



European
Commission



Supporting teacher and school leader careers – A Policy Guide

Summary

Education and
Training

IMPROVING THE WORKING LIVES OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS ACROSS EUROPE

School education cannot exist without its teachers and school leaders. They are the ones responsible for learner development on a daily basis and it is the learners for whom they are undertaking their professional role. Not only do European school education systems want to continually recruit enough teachers and school leaders, they also want to keep and nurture them.

However, serious teacher shortages are being reported and school education careers across Europe are still often seen as a flat or one-dimensional, with few or no opportunities for progression. This raises a serious challenge both for schools and for education systems, which need not only a sustainable and highly competent profession, but also a passionate and future-oriented one.

SUPPORTING TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS: A POLICY GUIDE

This summary and the full publication of SUPPORTING TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS: A POLICY GUIDE are aimed primarily at policy makers but may also be useful to any education stakeholder concerned with supporting the careers of teachers and school leaders.

Whilst this summary gives a useful overview, stakeholders are encouraged to use the full Guide to inform and inspire their own work in the area of teacher and school leader careers:

PART ONE – “New Understandings and New Approaches” – encourages a multi-dimensional understanding of teacher and school leader development and progression, based on current challenges and recent research from across Europe.

PART TWO – “Supporting Progression” – is divided into five chapters, each taking the challenges and concepts explored in Part One and offering practical ideas and possible solutions, accompanied by examples of recent action taken in European countries.



ABOUT THE ET2020 WORKING GROUP SCHOOLS

The ET2020 Working Group on Schools is made up of representatives from European education ministries and stakeholder organisations. Its mandate is to critically reflect on the governance of school education and how systems can address the serious challenges of quality and equity in order to strive for better learning outcomes for all young people.

This guide reflects not only recent work but also a legacy of ten years of European collaboration to improve the support to teachers and school leaders within school education systems.



TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS – FROM POTENTIAL CRISIS TO POSITIVE CHANGE

It is the ambition of the European Education Area to support outward-looking schools and their teachers and school leaders across Europe, giving all pupils an opportunity to have meaningful learning experiences derived from diverse cultures and experiences; and to support innovative and inclusive education and training systems based on the principle of lifelong learning. Having enough passionate – positive, engaged, ambitious – and highly competent teachers and school leaders inspiring all learners to reach their full potential is crucial.

SUPPORTING TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS: A POLICY GUIDE addresses a number of concerns and challenges facing school education systems in their capacity to best recruit and nurture their teachers and school leaders. It is aimed mainly towards policy makers, offering new understandings and approaches to careers in school education, together with numerous recent examples of policy action from countries across Europe. *(For more, see the Introduction to the Guide)*

Both recent research and discussions by the members of the ET2020 Working Group highlight clear, yet interconnected, challenges within school education systems concerning the careers of teachers and school leaders. A number of countries report a shortage of teachers in certain subjects, in certain areas of the country, and in new candidates to Initial Teacher Education. **Recruitment** (bringing new staff in), **retention**, (keeping them in the profession) and **regeneration** (the notion that teachers and school leaders continue to develop themselves, for the good of themselves and their pupils, and nurture their peers as a professional community) are all important. *(For, more see Chapter 1 ‘Current Challenges’ of the Guide)*

Improving motivation	Motivation may be both intrinsic – such as the altruism of wanting to inspire young people – and extrinsic – such as working conditions. Recruitment and retention may be challenged by negative public perceptions, negative experiences in the first years of teaching, and more attractive conditions and salaries in other sectors. However, because motivation is particular to each individual it is difficult, but not impossible, to create action that takes into account the motivation of all teachers and school leaders. The school climate and the well-being of teachers are also common concerns.
Valuing both talent and competence	It is important to create an appropriate balance between developing <i>competences</i> , which define what is required of an employee according to the needs of an organisation, and nurturing <i>talents</i> , which recognise the individual attributes and potential of a teacher or school leader. One way to achieve this is with carefully structured dialogue, which is in itself a challenge to create and monitor.
Diversifying career paths	Two main types of career structure currently seem to prevail in the school education profession: flat (single-level) and hierarchical (multi-level). To motivate potential candidates to begin training and employment, and to motivate present teachers and school leaders to stay, it is necessary to create and stimulate a more diverse and dynamic image of the school education profession and the different roles and career opportunities within it.
Supporting a sense of professional identity	Self-perception determines how a teacher or school leader sees his or her own professional expertise and consequently how they wish to develop. Again, there is no universal approach for all but the objective is to have professionals who are willing to take responsibility for their own development, as well as learn from and support those they work alongside. The challenge for education systems is to support this sense of professional identity, which may require a change of mind-set at different levels: the system (central authorities and/or other institutions), the teachers and school leaders as a collective, and by individuals themselves.

TOWARDS A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS

MOTIVATION, ABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

The development of teachers and their career progression involves a dynamic interplay between motivation, abilities, and opportunities, and all three are necessary.

Knowing there are opportunities to develop and advance during one's career is an important factor in helping teachers retain motivation, which includes a sense of empowerment, of direction, and of recognising one's own strengths. Career advancement is also a matter of stimulating professional competence development (abilities) and afterwards providing individuals with the opportunities to put these newly developed abilities into good use. Vice versa, those who have received new opportunities (e.g. new roles or responsibilities) may need to quickly develop new abilities/competences to enable them to fulfil the tasks of that new role.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF CAREER PATH

The importance of motivation, abilities, and opportunities for teachers requires a particular understanding of a teacher's working life as a 'career': a path over a period of time with different opportunities for variation and progress within or across a profession.

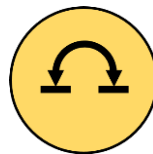
The Guide proposes a direct response to concerns that careers in school education are often seen as a flat with no or few opportunities for progression. These ideas are based on approaches that are already established in some countries in Europe. There are several different ways of understanding teachers' and school leaders' career paths – even if still centred on the important role of classroom teaching – and one or more of these directions may be pursued consecutively or at the same time.

Figure - Six types of teacher and school leader career path. Note that these paths are not exclusive and may be experienced at the same time, or one after the other, by an individual



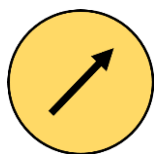
Moving upwards

Gaining a position of increased decision-making and responsibility
e.g. teacher to school leader; school head of a larger school



Changing contexts

Making a choice to work in a different context
e.g. teacher of a different age group; school leader moving from rural to urban school



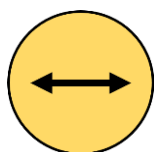
Moving up and along

Becoming a more competent teacher or school leader
e.g. teacher gains pedagogical expertise; leader improves leadership qualities



Adding layers of system

Networking/contact with local, regional or national stakeholders, which requires broader expertise
e.g. teacher as a project leader of a regional initiative; school head acting as advisor to ministry



Moving sideways

Taking a different (temporary or permanent) role within school
e.g. special needs co-ordinator; acting as a mentor to new teachers or school leaders



Moving in and out

Crossing border of school community
e.g. temporary post with NGO; becoming a researcher; changing profession to become a teacher; school head returning to classroom teaching

TEACHERS, SCHOOL LEADERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Teacher: A broad understanding of the role of the teacher as extending beyond the pedagogical practice of the classroom. They may also take on minor or temporary leadership roles – as project managers, or specialists in a particular competence.

School leader: Those who hold a formal position of responsibility for the management of the school. School leaders are also teachers, as they are also still involved in learner development, both in and out of the classroom. There needs to be certain career support to reach a leadership role.

School head: The most senior school leadership position - the person with overall responsibility for the pedagogical and administrative management of the school or cluster of schools. This role might also be referred to as ‘head teacher’, ‘school principal’ or ‘school director’. They can also be included in the broad definition of ‘school leader’.

POLICY MEASURES TO CONSIDER

Whether in a centralised or decentralised system, creating and supporting new policy initiatives on teacher and school leader careers, requires action on several levels:

DIVERSE CAREER PATHS	Broaden the understanding of teacher and school leader careers to include different types of career path. This approach requires a shared appreciation of careers in the school education profession, e.g. in terms of a framework that can contribute to a shared language and to signposts for teacher and school leaders, thus creating coherence between the way in which different stakeholders understand teacher career opportunities.
VARIETY OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES	Consider at a national, local or a school level what variety of career opportunities can be created for teachers and school leaders to work and develop as professionals. Some of these possibilities are based on local decisions or system-wide opportunities. Some of these functions can be appointed on a temporary basis, while others can be more permanent advancements.
SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT	Create a support system for continuous professional development in order to support career steps , with a balanced focus on pedagogy to become an expert in teaching, but also to qualify for fulfilling new job-functions. Personal development plans for teachers and school leaders should be effectively linked to training opportunities.
EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE	Support effective dialogue between teachers and school leaders. Through the mutual recognition of school needs and individual ambitions, new roles and responsibilities for the teacher, their colleagues, and school leaders are made more explicit and possible. Through this dialogue, personal planning can be complementary to school strategic development.
RECOGNITION AND REWARD	Identify ways to recognise and reward the development and career progression of teachers and school leaders in each of the different types of role and career path (either through salaries or other non-financial forms of recognition, such as time compensation).
SCHOOL HEADS AND THEIR LOCAL SUPPORT	Pay particular attention to the recruitment, support and nurturing of school heads , as well as improving the capacity of those local stakeholders that work most closely with school heads to give effective support.

CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

HOW A FRAMEWORK FOR CAREERS CAN HELP

To better support the careers of teachers and school leaders, it is essential that a shared language and vision are developed that can help to better coordinate action for different stakeholders: ministries, education employers, local authorities, schools, school leaders, teachers, teacher unions and teacher councils, and teacher education providers.

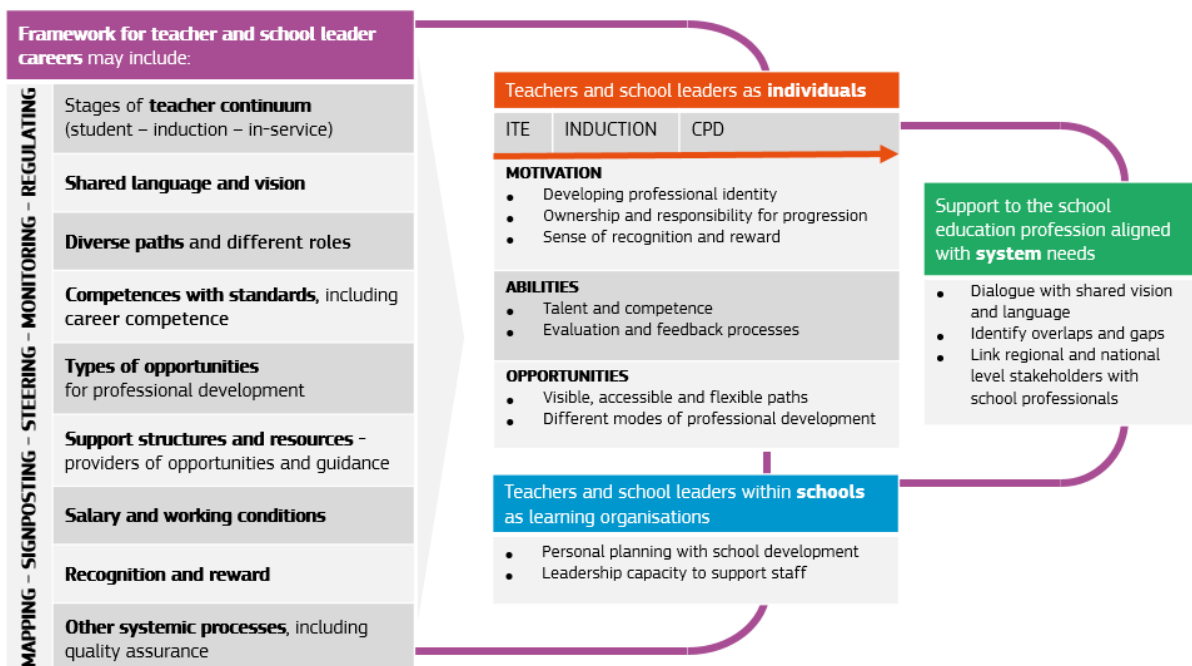
Whilst competence frameworks are common in school education, they may only focus on the “abilities” of a teacher or school leader and do not necessarily provide a way of defining structured support for progression. Against the background of teacher shortages that exists, the Guide proposes a template for a “framework for careers” that could address a broader notion of teacher and school leader progression and provide consideration and a response to their motivation and ambitions, as well as define opportunities for progression.

It is important to think broadly and be fully transparent about the inclusion of different elements which should identify and respond to the needs of the teacher and school leader, the school and the system. Whereas some may be included in order to map or signpost opportunities, other elements, such as rules and regulations may be purposefully included in order to steer or monitor aspects of teacher and school leader careers. This will involve important dialogue and negotiation in order to engage different stakeholders, ensuring a sense of ownership and understanding of responsibility at different levels of the system.

(For more, see Chapter 3 ‘A Framework for teacher and school leader careers’)

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Figure – a template for a framework with its potential use and positive impact across the system

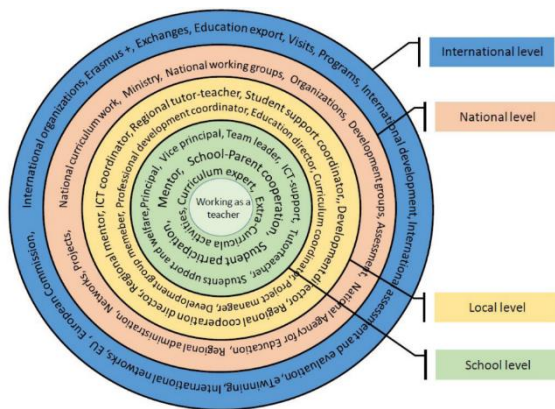


NEW APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER CAREERS

The Policy Guide offers a multi-dimensional understanding of teacher and school leader development and progression, based on current challenges and recent research from across Europe. It discusses prevailing issues and new understandings in detail, also offering practical ideas and possible solutions accompanied by examples of recent action taken in European countries. The proposed policy steps are presented here.

For a detailed discussion and country examples, consult Part Two of the Guide.

CREATING DIVERSE CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITIES



Having choice is fundamental. Identifying and communicating what career opportunities are currently available to teachers and school leaders is a first step and may be achieved by simple mapping. The next step is to consider how this offer might be enhanced to increase choice, for instance by linking to certain elements of new initiatives or reform.

Schools and the wider system should offer ways to diversify opportunities beyond the core role of the teacher in the classroom. These include leadership, specialist roles, and mobility opportunities to learn from peers working in other contexts. Defined levels of progression, including qualifications, may help to formalise career paths, although informal and temporary roles should also be recognised.

The visibility of career opportunities for teachers and school leaders can be improved by involving professional development organisations. Equally important is improving access to such opportunities, lifting time and other resource pressures on teachers and schools. Flexible working patterns may be considered.

SUPPORTING THE INDIVIDUAL TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER

The notion of “career competence” needs to be established for teachers and school leaders, enabling them to make informed decisions about their professional development and career path. A fundamental step in policy action is for it to become accepted system-wide as part of staff evaluation and feedback, and of routine professional practice. Where competence frameworks already exist, career competence can be built into the formal expectations for every teacher and school leader.

A framework for careers in school education needs to formally recognise and make visible the diverse paths and forms of support that are possible, as well as the full continuum of professional development, for individual teachers. Personal development plans may be better appreciated alongside school strategic development.

Action that enables structured dialogue and reflection is crucial, including specific training for these conversations, in order to maintain a sense of personal development and progress as key objectives. This might be the responsibility of a school leadership team, or delegated to supportive stakeholders working at local level, such as the inspectorate or municipality.

Policy makers should check that the evaluation and feedback that takes place allows for different expectations and measures to exist, according to a teacher’s context, own talents and competences. Professional standards that reflect the different stages of a school education career can be built into guidelines or frameworks.



SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS ACROSS THE SYSTEM



A key step in policy action is making sure that evaluation processes are viewed positively. Effective and balanced processes involve in-school evaluation (including self-evaluation) complemented by a form of evaluation that adds objectivity and a comparative viewpoint, in a number of systems this being from outside of the school. Templates and model processes will help schools achieve these goals.

Schools should achieve a balance between the individual development and ambitions of their teachers and the aims of the school. This can benefit from external support, and occasionally mediation, which should be provided system-wide. At the same time, a framework for careers should support aligned school development plans and help to realise the priorities of the wider education system.

Policy makers should consider different forms of reward by which to motivate teachers and school leaders, and to recognise their contribution to school education. There are many options at national or local level - including labels or certificates, public awards, and monetary payments - but it is likely that the most valued will be reasonable time allowances for staff to undertake the responsibilities that they have accepted. Discussions with unions may lead to agreement of what is acceptable compensation for work done beyond usual classroom responsibilities.

SUPPORTING THE CAREERS OF SCHOOL HEADS

Heavy workload and responsibility, and the perception of isolation, are well-known deterrents to potential school heads. Radical solutions may be difficult to envisage; however, there may be opportunities to encourage and support distributed leadership or other organisational arrangements in and around schools to alleviate this pressure.

Recruitment of new inspiring and motivational school heads requires clear criteria for demonstrating the qualities sought. However, if a teacher becomes a school head there are likely to be gaps in the managerial and possibly leadership competence domains, which should be acknowledged as normal and predictable. Policy action can ensure that tailor-made support is readily available, such as formal training for headships, at national or local level, as well as mentoring arrangements.

School heads work at the critical boundary - geographically and professionally - between the school and the wider system. The “middle ground” of local stakeholders, such as advisors and the municipality, can have a significant impact. Action at system level may be required to coordinate, and improve the competence of, these stakeholders, in order to better support school heads.



MANAGING SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Teachers and school leaders should be assured that Continued Professional Development (CPD) contributes to both the improvement of their schools and their career progression. The link between CPD and career progression should be made explicit by whatever means possible. A commitment to national standards and qualifications can improve a sense of equity and transparency in career progression.

Supporting teachers and school leaders in their career progression requires a considerable number of different support elements. Facilitating networking arrangements between teachers and school leaders, and other stakeholders is beneficial and may require an umbrella organisation. Setting up online networks can substantially improve communication and the sharing of good practice, with little cost involved.

Developing system-wide approaches to school organisational practice (e.g. leadership teams and other specialised roles) and quality assurance (such as frameworks and evaluation processes) will enable schools to adopt new ideas in supporting teacher and school leader career progression.

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