

# A Resourceful Partnership: Work in Progress on the UK Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB)

**Michael BLAMIREs, Simon HUGHES**

*Canterbury Christ Church University UK*

s.a.hughes@canterbury.ac.uk

**Abstract.** In this paper, we describe work in progress on the UK Teacher Training Resource Bank. This is an online database of articles, artefacts, materials and resources which have been compiled from the history of teacher education. The inclusion criteria for the site are being evolved in an organic and resourceful partnership between Canterbury Christ Church University, The Institute of Education's e-librarian, RM/3T and The British Education Index. Each object added to the site is assigned a unique identifier and carefully controlled meta data.

**Keywords:** Meta data - meta tagging - research tool - teacher education

## Introduction

This paper sets out details of the initial work that has been undertaken in developing an online resource bank for education professionals working in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The project, funded by the UK Teacher Training Agency (TTA), is a commercial enterprise based on an increasingly fruitful partnership between RM/3T (A UK-based technology group of companies), Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), The Institute of Education (London) e-librarian project and the British Education Index (BEI).

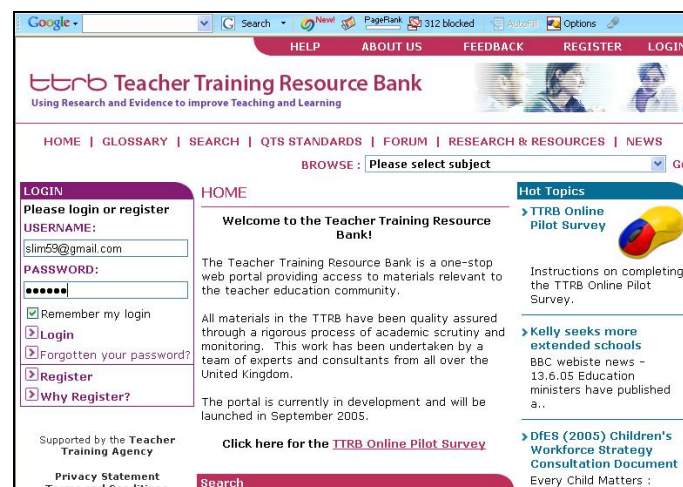


Figure 1: The TTRB Home Page

Web Address = <http://www.ttrb.ac.uk>

## 1. Rationale

The intended outcome of the project is a website (<http://www.ttrb.ac.uk>) that contains resources that have been included only where they meet a strict set of criteria. It is being developed using SQL technology, with each item entered through a bespoke Content Management System (CMS). This has been specified, designed and implemented by the TTRB consortium. The consortium has exploited the rich history and experience of the BEI to develop a unique meta data set which maps the knowledge domain of initial teacher education and tags each item in the database for intuitive searching.

At the point at which the site goes live it will contain over a thousand tagged and quality assured articles, whose provenance is identified and whose author(s) is attributed. The database will include policy level documents from the UK's Department For Education and Skills (DFES), its Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the TTA itself. It will also incorporate the reports of EPPI reviews (Evidence for Policy and Practice in Education), the available objects from the Behaviour4Learning, Citized and, Multiverse Initial teacher education Professional Resource Networks (IPRNs) and the Subject Induction Packs (SIPs) written to support tutors new to Higher Education. In addition to this there will be a number of video resources and references to key websites supporting ITE.

In order to embed the site in the daily professional learning work of tutors and tutees, the TTRB will also provide a series of glossary items that will give authoritative 'takes' on key issues and themes in ITE. It will provide access to the specimen answers given during the trial of the e-librarian pilot project and may, in due course, host this service should additional funding be provided by the TTA. Users of the site will therefore be able to search for materials and resources using:

- Key words
- Themes in education
- Phases of education

Should these searches not return useful objects they will then be able to refine their search and offer it to a trained librarian whose commitment is to make a minimum of 15 suggestions within 24 hours.

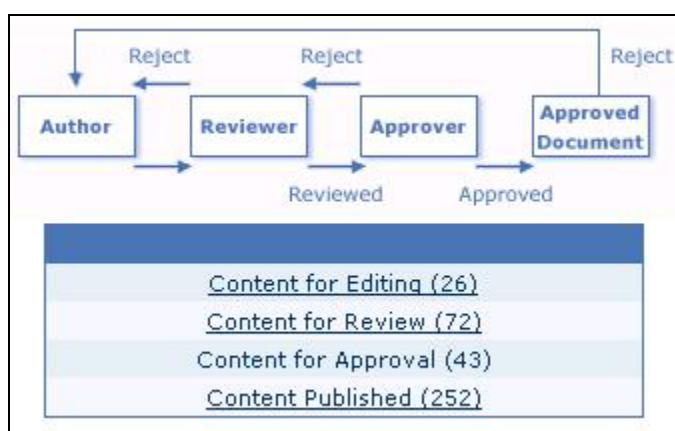
## 2. Initial Work

Having secured the contract and negotiated fixed deliverables, it became necessary to begin work immediately on some mission critical activity. The remainder of the paper sets out this work and describes some of the immediate challenges. It will also describe the potential research activities that the project may spawn.

1. Development of the technology platform. A factor in the success of the bid was the consortium's ability to bring to the table technologies that had been deployed in the development of the Behaviour4learning ([www.behaviour4learning.ac.uk](http://www.behaviour4learning.ac.uk)) and Multiverse ([www.multiverse.ac.uk/](http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/)) IPRNs. Consequently both the architecture and a software footprint were available that could be re-purposed for the new project. Developers were deployed to re-brand the front end website rather than to have to start from scratch.

2. Establishment of quality assurance protocols. Since the consortium will provide a unique and (inter)national service, the development of a rigorous process for identifying, coding and including materials was central to the consortium's planning for the project. Work is underway to set out a workflow model that ensures checking at several points, appropriate feedback loops [1], proof reading and usability testing. The model

emerging depends on internal reviews by the consortium team, moderation sessions with consultants reviewing the materials and sampling by a management team. All work is subsequently reviewed externally by a steering group appointed by the TTA and by users in a range of training providers.



**Figure 2: The TTRB Quality Assurance Process**

3. The Development of Inclusion Criteria. Central to the TTA's tender specification for this project [2] was the need for a sophisticated system of tags for materials in the site. It was also clear that only those objects that met a range of criteria could be included and so Mike Blamires is developing schemas and protocols to be used by reviewers and consultants to the project. One of the more powerful aspects of the partnership is its integration with the BEI whose Thesaurus, in XML format, is being used by the CMS as an automated checker of the content being uploaded. Reviewers can tag the object with terms from the BEI or specify their own preferred term. This has had the interesting and unintended outcome of making a dynamic interaction between the TTRB and the BEI for mutual benefit. In essence we have created a gap analysis tool for the BEI which will give it a new impetus as it seeks to serve both the initial teacher education community and those working in research in education.

4. Development of the CMS. Tim Berners-Lee envisaged the World Wide Web being populated with objects tagged according to a series of unique identifiers [3]. In essence the database which is being created for the TTRB will be populated with learning objects that have such identifiers derived from the existing and emerging professional knowledge domain. Crucial to the success of the project therefore is the Content Management System through which entries to the database are being made. Much of the initial work has centred on designing the structure and fields for this tool which can be used by education experts to upload objects intuitively they have reviewed, peer-reviewed and moderated.

Content Published						
Current Articles						
Title	Release Date	Expiry Date	Access			
School meals	25 April 2005	25 May 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Enable	Delete
Project overview	25 April 2005	25 April 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Enable	Delete
Presentation	25 April 2005	25 April 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Enable	Delete
E-Learning in Initial Teacher Training: A Report by the Teacher Training Agency	26 April 2005	26 April 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Disable	Delete
A Systematic Review of the Impact on Students and Teachers of the Use of ICT for Assessment of Creative and Critical Thinking Skills	26 April 2005	26 April 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Disable	Delete
CILT: The National Centre for Languages	26 April 2005	26 April 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edit	Disable	Delete

**Figure 3: The Publications Tool in the CMS**

5. Usability testing and assessment. In order for this project to be brought to a successful conclusion considerable time, effort and money is being assigned to usability testing. Groups of tutors, mentors, peer academics, trainees in school-based settings as well as HEI's and stakeholders have been invited to participate in both face to face testing sessions and online surveys. The site has been subject also to rigorous accessibility trials conducted by the technology provider and underwritten by quality assurance experts within the UK Teacher Training Agency. The site has been 'signed off' in this regard by the project managers. Feedback from the tests has been collated and a report, as yet unpublished, filed with the TTA. Data was harvested using a combination of quantitative measures through the CMS itself and qualitative tools which are being written up for publication elsewhere. It should be noted, however, that user feedback has been central to development of this project right from the start and their input to the design of the site critical to its success.

### 3. Initial findings

One of the most important findings so far has been that partnerships of this nature are possible. Each partner contributes something unique that none of the others possess. The academic members of staff at CCCU provide the appropriate intellectual capital for the project. RM/3T have contributed over 40 years of experience in providing educational technological solutions and are developing now a bespoke software platform for this new initiative. The e-librarian gives the project access to the biggest education research library in Europe as well as a working solution to the problems faced by dispersed and distributed learners seeking access to quality assured web-based resources. Finally the BEI has provided a Thesaurus initially comprising 8,400 terms against which the team can code a vast array of resources.

On a practical note we have found that the BEI Thesaurus needs to be updated. E.g. the contested term 'inclusion' does not appear in the Thesaurus and yet is a 'hot topic' for all working in UK initial teacher education and continuing professional development programmes. Organically the TTRB will evolve as the partnership develops its own resourcefulness and interactivity. This will help us to meet our objective to keep this resource centre as contemporary and relevant to the needs of its users as is possible.

### References

- [1] This practice is often associated with the work of Ralph Stacey (e.g. 1994 Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics: London Pitman Publishing)
- [2] Eg. "We have let the contract for the Teacher Training Resource Bank to a consortium which includes Canterbury Christchurch University College and RM machines. The presentation of the site will match that of the IPRN sites. A key feature of the contract is the development of sophisticated tool for meta-tagging that will make the site highly accessible to a wide range of stakeholders." (Chief Executive's Report to the TTA Board 27th October 2004 <http://www.tta.gov.uk/php/read.php?resourceid=4558>)
- [3] <http://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/Architecture.html> [1] Anderson, R. E. (1992) Social impacts of computing: Codes of professional ethics. *Social Science Computing Review*, 10, 2, 453-469.