



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

NASBTT Opinion Piece

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Early Career Framework – what might this mean for recruitment and retention?

What are the key things that school business managers should be planning for following the Department for Education's response to the 'Strengthening Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Improving Teacher Career Progression' consultation? How might the outcomes affect recruitment and retention? The development of an Early Career Framework (ECF), which we are involved in behind-the-scenes, is critical.

The main point arising from the consultation is that the award of QTS will remain where it is, at the end of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) year, with an extended induction period of two years and the ECF will ensure "consistency of support in this crucial phase of their career". The intent is that this is a longer period of support and guidance with clear entitlements (and entitlement is, I think, a key word) to professional development, access to mentoring and coaching and, potentially, reduced timetabling. Crucially, the extended induction will not impact on salaries and "teachers in their second year will have the same opportunity to advance through pay scales they currently have".

By clearly setting out the entitlement to support that every early-career teacher should receive, clarity over professional development, coaching and mentoring and guidance should become far more transparent and less dependent on the whims of a particular school leadership team. But by committing to entitle early career teachers to more support, we must not create a system fraught with accountability and data gathering which increases workload and stress, exacerbating the very problem it is trying to help solve. The framework must be about guidance, nurture, support and wellbeing and not create a tick-list of training events which must be sat through for the sake of a paper trail.

Every day I read another article which claims that teachers do not have enough funded training on x or y, and yet at some point it has to be recognised that teachers cannot singlehandedly cure all of society's ills. What must happen next is an honest and open discussion about what really constitutes 'initial' training and which aspects could be picked up in more depth as a career progresses. The ECF gives us the ideal opportunity to rationalise what it is that we want from our teachers – and what it is that they really need to become confident in order to excel in the business of helping children to progress.

The ECF will also need to strike that careful balance between ensuring a fair and equitable common entitlement for all teachers whilst giving enough scope for personalisation to prevent a generation of 'cookie cutter' teachers who are prevented from exploring their own interest and areas of expertise. What might work well in one area of the country, indeed – in one school, may not be what is needed in the school down the road. The framework will have the important task of identifying what it is that we want teachers to become skilled in, without dictating to what extent and in what order of priority.

The big elephant remaining in the room is, of course, the issue of funding. And whilst this summer the Secretary of State confirmed that £508 million has been allocated to ensure that the main pay range for classroom teachers will rise by 3.5%, as yet a firm commitment to the funds that will be allocated to schools to implement the changes resulting from this consultation has not been made. What is obvious is that schools are not in a position to provide the additional support that is required within existing budgets. Without time and resources where necessary, the ECF would be sadly doomed to failure.

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