

9

Chile: Learning from radio

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Type of intervention: non-governmental initiative and public-private partnership

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General description

Established in 2009, Enseña Chile (Teach for Chile) is a non-profit organisation with the mission of catalysing the hearts, minds and energy of prominent future leaders, as well as their communities, into a movement that will reimagine education and contribute to educational equity across the country. To achieve those goals, Enseña Chile develops a pipeline of people who work, for at least two years, as teachers in low-income communities. Enseña Chile is one of the 53 organisations that formed the [Teach For All Network](#) as of May 2020, and one of the 11 independent social enterprises that advance similar programmes in Latin America.

This case study exemplifies how Enseña Chile designed and rapidly scaled educational innovations that are responsive to emerging education needs, particularly among disadvantaged students. The solution described mainly focused on radio education.

Facing the COVID-19 crisis, the immediate response of the government and of most educational institutions, whether public or private, was to transition to online teaching, supplemented with printed materials in cases where connectivity and devices were not available.

Out of the approximately 12 000 schools and 3.6 million students in Chile, 3 000 schools and 200 000 students are in rural areas and face similar conditions to those where teachers of Enseña Chile educate 35 000 students. These students have limited access to the Internet and to digital devices.

In this context, when classes were suspended in Chile on 16 March 2020, Enseña Chile teachers were concerned about their students not being able to access educational content and about maintaining the relationships with them. Incoming teachers had only been in school a couple of weeks with their students, as the school year starts in the beginning of March in the southern hemisphere, yet it had been long enough to understand how essential relationships are for any learning process. Teachers in the second year of the programme had developed deeper relationships with their students, but the continuity of those relationships was a major concern. Enseña Chile teachers felt the responsibility of quickly developing a solution to address at least one of the many needs of their students.

A group of Enseña Chile teachers began “*La Radio Enseña*”, a 30-minute radio programme which delivers quality and entertaining educational content for students in secondary education. The programmes include lessons in history, maths, art, science and language (Spanish). The educational content is relevant for all students in the targeted age group, and, beyond the targeted students, any programme can be listened to by the rest of the family as they cook, work or engage in other activities.

All content was developed by Enseña Chile teachers, reviewed by staff members and adapted to podcast structures so lessons could fit in radio/audio channels.

What started with a group of 30 people, after about a month, evolved into more than 90 teachers, mentors and members of the foundation’s staff joining efforts, in addition to the work they were already doing, to make every second of the programme something of value not only for their own students, but for every single student and family in Chile. Staff resources were equivalent to 20 full-time equivalent specialists: 12 in maths, 14 in science, 10 in language, 11 in art, 7 in history and 8 that would work with other programme staff. Editors, producers and directors joined after a couple of weeks to co-ordinate the work and ensure that technical standards were met.

With no formal structure, extra compensation or incentives, but mainly intrinsic motivation and purpose, this group of teachers, mentors and staff members started *La Radio Enseña* so that it could be broadcast on more than 240 frequencies across the country in the first 4 weeks of operation. The first programmes were made in three days, but as experience was gained, each programme’s quality improves and takes 27 hours to produce.

Main problems addressed

La Radio Enseña mainly tries to address three problems related to education continuity:

- Although it wasn’t in the “radar” of Enseña Chile teachers, a significant amount of people willing to learn have no access to any platform under an “online learning” model, as they do not have access to the Internet or devices.
- The lack of capacity to absorb “online” education goes beyond connectivity and equipment. The level of autonomy and other competencies that students need to learn by themselves, let alone the amount of motivation to do so, is well above that of many students.
- The 4.9 million adults who have not finished secondary education, people with some disability and people in prison could also benefit from this solution, as there was no other easy alternative in a “social distancing” context.

Mobilising and developing resources

The seed for this innovation came from the most unexpected resource. Teach for Nigeria, one of the 53 countries in the Teach For All network, had implemented some classes by radio, and this innovation was highlighted in the monthly bulletin of the international network.

One second-year teacher in Chile thought this was the most simple and straightforward way to address the Enseña Chile teachers' challenge and brought the idea to some of his friends in the programme.

In a couple of days, without any knowledge on how to develop a radio programme, or the technical assistance needed to produce a radio programme, a group of teachers and staff members of Enseña Chile started to write scripts to make students live out their best 30 minutes of the day.

The existing assets of *La Radio Enseña* were its people, its purpose-driven philosophy and its networks. What needed to be developed from scratch were the content of the educational programme and the technical skills relating to radio broadcasts.

The main resource that *La Radio Enseña* could mobilise was the team “behind the scenes” that started working on this project. This group had no knowledge of how to make a radio programme (dialogues, sounds, silences and interaction), but they had a clear and common vision of what the experience of a “dream class” would be for those students listening to the programme.

This common purpose in the team results from a combination of Enseña Chile's recruitment criteria, its training processes and its members' teaching experience. Enseña Chile selects around 6% of the applicants to the programme based on a blend of nine competencies and mindsets. It then provides its members training that develops different kinds of leadership skills centred on a vision for students' learning in class. The development of character, academic achievement and a commitment to the community are the three dimensions to be developed in each class. Enseña Chile calls this the “dream class”. Every student should be able to explain the purpose of the lesson (i.e. how it connects with their future), to demonstrate what they are learning, where they take responsibility and agency for their learning and class work, and where they experience joy in their learning.

So when the idea of developing radio lessons was proposed by a member, the organisation to support this work evolved organically, but was driven by Enseña Chile's philosophy. The team included teachers, coaches (or reviewers), three people from the Communication Department, and people from several networks connected to the foundation. One of them, perhaps the most productive in terms of increasing the reach of the programme, was the Association of Radio Broadcasters (Asociación de Radiodifusores de Chile), which disseminated the programme almost immediately to 1 200 radios across the country. Around 95 radio stations subscribed and transmitted the programme as a response to this first call for diffusion. This collaboration is an example of how productive partnerships can be. With the goal of being of the greatest possible service to students, all organisations did what they could to increase the impact and reach of *La Radio Enseña*.

Making traditional radios include *La Radio Enseña* in their broadcast was a key step in increasing the reach to students. A key area of success was that in addition to asking the Association of Radio Broadcasters to “spread out the word” with the 1 200 radios where they had potential outreach, teachers from Enseña Chile reached out to local radios where they were teaching and contacted local broadcasters to benefit their own communities. As a result, after the second week, *La Radio Enseña* was being broadcast over 150 frequencies all throughout Chile.

The positive reception of the first programmes made the *La Radio Enseña* team understand the potential of the project and in no time they were learning to develop better scripts and about podcasts, broadcasting and editing techniques, and customer relationship management, etc.

The success of the programme was much greater than initially expected, which increased the need for more technical skills for producing radio programmes that met the quality requirements of some of the radio stations interested in the broadcasts. Resources were gathered to hire a sound editor and a producer to co-ordinate the production team, the radio broadcasts and the schools that were potential candidates to use this new tool.

Fostering effective use and learning

The student experience with the programme involves listening to a broadcast, engaging with questions asked by the broadcasters, writing down some key concepts of the topic, and following the suggestions of learning interactions with their family members.

The process is quite straightforward because the broadcasters ask direct questions, provide time to answer them, suggest when to write down relevant information and how to interact with the people around them. Then, if they want to exchange ideas or interact with *La Radio Enseña*, the only way is through an Instagram account, an alternative only available to some students.

The programme is designed differently from a regular class, but has the same expected learning goals of a “dream class”. To achieve these goals, Enseña Chile teachers working at *La Radio Enseña* are monitored by the Enseña Chile coaches who normally support them. Feedback is given at every step of the process (writing and recording), which creates a culture of continuous improvement. Every programme is “certified” as a “dream class”.

Implementation challenges

Since programmes were being broadcast every weekday, from Monday to Friday, the production pace was a significant initial challenge in itself. To address this need, additional members of Enseña Chile were asked to join *La Radio Enseña*. After 4 weeks, more than 80 teachers were working together and many members of the foundation’s staff willingly work providing support.

The student-teacher interaction was another challenge. Programmes were recorded prior to the date of broadcast, so real-time interaction with students was limited or even null. To tackle this issue, social networks were used to foster live interaction between teachers and students. Questions were asked during the programmes and students could share their answers using Instagram (if they had access), and different materials were shared on *La Radio Enseña*’s Instagram profile to allow for interactions with students. Some programmes included experiments that students could develop at home then share the outcome through their social network. Since a lot of students do not have an Internet connection and no access to online social networks, maintaining contact with them remained extremely difficult and one of the biggest challenges.

Monitoring success

While *La Radio Enseña*’s strategy team was keen to know how many students were listening to the radio podcasts, there are no rating data for radio in Chile. The only information that could be collected was how many radios were broadcasting the programme and the potential amount of people that could listen to it. Only an expensive market study would have allowed these data to be obtained.

- One very important indicator for the team was the geographical outreach of the programme: after four weeks of broadcasting, every large geopolitical dependency in Chile, and around 70% of small ones, had at least one radio station broadcasting the podcasts.

- The number of different frequencies transmitting was also relevant: *La Radio Enseña* was broadcast by over 240 frequencies 4 weeks after its launch. The number of weeks every frequency transmitted the programme was also monitored.

La Radio Enseña also established an Instagram account to stimulate interactions with students before and after each programme. It tracked the number of followers, users per day and engagement (rate of interactions per publication). In addition, *La Radio Enseña* started to track the reproductions of its resources on Anchor and Spotify, where the podcasts were also present from the second week of airing.

The biggest challenge was to estimate the number of students listening to the programme, their satisfaction with it and what they are learning. The plan is to collect information through surveys and/or focus groups (when possible).

Adaptability to new contexts

The approach followed by *La Radio Enseña* is transferable to other contexts with radio networks or even other digital channels (TV, Internet or other social media). Since its aim was to deliver high-quality education to all students in Chile, using broadcast media such as the radio appeared to be the best opportunity, especially for people without Internet access. But this was considered a starting point only. The team's view is that "the sky is the limit".

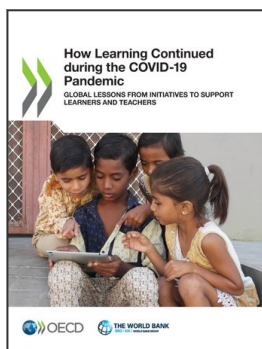
During the COVID-19 confinement (or other restrictions), broadcast media can provide a valuable community service for countries at similar or lower levels of development as Chile. *La Radio Enseña* served as an opportunity for private radio stations to serve the country in the context of a pandemic, but the project had such an impact that after three weeks, the idea that *La Radio Enseña* should be sustained and even grow after the COVID-19 pandemic was unanimous.

Since the format consists of a pre-recorded podcast sent to radio stations, it allows for quick and easy scalability. *La Radio Enseña* began broadcasting on 4 radio stations the first week, and a month later it was being broadcast on 240 radio frequencies, all transmitting the same podcasts. As of June 2020, the Ministry of Education was considering expanding the programme to the whole country.

Another path to scalability was achieved by sharing the scripts and/or the programme with other members of the Teach For All network. Panama was the first to adopt it and a sharing process of the podcast contents and productions started from the very beginning.

Box 9.1. Key points to keep in mind for a successful adaptation

1. Have a clear purpose. This should build on the sense of urgency created by the crisis, a sense of responsibility but also a sense of feasibility.
2. Engage with people from the community. All members of the different communities play an important role in reaching every student with radio programmes.
3. Do quality checks. This includes quality controls of the podcasts by coaches regarding the script writing, and, after recording and editing, checks on the audio quality.
4. Encourage continuous learning. When most teachers and coaches work with a radio format for the first time, learning the techniques and script writing for the radio are key elements for delivering effective podcasts. There should be a continuous reflection about this.
5. Have an agile and collective leadership. Some quick decisions are needed to ensure education continuity and reach as many students as possible. A collective, distributed leadership can be very beneficial.
6. Externalise areas where experience and/or knowledge are lacking.
7. Have a “Minimum Viable Product Approach”, establishing a strategy for one to three phases during the COVID crisis then a post-COVID phase.



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