



Directorate for Education

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), OECD

Innovative Learning Environments (ILE)

INVENTORY CASE STUDY

Colegio Karol Cardenal De Cracovia (Karol Cardinal of Krakow School)

Chile

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.

This Innovative Learning Environment case study has been prepared specifically for the OECD/ILE project. Research has been undertaken by the Office of International Relations at the Ministry of Education under the supervision of Eliana Chamizo from the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), following the research guidelines of the ILE project.

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INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS PROJECT**CERI – OECD****CHILE CASE STUDY****COLEGIO KAROL CARDENAL DE CRACOVIA (KAROL CARDINAL OF KRAKOW SCHOOL)****Case study structure**

A. ILE objectives, the nature of the innovation, including the details relevant for the socioeconomic context and the served population. The approach the ILE has, age of the students and the general situation of the educational system.

ILE OBJECTIVES

Karol Cardenal of Krakow school is an elementary school located in a low income commune in Santiago. There, all the community members have the strong conviction that every child, boy, girl and young person has the right to be educated and this belief it is an established requisite that needs to be shared by the whole school community, this is, teachers, students, parents and school educational authorities.

An important number of research and educational studies have shown that expectations that teachers have for students learning achievement and results influence directly in the real outcomes students have. All the community has to believe that changes are possible and that children need to be well educated if we want they have a real and permanent change on their lives. Karol school is an example of this.

THE ORIGINS OF COLEGIO KAROL

THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL

The name “*Colegio Karol Cardenal de Cracovia*” was given to the school as a tribute to the passed Pope John Paul II, who was cardinal of Krakow in Poland before becoming Pope. For the Principal of the school, **Mr. Juan Carlos Navarrete**, he became the highest spiritual authority on earth, representing peace, which is embodied by a flying dove, symbol that every student wears on their school uniforms. According to the words of the Principal: “Karol, the good Pope, the Pope of peace, unarguably the symbol of love, the most charismatic human being the planet has known, a man who trespassed frontiers and was able to win a place of respect and love, between all human beings who met him, regardless of their social class, origin and religious beliefs: a Saint”.¹

NATURE OF ILE

This is then an Elementary school, open to boys and girls, where there is no student selection and where every child who wants to be educated gets an opportunity to receive education.

General situation of the Chilean educational system

The Chilean educational system has a structure of 8 years of elementary mandatory education for students aged between 6 and 13 years old, followed by 4 years of secondary education, also mandatory since year 2003, for students aged between 14 and 17 years old.

Secondary or high school education is organized in four years. The first two are dedicated to general subjects and the last two are organized in two different career tracks. On one hand there is a *scientific humanistic* path (that delivers training mainly to prepare students to move into higher education) and the Technical and Vocational Education (that gives education and training to access primarily to the job market, in areas like Administration, Services, Agriculture, Industry and Commerce).

Finally, the preschool system in Chile provides education and care for children up to 5 years old by a variety of private and public institutions. It is not mandatory yet and its coverage is still low.

¹ Navarrete, Juan Carlos. Mundo Karol, el país de los bajitos... una república EN-TREN-TENIDA.

Currently there are a number of reforms put into place to increase enrollment and quality of preschool education, so is possible to “*level the field*” (extremely necessary in an unequal society like the Chilean) for all children born in Chile.

School administrative categories:

In Chile there are four types of categories of school institutions:

Municipal schools: Administered by 341 municipalities along the country, through one of the following systems:

- Municipal departments for the administration of education (DAEM), which are 288 and respond directly to the municipal authority (Mayor or Mayoress)
- Municipal Corporations, which are 53 and have rigorous rules with respect to the hiring of personnel and the use of resources

Private subsidized schools: Financed by a subsidy or a public voucher given by the state based on student’s attendance. The difference is covered by student’s parents or guardian.

Private paid schools: They don’t receive any subsidy from the State and operate completely with parents’ contributions.

Corporations: They are technical high schools administered by firm corporations with public financing specially settled with this purpose (which it is not a per student subsidy).

SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEX OF THE ILE

Colegio Karol is located at the commune of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. This is an area of low and middle income population that has slowly improved their income over time. The school is a private subsidized that gets a monthly stipend from the central government budget and the rest is contributed by parents.

Inside the commune of Pedro Aguirre Cerda, this school is located on one of the poorest zones of Santiago, called José Maria Caro. There it is possible to see important drug abuse and

addiction problems and an important lack of job opportunities for young people and adults. Many of them don't have a job so they steal to get what they need.

Considering the socioeconomic characteristics of this educational environment it is even more complex to educate students. For teachers is particularly harder to get educational outcomes for this group of students comparing to students from other schools located in best equipped areas with more stimulating social environments.

The impact produced by Karol school on their environment has allowed duplicating the enrolment number in almost one decade and has become the first option for parents when they decide where to educate their children. So the school has earned a reputation of "*Committed School*" with disadvantaged and poor people, "which is something that makes us proud and also demands from us our complete commitment and service and that compromises all of our work".²

- B. The ILE model and the learning environment characteristic: how students are organized, how they work with teachers and facilitators, how is knowledge and content combined, pedagogy and sequence of learning, use of facilities and the space and the use of commentary resources.**

ILE MODEL

The model that the school presents is a one of a *democratic school*, where all students, called "*cracovians*", live democracy. The cross-curricular objective is to get active participation on the activities of the community and get ready to fully exert their rights and duties that are recognized and demanded by the social democratic life.

Other of the objectives derived from the above is the fight against apathy and boredom that children and young people traditionally demonstrate when dealing with education. This is

² Ibid. p. 81

associated with the lack of incentives that students have in many occasions to participate in school and society, which is a phenomenon that was diagnosed from the first moment by the Principal, Juan Carlos Navarrete. He realized this was a problem embedded in the community and the school. Between school and community there was no connection and the worst part was there was no conscience that the problems of Chilean society were the same that students had.

Teachers, parents and students have been able to follow with perseverance and conviction the ideas of the Principal, which has not always been an easy task. Many did not understand immediately the idea behind the model, but they have slowly got used to this type of education and the great possibilities this meant for their families and mainly for their children.

The final purpose the school offers is the development of *integral* people, who will receive values that they will later put into practice when adults.

So the school offers them with tools that allow them to present themselves as unique people in front of the school community and the society. The Principal defines this idea on his book, and says that this school is “a different school, a school committed with people and that transforms boys and girls into the first actors of teaching and learning process”.³

All teachers from “*Karol world*” acknowledge the working style that is used to embody the school government. When they plan their lessons they include units and activities that are shared with the rest of the teachers. By doing this they remind the different classes their daily responsibilities and the roles they have been assigned with.

The relationship between teachers and the school administration is open and true and they are able to express their ideas and problems at the Principal’s office. For the same reason, and because it is a small school, the Principal gets to know pretty fast the problems of his students. Since there is also a close relation with parents, who cooperate constantly with the school, he is able to be informed about the situation of many student`s families.

Even when the school complies with all the administrative and requirements like any other school in Chile, they also develop extracurricular activities. This is part of the school identity and when children, parents or teachers become part of the school they adopt this identity. They all know the school will have a different seal, with a work centered on school government.

³ Ibid. p. 14

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Karol school is a school with a familiar and reliable environment. A strong friendliness is observed among their members. Students seem to be happy, cheerful, playful and very aware of what is happening around them in the school.

We have to keep in mind they are boys and girls who are under 15 years' olds and are in the middle of their personal development, so if they are given the right incentives they will be able to stay motivated at their daily duties and at the same time they can have a god time during their days at school.

The world “us” is perhaps the most used at the school, where there are no individuals, but only a common mission. All of those who work there believe in the established model, they struggle every day in collaborative teams to prove that changes in difficult social contexts are possible and that is feasible to participate in community on this challenge.

THE PRINCIPAL OF COLEGIO KAROL CARDENAL DE CRACOVIA

This model of work was started by the Principal of the school, who can already be characterized as a real innovator and the creator of this learning environment. His name is Juan Carlos Navarrete and he is a highly dedicated teacher who has assumed the direction of the school. He studied pedagogy in elementary education at University of Tarapacá, in the north of the country and has finished a number of courses for principals, a diploma on management abilities and a Master on Educational management. At the conversations with him and by watching his action in front of the school community is possible to see his strong passion for teaching.

He has declared that all he does, he does it for love. “Love corresponded with love seems to be the general idea and so, little by little, with more passion than work abilities the desired behavioural changes are obtained ...”.⁴

He has been the motor of the project, and has put together a team of excellent teachers, whom he completely trusts. He has established a work system with large participation, many programmed activities based on *community pedagogy*. This theory has its background on the principles from Carl Rogers and are also based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence.

⁴ Ibid., p. 10

KAROL SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The Principal decided to start school government and he has called it the “*School Republic*”. Also it is called “*Karol world, the country of the short people*”, in reference that the school Republic is dedicated to children.

The Principal says “when we are able to create a different environment, with strong and loving relations, we will start to see happy students, children who did not dream but who are now able to project themselves. Each student has to discover his own potential and be happy”.

The Principal comments he realized that teachers in general were not a source of inspiration for their students and that they moved from one subject to other without investing on their teaching quality. They were boring for their students. Traditional education *bombed* students with disconnected contents where seemed to be more important to be quiet and passive in the classroom than really learning. Because of this he decided to motivate and attract students and parents with a new, active, dynamic and interactive system.

SCHOOL GOVERNMENT

Students at Karol School have the possibility of participating actively on the election of President, school symbols, rights and duties and even a Political Constitution.

For the school government, the idea is as follows: each class is a commune. For example, 3th A is Ñuñoa and 4th C is Conchalí. Each commune is administered by a Mayor or Mayoress with their communal departments. In each commune there is a cabinet, a Local Police Justice Department, an Education Department, Health and Building Department.

At school level, all students from third to sixth grade can apply to become President of the Republic. This right is valid only when the applicant can certify not to have repeated a course, has been at the school for at least one year and has won the elections of their “**commune-class**”.

In March of each year there are elections for school government for children and parents, and it is the duty of both to work closely under the support and orientation of teachers and school administrators. On Election Day they elect: a President, a Vice President and a Secretary General of Government. The President, later, will choose the Cabinet formed by nine members.

The Ministers, on their hand, will choose a Deputy Secretary for each of their positions, who will act as coordinators of activities and have an important responsibility for information.

The organization of the educational unit is done through different ministries. Each student from 3rd to 6th grade will have to belong to one ministry. Each ministry has a parent involved as well. Children from kindergarten, first and second grade play to the “*Little Country*” using the same guidelines of the Constitution.

Students at Karol school are attached since they are very young to the school government. During the activities in the classroom with teachers they get explanations of how the work will be developed during the school cycle. Each classroom is a governmental ministry, each communal department has a specific mission, with rights and duties on the pedagogical area, they develop competencies on that area and the system of school government is the pillar of all the education that the school provides. The school develops internal evaluations, along with school projects (*macro projects*) and classroom level projects (*micro projects*).

THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF KAROL WORLD

The **Political Constitution** of Karol government sets a big emphasis on people. The *Political Constitution* where all these aspects are specified was approved by 87% of students. This constitution started in year 1997 and is the one that establishes school government for boys and girls at Karol Cardenal de Cracovia School.

On Article 1st the Constitution establishes: “Children are the main actors of the teaching and learning process”.⁵ It is also written the opportunity of being freely and sovereignly part of this School Republic, with freedom of speech and with no discrimination. The school gives access to a big family, where students and adults can find opportunities to advance on the development of their potential.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 42

THE MINISTRIES

There are 12 Ministries within the Republic School Karol:

1. **Ministry of Education:** Concerned about the strengthening of the educational Project and its fair and differentiated application, according to people`s capacities.
2. **Ministry of Justice:** In charge of the constitution compliance and its enhancement (Internal regulations)
3. **Ministry of Health:** Its mission is to care for risks prevention, good health and support in case of school accidents for all students and the community.
4. **Ministry of Foreign Relations:** Works for the improvement and enlargement of communications with the community, always guarding the institutional image of the school.
5. **Ministry of the Interior:** In charge of the harmonic development of all the daily activities of the school, promoting the use of free time on recreational games that promote camaraderie and good relations. This Ministry is also in charge of the school fund FO.SO.E whose main mission is to take care of the most economically deprived students of the school. They organize a school wardrobe, charity wreaths, etc.)
6. **Ministry DI.ES.CO, School Direction for Communications:** This Ministry is in charge of the promotion of all the school government activities and the educational institutional Project at internal level. They work with *Karol Radio*, the school bulletin boards, school brochures and also external communications with other media.
7. **Ministry of Labor, Public Works and Culture:** This Ministry organizes activities like the census of jobs and professions of parents and guards the maintenance of the school. It is concerned with culture promotion and people`s values at the school.
8. **Ministry of Sports and Recreation:** Organizes and supervises the right development of all kinds of sport and recreational events that lead to increase the wellbeing of the educational community.
9. **Ministry of the Environment:** It is in charge of raise awareness of the importance of ecology and the care of nature, motivating the cleaning and ornament of the school. The

motto of this Ministry is “If you are a decent *Cracovian*, you take care of your environment”.⁶

10. **Ministry of Finance – Economy:** Concerned about the activities of the fair distribution of the Cracovian Budget (*Karol Méritos*). Resources are at the Karol *Bank of Méritos* (Ba.Ka.M. Banco Karol Méritos).
11. **Ministry of Defense:** In charge of the care and preservation of the *Cracovian* life style, based on very important values like respect, loyalty and integrity.
12. **Ministry of the Family:** Its topic is the strengthening of the family unit, working on joint efforts of mutual support between family and school, giving privilege to the understanding of the surrounding environment.

This ministerial division as well of the administrative bodies the school responds to the legal tradition Chile has, inherited from the Spanish system. In Chile there is still a strong respect for the institutions and for those who have an institutional position.

So behind this school idea there is an enhancement of the importance of citizenship and the rights of each citizen. Each student is receiving tools to fully exert their rights and duties in the future, at the society. Also the whole school community gets to understand the way how society is organized and how their executive bodies work. This plants on them the interest on social participation and learning of how to exert their civic obligations.

Inside the school there is a *Cracovian Security Council*. It is chaired by the Principal of the school, with the presence of the body of teachers and school administrators from the Children Government and Parents (President – Vice-president – Secretary General of the Government). They are convened by the Principal and the agreements are taken by majority.

The main idea is that students feel involved with their responsibilities and they realize all citizens are important and have a role to play so society can work. In some way this is related to the “role-playing games”, which are so popular today. These games can have significance for education and can allow students to have access to knowledge in a significant way and make them have ownership of their knowledge. Situations that for others may seem irrelevant can become

⁶ Ibid., p. 129

important for students during the learning process. Students start to feel that the contents they are receiving are important and the use of games becomes essential on the teaching-learning process. Games are interesting since they can allow teachers encourage motivation in students, introduce concepts, procedures and educational values.

THE KAROLGANIGRAMA

Karolganigrama is the school organization chart and establishes the authorities that exist inside the Ministry:

On each ministry there are the following positions, which have to work united and harmonically:

- Student Minister
- Counselor teacher
- Parent Minister
- Chiefs of comunal Departments
- Mayor of the class
- Deputy Secretary

- The election of authorities is as follows: The President is elected by political campaigns at the voting boxes, including elections` monitors. If the winner does not get the absolute majority, there is a second round and then a definitive one.

- The person who gets the first majority becomes president of the school government of boys and girls and the one who gets the second majority becomes the Secretary General of the Presidency.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

School uniform is a particular characteristic of *Cracovian* students. The Principal selected the purple colour to identify the school. Also, it gives students a sense of belonging to a community and uniformity to their clothing. It is also a factor of discipline on the way they dress to attend school.

Purple colour was chosen to better identify the school with the Pope John Paul II, whose name the school has. At every church celebration and religious rite for the time of Lent, priests and catholic authorities use to dress on purple, as a mandate from the Catholic Church. Since the Pope`s

decease was on the month of April 2005 it was the time of Lent. Therefore priests who participated on the rites and ceremonies dedicated to the late Pope wore this color on their vestments.

So everything at Karol School looks purple: the painting on the classrooms, the walls of the schoolyards, the decoration on the bulletin boards and the colour of the uniforms for boys and girls.

DISCIPLINE AT KAROL SCHOOL:

Inside the school there are people who collaborate with the Ministry of Justice to preserve good discipline and behavior inside the school. These collaborators preserve the order inside the school and establish discipline for students who don't respect the rules of behaviour the school government has determined.

When there are some problems derived from discipline, there are some infractions, being the highest the "*public trial*" where children are accused and defended by students/lawyers from the Ministry of Justice.

Gender equality between boys and girls is essential at Karol School Political Constitution. It is important to highlight that each of these groups, even when they are very young, have the same obligations. In a country like Chile, where there is still a persistent gender gap in terms of income, completion of studies, among other factors, is critical to start with a more equitable education since the start of schooling. Many studies have shown that gender inequality is learned and replicated by the same cultures where is reproduced. It is a central factor that women have the opportunity to get the same level of education that men do and reach the same goals and outcomes during their lives. Even when Chile had a woman as President, Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, there are still a number of accomplishments that have to be reached by women.

BANK B.A.K.A.M.

The government's Budget of the Karol Government is composed by one fee of schooling rights, paid once and in advance in the month of December. The 50% of the budget will be totally directed to the enhancement of education. The other 50% is delivered equally to the ministers so they can have their own projects and put their ideas into action.

The school has its own money, called *Karolméritos*, which are printed at their own bank. The bank is called B.A.K.A.M. which means *bank of Karol merits*. At the bank there is an agent, a Head of the Commercial Area, a Head of Operations, bank executives, partners and cashiers. The “money” is used to buy at the same school. The money is monthly distributed to the teachers for the class-commune and more frequently to students.

There are bonuses of real incentives that the students use to get loans and to get toys and movies from a specific place called “*jugarteca*”, which is also an important institution inside the school/nation. At that space there are table games, lotteries and other items which are highly appreciated by students since it is a place to have fun inside the same classroom. “What is a *jugarteca*? ... it is a store with more than three thousand toys for the educational community, that works twice a week and has the goal of keeping, lending and collecting toys, which are given as loans to students from the school. In the case of our store gets the stuff through the High Economics School of Harlem in Holland and also has the support of the funds collection done at the same school”.⁷

KAROLWEEN:

During the school year there are a number of dates that are expected with enthusiasm by the students. They are for example, Mother`s day, Teacher`s day, the Star`s Show, the Fun Fair, the Festival of Music and the night of Karolween. This last event happens on the night of October 31st. This occasion is the most valued event of the year, by students and by parents.

The school also has its own radio, called “*Karol, a window to the 21st Century*”. The radio has become an important element that has helped many students to increase their own personal development, breaking the bubble of isolation. This isolation “provokes that many children are excessively shy and are unable to communicate. They don`t have any severe behavioral problem but they become people who are absent in school and nobody will ever remember them and they leave no mark of their time in school”.⁸

The school anniversary is also an important date for the school and by then many activities are organized demonstrating students and parent`s imagination. The idea is showing a spirit of

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 170

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 174

solidarity. Some organized activities are like the creative fair, *cracovian hands* and the *Supermerkarol*.

SCHOOL BREAKS AT KAROL SCHOOL

School harmony it is also present during the daily breaks, where students share with each other on a pleasant and fun environment. At lunch they can watch movies, listen to music, sing, dance and relax. They love watching TV and they appreciate to have a big screen projector where a group of students can share a movie or a special program.

We had the chance to see them compete during a school break with a lottery of mathematics. They came in order to the meeting room and there they participated according to their class/commune. They celebrated noisily and happily when they got good scores and especially when they won the game.

STUDENTS AT KAROL SCHOOL

Karol school is formed by 800 students from kindergarten to sixth grade in elementary school and the parents participate voluntarily at the school activities. The school has become so popular and has got such a high prestige that at a determined moment the number of students increased three times and now it has around 1100 students.

Teachers declare children at Karol school “are respectful, loving, affective where they obey the established rules, they are quiet and lack many things they need.”⁹

This school has a majority of poor population with high social risk and vulnerability. Families there regularly don't have enough resources to cover their needs. More than 300 students require integration initiatives and present special needs. All of them are accepted at the school, given there is no school selection and the school is always trying to have more diversity.

“Children are the reflection of their parents, they don't have many aspirations, we have to develop those aspirations ... they know exactly which are their rights and duties for education, but they don't have a projection on the technical and professional area, or to continue studies towards higher education. Their parents don't project lives of their children. We receive all kind of

⁹ The expression “lack of” is very used in Chile to describe those socioeconomic groups who have fewer resources in society. It indicates absence of, need of, etc.

children, with the same intellectual capacity, but they are children with a very special self-esteem”.

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All the students are called and recognized as *cracovians* and by this, everybody, teachers, parents, students and all of those who work at the school are involved on the learning process in the school. They even get the *nationality* of the school, through an identity card, that identifies them as citizens and it is given to all those who are involved on the daily activities of the school. They give it to visitors as well to make them involved with the school community.

Students don't show important discipline problems and the school government has helped them to have self-control and not to be aggressive. There are no important problems of school drop-out or school leave either.

At Karol school students have a specific role and there is a place guaranteed for them at the school. They are treated with dignity, they are taught values and they are given the same learning opportunities that at any other school. This aspect is well protected and it is very important for example for the Head of the Academic department of the school¹¹, who takes care that all of the above is done at the school. The trust in students is central: authority is based on reciprocal trust.

One aspect that school parents value very much is that at Karol school there is no student bullying which is very common on other schools in the area. “Here we don't see children fighting outside the school”.¹² All of them know they when there is violence towards any school member he or she will be severely punished and censured. It is not allowed that students treat each other with any sign violence or with any rudeness towards teachers. The prestige that school has got has to be preserved. The only reputation the school has is to be the “*school of the trains*”, since there are wagons installed as special rooms inside the school.

In the case of the students with special characteristics, those who have a more complex family history, sometimes crossed by familiar violence, the school has used the strategy of Reiki¹³. They have been successful on relaxing those students and have made them perform better on the school

¹⁰ Interview with the Head of the Academic Department, Colegio Karol Cardenal de Cracovia

¹¹ There is one of these units at every school or high school in Chile. It is under a teacher who supervises the curriculum for the different subjects. In many occasions this teacher is the counterpart of the Ministry of education at their supervision tasks in terms of the student's attendance and the accomplishments of academic goals.

¹² Interview with parents of Karol Cardenal de Cracovia School

¹³ Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. It is administered by "lying on hands" and is based on the idea that an unseen "life force energy" flows through us and is what causes us to be alive.

environment. On his book the Principal tells how Reiki helped a student who was living domestic violence: “The first sessions of Reiki, supported by relaxing exercises, aromatherapy and musical therapy, applied to the little boy, and produced consequences on the life of *Matias* and an important change. Little by little he was learning new techniques that allowed him to better manage his emotions and by doing this he started recognizing Karol world as an oasis in front of the environment he was living at home. He started to love himself and to enjoy the fact of being loved, protected and respected as a child”.¹⁴

TEACHERS AT KAROL SCHOOL

In general the team of teachers is a very young one. They are called “uncle or aunt” by their students, so there is more closeness between them and the familiar environment inside the school can be felt by all of them.

The majority of teachers arrive to school once they finish their studies at the university and have developed their professional career there. All of them recognize that there is an important teamwork at the school, a strong collaboration between them and they are aware that one important requisite is to be receptive to those changes and to be able to innovate.

The Principal has told them from the beginning of their work at the school that they are called to be agents of change and that he values the diverse set of abilities they have. On that sense, if they are able to develop their emotions, they have more emotional, sensorial, multidisciplinary intelligence and that it is an asset for the school.

During the last years there has been a very low rate of teachers leave and the teaching team has been growing steadily. They have supported each other and have created a real professional family.

The role of teachers is critical for the school government. Teachers have responsibilities oriented towards two areas, as counselors for class/commune and as advisors of a ministry. They guide and organize ideas and projects which are developed by the same students.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK DEVELOPED BY PARENTS OF KAROL SCHOOL

Parents` participation is fundamental at “Karol world”. The Principal declares that he feels parents` role is different in this school. Here, in Karol school, parents are not “clients”, as is the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 153

case in many schools in Chile, but they are active partners and they have a specific mission to accomplish.

The process of making parents and students` guardians participate started with a series of meetings organized by the Principal where they were asked to develop and graph what is for them an ideal world, showing their own ideas, motivations and aspirations. Among the ideas that emerged it was “*the country of the kisses*” (an idea of one mother of the school) or the dream of a society where money was formed only by smiles. These workshops with parents were the source of inspiration for many ideas that later the Principal took to practice and convinced him that all human beings dream with a better and human world. This would have to be a world where everyone has the opportunity of being valued and respected.

Many parents and guardians have declared that one of the reasons why they took their children to this school was for the diverse group of activities that the school offers to their parents. “For example we celebrate Mothers` day, the Children day, the day for the Show Searching for a Star, and then these activities become well known and they create a story and a special mystic with the school. The parents get to understand that here they are listened to”.¹⁵ Parents and guardians who come to this school are part of the educational process, part of the institutional activities and feel their opinions are heard and they are respected, only because he/she are human beings, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

The place for development the school offers is important for parents given the same speed that human beings live currently on their lives. It seems there is no room for communication and this space is given to them only at the school.

This is crowned by the declaration that parents do of being “a Karol mom”. One of the mothers declares proud, on an interview: “I am a Karol mom”. She and many more parents tell that at school there are many incentives for parents. They are always looking for new forms of involving them at the work of the school, through different activities.

The value of this joint work is so high that even a parent says “this has been useful for the relationship with my son, the more I support him, the more I know him”. As we have said, this is essential and very valued on the social environment where the school is located and on an individualistic society where children need the parents support through life. In a school like Karol

¹⁵ Interview with parents from Karol School

school, where many families are single-parent, where the grandfather or the grandmother is the one who educates, insertion and inclusion of the family in all school activities is essential. It has been proved that the family is the first social system that a human being faces. Social and cognitive abilities the child gets in the family will be of vital help when he faces school.¹⁶

It is well known that the incentives for collaboration between families and schools are important to give more security to children. This enhances learning in children and schools and gives more expectation for their personal goals. Also, if the child or his family supports what the school teaches, this will reinforce even more their learning and the values that the school gives.

However, it is clear that not all children receive the same support from their parents. On each class there is an important percentage of students who don't have the support of parents or guardians and who are then socially disadvantaged. Many of the parents don't attend any school meeting and about 20% of children either don't know their parents or don't live with them.

Given that students don't pay a monthly tuition, the funds the parents get help to improve school facilities and make possible to have complementary activities which benefit the whole school community. It is common to see at the school how the same parents donate groceries, toys for the *jugarteca* and table games. Many of them cooperate also during lunch hours, making sure students eat their lunches and behave properly.

Parents also declare they have a very familiar environment at the school and they can see that values are alive. They feel they are part of something, they feel important and they see how their own children develop their personalities, are trained as leaders and then when they go to high school they are also leaders of the high schools they go to. Parents say "And that they learned it here, at Colegio Karol".¹⁷ It happens then that children learn to live democratically and develop their personal capacities in school to apply them later on the world where they work in the future. This work is done with children with what the parents call "*human science*" and they highly value. They realize this is the result of a systematic work of teachers, the school Principal and school administration.

¹⁶ Schneider, Barbara; Keesler, Venesa and Larissa Morlock. The effects of family on children's learning and socialization. The Nature of Learning, OCDE (2010)

¹⁷ Interview with parents at Karol Cardenal de Cracovia School

Parents know very well the reality their children live and feel that at Karol school they are equally respected. They are aware of the drug problems, parents in prison and other circumstances. Nevertheless their children are taught they don't necessarily have to live the same lives their parents had and can dream with a better one. It is only a matter of working hard to advance in the society they live on.

Parents who have been at the school for a longer time feel the school is really a *learning environment*, where their roles are clear, where they have a part and where they have to keep orienting the newcomers. It is their mission to make of this place a pleasant one, respectful and collaborate with the mission that the Principal and teachers are working on.

As has been said, this mission has been promoted from the same school: "the institution has always had open spaces of every kind, so it can be accessed by any of their members. The idea is to come in selflessly and not to wait for a special invitation or special gratitude, losing the fear to assume responsibilities".¹⁸

MANAGEMENT TEAM:

The school management team is formed by professionals who develop their work very quietly. All of them are low-profile people who are convinced of the importance of their work and how it can be well developed. They sustain fluid dialogue with all teachers and with the professional team at the school.

Their objective is to be well-ordered, rigorous and exhaustive on their work and be pedagogically effective all the time. They must reflect the true value of Karol world and be able to support their teachers, watch classes and keep a record of them.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 69

PEDAGOGY AND LEARNING SEQUENCES: THE SCHOOL GOVERNMENT

The school has developed the idea of “*pedagogy of projects*”. The concept is to develop original, critic and reflective thinking of boys and girls.

Teachers propose ideas and students must present a format providing responses to the following questions:

What?	Title
Why	Diagnostics
What for?	Background
Using what?	Material resources
When?	Time
How?	Organization
Who?	Human Resources
What do we know?	Arguments
How will we know if it worked?	Evaluation

This format has allowed the school to reorient and give order to the work they develop.

The most important project of the school is school government that involves all the school as if it was an “*Independent Republic*”. However, what is most important is the attention to affection and participation, as efficient tools against the myth of “problematic children”. In other words, the Principal created a culture where a child is only representing the problems of society; this is a materialistic, violent and sometimes a sick society,

Students are not guilty of being part of this society and they have to receive the opportunity of getting the best education they can.

WORKSHOPS AT KAROL SCHOOL:

At the school everyone has tried to provide a different type of education to students and this is reflected as well on the different workshops and activities offered to students.

This is an innovation for the school. For example, they have a workshop on circus-theatre, where children are taught to develop self-consciousness, they have games, juggling lessons, karate workshop, music workshop and the most important workshop is school government. As mentioned, there are also the reiki workshops that have been useful for many children with serious behavioural problems or who have witnessed crime or domestic violence.

This is all related to the *theory of holistic and integral education*. The concepts around this theory have to do with providing education that includes as many perspectives of human nature as possible. This theory has provided an answer for the complexity of education and clearly indicates that knowledge alone is not enough. It considers six dimensions of the human being: Emotional, Social, Cognitive, Esthetic, Corporal and Spiritual. The educator, the student and the environment are considered as only one entity.

The goal is to develop within the educational community the following types of learning: learn to learn, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be.

The demands and requests for the holistic educator are certainly high. He or she must be able to support the student and a good teacher is no longer the one who has acquire more knowledge. It is not enough now to have a large knowledge base and it has become important to offer an adequate pedagogical structure to give answer to students and promote real interaction with knowledge.

USE OF SPACES AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

The train wagons are one of the more representative spaces of the school. Currently there are workshops and special activities done there for students with special needs, in a warm, colourful environment. It is because of these train wagons that the school has been called "*the school of the*

trains”. The Principal says that these wagons were going to be thrown away and he asked for them for the school. From the beginning he imagined he could use them as innovation spaces, offering new activities different from the ones that traditional school offered. For him the wagons represent the living engine of the school.

Also there is a special room for meetings and assemblies, which is big, has special audio amplification and comfort conditions to receive students. There they have the meetings for school government, teachers’ meetings, and all the events and ceremonies they invite the school community to.

C. - Nature and quality of the learning developed at the ILE, at the classrooms, laboratories, workshops and other non-formal spaces.

NATURE AND QUALITY OF LEARNING

The nature of learning in Karol school is completely crossed by the concept of the school government. It is a strategy of educating with values that helps children to receive civic training and essential values. Teachers declare that this model will always be useful, no matter what the cultural change is or the educational reform the system is under. The human being will always have to be concerned about his soul and about how to live on a community. They will always have to know their rights, duties and the concept of freedom, since knowledge per se will never be enough to have a good performance in life. It is necessary to have rational citizens, able to make their own decisions.

Other of the pillars of learning at school is based on the concept of school and the definition of school boundaries. The school is not only formed by school facilities and the physical space where the school is. It also refers to where the children, the families and their communities are. At the school they firmly believe on the triad *teacher- student- parent*, all of them communicated through love and peace.

The school motto is “first the person, then the student, being the key the planned action that develops all the potentialities of human being”. As the Principal summarizes “because we know that the integral care of each crop emerges from pedagogical practices cultivated on love: teachers of the Karol world, they intervene the processes of life to maximize the natural smells, the flavors

and the temperature degrees boys and girls need to get a level of entrepreneurship, talent and innovation, on a healthy balance with the flavour of the perfect maturity of a Great Citizen”.¹⁹

D. - Impact and effectiveness of ILE:

EVALUATIONS

During last year, the school has got an important increase on the scores for the standardized test which is applied in Chile, SIMCE (System of Measurement of the Quality of Teaching).

In year 2010 the school was able to increase by 16 points in Language and by 9 points in Mathematics and Science. This has been appreciated by the whole school community. However, they feel that the essence of the school is the school government and that SIMCE is only one more indicator of how the contents of the evaluated areas are being worked at the school.

INDICATORS

During all the school history the school has been recognized on many dimensions. One important moment was the interview students had with the former president Ricardo Lagos Escobar. On that occasion the President of the school told him “I am Liseloth Cisternas, I am nine year old and I am the President of the school government of boys and girls. Here with me you can see my Cabinet of 12 ministers. I would like to take the occasion to present you, Mr. President, with the First Political Constitution of the school government for Chilean boys and girls”.²⁰

The testimony of graduates from the school has also been very important. “It touches me when I remember that beautiful stage of my life; I feel I am privileged to have been able to move around these classrooms, to have been and had lunch at La Moneda Palace, to be with the President of the Republic, to know the governors at the Congress, etc. And to understand that nothing is impossible in life when you work on a community”.²¹

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Karol School website: www.mundokarol.cl

Interviews with parents, teachers, principal, academic department head and students from Karol school.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 184

²⁰ Ibid., p. 118

²¹ Ibid., p. 119