



## **DigiEduHack Solution Berlin - DigiEduHack 2020 Challenge: Berlin - Building Bridges - Digital, International & Sustainable Challenge 2020**

### **CAMPFIRE**

#### **Turning the pandemic for the better**

Overnight, Corona forced schools to digitalise - throwing teachers in at the deep end. Even though digitalisation is broadly discussed, we were not prepared. In a collective effort, we can build on these experiences: Empowering teachers through centralised support, room for exchange and motivation.

#### **Team: Digital Schooling**

##### **Team members**

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### **Solution Details**

#### **Solution description**

CAMPFIRE goes beyond building just a platform. It is a safe space that helps overcome initial frustration with digital tools by showcasing inspiring success stories and providing an idea-exchange between school management, teachers, parents, and students. Moreover there are external experts on the platform such as Khan Academy which offer their long-standing expertise in online teaching. Users on the landing page are greeted by a set of inspiring stories of colleagues in the form of a video about how they overcame common challenges. This, among other features, enables the sharing

of best practices in online teaching. Scrolling down, a filtered selection of most relevant posts by other users are displayed, in which appropriate questions are asked, ideas are shared, and help is offered. Through the website's voting system the relevant answer is no more than three clicks away. On another level, the platform also provides an intranet for use by individual schools. Here, logged in users of the same school can access school-specific information, forums and stack exchange inaccessible to the general public. The platform itself will be built in a GDPR compliant manner by partnering with local partners such as schul.cloud.

## **Solution context**

Our challenge:

The pandemic has introduced a new normal for the general population, affecting German schools in the process. Teachers were practically forced to go digital overnight. It became increasingly evident that neither teachers nor schools were prepared - even though digitalisation in schools is an extensively discussed topic. As a result, many teachers have developed negative attitudes towards digital teaching: "The face-to-face contact is missing." "Students do not participate." "It is time-consuming." "I cannot make it right for everyone." are only some examples of statements uttered regularly. Meeting the teachers' concerns is crucial in order to drive digitalisation instead of stagnating or even reversing it in the long-run. The risk of jumping off the bandwagon towards digital schools is high. We need to keep teachers on board and prevent them from withdrawing.

We see the problem in teachers being overwhelmed by the situation. Their profession brings great responsibility with it - educating tomorrow's society. Accordingly, parents, politics and students have high expectations of them. Overviewing these expectations and then commenting on them, thus making their standings clear, seems impossible for teachers - at least until now.

In the end it comes down to hamstrung teachers: What is expected from them? How can they reconcile their responsibilities? And most importantly is there room for them to communicate their needs? It is crucial to draw on these points and prevent teachers from losing their motivation.

## **Solution target group**

We want to facilitate going - or staying - digital for German teachers who made bad experiences with online teaching due to the sudden switch necessary this year.

At the same time, we integrate other stakeholders' perspectives to create a holistic picture of how digitalisation in schools can be successfully implemented. In the end, teachers, students, politics and parents have to pull together.

## **Solution impact**

CAMPFIRE is for teachers - and their profession comes with great responsibilities. Our teachers are shaping our future society by acting as a role model for students, transferring knowledge to them and promoting skills that allow participation in a civil society. In order to do so, teachers need to be provided with adequate and enabling conditions. One of these is feeling empowered to teach digitally and thus promoting their own and the students' digital competencies which are integral in

everyday-life encounters.

On another level, CAMPFIRE impacts the educational system in the long-run. It works towards overcoming frustrating experiences with digital tools that were due to demands for a fast response. It does so by showcasing inspiring stories from colleagues and providing knowledge in a forum with experts and other teachers. Instead of letting digitalisation in schools slide once we are back to normal, CAMPFIRE ensures the continued dialogue about drivers and challenges that arise. It represents a safe space for exchange driving teachers in their efforts towards a digital school.

CAMPFIRE is building bridges between teachers, students, parents, and politics and thereby empowering teachers in feeling comfortable in digital teaching. CAMPFIRE aims at creating a valuable community for fruitful and inspiring exchange.

### **Solution tweet text**

Overwhelmed by digital teaching and the myriad of new tasks? You believe the old methods of teaching were more effective and efficient? CAMPFIRE is the space for you to enroll, explore, experience and exchange.

### **Solution innovativeness**

We know that we are not reinventing the wheel here - we're only making it better. From our research, we inferred that teachers are struggling with overviewing the possibilities of digital teaching and meeting expectations brought to them by students, parents, and politics. They long for support and exchange. And this is exactly what CAMPFIRE wants to provide. The interactive functions of the platform as well as its focus on empowering teachers make it unique.

There are lots of websites that focus on helping teachers to find out what students really need, get in touch with the parents or that offer room for exchanging materials. A fair share of these additionally offer a forum enabling a dialogue between, for example, teachers and parents. The interaction under posts related to digital teaching highlights the need for exchange once more. A closer look at these forums reveals though that these forums are quite incomprehensible, it is unclear what they are about, and they are hidden on websites whose actual focus is on completely different topics. On CAMPFIRE on the other hand, answers are only three clicks away, the community's most important posts are promoted and the platform is easily accessible for everyone. The platform's focus on digital teaching is a silver lining connecting its elements: The public space for exchange, the inspiring success stories, the separate pages for individual schools etc. Together these provide a holistic overview of current trends, tools, and teaching practices in the context of digitalisation in schools.

During the pandemic, data protection seemed to play second fiddle. In the hurry of coming up with digital solutions, engaging with complicated legal regulations was too much to ask for. CAMPFIRE is clear about that: The development is in line with current legal requirements in Germany. No need for data protection officers to worry!

### **Solution transferability**

The approach of creating a platform to increase communication among different stakeholders and to facilitate the creation of a community can generally be applied to any context. With our approach targeting German schools, it is likely the concept will work for other nations with similar struggles.

Furthermore, while universities are generally more adept in the use of digital platforms for content management, a standardized, common hub for exchange of information between students and university staff with campus-wide participation has yet to penetrate the market.

## **Solution sustainability**

The solution is inspired by the challenges faced by teachers during the pandemic, however its value will only keep increasing in time as the network gets bigger with consistent input growth in the Digital Education Stack Exchange.

Another aspect is the lack of privacy related concerns in current short-term solutions. While there are benefits in using tools of big tech companies in the short term, our solution will provide a hub of information which is specifically built with privacy protection of its national users in mind, therefore providing a sustainable, long-term focused approach.

## **Solution team work**

Design Thinking methods were a core part of our approach. With Sören's background in Design Thinking, frameworks were quickly built for ideas and guided team members while they individually sourced information from expert interviews. The team was able to draw from the strengths of the different backgrounds of its members, complementing the expertise of each other in enriched discussions. Members with past experience in product development and prototyping quickly created mockups and tested them iteratively while others specialized in refining the product's presentability. Therefore, we all strongly agree that future collaboration is heavily favored.