

Chile

Colegio Cardenal de Cracovia

This state-subsidized private school is organised around the topic of a “state-school”: Classes represent communities that have an administration and departments, there is a school constitution regulating behavioural rules, a (symbolic) ministry of justice, a court, elections for student presidents, a school bank and a school currency that can be exchanged for rewards, as incentive for students. The school caters for children from kindergarten to 8th grade of elementary school. It is located in a very poor area with high rates of unemployment and drug problems. The innovation was initiated by the headmaster, in order to create an environment of strong and caring relationships and to help all students discover their own potential.

Main Focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

Other Keywords: alternative philosophy, equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Colegio Cardenal de Cracovia

Website: <http://www.mundokarol.cl/>

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

The Chilean education system faces many problems derived from the social and economic inequalities which determine the characteristics of the educational system. Some areas are very poor and so are the schools. However every child has the right to be educated and receive a high quality education. Some teachers have such a strong vocation that they are convinced that is necessary to give equal opportunities to every boy and girl. Juan Carlos Navarrete is the head teacher of Colegio Cardenal de Cracovia and he strongly believes that education is a right and he does all he does for love. He is showing everyone how innovation can come at his school by learning by doing.

The school has a president, national symbols, rights and duties and a political constitution approved by 87% of the students in voting age.

At the school everything is purple (“morado o lila”). Desks, folders, murals frameworks, the school standard at the president’s cabinet. The clothes that the governor of Mundo Karol wears when he or she is in office are of the same colour.

Inside the school there are collaborators inside a Ministry of Justice, who take care of the order of the schools and who even sanction students who do not respect the rules of behaviour of the nation.

There are infractions and for those most serious cases there are “public judgments” where children are defended and accused by students/lawyers at the Ministry of Justice.

Gender equality is important for the political constitution. The president is elected in strong campaigns decided at the ballot boxes, with election monitors included. If the winner does not get the absolute majority there is a second round and then a definite round.

The individual that receives first majority becomes the president of the school government of boys and girls and the recipient of the second majority becomes the general secretary of the presidency.

The name is Karol Cardenal from Cracovia as homage to John Paul II who was cardinal of Cracovia before becoming Pope. For the head teacher he constitutes the highest moral authority on earth, with his sign of peace, represents a white dove flying, the symbol students use on their uniforms.

All are *Cracovians*, people, teachers, parents, and students are involved in the learning process in the school. They even give school nationality, by grace, to everyone who gets involved in the learning process at the school in daily activities and draws attention to the school’s institutional image.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners’ social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

The idea is to end with the boredom and lack of incentives to participate in the school and even in society. The head teacher realized how deep the misunderstanding remained between the community and the school, the one was not in touch with the other, and worse did not care about the problems of Chilean society as manifested in the school.

Teachers, students and parents followed the head teacher some of them with faith and others not really understanding the idea, even complaining. They understood it would be the first state-school in Chile but did not really understand how.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

This project is meant to work for every child in the school and it was called “the republic-school” (recreating Plato’s idea), where there is a constitution which regulates the behaviour of each person involved. The functioning of the school is similar to how a real country works.

Every student from 3rd to 8th grade can run for president of the republic. This right is valid only when he or she is certified not to have repeated a course, has at least one year in the school, and win the leaders elections in his or her “comuna-class”.

They also have their own money, Karolméritos, which is delivered by their own bank. The bank is called B.A.K.A.M or Bank of Merits in Karol. At the bank there is agent, a chief of the commercial area, an operation manager, bank executives, associates, and cashiers.

Money is weekly distributed, to the “comuna-class teachers, and more frequently to students. These are real incentive bonuses and it is used by students to get loans for toys and videos from a place called “Jugarteca”, another important institution at the School Nation.

The political constitution of Karol Government puts emphasis on people. The free and sovereign opportunity of be part of the school republic, with freedom of speech and without discrimination. The school provides access to a big family, where students and adults will find opportunities for advancing in development of their potential.

Karol World is formed by about 800 students from kindergarten to 8th grade in elementary school and its teachers and parents who also have voluntary activities.

Some of the activities that the school has organized are teacher’s day, looping for a star show, fun fair, voice festival, and the night of Karolween, in replacement of Halloween festivity.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

As said formerly, the head teacher has been able to put together a team of excellence. In general, what is more valued at this school is to have teachers with real vocation to become teachers at this school. Academic credentials become less important than personal characteristics which determine really who is empowered to teach and do it passionately.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

The pedagogy behind this school is project based pedagogy, one of them being the project of school government. Especially important was the attention to affection and participation as important tools against the myth of the “problematic child”. The head teacher says children are only a thermometer for a sick society, which is violent and materialistic. He believes that the moment they create a different environment, with strong interpersonal relations, you start seeing happy children, who can protect themselves in every aspect.

For the school government the idea is as follows: Each class is a “comuna”. For example, 3rd A is Ñuñoa or 4th C is Conchalí. Each comuna is administered by majors and its respective communal departments. On each comuna there is a cabinet, a *juzgado de policia local*, department of education, health and building.

There is one minister called “dirección escolar de comunicaciones” which is in charge of the promotion of the activities of school government and promoting a good use of free time in recreational games which promote camaraderie.

The school also has its own radio station called Karol “Window to the 21st century”

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

This school is located in one of the poorest areas of the city of Santiago, José María Caro town, where there are serious problems related to drugs and the lack of job opportunities for young and adult inhabitants. Considering the socio-economic characteristics of this environment it is far more difficult for this educational community than in other schools where conditions are better.

Since the head teacher was educated in the countryside, he really believes that is crucial to improve the quality of learning, in the same way by which a harvest is improved, put down the best soil and seeds where in the trust of a plantation with seed (“almácigo”) to sprout the seeds. This good soil and seeds will ensure that the best harvest is the reaped.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

This program was initiated by the director Juan Carlos Navarrete who is a very active and committed teacher who says everything he does he does it for love. The head of the school, Juan Carlos Navarrete has been the main promoter of this project. He has put together a team of demonstrated excellence and a system of active, participatory, integrative and communitarian pedagogy based on the pedagogical principles of Carl Rogers and the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner. The school went from being a school for expelled students with an enrolment of 370 students to one for 1100 students. Navarrete realized teachers` lessons were boring and that they moved from one subject to another without investing in the students or the quality of their teaching. Traditional education bombs students with unconnected knowledge where to be quiet is valued as a symbol of excellence. So they decided to attract students and parents with an educational system, agile, dynamic and interactive. They implemented “*pedagogy of projects*” where some of the most important are school government, involving all the school as though it were a real independent republic. But what is more important is the attention to affection and participation, as efficient tools against the myth of the “trouble-maker children”. In other words, Navarrete created a culture whereby a child was only the thermometer of the sick, materialistic, and violent society that surrounds him or her. As Navarrete believes “when we are able to create a different environment, with strong and caring relationships, we start to see happy students, children who did not dream before but now they are projecting themselves. Each student has to discover their own potential and be happy”.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

This is a private subsidized school, which receives a monthly stipend from the Ministry of Education, through a voucher to the municipality, and the difference comes from parents.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

The school environment at the school has changed and it is now widely accepted they have better communication, better channels of expression between them and therefore they feel heard and their opinions are taken into consideration. It is of course hard to measure this kind of outcomes, but authorities and the whole school community feel it is important to understand these are factors that are crucial for a good functioning of the school.