Perspectives on Early Career Researchers

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Objective

To recruit, and facilitate the development of, outstanding young research talents
Ideal trajectory

Age

6-15
16-18
19-21
22-23
24-26
27-30
31-36
37+

Elementary schooling
High school
Bachelor
Master
Post doc
Ass. Prof.
Prof.

Fraction of population

100%
13%
0.4%
0.06%
Tenure track?
A typical academic progression leads to the first permanent employment in mid 30s.

At any earlier stage, you can reasonably expect to not qualify for a further career in science.

*Is this attractive for the most talented people?*
A young academic is expected to leave friends and family to be «mobile» – with only moderate expectation that the mobility will be rewarded with a job.

Young professionals elsewhere are mobile within permanent employment.

Is this attractive for the most talented people?
An academic career progression is largely incompatible with the biological time-scales of establishing a family.

Statoil has a child care facility next to the research division so that you can have lunch with your kids.

*Is this attractive for the most talented people?*
From talking to young, talented, potential future researchers in academia:

No.
From talking to young, talented, potential future *female* researchers in academia:

*Hell, no.*
Proposition 1: Timeliness

It is possible to assess a researcher’s capabilities by the time they are in their mid 20s.
Proposition 2: Excellence

Recruitment benefits from clear and predictable career paths
Proposition 3: Fairness

Senior academicians benefit from recruiting mobile post docs as cheap and effective labor

Senior academicians benefit from having the power to fire young researchers (a.k.a. Tenure track)
Suggestion 1

- The post doctoral position should be essentially eliminated.
- Funding should be reallocated to increase permanent or long-term researcher positions.
Suggestion 2

• The possibility of considering direct permanent employment for the absolutely best PhD students should be explored.
Suggestion 3

- Tenure track faculty positions should only be introduced as a replacement for post.doc. positions.
- Expected tenure rate should be designed to be well above 50%.
Suggestion 4

• Enhanced researcher mobility can be achieved through increased use of reduced teaching duties for early stage permanent faculty.
It is not necessarily those who endure the longest who are the best academicians.

- Assoc. Prof Inga Berre