

The Training and Development Agency For Schools

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is the new name for the remodeled Teacher Training Agency - an executive non-departmental public body of the Department for Education and Skills.

The change in name, and the substantial restructuring of the TDA's corporate plan, reflects the Agency's new responsibilities. Like its predecessor, the TDA has responsibility for teacher recruitment and for improving the quality of teacher training, development and promotion of the diversity of routes to attain the teaching qualification.



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Christine Jones.
EBRDMS Project Manager.
The Training and Development
Agency for Schools .

The strategic and management aims of the TDA are to:

- ◆ Ensure that schools have an adequate supply of good-quality newly qualified teachers,
- ◆ Enable schools to develop the effectiveness of their support staff,
- ◆ Enable schools to develop the effectiveness of their teachers and keep their knowledge and skills up to date,
- ◆ Support schools to be effective in the management of training, development and remodeling of their workforce,
- ◆ Enhance the impact of its communications with all audiences,
- ◆ Plan and use resources effectively and efficiently, and
- ◆ Provide strategic planning support across the Agency.

Teacher training programmes

Started in 2002, the TDA's Employment Based Routes (EBR) programmes are teacher training programmes that allow trainees to work in a school and follow an individual training programme leading to qualified teacher status. According to the TDA's EBRDMS Project Manager Christine Jones, these programmes suit mature, well-qualified people who can quickly take on teaching responsibilities and who need to earn a living while they train.

“Many EBR trainees have relevant experience in other sectors or in a support role in a school, whilst others are career changers who want to move into teaching,” explained Christine Jones. “Our three EBR programmes suit mature, well-qualified people who can quickly take on teaching responsibilities and who need to earn a living while they train.”



The TTA quickly realised that the administration of the EBR programme would be best achieved with a web-based data management system so that all teacher training programme information could be collated centrally through web-based forms and, following the tender process, entered into a partnership agreement with Forvus to provide this.

An immediate success

Forvus developed the online EBR system, which enabled the TDA and EBR providers to record and monitor the progress and recruitment of the thousands of trainees taking part in the scheme each year. In August 2005 Forvus completed an architectural rewrite and re-launch of EBR to reflect the expanded policy and objectives of the re-branded Training and Development Agency for Schools.

A key component of the remit

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Users are now able to maximise the value of the data held in the system by utilising new reporting tools built on Microsoft Reporting Services.

Prior to the rewrite, the system had to be constantly re-programmed when policy changes were implemented but, explained Christine Jones, Forvus introduced a powerful ‘forms based’ XML Rules engine which enables the TDA to make ‘dynamic change validation criteria’ changes without having to write any code. *“This, combined with the enhanced reporting via Microsoft Reporting Services and an emphasis on automated data transfer to and from related systems wherever possible, has resulted in a flexible and scalable system that will easily handle our future expansion requirements,”* she added. *“An example of this flexibility is that from September 2005 we were able to extend this management tool to the Teach First programme with very little additional development.”*

Forvus go to the top of the class

The number of entrants to teacher training in 2004/5 was 41,300, the highest for 30 years. Of those, just over 6000 were EBR trainees

“EBR has allowed us to better record, monitor and understand the progress and recruitment of thousands of trainees who take part in the scheme each year.” concluded Christine Jones. *“The benefits are testament to the consultative partnership between Forvus and the TDA, and the web solution will help us in our drive to process improvement, as well as supporting evidence based decision-making.”*

Forvus continue to work closely with the TDA as the project continues to expand annually, to ensure that the system adapts to the needs of users and implementing any necessary modifications.

The new online ERB system meets new requirements as specified by the TDA, including the adoption of the latest Microsoft .NET and XML technologies, enhanced extraction of customised information, changes to reflect the TDA’s expansion, and the ability to incorporate policy and requirement changes in real-time. Benefits include:

- ◆ XML Rules engine, allowing users to customise ‘dynamic change validation criteria’ without having to write any code.
- ◆ Enhanced custom-based reporting via MS Reporting Services.
- ◆ Seamless, automated data transfer to and from related systems.
- ◆ Data can be extracted by users to port to their own systems for measurement and reporting purposes.
- ◆ Improved user-friendly web content accessibility following W3C guidelines.
- ◆ Validation of inputs, notifications and warnings systems.
- ◆ Increased capacity and security.
- ◆ Inherently flexible and scalable system design to allow future expansion.
- ◆ Improved Helpdesk facilities.

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