

CLASEDIGITAL (CHILE)

Endorsing ICDL at Governmental Level – Setting up a National Standard for ICT Competences and Improving Students' Employability in Chile

Background

For many years the Chilean Ministry of Education has successfully worked on providing access to personal computers for students. Today, more than 90% of the student population has access to a computer, which they use for both academic and leisure activity. However, until 2007 there was no national standard in ICT competences, neither for students nor their teachers. The ClaseDigital project, run and managed by ICDL Chile (Fundación Chile), convinced the Ministry of Education to accept ICDL as the official standard for proving a certain level of ICT competence at national level.

One of the compelling reasons that the Ministry approved the use of ICDL was that, following its successful implementation in schools, the attainment of a recognised international certificate of ICT skills would directly improve the employability of Chilean students.

Details and Delivery of the ClaseDigital Project

Fundación Chile and the Ministry of Education worked together and invited all public high schools to participate in the ClaseDigital project. As part of the sell-in phase of the project, the Ministry of Education communicated, through official notifications and through direct mail, the intent and the ambition of the project. Fundación Chile then took over the implementation phase of the project. A ClaseDigital train-the-trainer programme was organised. Fundación Chile staff visited schools to educate the trainers in how to motivate students to enrol, how to use available learning materials in the education process, and to accredit the schools as official ICDL test centres.

The two teachers who run the ICDL workshop for students in each school are:

- Provided with ICDL training and certification
- Provided with methodology training
- Given a printed guide for teachers
- Offered support and directions during the ICDL workshop

Additionally, thirty copies of students' ICDL guides were provided for free.

The provision of quality training and support materials, as well as secure automated testing in an invigilated environment not only were an essential requirement of the Ministry in guaranteeing a high level of return on their investment in the project, but also gave the project greater credibility amongst stakeholders. It was seen as a valuable programme which had a tangible outcome in the form of a recognised international certificate, which would also be of value to the candidate in the job market.

About the Candidates who Participate in the ClaseDigital Project

The candidates were both students and teachers from Chilean public high schools. As part of the project, the candidates enrolled on an ICDL programme which was established in their school as part of the joint Fundación Chile/Ministry of Education effort. Many of the student participants who registered were from poorer backgrounds and had limited access to or experience of ICT at the time of commencing the programme. Follow-up studies have since shown that those who became ICDL certified during the ClaseDigital project, had a higher job placement rate than those from the same school who had not partaken in the programme. Moreover, it became clearer that teachers benefited greatly from completing the ICDL programme, becoming more effective ICT users who were capable of further developing the use of ICT within existing educational processes.

Funding of the ClaseDigital Project

The Chilean Ministry of Education and the Chilean Economic Development Agency (Corporación de Fomento de la Producción, CORFO), the state organisation responsible for promoting economic development in Chile, provide the majority of the project's funds. A small part of the project's fee is covered directly by the students.

Impact

To date, as part of the ClaseDigital project, 910 high schools have participated, and more than 37,000 students have been ICDL trained. Of this number, over 10,000 students and 2,300 teachers were ICDL certified. At any one time more than 5,000 students are enrolled in the ClaseDigital project.

Word of the success of the ClaseDigital project in Chile spread throughout the Latin America region. Colombia is currently running its own ClaseDigital project with the help of the Colombian Ministry of Education.

