

Access to market-leading talent and committed to the best outcomes for our clients...

Find out more >

EducationInvestor

news and views on the business of learning

Hello sunniva2014
86.140.209.75
[Edit Profile](#)
[Logout](#)

Menu

Home
News and features
Deals archive
Awards
Executive moves
Conferences
Education Summit
Round table
Advertising
Subscribe
Contact us
About us
Admin

El article

Market forces

A new service from TES Global allows teachers to sell the learning resources they create online – but will it catch on? Sunniva Davies-Rommetveit investigates

In her day, teacher Bev Evans was a prolific creator of learning resources. Between 2006 and 2011 she made 600 resources for the TES Connect website which were downloaded millions of times in hundreds of countries. Sadly she passed away after a battle with cancer in March 2014, but while she was described as a “legend of the TES Resources platform”, she ironically did not make a penny from those efforts to facilitate teaching in special educational needs classrooms (Although TES Global, owner of TES Connect, did reward her with a full time job as its SEN subject lead in 2011.)

Of course, it was never about money for Evans. But it does speak to the huge dilemma TES has faced with its resources platform: how to ensure teachers get credit for what they create, while providing access to thousands of helpful, free online resources.

The fact that teachers were already earning good money using similar platforms like the US firm TeachersPayTeachers (TpT) probably did not help either. Indeed, Georgia-based kindergarten teacher Deanna Jump became the first TpT member to earn over \$1 million (about £670,000) in September 2012 – a sum Evans would surely have arrived at had the TES platform been monetised.

Now though, TES has moved to rectify that oversight by introducing a freemium pricing model. Teachers will be able to charge between £1 and £10 per download and have been given simple guidelines on how to go about becoming vendors. And with some 780,000 teaching resources already uploaded to the site (the majority of which is still free to access), the volume of new content to monetise in future could be considerable.

Education technology investor and expert Richard Taylor thinks that this is a positive step, but argues the move should have been prioritised “a few years ago” given the success of TpT in the US. For him, platforms like TES Connect are interesting to investors because “the core content is created and evaluated by educators based on their professional opinion and experience”. He adds: “Material that’s highly rated is because of the judgement of educational users, rather than techniques like search engine optimisation and public relations.”

Caroline Wright, director at the British Educational Suppliers Association, says that when you add monetisation to the mix, you can really start to gain an insight on “whether there is a market for a potential new resource”. And with TES Connect boasting seven million signed-up members, enterprising teachers have a vast addressable market.

Grand plans

For TES, the decision to monetise wasn’t just about profit, though it will take a cut of everything sold. As chief executive Rob Grimshaw explains, the firm’s future plans for the site simply would not be possible without monetisation. “We wanted the platform to be self-sustaining and eventually produce a good stream of revenue for TES. At the same time we want to maintain a huge community as well as the altruistic aspect to the platform.”

Those plans are highly ambitious too. Firstly TES hopes to group resources into comprehensive bundles that provide detailed help for a large chunk of the British curriculum. For instance, Grimshaw claims the firm has “enough resources on TES Connect to cover mathematics for one year of secondary school, matching the curriculum step by step”.

While it will take more time to amass all the necessary content, TES Connect would eventually like to become not just a useful supplement to mainstream teaching resources, but a complete alternative. And that poses a considerable threat to the publishing houses that currently dominate the education market. Teacher-to-teacher resources already are very popular among teachers, for instance being more flexible and responsive to curriculum changes than the periodically updated textbook.

According to a survey published by TES Global last month, out of over 3,000 teachers, 69% thought open resources were now used “more often than textbooks” in classrooms. 86% said that they produced better



Search news and features

- Match all
 Match any

Go >



In this issue



Latest headlines

[Civitas Learning acquires BlikBook](#)

[Philippines: Ayala Education invests \\$9.9m in University of Nueva Caceres](#)

[Exclusive: Sovereign Capital to buy recruitment agency Synarbor](#)

THE SPENCER GROUP
Bringing more to the table



More >

EducationInvestor
Awards 2015



[Click for more information](#)

lessons than textbooks and 81% that they help teachers access new, innovative methods of teaching.

"There are now loads of ways you can take the raw curriculum and change it into a useful resource. Textbooks will remain, but it's already a much more diverse market place where schools are buying in different solutions," Grimshaw says.

A choppy market?

However, there are some clear barriers TES must overcome to achieve long-term success with its venture. First, the switch to charging for resources that were previously accessible for free carries an obvious degree of risk. The TES Resources website's look and feel have remained relatively unchanged, too, notes one observer, which could prove problematic when trying to draw in new customers.

By the end of February 2015, almost 300 teachers had uploaded 2,820 chargeable resources following the freemium launch; not a bad start. But as it grows, better search filters for sifting through the reams of chargeable or free resources will be needed, says Taylor.

"One teacher I know purchased three resources within 10 minutes on TpT, after spending an hour searching TES Connect. I think time is the most valuable resource any educator has, and any tool that helps them identify and obtain resources more efficiently is likely to be successful."

Maintaining the quality of resources under the new service will also be vital; after all, expectations will be higher when teachers are paying for products rather than just downloading them for free. There are, as mentioned, hundreds of thousands of resources on the site already, and as the proportion that can be charged for grows, keeping tabs may be tough.

Grimshaw points out that TES employs 20 former teachers to assess the quality of its resources already. He also notes that the resources themselves have ratings, voted for by users, which means the worse quality ones get pushed to the bottom of the pile. Yet, as observers point out, as a means of judging quality objectively, voter ratings systems have their flaws. One senses that to prove teacher-made resources are of the same quality as those made by publishers, an additional layer of quality assurance will be necessary.

TES Resources facts

- 780,000 teaching resources are available on TES Connect's resources platform
- TES Connect has over seven million members worldwide and 22,000 new ones join every week
- Teachers can choose to upload resources for free, or price the resource at between £1 and £10
- By the end of February 2015, almost 300 teachers had uploaded 2,820 chargeable resources following the freemium launch
- Teachers keep 60% of earnings; TES keeps the rest but loses about half of that to tax

'Something much bigger'

Whether or not TES' grand plans are achievable remains to be seen, as does the financial viability of the project. Teachers currently take home 60% of the spoils, while the rest goes to TES (although Grimshaw emphasises that a chunk of its share goes on tax, meaning that proportionally the media giant takes home less than Apple does from its app store).

For the next two years, TES Connect hopes that the platform will "break even", but from there its profitability will be hard to predict given that "it's a completely new and rapidly developing area".

As it stands, TES Connect is still propped up by TES Global's hefty recruitment business, which brings in the majority of the firm's profits. As Taylor says: "It will be really interesting to see if they can grow the paid part of TES Connect to be like TpT. If they do it will transform what's currently a recruitment business into something much bigger; that's what their management and investors will be hoping for."

TES Connect is at the start of what is going to be an exciting journey, then. If it doesn't succeed, it will still remain a much loved platform for sharing resources, with the added benefit of allowing users to earn a bit of cash on the side. But if it does, it could grow to become a formidable resources business, challenging the might of the dominant publishers.



Posted on: 10/04/2015

Latest news

South Africa: Curro drops Advtech takeover bid

31/07/2015
South African schools group Curro Holdings has dropped a R6 billion (£300 million) takeover bid for smaller rival Advtech.

Learning Technologies Group acquires Eukleia for £7.5m

31/07/2015
Corporate training firm Learning Technologies Group (LTG) has acquired Eukleia, a provider of e-learning to the financial services industry.

Civitas Learning acquires BlikBook

31/07/2015
US-based software provider Civitas Learning has acquired British learning platform BlikBook for an undisclosed sum.

Philippines: Ayala Education invests \$9.9m in University of Nueva Caceres

31/07/2015
The education branch of conglomerate Ayala Corp, Ayala Education, has invested \$9.9 million (£6.3 million) for a 60% stake in the University of Nueva

THE SPENCER GROUP
Bringing more to the table



More >

DAC beachcroft

Leading provider of
legal services to the
education sector

www.dacbeachcroft.com

Features and analysis

Caceres (UNC) in the Philippines.

Exclusive: Sovereign Capital to buy recruitment agency Synarbor

31/07/2015

Private Equity firm Sovereign Capital has made an offer to buy teacher recruitment agency Synarbor PLC, EducationInvestor understands.

UK: Zondle to stay open after funding lifeline

30/07/2015

Games-based learning business Zondle is to stay open after an eleventh hour intervention by an "anonymous donor".

Exclusive: Bridges Ventures brings forward Babington sale

30/07/2015

Bridges Ventures has brought forward its sale of apprenticeships business Babington Group, EducationInvestor understands.

University of South Wales closes London branch

29/07/2015

The University of South Wales has closed its London campus after failing to enrol a single student.

Cognita schools roadshows £280m bond

29/07/2015

International schools operator Cognita has begun road-showing a £280 million bond to fund its expansion.

US: Providence Equity Partners seeks up to \$3.4bn for Blackboard sale

29/07/2015

Learning management system (LMS) provider Blackboard has been put on the market by its owner Providence Equity Partners, Reuters has reported.

Realising the potential of student-led innovation

When it comes to developing ed tech, students and teachers are our secret weapons, argues Jisc's Martin Hamilton

Watching the watchdogs

New European Union data protection laws could cause headaches in the education sector. Kirsten Noben investigates

Tribal's war

Profits at Tribal Group took a hit last year following the non-renewal of a major Ofsted contract. Can the firm make up the lost ground, asks Daniel Thomas

Top marks

Dan Sandhu is betting big on the assessment market with his firm Digital Assess. Julian Hall meets the tech impresario to find out more

Gravy train?

Several trends bode well for an active training deal environment in Europe in the second half, argues Martin Luen

Stars, stripes and start-ups

M&A activity in the US education industry is hotter than ever. Kirsten Noben looks at what's driving the trend and the subsectors getting most love

The name's bond...

Social impact bonds offer an innovative way of channelling private investment into public services. But can the market's limitations be overcome, asks Daniel Thomas

A tottering policy

The government's plan to double free childcare hours is in danger of derailing, finds Sunniva Davies-Rommetveit