PluggStugan
For Students, By Students

A Global Challenge Emergency

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Due to the Corona Pandemic, distance learning has become more relevant than ever. This poses new demands on institutions in order to ensure equitable and qualitative education. And already existing inequalities in the system are further amplified by this crisis. Good education has become a matter of class, where the students with the right background or the resources to afford private supplementary tutoring are those who prosper in the current system[1]. Given the complexity of this challenge, it touches upon several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, of which the most related one is SDG 4: to ensure equitable and qualitative education.

[1]*"Analyser av familjebakgrundens betydelse för skolresultaten och skillnaden mellan skolor"*, Skolverket (2018).

School Segregation*

%
— Socio-economic Index
— Level of Education

1998   2004   2010   2016
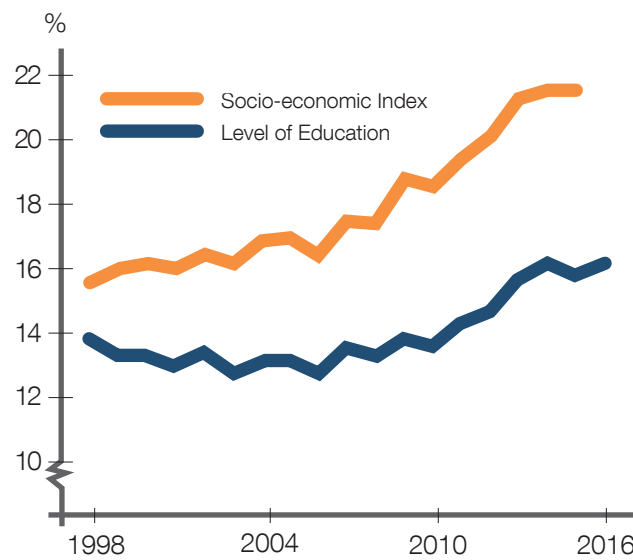
*Explanatory power in socio-economic factors to variations in school results

The birth of an idea

The rapid change in educational routines in the wake of the crisis gave birth to an idea of supporting the system by facilitating sharing of all the knowledge that has been built up in our society. This vision has been implemented in the form of an online study community where university students can volunteer as tutors for elementary and high school students. In this way, we are able to fill the need for free tutoring by connecting people eager to share their knowledge with people in need of others' expertise. Some of our inspiration came from a similar initiative at KTH, where undergraduates offered online math-help to high school students.

Our ambition was to offer help in a wider variety of subjects and to simplify user processes. We believed that the best way to accomplish this was by developing a stable and frictionless platform for the community, in the form of an app.

Introducing Pluggstugan

HOW DOES IT WORK?
Students create a request for help by describing what they need help with and if needed attaching an image of the problem to the request. When the request is created, tutors will be notified.

HELP FROM TUTOR
If the request is of simple nature, a tutor can respond to the request by chatting with the student. If the student wants help explaining a broader concept, they can request a video session, allowing the tutor to explain the concept more interactively. After a request has been solved, students can grade their tutors which reduces information asymmetries on the platform.

THE ARCHIVE
Solved requests are anonymized, and ends up in an archive where other students get access to the knowledge that has been shared. The rating system provides quality assurance to this archive.
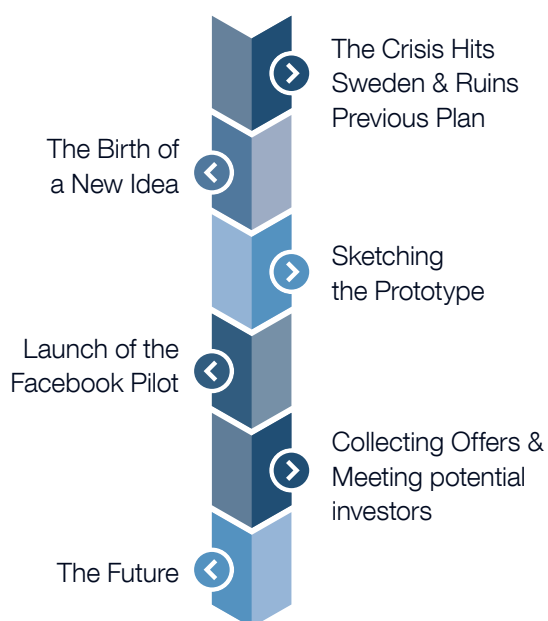

AN INTENSE TIMELINE

The Birth of a New Idea

The Crisis Hits Sweden & Ruins Previous Plan

Sketching the Prototype

Launch of the Facebook Pilot

Collecting Offers & Meeting potential investors

The Future

The people behind Pluggstugan (group 12.3):
Olle Wallberg, Isak Mölzer, Anton Kalte,
Carl Nordahl, Timmy Gustafsson and Max Richnau.

The Facebook Pilot

Parallel to the app prototyping, we tested our idea by launching a Facebook pilot. We created a group anyone could join and post problems for SSE students to help them solve.

The pilot has helped us build a user base and provided valuable insights for the app design. The overall response has been great, and the facebook page has become the start for the community we envisioned.

The Future and The Challenges Ahead

To develop an app indeed requires significant financial resources, which is why we have made most of the time-consuming groundwork ourselves. We have managed to develop an interactive prototype which has facilitated the pitching for potential investors. And even though funding has not yet been secured, we have received positive feedback during our meetings.

Another challenge is that when the crisis eventually settles, the need for distance learning may diminish. In this case however, Pluggstugan still plays an important role in decreasing educational inequalities – a problem that lies beyond the current crisis.

Our journey with Pluggstugan has truly been a great learning process. It has been interesting to work with a real-world project involving everything from prototyping and pitching to homework tutoring. The integration of many previously learned skills has been a true experience and something we gratefully take with us going forward.