

Understanding the Journeys of Aspiring Further Education and Skills Teachers in England

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Abstract

This qualitative action research study investigates the motivations of and challenges faced by trainee further education (FE) and skills teachers in England. Using the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, it explores the factors that drive individuals to enter and remain in the teaching profession. The research involves 35 final year trainee teachers enrolled in PGCE Further education and Skills (FES) and Diploma in Education and Training (DET) courses at six colleges in London and southeast October – December 2023. The data was collected, examining their current employment status, likelihood of becoming teachers and long-term career goals. Findings indicate a strong commitment to the profession, with aspirations for leadership roles or specialised teaching positions. The study also highlights varying levels of confidence and readiness among trainees. Recent reforms in the FE sector, such as the FE + Skills Collective report and the updated Diploma in Teaching qualification framework and AI in education are discussed for their potential impact on trainee teachers. Key motivations include a passion for teaching, career progression and subject-specific interests. However, trainees encounter significant challenges, e.g., administrative workload, student challenging behaviours and the need for better mentorship and support. The study highlights the importance of tailored support and resources to enhance professional development and career progression, offering valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers.

Keyword: aspirations, challenges, further education, skills teachers, motivation, teacher journey