



EDZARD HASBARGEN

Required Computing Skills Training and Certification Provide Employment Opportunities for German Students

Unprecedented digital literacy programs in Lower Saxony offer IC³ credentials to students and teachers

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In 2007, Edzard Hasbargen, training manager at MD Schulung & Beratung GmbH, a commercial training center in Germany, began Vertiefte Berufsorientierung, or "Profound Professional Orientation." The pilot training program was designed to bring teachers, students, the German Ministry of Education, employment agencies and politicians together to increase digital literacy in the German state of Lower Saxony.



With four schools, 358 students and unprecedented cooperation with the German Ministry of Education, Hasbargen provided computing skills training and Certiport® Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³®) to teachers and students in seventh, eighth and ninth grades. In addition to IC³, participants earned Microsoft® Office Specialist and Microsoft Certified Application Specialist certifications in Microsoft Word and Excel®. Hasbargen said representatives from the ministry and the federal government were keenly interested in the success of the program and evaluated ways to expand it throughout the entire Lower Saxony region.

And expand it did. Because of the first year's success, the pilot project extended in 2008 to include seven schools; 1,216 students and more than 200 teachers. IC³ also became a graduation requirement for students, a benefit Hasbargen anticipates will be appreciated because only 44 percent of individuals aged 15 to 24 are employed in Germany¹. "Unemployment for teenagers is very high," he said. "Computing skills are important in any profession; therefore, students have to be certified."

The European Union sponsors student IC³ exams, an investment Hasbargen said will promote knowledge and competency because IC³ is a global digital literacy standard.

Teachers participating in MD's computing skills training and certification program are prepared to include information and communications technology training and certification in their own courses. They are encouraged to earn IC³ through the Innovative Teachers Academy program sponsored by CERTNET, a Certiport Solution Provider. Initially, some teachers responded with skepticism. "But in symposia at schools, I was able to convince them IC³ was worthwhile," Hasbargen said. "Now 90 percent of the 210 teachers in the area take the course."

As the pilot programs show proven success, Hasbargen said both the German federal government and the Lower Saxony state government have responded positively to his efforts. "They keep an eye on our project," he said. "At a meeting of schools in Lower Saxony, they requested Internet connections for all schools and digital literacy training for 40,000 teachers."

In the future, Hasbargen hopes to continue to see his digital literacy program expand throughout the country.





"First, we hope in the next two years to have more than 20 schools participating in Frisia. Later, we will expand throughout Lower Saxony and later to all of Germany."

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¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 25 June 2008.