D4.1 Digital Academy v2.0 including MyTutoring module and Our cases module

DIGITAL ACADEMY v2.0

Final Version

2024-10-29

Version history

Version	Date	Reviewer	Reason
0.9.0	2024-03-22	Salvador Banderas Rovira (FUN)	Initial draft
1.0.0	2024-05-31	Salvador Banderas Rovira (FUN)	First version
1.1.0	2024-10-29	Salvador Banderas Rovira (FUN)	Final review after partnership comments

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed overview of the finalized Teacher Academy platform, summarizing its core functionality, design, and anticipated modifications. Building upon prior documentation, this report presents the current state of the platform, which supports knowledge sharing and collaboration among pre-service and in-service teachers. Teachers can share their challenges and reflections, seek guidance, access a case study repository, and engage with a learning community of educational professionals.

Unlike the Functional Requirements Document (FRD), which evolved throughout the development process, this document provides a static overview of the completed platform. It outlines the alignment with initial FRD specifications, highlights any deviations or modifications, and describes the platform's accessibility and readiness for the intended user base.

1.1. Document audience

This document is intended for EU project evaluators, platform administrators, mentors, tutors, and other stakeholders involved in the platform's use and management. It provides stakeholders with an understanding of the platform's features, layout, and user engagement tools, and highlights potential roles, such as mentorship, content curation, and future system enhancements.

1.2. Scope

This document covers:

- **Platform Overview:** A description of the finalized Teacher Academy platform, including key deviations from the original FRD and an overview of major features.
- **Platform Walkthrough:** A guided walkthrough of the platform's main components, covering functionalities like experience sharing, case studies, mentorship, and reflective learning tools.
- **Future Modifications:** A summary of expected enhancements to improve scalability, functionality, and user experience.

The document does not include detailed technical specifications or architectural details; it focuses on functional components and the overall user experience.

1.3. Roles and responsibilities

This section outlines the key roles supporting the platform's maintenance and growth:

- **Platform Administrators:** Ensure functionality, manage access, and moderate content to maintain a seamless user experience.
- **Tutors/Mentors:** Provide guidance, share expertise, and collaborate with users to foster reflective learning, contributing to high-quality professional development.

- **Educators (Users):** Engage with the platform to share experiences, seek mentorship, access case studies, and participate in the learning community.

2. Description of the platform

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the Teacher Academy platform as it stands upon completion, focusing on its core components, functionalities, and overall user experience. Additionally, any significant changes or improvements made since the original Functional Requirements Document (FRD) and previous versions are highlighted, demonstrating the evolution of the platform to meet stakeholder needs. Finally, a walkthrough of the platform's features and functionalities is provided to guide stakeholders through its various modules and their intended use.

2.1. Platform evolution

Significant changes were made between the initial Functional Requirements Document (FRD) and the finalized Teacher Academy platform. These changes reflect the evolving needs of the project, user feedback, and the integration of new features that better align with the platform's purpose of supporting teachers in their professional growth. Below are the key differences.

2.1.1. User Roles and Permissions

In the original design, users could access most platform functionalities without restrictions. In the final version, role selection is essential during sign-up (Figure 1), defining a user's interaction within the platform. Users now choose between predefined roles: **Student**, **Newly-Qualified Teacher (NQT)**, **Tutor**, and **Mentor**. These roles control access to certain functionalities; for instance, only tutors and mentors can offer mentorship, and only selected roles can publish case studies. Additional roles—**Consortium** (for project partners) and **Platform Administrator**—are assigned exclusively by administrators to manage platform governance and configuration.

*Figure 1. Choosing a role in the signup screen*

2.1.2.   MyChallenge to MyExperience Module

Originally designated as "MyChallenge," this module has been expanded and renamed "MyExperience" to broaden its purpose. Instead of focusing solely on classroom challenges, users are now encouraged to share a wide range of experiences from their teaching journey. This change reflects the consortium's view that day-to-day experiences, including successes, insights, and difficulties, can offer valuable learning and reflection opportunities for the teaching community.

2.1.3.   Component Names and User Presentation

The technical architecture maintains internal component names (e.g., "MyExperience" and "ResourceRepository"), but the user interface has been designed to present these as simpler, intuitive sections like "Experiences" (Figure 2) and "Resources." This adjustment removes technical jargon from the user experience, providing a more accessible interface. Notably, the **Reflection Management Tool** and **Learning Community** modules have been absorbed into other functionalities, making them part of the interaction tools within experiences, case studies, and resources.

Figure 2. The new Experiences section
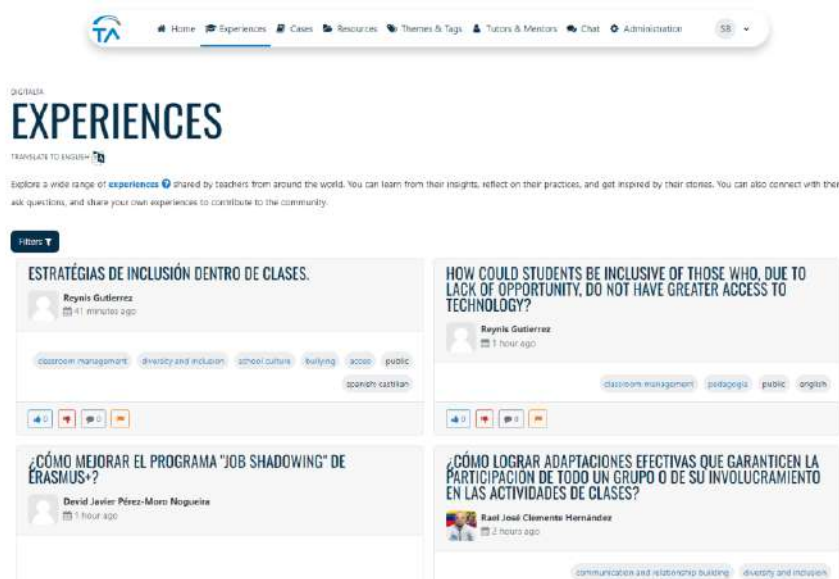
2.1.4. Experience-Centered Platform Structure

The platform has shifted to an experience-centered model, positioning user-contributed experiences as the central element. Experiences now form the core of user engagement and interaction, allowing reflection, mentorship, and resource-linking to revolve around this primary element. This approach ensures that all major actions—reflection, community discussion, mentorship, and case study exploration—connect back to the user's shared experiences, reinforcing the platform's purpose as a reflective teaching community.

2.1.5. Integrated Reflection and Learning Community

Reflective practice has been embedded within each experience, providing users with a streamlined process to document and expand on their thoughts. The previous standalone Reflection Management Tool has been integrated as a feature within the experience interface, guiding users through structured reflection prompts. Similarly, the "Learning Community" section has been distributed across the platform. Social capabilities (e.g., liking, disliking, commenting, and reporting) are embedded within experiences (Figure 3), case studies, and resources, transforming the entire platform into an interconnected learning community.

Figure 3. Social capabilities in an experience
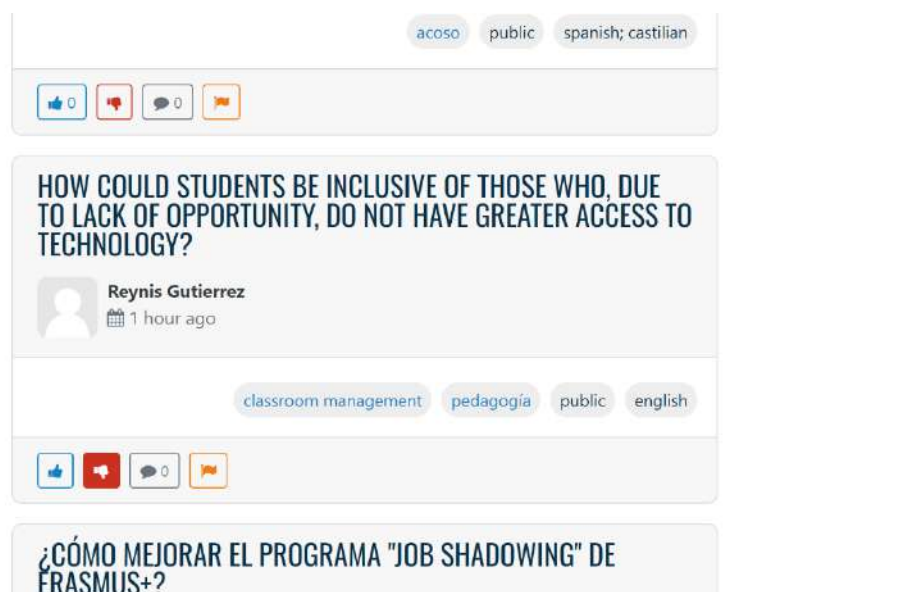
2.1.6. New Resource Repository

A new "Resources" section, known internally as "ResourceRepository," was added to allow users to contribute and access a diverse library of external resources useful for teaching practice. Resources, which may include articles, guides, lesson plans, and multimedia content, can be linked to experiences to support the reflection process or shared independently for broader community benefit. This addition enhances the platform's value as a resource hub and provides teachers with additional materials for professional growth.

2.1.7. Themes and Tags for Content Organization

The addition of Themes and Tags (Figure 4) during development has enhanced content categorization, supporting user navigation and searchability across experiences, case studies, and resources. **Themes**, predefined by the consortium, capture essential areas of professional focus. Available themes are: "Digital Technology", "Classroom Management", "Communication and Relationship Building", "Diversity and Inclusion", "Professional Collaboration and Development", "School Culture", "Curriculum Planning and Development", and "Others". Themes help users find content aligned with their interests, while Tags are user-generated keywords that allow further customization. **Tags** might include specific teaching methods, grade levels, or challenges, enabling users to filter and locate content based on finer-grained attributes. Tags can be applied to all main entities (experiences, case studies, resources, and even user profiles) for a personalized and dynamic browsing experience.

Figure 4. The Themes & Tags section
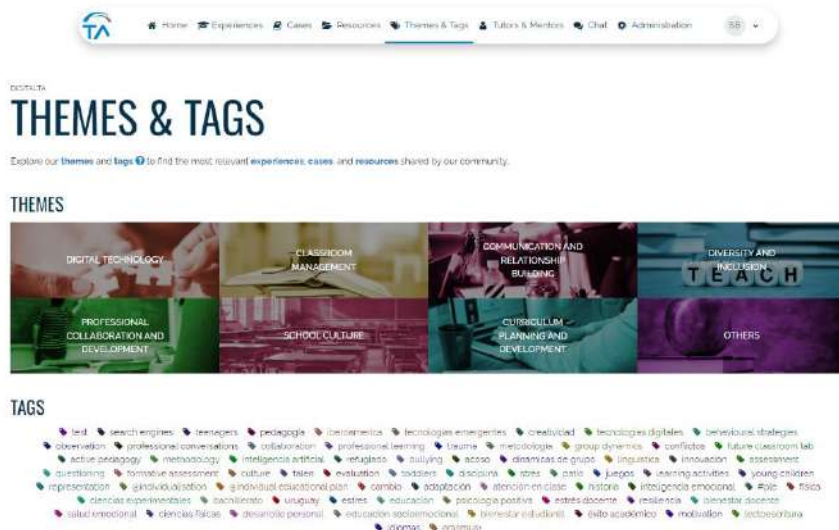
2.1.8. MyTutoring Module Enhancements

The MyTutoring module, presented as "Tutors and Mentors" to users, retains its primary function of connecting NQTs and students with mentors and tutors but includes expanded functionalities. NQTs and students can now request mentorship directly within an experience, allowing for context-specific guidance. Conversely, tutors and mentors can offer mentorship to experiences that align with their expertise by sending a request to the experience owner. Additionally, tutors and mentors can now set specific "free hours" during the week (Figure 5), which mentees can schedule, adding flexibility to the mentoring process and supporting real-time interactions.

Figure 5. Configuring availability
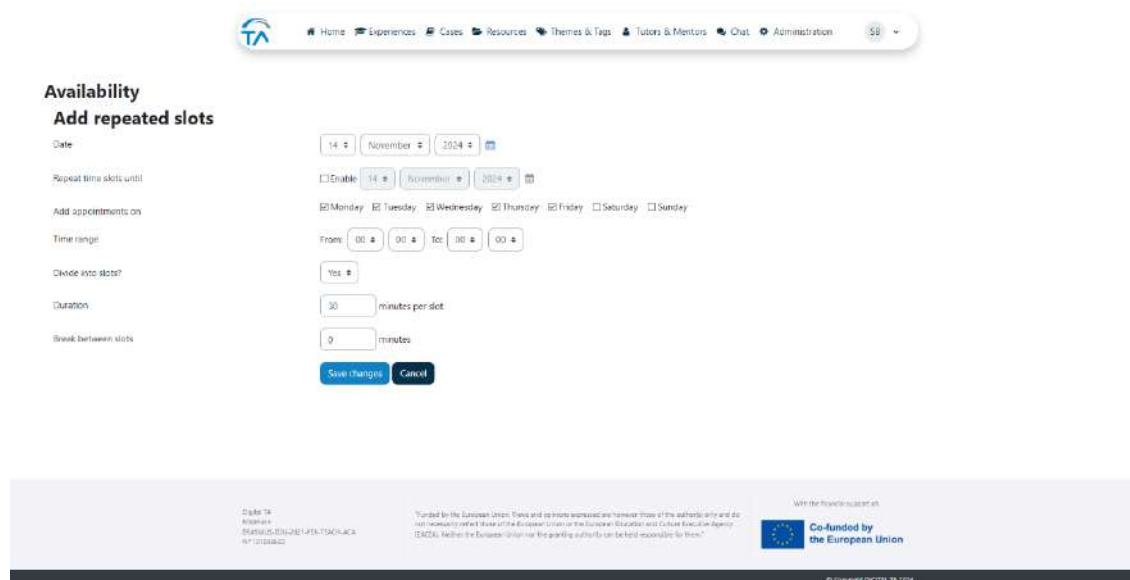
2.1.9. UI/UX Redesign

Following feedback from early pilot testing, the platform's user interface was revamped from the initial v1.0 and early mockups to optimize usability. The Dashboard has been significantly restructured (Figure 6) to prioritize relevant information in an order that enhances user workflow, presenting recent activities,

mentoring notifications, and updates on experiences and resources in a streamlined layout. This redesign improves user engagement and helps educators focus on their primary activities upon login.

Figure 6. UI/UX redesign of the Dashboard
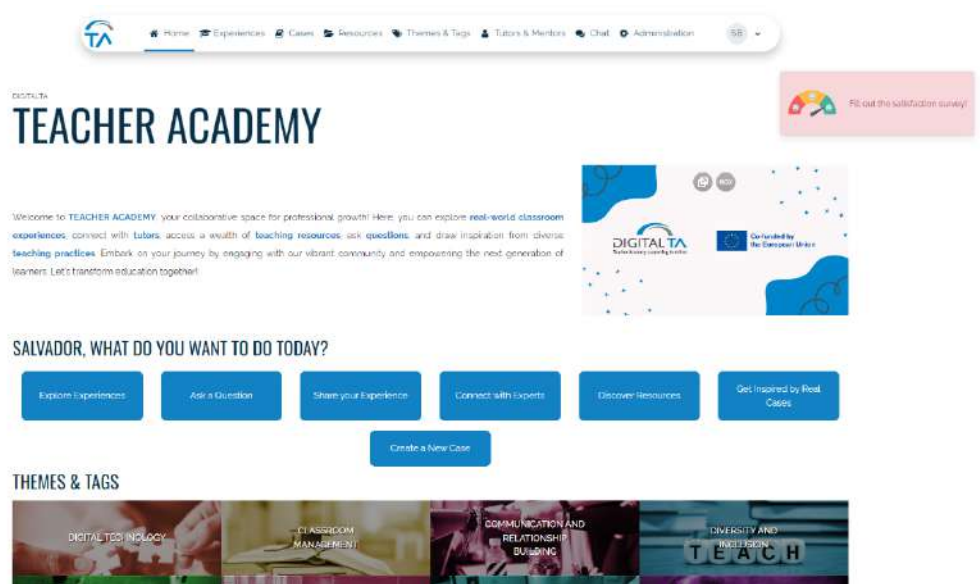
2.1.10. Automated Translation System

To facilitate collaboration across European borders, an automated translation feature was implemented, allowing users to translate content into their preferred language (Figure 7). This feature enables educators from different countries to communicate and share insights effectively, supporting the platform's goal of fostering cross-cultural mentorship and learning relationships throughout Europe.

Figure 7. Translating an experience into the local language
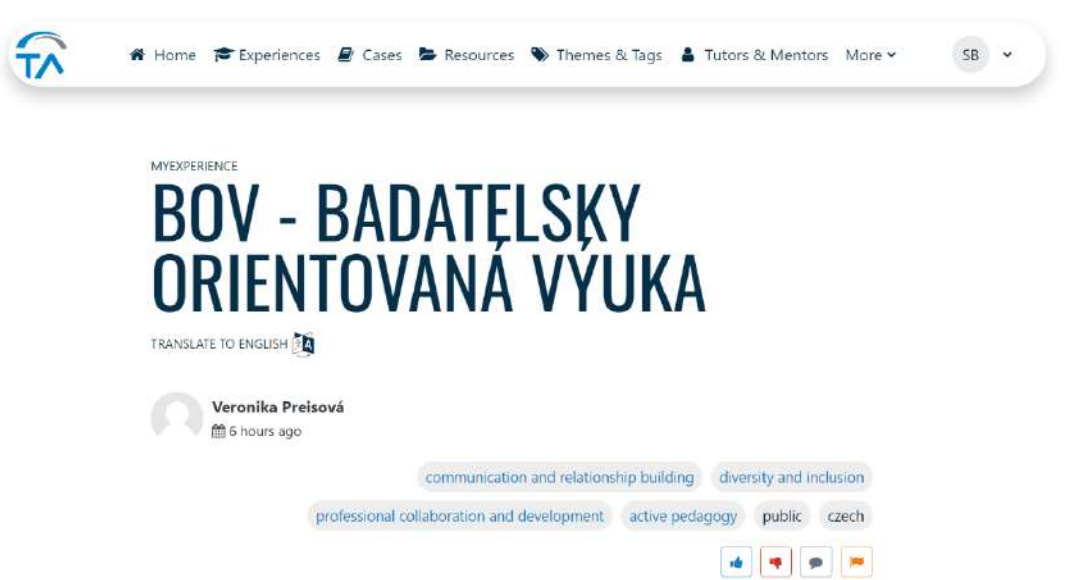
2.2. Platform availability and access

The Teacher Academy platform is designed as a responsive, accessible web-based application, intended to serve a diverse user base across different devices and locations.

2.2.1. Platform URL

The Teacher Academy is currently accessible at https://betacademy.digitalta.eu/ during the pilot phase. After the pilots are complete and final adjustments are made, the platform will transition to its permanent address at https://academy.digitalta.eu/. Users will be notified of this change in advance to ensure a seamless transition.

2.2.2. Access Requirements and Authentication

To ensure secure and managed access, all users must create an account, with authentication processes safeguarding user data. Upon registration, users select their role (e.g., student, NQT, tutor, or mentor), which customizes their platform experience and dictates their access permissions. Consortium and platform administrator roles are designated by existing administrators to maintain governance and security across user interactions.

2.2.3. Device Compatibility and Responsiveness

The platform's design is fully responsive, providing a seamless experience across desktop, tablet, and mobile devices (Figure 8). This compatibility facilitates access for educators and mentors who may engage from various environments and devices, ensuring consistent functionality and user experience regardless of screen size or operating system.

Figure 8. Mobile view of the platform

2.2.4. Regional Accessibility and Language Support

The platform is accessible from multiple European regions, supporting its mission to connect educators across borders. Additionally, an automated translation feature enables users to translate content into their preferred languages. This language flexibility strengthens collaborative opportunities among users from different countries and cultures, allowing mentors and mentees from diverse linguistic backgrounds to engage without language barriers.

2.2.5. Roles and Permissions

Role-based access controls are integral to the platform's structure. Different roles—student, NQT, tutor,

mentor, consortium, and administrator—each have specific access rights, ensuring that functionalities align with the user's purpose and needs on the platform. For example, only certain roles can publish case studies or offer mentorship, while the administrator role encompasses full oversight of platform settings and content moderation.

2.2.6. Privacy and Data Security

Privacy is safeguarded through compliance with EU data protection standards. User data, communications, and personal information are protected via encryption, and sensitive actions, such as mentorship interactions, are restricted to authorized participants. Additionally, planned enhancements include options for integrating further authentication methods (e.g., EU Login) to add an extra layer of user verification.

2.3. Walkthrough of platform components

This section provides a functional overview of the Teacher Academy's components, highlighting user navigation through each module and key functionalities.

2.3.1. In-Platform Guidance

The platform offers in-platform guidance at various points to support users as they navigate and use different features. Tooltips, contextual instructions, and help icons appear throughout (Figure 9), providing just-in-time assistance for tasks like sharing experiences, reflecting, or accessing resources. This guidance, combined with the User Manual, ensures a smooth onboarding and ongoing user experience.

Figure 9. A tooltip to help users understand the concept of case
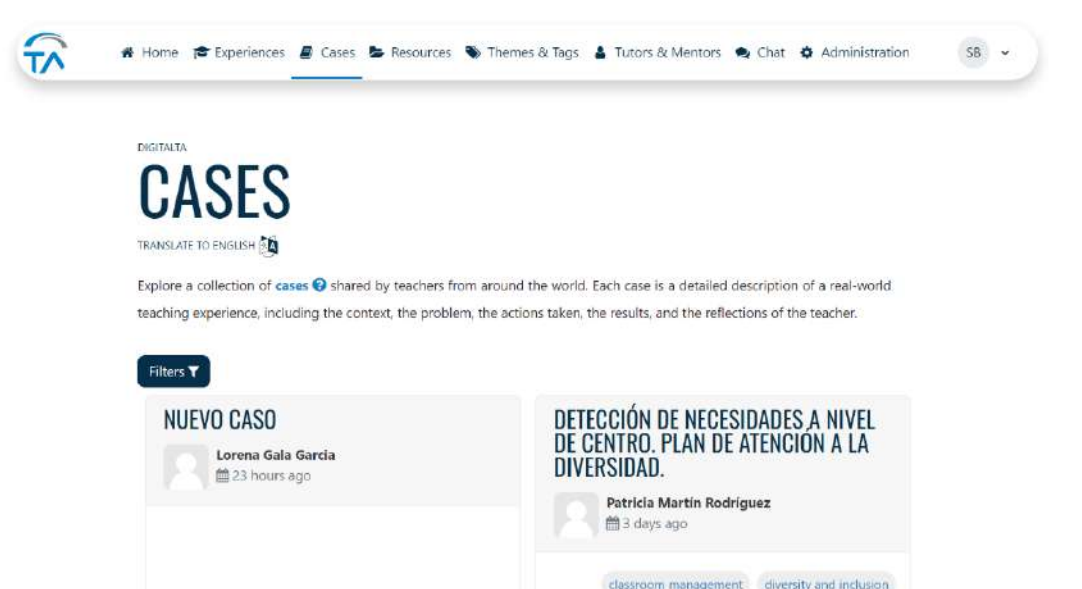
2.3.2. Registering on the Teacher Academy

Users begin by registering and selecting a role (e.g., student, newly-qualified teacher, tutor, or mentor). The registration process ensures each user's experience is tailored to their role, as permissions and available actions differ based on this choice. Platform administrators assign additional roles (e.g., consortium or platform administrator) as needed for governance.

2.3.3. Navigating the Main Page (Dashboard)

Upon logging in, users are directed to the main dashboard. This centralized hub displays recent updates, relevant notifications, and quick-access links to key sections like **Experiences**, **Case Studies**, **Resources**, and **Mentorship**. Users can immediately view recent activity, pending mentorship requests, and suggested resources to support continued engagement.

2.3.4. Experiences

The Experiences section is central to platform engagement, where users share and explore various teaching scenarios (Figure 10). Users can:

- **Asking a Question or Sharing an Experience:** This functionality allows users to post questions, challenges, or insights from their day-to-day teaching. Each experience can be categorized by selecting relevant themes and tags for better discoverability.

- **Reflecting on Your Experience:** After posting an experience, users are encouraged to document reflections, addressing prompts that guide them through the "What?", "So what?", and "Now what?" of the experience.

- **Completing Self-Reflection:** Reflection is structured to help users analyze their experiences deeply. Users can add text, multimedia, or attach supporting resources as part of their reflection process.

- **Looking for a Tutor or a Mentor:** Users can request mentorship on specific experiences, receiving guidance from a tutor or mentor who has relevant expertise.

- **Interacting with the Community:** Community engagement is embedded within experiences, allowing other users to like, dislike, comment on, or report experiences. This feature enables collaborative feedback and a supportive peer environment.

- **Linking Case Studies and Resources:** Users can connect relevant case studies or resources to their experiences, enriching the reflective process and providing practical, real-world insights.

Figure 10. View of an experience

2.3.5. Exploring Experiences

Users can explore shared experiences through the Experiences section (Figure 11), discovering posts made by other educators. This section supports browsing, filtering, and searching by themes and tags, making it easy for users to find content that aligns with their teaching focus or interests.

Figure 11. The list of experiences filtered by theme and language
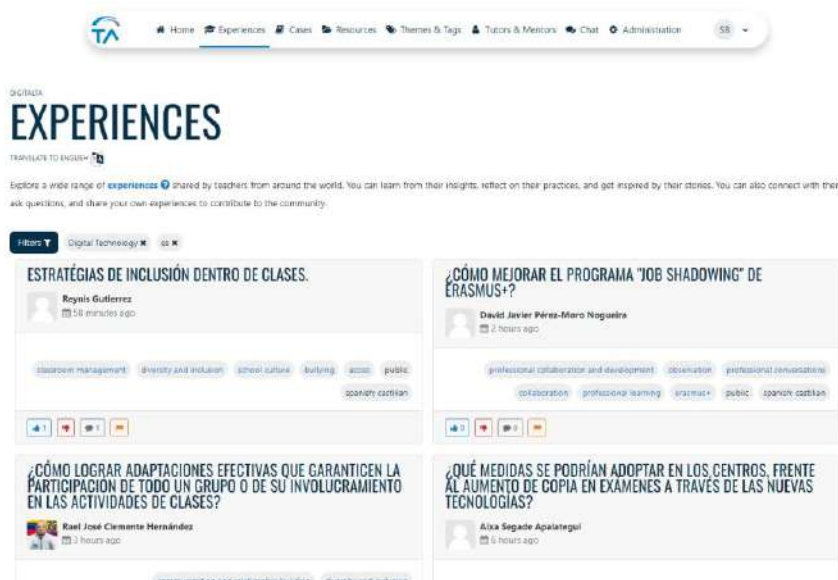
2.3.6. Case Studies

The Case Studies module provides a repository of real-world educational scenarios shared by tutors, mentors, and experienced educators. Users can:

- **Browsing Case Studies:** View and engage with case studies, each tagged with relevant themes to support targeted exploration. Case studies detail practical classroom situations and challenges, making them a valuable resource for reflective learning.

- **Developing New Case Studies (Tutors/Mentors Only):** Tutors and mentors can create new case studies or adapt comprehensive experiences into case studies for further analysis. This functionality allows them to share insights and strategies with the broader community, fostering peer-to-peer learning and mentorship.

2.3.7. Resources

The Resources section (Figure 12) serves as a repository of external educational materials. This library includes articles, lesson plans, and teaching guides that users can link directly to experiences or access independently. Resources are organized by themes and tags to facilitate easy access. Key functionalities include:

- **Discovering Useful Resources:** Users can browse, search, and filter resources by educational themes or user-generated tags. This section provides access to valuable supplementary materials to support teachers' reflection and development.
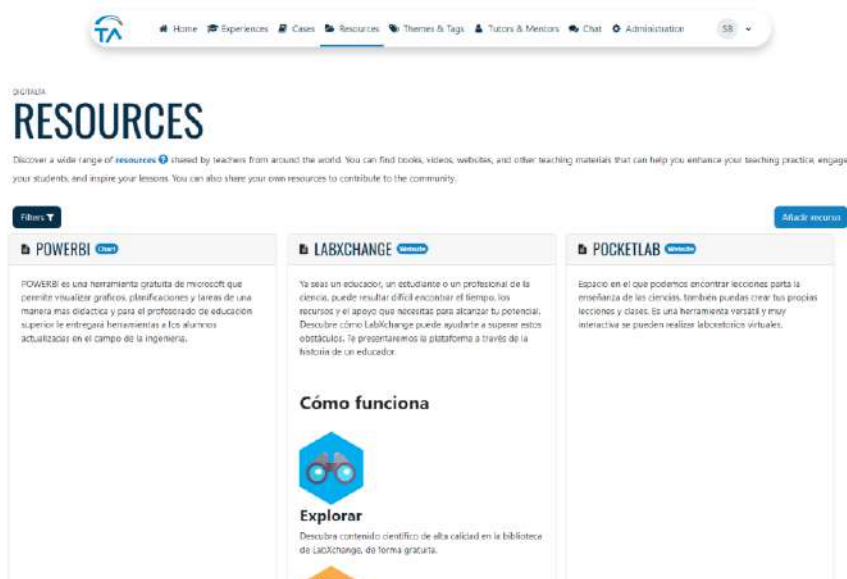
2.3.8. Tutors and Mentors

The Tutors and Mentors section connects NQTs and students with experienced tutors and mentors for guidance and feedback. Mentorship interactions can occur in response to specific experiences or through general mentoring support. Key functionalities include:

- **Tutoring or Mentoring an Experience (Tutors/Mentors Only):** Users can request mentorship for individual experiences, or mentors can offer support on experiences of interest. This setup facilitates context-specific advice, enhancing the relevance of the mentoring relationship.

- **Scheduling:** Mentors can make "free hours" available on their schedules, allowing mentees to book sessions conveniently. This function supports flexibility and ensures users can access mentoring when needed.

- **Communication Tools:** A built-in chat system and virtual meeting capabilities allow real-time or asynchronous communication, supporting flexible and effective mentorship.

2.3.9. Themes and Tags

Themes and tags are essential for categorizing and organizing platform content. Themes, predefined by the consortium, cover core areas of educational interest, including:

- Digital Technology
- Classroom Management
- Communication and Relationship Building
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Professional Collaboration and Development
- School Culture
- Curriculum Planning and Development
- Others

Tags, which are user-defined, allow additional categorization, enabling finer-grained filtering and discovery

across experiences, case studies, resources, and user profiles.

3. Types of future modifications foreseen

As the Teacher Academy platform is currently deployed for pilot testing, we anticipate further enhancements based on feedback from educators, mentors, and other stakeholders. While the platform fulfills its primary objectives, additional adjustments will support the platform's continued evolution and alignment with user needs. Any potential modification will be subject to project constraints, such as time, budget, and technological feasibility.

3.1. Role Validation for Enhanced Security

Currently, users self-select their roles upon registration (e.g., student, NQT, tutor, mentor) without a system to verify these designations. To enhance user role accuracy and trust within the platform, a standardized role validation system could be implemented. For example, integration with EU Login or a similar verification mechanism would confirm users' qualifications or institutional affiliations, providing an extra layer of security, particularly for roles that involve mentorship.

3.2. Expanded Mentorship Functionality

Building on the existing mentorship capabilities, we foresee potential expansions to increase the flexibility and effectiveness of mentoring. This may include:

- **Group Mentorship Sessions:** Allowing tutors and mentors to host group sessions where multiple users can join discussions or Q&A sessions on specific themes or topics.
- **Mentorship Feedback and Ratings:** Adding a rating or feedback feature for mentees to assess their mentorship sessions, creating a system that fosters continuous improvement and recognition for mentors.

3.3. User Profile and Activity Tracking Enhancements

Enhanced profile features could support users in showcasing their progress and contributions to the platform. Possible developments include:

- **Progress Tracking:** Allowing users to track their activities, such as the number of reflections completed, case studies reviewed, and mentoring sessions participated in, could encourage engagement and provide a visual representation of their growth.
- **Badge and Achievement System:** A badge or achievement feature to recognize users' milestones (e.g., completing a certain number of reflections, receiving positive feedback on experiences) may also enhance motivation and reward participation.

3.4. Advanced Search and Filtering Options

The current tagging and theme system is effective for content organization, but expanded search capabilities could further improve user experience:

- **Advanced Filters:** Additional filters, such as educational level, role, and region, would allow users to find experiences, cases, and resources more tailored to their needs.
- **Personalized Recommendations:** A recommendation engine that suggests experiences, resources, and mentors based on user interactions and interests could help users navigate the platform more effectively.

3.5. Scalability and Performance Enhancements

As user numbers increase, platform scalability will be essential to maintain performance and reliability.

Potential upgrades include:

- **Load-Balancing Systems:** Implementing load-balancing techniques to handle increased user activity and prevent performance bottlenecks.
- **Resource Optimization:** Optimizing resource management (e.g., for multimedia content and case studies) to ensure efficient loading times and smooth interactions across devices.

3.6. Language and Accessibility Improvements

With the current automated translation system, users can translate platform content into their preferred language, but future updates may include:

- **Enhanced Translation Options:** Incorporating more language nuances to improve the quality of translations for specific educational terminologies.
- **Accessibility Features:** Adding more accessibility features, such as screen reader compatibility improvements and customizable text display settings, would ensure the platform remains inclusive to a broader user base.

3.7. User Feedback Integration

To keep the platform relevant and user-centered, we plan to implement a more robust feedback mechanism.

This could include:

- **In-Platform Feedback Tool:** Allowing users to submit feedback directly from each platform section would facilitate the collection of targeted insights.
- **Periodic User Surveys:** Regular surveys during and after the pilot phase will capture structured feedback on user satisfaction and improvement suggestions, helping prioritize future developments.

3.8. Enhanced Community and Collaboration Features

As part of creating a supportive community, additional features to support collaboration may include:

- **Peer Groups and Communities of Practice:** Creating user-led groups or communities focused on specific themes, enabling targeted collaboration and discussion among educators with similar interests.
- **Collaborative Resource Creation:** Allowing multiple users to contribute to a shared resource or case study could foster peer-to-peer learning and expand resource diversity.

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