of a survey for ESP and a survey for union leaders to explore the differences and similarities between seven case study countries: Brazil, Canada (Quebec), France, New Zealand, Philippines, USA, and Zimbabwe. The surveys focused on the characteristics of ESP, their employment and working conditions, and support provided by their unions. In total, 3,012 ESP around the world responded to the survey.

With regard to the characteristics of ESP in the case study countries, the research found that:

- In Brazil, ESP are typically female, aged between 36 and 60 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than BRL 60,000 (USD 15,000) per year.
- In Quebec, Canada, ESP are typically female, aged between 31 and 50 years, and employed on a permanent, full-time basis.
- In France, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 60 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than EUR 20,000 (USD 22,500) per year.
- In New Zealand, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 60 years, employed during term-time only on a part-time basis, and earn less than NZD 30,000 (USD 20,000) per year.
- In the Philippines, ESP are typically female, aged between 21 and 40 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than PHP 11,000 (USD 215) per month.
- In the United States of America, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 65 years, employed full-time on an hourly wage basis, and earn between USD 20,000 and USD 25,000 per year.
- In Zimbabwe, ESP are typically male, aged between 36 and 50 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than USD 5,000 per year.

With regard to the employment and working condition of ESP, the research found that:

- ESP were often working in a role unrelated to their highest qualification.
- ESP did not often shift between ESP jobs. Most of the ESP were currently working in their first and only ESP role.
- The majority of ESP were working under an employment agreement or contract.
- In most countries, except the Philippines, the majority of ESP had a job description for their role. Whether or not this job description was updated regularly was variable across the seven countries.
- In every country, the ESP felt they were not adequately paid for the work they do. The country-specific data showed that most ESP were poorly paid, earning less than the average wage for their countries.
- A sense of job security was variable across the seven countries. Some ESP felt secure, whilst others felt their jobs were precarious.
- The majority of ESP felt that their work was respected by teachers, school leaders, students and parents.
- Most ESP felt that their role attracted average to low status in their societies.
- Most ESP felt they had some autonomy within their individual practice, but little autonomy in their workplace overall.
- Very few ESP felt discriminated against in their workplace, and most felt their workplace was a safe and healthy environment.
- In most countries, except the Philippines, the majority of ESP felt they did not have opportunities within their workplaces for promotion or higher responsibilities.
- In most countries, except Zimbabwe and Brazil, the majority of ESP felt they did not have opportunities to further their qualifications whilst keeping their jobs.
- Access to formal professional learning and development opportunities was variable across the seven countries. Where ESP did have access, these opportunities tended to occur once a year.
- Access to informal professional learning and development opportunities was variable across the seven countries. Where ESP did have access, these opportunities tended to occur several times a year.
- Access to regular performance appraisal varied across the seven countries.
- Overall, most ESP were satisfied with their jobs.
- Overall, most ESP were confident or very confident in carrying out their work.
- In most countries, the majority of ESP felt they made a big difference

for teachers. Most ESP in France felt they made a small difference.

- Most ESP felt they made a big difference for students.
- In most countries, the majority of ESP felt they were likely or very likely to remain in the same or a similar job in five years' time. In the Philippines, most ESP were very unlikely to be in the same or a similar job in the future.
- Education unions in each of the seven countries were advocating on behalf of ESP for fair pay, acceptable working and employment conditions, rights and recognition.

As a result of this research on ESP, there is a clear case for union advocacy on behalf of Education Support Personnel. This research recommends that:

- ESP be supported to know their legal rights and responsibilities;
- Unions advocate for permanent positions and higher salaries;
- Professional learning and development and increased qualifications be tied to increases in salary;
- Unions advocate for increased awareness of ESP roles and employment conditions amongst teachers and principals;
- Opportunities for career progression for ESP be explored; and
- The work of ESP in supporting students and creating well-functioning schools and educational institutions be celebrated.

Introduction

Education Support Personnel (ESP) play a vital role in promoting quality education, fostering a safe and positive learning environment for all students, and ensuring that schools and educational institutions function effectively. ESP cover a wide range of people working in the education sector, such as teaching and learning assistants, librarians, school nurses and counsellors, office staff, maintenance staff, and security staff, among others. Despite being an essential part of the education workforce, the work that ESP do is often unrecognised and undervalued.

ESP are employed to work in schools and educational institutions around the world. Education International classifies ESP under the following eleven job categories:

- Administration and clerical personnel,
- Career guidance and counselling personnel,
- Documentalists and librarians,
- Maintenance and skilled trades personnel,
- Food and nutrition personnel,
- Health and welfare personnel,
- Tutors, teaching and learning assistants,
- Security personnel,
- Technical, technological and communications personnel,
- Transport personnel,
- Specialist professionals.

At the moment, there are significant gaps in the knowledge and understanding of ESP: who they are, what they do, and what they need to do their jobs effectively. For this reason, Education International has commissioned research seeking to understand the kinds of support that ESP provide, their specific job categories, their employment and working conditions, their participation and representation in education unions, and the issues and challenges that they face.

This research made use of a survey for ESP and a survey for union leaders to explore the differences and similarities between seven case study countries: Brazil, Canada (Quebec), France, New Zealand, Philippines, USA, and Zimbabwe. The surveys focused on the characteristics of ESP, their employment and working conditions, and support provided by their unions. This report presents the findings from these surveys.

Methodology

This research employed a literature review and surveys in seven case study countries to examine the role, impact, status, and employment conditions of education support personnel. The literature review was used to give a thematic overview of the information currently available on ESP, while the case study surveys examined country-specific examples of ESP employment practice, roles in schools, and working conditions.

Literature review

The literature review focused on the employment practices and work of ESP. Article databases such as ERIC, Academic Search, Google Scholar, and Scopus were searched for academic and professional literature that addressed the employment or working conditions of ESP. Search terms included various permutations of 'education support personnel', specific roles such as 'teacher aide' or 'paraprofessional', and permutations of terms such as 'employment', 'policy' and 'conditions'. Due to the language skills of the researcher, the literature search was conducted in English alone.

Articles and documentary materials that were discovered through the search were assessed for their relevance against inclusion criteria: did they address ESP employment conditions, rights, or status; the impact of ESP on education settings, teachers or learners; or issues or challenges involved in their work? If an article was deemed not relevant, it was not included in the final review. The bibliographic material of relevant articles was also examined for other articles that might have been missed from the database searches, especially seminal works that are frequently cited. The relevant information was synthesised into a literature review of current research on ESP. Gaps in the knowledge base were identified.

Case studies

Case studies were used to contextualise the more general information about ESP, and probe for country-specific good practice, issues and challenges. Case study countries were chosen to align with representatives on the Education International ESP Task Force¹. The case study countries were:

- Brazil,
- Canada (Quebec),
- France,
- New Zealand,
- The Philippines,
- United States of America, and
- Zimbabwe.

Two open-ended, descriptive surveys were developed for administration to ESP and to union leadership in each of the case study countries. The ESP survey focused on gathering specific detail about who is employed as ESP; their roles in schools; their employment contracts, conditions and job descriptions; their support needs in terms of advocacy and in terms of professional learning and development; their job satisfaction; and what works well and what is challenging about their role. Demographic information, such as gender, age, qualifications and experience, were also collected. The union leadership survey focused on national advocacy for ESP, and issues and challenges regarding unionisation of the ESP workforce.

Education International ESP Task Force members from each case study country were instrumental to the ESP survey development and administration. A generic survey was designed, that was then adapted with the advice of the task force members to fit country-specific concepts, terminology and languages. A copy of the generic survey can be found in Appendix A.

The task force members distributed the surveys in their countries, through their union ESP membership networks. Each country chose the appropriate format for their survey: either online or paper-based. Once the surveys were completed, the open-ended comments in languages other than English were translated into English with the help of the task force members.

The survey for **Brazil** was translated into Portuguese and a paper-based copy was distributed to ESP. The survey responses were scanned and sent to the New Zealand-based researcher for collation and analysis. The survey for **Canada** was translated into French, and a French and an English version was sent to ESP in the province of Quebec. The survey was administered online using SurveyMonkey. The survey for **France** was translated into French and was administered online. The surveys for **New Zealand** and the **United States of**

¹ Education International's Education Support Personnel Task Force includes up to ten individuals representing unions across each world region. It was created in 2013 with the aim of increasing the visibility of ESP, identifying the issues and challenges ESP face, and advocating for ESP rights and status.

America were both conducted in English and were administered online. The survey for **Zimbabwe** was administered in English. Paper-based copies were mailed to ESP. The responses were scanned and sent to the researcher for collation and analysis. The survey for the Philippines was translated into Filipino and paper-based copies were distributed to ESP. The responses were collated in the **Philippines** and a summary of the data was sent to the researcher.

Once the survey responses were received or were downloaded from SurveyMonkey, the data were entered into SPSS for analysis. SPSS is a statistical data analysis software package. The data were examined for invalid responses, defined as those who did not complete the survey beyond the initial demographic questions. These responses were removed, leaving a final dataset of 580 valid responses from Brazil, 891 from Canada, 129 from France, 1,208 from New Zealand, 58 from the Philippines, 75 from the United States of America, and 71 from Zimbabwe (see Table 1).

Table 1: Responses to the Education Support Personnel surveys

Country	Total Responses	Valid Responses	Total ESP (union)	Indicative response rate
Brazil	588	580	1,200,000 (CNTE)	0.05%
Canada (Quebec)	986	891	40,000 (CSQ)	2.23%
France	134	129	8,500 (UNSA) Unknown (SNUipp)	1.52%
New Zealand	1,272	1,208	10,094 (NZEI)	11.97%
Philippines	58	58	3,000 (ACT)	1.93%
United States of America	81	75	470,000 (NEA)	0.02%
Zimbabwe	74	71	9,500 (ZESSCWU)	0.75%
Total	3,193	3,012		

The number of valid responses was compared to the approximate total number of ESP provided by the unions who responded to the union leadership survey. This gave an indicative response rate for each country. In some countries the response rate was particularly low because the ESP survey was administered soon after another in-country survey, or it coincided with natural disaster or political unrest. The response rate was relatively high for New Zealand, as the pay and employment conditions of ESP were a focus of union action at the time of the survey.

The survey for union leadership was emailed to each of the Education International ESP Task Force members from the case study countries. Respondents could choose to respond on a Word version of the survey and email it back to the researcher, or use an online SurveyMonkey version of the survey. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix B. Responses were received from Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE), Brazil;

Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ), Canada; SNUipp and Syndicat de l'Administration et de l'Intendance (UNSA), France; New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI), New Zealand; Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Philippines; National Education Association, USA; and Zimbabwe Educational Scientific Cultural Workers Union (ZESSCWU), Zimbabwe.

Ethics

Before the research began, a low risk ethics notification was lodged with the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, the ethics committee governing research at the institution where the researcher is employed. This notification covered the surveys in all seven case study countries. The main ethical issues were related to administering a survey in several different countries, with differing levels of internet access and who use a variety of different languages. Each country representative was asked for their advice on whether the survey should be online or paper-based. Where ESP might not have access to technology, a paper-based survey was administered. The country representatives arranged for translation of the survey into their national languages where necessary, and helped to translate the open-ended responses back into English for analysis. The country representatives were named in the survey information sheet as a point of contact if respondents had any queries, along with the New Zealand-based researcher.

Presentation of responses

Descriptive statistics have been generated to describe the ESP survey responses. These are presented as frequency counts, percentages and bar charts in the sections that follow. The percentages are based on the valid percent, so exclude missing responses. A description of the demographics of the respondents from each case study country, their role, and country-specific workplace and employment information is presented first, followed by a comparison of employment-related themes across the seven countries.

Open-ended comments, where available, are used to illustrate and expand on the survey responses. Quotes have been selected that typify the responses from ESPs in each country. These quotes have been edited to correct typographical errors. As the Philippines survey data were collated before being sent to the researcher, no open-ended comments were received.

Literature Review

Educational Support Personnel (ESP) have been described as a vital part of the workforce in schools and other educational institutions. As Cheminais (2008, p. 26) has stated, ESP “play an essential role in improving outcomes for children and young people in relation to promoting their learning, health and well-being”. There is, however, little information available on ESP as a workforce and their professional needs.

A search of peer-reviewed literature and publicly available reports was conducted, looking for literature that focused on ESP and their employment and working conditions. While some literature was found that discussed the employment of teaching and learning assistants, very little was found that addressed the employment of other ESP categories such as administrators, school librarians, specialist roles such as education psychologists, maintenance staff, food and nutrition staff, and so on. The literature was predominantly from first world nations in Europe, America and Australasia. No information was found that addressed issues faced by the ESP workforce from the perspective of developing nations. Hopefully this will change over the coming years, as education organisations become increasingly interested in the work of ESP. For example, Education International has a current focus on ESP², and the Education Commission is conducting research on restructuring the education workforce, with pilots in Vietnam, Ghana and Sierra Leone³.

More literature was found that addressed the role of teaching and learning assistants and their work in classrooms (see, for example, Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2015; Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; Butt, 2016; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2009; Clarke & Visser, 2016; Groom, 2006; Kalsum, 2014; Vincett, Cremin, & Thomas, 2005; Wren, 2017). Other articles looked at the professional learning and development needs of teaching and learning assistants or of the teachers who supervised them (see, for example, Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; Bourke, 2009; Broadbent & Burgess, 2003; Calder & Grieve, 2004; de Paor, 2016; Huang et al., 2010; Moshe, 2017), or at professional standards or guidelines for working in classrooms (see, for example, Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2015; American Federation of Teachers, 2006; Department of Education, 2004; Hauerwas & Goessling, 2008; Morgan, 2007; Sharples, Webster, & Blatchford, 2015; UNISON, National Association of Head Teachers, National Education Trust, Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants, & Reading Teaching School Alliance, 2016).

ESP are employed in schools and educational institutions around the world, yet not much is known about who is employed as an ESP and how they are employed. Blatchford, Russell, and Webster (2012) found that in the UK, “the

2 www.ei-ie.org/en/detail_page/4646/education-support-personnel
3 educationcommission.org/education-workforce-initiative/

vast majority of all support staff were female, of white ethnic origin, and aged 36 or over" (p. 51). When they looked for differences between categories of support staff, they found relatively high numbers of men in maintenance and technician roles (at 76% and 41% of the respective categories), and very high numbers of women in teaching assistance roles (98%). From the same research study, Webster et al. (2011) note that teaching and learning assistants typically had lower qualifications than teachers, and that teaching and learning assistants often worked extra hours beyond their contracted hours and were not paid for those extra hours.

Earlier, Smith, Whitby, and Sharp (2004) found that in the UK, teaching and learning assistants were typically female (99%), aged between 41 and 50 (48%), spoke only English (85%), and had responsibilities outside the workplace caring for children or elderly relatives (71%). Teaching and learning assistants in their survey felt that they were poorly paid for the work they did, and also reported working additional hours without pay. Teaching and learning assistants were commonly employed on a full-time basis for the whole year (36%) or during term-time only (31%). Eighty per cent of the teaching and learning assistants reported having a job description. Lee (2002) also described the salaries of teaching and learning assistants in the UK as very low, and points out that often teaching and learning assistants are employed for fixed periods of time or during term-time only.

In the US, the American Federation of Teachers (2002) reported that ESP of all job categories are typically older, aged between 45 and 54, and are poorly paid. In 2000, 54% were paid between \$10,000 and \$25,000 per annum, 10% were paid less than \$10,000, and 12% were paid more than \$30,000. As the American Federation of Teachers (2002, p. 9) indicates, "this places many PSRPs [paraprofessionals and school-related personnel] just barely above the poverty line, which in 2000 was \$17,050 for a family of four".

Kalsum (2014) found that teaching and learning assistants working in New Zealand, the UK and the US earn between half and one third of the annual salary of a classroom teacher. As a consequence, schools are incentivised to employ support staff to cover a range of low-level tasks, rather than teachers, in order to make their operational budgets stretch further.

Goessling (1998) has described ESP, teaching and learning assistants in particular, as the 'invisible elves' that support inclusion in schools. In the US context, much of the work that ESP undertake is unrecognised and unappreciated, yet is vital to ensure that students with special educational needs are included in classrooms. Bourke and Carrington (2007) argue that the same is true for the Australian context. They attribute the invisibility of teaching and learning assistants to three factors: unstable and temporary employment practices, a lack of voice from teaching and learning assistants in education policy change, and lack of status and power within education settings. Teaching and learning assistants are not seen as valuable stakeholders in inclusive education decision-making, and their opinions and perspectives are not considered by researchers and policy-makers.

Other research has found that teaching and learning assistants do not always feel valued by teachers, especially where teachers are not aware of their skills and previous experience, or where teachers see teaching and learning assistants as there to take over responsibility for students with special educational needs (Lee, 2002). This perceived lack of value contributes to a sense that teaching and learning assistants are of low status in the school setting.

These negative indicators have implications for ESP turnover and retention. Ghere and York-Barr (2007) found that in the US there was a high turnover of ESP. This turnover was attributed to low wages, poor benefits, and the stress of the role, in addition to the 'ordinary' turnover that might be expected due to changing life circumstances: entering study, moving city, family events, retirement, and so on. In schools where turnover was low, this was attributed to a collaborative workplace culture, or to an older and therefore more settled workforce. Strategies to improve ESP retention could include a higher minimum wage, ensuring that ESP were well-matched to the roles they were asked to perform, and fostering supportive relationships between ESP, teachers and the wider school or institution.

Despite low pay and a devaluing of work conducted by ESP, satisfaction with the job can be high. Blatchford et al. (2012) found that most teaching and learning assistants were satisfied with their jobs (93%), but were less satisfied with the respect they gained from their schools (69%), or with the pay they received (51%). However, the research found that "a love for supporting and helping children and young people was a large factor in the high rates of job satisfaction" (Blatchford et al., 2012, p. 54).

All of the staff members of a school, including every type of support worker, are responsible for creating and sustaining a school culture where learning can take place. Writing from a Swedish context, Frelin and Grannäs (2015) argue that ESP can be categorised according to their proximity to or distance from educational content. Support staff such as teaching and learning assistants and librarians have a close relationship with content and learning activities, while other staff members such as maintenance workers, bus drivers, or food service personnel have a more distant relationship. However, they argue, "what all staff in school have in common is that their functions are to facilitate the education of young people" (p. 58).

Teaching and learning assistants work closely with students in a classroom setting. Their role is usefully summarised by Butt (2016). She described three models: the one-on-one model where a teaching and learning assistant works closely with one student, the itinerant model where a teaching and learning assistant moves between classes to support several teachers and students, and the class support model where a teaching and learning assistant supports a teacher or a whole class. The first model, one-on-one support, does not foster inclusive classrooms for learners with additional needs, "as teachers tend to disengage from the student" (p. 997). The third model, class support, is the most inclusive as the teacher and the teaching and learning assistant are working together to meet the needs of all students.

To ensure that the work of teaching and learning assistants is effective, they, and the teachers who supervise them, need adequate professional learning and development (PLD). Ashbaker and Morgan (2012) have argued that teaching and learning assistants need PLD to understand their role in the classroom, develop skills for working with students, and learn how to work under supervision. Teachers likewise need to learn how to best collaborate with teaching and learning assistants, and how to effectively manage and supervise their work. UNISON et al. (2016, p. 6) have recommended that:

School leaders should not only ensure that teaching assistants have the right knowledge and skills to provide effective teacher and pupil support, via appropriate and timely training and professional development, but also ensure that teachers are informed and equipped to fully capitalise on teaching assistants' professional learning and expertise. ... Teaching assistants should have an appropriate career development pathway and access to training within the working day.

ESP can have a big impact on the school environment. Blatchford and colleagues have conducted research in the UK on the *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools* (the DISS project; see, for example, Blatchford et al., 2011; Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Webster, 2009; Blatchford et al., 2012; Webster et al., 2010). They have found that ESP help to reduce teacher workload, reduce teacher stress, and therefore increase teacher satisfaction, in large part because ESP take over many time-consuming administrative tasks (Blatchford et al., 2012; Webster et al., 2010). However, they have also found that the presence of teaching and learning assistants in classrooms, especially those who provide one-to-one support to students with special educational needs, has a negative impact on student achievement. As Webster et al. (2010, p. 323) explain, "those pupils receiving most TA [teaching assistant] support made less progress than similar pupils who received little or no TA support, even after controlling for factors likely to be related to more TA support (e.g., prior attainment and SEN [special educational needs] status)". They attribute this finding to the observation that as students spend more time with teaching and learning assistants, they spend less time with teachers. Interactions between teaching and learning assistants and students are more likely to be focused on completing tasks than on facilitating learning and understanding. Webster et al. (2010, p. 331) argue that "TAs have become the de facto primary educators of pupils with SEN. TAs are placed in situations each day in which they have to make pedagogical decisions beyond their expertise, and the effects of this are more damaging for the pupils who struggle most". To address these concerns, they believe that teachers and school leaders need to think carefully about how teaching and learning assistants are utilised in classrooms, what their role should be, and how they are prepared for their role.

Writing from a US perspective, Giangreco (2013) agrees that "teacher assistants have become almost exclusively *the way*, rather than *a way*, to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms, especially those with severe or low-incidence disabilities (e.g., autism, intellectual disabilities, behaviour

disorders, multiple disabilities)” (p. 94, original emphasis). Giangreco (2013, p. 95) provides a list of guidelines to follow, should teaching and learning assistants be asked to support learning in the classroom:

First, any potential instruction provided by teacher assistants should be supplemental, not primary or exclusive. Second, teacher assistants should be working from professionally prepared plans developed by teachers or special educators based on evidence-based approaches, thus not putting teacher assistants in the inappropriate role of making pedagogical decisions. Third, teacher assistants should be trained to implement these teacher-developed plans with procedural fidelity. Fourth, teacher assistants should be trained to constructively manage and respond to challenging student behaviours that might arise during instruction. Fifth, teacher assistants should receive ongoing monitoring and supervision from qualified professionals — not be left to fend for themselves.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that as a workforce, ESP are poorly paid, have low qualifications, are often employed during term-time only, and are not valued by their teaching colleagues. This can lead to increased stress and high turnover. However, ESP are satisfied with and committed to their work. ESPs can make a positive impact on teacher workload and help to foster a school culture that facilitates the learning of students. Their role is one of support; they should not be expected to replace teachers or be solely responsible for the learning of students.

Characteristics of ESP in the Case Study Countries

Brazil

Characteristics of the ESP

In Brazil, 580 ESP responded to the survey. Of these, 454 were female (78%), 123 were male (21%), and two identified as gender diverse (0.3%). One respondent did not provide their gender.

The majority of the respondents were aged between 36 and 60 years (n=449, 78%). Eight were 25 years or younger (1%), and 10 were 66 years or older (2%) (see Figure 1).

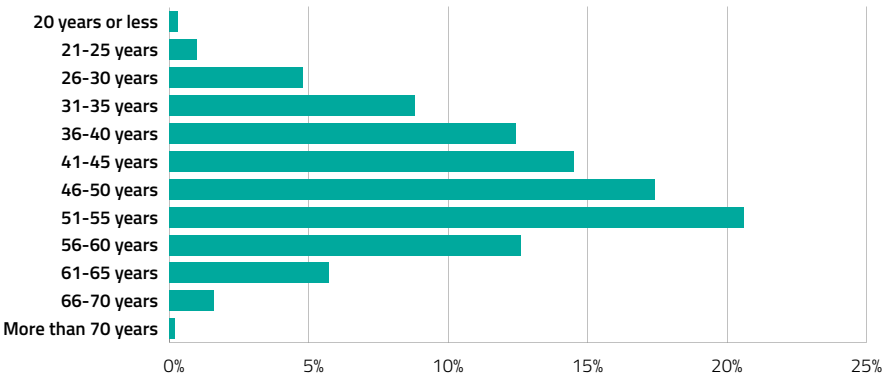


Figure 1: Age of ESP respondents from Brazil

Workplace

Respondents from Brazil were working in primary (n=399, 70%), high school (n=382, 67%), early childhood (n=99, 18%), technical and vocational education and training (n=54, 10%), or higher education (n=1, 0.2%) settings. Respondents could select more than one setting, to cover the complexities of their work sites.

Most were working in public schools (n=562, 99%), and were employed at one school (n=540, 95%) rather than across several schools.

Respondents were working in schools situated in small cities or towns (n=270, 48%), large urban cities (n=263, 47%), or rural areas (n=25, 5%). They were working in schools located in poor areas (n=246, 51%), middle class areas (n=221, 46%), or wealthy areas (n=18, 4%).

Role

ESP who were working in administration and clerical roles (n=244, 43%) were the most frequent responders to the survey in Brazil. The next most common groups to respond were food and nutrition personnel (n=133, 24%), and maintenance and skilled trades personnel (n=109, 19%) (see Figure 2).

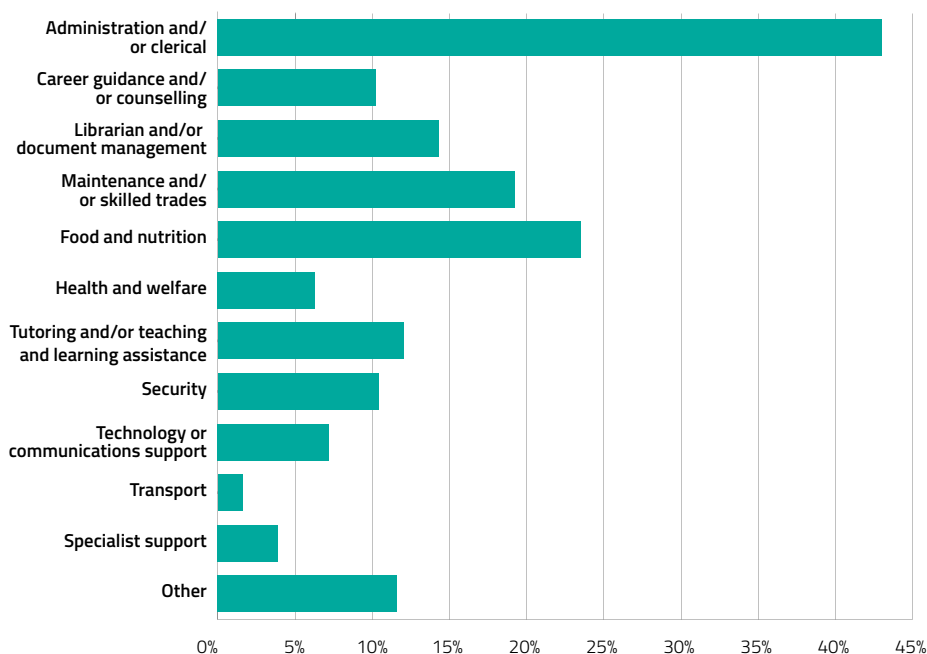


Figure 2: Roles taken by ESP in Brazil

Employment conditions

Respondents in Brazil were employed on a permanent, full-time basis (n=224, 67%), a permanent, part-time basis (n=53, 16%), a fixed term, full-time basis (n=35, 10%), a fixed term, part-time basis (n=18, 5%), or a casual basis (n=5, 2%) (see Figure 3). Two hundred and forty-five ESP (42% of 580) did not

respond to this question.

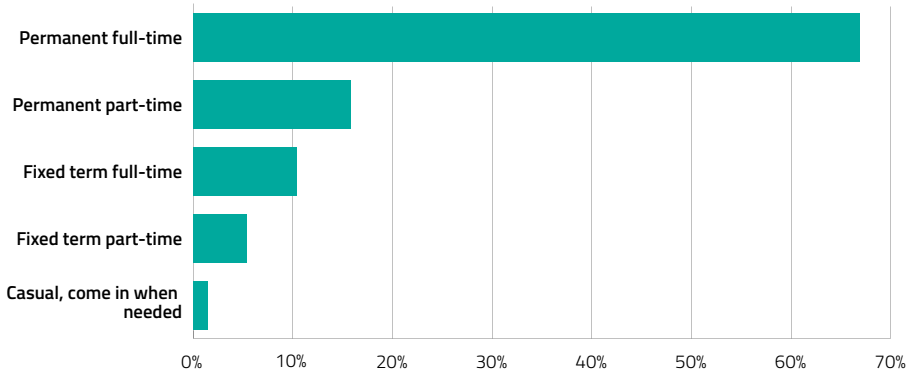


Figure 3: Employment tenure of ESP in Brazil

Most respondents earned BRL 60,000 (USD 15,000) or less before tax per year (n=468, 91%), the lowest income bracket available in the survey (see Figure 4). This is well above the average wage and the poverty line in Brazil (see Appendix C). Unfortunately, the income data in the Brazil ESP survey were not fine-grained enough to indicate how many ESP were earning a low wage.

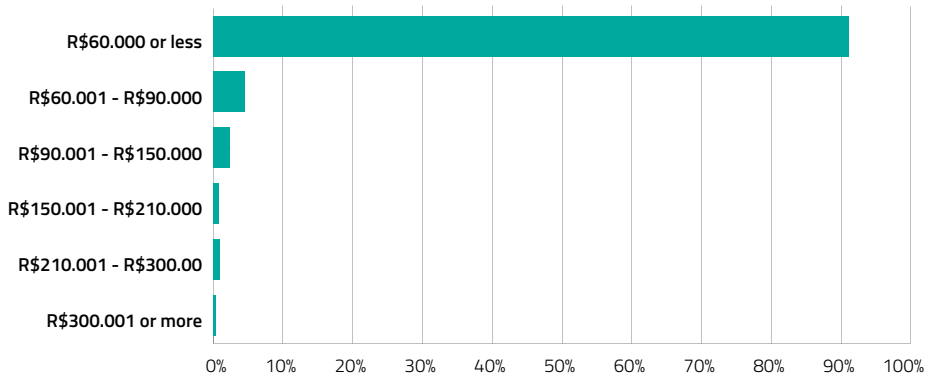


Figure 4: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in Brazil

Commonly, respondents said they received annual holiday pay (90%), transportation benefits (71%), a pension scheme (59%), and sickness or health benefits (40%) as part of their job (see Figure 5).

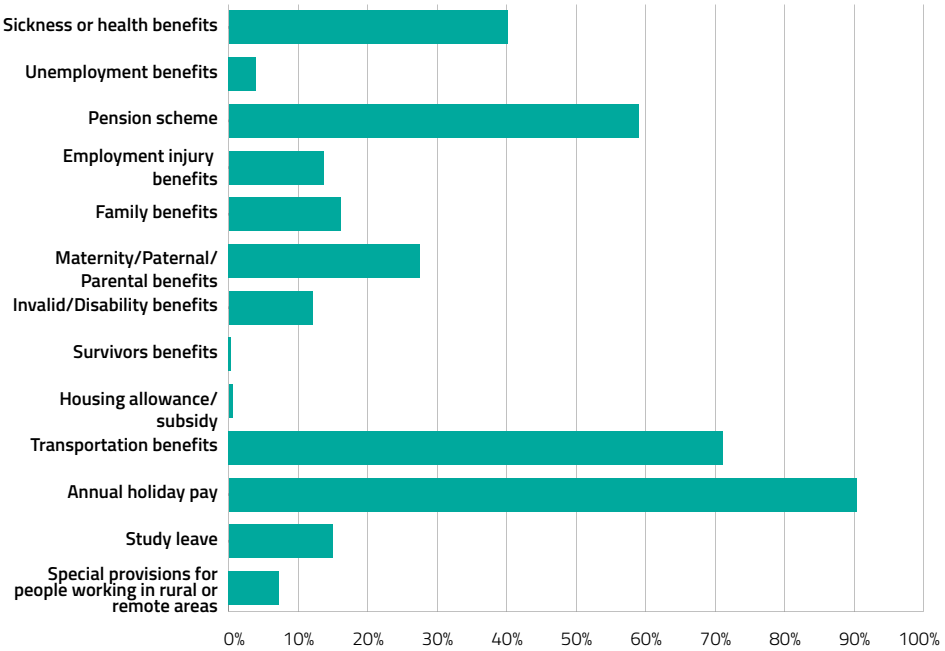


Figure 5: Employment benefits received by ESP in Brazil

Canada (Quebec)

Characteristics of the ESP

In Quebec, Canada, 891 ESP responded to the survey. This included 714 female (82%), 154 male (18%), and two gender diverse (0.2%) participants. Twenty-one ESP did not state their gender.

Most of the respondents were aged between 31 and 55 years (n=645, 73%). Thirty-two were 25 years or younger (4%), and three were 66 years or older (0.3%) (see Figure 6).

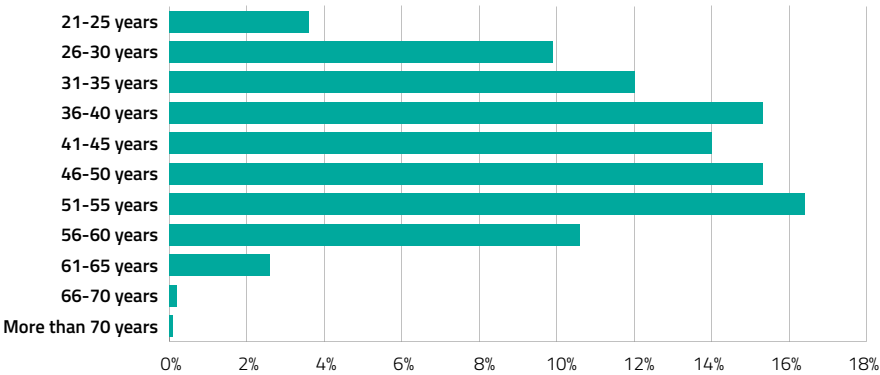


Figure 6: Age of ESP respondents from Quebec, Canada

Workplace

Respondents from Quebec were working in primary (n=446, 51%), high school (n=286, 32%), higher education (n=167, 19%), technical and vocational education and training (n=138, 16%), or early childhood (n=35, 4%) settings. Respondents could select more than one setting, to cover the complexities of their work sites.

Most were working in public schools (n=875, 99%), and were employed at one school (n=789, 90%) rather than across several schools.

Respondents were working in schools situated in small cities or towns (n=370, 46%), large urban cities (n=323, 40%), or rural areas (n=116, 14%). They were working in schools in middle income areas (n=375, 63%), low income areas (n=115, 19%), or high income areas (n=102, 17%).

Role

In Quebec, responses most commonly came from administration and clerical personnel (n=319, 36%), and from specialist support personnel (n=282, 32%) (see Figure 7). It appears from the open-ended survey responses, that ‘specialist support’ is understood in Canada in a similar way to ‘teaching and learning assistance’ in other countries. For example, one respondent selected ‘specialist support’, and described her role as “Specialised educator accompanying the student emotionally, socially and academically” (Canada #77).

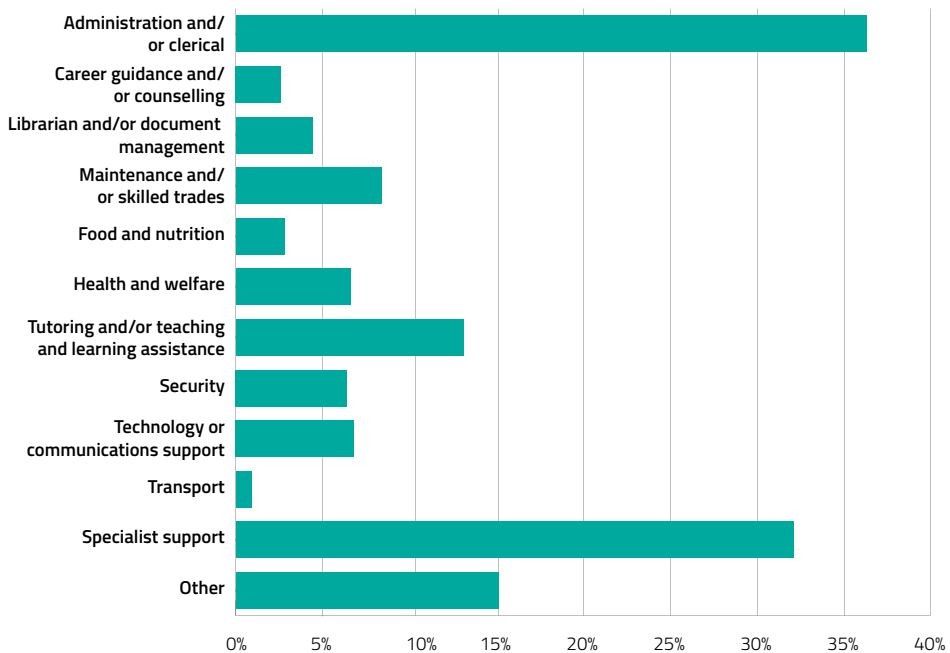


Figure 7: Roles taken by ESP in Quebec, Canada

Employment conditions

Respondents in Quebec were employed on a permanent, full-time basis (n=523, 68%), a permanent, part-time basis (n=112, 14%), a fixed term, part-time basis (n=62, 8%), a fixed term, full-time basis (n=50, 6%), or a casual basis (n=33, 4%) (see Figure 8). One hundred and eleven ESP (13% of 891) did not respond to this question.

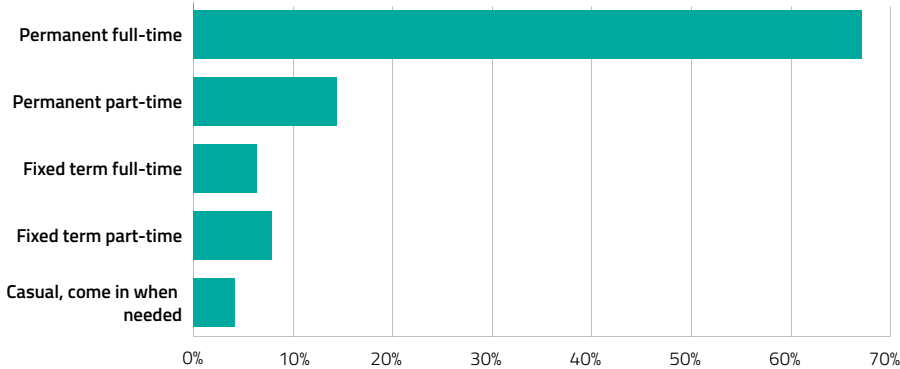


Figure 8: Employment tenure of ESP in Quebec, Canada

Questions about pay rate and employment benefits were not asked in the Quebec survey.

France

Characteristics of the ESP

In France, 129 ESP responded to the survey. This included 85 female (67%) and 42 male (33%) participants. Two ESP did not provide their gender.

The majority of the respondents were aged between 46 and 60 years (n=87, 67%). Four were 25 years or younger (3%). None of the respondents were 66 years or older (see Figure 9).

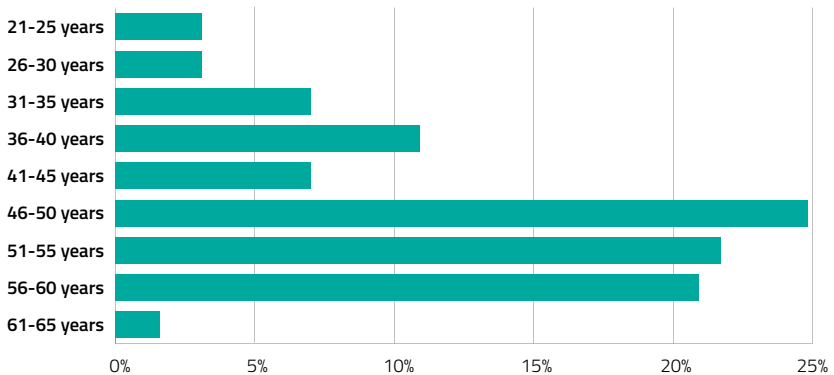


Figure 9: Age of ESP respondents from France

Workplace

Respondents in France were working in high school (n=82, 64%), technical and vocational education and training (n=48, 37%), primary (n=28, 22%), higher education (n=22, 17%), or early childhood (n=14, 11%) settings. Respondents could select more than one setting, to cover the complexities of their work sites.

Respondents were working in private (n=68, 53%), public (n=33, 26%), or public-private partnership (n=28, 22%) schools. Most of the respondents were employed at one school (n=116, 94%), rather than across several schools.

Respondents were working in schools situated in small cities or towns (n=57, 47%), large urban cities (n=42, 35%), or rural areas (n=22, 18%). A question about the socio-economic status of the ESPs' workplaces was not asked in the French survey.

Role

In France, responses to the ESP survey were received most frequently from administration and clerical staff (n=69, 55%) (see Figure 10). Thirty-five ESP (28%) selected 'other' to describe their role. The open-ended responses indicate that these ESP were using this category to express some complexity in their roles, which would otherwise fit under the administrative, health, security, and teaching and learning assistance categories.

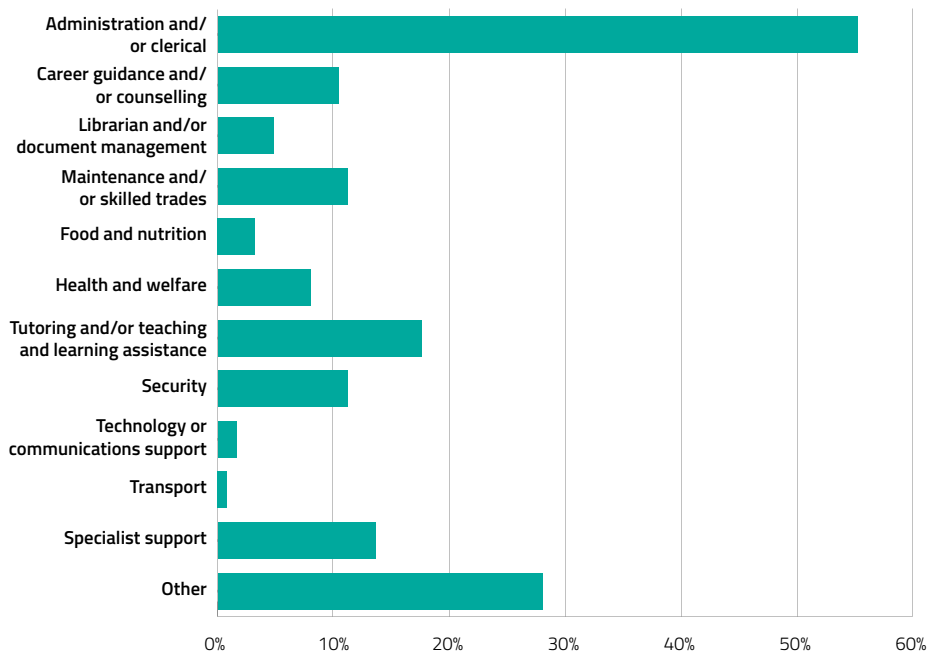


Figure 10: Roles taken by ESP in France

Employment conditions

Respondents in France were employed on a permanent, full-time basis (n=78, 72%), a permanent, part-time basis (n=25, 23%), a fixed term, full-time basis (n=4, 4%), or a fixed term, part-time basis (n=1, 1%) (see Figure 11). Twenty-one ESP (16% of 129) did not respond to this question.

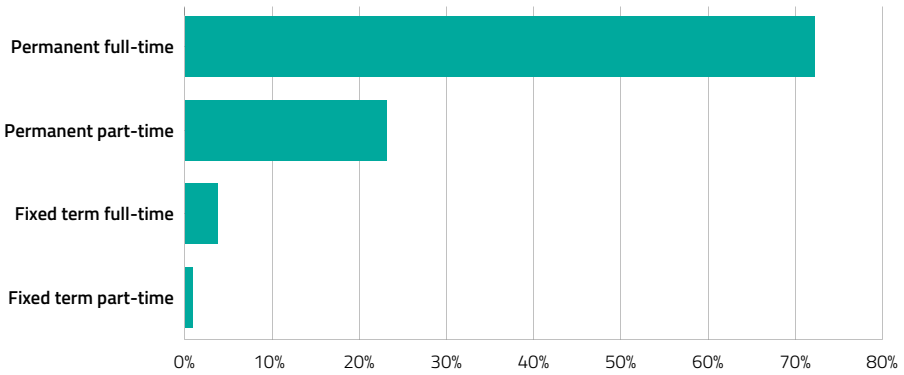


Figure 11: Employment tenure of ESP in France

Most respondents earned EUR 20,000 (USD 22,500) or less before tax per year (n=65, 54%), the lowest two income brackets available in the survey (see Figure 12). The majority of ESP were earning below the average wage for France (see Appendix C).

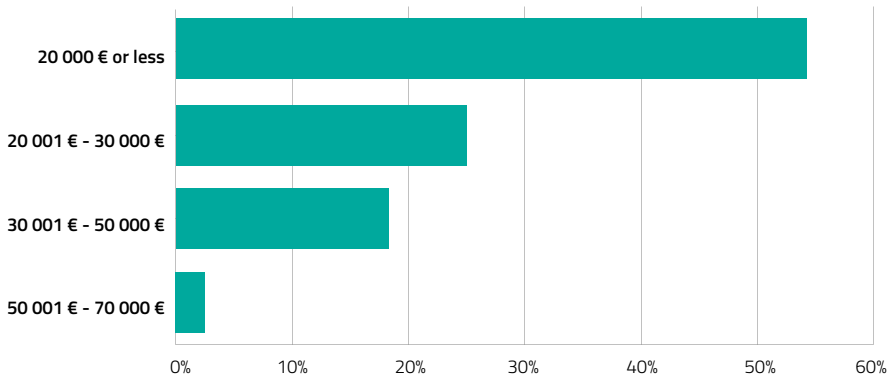


Figure 12: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in France

Respondents said they received study leave (81%), sickness or health leave (66%), transportation benefits (25%), family benefits (16%), and a housing allowance/subsidy (8%) as part of their job (see Figure 13). The list of benefits provided in the survey for France was shorter than for other case study countries.

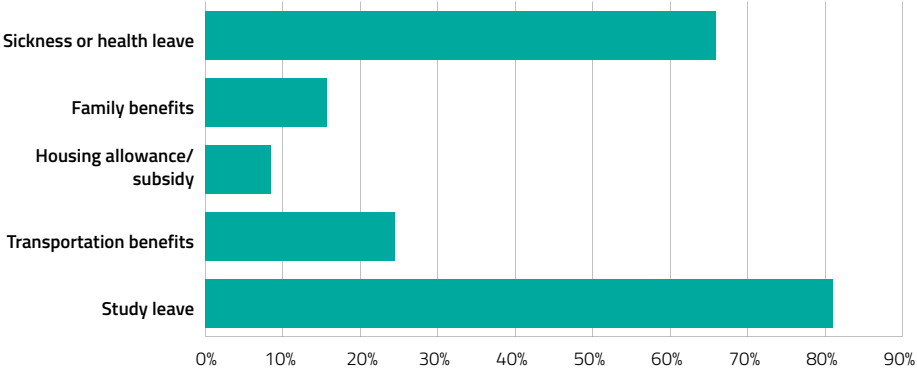


Figure 13: Employment benefits received by ESP in France

New Zealand

Characteristics of the ESP

In New Zealand, 1,208 ESP responded to the survey. Of these, 1,134 were female (94%), and 36 were male (3%). Thirty-eight did not provide their gender.

Most of the respondents were aged between 46 and 60 years ($n=749$, 62%). Eight were 25 years or younger (1%), and 49 were 66 years or older (4%) (see Figure 14).

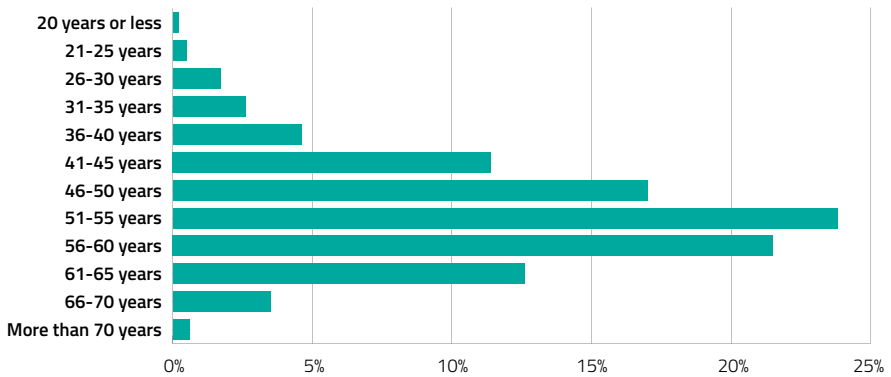


Figure 14: Age of ESP respondents from New Zealand

Workplace

Respondents in New Zealand were working in primary ($n=841$, 70%), secondary ($n=430$, 36%), early childhood ($n=13$, 1%), technical and vocational education and training ($n=11$, 1%), or higher education ($n=9$, 1%) settings. Respondents could select more than one setting, to cover the complexities of their work sites.

Most of the respondents were working in public schools ($n=1122$, 93%), and were employed at one school ($n=1179$, 98%) rather than across multiple schools.

Respondents were working in schools situated in small cities or towns ($n=514$, 43%), large urban cities ($n=483$, 41%), or rural areas ($n=193$, 16%). They were working in schools in medium income areas ($n=458$, 41%), low income areas ($n=337$, 30%), or high income areas ($n=316$, 26%).

Role

Responses to the New Zealand ESP survey primarily came from teaching and learning assistants (n=648, 54%), and administrators (n=520, 43%) (see Figure 15). The overall percentage of 197% indicates that the ESP were, on average, selecting two categories to describe their roles.

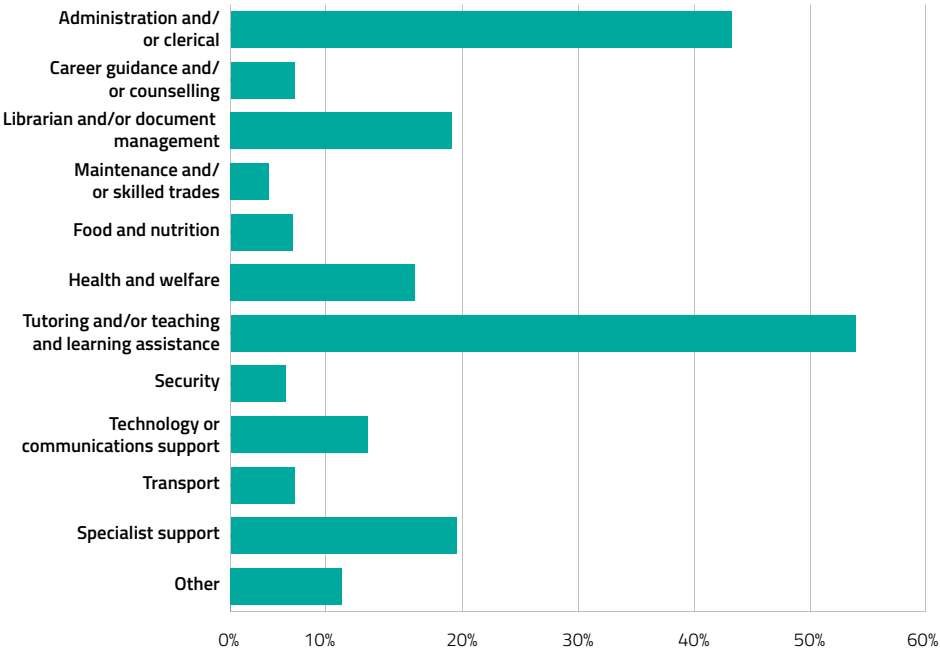


Figure 15: Roles taken by ESP in New Zealand

Employment conditions

Respondents in New Zealand were employed on a term-time only, part-time basis (n=507, 45%), a term-time only, full-time basis (n=305, 27%), a permanent, full-time basis (n=158, 14%), a permanent, part-time basis (n=120, 11%), a fixed term, part-time basis (n=24, 2%), a fixed term, full-time basis (n=19, 2%), or a casual basis (n=6, 1%) (see Figure 16). Sixty-nine ESP (6% of 1208) did not respond to this question.

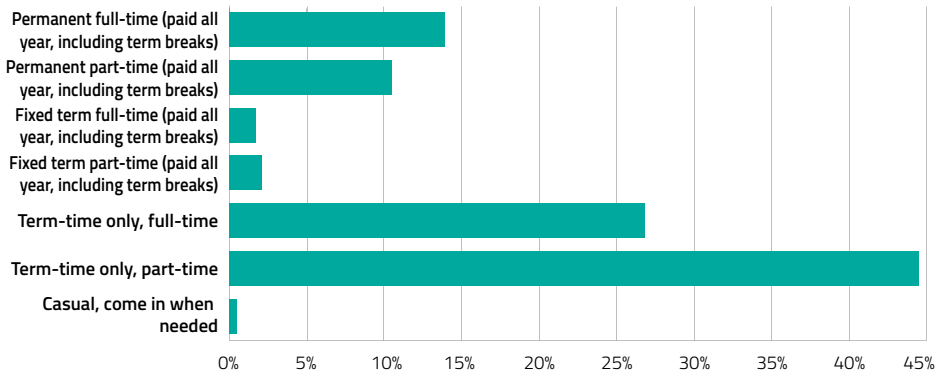


Figure 16: Employment tenure of ESP in New Zealand

In the New Zealand survey, additional questions were asked about the nature of the ESPs' employment agreements. Most (n=1,056, 95%) said that their job was covered by collective union agreement, though not all of them subscribed to this agreement. The majority (n=834, 73%) were employed under the collective union agreement, while 264 (23%) had an individual employment agreement, and 42 (4%) had no employment agreement. When asked if their employer had provided them with any additional formal documentation related to their employment, 823 (76%) had received a letter confirming their employment, and 486 (45%) had received a specific employment agreement related to their position.

Respondents earned NZD 20,000 (USD 13,500) or less before tax per year (n=377, 34%), or between NZD 20,001 and NZD 30,000 (USD 20,000) before tax per year (n=377, 34%), the two lowest income brackets available in the survey (see Figure 17). Most respondents earned a wage by the hour (n=984, 87%), rather than an annual salary (n=150, 13%). The majority of ESP were earning less than the average wage, and 34% were earning wages below the poverty line (of NZD 20,165) (see Appendix C).

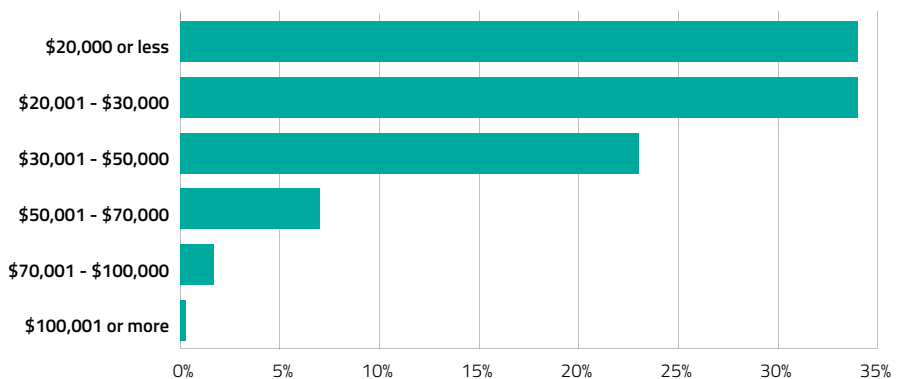


Figure 17: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in New Zealand

Commonly, respondents said they received sickness or health leave (83%), annual holiday pay (82%), employment injury or disability benefits under the country's Accident Compensation Corporation scheme (58%), access to employer-subsidised retirement savings (47%), and maternity, paternal, or parental benefits (30%) as part of their job (see Figure 18).

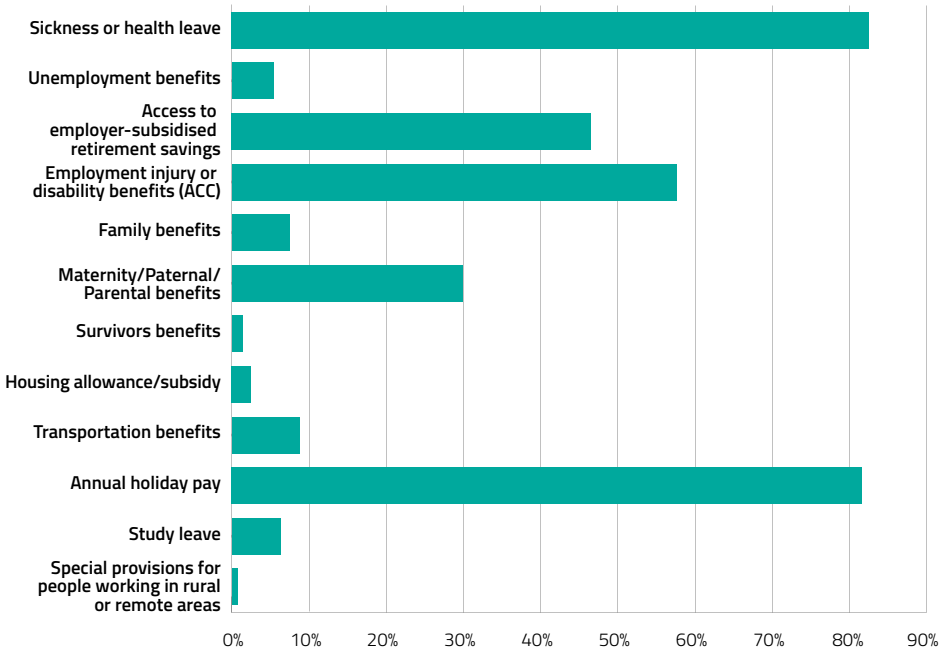


Figure 18: Employment benefits received by ESP in New Zealand

The Philippines

Characteristics of the ESP

Survey responses were received from 58 ESP in the Philippines. Of these, 32 were female (55%), 23 were male (40%), and three identified as gender diverse (5%).

The majority of the respondents were aged between 21 and 40 years (n=47, 81%). None were younger than 21 years or older than 60 years (see Figure 19).

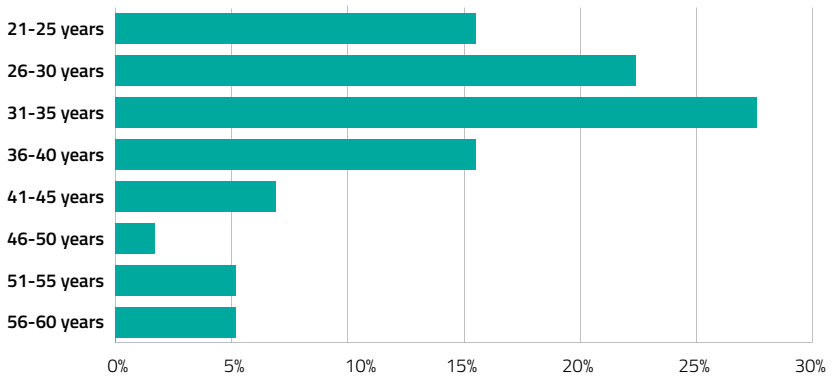


Figure 19: Age of ESP respondents from the Philippines

Workplace

Respondents in the Philippines were working in higher education (n=25, 43%), high school (n=17, 29%), or primary (n=16, 28%) settings. They were working in public (n=33, 57%) or private (n=25, 43%) schools.

All of the respondents were employed at one school (n=58, 100%), rather than working across several schools, and their schools were situated in a large urban city (n=58, 100%). The respondents were working in low (n=33, 57%), or medium (n=25, 43%) income areas.

Role

Compared to the other countries, only a few ESP job categories were represented in the Philippines survey. Responses were received from maintenance staff (n=18, 31%), administrators (n=15, 26%), security staff (n=13, 22%), transport staff (n=8, 14%), librarians (n=3, 5%), and health and welfare personnel (n=1, 2%) (see Figure 20).

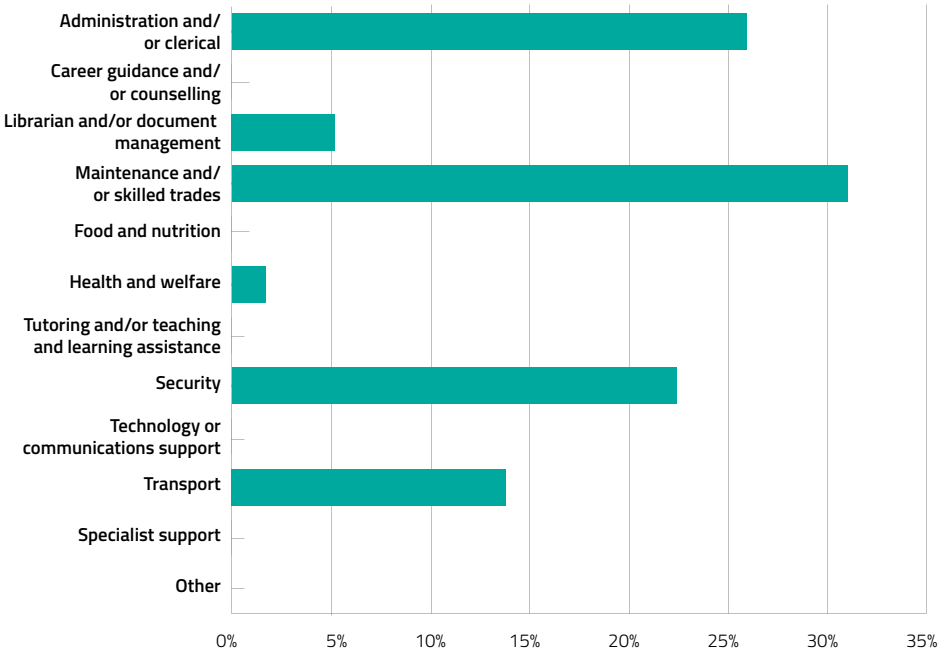


Figure 20: Roles taken by ESP in the Philippines

Employment conditions

Respondents in the Philippines were employed on a permanent, full-time basis (n=25, 43%), a fixed term, part-time basis (n=18, 31%), a casual basis (n=13, 22%), or a fixed term, full-time basis (n=2, 3%) (see Figure 21).

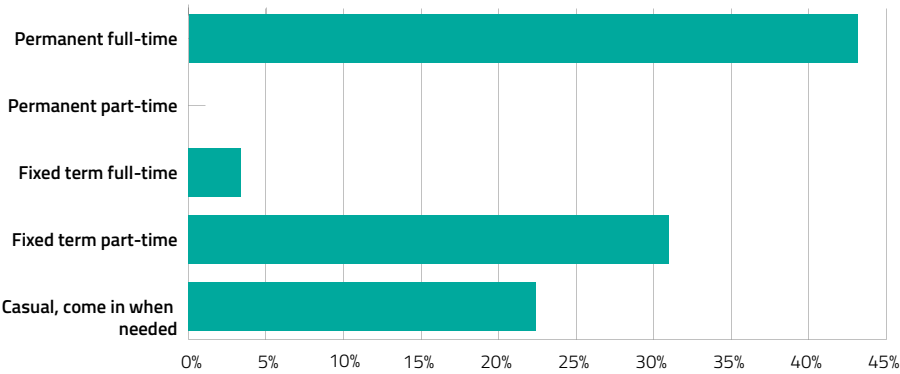


Figure 21: Employment tenure of ESP in the Philippines

Some respondents earned PHP 9,000 (USD 175) or less before tax per month (n=13, 22%), or between PHP 10,001 (USD 195) and PHP 11,000 (USD 215) before tax per month (n=16, 28%), amongst the lowest income brackets available in the survey. Some respondents earned more than PHP 15,001 (USD 290) per month (n=19, 33%), the highest bracket (see Figure 22). The Philippines was the only case study country to display this bi-modal income distribution for ESP. These figures approximate to the average wage in the Philippines (see Appendix C).

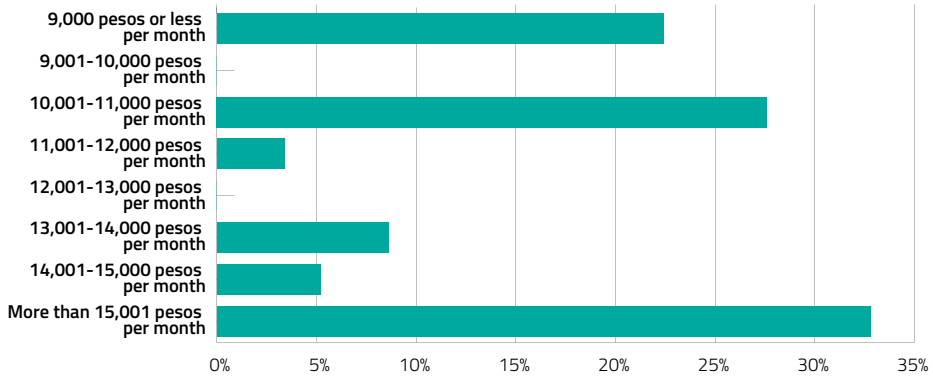


Figure 22: Monthly pay (before tax) of ESP in the Philippines

The most common employment benefit received by respondents was a pension scheme (n=53, 91%). Sickness or health benefits, employment injury benefits, family benefits, maternity/paternal/parental benefits, invalidity/disability benefits, and housing allowance/subsidies were further benefits enjoyed by 25 respondents (43%) (see Figure 23).

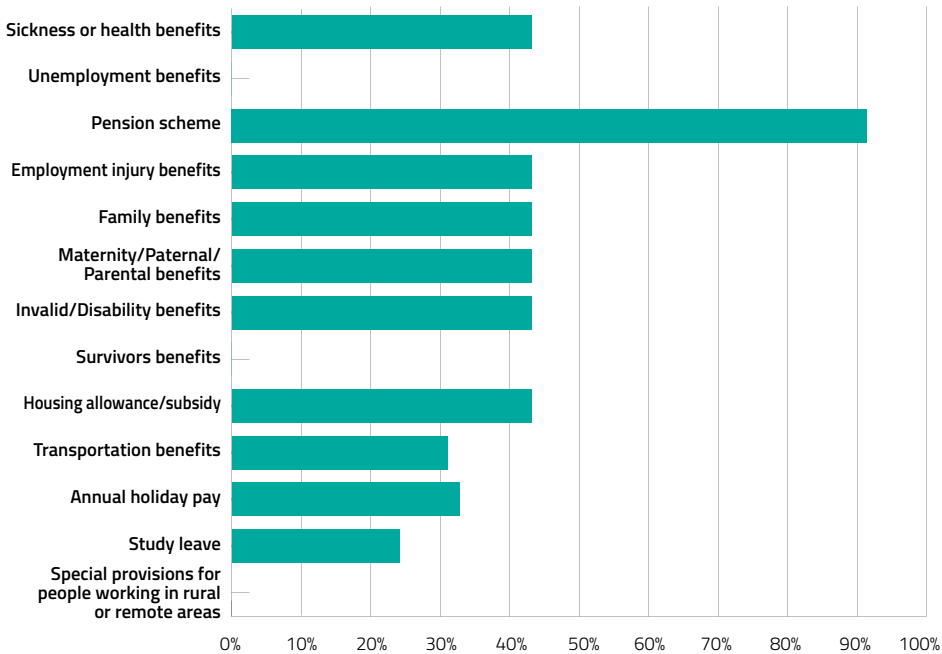


Figure 23: Employment benefits received by ESP in the Philippines

The United States of America

Characteristics of the ESP

In the United States of America, 75 responses to the ESP survey were received. This included responses from 65 female (90%) and 7 male (10%) respondents.

Most of the respondents were aged between 46 and 65 years (n=62, 83%). None were younger than 25 years, while two were 66 years or older (3%) (see Figure 24).

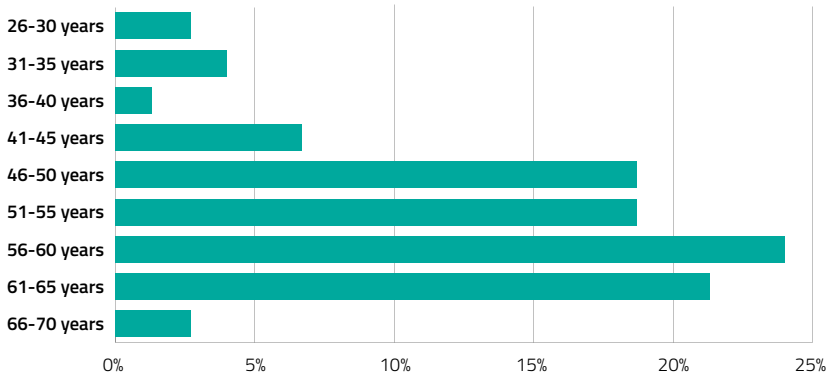


Figure 24: Age of ESP respondents from the United States of America

Workplace

Respondents in the United States of America were working in Pre-K to Grade 12 (n=71, 95%), or higher education (n=4, 5%) settings. All were working in public schools or institutions (n=74, 100%).

Respondents were employed by their school district (n=62, 84%), or at one school or institution (n=12, 16%). They were working in schools situated in suburban areas (n=35, 47%), small cities or towns (n=23, 31%), rural areas (n=12, 16%), or large urban cities (n=5, 7%).

A question about the socio-economic status of the employing institution was not asked in the US survey.

Role

The list of job categories used in the United States of America survey was slightly different to the other surveys, instead using the National Education Association ESP career categories. The majority of responses came from paraeducators (n=56, 76%), equivalent to the teaching and learning assistant category in the other surveys (see Figure 25).

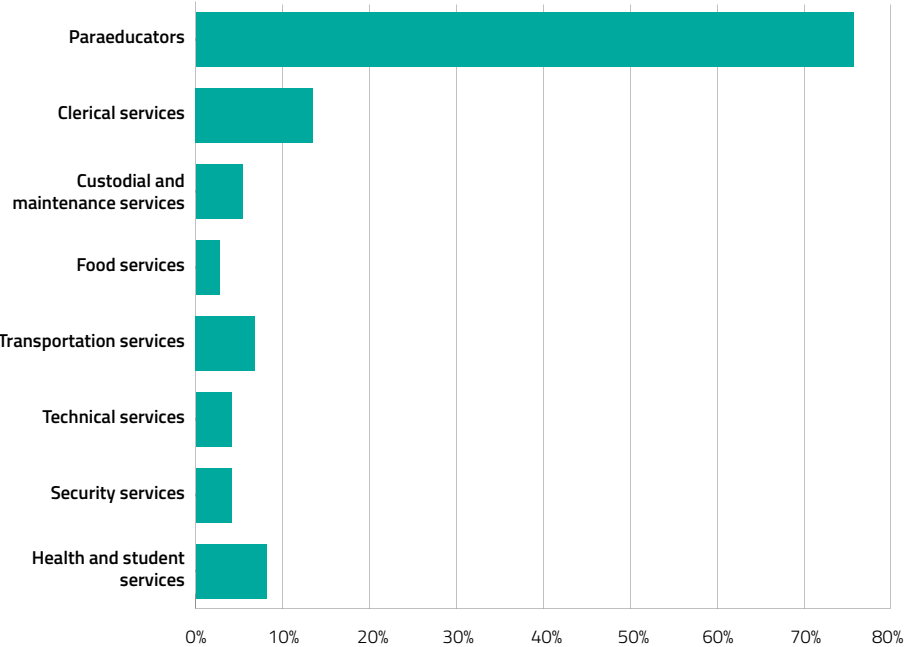


Figure 25: Roles taken by ESP in the United States of America

Employment conditions

Most respondents in the United States of America were employed full-time, on an hourly wage basis (n=37, 56%), or full-time, on an annual salary basis (n=19, 29%) (see Figure 26). Two ESP (3%) selected 'other' and indicated that they were employed full-time for the school year, and were not employed over the holiday period.

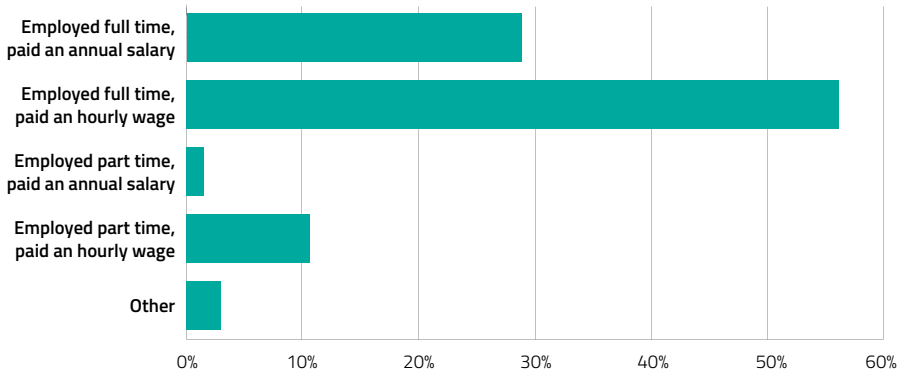


Figure 26: Employment tenure of ESP in the United States of America

Most respondents earned between USD 20,001 and USD 25,000 before tax per year (n=27, 36%), between USD 25,001 and USD 30,000 before tax per year (n=10, 13%), or between USD 30,001 and USD 40,000 before tax per year (n=13, 17%), the middle income brackets in the survey (see Figure 27). ESP in the United States of America were the only ESP surveyed who tended to earn incomes in the middle of the available income categories, though as only 75 ESP responded to the survey, these figures need to be treated with caution. The majority of the ESP were earning less than the average wage of USD 47,000. Ten ESP indicated that they were earning wages below the poverty line (less than USD 16,000) (see Appendix C).

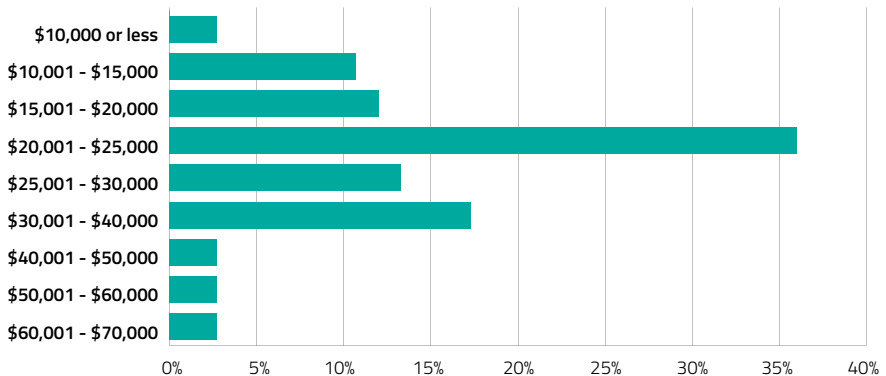


Figure 27: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in the United States of America

The most frequent employment benefits reported by respondents were a pension (93%), sick leave (93%), health insurance (89%), and worker's compensation injury benefits (82%) (see Figure 28).

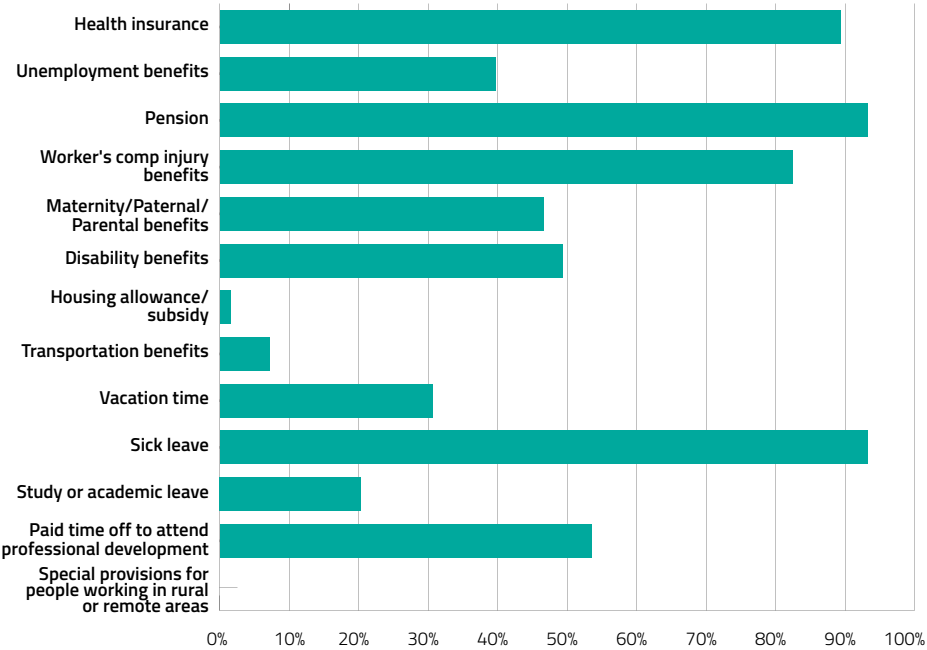


Figure 28: Employment benefits received by ESP in the United States of America

Zimbabwe

Characteristics of the ESP

In Zimbabwe, 71 ESP responded to the survey. Of these, 28 were female (42%) and 39 were male (58%). Four ESP did not provide their gender.

The majority of the respondents were aged between 36 and 50 years (n=43, 65%). None were younger than 26 years, and none were older than 65 years (see Figure 29).

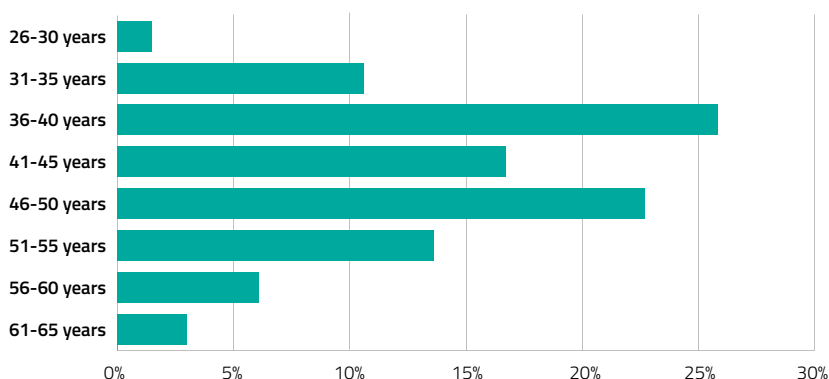


Figure 29: Age of ESP respondents from Zimbabwe

Workplace

Respondents in Zimbabwe were working in high school (n=62, 86%), primary (n=10, 14%), higher education (n=6, 9%), technical and vocational education and training (n=2, 3%), or early childhood (n=2, 3%) settings. Respondents could select more than one setting, to cover the complexities of their work sites.

Most respondents were working in non-government schools run by a church (n=58, 82%), and were employed at one school (n=68, 99%).

Respondents were working in schools situated in rural areas (n=52, 78%), large urban cities (n=10, 15%), or small cities or towns (n=5, 8%). They were working in high SES schools (n=31, 52%), medium SES schools (n=24, 40%), or low SES schools (n=5, 8%).

Role

The majority of the responses to the survey in Zimbabwe came from food and nutrition staff (n=21, 30%) and maintenance staff (n=17, 24%). Fourteen ESP (20%) selected 'other' to express the complexity of their roles (see Figure 30).

The open-ended responses indicate that most of these ESP were involved in supporting students living in boarding schools: they were boarding masters or matrons and hostel cleaners.

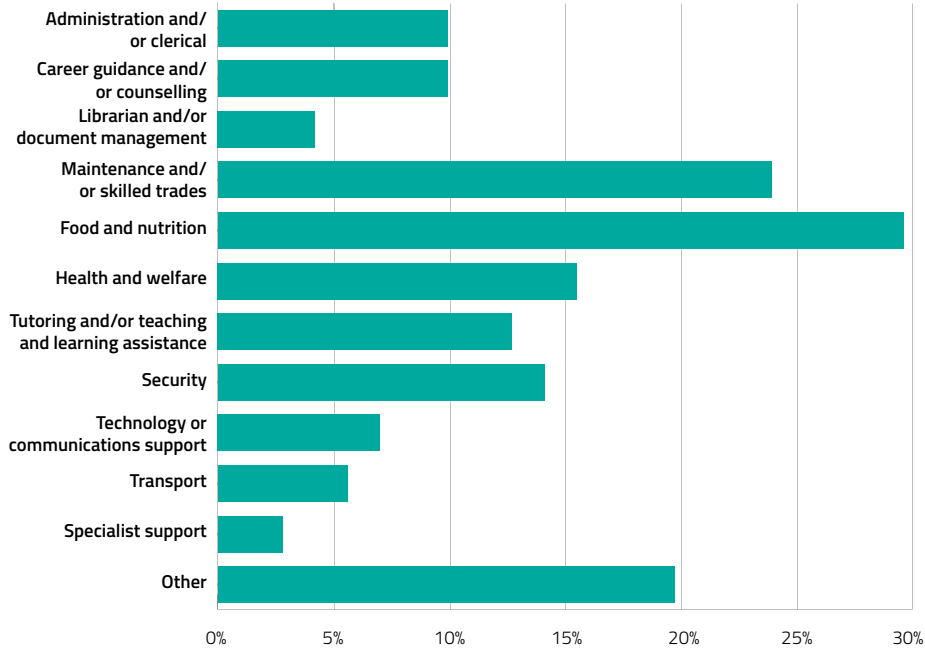


Figure 30: Roles taken by ESP in Zimbabwe

Employment conditions

Respondents in Zimbabwe were employed on a permanent, full-time basis (n=58, 97%), or a fixed term, full-time basis (n=2, 3%) (see Figure 31). Eleven ESP (16% of 71) did not respond to this question.

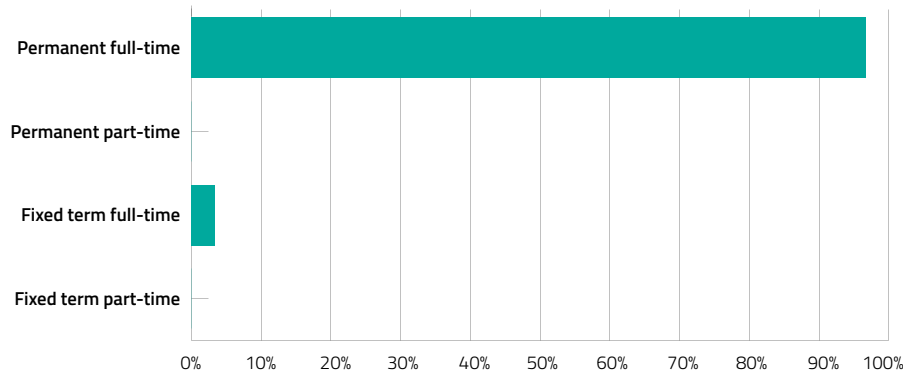


Figure 31: Employment tenure of ESP in Zimbabwe

Most respondents earned USD 3,000 or less before tax per year (n=14, 23%), between USD 3,001 and USD 4,000 before tax per year (n=18, 30%), or between USD 4,001 and USD 5,000 before tax per year (n=15, 25%), the three lowest income brackets available in the survey. A further nine respondents (15%) earned between USD 5,001 and USD 6,000 before tax per year (see Figure 32). All of the ESP were earning less than the average wage for Zimbabwe (USD 9,000) (see Appendix C).

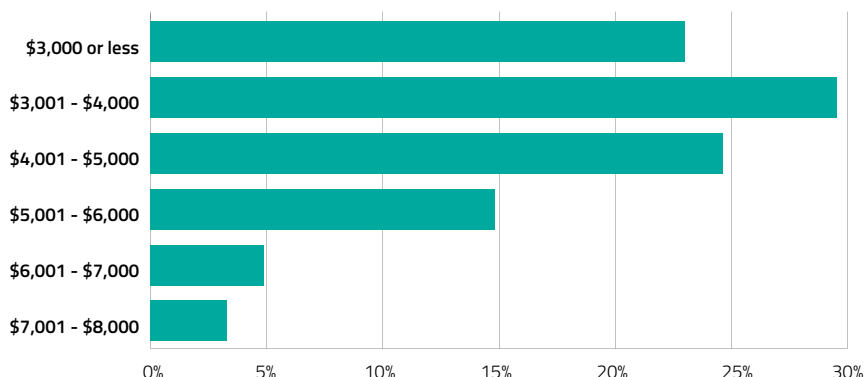


Figure 32: Annual pay (before tax) of ESP in Zimbabwe

Commonly, respondents said they received a housing allowance or subsidy (73%), transportation benefits (64%), or a pension scheme (61%), and sickness or health benefits (40%) as part of their job (see Figure 33).

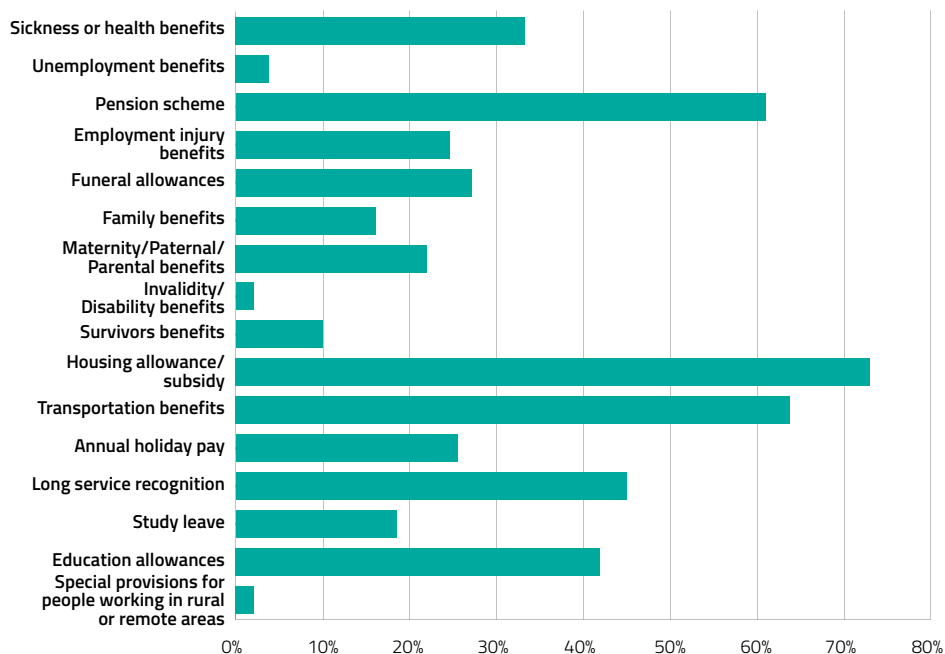


Figure 33: Employment benefits received by ESP in Zimbabwe

Nationality

All of the surveys except the USA survey asked a question about the nationality of the respondents. Most of the ESP were citizens of the countries in which they were working. New Zealand had a higher incidence of people from other countries working as ESP (12%) than the other case study countries, followed by France (4%) and Canada (3%) (see Figure 34).

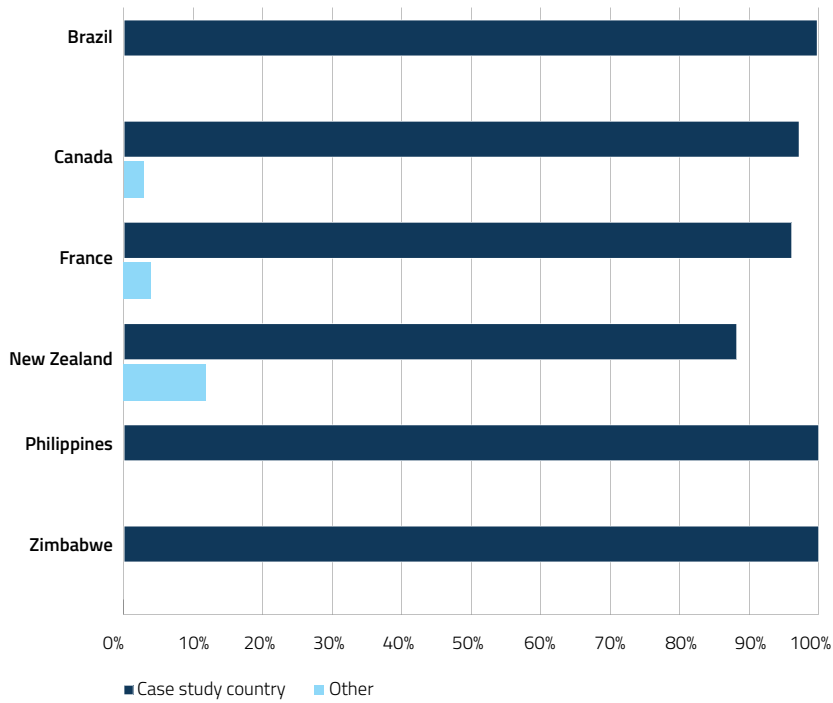


Figure 34: Nationality of ESP survey respondents, across the case study countries

Academic qualifications

The ESP survey asked respondents in each country to describe their highest level of academic qualification. In Brazil, 37 (6%) had no or only elementary school qualifications, 236 (41%) had completed a high school qualification, 225 (39%) had a higher education qualification, and 81 (14%) had a postgraduate qualification.

In Quebec, Canada, 11 (1%) had no qualifications, 178 (21%) had completed a high school qualification, 635 (76%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification, and 16 (2%) had a postgraduate qualification.

In France, 1 (1%) had no qualifications, 38 (30%) had completed a high school qualification, and 89 (70%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification.

In New Zealand, 97 (8%) had no qualifications, 351 (30%) had completed a high school qualification, 667 (57%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification, and 63 (5%) had a postgraduate qualification.

In the Philippines, 23 (40%) had some school qualifications, 10 (17%) had completed a high school qualification, 21 (36%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification, and 4 (7%) had a postgraduate qualification.

In the United States of America, 21 (29%) had completed a high school qualification, 47 (65%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification, and 4 (6%) had a postgraduate qualification.

In Zimbabwe, 11 (18%) had no qualifications, 27 (43%) had completed a high school qualification, and 25 (40%) had a post-secondary or degree-level qualification.

In addition, the respondents were asked whether their current education support role was related to their academic qualifications. In Brazil, Canada and the Philippines, the ESP were more likely than not to be working in a job related to their qualifications. In France and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand, ESP were more likely to be working in a job unrelated to their qualifications (see Figure 35).

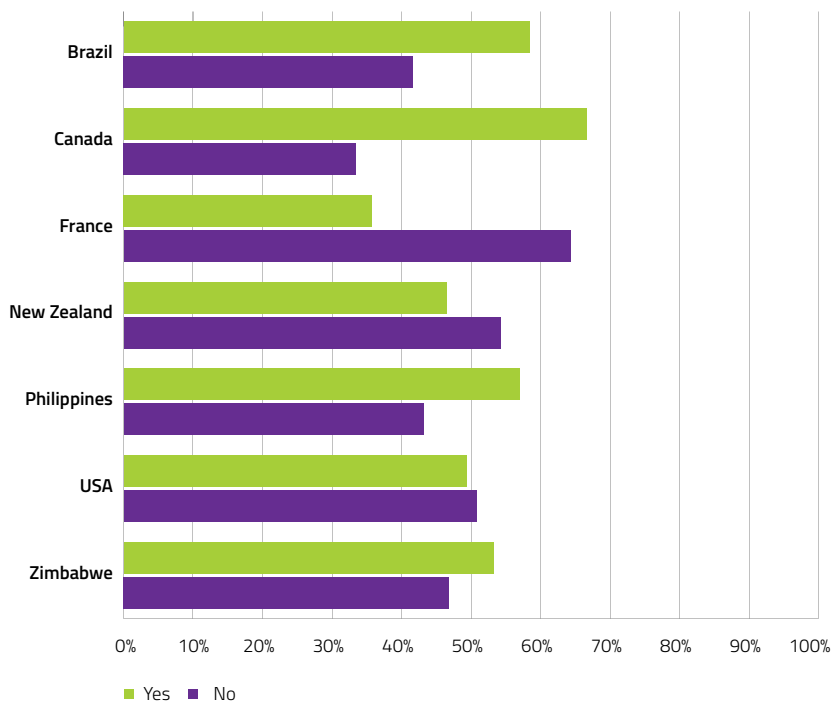


Figure 35: Academic qualification related to ESP role, across the case study countries

Employment and Working Conditions of ESP

Experience as an ESP

The ESP surveys asked questions about how long the respondents had been in their current role, and how long they had been working as an ESP overall. In every country, the majority of respondents were currently working in their first and only ESP job. This trend was particularly apparent in Zimbabwe and Brazil, where 82% (in Zimbabwe) and 81% (in Brazil) were working in their only ESP job (see Figure 36).

As the survey data from the Philippines was provided in an aggregated form, a comparison between years of experience in the current ESP role, and years of experience as an ESP overall, was not possible.

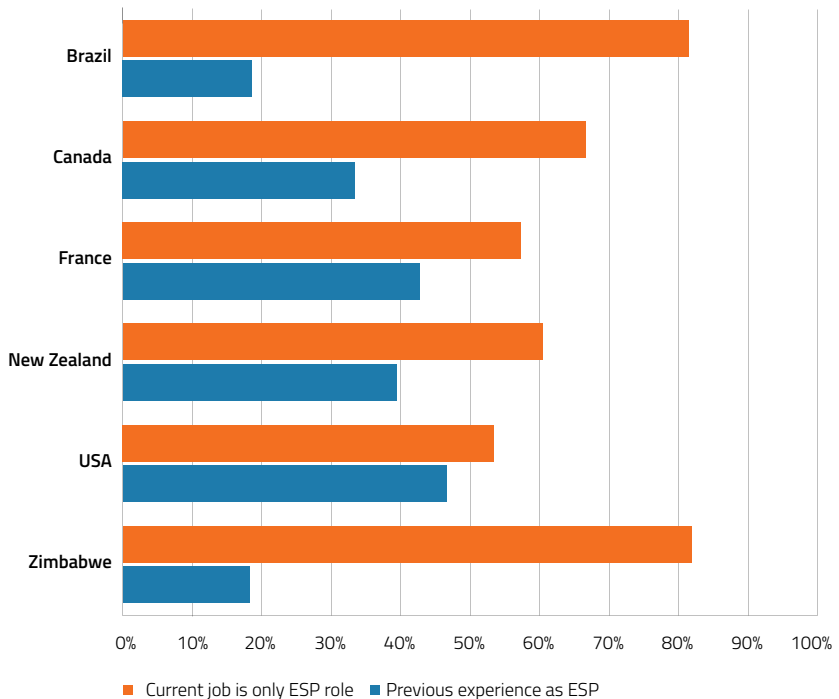


Figure 36: Experience as an ESP, across the case study countries

Employment agreement or contract

The ESP were asked whether or not they had an employment agreement with their employer. In most countries, the majority of ESP had an agreement. This was especially true for New Zealand (96%), Quebec, Canada (90%), the United States of America (85%), France (84%), Zimbabwe (80%), and the Philippines (78%). In Brazil, the responses were more evenly split, with 57% of ESP saying they had an agreement, and 43% saying they did not (see Figure 37).

The New Zealand survey had more nuance in its question. ESP were asked whether they had a collective union agreement (73% said 'yes') or an individual agreement with their employer (23% said 'yes'). Together, these responses combined to show that 93% were working under an employment agreement.

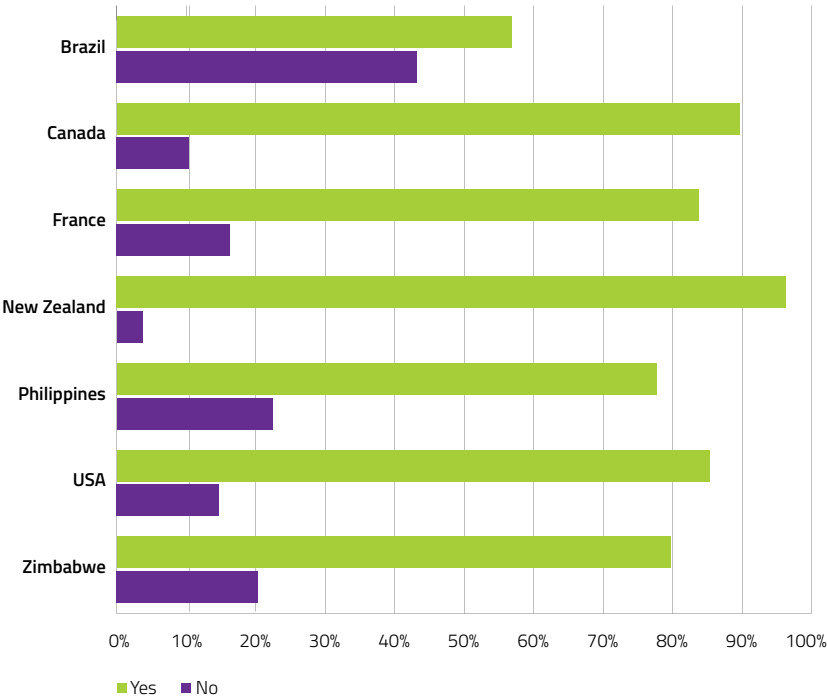


Figure 37: Employment agreement status, across the case study countries

Job description

The ESP were asked whether they had a job description for their position. In most countries, between 70% and 85% of respondents had a job description. In the Philippines, more respondents did not have a job description (48%) than did (43%) (see Figure 38).

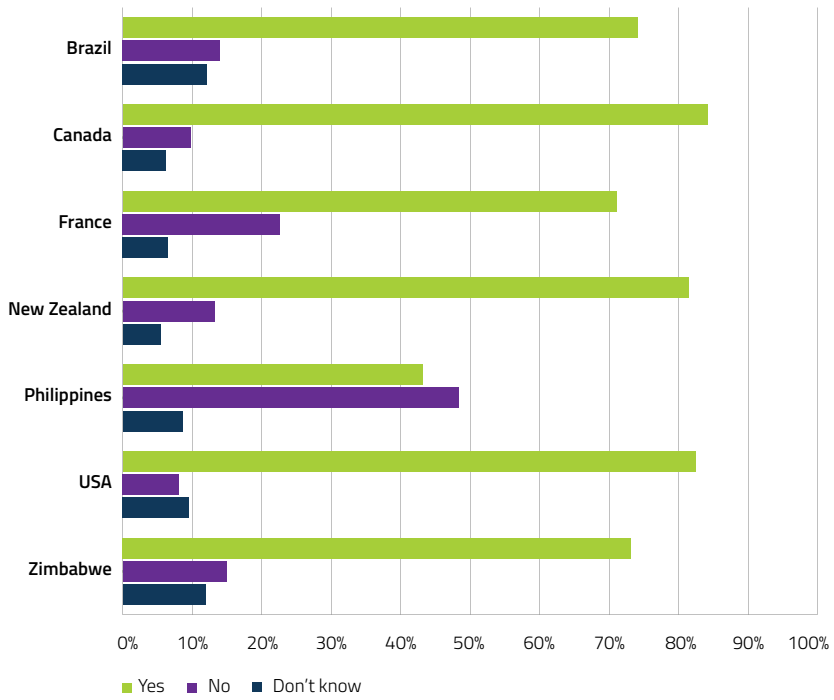


Figure 38: Job description status, across the case study countries

The respondents were also asked whether their job descriptions were updated regularly. In three countries, the majority of ESP indicated that they were: the Philippines (85%), New Zealand (63%), and Brazil (62%). In three countries, the majority of ESP indicated that their job descriptions were not updated regularly: the United States of America (79%), Canada (72%), and France (63%). In Zimbabwe, about half of the ESP said their job descriptions were updated regularly (51%), and half said they were not (49%) (see Figure 39).

Again, the question in the New Zealand survey was more nuanced. Of the 1,012 ESP who responded to the question, 40% said their job description was updated annually, 37% said it was not updated, 16% said it was updated as and when their job changed, 4% said it was updated every two years, and 4% said it was updated more than once a year.

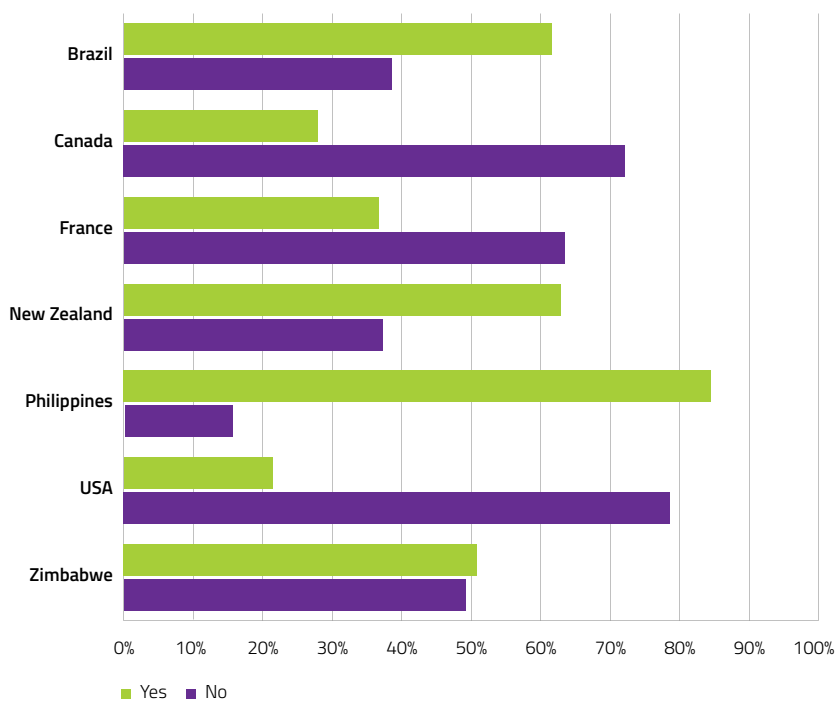


Figure 39: Job description updated regularly, across the case study countries

Pay

In addition to questions about the pay range for ESP, reported earlier for each country, the ESP were also asked whether they felt they were paid fairly for the work they do. In every country, more respondents felt they were not fairly paid. In the Philippines and Canada, a reasonable number of ESP felt they were fairly paid: 26 (45%) in the Philippines, and 316 (39%) in Quebec, Canada (see Figure 40). The Philippines was the only country where ESP reported that they were paid wages that approximated the average wage for the country. The ESP survey for Canada did not collect information about specific pay rates. ESP in other countries were paid at a lower rate than the average wage, and in some cases were paid wages close to their country's poverty line (see Appendix C).

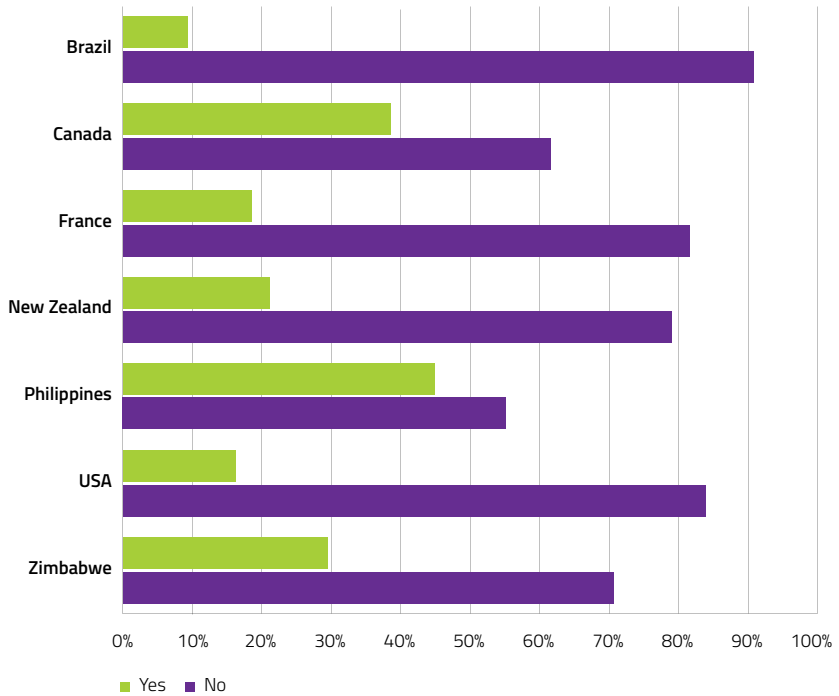


Figure 40: Sense of fair pay, across the case study countries

Job security

When asked about their sense of job security, responses from the ESP were mixed. In three countries, more ESP felt secure in their jobs than ESP who did not: in the United States of America 68% felt secure, in Canada 60% felt secure, and in New Zealand 55% felt secure. In two countries, more ESP felt insecure: France (64%) and the Philippines (60%). In Brazil and Zimbabwe, responses from the ESP were fairly evenly split between feeling secure and insecure in their jobs (see Figure 41).

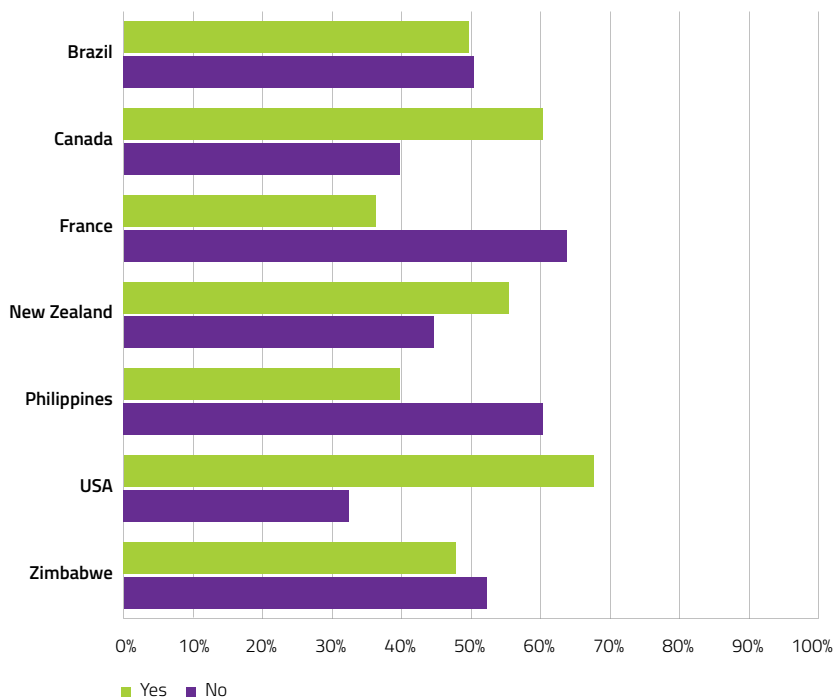


Figure 41: Sense of job security, across the case study countries

When ESP said they felt secure in their jobs, this was because their job was permanent, they had a strong employment agreement, or because they held a senior or indispensable position:

Yes, because I am a permanent public employee, hired through a public exam. (Brazil #193, Administrator4)

I have seniority, and my collective agreement protects me. If it were not for these two things – no I would not feel as though my job was secure. (Canada #409, Administrator)

I have been at the school for 18 years. As a permanent employee I am secure in my role. (NZ #375, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I am the only admin person here so there is no fear of restructure as in my last position at a different school. (NZ #802, Administrator)

I have seniority and it would take cutting Support Staff entirely for me to lose my position. (USA #8, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

4 For each quote, the ESP’s primary role has been identified, based on the Education International job categories.

I feel that my job is secure because I have a permanent contract with the institute. (Zimbabwe #58, Maintenance)

Some ESP felt their jobs were very precarious, because they were in non-permanent positions, they were only employed during term-time, they felt at the mercy of changing government policy, or because their roles were dependent on funding or student numbers:

Yes, because it was a public hiring process. No, because today they are trying to privatize. (Brazil #54, Maintenance)

Our jobs are precarious. We know a few weeks in advance what position we will occupy for the school year. Each year, the number of positions decreases, despite the fact that the needs increase. (Canada #268, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

At the end of every year, I have to reapply and then I don't know until a couple days before the new school year begins. (Canada #711, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

If the budget is restricted, the psychologist positions may be reduced in the institution where I work. (France #71, Specialist)

Year to year contracts, but really stressful not knowing if I will have a job after the summer break. (NZ #2, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

My hours are dependent on number of funded pupils attending the school. While this year we were made permanent, the hours can vary. With no pay over holidays, low hours per week would make staying uneconomic. (NZ #397, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

My principal once said to me that she can replace me if I am not happy with what they pay me. That made me feel very un-secure and undervalued. (NZ #744, Administrator)

Being a teacher aide, you never know when your hours will change or whether you have a job. As we are paid out of the school's operational grant, cost cuts may mean the support staff have to be let go. (NZ #1059, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The threat of outsourcing is a constant. The school boards need to realize that the care a local employee has for their students cannot be matched by someone just wanting any job. (USA #1, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

No because most of the time I work over time, the hours are not paid. I do not get paid during the holidays but during the term I work many hours. (Zimbabwe #46, Health and Welfare)

Respect for ESP role

Respect from teachers

The ESP were asked a series of questions about how respected they felt in their roles. In most countries, the majority of ESP felt respected by teachers. However, 48% of ESP in Zimbabwe and 38% of ESP in France felt they were not respected (see Figure 42).

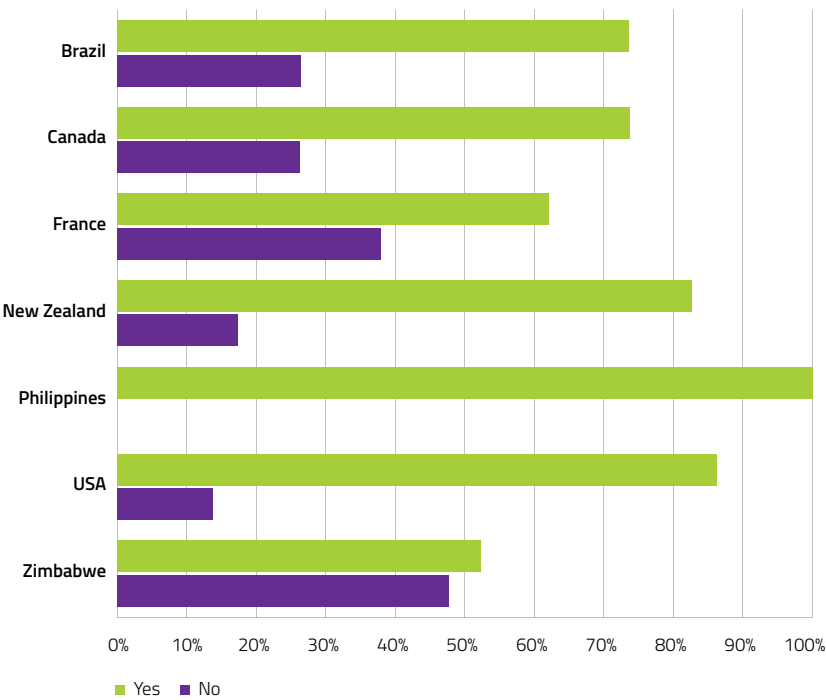


Figure 42: Sense of respect from teachers, across the case study countries

A lot of the open-ended comments on the extent of respect received from teachers focused on lack of respect and lack of knowledge about the role that ESP play in a school. Many ESP felt undervalued by teachers, and as if they were 'ghosts' whose presence and work was invisible.

People in general have no idea how important each job is for the functioning of the school. (Brazil #5, Food and Nutrition)

In the minds of many teachers, the work of the support staff is not as important as their role in the classroom. In my understanding, all actions that take place within the school space should be educational practices and all activities should have the same importance. (Brazil #293, Librarian)

We are the ghosts of the school units, we do not go to meetings and we do not know anything at school. (Brazil #522, Security)

It's as if we are ghosts. (Canada #172, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Not always, some treat us from high because they are "teachers" and we, only support. (Canada #289, Administrator)

Teachers often take us down, we are only supervisors for them, they do not realize the workload that we perform, especially for such a low salary. (France #4, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Teachers are largely unaware of our level of hiring, our qualifications, and feel that we are in junior positions. (France #115, Administrator)

It's a lot better than it was but there's still an 'us and them' feeling and there are still teachers who think that all support staff are there to meet a teacher's every need regardless of job responsibilities. (NZ #225, Administrator)

Teachers seem unaware of our roles and/or the necessity for them. They don't even realise we are only paid during term time. (NZ #740, Administrator)

I don't want to be treated as their go-for person. I am there to work with students. I want them to listen when I have an idea to help the students learn or what their limits are. (USA #2, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

It depends who you work with. We have some teachers that don't want a Para but still have to have one. We don't get respect from those teachers. (USA #34, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Teachers take themselves as highly educated and see us as the peasant with no respect. They can just decide to send you to where ever they want. (Zimbabwe #22, Maintenance)

Teachers don't recognise that some of the members of the auxiliary staff have passed [their qualifications] better than them. They regard themselves as professionals. (Zimbabwe #65, Maintenance)

Respect from leaders

Across the seven countries, between 60% and 85% of ESP felt they were respected by the leaders of their schools or institutions. Again, 39% of ESP in Zimbabwe and 39% of ESP in France felt they were not respected (see Figure 43).

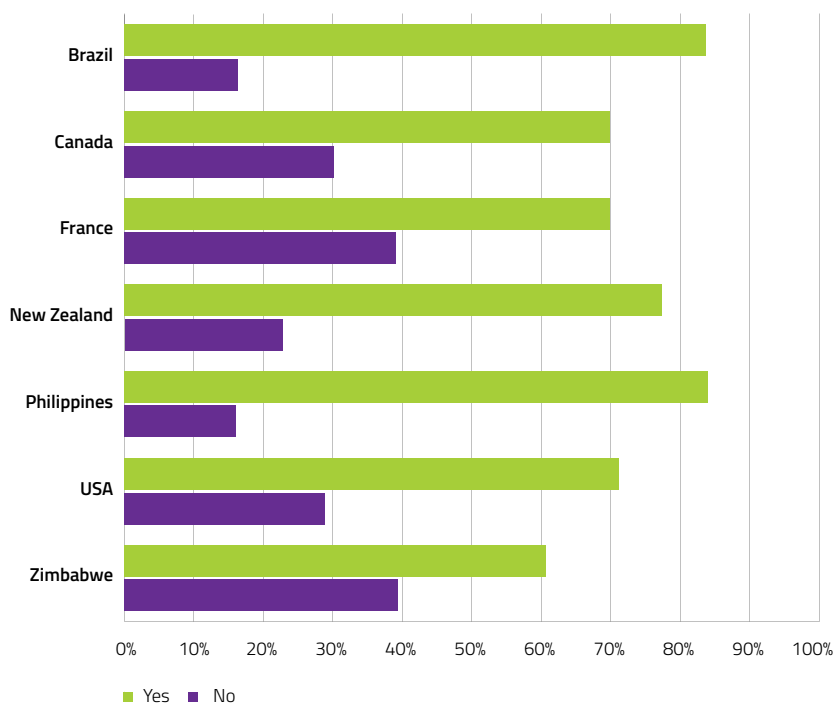


Figure 43: Sense of respect from school or institution leaders, across the case study countries

ESP felt that their school leaders or management teams were largely unaware of their work in the school. ESP felt excluded from school-level conversations and decision-making. In some cases, the ESP had received expressions of appreciation, but this did not translate into improved pay or conditions.

There is little dialogue, and they demand a lot without offering the conditions for us to feasibly accomplish the tasks. There is a certain brutality. (Brazil #407, Maintenance)

Usually we are not part of school decisions, but we are the most affected by them. (Brazil #495, Administrator)

The school leader does not respect the employees in the school. Employees are simply a warm body to fill the seat. The leader goes as far as to manipulate situations and other employees to cause tension, stress and issues amongst the staff. (Canada #409, Administrator)

No respect on the part of the director and his assistant. We even wonder if they know what I'm doing. (France #18, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

We have a number of violent children in our school that hurt support staff on a daily basis yet nothing is done about it. We feel vulnerable and unsupported. (NZ #326, Librarian)

Thanked often for the work we do but don't see any evidence of them backing equal pay claims or advocating for change in funding for teacher aides. (NZ #473, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

While management appears to value what we, as support staff, do in the school, I don't think they realise quite how much of our own time/money we put into helping our students. (NZ #643, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

They don't understand or even know what a lot of paraeducators have to do on a daily basis. (USA #40, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Many years ago our principal made a consistent effort to include paras in meetings and reinforce our position as important members of the team. His wife was a para, so that helped him to understand. That effort made a big difference in our school. (USA #64, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

They do not keep us updated on school programs or day to day changes. (Zimbabwe #20, Security)

Respect from students

In most countries, more than 80% of ESP felt they were respected by students. In the Philippines, 67% felt respected, and 33% felt they were not respected by students (see Figure 44).

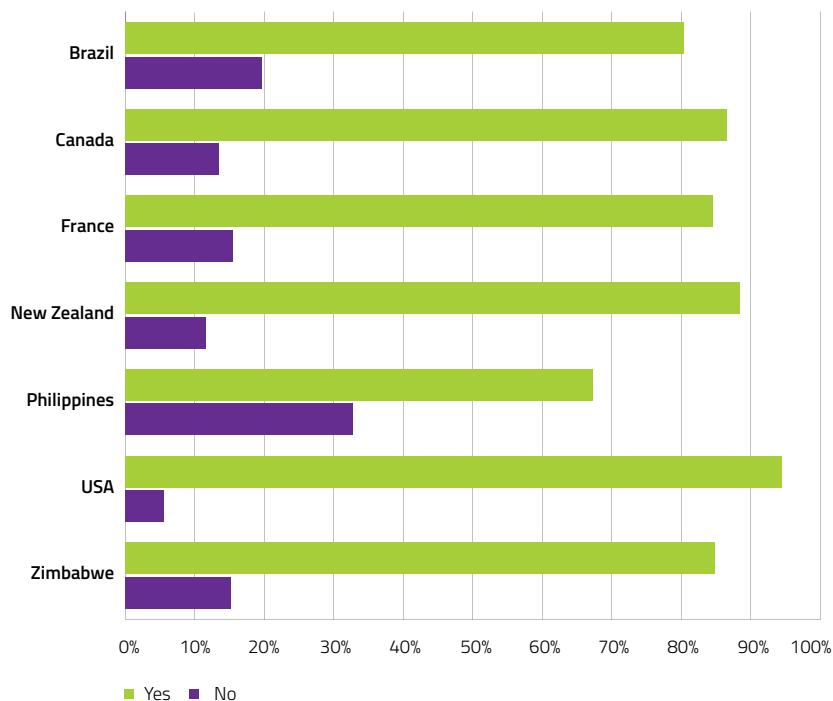


Figure 44: Sense of respect from students, across the case study countries

The comments that ESP made about their relationships with students were mostly positive. For some, the students were the highlight of their working day and the reason they were doing the job. Others found that the respect they received from students varied according to how closely they worked with the students.

The students are people that we learn to deal with on a daily basis, so most of them respect me. (Brazil #147, Security)

Personally, this is the most motivating part of my work: interacting with students, the bond of affection with them, friendship, respect, exchange of experiences. In other words, the human side of education. (Brazil #256, Administrator)

The most beautiful thing that holds us to this profession is the students who appreciate us and clearly demonstrate it to us. This is our best pay. (Canada #208, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

When a student requests to work with you, you know you are making a difference, and they say thanks. (Canada #514, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Excellent rapport with my students. A lot of respect and consideration for them and vice versa! (France #5, Administrator)

I am lucky to be in an establishment where students are polite, and respectful of us and of our function. They are certainly the ones who best recognize the work done with them. (France #114, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I have a great relationship with the students both in the classroom and one-on-one. I also have students come to me for support when overwhelmed or needing someone to talk to. (NZ #262, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The children I work with respect me and know that I'm there to help them. They love working with me and experiencing success. They are often too afraid to ask for help in the classroom as they don't want to show themselves up in front of the other students. (NZ #445, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I have an incredible rapport with my students, they trust me to do my job correctly, I guide, nurture and support through the end of their schooling towards the next phase in their life. This is crucial in their eyes and my students continue to contact me after leaving school to update me on their next educational steps, and their steps towards and within their careers. (NZ #739, Counsellor)

Yes, as long as the teacher respects you. Students get the tone from the teacher as a general rule. If the teacher won't support you or talks down to you in front of students then it affects how the students treat you also. (NZ #1106, Administrator)

It is clear the high school students who have paraeducators working with them or in their classes appreciate us very much and do respect us. The rest of the students do not know we exist. (USA #56, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

They respect my role I play in assisting them and they achieve the best in their projects. We share challenges and lobby for a way forward. (Zimbabwe #24, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Respect from parents

In six of the seven countries, more than 80% of ESP felt they were respected by parents. In the Philippines, 57% felt they were respected, and 43% felt they were not respected by parents (see Figure 45).

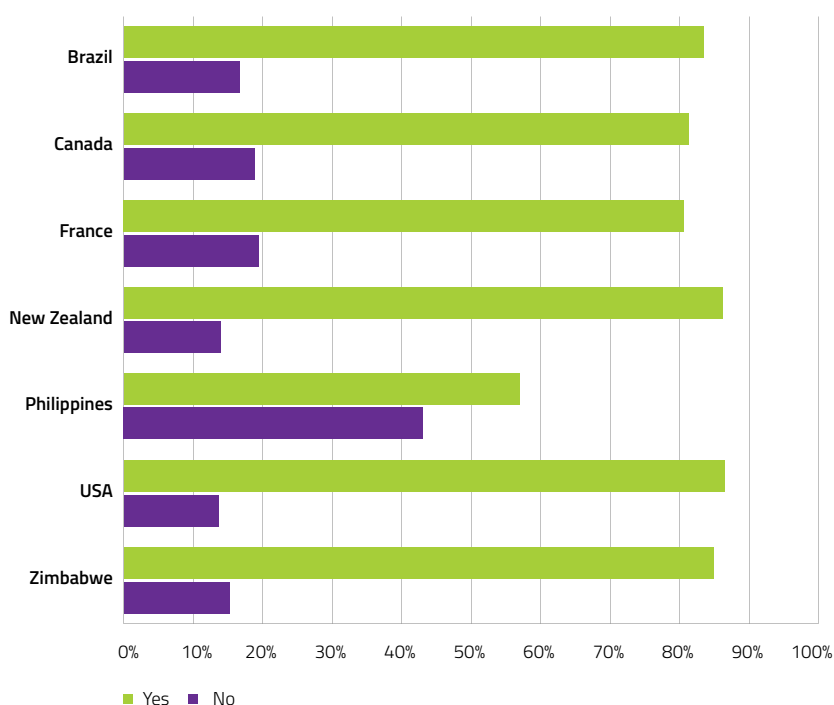


Figure 45: Sense of respect from parents, across the case study countries

Many comments about respect from parents were quite negative. Many ESP felt that they were treated as ‘servants’ or ‘babysitters’ by parents, and that their work was not valued. When parents understood the role played by ESP, the relationship was much more positive.

Parents do not respect us either. Anyone who helps clean the school and cook is never regarded with respect. (Brazil #105, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

They think we have an obligation to serve them how and when they want us to. They do not understand that we have deadlines and procedures that need to be fulfilled. (Brazil #288, Administrator)

Most parents think that we are their children’s maids. They do not see us as part of their education. (Brazil #422, Maintenance)

We are unfortunately all too often seen as babysitters and yet we are trained as educators. (Canada #253, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

But not by all parents unfortunately. We have less and less support from them. (Canada #786, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Some parents behave like consumers but on the whole they respect the work. (France #72, Administrator)

When I have worked with parents, there have only been a few times where they have shown no respect. Most parents show great appreciation, usually more so than the Management. I often get the comment that “I couldn’t do your job”. (NZ #97, Administrator)

I talk with parents and they often thank me for what I have achieved with their child. They see the difference I make especially in the confidence area. I can relate to these children and they feel like they can trust me. I love my job as I know that I am changing kids’ lives. (NZ #445, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Sometimes in my job I feel that parents take me for granted and do not see all of the behind-the-scenes things I do. (NZ #794, Administrator)

Depends on the family. We have some who are wonderful, and some who blame us for everything and who we can never seem to make happy. (USA #63, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Parents respect us as workers. They are also willing to give food hampers for our poor pay, but the management stopped [this practice]. (Zimbabwe #22, Maintenance)

Some parents respect us, but a number of them are told bad things about workers by the bosses of our school. (Zimbabwe #30, Administrator)

Status of ESP role

The ESP were asked what status they felt their society accorded Educational Support Personnel. In most countries, the ESP felt their status was ‘average’ to ‘low’. In the Philippines, 40% felt their status was ‘very low’, and 29% felt their status was ‘very high’ (see Figure 46).

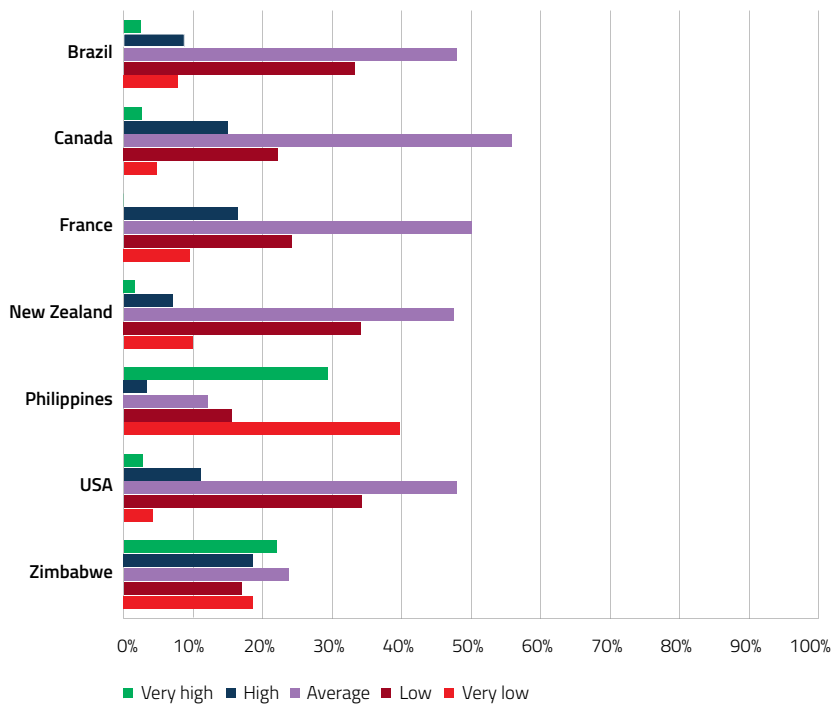


Figure 46: Sense of status of Education Support Personnel, across the case study countries

Independence of the ESP role

The ESP were asked whether they had some independence or autonomy in their role, or whether they were told what to do. In most countries, more than 80% of ESP felt they had some independence. In Zimbabwe, 69% of ESP felt they had some independence (see Figure 47).

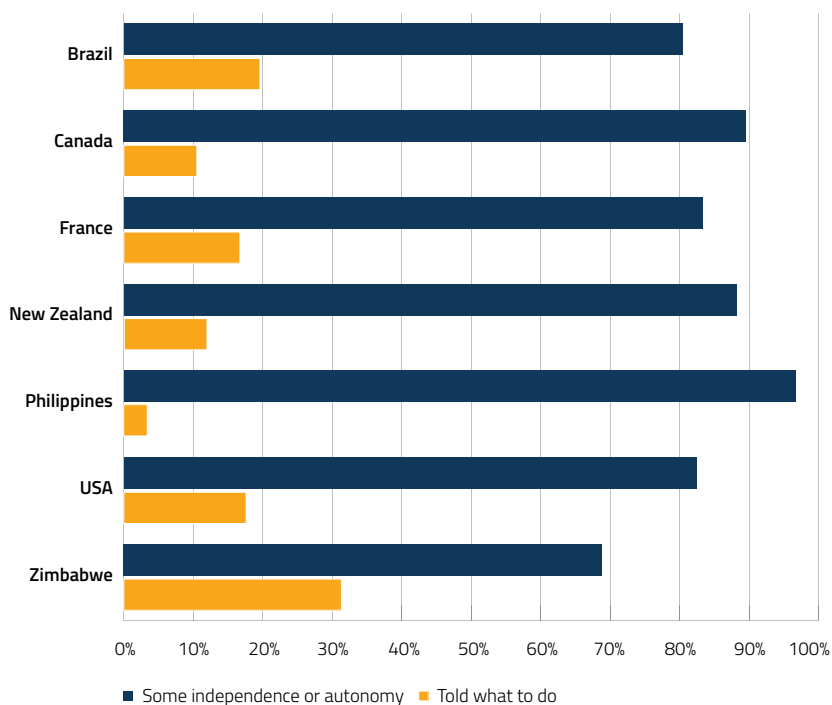


Figure 47: Sense of autonomy in ESP role, across the case study countries

However, when asked whether they had the opportunity to participate in decision-making in their school or institution, fewer ESP said 'yes'. Only in the Philippines (90%) and the United States of America (72%) did a clear majority participate in decision-making (see Figure 48).

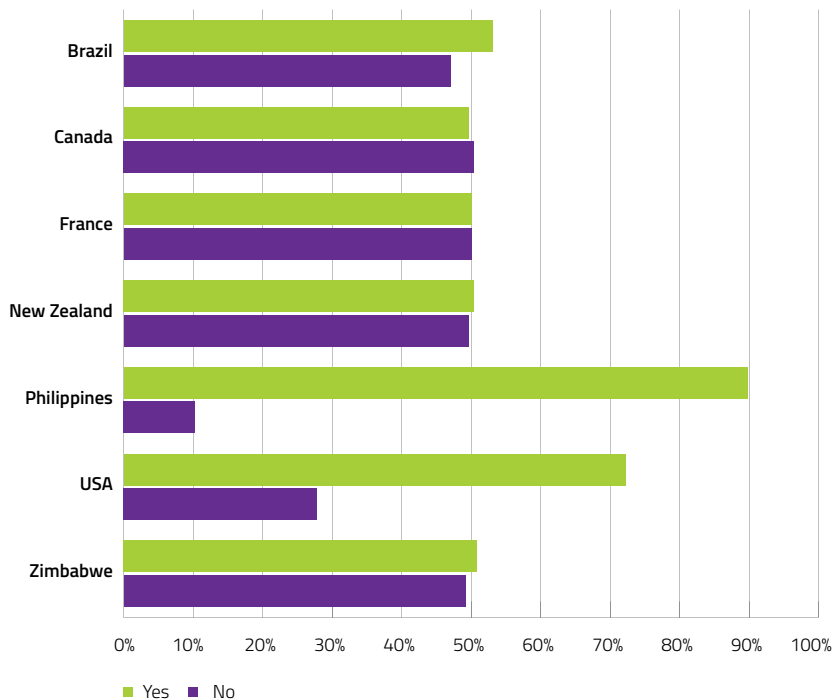


Figure 48: Ability to participate in decision-making, across the case study countries

Workplace culture

ESP were asked whether they had ever felt discriminated against in their workplace, because of gender, race or ethnicity, or religion. In four countries, most ESP had not experienced discrimination: Canada (94%), New Zealand (91%), Brazil (87%), and France (86%). More ESP had been discriminated against in the Philippines (53%) and Zimbabwe (38%) (see Figure 49). This question was not asked in the survey for the United States of America.

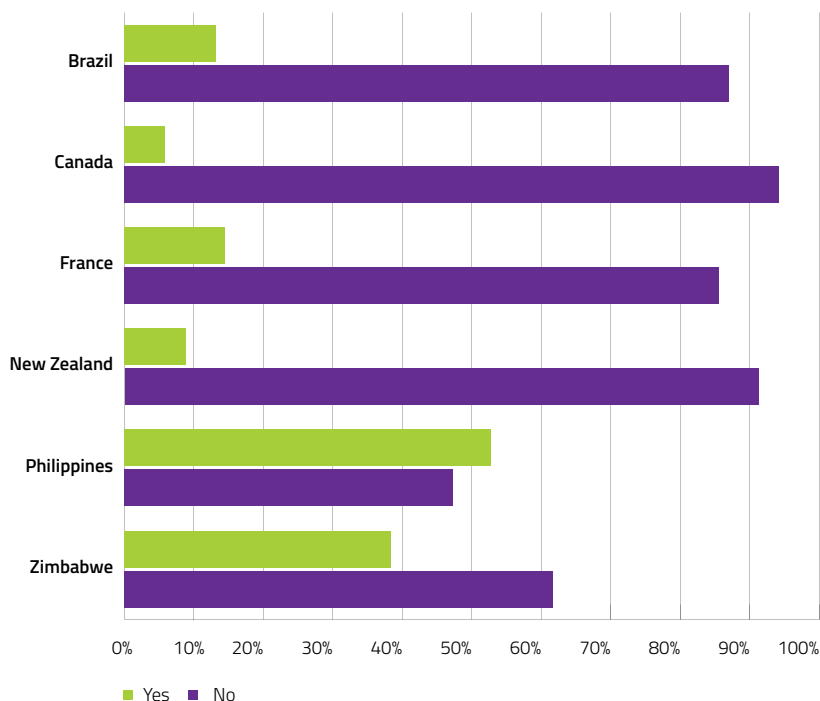


Figure 49: Sense of discrimination in the workplace, across the case study countries

The open-ended comments provided more detail about ESP experiences of discrimination. ESP felt discriminated against because of their religion, their gender, their language, their ethnicity, or their age.

We were discriminated against when we couldn't attend the teachers' party, they do not accept people who are not members of their religion.

(Brazil #7, Maintenance)

I am the only man among 50 female employees. I am more qualified in the administrative area than all of them, but I work in the yard.

(Brazil #545, Administrator)

Sometimes I feel discriminated against by my white hair and age.

(Brazil #567, Administrator)

I think the main issue I have is some teachers do not speak English and I do not speak French. There are some teachers who have treated me with disgust because I do not answer in French. (Canada #833, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I am excluded from school activities because of my ethnicity. The leader included only my colleagues of the same ethnic affiliation.

(France #94, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Sometimes I feel that way. It might be because I am also a foreign person and my native language is not English. (NZ #527, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Not because of gender, but definitely because of my nationality and religion. Management and middle management often make comments on my religion and my nationality – also on my accent. (NZ #744, Administrator)

At times I feel because I am a Pacific Islands female I am called on more to deal with angry students whereas the European teacher aides do not get called on for such things. (NZ #1023, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The institution prefers Anglican members for higher grade vacancies whenever chances arise. (Zimbabwe #29, Technician)

Female workers are treated better than male workers.
(Zimbabwe #44, Librarian)

The majority of ESP felt their workplace was a safe and healthy environment. However, some ESP in every country expressed some concern about their workplace: the Philippines (41%), Zimbabwe (37%), Brazil (31%), France (29%), Canada (20%), and New Zealand (16%) (see Figure 50). This question was not asked in the survey for the United States of America.

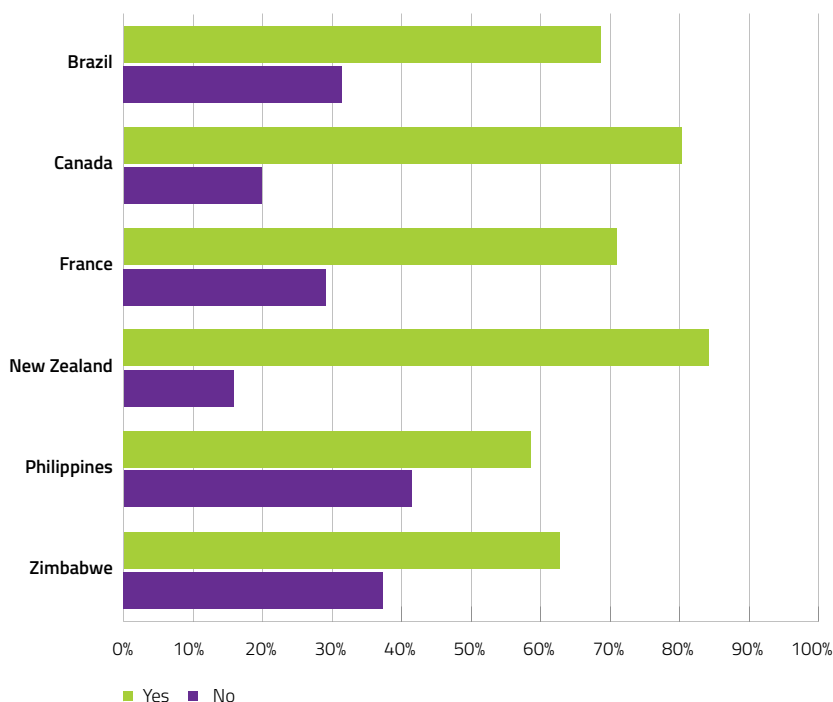


Figure 50: Access to a safe and healthy workplace, across the case study countries

In the comments, the ESP provided more detail about their workplaces and their health and safety concerns. In Brazil, violence and criminal activity outside the school gates had a big impact on the ESPs' sense of safety at work. Other safety concerns related to infrastructure or equipment within the school. Health concerns related to the stress and workload of the job, poor morale or workplace relationships, and the physical nature of some students' needs.

It is healthy. It's not safe/secure. Due to drug dealing, robberies, etc. (Brazil #5, Administrator)

It is in the countryside and I've already been robbed twice. (Brazil #38, Administrator)

The school infrastructure is completely obsolete, there is no adequate lighting or piped water in the toilets and sinks. There are also no guards and porters during school hours. (Brazil #57, Administrator)

It is in a frantic neighborhood, on a dead-end street, with two dangerous alleys nearby. (Brazil #84, Security)

The school is in the middle of some "favelas" (slums), we know that some students are coming to school with drugs, which creates a sense of insecurity. (Brazil #214, Administrator)

We cannot leave the gate open and always need to be careful when leaving because of the robberies that happen around the school. (Brazil #352, Maintenance)

Because of violence, verbal and mental abuse, psychological harassment. Mental and psychological abuse by the Administration. Students verbally abuse staff (support and teachers) but the Administration does little or nothing. School administration encourages students to, and rewards them for, reporting on other students. We have some students with anger issues but instead of helping, Administration "pushes" the student to anger and frustrates them more; this is their way of getting a student expelled. I am afraid (and I have had other staff members state the same fear) that one day, one of these students will retaliate in a way similar to the school shootings we see happening in the USA. (Canada #409, Administrator)

Yes, although I think that some safety rules are not up to standard, especially in the room where I work. (France #10, Counsellor)

Verbal aggression, moral harassment, written insults, no sanction towards the author [of the notes]. (France #40, Librarian)

We regularly deal with violent or physically challenging children. We have not been given training to assist disabled children safely (i.e. lifting, supporting on stairs, etc.) which increases our risk of injury. The understaffing of teacher aides and underfunding of high needs children results in overworking and stress. (NZ #5, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Because of the high behavioural problems, stress has been an issue. There has been an emphasis on making sure everyone has time to talk and support each other (teachers and teacher aides). This has also been supported and acknowledged by leaders. (NZ #336, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Yes, it is a safe and secure place to work but staff morale can be low at times. That undermines the feel and happiness of the work place. (NZ #690, Librarian)

No protective clothing supplied. (Zimbabwe #10, Maintenance)

They don't take us seriously when we request flood lights especially at night. No access to office. (Zimbabwe #20, Security)

Opportunities as part of the ESP role

In the United States of America, New Zealand, France, Canada, and Brazil, more than 65% of the ESP felt that they did not have any opportunity for promotion or higher responsibilities in their current role. In Zimbabwe, 57% did not feel they could be promoted, while 43% felt there was opportunity for promotion. In the Philippines, 71% of ESP felt they did have opportunities for promotion or higher responsibilities (see Figure 51).

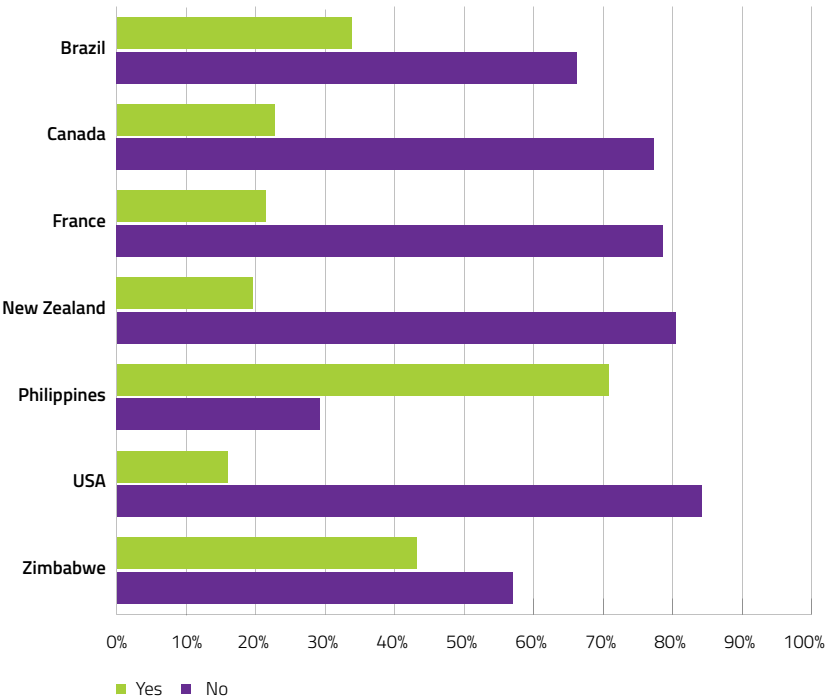


Figure 51: Opportunities for promotion or higher responsibilities, across the case study countries

The majority of ESP in five countries felt they did not have opportunities for further study, within their current job: the Philippines (76%), France (67%), the United States of America (66%), New Zealand (61%), and Canada (53%). More ESP felt they could study in Zimbabwe (70%) and Brazil (60%) (see Figure 52).

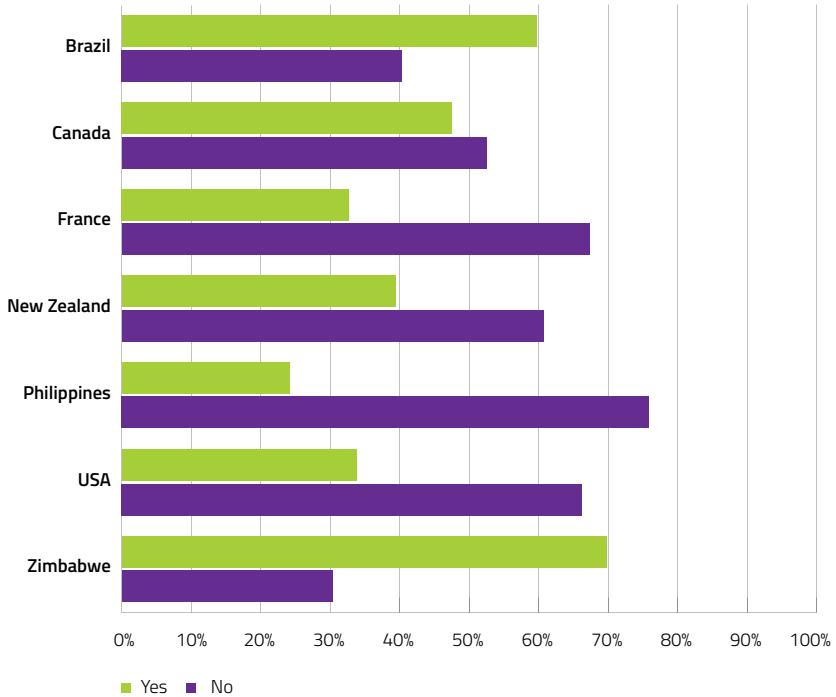


Figure 52: Opportunities for study within current role, across the case study countries

The ESP were asked to comment on their opportunities for promotion or further study. Many felt that there was no scope for career progression. Further study was often not supported by their school leaders, so ESP had to find time and funding outside of the workplace. If the ESP did complete further study or training, it did not necessarily mean that their higher qualifications were recognised in terms of pay or seniority.

There is no prospect for advancement for the post of secretarial assistant, except for the hope that the gross salary will increase since it is below the minimum wage. (Brazil #73, Administrator)

We were encouraged to study, study, complete the upper level, and did not get promotions or raises. (Brazil #135, Maintenance)

Increased responsibility is constant. Promotion and recognition are another story. Studying does not make sense in this situation because there is no regulation for career progression. (Brazil #488, Administrator)

You need to be a friend of a director to be able to use personnel improvement money or to access a promotion. You are good enough to replace when they are in trouble but will never get the job. (Canada #604, Administrator)

This position offers no opportunities for internal promotion.
(France #12, Administrator)

Advancements are complicated, and complex. The school head does not support training. He asks us to do the training in addition to our work, which triples our working time, without compensation. (France #33, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

There is nowhere to go in my role at my school. I would have to move to a school with a bigger international program. School has said it would be willing to pay for me to do a specific international qualification. However, there would be no one to help me with the work I wouldn't be doing which has put me off.
(NZ #170, Counsellor)

I would love the opportunity for some kind of promotion. I love my job, and give it my all, but there are no opportunities to progress. (NZ #396, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Yes, there are some opportunities to study but it is not feasible to spend lots of time and hundreds of dollars on study to be qualified when the school will not pay enough in wages to cover these costs. (NZ #690, Librarian)

The school district will pay for college classes taken during your employment. Some ed techs have got their degrees and gone on to become teachers.
(USA #59, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I am still getting same amount of pay salary but I have upgraded myself. I now have a degree in my work area. There is more work because I now know more things. (Zimbabwe #9, Librarian)

No opportunity for promotion because there is no ladder for going up. No opportunity for studying higher because there is no room for study leave with pay. (Zimbabwe #26, Technician)

Would like to study [but I am] in a rural area with no colleges nearby.
(Zimbabwe #44, Librarian)

Professional learning and development

The survey distinguished between formal and informal professional learning and development (PLD). Formal PLD was defined as workshops or training sessions run by an expert, while informal PLD was defined as conversations with colleagues in a similar role, with teachers, or with outside agencies.

The majority of ESP from Canada (77%), the United States of America (74%), New Zealand (73%), and France (58%) had access to formal PLD. More ESP from the Philippines (72%), Zimbabwe (68%), and Brazil (60%) did not have access (see Figure 53).

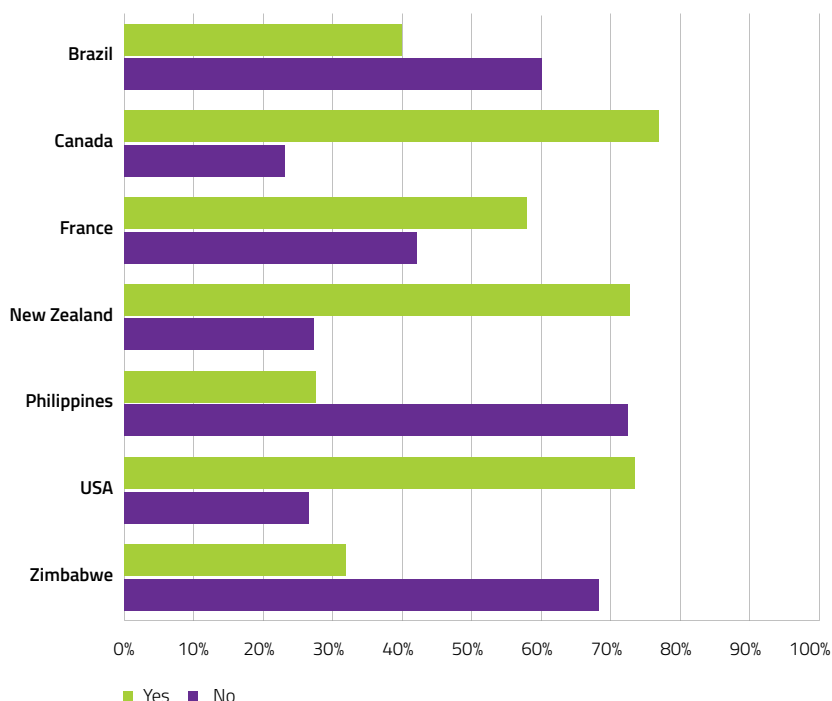


Figure 53: Access to formal professional learning and development, across the case study countries

ESP provided country-specific information about the formal PLD they could access through their schools or through their unions. The ESP described training programmes on particular learning or health disorders, on computer software, or on other specific approaches related to their roles in schools. The comments from ESP are organised by country.

Brazil

Profuncionário (Government program for the training of school staff), training courses. (Brazil #29, Food and Nutrition)

Stages of childhood, Piaget, Freud, etc. ... (Brazil #86, Security)

On Autism Spectrum Disorder and on LIBRAS (Brazilian sign language). (Brazil #159, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Specific courses such as: operation of the registration system, registration of students, registration of the schoolbook, non-violence and accident prevention. (Brazil #260, Administrator)

Legislation, social ethics, computers, Portuguese (formal), basic sanitation, health programs, neuro-linguistic programming, democratic management. (Brazil #465, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Canada

ASD workshops, Attachment Theory, Maker space through LEARN. (Canada #401, Specialist)

Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook. (Canada #646, Administrator)

Always the same workshops... Autism, special needs, ADHD, ODD, ADD. interventions etc. (Canada #745, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

France

Prevention of violence, School dropout. (France #44, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Student stress management. (France #46, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

These are cheap training opportunities, they are more activities to occupy us than train us. (France #58, Specialist)

Suicide, interpersonal relationships. (France #76, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Accounting and budget training. (France #115, Administrator)

New Zealand

Literacy, maths, behaviour, te reo Māori, and we are invited to any professional development we are interested in that teaching staff participate in. (NZ #85, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Annual conferences. Specific training on any new programmes that are introduced. (NZ #110, Administrator)

First aid, specific health training for certain conditions. Severe behaviour management. (NZ #203, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

We have had access to professional development, some of which has been fabulous: child development, brain development, many specific diagnosis/syndromes training – ASD, FAS, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Angelman syndrome, behavioural – the trouble is none carry a formal qualification so although extremely valuable for knowledge they are not recognised or formally acknowledged. (NZ #298, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

School Librarians' conference every two years, but we have to plead our case to have it paid for. Other training is rare and piecemeal. (NZ #552, Librarian)

Very infrequently is PD made available. But because there is no structured career path the PD ties into nothing or builds towards nothing. (NZ #927, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The United States of America

Advocacy, mentoring, intervention curriculum, behavior strategies, First Aid/CPR, restraint techniques, small group instruction, data collecting. (USA #7, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Most training opportunities are online in the form of webinars. We can earn hours toward recertification. We need 45 hours in 5 years. (USA #59, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Zimbabwe

Keeping inventory records, how to prepare experiments for all levels, cleaning laboratory equipment. (Zimbabwe #29, Technician)

Classification and cataloguing of books. (Zimbabwe #34, Librarian)

Health and safety, creative skills. (Zimbabwe #47, Maintenance)

Opportunities for formal PLD tended to occur once a year in Canada, France, Brazil and New Zealand. In the United States of America, ESP tended to have access to formal PLD more than once a year. In the Philippines and Zimbabwe, there were infrequent opportunities for PLD (see Figure 54).

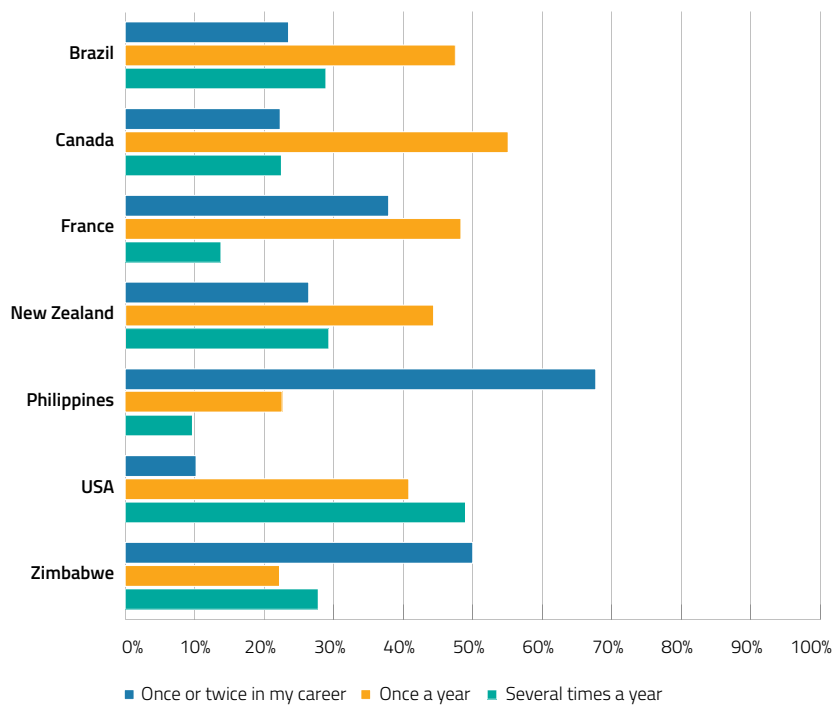


Figure 54: Frequency of formal PLD opportunities, across the case study countries

In New Zealand, the majority of ESP had access to informal PLD (67%). About half of ESP in Canada, the United States of America, Zimbabwe, and France also had opportunities for informal PLD. In the Philippines (79%) and Brazil (63%), the majority of ESP did not have access (see Figure 55).

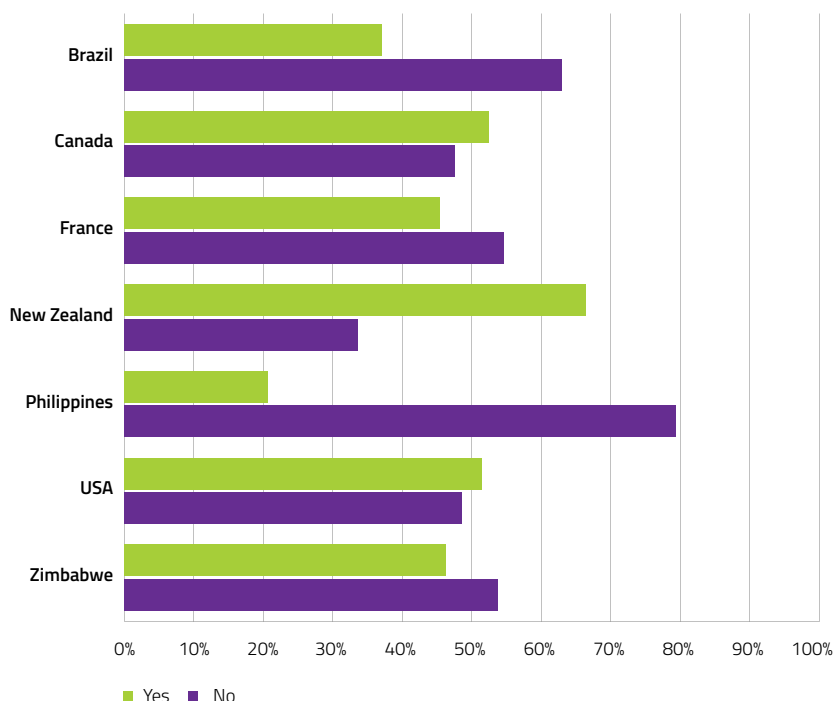


Figure 55: Access to informal professional learning and development, across the case study countries

The ESP commented on their access to and experiences of informal PLD. The ESP described conversations with colleagues about interesting ideas and opportunities to share different approaches to common situations. They also described information on their rights and responsibilities that had been provided by unions. The comments from ESP are organised by country.

Brazil

About the rights and duties of school support workers, mostly given by the union. (Brazil #11, Security)

School security during school hours and after school. (Brazil #51, Security)

We recently had an interesting discussion at school with a psychologist. (Brazil #123, Librarian)

From assessing gender issues, ethnic-racial diversity, to more political day-to-day school issues. (Brazil #293, Librarian)

Some working meetings with the regional teaching staff. (Brazil #488, Administrator)

Canada

I've tried asking how other things are done with the software, but I'm usually told if I get that task, send it to the colleague. No one is eager to teach me anything about THEIR jobs. (Canada #398, Administrator)

Yes and no. Yes, on staff support day. I can start a conversation with a teacher or colleague but they aren't necessarily informed and we have other work to do while at work. (Canada #809, Administrator)

I try to seek guidance from employees that have more experience. It is very informal and spontaneous. (Canada #943, Administrator)

France

Recently we did training on well-being at school. (France #21, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Teaching approaches, tools. (France #45, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I have friends who do the same job in other institutions. We compare our functions, the organization of our school, the students. (France #78, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Meeting request to talk to each other, to exchange ideas, made more than once but it never happens because it is not possible to bring everyone together at the same time. (France #91, Administrator)

New Zealand

Can talk with some teachers about my development. But mostly I talk to other Teacher Aides. (NZ #1, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Discuss topics and helpful ideas that might have worked better. Different tips and tricks to try with a specific student, etc. (NZ #55, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Discussions in the staffroom with colleagues, which include teachers, teacher aides, and specialists employed by the school (physiotherapist, occupational therapist, child psychologist and speech language therapist). (NZ #303, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

There are opportunities to discuss individual students with their teachers, during morning tea and lunch breaks, or before/after school. I am sometimes invited to attend and contribute to my students' Individual Education Plan meetings with the speech language therapist, neuro-developmental psychologist, or Resource Teacher (Learning and Behaviour). (NZ #643, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Safety issues, correct disposal of chemicals, where to purchase difficult to obtain items, new legislation relating to our laboratories, new experiments, help with finding appropriate experiments for practical exams, good websites for obtaining safety data sheets, etc. (NZ #856, Technician)

There is a good network of school library staff in NZ, with opportunities to discuss library-related issues via an email network, and at organised gatherings. (NZ #1045, Librarian)

The United States of America

Even though every school has collaborative time built into the weekly schedule, rarely does it allow for paras to meet informally to discuss issues or to meet with teachers to discuss topics. (USA #56, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Zimbabwe

We discuss school developments and other things. (Zimbabwe #41, Maintenance)

In most of the countries, ESP were accessing informal PLD several times a year: New Zealand (71%), the United States of America (71%), Zimbabwe (65%), Canada (65%), and France (59%). In Brazil, ESP accessed informal PLD once a year (43%) or several times a year (40%). In the Philippines, ESP accessed informal PLD several times a year (45%), or only once or twice in their career (40%) (see Figure 56).

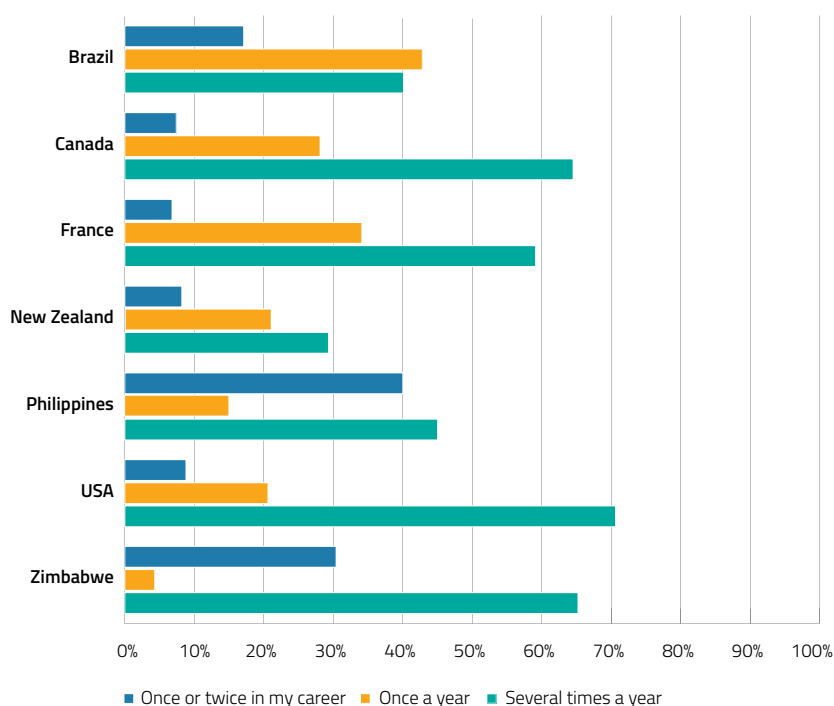


Figure 56: Frequency of informal PLD opportunities, across the case study countries

The ESP also made comment on the formal or informal PLD they wished they could access. The ESP wanted more specific, job-related information, more information about their rights as a workforce, and more opportunities to meet with others in similar roles and share ideas. Their suggestions, organised by country, are below.

Brazil

Lectures with themes related to education and specifically to the work of a school secretary. It would also be interesting to hold meetings to share experiences. (Brazil #57, Administrator)

Training which improves our salary. (Brazil #108, Counsellor)

I would like to attend lectures on public service and computer courses. (Brazil #190, Administrator)

Labor reform, social security reform, educational reform and others. (Brazil #236, Administrator)

We are facing youth with complicated problems. Generally, drugs and sexual diseases. Many suffer from lack of information. (Brazil #257, Security)

Canada

To learn how to work with children in crisis. Plenty of times they come to the office and I do not know how to handle them. (Canada #403, Administrator)

Opportunity to meet as a team to brainstorm on common students and offer support to each other for difficult cases. Also, to be kept informed on students' achievements to better assist them. (Canada #514, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Training on new software or training to improve myself on software. French or English course. Any other training that can help me to obtain a promotion. (Canada #604, Administrator)

Short conferences with peers at other institutions, and discussions in a vertical way (i.e. not just with peers but also with Directors/managers who are responsible for processes such as the authorized absence process) on a regular basis, perhaps annually, to optimize the process both for our institution and for the students. (Canada #806, Administrator)

France

First aid and sign language. (France #11, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Pedagogy, new learning techniques, development in my areas of expertise, opportunities for career-related training, etc. (France #33, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

New Zealand

I would appreciate an induction into the school, and information on the children I may be working with, as well as generic information about special education needs. (NZ #5, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

More time to talk amongst the other teacher aides to come up with plans about children that are being difficult. Time to go to other schools to see how teacher aides at other schools operate to improve what we do. (NZ #343, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

I have found that a lot of my job has been learn as you go, with no clear instruction. It would be good to attend some professional learning on best practices for payroll, enrolment, student management systems, etc. (NZ #678, Administrator)

An overview of the government agencies that special needs people and their families will need to deal with to gain an understanding of what is out there for them. More of an understanding of the funding situation and how different

agencies work together to simplify things. (NZ #855, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

It would be great to be included in school-based professional development so that we are on the same page. Often, we are not informed or part of school wide development (once again it comes down to money) as often PD, staff/ team meetings are outside of school hours. (NZ #953, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The United States of America

Educational law and regulations. (USA #22, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

MA in Librarianship. (USA #48, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Working with students on the autism spectrum. (USA #59, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Zimbabwe

Learning about plumbing and electrics. (Zimbabwe #4, Administrator)

ICT – every worker is computer illiterate. (Zimbabwe #22, Maintenance)

First aid and health and safety courses. (Zimbabwe #50, Health and Welfare)

Appraisal

Access to regular appraisal varied across the seven countries. In the United States of America (89%), New Zealand (63%), Zimbabwe (58%), and Brazil (57%), the majority were appraised regularly. In Canada (72%), the Philippines (59%), and France (55%), most ESP did not have access to regular appraisal (see Figure 57).

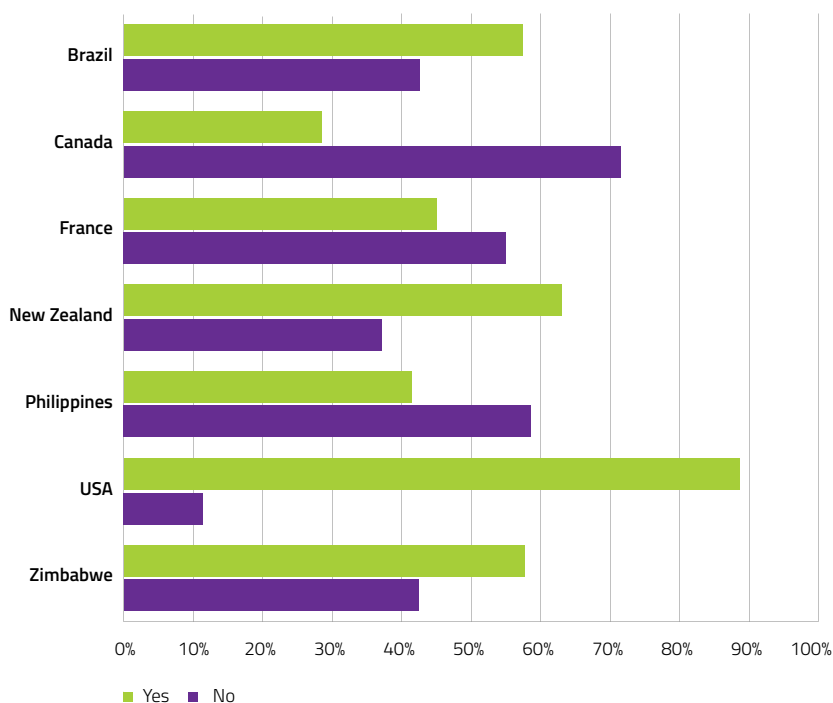


Figure 57: Access to regular appraisal, across the case study countries

Satisfaction

The ESP were asked how satisfied they felt, overall, with their ESP jobs. In four countries, the majority were 'satisfied': Canada (55%), Brazil (53%), New Zealand (48%), and France (48%). In the United States of America and Zimbabwe, although the highest percentage of ESP were 'satisfied', there were also several ESP who remained 'neutral' on the question (in the USA, 36% satisfied and 30% neutral, and in Zimbabwe, 36% satisfied and 27% neutral). In the Philippines, 35% of ESP were 'dissatisfied' and 28% were 'satisfied' with their role (see Figure 58).

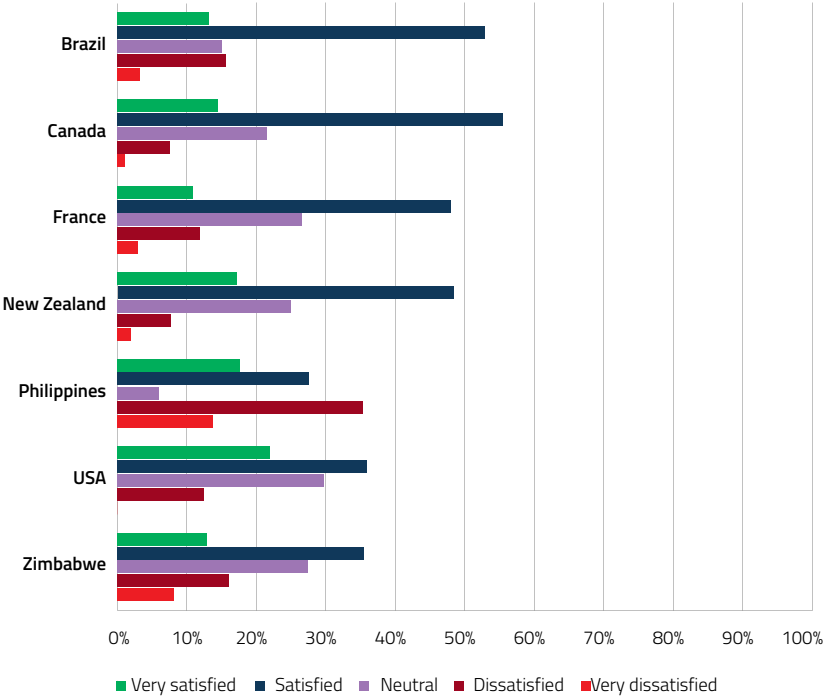


Figure 58: Satisfaction with education support role, across the case study countries

Confidence

The ESP were asked how confident they felt, overall, in their ESP role. In six of the seven countries, ESP were ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’. In the Philippines, the responses were more mixed. There, 28% of ESP were ‘very confident’, 12% were ‘confident’, 21% were ‘neutral’, 29% were ‘unconfident’, and 10% were ‘very unconfident’ (see Figure 59).

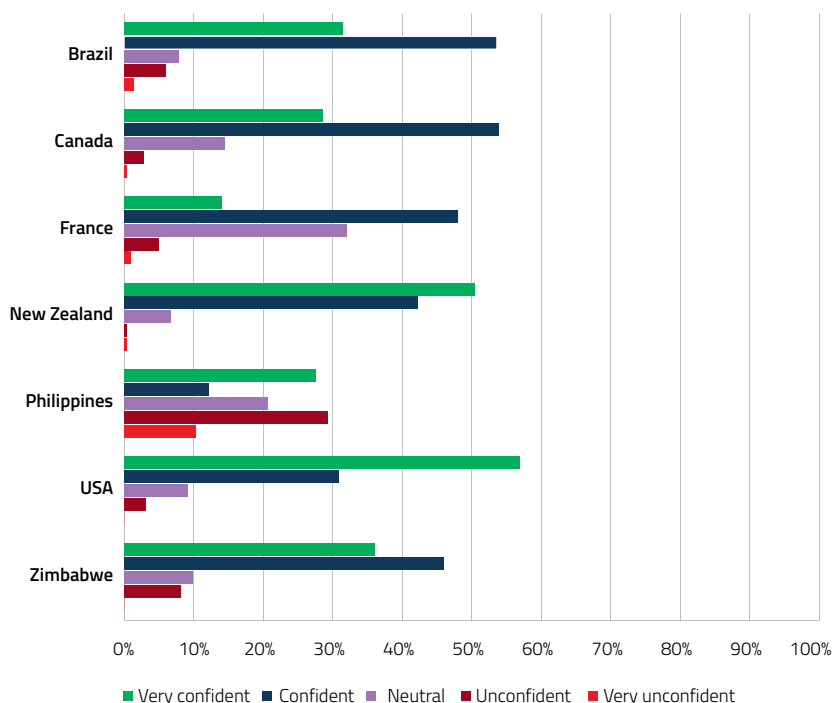


Figure 59: Confidence in carrying out education support role, across the case study countries

Making a difference

The ESP were asked whether or not they felt their work made a difference for teachers and students. In six countries, the majority felt they made a big difference for teachers: New Zealand (83%), Brazil (74%), the Philippines (74%), the United States of America (74%), Zimbabwe (68%), and Canada (55%). In France, 53% of ESP felt they made a small difference for teachers, and 36% felt they made a big difference (see Figure 60).

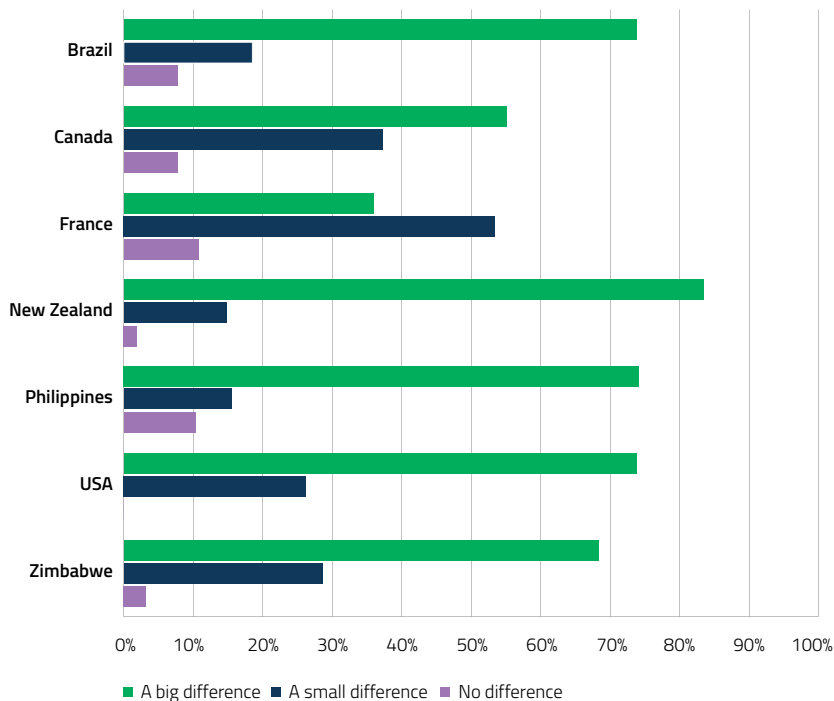


Figure 60: Sense of making a difference for teachers, across the case study countries

In every country, the majority of ESP felt they made a big difference for students: the Philippines (90%), the United States of America (88%), Brazil (83%), New Zealand (83%), Canada (69%), Zimbabwe (59%), and France (54%) (see Figure 61).

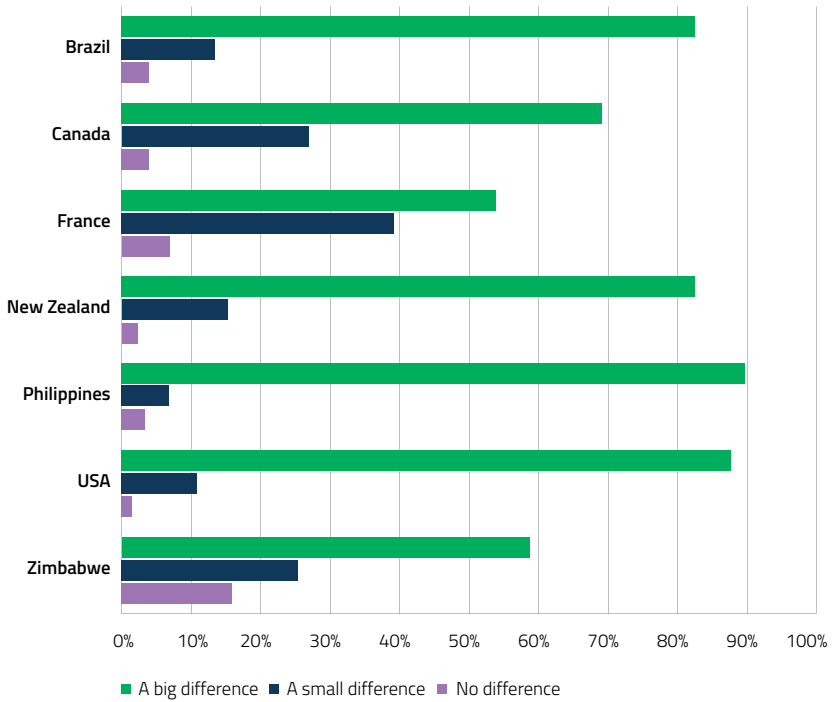


Figure 61: Sense of making a difference for students, across the case study countries

Plans for the future

The ESP were asked how likely they were to be in the same or a similar job in five years' time. In five of the countries (Brazil, Canada, France, New Zealand, and Zimbabwe), the responses tended towards 'very likely' or 'likely'. In the Philippines, 81% of ESP were 'very unlikely' to be in an ESP role in five years' time. In the United States of America, the responses were more evenly distributed: 28% were 'very likely', 32% were 'likely', 17% were 'neutral', 22% were 'unlikely', and 2% were 'very unlikely' to be in the same or a similar job in the future (see Figure 62).

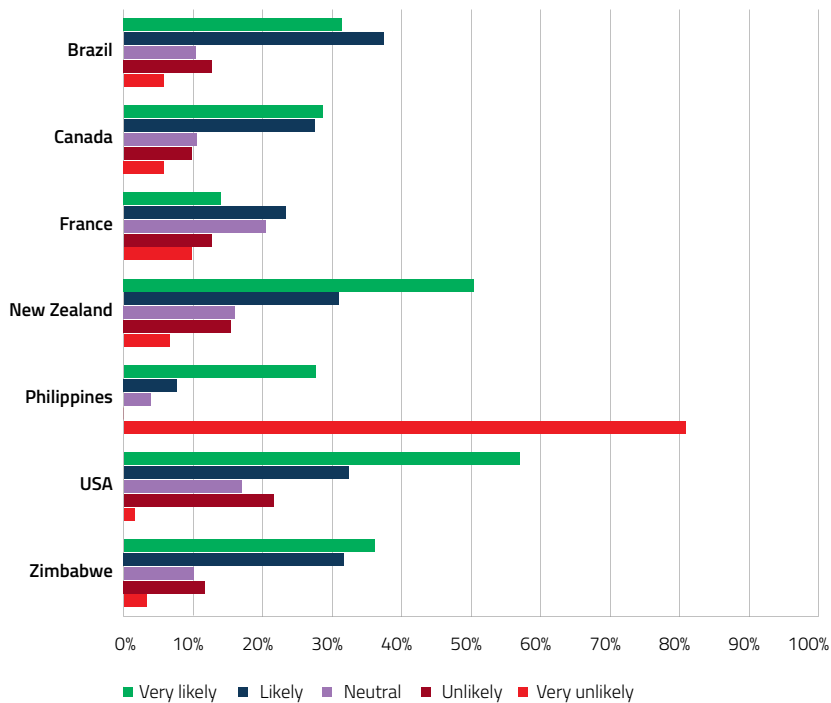


Figure 62: Likelihood of being in the same job in five years' time, across the case study countries

ESP and Unions

Each education union who helped to administer the ESP survey in their country, was also asked to take part in a survey about their representation of ESP. The union leadership survey asked questions about national advocacy for ESP, and issues and challenges regarding unionisation of the ESP workforce. The responses from each union are summarised below.

Union leadership survey in Brazil

The Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação (CNTE), Brazil, represents approximately 1,200,000 ESP. The union estimates this to be less than 20% of all ESP in Brazil. They represent ESP in seven job categories: administrators, librarians, maintenance staff, food and nutrition staff, security staff, technology or communications support personnel, and transport staff.

CNTE has been representing ESP for more than ten years. The union has four dedicated staff members who work on ESP issues. CNTE writes that, “ESP are represented though an allocated ESP seat on the national executive committee and an allocated ESP seat in other committees and bodies”.

Three issues that CNTE is seeking to address for ESP in Brazil are: (a) to “improve ESP salaries and benefits”, (b) to “ensure access to training opportunities”, and (c) to “defend the trade union rights of members and fight for their respect”. Successes thus far are that “CNTE have a national ESP day, campaigns on ESP and continuous professional development for ESP”.

Union leadership survey in Canada (Quebec)

The Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ), in Quebec, Canada, represents 40,000 ESP from five federations:

- Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire: 27,000 members
- Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation: 7,500 members
- Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges: 1,500 members
- Fédération du personnel de soutien en enseignement supérieur: 3,500 members
- Fédération du personnel de l'enseignement privé: 500 ESP members

Approximately 31% of CSQ membership is made up of ESP; the remaining 69% are teachers. CSQ represents ESP from all eleven of Education International's job categories, as well as "school day care educators". CSQ has been representing ESP since 1993. The union has 22 employees who work on ESP issues, across the five federations.

The three main issues for ESP that CSQ is seeking to address are: (a) "recognition", (b) "improving working conditions including fighting precarity", and (c) "improving salaries and benefits". The second of these issues takes up the most time and attention: "There are more and more employees working on broken schedules. E.g. people working 15 hours a week but must begin to work at 7 AM and finish at 6 PM, from Monday to Friday". CSQ highlights one success story: "We have introduced a week of ESP on the last Thursday of September. This is an opportunity for our union members to meet and discuss their concerns".

Union leadership survey in France

Responses to the union leadership survey were received from two French unions: SNUipp and Syndicat de l'Administration et de l'Intendance (UNSA).

SNUipp was not able to estimate the proportion of ESP in France that they represent, as "data on the size of the workforce are not available". The union represents ESP in two job categories: teaching and learning assistants, and specialist support staff. SNUipp has been representing ESP since the inception of the union.

SNUipp has three staff members who work part-time on ESP issues. The three main issues that the union is seeking to address are: (a) "increase the number of posts", (b) "professionalisation of staff", and (c) "working conditions of staff (time, salary...)". Two recent successes are "the campaign on professionalism and legal/administrative issues".

UNSA represents 8,500 ESP, all from the administrator job category. The union specialises in representing ESP. As UNSA explains:

When the union was founded in 1994 it was comprised of the personnel involved in the general administration and stewardship of schools, public ministries, rectorates (French local education authorities), universities and other public ministries responsible for education. In this context "stewardship" is the supervision and monitoring of the management of material resources (maintenance and repairs) and the financial management (budgets and accounting) of secondary schools (colleges, high schools) and accommodation for students attending state institutions (CROUS and universities) and local authority institutions (middle and high schools). **The rationale for creating an "administration and stewardship" ESP union is the belief that these jobs make up a family of trades distinct from all those, ESP and others, that make an important contribution to the education of students and pupils.**

UNSA is focused on the following three issues: (a) “to defend the occupations and projects sector in the ESP within the framework of a national and statutory civil service (saying ‘no’ to the elimination of the public sector or its regionalisation)”, (b) “to promote the sector of occupations and projects sector of ESP within a national public service of education and training (saying ‘no’ to privatisation or the regionalisation of occupations and projects)”, and (c) “to obtain a fair salary for those ESP working in the occupations and projects sector”. The most pressing issue for UNSA is that there are “concerns related to the ‘public services’ reform being sought by the government, the details of which we still know very little”.

Union leadership survey in New Zealand

The New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI), New Zealand, represents 10,094 ESP. They estimate this to be fewer than half of all ESP in New Zealand. ESP make up approximately 22% of NZEI’s membership, the remainder being made up of early childhood educators, primary teachers and primary principals.

NZEI represents ESP from five different job categories: administrators, librarians, teaching and learning assistants, technology or communications support personnel, and special support personal. In addition, they represent staff who support the learning of te reo Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand.

NZEI has represented ESP for more than 20 years. As they explain, “school administrative staff were initially incorporated through a merger of their union with NZEI Te Riu Roa. Other groups have been merged or added to NZEI Te Riu Roa since then”.

Between three and eight staff members from NZEI work on ESP issues, depending on need:

We have three staff members in our national office who are responsible for industrial and professional matters related to ESP. We also currently have a major campaign focused on gender pay equity for ESP that involves the three staff already mentioned along with other staff members in the leadership group. All our field (organising) staff have responsibility for campaign implementation and it is expected to constitute about half their work.

The three main issues currently being addressed by NZEI are: (a) “improving industrial conditions, in particular pay and job security”, (b) “achieving secure, sufficient central (government) funding for all schools to employ ESP”, and (c) “establishing a professional career framework including qualifications, professional learning and development and pathways”.

These issues take up a lot of NZEI’s attention:

We currently have a major campaign focused on addressing gender-based pay equity issues which will incorporate elements from all three issues above.

We anticipate that it will result in improvements to industrial conditions (a) and necessitate a change to resourcing levels and delivery from government (b). We are ensuring that professional elements (c) are included in the work so that the outcomes we achieve have a future-focused element to promote sustainability over time.

NZEI's campaign to address pay equity is progressing well:

We are working with the NZ Ministry of Education on a process to assess and address pay equity issues for school teacher aides. It is the first time work of this nature has been addressed through the type of process we have agreed with the Ministry. We have just finished a series of interviews of teacher aides, school managers and governance groups to establish a clear understanding of the nature and scope of work undertaken by teacher aides. This has been a complex and ultimately rewarding task as the information it has revealed is rich and detailed. We trained a group of members to be interviewers (alongside Ministry staff) which has developed their skills, confidence and active participation in the process.

Union leadership survey in the Philippines

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Philippines, represents approximately 3,000 ESP. ACT estimates that ESP make up about 5% of their membership base. Their other members include early childhood educators (approximately 80%) and higher education personnel (approximately 15%).

ACT represents ESP from eight job categories: administrators, librarians, maintenance staff, food and nutrition staff, health and welfare staff, security staff, technology or communications support personnel, and transport staff. The union has represented ESP since 1982, since ACT was founded.

Three ACT staff members work on ESP issues. The union has links to affiliate organisations who also support the ESP workforce: "We have affiliate organizations that work with the ESPs. In Quezon City Public School Teachers Association, Manila Public School Teachers Association, Alliance of Contractual Employees, All Workers Unity-University of the Philippines Diliman, ACT Private Schools. We have an organizer assigned to each formation".

Three main issues are the focus of ACT's activity: (a) "labor contractualization/regularization", (b) "salary increase", and (c) "working condition/benefits". The first two issues take up most of the union's time and resources. ACT outlined several recent successes: "We were able to reduce the tax burden to the benefits although this applies to all [union members]. Many contractual workers were regularized. Many schools are unionized already".

Union leadership survey in the United States of America

The National Education Association, USA, represents approximately 470,000 ESP. NEA estimates that they represent about 25% of the total ESP workforce in the United States of America. Approximately 15% of the NEA membership is made up of ESP, alongside teachers (71%) and other members (such as students, retired members, etc., 14%).

The job categories in use in the United States of America are slightly different to the job categories put forward by Education International. NEA has ESP membership from the following categories: administrators, maintenance staff, food and nutrition staff, health and welfare staff, teaching and learning assistants, security staff, technology or communications support personnel, and transport staff. They comment, "Custodial services are also included in our ESP career families. We also include paraeducators (marked above as 'tutoring and/or teaching and learning assistance')".

NEA has represented ESP for nearly 40 years:

ESP have had full membership rights since 1980. ESP were already full members in many states, so making this change at the national level was a way to bring consistency that helped unify and strengthen the association. Association leadership believed (and still do) that "the more frequently and the more skillfully the family of education works together, the more successful all will be in attaining mutual goals." (Insight gathered from NEA: A Special Mission (1987).)

Seven NEA staff members are dedicated to ESP issues: "There are seven full-time staff in the ESP Quality department, but several others who include ESP as part of their responsibility in a broad scope".

The main issues for ESP being addressed by NEA are: (a) "fair pay and benefits", (b) "respect and inclusion", and (c) "high quality professional development". The quality of professional development is the issue currently taking up the most time and resources, and has resulted in the following successful outcome:

NEA launched the ESP Professional Growth Continuum (nea.org/esppgc), the first-ever national set of professional standards for all ESP career families. These were developed for ESP by ESP. Many affiliate leaders are using the Professional Growth Continuum to secure time, space, and money for ESP professional learning. Others are using it to combat privatization. We recently brought ESP together to create micro-credentials and a blended learning program to help affiliates and members learn about the standards. The ESP Professional Growth Continuum and related efforts are being very well received by affiliate leadership and ESP members.

Union leadership survey in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Educational Scientific Cultural Workers Union (ZESSCWU), Zimbabwe, represents approximately 9,500 ESP. ZESSCWU estimates that they represent about half of all ESP in Zimbabwe. ESP make up the majority of their union membership, at approximately 65%.

The ESP members of ZESSCWU come from eight different job categories: administrators, librarians, maintenance staff, health and welfare staff, teaching and learning assistants, security staff, technology or communication support personnel, and transport staff.

ZESSCWU has represented ESP since 1982. As they explain, “The Union has represented the ESP members since its formation in 1982 after the realization that there was no Union that represented the workers in the Education sector and the industry was considered to be a domestic industry”.

Twenty-two staff members of ZESSEWU are dedicated to working on ESP issues. The structure of the union is outlined below:

The dedicated staff who work on ESP issues consists of the **General Secretary** who is the Chief Executive Officer, and the **Deputy General Secretary** who deputizes the General Secretary. There is the **National Organizing Secretary** who organizes recruitment and servicing of membership as well as supervision of the Regional Officers. The **National Education Officer** is responsible for training and educating ESP members on different Union activities. There is also the **Legal Officer** who is responsible for the Union's legal research, legal drafting, litigation, and liaising with external lawyers on behalf of the Union. The **Bookkeeper** and the **Accounts Clerk** are responsible for the Union's books. The **Regional Officers** are directly responsible for recruitment and servicing of membership. **Drivers** are responsible for the transportation of staff on their recruitment drive and other day to day duties. **Secretaries** are responsible for the switchboard operation, typing, sending and receiving correspondence. The **Office Orderly** is responsible for the general hygiene of the Union offices.

The three main issues which occupy ZESSCWU are: (a) “the need to negotiate living wages for our members”, (b) “social security which includes amongst other things health and safety, housing and medical aid schemes”, and (c) “workers' rights and on the job training to capacitate the ESP members”. The activities that take up the most time and resources include “dispute settlement, organizing, education and training”.

ZESSCWU has been successful in negotiating a “progressive Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), catering for a variety of issues which include minimum wages, recognition of service, Education allowance, funeral allowance, transport and housing allowance”.

ESP perspectives on union support

In the ESP survey, respondents were asked to identify the support that was provided by their education unions. The ESP mentioned advocacy for employment rights and recognition, information about laws and regulations, workshops and training days run by the union, mediation services, and social activities. The comments have been organised by country.

Brazil

The union offers adequate guidance to workers, legal support, and acts as a moderator in resolving conflicts between the category and the municipal administration. In addition, the union struggles for the maintenance and conquest of labor rights. (Brazil #57, Administrator)

It fights for the recognition that staff are also educators, for career plans and professionalization. (Brazil #94, Technician)

In addition to fighting and protecting all class interests, it offers training courses for teachers and staff, legal support, promotes awareness building, and mobilizes resistance against the loss of rights. It also provides guidance, information, among others. (Brazil #256, Administrator)

Canada

They guarantee our job security, inform us about their negotiations with our employer. We can have inquiries if we have any problems at work and we are connected with our union advisors. (Canada #324, Administrator)

Discussion of work conditions with human resources or specific problems. Grievances when they arise. Labor relation committee. (Canada #604, Administrator)

The union provides support in terms of providing information on our rights, accompanying us to meetings with management and/or HR, and advocating on behalf of employees in situations where mass decisions have been or are being made (e.g. the college has accidentally overpaid us and has declared they will rectify it in one paycheque - the union steps in automatically and reminds them they are not allowed to do this without our consent, and must instead negotiate a voluntary repayment schedule). I believe they also hold social activities throughout the year and subsidize certain elements of college functions (e.g. a free drink at the Christmas party). (Canada #806, Administrator)

France

Information on rights, collective agreement, support. Negotiation for the recognition of the profession. (France #3, Administrator)

Quarterly meetings, protest movements, legal support if needed.
(France #56, Health and Welfare)

New Zealand

Will be there if you need them. They run courses every now and again out of school time if we wish to attend (don't get paid). (NZ #165, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Regular discussion with government, keeps us updated on how negotiations are going. Once a year gathering to inform us, plus have union rep. (NZ #192, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Scholarships, workshops, professional development, 0800 [free] contact number for help and advice, Worksite Representatives, Support Staff National Caucus members in every area. Support Staff Day celebration activities. Cross sector meetings, celebrations and workshops. Local meetings with a Support Staff focus, collective agreement bargaining. Pay Equity. (NZ #371, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Union rep at our school who keeps support staff informed on anything that is relevant to us and our role. Also lets us know if there are any union meetings etc. that we should be attending. Emails from union, magazine etc. (NZ #1038, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

The United States of America

Professional development, representation, mentorship, various trainings, conferences and help in attaining certification. (USA #7, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Most of the support that we receive is from the county, state, and national (NEA) levels. We receive guidance on contract negotiations and grievances as well as training and workshops. (USA #16, Administrator)

Professional development, advocacy, negotiations, information, etc. (USA #28, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Zimbabwe

It supports our working conditions and our wages.
(Zimbabwe #4, Administrator)

Workshops, advice about the labour act, assists with the settlement of grievances. (Zimbabwe #16, Health and Welfare)

Salary bargaining, dispute resolution, fair labour practice.
(Zimbabwe #26, Technician)

The ESP were also asked about the support they would like to receive from their union. ESP wanted to know their legal rights, and wanted their union to advocate for better salary and employment conditions.

Take care of the interests of all education officials because many still do not know their rights and it is necessary to have more debates for their awareness. (Brazil #222, Food and Nutrition)

A professional minimum wage for school employees such as the teachers' national minimum wage, partnership agreements for qualification courses, undergraduate education and others. (Brazil #377, Administrator)

Be more specific with human resources on what they can or can't do as per our collective agreement. Try to be more aware of what is going on across the board (different school and center, administrative center). Try to have more employees involved in the Union. (Canada #604, Administrator)

Keep us informed of the laws and be able to train to change our wages. (France #21, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Fight more for pay rise and working conditions. (France #51, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

Inform Support Staff of their rights in regards to Appraisals, Yearly Increments, and Benefits, and also make it known to Employers, so we don't feel like beggars always having to follow up and ask for an Appraisal or our entitlement to increments. Send out reminders to schools/kura – encouraging and celebrating Best Practice. (NZ #426, Administrator)

Push for higher wages, push for full time employment hours and pay for term holiday breaks as well (I'm willing to work but there is no funding to pay me). Push for teacher aides to be given a scholarship/professional development to become trainee teachers or work towards their teaching qualification without student loans etc. There is a teacher shortage predicted but no career pathway supported for teacher aides to move up from teacher aiding to teaching without having to quit their jobs and get a student loan to pay to do so. (NZ #770, Teaching and Learning Assistant)

More quality training, advocate for all members to have the tools they need to complete their job duties, networking with other professionals, building district solidarity, etc. (USA #73, Counsellor)

I would like a union to arrange more workshops to enhance workers' legal knowledge. (Zimbabwe #29, Technician)

Scholarships if the opportunity arises. Starting projects which will benefit members after retirement or termination of contracts. (Zimbabwe #76, Maintenance)

Summary and Recommendations

This report has drawn from the findings of ESP surveys and surveys of union leaders in seven case study countries: Brazil, Canada (Quebec), France, New Zealand, the Philippines, the United States of America, and Zimbabwe. Every country is of course different, but there were some commonalities in the experiences of ESP across the countries.

The characteristics of the ESP survey respondents have been summarised to create a picture of a typical ESP in each country.

- In **Brazil**, ESP are typically female, aged between 36 and 60 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than BRL 60,000 (USD 15,000) per year.
- In Quebec, **Canada**, ESP are typically female, aged between 31 and 50 years, and employed on a permanent, full-time basis.
- In **France**, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 60 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than EUR 20,000 (USD 22,500) per year.
- In **New Zealand**, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 60 years, employed during term-time only on a part-time basis, and earn less than NZD 30,000 (USD 20,000) per year.
- In the **Philippines**, ESP are typically female, aged between 21 and 40 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than PHP 11,000 (USD 215) per month.
- In the **United States of America**, ESP are typically female, aged between 46 and 65 years, employed full-time on an hourly wage basis, and earn between USD 20,000 and USD 25,000 per year.
- In **Zimbabwe**, ESP are typically male, aged between 36 and 50 years, employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and earn less than USD 5,000 per year.

Overall, the ESP were female, aged between 40 and 60 years, permanently employed, and poorly paid.

With regard to the employment and working condition of ESP, the research found that:

- ESP were often working in a **role unrelated to their highest qualification** (see Figure 35).
- ESP did not often shift between ESP jobs. Most of the ESP were currently **working in their first and only ESP role** (see Figure 36).
- The majority of ESP were **working under an employment agreement or contract** (see Figure 37).

- In most countries, except the Philippines, **the majority of ESP had a job description for their role** (see Figure 38). Whether or not this job description was updated regularly was variable across the seven countries (see Figure 39).
- In every country, the ESP felt they were **not adequately paid** for the work they do (see Figure 40). The country-specific data showed that most ESP were **low paid**, earning less than the average wage for their countries (see Appendix C).
- A sense of **job security was variable** across the seven countries. Some ESP felt secure, whilst others felt their jobs were precarious (see Figure 41).
- The majority of ESP felt that their work was **respected by teachers, school leaders, students and parents** (see Figures 42-45).
- Most ESP felt that their role attracted **average to low status** in their societies (see Figure 46).
- Most ESP felt they had some autonomy within their individual practice, but **little autonomy in their workplace** overall (see Figures 47 and 48).
- **Very few ESP felt discriminated against** in their workplace (see Figure 49), and most felt their workplace was a safe and healthy environment (see Figure 50).
- In most countries, except the Philippines, the majority of ESP felt they **did not have opportunities within their workplaces for promotion** or higher responsibilities (see Figure 51).
- In most countries, except Zimbabwe and Brazil, the majority of ESP felt they **did not have opportunities to further their qualifications whilst keeping their jobs** (see Figure 52).
- **Access to formal professional learning and development opportunities was variable** across the seven countries. Where ESP did have access, these opportunities tended to occur once a year (see Figures 53 and 54).
- Access to informal professional learning and development opportunities was variable across the seven countries. Where ESP did have access, these opportunities tended to occur **several times a year** (see Figures 55 and 56).
- Access to **regular performance appraisal varied** across the seven countries (see Figure 57).
- Overall, most ESP were **satisfied** with their jobs (see Figure 58).
- Overall, most ESP were **confident or very confident** in carrying out their work (see Figure 59).
- In most countries, the majority of ESP **felt they made a big difference for teachers**. Most ESP in France felt they made a small difference (see Figure 60).

- Most ESP **felt they made a big difference for students** (see Figure 61).
- In most countries, the majority of ESP felt they were **likely or very likely to remain in the same or a similar job in five years' time**. In the Philippines, most ESP were very unlikely to be in the same or a similar job in the future (see Figure 62).
- Education unions in each of the seven countries were **advocating** on behalf of ESP **for fair pay, acceptable working and employment conditions, rights and recognition**.

The analysis of the survey responses suggests a mismatch between the low status of ESP and the important contribution they make to the education community. Most of the ESP were satisfied with their education support roles, and confident in carrying out the tasks associated with their jobs. Most felt they made a big difference for students and for teachers. Although they felt well-respected by the teachers, school leaders, students and parents they interacted with on a daily basis, the ESP felt society as a whole accorded them average or low status.

Overall, the findings from the survey show that the ESP were committed to their jobs: despite their low pay and worries about the permanence or long-term security of their jobs, most of the ESP were likely or very likely to be in the same job in five years' time. The low recognition that they received for their work did not match the energy and commitment they put into it. They were poorly paid and many were on tenuous, short-term employment contracts that did not offer job security or a career path. Many were women aged 40-60 years, who were also likely to be in caring roles in their families – either caring for their children or caring for older family members. Job security, being paid all year round, and access to benefits such as sick leave were very important issues for ESP.

As a result of this research on ESP, there is a clear case for union advocacy on behalf of Education Support Personnel. This research recommends that:

- ESP be supported to know their legal rights and responsibilities,
- Unions advocate for permanent positions and higher salaries,
- Professional learning and development and increased qualifications be tied to increases in salary,
- Unions advocate for increased awareness of ESP roles and employment conditions amongst teachers and principals,
- Opportunities for career progression for ESP be explored, and
- The work of ESP in supporting students and creating well-functioning schools and educational institutions be celebrated.

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Appendix A: Survey of Education Support Personnel

Survey of Education Support Personnel in [Country]

ABOUT YOU

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Gender diverse

2. What is your age?

☐ 20 years or less

☐ 36-40 years

☐ 56-60 years

☐ 21-25 years

☐ 41-45 years

☐ 61-65 years

☐ 26-30 years

☐ 46-50 years

☐ 66-70 years

☐ 31-35 years

☐ 51-55 years

☐ More than 70 years

3. What is your nationality?

☐ [Online version: drop-down list of 195 countries]

☐ Other (including dual nationalities) [open-ended response]

4. What is your highest qualification?

☐ No qualification

☐ Degree

☐ School-based qualification

☐ Postgraduate qualification

☐ Certificate or Diploma

Please give the name of the qualification and the subject area (if applicable)

**5. Is your current job related to your highest qualification
(are you doing what you have trained to do)?**

☐ Yes☐ No

YOUR JOB

6. Please give your current job title and a brief description of what you do:

**7. Which job category (or categories) best describes your current role?
Please select as many as apply**

☐ Administration and/or clerical☐ Career guidance and/or counselling☐ Librarian and/or document management☐ Maintenance and/or skilled trades☐ Tutoring and/or teaching and learning assistance☐ Security☐ Technology or communications support☐ Transport☐ Specialist support☐ Other (please specify)
.....

8. How long have you been in your current job?

☐ 0-4 years☐ 5-9 years☐ 10-14 years☐ 15-19 years☐ 20-24 years☐ 25 years or more

**9. How many years' experience do you have working in education support
(in your current role and in any previous roles)?**

☐ 0-4 years☐ 5-9 years☐ 10-14 years☐ 15-19 years☐ 20-24 years☐ 25 years or more

10. What is the minimum qualification required for your current role?

YOUR WORKPLACE

11. What education sector do you work in? Please select as many as apply

<input type="checkbox"/> Early childhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher education
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	

12. Are you employed at a public or a private school, institution or organisation?

<input type="checkbox"/> Public (funded by the government)
<input type="checkbox"/> Private (funded by a private organisation)
<input type="checkbox"/> Public private partnership (funded by the government but run by a private organisation)

13. Are you employed in one school or institution, or are you employed by an organisation to work across several different schools/institutions?

<input type="checkbox"/> One school/institution	<input type="checkbox"/> Across several institutions
---	--

14. If you are employed at one school or institution,

a. About how many students attend your school/institution?

b. Where is your school/institution located?

<input type="checkbox"/> Large urban city	<input type="checkbox"/> Small city or town	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural area
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c. What is the socio-economic status of your school/institution?

☐ Low (Decile 1-3)☐ Medium (Decile 4-7)☐ High (Decile 8-10)☐ Not applicable

15. If you work across several schools or institutions, how many students do you support?

YOUR EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

16. Do you have an employment contract?

☐ Yes☐ No

17. If you have an employment contract, what type of contract do you have?

☐ Permanent full-time☐ Permanent part-time☐ Fixed term full-time☐ Fixed term part-time☐ Casual, come in when needed

18. Do you have a job description?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Don't know

19. If you have a job description, is it updated regularly?

☐ Yes☐ No

20. How much are you paid per year (before tax) for your education support role?

☐ \$20,000 or less☐ \$20,001 - \$30,000☐ \$30,001 - \$50,000☐ \$50,000 - \$70,000☐ \$70,001 - \$100,000☐ \$100,001 or more

21. Do you feel that you are fairly paid for the work you do?

☐ Yes☐ No

22. Do you get any additional benefits with your job?

Sickness or health benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Unemployment benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Pension scheme	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Employment injury benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Family benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Maternity/Paternal/Parental benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Invalidity/Disability benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Survivors benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Housing allowance/Subsidy	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Transportation benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Annual holiday pay	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Study leave	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Special provisions for people working in rural or remote areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

Other (please specify)

23. Do you feel that your job is secure?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please comment

24. Do you belong to a union?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please name the union that represents you in your education support role



25. If you belong to a union, what sorts of activities or support does your union provide for education support personnel?

26. If you belong to a union, what other activities or support would you like your union to provide to best represent your interests?

27. If you belong to a union, how effective do you feel your union is in representing your needs in your education support role?

☐ Very effective

☐ Effective

☐ Neutral

☐ Ineffective

☐ Very ineffective

YOUR WORKING CONDITIONS

28. Do feel that your work is respected by teachers in your school or institution?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the respect you receive (or do not receive) from teachers?

29. Do you feel that your work is respected by the school/institution leaders?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the respect you receive (or do not receive) from leaders?

30. Do you feel that your work is respected by students?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the respect you receive (or do not receive) from students?

31. Do you feel that your work is respected by parents?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any comments you'd like to make about the respect you receive (or do not receive) from parents?

32. What status does your society accord your education support role?

☐ Very high

☐ High

☐ Average

☐ Low

☐ Very low

33. Do you feel that you have a say in what you do each day, or are you told what to do?

☐ I have some independence or autonomy in my work

☐ I am told what to do



34. Do you work as a part of a team with teachers?

☐ Yes

☐ No

35. Do you participate in decisions about changes that might happen in your workplace?

☐ Yes

☐ No

36. Do you have any comments you'd like to make regarding your answers to Questions 33-35?

37. Do you feel discriminated against in your school or institution because of gender, race or ethnicity, religion, or some other reason? For example, do you miss out on work opportunities or are you excluded from social occasions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please comment

38. Do you feel that your school or institution is a safe, secure and healthy place to work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, why not?

PROFESSIONALISM

39. Do you feel you have opportunities for promotion or higher responsibilities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

40. Do you feel you have opportunities to study for a higher qualification, while still keeping your current job?

☐ Yes

☐ No

41. Do you have any comments you'd like to make about your opportunities for promotion or study?

42. Do you have access to formal professional learning and development (workshops or training sessions run by an expert)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what topics have been covered by the formal professional learning and development?

43. How often do you receive formal professional learning and development?

☐ Never

☐ Once or twice in my career

☐ Once a year

☐ Several times a year

44. Do you have access to informal professional learning and development (conversations with colleagues in a similar role to you, with teachers, or with outside agencies)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what topics do you discuss?



45. How often do you have informal professional learning and development conversations?

☐ Never

☐ Once or twice in my career

☐ Once a year

☐ Several times a year

46. What formal or informal professional learning and development would you like to receive?

47. Is your performance regularly reviewed or appraised?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, who reviews or appraises your work, and how often does this occur?

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

48. How satisfied do you feel in your education support role?

☐ Very satisfied

☐ Satisfied

☐ Neutral

☐ Dissatisfied

☐ Very dissatisfied

49. How confident do you feel to carry out your education support role?

☐ Very confident

☐ Confident

☐ Neutral

☐ Unconfident

☐ Very unconfident

50. How much of a difference to you feel your job makes for teachers?

☐ A big difference

☐ A small difference

☐ No difference

51. How much of a difference to you feel your job makes for students?

☐ A big difference

☐ A small difference

☐ No difference

52. How likely are you to be doing the same or similar job in five years' time?

<input type="checkbox"/> Very likely	<input type="checkbox"/> Likely	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/> Unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/> Very unlikely	

53. What are the three biggest challenges in your education support role?

a.

b.

c.

54. How do you think these challenges could be overcome?

55. What are the three biggest successes you have had in your education support role?

a.

b.

c.

56. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make about your education support role?



Appendix B: Survey of Union Leadership

Survey of unions representing education support personnel

1. Please name your union and your country:

2. Does your union represent education support personnel (ESP)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Are you aware of other unions in your country who represent ESP?

These might be education or non-education unions. If so, please list these other unions:

4. If your union DOES NOT currently represent ESP, do you have plans to represent ESP in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these plans:

If your union does not currently represent ESP, you have now finished the survey. Thank you for your response.

5. If your union DOES represent ESP, how many ESP do you represent?

6. What proportion of ESP in your country do you think your union represents?

<input type="checkbox"/> More than half of all ESP	<input type="checkbox"/> About half of all ESP
<input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than half of all ESP	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure, as the size of the workforce is unknown
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

7. Which groups of education employees does your union represent? Please indicate the approximate proportion of your union membership in each of these categories: (e.g. ESP 30%, primary teachers 50%, secondary teachers 20%, etc.)

Early childhood educators	
Primary teachers	
Secondary teachers	
Vocational education and training personnel	
Higher education personnel	
Education support personnel	
Other	

8. What types of job categories do your ESP represent? (Please select as many as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Administration and/or clerical	<input type="checkbox"/> Career guidance and/or counselling
<input type="checkbox"/> Librarian and/or document management	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance and/or skilled trades
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring and/or teaching and learning assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Security
<input type="checkbox"/> Technology or communications support	<input type="checkbox"/> Transport
<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist support	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

9. How long has your union represented ESP, and how did this come about?



10. Do you have dedicated staff in your union who work on ESP issues?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How many staff members?

Can you briefly describe the structure?

11. What are the top three issues or objectives you are seeking to address for ESP at a national level?

a.

b.

c.

12. Which issue takes up the most of your time and resources?

13. Do you have one “good news” story to share about your work with ESP?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY

Appendix C: Income Data for the Case Study Countries

	Average wage		Poverty line		Majority of survey responses	
	Local currency	USD (rounded)	Local currency	USD (rounded)	Local currency	USD (rounded)
Brazil	BRL 25,452	6,500	BRL 6,567	1,500	< BRL 60,000	< 15,000
Canada	CAD 50,748	38,000	CAD 20,749	15,500	–	–
France	EUR 35,136	39,500	EUR 10,930	12,500	< EUR 20,000	< 22,500
NZ	NZD 57,408	38,500	NZD 20,165	13,500	< NZD 30,000	< 20,000
Philippines	PHP 125,496	2,500	PHP 10,969	200	< PHP 132,000	< 2,500
USA	USD 47,112	47,000	USD 16,038	16,000	< USD 25,000	< 25,000
Zimbabwe	USD 9,168	9,000	USD 1,160	1,000	< USD 5,000	< 5,000

Notes: The most recent average wage data were taken from International Labour Organization (2018). In this report, monthly income figures were provided. These have been multiplied by 12 to generate an annual average wage.

The poverty line data were taken from Ortiz, Behrendt, Acuña-Ulate, and Nguyen (2018). These figures are for one adult, per year, as at 2015.



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Understanding the Invisible Workforce: Education Support Personnel's Roles, Needs and the Challenges They Face

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Massey University
Institute of Education –
Te Kura o Te Mātauranga
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