

Knowledge Exchange Networks



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Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue

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Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests.

G. Bachelard, 1957

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes action research that was conducted by the Direction de l'éducation des adultes et de l'action communautaire (DEAAC), in collaboration with the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François (CSEP), in order to account for the benefits of a knowledge exchange network (réseau d'échanges de connaissances, REC) for stimulating the desire to learn, undertaking or pursuing training activities and developing a culture of continuing education within a community. It also reports on the conditions of implementation formulated by practitioners who have tested this model of educational intervention. Since 2003, the CSEP, located in East Angus, Québec, has tested the implementation of a knowledge exchange network through funding granted under the Joint Federal-Provincial Literacy Training Initiatives (JFPLTI) program.

*A knowledge exchange network, regardless of the field, is an openly reciprocal process: any supply of knowledge presupposes a demand and any demand for knowledge is accompanied by a more or less long-term supply. **Only knowledge is exchanged:** all relationships based on money or services are excluded.*

A pilot group comprising school board representatives from Estrie, the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François and the Direction générale de la formation générale des adultes, of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport was set up to explore the conditions for implementing this kind of network.

The group met on several occasions and focused their reflection and discussion on the following elements:

- reach isolated persons who are considered excluded from social and economic activities
- avoid hierarchical relations by forming an exchange group within a given segment of the population and hope that it will snowball
- integrate associations or organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, the *cercles de fermières*,¹ groups for seniors, immigrants, etc.
- take a respectful approach and be sensitive to dominator-dominated relationships where there is a significant cultural and educational gap
- encourage other organizations to take part in implementing and maintaining the network
- recognize the importance of the role of the facilitator, who must ensure facilitation in the community as well as implement and maintain the network

1. The *cercle de fermières* (literally, farm women's circle) is the largest women's association in Québec. Its aim is to improve the conditions of women and families and pass on cultural and artisanal traditions.

- consider the limitations of a small community in terms of transportation, ties between people and settings (everybody knows each other)
- comply with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* whose primary orientation is to significantly raise the level of basic education of the Québec population

Following a number of group meetings, the network began its activities in several regional county municipalities (RCMs) in the Estrie region. However, in Haut-Saint-François, the experiment continues today.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training²

At the outset, the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* asserts that every individual should be able to access knowledge and have the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning. In fact, it is an essential condition for cultural, social and economic development. The Policy also clearly states that poverty and social exclusion will be reduced by enhancing and updating competencies. It underscores and welcomes the fact that the diversification of types of training and places where training is provided has given rise to autonomous formal and informal learning models independent of recognized educational institutions.

Through their philosophy, knowledge exchange networks are instrumental in furthering this Policy aim in the sense that they are open to everyone and allow people to discover or broaden their ability to be useful to others through their knowledge and skills. The networks also build on the fact that the acquisition of competencies constantly brings into play a social relationship with knowledge and they call into question processes that exclude whole segments of the population from the knowledge field. The knowledge exchange network thus becomes an important social environment for developing social learning and sharing acquired competencies.

By insisting on lifelong learning, the Policy conceives of education as an ongoing process, whose goals are to help individuals and communities become autonomous, develop a sense of responsibility and face economic, cultural and social changes, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and informed, creative participation of citizens in community life. It is essential that approaches to adult education and lifelong learning be based on the heritage, culture, values and personal experience of those concerned and that these approaches be implemented in such a way that they help and encourage the target population to play an active role and express themselves.

This action research will promote the following: knowledge exchange networks help develop a culture of continuing education and training in the community by allowing each member to demonstrate his or her knowledge and needs, and by organizing and formulating this knowledge so that he or she can share it effectively with others. And the Policy confirms this: "Access to knowledge for all and **sharing of knowledge** are factors in personal growth, economic development and social cohesion."³

Knowledge exchange networks may also promote the expression of a range of training needs that involve various areas of an adult's life and that will help diversify types of training and places where training is provided. In the same way, the Policy asserts that conditions must be created to ensure that the expression of learning needs in all their diversity. As a result, the supply of training must be more flexible and the diversity of types of training and places where training is provided must be taken into consideration. This makes it possible to reach people in their immediate living and working environments.

2. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002).

3. Ibid., 3.

Several other Policy statements advocate new experiments, such as those experienced in knowledge exchange networks, particularly concerning the record of learning and the recognition of prior learning and competencies. Recognition of prior learning and competencies is a major lever in the dynamics of lifelong learning. Since the implementation of the Policy's action plan, mechanisms for establishing a record of learning are now available. It is defined as a process that encourages adults to explore and identify their prior learning in terms of education and experience. It contributes to developing autonomy by helping adults to express their goals with respect to a personal project that might include a training plan, where necessary.⁴

It may be assumed that knowledge exchange networks promote the establishment of a record of learning when an individual questions his or her knowledge in order to share it with others. These networks should thus contribute to reinforcing an individual's ability to act by allowing the individual to become aware of his or her knowledge, share it with others and thereby develop self-confidence.

Lastly, in order to attain/achieve the objective defined in the first orientation of the Policy, which is to significantly raise the level of the basic education of Québec's population, it may be said, in defence of implementing knowledge exchange networks, that they provide an important way of reaching citizens and helping them consider literacy training.

1.2 Aspects of the issue

In Estrie, where the testing of knowledge exchange networks began, a large proportion of adults do not have the basic education required to fully participate in the cultural, community, social and economic life of their community. The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey⁵ established Level 3 as the "desired threshold" for functioning comfortably in today's society in which growing demands require considerable ability to adapt. In Québec, a significant segment of the population has not attained this level, although improvements in literacy have been noted over the past ten years. Nearly 16% of Québec adults aged 16 to 65 years ranked at the lowest level of the scale for prose literacy (level 1) and nearly 1 person in 2 (aged 16 to 65) does not have the competencies required to use information in order to fully function in society and the economy (levels 1 and 2).⁶

According to a number of studies carried out by the Direction de la recherche of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport,^{7 8} many adults do not feel that this supply of training concerns them, which limits their participation in literacy activities throughout Québec. In 2002, fewer than 3% of adults with little schooling participated in literacy training activities.⁹ However, since then, enrollments have increased slightly in this area. Nevertheless, most of these adults are difficult to reach. Many obstacles prevent them from enrolling in literacy training activities, most of which are attitudinal nature, that is, they are linked to their self-perception as learners and thus affect their decision to undertake training.

4. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Bilan des acquis relatifs à la formation générale de base. Schéma du concept. – Traits dominants* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006).

5. Statistics Canada, *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)* 2003.

6. ISQ, *La littératie au Québec: faits saillants* 2005.

7. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Direction de recherche, de la statistique et des indicateurs, Direction générale de la formation générale des adultes, *État de la formation de base des adultes au Québec* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005).

8. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Faire le point sur nos actions. Bilan des initiatives fédérales-provinciales conjointes en matière d'alphabétisation 1993-1997* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999).

9. Ibid.

2. A FEW HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORKS¹⁰

During the 1970s, a French teacher named Claire Héber-Suffrin, who was grappling with the learning difficulties and lack of motivation in some of her students, observed that they nevertheless possessed a great deal of knowledge that the school either failed to understand or recognize. Based on her observations, she changed her teaching practices and gave these young people the opportunity to share some of their knowledge. The students thus became aware of their abilities and, little by little, discovered that they too could succeed. The concept of a network of reciprocal knowledge exchange began with the classroom students, then extended to neighbourhood residents, an HLM district.

Claire Héber-Suffrin joined the network seeking knowledge about the economy, in exchange for folk-dancing courses. Her request for information interested about fifteen people [. . .]. Two people responded to her request. That is how the exchange began. For courses in economics, Solange provided Spanish courses to five people, including Marie-Thérèse who taught a young 19-year-old African to read. In exchange, this young man showed children and teenagers how to make African musical instruments using recycled materials. Two of these young people taught adults how to skate. One of these adults taught mathematics and physics to a grade 9 student, who shared knowledge about his country, Iran, with adults, and so on.

Ms. Moulin joined the Évry network when she left her job, with no idea of what she could offer others. She was requesting folk dancing courses, when she met Janine, who was offering academic support for children in the neighbourhood; Agnès, who teaches manual techniques; and Claire, who facilitates writing workshops.¹¹

These events occurred during the 1970s, when reciprocal knowledge exchange networks (RERS) began. At the time, they were defined as follows:

Based on the principle that everyone can transmit knowledge or ignorance, the reciprocal knowledge exchange network brings together people who wish to share their skills or who wish to learn from others and help others learn. Everyone is a teacher and learner. This is reciprocal education that works in open networks.¹²

According to the Web site of the Mouvement national et international des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs (MIRERS),¹³ the highlights of the history of these networks are as follows:

10. The term "reciprocal knowledge exchange networks" (RERS)" is used by the founders and continues to be used where RERS have been implemented. In Québec, to facilitate understanding, it was decided to use the term "knowledge exchange network (REC)," which more closely reflects the reality in Québec. However, the two terms are used synonymously in this research.

11. Julie Fouilland, "Diversifier ses savoirs. Les réseaux d'échanges réciproques des savoirs," Conference-debate, February 13, 1999, [Translation], <www.cite-sciences.fr/universite/texte/telecharge/uort9908.pdf>.

12. Pascal Chantagnon in Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001), 298. [Translation]

13. See the MIRERS Web site at <www.mirers.org/spip.php?article 39> (updated Wednesday, September 13, 2006).

- 1971-1984 The first reciprocal knowledge exchange network is implemented in Orly, France, based in an elementary school, in cooperation with city actors. The goal was to create social connection, promote academic success and help open up the school to the city. Afterwards, more networks gradually emerged in various communities, first in Évry and later in many other localities in France.
- 1984-1988 The first conference on reciprocal exchange network is held in Évry, France. A movement is created: the Mouvement international des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs (MIRERS). A charter is drawn up to provide the ethical framework for the networks.
- 1989-1992 Conferences, studies, research and summer university sessions are organized to further reflection on the networks and thereby promote contributions from many researchers: in particular, French educator and philosopher René Barbier; Pascal Galvani, professor-researcher at the Université of Québec à Rimouski (UQAR); Gaston Pineau, writer and editor of the "Histoires de vie et formation" collection; Jean-Marie Labelle, professor at the Université de Strasbourg and the Département de psychopédagogie et d'andragogie at the Université de Montréal; French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin; Philippe Perrenoud, professor at the University of Geneva; French philosopher and researcher Philippe Meirieu; and many others working in fields such as self-directed learning, life stories, knowledge and reciprocity. The networks gradually spread to Belgium and many countries of the European Community.
- 1992-2000 Regional coordination, committees, and training activities are implemented to prepare tools that will help foster the expansion of these networks as far away as Brazil and Africa and the organization of training for facilitators and trainers.
- 2000-2007 A documentation centre is established and Estates General are held to allow the networks to establish a solid, permanent structure and to propose their philosophy and practice as far away as Québec and elsewhere in the world. Today, about 100 000 individuals participate in networks in Germany, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Spain, Switzerland, Brazil, Morocco and Senegal.

3. ACTION RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1 Objectives

Since 2003, the CSEP of Haut-Saint-François has been testing a knowledge exchange network. From 2003 to 2006, seven phases were completed (see introduction and section 3.2.1). In the spring of 2006, the action research began with a view to monitoring testing of a knowledge exchange network, led by those responsible at the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François. It then further explored the literature on the philosophy of networks of reciprocal knowledge exchange and a number of experiments with these networks in France and elsewhere around the world.

The research also pursued the following objectives:

- to monitor testing of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François in order to identify the main factors that foster or limit the implementation of a knowledge exchange network
- to determine how a knowledge exchange network can contribute to the emergence of a new informal learning process in order to develop aptitudes and enhance the competencies of network participants
- to examine the effects of a knowledge exchange network on a community in terms of the development of citizenship, the social integration of its members and the emergence of a culture of continuing education
- to observe how the experiment impacts the development of an awareness-raising and facilitation process in the community, which could give rise to various types of training and places where training is provided
- to assess the possibilities of returning to or enrolling in an education or literacy program following participation in a knowledge exchange network
- to establish a connection with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* and with a number of initiatives associated with the Policy (such as the record of learning, the curriculum of common core basic education, and reception, referral, counselling and support services) as well as with the research project conducted in 2006 by Rachel Bélisle of the Université de Sherbrooke: *Compétences et pratiques de lectures d'adultes non diplômés: conditions et principes d'un environnement écrit participatif*.

3.2 Process

The process adopted was that of action research. In this case, although the action taken was based on a single experiment, it nevertheless provided sufficient knowledge and inquiries to inform research. There was enough literature on the subject to allow a deeper understanding of the philosophy of knowledge exchange networks and, within this framework, to conduct an analysis of the experiment at hand. By taking part in the research, the social actors involved (i.e. the network facilitators of Haut-Saint-François) also helped develop a theory of their practices. The action research process adopted here thus made it possible to produce knowledge and understand a real

situation through action and to make the experiment results visible. In this way, the action undertaken enriched knowledge (science) about the networks, which was re-applied over the course of the action research.

3.2.1 Phases

The introduction presented the initial actions in the context of the research. They are summarized below to provide an overview of the phases of the research.

<p>Phase one</p> <p>As soon as the facilitators of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François presented the project in the context of the JFPLTI program, MELS wanted to monitor the development of the knowledge exchange through action research. A researcher was thus hired.</p>
<p>Phase two</p> <p>A pilot group was set up to discuss how to define the knowledge exchange network and adapt it to adult education and the situation in Québec.</p>
<p>Phase three</p> <p>Data collection tools were prepared for interviews with organizations and meetings with various individuals in order to gauge the interest in collaborating in and implementing a knowledge exchange network in the region of Estrie.</p>
<p>Phase four</p> <p>Interviews were conducted with organizations (e.g. CSSS, CLE, Table de concertation 0-5 ans, Intro-Travail, adult education centres, Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi, reception centre for new immigrants) and various individuals (e.g. trainers, parents, youths, members of the governing boards in certain schools, unemployed individuals, immigrants).</p>
<p>Phase five</p> <p>Five areas of experimentation were set up in Estrie (RCM Granit, RCM Haut-Saint-François, RCM Memphrémagog, RCM Coaticook, and RCM des Sources).</p>
<p>Phase six</p> <p>From 2003 to 2006, information meetings and knowledge exchange workshops were held in the RCM Memphrémagog. The report on these actions is presented in Appendix 1.</p>

Phase seven

More intensive testing was carried out and continues to date, in particular at the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François, located in East Angus. In addition to the knowledge exchange at the CSEP, testing has focused on several other aspects, including:

- “environmental” exchanges organized to underscore Earth Day
- an exchange and discussion fair involving four regions (Haut-Saint-François, Lac-Mégantic, Coaticook and Magog)
- the potential involvement of teachers, students and parents in the knowledge exchange process, as part of the School-Family-Community program
- exchanges organized by the sub-committee on employability of the CAMO du Haut-Saint-François for individuals enrolled in the Centre local d’emploi of East Angus, in which network members have taken part
- a full day of knowledge exchanges that have been held over the past few years by CSEP staff during the Semaine des adultes en formation with adults attending the CSEP
- collaboration with the Animation-famille group (Centre d’action bénévole) in order to allow participants in this organization to experience knowledge exchange on themes that are meaningful to them
- in collaboration with the community organizer of the CSSS du Haut-Saint-François, network facilitators were asked to present the project to those responsible at the Community Learning Centre of Bury so that this centre could integrate the process into its community activities program. The anglophone population that this project addressed will thus be able to experiment with the knowledge exchange networks.

Phase eight

The researcher met with the participants involved in testing the knowledge exchange network in East Angus in order to gather their comments and their assessment.

Phase nine

Alongside the eight phases described above, documentary research made it possible to establish a framework to analyze the experiment.

3.3 Research hypothesis

Documentary research, aspects of the problem and experience in the field at the outset of the action research allows us to formulate the following hypothesis:

Knowledge exchange networks can, in the more or less long term, promote the recognition of prior learning of people with little schooling in an informal way; give a voice to those who are excluded and isolated from social, economic and educational activities; foster self-esteem, self-confidence and the social integration of network participants, and stimulate motivation to undertake training (education) and accordingly, recruitment for training.

3.4 Limits of the action research

Despite the several meetings with Ms. Héber-Suffrin, the founder of the reciprocal knowledge exchange networks in France and author of many works on the subject, which brought together people from various organizations in Montréal and in surrounding areas, despite the attempts to establish a network in four RCMs in Estrie, only one project is in operation, the one piloted by those in charge of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires in Haut-Saint-François. Other funding priorities in 2005-2006 slowed the development of RECs in the other RCMs. The continual involvement and monitoring of facilitation resources and the maintenance of facilitation in the community and contacts with partners are also factors that played a role in terminating other projects. **For this reason, the action research only targeted the experiment in the CSEP in Haut-Saint-François.**

Knowledge exchange networks are based on reciprocity and parity (supply and demand; all knowledge is equal) and do not target a specific population. However, the literature consulted shows that a knowledge exchange network may help participants develop an interest in training and develop the self-confidence and personal validation that fosters their social and economic integration. **Thus the action research took these areas into account.**

4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 The concept of self-directed learning

The questioning that led to the creation of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks exchange was based on concepts of self-directed learning and clarified through the use of life stories. The concept of lifelong education and transformation has also transcended the long-held perception of an adult as a person whose development is complete. One of the pioneers of continuing education in France, Bertrand Schwartz, conducted training-action-research centred on the production of knowledge, in which he demonstrated that above all, the power of education lies in the fact that every individual then shares knowledge with others. Becoming aware of and becoming empowered with respect to learning are two components underlying the conceptual definition of self-directed learning, a concept that Pascal Galvani, professor-researcher at the Université du Québec à Rimouski has long explored and developed.¹⁴ This definition stems from an existential concept of self-directed learning as a dialectic between the self, the world and others, a dialectic between the learning acquired through the social and physical environment and the one that individuals provide for themselves.¹⁵

Pascal Galvani has integrated into his research the work of other researchers, such as Joffre Dumazedier, Philippe Meirieu, Gaston Pineau and Pierre Dominicié, to arrive at a definition of self-directed learning: that is, the awareness that takes shape by understanding an experience. It allows people to feel more alive, more independent of dominant knowledge and to feel they belong to the times. Philippe Meirieu, a researcher who has written extensively about the competency-based approach (the approach that underpins the new Québec curriculum in common core basic education), states that real learning can only occur through self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is thus the act of a desiring subject who educates himself or herself with, against or without educational institutions. Trends in community education, community university and reciprocal knowledge exchange networks illustrate this significant social phenomenon of the 21st century.

Self-directed learning may occur in a group, as in networks of information exchange. In this sense, it is a source of personal and group empowerment and helps practitioners develop critical thinking. It operates on the fringe instead of according to social norms and argues for social, cultural, economic and instructional independence. Self-training must also be seen as a quest for meaning that is open to dialogue and confronting others. Such a quest implies an explanation of the implicit knowledge that an individual possesses. This explanation is found through reflection and the creation of new knowledge.

4.2 The concept of “life stories”

Self-directed learning is often rooted in people's “life stories,” a concept that was made popular in France by Gaston Pineau, professor in the Département des sciences de l'éducation et de la formation at the Université François-Rabelais, Tours, and in Québec by André Vidricaire, retired professor with the Université du Québec à Montréal. According to Gaston Pineau, a life story involves **research** and a **construction of meaning** based on personal experience over time. It

14. Pascal Galvani, *Relier les dimensions pratiques, symbolique et didactique de l'autoformation* (IFRADE and Université de Tours).

15. Ibid.

makes connections between the past and the future, and between what one says and what one does.¹⁶

Life stories allow people to understand themselves, to “put together” the events and meetings over the course of their life and to make a story out of it, to give it meaning. Producing meaning opposes the belief in destiny; it represents a personal outcome of lived experience.

Life stories thus offer people the potential for connecting with their place in history, to become actors in their lives and the authors of their own story and thereby to take back the overall meaning of their existence. Life stories have long been used in the social sciences. However, since the 1980s, this practice has been particularly used in the field of adult education.¹⁷

4.3 The challenges of complexity

In *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, Edgar Morin, writes, in a chapter entitled “Principles of pertinent knowledge”¹⁸ that education must deal with complexity, which is “the bond between unity and multiplicity.” Developments in our era confront individuals more frequently with the challenge of complexity. “Consequently, education must encourage ‘general intelligence’ apt to refer to the complex, the context, in a multidimensional way, within a global conception” of the universe.

According to Jeremy Ahearne,¹⁹ who contributed to a book edited by Claire Héber-Suffrin entitled *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien*, the work of Edgar Morin helped focus the issue underlying reciprocal knowledge exchange networks on questions pertaining to organization and knowledge. Edgar Morin's and Claire Héber-Suffrin's efforts to deal with these basic issues revealed two common aims: one toward complexity and one toward methods adapted to such complexity. During the 1970s, Edgar Morin, and Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin expressed a great deal of frustration with the social organization of knowledge and also with the effects of the limits of contemporary knowledge on organizational processes. The Héber-Suffrins had difficulty accepting the fact that some people were almost always automatically excluded from knowledge or that so much associated knowledge or skills were not recognized in the everyday organization of knowledge. For this reason they sought out new organizational models in the instructional relationship. For example, the networks would not distinguish between teachers and students. Every participant would act as a teacher and a student.²⁰ As is the case in adult education, this form of knowledge sharing basically underlies the andragogical process, which is based on the recognition of competencies, which are meant to be shared and on which new learning must be based.

4.4 The construction of knowledge

Le *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation*, defines knowledge, skills and attitudes as: “a set of socially constructed and recognized statements and procedures [. . .]. Knowledge can be considered “inventories” of statements and procedures, whose organization,

16. Gaston Pineau, *Actes du colloque "Les histoires de vie en formation"* (Tours, 1986/06/5-7), vol. II.

17. Martine Lani-Bayle, *Une pratique: les histoires de vie* (Nantes: Université de Nantes).

18. Edgar Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), 15.

<<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117740eo.pdf>>

19. Jeremy Ahearne, “La complexité dans les réseaux,” in Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001).

20. Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon Chronique social, 2001).

systematization and formalization are coherent and legitimized in a given social group, in a given historical period.²¹

According to Patricia Portelli:²²

[This] definition emphasizes that knowledge cannot be acquired if the subject is not engaged in a learning activity, and that knowledge can exist only as the goal of an activity for an individual or group. To understand the subject's mental activity, the social and psychological dimensions must be taken into consideration. The acquisition of knowledge thus constantly brings into play a social relationship to knowledge, which is a relationship of meaning and thus involves value between an individual, a group and the processes or products of knowledge.

Social constructivism, a social cognitive humanist theory, which underlies the new Québec curriculum in common core basic education, reflects this aim, insofar as knowledge is constructed in relation to the environment in an ecological system that refers to various fields that influence the life of an individual.

4.5 Places where knowledge is acquired

In the line of thought of Patricia Portelli, *Le cercle des savoirs reconnus* by Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin²³ provides a good overview of the processes that exclude entire segments of the population and devalue established knowledge. Portelli asks: "Could reciprocal knowledge exchange networks not provide an ideal social forum in which to develop social skills and social learning? Could they not help populations experiencing job insecurity maintain a social identity?"²⁴

These concerns can also be associated with the problem of mobilizing competencies, which was the focus of the recent research project conducted by Rachel Bélisle at the Université de Sherbrooke,²⁵ and which proposes a participatory environment that fosters the mobilization of previously acquired competencies that could be applied in reading and writing situations other than those proposed in schools.

Moreover, according to Jean-Pierre Worms,²⁶ the various spheres in which individuals integrate into society include the workplace, families, all of the state or institutional organizations that come between families and society, the state or the political sphere.

Worms claims that "each of these spheres is losing power and meaning. This results in much greater personal responsibility but at the same time, a form of solitude with respect to this responsibility."²⁷

21. Philippe Champy and Christiane Etévé (ed.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation* (Paris: Nathan, 1994). [Translation]

22. Patricia Portelli, "La socialisation et les apprentissages sociaux dans les réseaux" in Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001). [Translation]

23. Claire and Marc Héber Suffrin, *Le cercle des savoirs reconnus* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1993).

24. Patricia Portelli, in *Partager les savoirs, Construire le lien*, Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.) (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001). [Translation]

25. Rachel Bélisle, *Compétences et pratiques de lecture d'adultes non diplômés: conditions et principes d'un environnement écrit participatif* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006).

26. Jean-Pierre Worms, *Les identités plurielles et la construction de collectif* in Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001).

27. Ibid., 97

In his view, reinforcement of individual strength leads to active forms of citizenship, a process that is in keeping with reciprocal knowledge exchange networks.

4.6 Knowledge sharing and people's basic needs

Nicole Desgroppes views networks from a sociological and pedagogical perspective. She says that "knowledge exchange espouses the so-called four wishes theory which states that all human acts are motivated by four fundamental wishes:"²⁸ the desire for response (the desire to share knowledge while being close to others), the desire for recognition (the need to occupy a recognized position in the group), the desire for security (not to be labelled if you don't possess certain knowledge) and the desire for new experience (curiosity, collective memory, imagination).

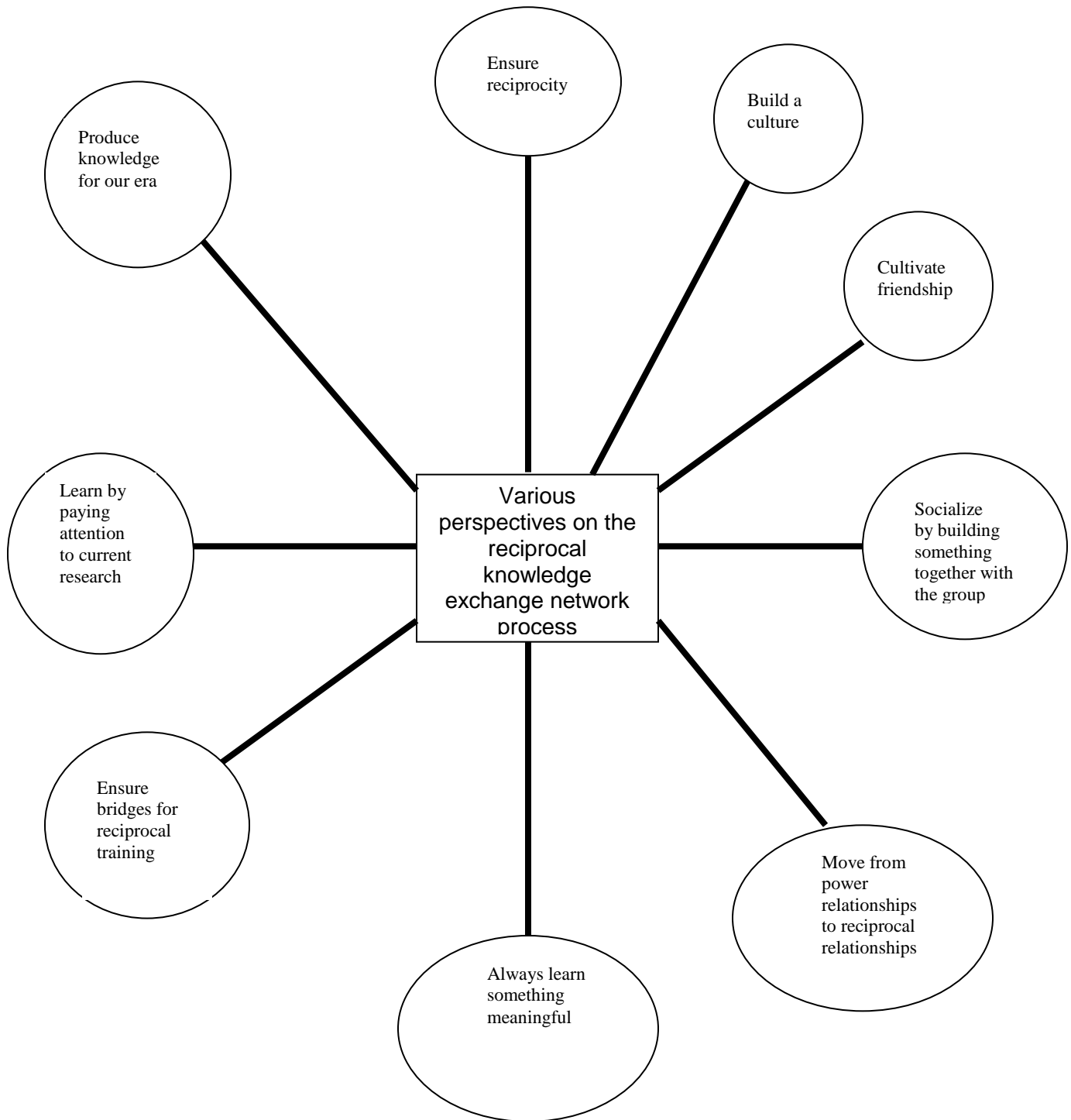
The network process is in completely keeping with the aims of education which must help develop the cross-curricular competencies of learners. In research and exchange situations, individuals discover that they can, as Philippe Meirieu writes, "recontextualize knowledge in another context and in a different way, by taking distance from the teacher, from those who helped them learn. Students in a situation of interaction adopt cognitive means to structure their learning because they are both teachers and learners."²⁹

28. Nicole Desgroppes, "Un regard sociologique et pédagogique sur les réseaux," in Claire Héber-Suffrin (ed.), *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001). [Translation]

29. Philippe Meirieu, "Préface," in *Échanger des savoirs à l'école; Abécédaire pour la réflexion et l'action* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2004). [Translation]

Figure 1, “Various perspectives of the reciprocal knowledge exchange network process,” summarizes the main elements that make up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network.

Figure 1: Various perspectives on the reciprocal knowledge exchange network process³⁰



30. Source: figure adapted from a synthesis by Claire Héber-Suffrin and Élisabeth Thelcide, in *Partager les savoirs, construire le lien* (Lyon: Chronique social, 2001), 99.

5. HOW A RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK FUNCTIONS

The way a reciprocal knowledge exchange network works is a simple. The **exchange of knowledge occurs in an open reciprocal manner: any offer is subject to demand and any request is expected to be accompanied by an offer, on a more or less long-term basis.** Only knowledge is exchanged: all relations based on money or services are excluded. The underlying concepts are reciprocity and parity, conviviality and citizenship, knowledge about knowledge. Reciprocity allows everyone to be a teacher and a learner, to receive something from one person and pass it on to someone else who will learn something from a fourth person, in open, general reciprocity. Parity enhances the value of the individual because the individual receives personal recognition as a peer: every individual possesses knowledge or a skill that may interest someone else. Conviviality and citizenship are fostered through becoming aware of one's ability to take action in society, building group projects reflecting the needs and desires of everyone, in a spirit of inclusive solidarity, mutual aid and exchange.³¹

The networks are grouped together under the Mouvement international des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs (MIRERS), which adopted a charter that was updated on March 26, 2007. These are the main principles of this Charter:

Reciprocal knowledge exchange networks are community education groups made up of citizens of all ages, political or religious convictions, or cultural or social origins.

The transmission of knowledge does not involve any financial transaction. The individual who makes a request is asked to offer some of his or her knowledge. There is no hierarchy or benchmark of any kind to measure the relative value of this knowledge.

The content of every exchange, the methods of learning or transmission, and the practical conditions for carrying out an exchange are determined by the interested parties who freely choose them based on their desires, means, problems or availability. The parties establish a connection so that they can better define the content, the method and the evaluation criteria for each exchange.

A legal framework is not recommended. There are no set operational rules for reciprocal knowledge exchange networks.³²

5.1 The implementation of a reciprocal knowledge exchange network

The network is a fluid system, in which the flow of inflow and outflow ensures its regeneration. It is flexible because its organizing agents must strike a balance between order and disorder, stability and newness, and the necessary closure and openness.

To initiate an exchange in a network, an individual formulates an offer and a request for knowledge and communicates them to the network. A facilitator takes part in the first meeting between knowledge supplier(s) and requester(s). Together they decide on the content, learning methods,

31. See the following Web site: <www.larucheauxsavoirs.org/>.

32. Mouvement des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs *Charte des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs*, <www.mirers.org/article.php?id_article=32>. [Translation]

duration and frequency of meetings, and the time and place of exchanges. The facilitator will then ensure follow-up and a progress report. The exchanges take place between two people or in a group.

The interested parties thus join the network voluntarily, based on a personal decision, without a formalized commitment, and are free to come and go without having to provide any explanation.

Each actor or each author in the network decides, along with those involved, on the time, place and conditions for an exchange of knowledge. The exchange continues as long as participants wish. The tasks concerning the operation of the network are not divided up in a vertical or hierarchical manner, but through changing roles and duties, regardless of the person's position in the group.

Some examples of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks are provided in Appendix 1.

6. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORKS IN QUÉBEC

6.1 Initial meetings

At the outset of action research conducted in Québec, various meetings took place with members of community organizations in the RCMs of Granit, Memphrémagog, and Coaticook, with staff of the Commission scolaire des Sommets in RCM des Sources, the Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke and the Commission scolaire des Hauts-Cantons in RCM Coaticook, as well as with those responsible at the Centre de services éducatifs populaires (CSEP) in Haut-Saint-François. The purpose of these meetings was to gauge the interest of the people and organizations targeted in starting up a knowledge exchange network. An interview questionnaire was prepared in advance and included the following points:

- the name of the organization or title of the individuals interviewed
- the territory
- the objectives of the meeting
- the topics discussed
- the reactions of the individual or organization regarding:
 - interest in the project
 - the main obstacles anticipated
 - facilitating conditions
 - follow-up

In addition, data were collected on the population targeted by each organization:

- the proportion of the population with little schooling reached
- the characteristics of this population
- the services offered by the organization
- the difficulties that the organization experiences in relation to this population
- the feasibility of a project, such as a knowledge exchange network, for this population

6.1.1 Report on the meetings

6.1.1.1 Persons met

About 120 individuals took part in the discussions. These meetings brought together parents, grandparents, youths, members of the governing boards of the targeted schools, people with little schooling, immigrants and unemployed persons. All the meetings took place in the region of Haut-Saint-François. Most people expressed an interest in the network and the desire to get involved and participate in the project. However, obstacles were anticipated, such as maintaining participation and momentum; joining the network without feeling threatened; ensuring the availability of participants; dealing with small population in a small community, bridging differences among various cultures;

identifying one's knowledge, skills or experience outside of work; overcoming individualism or transportation problems in a large territory.

Those who took part in the meetings also highlighted the conditions that would facilitate starting up and maintaining this kind of network, in particular the interest shown by those interviews, openness toward others, respect for the pace of participants, sensitivity to mutual aid, openness to disseminating information, the willingness of directors of adult education centres to test a network in their respective settings and the perception of the importance of this kind of network for the development of a culture of lifelong learning in a community.

As a result, some initiatives were suggested: discussion meetings to build ties and foster the establishment of a climate of trust, meetings between members of the golden age club and interested persons who would recruit potential participants, information kiosks when handing out report cards.

6.1.1.2 The organizations met

Some fifteen organizations were consulted in order to determine their interest in setting up a knowledge exchange network in the region. The organizations contacted included centres de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS), local employment centres (CLE), the Table de concertation 0-5 ans, Intro-Travail, adult education centres, the Service d'accueil aux nouveaux arrivants and the Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi.

Most of the organizations' representatives expressed an interest in the project and in participating in its implementation. They nevertheless cited potential obstacles, such as dealing with an economically limited population, their own limited availability for meeting with the target population, managers' resistance to initiatives that are not part of their usual schedule, transportation problems, rural isolation, a weak existing social network, the fear and stress of giving a workshop, childcare problems, lack of facilitation resources.

Representatives indicated the following facilitating conditions: a marked interest in the project on the part of individuals and organizations, a common objective of rallying and stimulating the interest of the target population as well as a common understanding of the effects of this kind of project in a community.

The general impressions were thus positive and stressed the importance of staying in touch to find solutions to the above obstacles. At the same time, it was suggested that reception and assistance mechanisms should be improved in order to reach the target population and groups, such as the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS), the Knights of Columbus and the pastoral social committee.

6.2 International meeting of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks

At the outset of the action research, in November 2004, Manon Leblanc of the Centre de formation Le Granit de Lac-Mégantic and Émilie Plante of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François participated in an international meeting on reciprocal knowledge exchange networks in Évry, France. It should be remembered that reciprocal knowledge exchange networks, which first emerged in France, are the source of inspiration for the Québec knowledge information networks.

The purpose of their participation in these meetings was:

- to enrich the action research under way
- to develop expertise in the subject by examining applications that could be applied in Québec
- to establish the contacts required to develop a number of start-up tools
- to explore methods of recruiting participants in reciprocal knowledge exchange networks, especially in rural areas
- to discover the best methods for establishing and implementing a reciprocal knowledge exchange network
- to determine how networks can make learning more accessible
- to discover how networks can be used to recruit candidates for literacy training, among other things
- to verify whether the networks reduce exclusion and enrich the community in which they evolve
- to confirm the group's intuitions regarding the recognition of people who get involved in a reciprocal knowledge exchange network
- to consult existing networks in order to determine the best ways of ensuring that knowledge is not lost

Following this meeting, Manon Leblanc and Émilie Plante shared the following observations:

- The networks can be implemented in a variety of contexts and based on multiple approaches in various environments to meet a variety of needs.
- Supply is based on the expression of demand on the part of network participants, not on a strict framework.
- The participation of MELS in implementing networks in Québec has caught the interest of all meeting participants, as well the interest of experts in attendance.
- The tools designed in Québec to start up and operate the network were much appreciated, and many French participants expressed surprise, as they had not developed such tools.³³
- In the networks, people do not talk about “recruitment” but rather “development”—thus, word of mouth is the main conduit, especially in the communities of network members.
- The network is its own engine of development and only in this way can it expand and operate.
- It was not possible to gather information about the connections that exist between the illiterate population and the networks. Since participation in reciprocal knowledge exchange network is

33. The tools presented in section 6.4 are provided in appendixes 4 to 9.

open, the networks cannot target a specific population. The only group with a connection to literacy training was in de Meaux, encountered outside the conference. This network, operating from a community centre, maintains close ties with the literacy training group at the same centre.

- The life stories that are sometimes used in the networks were deemed a wonderful tool for boosting self-confidence, reducing exclusion and enriching a community.
- However, as it was often said, the main purpose of these networks is to exchange knowledge and not to provide literacy training or combat exclusion. Yet networking can lead to literacy training and reduce exclusion because it stimulates participants to learn more and to get involved in the learning community that the network promotes. However, it should be noted that limiting participation to people in difficulty is risky. This may put them at further risk of stigmatization and other insidious forms of marginalization.

Following start-up activities, the action research was suspended for two years because the researcher was not available. During this period, following a number of start-up attempts in the Commission scolaire des Sommets in the RCM des Sources, the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François and in the community organizations of the RCM Memphrémagog, RCM Granit and RCM Coaticook, the knowledge exchange network developed mainly in the RCM Haut-Saint-François, where it was supported by the officials of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires (CSEP).

6.3 The knowledge exchange network of Haut-Saint-François

In January 2003, the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François (a community literacy training group) suggested that its partners (the Commission scolaire des Hauts-Cantons, the Commission scolaire des Sommets and the Centre Saint-Michel) adopt a process to test the implementation of knowledge exchange networks in four regional county municipalities in Estrie.

Robert Cyr³⁴ provides a good overview of the development of knowledge exchange networks in Québec. Here are some excerpts:

The first phase of the project consisted in developing tools and a framework to foster the creation of the networks. The 2002-2003 JFPLTI subsidy funded the first phase. The second phase of the project—the development of community awareness and facilitation—was undertaken at the end of the same year in both Granit and Haut-Saint-François: the concept was presented to the different partners so that we could develop an information and recruitment strategy together.

In this context, various activities were carried out in 2003-2004, in accordance with our financial resources, and yielded the following results:

RCM Granit:

Implementation of a network, in collaboration with a community organization (women's group) and expansion of a network to include more members—exploration

34. Robert Cyr, *Le Réseau d'échanges de connaissances du Haut-Saint-François: une expérience d'apprentissage et de citoyenneté*, free text, November 2006. [Translation]

of the possibility of establishing a network of parents of elementary school children in a rural community—both networks have clientele with a various levels of schooling.

RCM Haut-Saint-François:

Implementation of two small networks (East Angus – Cookshire) following a series of community information and facilitation initiatives—both networks have a clientele with varied levels of schooling. Exchanges began in both networks. In addition, a third network is planned in Saint-Isidore.

RCM Memphrémagog:

Implementation of the network as part of the activities of the community organization *L'Écho* (a goods and services exchange resource)—this network has the clientele has varied levels of schooling. (Reports on information and knowledge exchange activities are presented in Appendix 1.)

RCM Coaticook:

Implementation of a collaborative network with two community organizations (volunteer action centre and a mental health organization)—this network has clientele with little schooling.

Two important challenges must be met to reach our goal: the first is to generate interest among people with reading and writing difficulties; the second, in the context of network facilitation, is to encourage this clientele to continue their education. We believe that the diversity of the communities and the practices implemented in each of the RCMs will allow us to make observations and identify interesting lines of action.

6.3.1 The basic principles of Québec reciprocal knowledge exchange networks³⁵

Based on the basic principles of parity and reciprocity, knowledge can be classified into five categories:

- *functional knowledge*: organization of personal time, planning and organization of a trip, basic care of animals, determining and monitoring a budget, etc.
- *skills*: plumbing, mechanics, cooking, sewing, gardening, etc.
- *artistic knowledge*: music, painting, sculpture, dance, etc.
- *classical knowledge*: languages, reading, mathematics, history, botany, etc.
- *life experience*: raising children, challenges, etc.

The network facilitator must record offers and requests and put in contact people who want to take part in the knowledge exchange network.

At all times, two main principles underlie exchanges, i.e. reciprocity (supply/demand) and parity (all knowledge is equal).

As is the case with the French reciprocal knowledge exchange network, the basic principles of the Québec knowledge exchange network are based on the following:

- Everyone knows something.
- All knowledge can be transmitted.
- Everyone can learn.
- All knowledge is equal.
- People enter and leave a knowledge exchange network of their own free will.
- Knowledge exchange is free in a network.

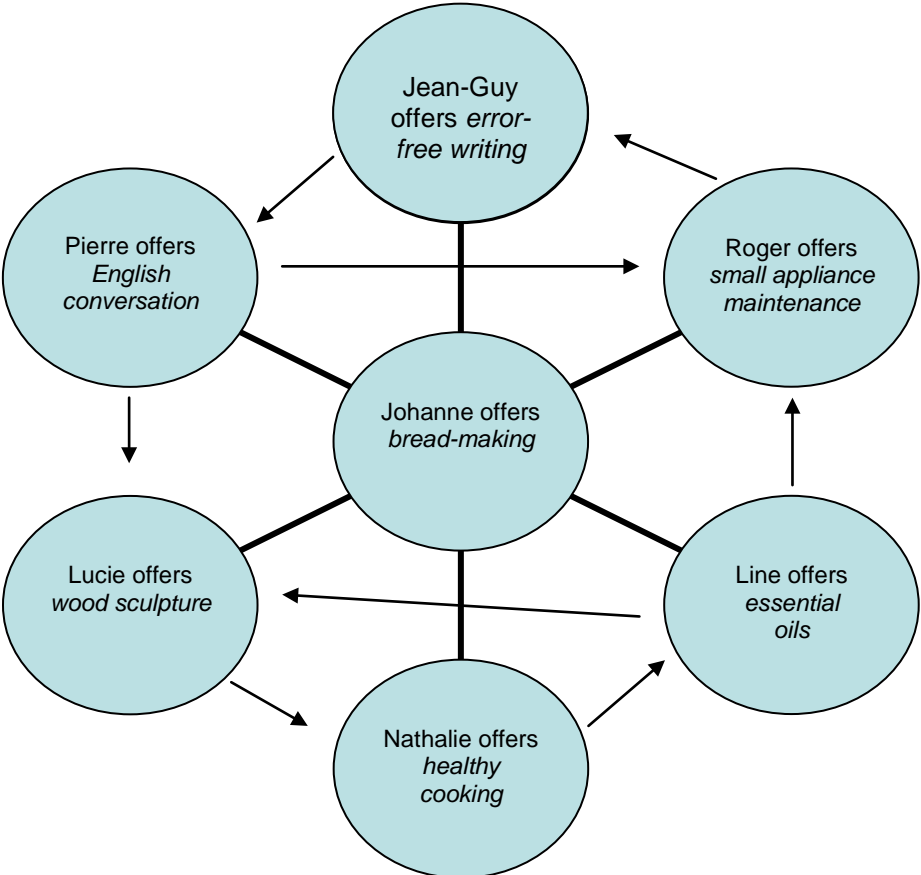
Knowledge exchange networks allow people to acquire knowledge while developing citizenship skills and ties with the community. The Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François acts as an intermediary for network participants in order to foster exchanges and encourage learning that leads to empowerment.

The knowledge exchange network also provides an exercise in citizenship because it helps participants to reflect on their social role and purpose. It also helps people come together and to deepen their reflection on sharing, respect and solidarity.

Figure 2, on the following page, illustrates the various subjects that can be dealt with in a knowledge exchange network and the dynamics of exchange.

35. The basic principles stated below are taken from a variety of documents, texts and tools prepared by the Haut-Saint-François knowledge exchange network.

Figure 2: Dynamics of exchange in a knowledge exchange network³⁶



No need to be an expert. Everything can be learned, everything can be taught!

36. Robert Cyr, *Le Réseau d'échanges de connaissances du Haut-Saint-François: une expérience d'apprentissage et de citoyenneté*, free text, 2006.

6.3.2 Reciprocal knowledge exchange network start-up strategies applied to knowledge exchange networks

The Web site of the Mouvement international des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs <www.mirers.org> provides suggestions on how to start up a network, based on actual experiences. The process suggested involves four steps (i.e. understanding the project, taking stock of resources, establishing a schedule and identifying knowledge), which are described in greater detail below.

6.3.2.1 Understanding the project

In phase one, an individual wishing to form a network meets with other people who may also be interested in the project. First, the individual must explain the exact nature of a network to the future participants. This entails presenting as many dimensions as possible in order to reach as many people as possible by appealing to their personal interests.

Then, participants who are designated as "drivers" form a team and identify the aspect(s) of the network philosophy that speak most strongly to them: tolerance, citizenship, integration, parity, conviviality, knowledge exchange, reciprocal education, tool for social work, recognition, learning or communication.

It is important to emphasize that during the first phase:

- the team bears responsibility for the entire project
- every team member is responsible for the aspect of the project that he or she is interested in
- each member must be interested in and open to a variety of subjects in order to include as many possible
- each team member must record what he or she finds meaningful in order to be able to justify it later and make connections with the project as a whole
- the team must determine and prepare the tools required for implementing the network

6.3.2.2 Taking stock of resources

Once the entire team thoroughly understands the project, it is time to move on to phase two: taking stock of resources. Various aspects must be taken into consideration, including:

- the time available
- possible meeting places
- the various roles and the individuals who will be assigned to these roles
- the resources available to the team (e.g. photocopier, computer, supplies, telephone)
- the people they wish to attract, encourage to participate, offer and request knowledge

Establishing a schedule

The third phase in the project, establishing the schedule, presupposes a number of actions, including:

- hold the first meeting with those who wish to launch the project

- decide on the date for the project launch, in other words, the first information meeting with those who are interested
- draw up an initial list of available resource persons, make a list of people to be contacted
- write a brief description of the network and an invitation to the information meeting
- provide team members with sufficient quantities of photocopies of the text so they can distribute them
- contact the individuals who may be interested in participating in the project
- later, collect the offers and requests from each person in order to start up the network
- follow up with phone calls
- hold the information meeting

The information meeting may cover the following:

- define what a knowledge exchange network is
- explain why it might be useful to implement this kind of network in the community
- describe how this is done in concrete terms
- promote awareness of the knowledge that exists in the group
- group together offers and requests

Identifying knowledge

Phase four, identifying knowledge, presupposes a series of specific actions. The facilitators of the Haut-Saint-François knowledge exchange network suggest that this phase can be carried out as follows:

- Distribute index cards referring to the five categories of knowledge: functional knowledge, skills, artistic knowledge, classical knowledge, life experience.

Each person draws an index card and considers the knowledge he or she may possess in relation to the theme presented and that could be shared with others.

Once the knowledge is identified, the index card is placed in the middle of the table, and the person draws another index card and once again considers the knowledge he or she may have in connection with this theme.

It must be emphasized that one kind of knowledge is not better than another. There can be a great variety of knowledge. Although some knowledge may seem trivial, it never is.

- After drawing at least three index cards, each person writes down the knowledge he or she would like to offer on index cards.
- All the written offers are placed on a large board and participants are asked to consider them. Once they have identified the knowledge that corresponds to their needs, they write down their names next to it. Other offers can be added.

- After verifying that the **offers** displayed meet all the requests, on another index card, participants write down their **requests** for knowledge.
- A board is then displayed containing the following categories:
 - OFFERS
 - REQUESTS
 - OFFERS THAT HAVE BEEN MET
- A round table discussion is held to describe the knowledge.
- The suppliers and requesters are paired off.

6.3.3 The organization of the knowledge exchange network

To carry out the above phases in an efficient way, it is important to prepare all the tools needed to run the network, in particular:

- participants' files
- offer and request forms
- a task distribution board

In addition, the team of “drivers”³⁷ must establish how it will hold meetings regarding organization and evaluation, while allowing constant openness in the network so as never to create hierarchies.

Note that the above steps are presented for illustrative purposes only to help those who are interested in starting up a network. They do not constitute an official process, but rather serve as guidelines to facilitate the creation of a knowledge exchange network.

37. The “drivers” make up the initial start-up team. This team helps bring people into, and start up, the network.

6.4 Tools facilitating the implementation of a network

As it implemented its network, the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François designed a variety of tools to facilitate the creation and operation of the network. These tools were presented at the international meeting of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks held in Évry, France, in November 2004. Manon Leblanc and Émilie Plante, who attended these meetings said: “we were surprised to see that we were the only ones equipped with specific network operation tools that helped monitor and evaluate exchanges and the network. Our colleagues appreciated these tools.”³⁸

The various tools are provided in appendixes 4 to 9. Here is a brief description.

Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group. Tool: Interview questionnaire
(Appendix 4)

This document is used during meetings with organizations to collect information about the organization, its characteristics, its target population, services and programs and problems encountered. It presents reciprocal knowledge exchange networks and attempts to explain the possible ways in which an organization can get involved.

Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group. Action: presenting the reciprocal knowledge exchange network and mobilizing the community behind a concrete project
(Appendix 5)

This tool explains how to publicize networks and develop relevant information, presentation and promotional tools. In addition, it indicates possible criteria for targeting organizations and individuals.

Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group. Action: inviting someone to an information meeting
(Appendix 6)

This document explains how to approach people to join the network and ensure that they attend the first information meeting.

Knowledge exchange networks
(Appendix 7)

This document defines various aspects of knowledge exchange networks. It answers the following questions: Why set up a knowledge exchange network? What do we mean by “knowledge”? What is an “exchange”? Why should we encourage participants to both request and supply knowledge? Is there a need for more than one network?

The knowledge exchange network. Guide to facilitating a meeting on knowledge identification
(Appendix 8)

This document clearly explains the role of a network facilitator in identifying areas of knowledge.

Examples of knowledge exchange

38. Manon Leblanc and Émilie Plante, *Rencontres internationales des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs, Évry, France, November 2004*, mission report, 2004.

(Appendix 9)

This document presents examples of knowledge exchange.

6.5 Reactions from participants in the activities of the Haut-Saint-François knowledge exchange network

A meeting was held on November 9, 2006 at the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François in East Angus in order to gather comments from participants in the Haut-Saint-François knowledge exchange network.

6.5.1 General comments

Below are some of the general comments that were made about the knowledge exchange network:

- It is more difficult to organize and maintain an exchange network in outlying regions, mainly because of the distances, transportation problems (especially in winter) and other constraints associated with a widely dispersed community. Based on the French experience, it is easier to establish a network in a captive community. On the other hand, a fragmented community offers a rich diversity of situations and knowledge that can be exchanged.
- Based on the writings of and discussions with the founder, Claire Héber-Suffrin (as was confirmed by those responsible at the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François who attended this meeting), it takes ten years to firmly establish a knowledge exchange network. One of the necessary conditions is to ensure that someone is available to establish the network and that financial support is provided both to create and consolidate the network.

6.5.2 Examples of exchanges

Each person who joins a network is both a “supplier” and a “requester” of knowledge. His or her participation is based on the following two principles, i.e. reciprocity (supply and demand) and parity (all knowledge is equal). Each person is thus perceived in terms of the competencies and strengths he or she already possesses.

The main exchanges reported by those in attendance involve:

- recipes from different countries
- medicinal plants
- certain aspects of Native culture

6.5.3 Effects observed

Participation in a network yielded many positive effects:

- As several examples revealed, the network made it possible to establish a culture of lifelong learning in the group by recognizing the knowledge of each participant, and in particular, by developing a desire to enrich this knowledge through the knowledge of others, thereby fostering greater personal autonomy.
- Exchanges also help build friendships. This strengthens relationships between the network participants and makes it possible to create a feeling of solidarity in the community.

- The people who prepared exchange workshops were coached by those in charge of implementing the network. In the case of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François, many of these people had little schooling. This coaching allowed them to improve their writing skills (because they used a logbook), to structure and organize their thoughts in order to improve communication, to master and use the knowledge they shared with others, to find ways of exploring reference and research tools and lastly, to further integrate the conditions for learning in adults.
- The principles of reciprocity and parity that transcend the exchanges ensure that everyone respects each other.
- The process adopted during the exchanges (which relies on simulation to transmit knowledge), integrates methods of verifying participants' learning. These means ensure the transfer of learning in everyday life. Tools and guides prepared by "suppliers" are also means of transferring learning.
- The participants also noted that the more they learned, the more they wanted to learn about different areas of life. This obviously reinforces the establishment of a culture of lifelong learning during the exchanges as well as afterwards, through other means available to these people.
- Since there is no hierarchy in the network, everyone finds and takes their place and thus gains greater self-confidence in continuing to develop their knowledge.

6.5.4 Obstacles encountered

The following obstacles were noted:

- At the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François, no one in particular was available to run the project. As can be imagined, maintaining a network requires a great deal of time and energy. Considerable periods of time elapsed between exchange activities.
- The pool of "suppliers" and "requesters" had to be replenished, which proved difficult in a small community. It was particularly challenging for those in charge, who had many other tasks to perform and thus could not devote themselves entirely to running the network.
- Although it is important for a network to have its own independent location, such was not the case for the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François. Ideally, independent offices and a phone number would be required.

6.6 Values conveyed by the network and other impacts

Discussions made it possible to highlight the network's main values and impacts:

- The network values all knowledge, not only theoretical knowledge but practical knowledge as well. It fosters the creation of situations that recognize a variety of knowledge, **which can add to the record of learning** and the SARCA.
- The approach most often used in exchanges was based on values associated with adult education, in the sense that the network made participants feel secure (both those who transmitted knowledge and those who acquired it); it fostered a climate of reciprocity and

authenticity, motivated people to learn (one skill leads to another) and, accordingly, significantly mobilized participants.

- The knowledge exchange network, through its process and impacts, truly reflects major trends in adult education of recent years, supported by UNESCO³⁹ ⁴⁰ and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, which affirms the importance of lifelong learning. The network was also in keeping with preferred approaches to adult education, i.e. the andragogical approach that underlies the competency-based approach, customized training and the experiential learning process.
- The network advocates the need for pleasure, which is at the heart of all learning. The values underlying any network action (i.e. the profound belief in the competencies of each person, openness to new knowledge, the lack of judgment, the demystification of knowledge, the demonstration of knowledge that is accessible to everyone, free access, democracy and cooperation) help develop and promote the pleasure of learning.

39. UNESCO, Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, 14-18 July 1997, Hamburg Declaration: Agenda for the Future (Paris: UNESCO; UNESCO Institute for Education, 1997).

40. UNESCO, Education for All (EFA) 2005-2015.

7. OBSERVATIONS DRAWN FROM THE ANALYSIS OF PRACTICES⁴¹

7.1 Advantages

In the past, students have often lost pleasure in learning because of institutions. The reciprocal knowledge exchange network allows adults and youths to undo the logic of failure and rekindles their motivation by giving them new reference points. It allows them to put their shortcomings in perspective, embrace areas of knowledge that previously appeared inaccessible, confirm and increase their self-confidence by choosing knowledge they can transmit based on prior learning, and thereby reinforces the culture of lifelong learning. It sets education in motion again. The ability to fulfill one's potential is reactivated and thus voluntary involvement in new training activities becomes feasible.

The experience of reciprocal training promotes the development of creativity and productive interaction. It also allows targeted persons to renew their ability to take action. It gives them the possibility of meeting their needs for knowledge and of choosing what is most suitable for them. Thanks to the awareness-mobilization-organization effect, which exchanges promote, people become aware of the dynamics and the means through which they can act on these situations. "The individual acts only if he experiences a need."⁴²

The literature also shows that networks yields results that are far richer, more complex and profound than simple reciprocity. By affecting the cultural, environmental, psycho-sociological dimensions, networks help develop citizenship. In a world that is constantly changing, individuals use institutional resources as well as personal resources and experiences in order to adapt.

The literature on reciprocity, at the core of the network, shows how the learning that occurs in a supply-demand relationship can be based on the desire that emerges from the pleasure-pain relationship: pleasure at the knowledge "to be obtained," the pleasure of learning, the pleasure of the freedom to teach, but also stress in the face of the unknown and anxiety about not being up to the task. The solution, if there is one, lies perhaps in the concept of "the adventure of life," i.e. the instinct to move forward that implies audacity. The knowledge exchanged is built over time and translates into "behaviour," "social skills" and "risk-taking." It allows confrontation with others, helps prevent isolation and enables people to rediscover how to make a request and seek help without fearing judgment about what they don't know.

To exchange knowledge in a network, an individual must be aware of the presence of many other individuals and the relations that bind them. He or she must be ready to welcome them but want to make them similar to himself or herself, while allowing them the time and space required for building and transforming the relationship. There are many ways to learn, and we must be able to move away from traditional types of training. Moreover, the objective of the reciprocal knowledge exchange network is not to offer itself as an alternative to official or unofficial educational institutions but to seek possible relations with these institutions by recognizing the value of the experience and knowledge of all individuals.

41. Interpretation of "résumés de recherches sur les RERS, avril 2005," updated January 2008 on the site <<http://www.reciprocite.net/spip.php?article88>> and links to sites concerning the reality of adult education in Québec.

42. Jean Piaget, *The Psychology of Intelligence*, International Library of Psychology (Routledge, 1999), 4..

7.2 Difficulties and limits

The analysis of various practices concerning knowledge exchange networks makes it possible to highlight the obstacles that stem from people's attitudes, such as fear, embarrassment, anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem, or the fear of ridicule. These dispositional or attitudinal factors can create distortions in a network.

Reciprocity can be a form of social relationship and an effective instructional tool. However, it can become an ineffective tool if it is not integrated into a project or associated with an attitude. It cannot be considered a panacea nor can it operate independently of other values. Reciprocity alone cannot compensate for years of exclusion, low self-esteem, failure or rejection. Partnership, time, patience, recovery, support and taking distance are also needed.

Sometimes it is difficult for the most disadvantaged (who have often not had any options) to rediscover the power to negotiate, refuse, discover their knowledge and believe that this knowledge might be interesting to others.

Moreover, some people may perceive the networks' flexibility as a lack of structure, reference points support or rigour. Those who do not have much experience find it difficult to imagine that they can control their learning, the organization of this learning and even teaching.

It takes a long time for a person to shed long-held beliefs about his or her lack of ability or perception as someone without importance to others. It takes three or four years before a network can truly achieve the desired degree of parity. For this reason, a network must have the continual support of a facilitator.

A network is a difficult process to build. It must take into consideration social segregation in a community and psychological resistance and avoid establishing behavioural patterns that may interfere with the development and opening of new horizons. It must also avoid the risk of becoming institutionalized or a tool of social control (for those who coordinate, control and analyze the network). For this reason, the network facilitator must participate in the network and offer and request knowledge like any other participant. Lastly, it must be prevented from becoming an instrument of power for external elements that may wish to use it to serve their own interests.

CONCLUSION

For many years, those working in the field of adult education have sought ways of implementing forms of continuing education that will help people develop their competencies and take ownership of their personal, occupational and economic lives. According to the literature on adult education and on andragogy, including the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* and the resulting programs and services as well as the research in this area, all training should be based on the recognition of people's competencies and experience, on relationships of equality among the various actors, on reaching people in their communities, and on gaining a better understanding of the demand for training.

This action research shows that knowledge exchange networks may be an important way of translating these aims into reality. In addition to all the effects listed in this report, and the connections that can be made with the various projects associated with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* pertaining to adult education, knowledge exchange networks could provide a significant lever for penetrating communities, deepening understanding of the demand for training and diversifying access to adult education. To date, the initiatives explored in the action research have been aimed mostly at people in disadvantaged environments and have attempted to reach adults with low levels of literacy. Given the results obtained, the potential for training and for reaching illiterate population in a community is promising. These observations confirm the original hypothesis of the action research, i.e. that knowledge exchange networks could make a significant contribution to the development of several sectors, in particular, adult education.

However, knowledge exchange networks pose challenges for educational institutions. In organizational terms, it is important to pursue the changes required by the aims of the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, i.e. the expression of the demand for educational training that shifts and adapts service offerings based on expressed needs.

A knowledge exchange network comprises advantages for an institution, particularly because it brings people closer together by breaking down educational, geographical and social isolation.

For this reason, we conclude that the knowledge exchange networks provide a way of reaching people in their community and of helping them undertake a process of socioeconomic integration and literacy training, while respecting the values and orientations of the network.

APPENDIXES

Since the text in the appendixes was not edited by the linguistic services of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the authors assume full responsibility for their content and presentation.

APPENDIX 1

Examples of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks

The Angoulême experience: reciprocal knowledge exchange networks and employment

The purpose of the reciprocal knowledge exchange network (RERS), which began with the “Résonances” association, in collaboration with the Agence nationale pour l’emploi (ANPE), was to help the unemployed take a different approach to job seeking, by calling on their knowledge, building on their strengths and not their shortcomings.

“One day, a man who felt completely discouraged with his job search described the antique roses he grew in his garden. From that moment on, people viewed him differently, but more importantly, he viewed himself differently. This man did not find the job of his dreams growing antique roses, but he was able to take a different approach to his job search. He was no longer someone who knew nothing but someone who simply didn’t have a job.”

The following examples illustrate the process:

A job seeker is referred by the ANPE for guidance and support. Depending on the person’s needs and wants, several avenues may be suggested, such as updating computer, accounting or English competencies through a request in the network. The job seeker offers knowledge of his or her own in return.

An individual is already making and receiving offers in the network; however, the facilitators anticipate he or she may need guidance and support in looking for a job. Through the knowledge exchange network, this need could be supported and formalized as part of an agreement with the ANPE. The individual could thus be invited to meet with the facilitators who provide this type of assistance.

An individual wants to start a business, but is shy, impeded by a variety of internal obstacles and suspicious of institutions. This person could ask a knowledge exchange network for information on how to start up a business in exchange for some of his or her knowledge.

This type of approach allows individuals to take control of the process, to take action and formulate desires, to take steps toward the group, society or the job market, not the other way around.

The Argentat experience: reciprocal knowledge exchange networks and school

The idea of integrating a network into a school came from teachers experiencing a number of difficulties inherent in their profession. “How can we instill in unmotivated students the desire to read and write, how can we communicate the pleasure of learning to them?” The network was set up to answer these questions. Yet what gave the network continuity was the motivation of participants, who either needed help in another subject area or wanted to enrich their personal culture by learning another language or became interested in a new activity.

The network began in 1989 with writing and drama workshops in which students, teachers and parents took part, taking turns playing different roles.

The principle of exchange and cooperation was then integrated into a “quatrième” (or Secondary III) classroom. A large double-entry board was displayed in the classroom. One side of the board listed the names of the students, the other side listed codes referring to 65 spelling and grammar rules that the students were acquiring or were supposed to have been acquired. The students put sticky notes beside the codes when they acquired a rule. If one of the students did not understand a particular rule, he or she could look at the board and immediately call on a classmate who had. Thus, the students’ offers and requests were recorded on the board.

In 1992, the network was extended to all members and partners of the school. One day, two students in final year of secondary school asked one of the teachers for assistance in Latin, a pre-requisite for entering the faculty of arts. The teacher wanted to learn Spanish. She helped the students improve their Latin. One of the students helped the teacher with her evening work, while the other student helped someone else with mathematics, who in turn taught Spanish to the teacher. A reciprocal knowledge exchange network was born!

After ten years, the network has over six hundred (600) participants.

This process proved effective in helping students succeed in the official curriculum. In addition, it encouraged motivation to learn, to learn with enjoyment, and created a climate of mutual recognition among students, which facilitates group learning. The students developed remarkable analytical and reflective skills concerning their own learning styles. They developed a critical attitude while becoming aware of the difficulty of communicating, and became more understanding of their teachers.

This experience can be easily adapted to adult education workshops. Reciprocity, parity in exchanges and consideration of people's prior learning and experience in starting up a network correspond to andragogical principles and processes applied to adult education, in any subject area.

Other experiences

In November 2004, Manon Leblanc of the Centre de formation Le Granit de Lac-Mégantic and Émilie Plante of the Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François attended the international meetings of reciprocal knowledge exchange networks in Évry, France.⁴³ In their mission report, they emphasized other important examples.

In the network of de Meaux, France, people put on and perform in small plays in a number of strategic places in the city, where it is possible to reach as many spectators as possible, and thus extend the network and offer exchanges based on economic and social themes specific to the city.

43. Émilie Plante and Manon Leblanc, *Rencontres internationales des réseaux d'échanges réciproques de savoirs, Évry, France* Rapport de mission pour le Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. (Centre de formation Le Granit de Lac-Mégantic and Centre de services éducatifs populaires du Haut-Saint-François, East Angus).

In Belgium, the network is used to help newcomers integrate into the community and to offer exchanges in the French language, cooking, etc.

“In fact, all networks offer proof that they help reduce exclusion and thus inevitably enrich the community.”⁴⁴

44. Émilie Plante and Manon Leblanc. [Translation]

APPENDIX 2

THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK

RCM MEMPHRÉMAGOG

2003-2004 Report

(For the period November 3, 2003 to April 30, 2004)

Prepared by Maurice d'Auteuil

Network facilitator

Information meetings

In order to inform the general public of the knowledge exchange network in our RCM, we organized two information meetings on December 1 and December 3, 2003. We invited local media to a press briefing to publicize the dates of the meetings and provide relevant information about the network's operation, goals and structure, etc. At this press briefing, an *ad hoc* document was handed out to the media and anyone showing interest.

Despite effective media coverage (an article published in *Le Reflet du Lac*, and a radio interview on Radio-Canada's *Estrie-Express*, broadcast twice), only one person showed up, a student at the Centre d'éducation aux adultes (CEA).

In short, a great deal of time and energy were invested, but yielded few or no immediate, concrete results.

In contrast, the partnership established between the CEA and *L'Échos*, a bartering resource network, proved very productive. Through the existing members' network (about 60 active members at the time), which is gaining in popularity (over one hundred members today), we were able to reach over one hundred members and provide them with information at special events (spaghetti dinner, Valentine's Day dinner, Doux printemps dinner).

It was through *L'Échos* that I was able to provide workshops that had been previously presented by members and to prepare new ones. Since the exchange of services and, by extension, of knowledge among members was already an integral part of this bartering network, it became an ideal vehicle for developing and consolidating the exchange of knowledge, between individuals or in small groups.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

One of our preferred methods of publicizing activities is to go through the network of community organizations. Since *L'Échos* is sponsored by the Bouchée double community kitchens of Magog, we always have a platform during public events, which we obviously take advantage of to publicize our activities.

International Women's Day (March 8), organized by the Centre des femmes Memphrémagog, has given us excellent visibility over the past two years. A kiosk set up last year allowed us to reach some fifty people.

Since *L'Échos'* office is in the Carrefour du Partage de Magog, it provides a strategic location for reaching the population targeted by the knowledge exchange network. A growing number of members are recruited among staff, volunteers and clients of the Carrefour.

Since its official launch, *L'Échos* has developed its reputation among most of the community's community organizations. We have distributed brochures explaining our organization and its operation among most of these organizations. Information sessions were held where an interest was expressed. Over the years, ties and collaboration have been established with the Carrefour du partage, the Banque alimentaire, the Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi and the AQDR.

The network of community organizations has been and continues to be a preferred way of implementing, developing and consolidating resources in our community. We will be approaching other social groups in the course of this mandate.

INFORMATION SHARING

In order to promote *L'Échos* and inform the public about activities on our agenda, a couple of press releases were published every month in the community pages of the *Refllet du Lac*.

Radio and television ads were prepared showing *L'Échos* three major areas of exchange: the exchange of services, knowledge and objects. Preliminary talks were held with the administration of Cogeco Cable for the production and broadcasting of these ads. We will continue to monitor this project.

OBJECT EXCHANGE

As requested by many members, the opening of physical site for exchanging objects was one of the major accomplishments at the time. It required time and energy but I believe that in the long term, this place will become an important hub for the resource. Above all it was a group project to which many members contributed (layout of the premises) and continue to contribute (ensuring sustainability).

This site is a place for meeting and for exchanging objects as well as information concerning the resource network and planned activities. Offers and requests for knowledge could be displayed there along with possible match-ups. Open to all, barter networks make it possible to reach and stimulate interest in a clientele that we could not otherwise reach.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Person to person

A total of 12 different exchanges of knowledge took place during the period under study, for a total of 30 hours of knowledge exchange (e.g. French, computers, English conversation, making homemade yogurt).

In groups

Seven workshops were proposed over this period, and four actually took place. The workshops (on soap-making, dream exploration, GMOs, drawing) brought together 15 people and totalled 23 hours.

Three workshops were prepared but did not find any takers. The workshops, which involved 35 hours of exchanges, may still be given in the coming months.

SUMMARY

INFORMATION MEETINGS	NUMBER	PLACE	ATTENDANCE
Public meetings	2	Adult Ed. centres	1
<i>L'Échos</i> member meetings	3	Maison de la Famille	Over 100
International Women's Day	1	Église St-Jean-Bosco	Over 50

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE	NUMBER OF EXCHANGES	TOTAL HOURS
Between 2 members	12	30
Workshops given	4	23
Workshops not given	3	35

APPENDIX 3

THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK

RCM MEMPHRÉMAGOG

2006 Report

(For the period May 2006 to December 2006)

Prepared by Maurice d'Auteuil

Network facilitator

Press releases

Press releases informing the public about the network's existence and activities (member meetings, workshops) for *L'Échos* bartering resource and the knowledge exchange network were sent out on a regular basis (about three per month) to the *Refllet du Lac*, *La Tribune* and to Cogeco Cable. About twenty press releases were written and sent out. Information about scheduled activities was also sent internally, i.e. to all members of *L'Échos* with an e-mail address. As a result of these press releases, about twelve people contacted me for information about the knowledge exchange network and the bartering resource. Of the twelve, I met and enrolled four new members.

Information meetings (happy hours)

Two information meetings were held as happy hours in the community room of Loblaw's in Magog. The purpose of these meetings was to inform the general public and the members of *L'Échos* of how the network and the bartering resource worked. Seven people, all from *L'Échos*, attended.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Person to person

A knowledge exchange (French Conversation) should begin in January 2007. This exchange was introduced at the request of a *L'Échos* member, who is of foreign origin and wants to improve his French.

Group

Four workshops were proposed during this period, three of which actually took place. The workshops presented (one on voice yoga [four 90-minute workshops], English Conversation [five two-hour workshops] and a bicycle tour of Benin and Burkina Faso [one three-hour workshop]) brought together 35 people for a total of 175 hours of exchanges.

A workshop called *Initiation à l'Art floral classique* – (introduction to classical floral art) was prepared but there were no takers. It would have provided 15 hours of exchange.

SUMMARY

INFORMATION MEETINGS	NUMBER	LOCATION	ATTENDANCE
Public meetings	2	Loblaw's	7

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE	NUMBER OF EXCHANGES	TOTAL HOURS
Between 2 members	Beginning January 2007	
Workshops given	3	175
Workshop not given	1	15

APPENDIX 4

STARTING UP A RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK AS A GROUP⁴⁵

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE⁴⁶

(tool to be used for meetings with organizations)

Name and contact information of the organization:

Name of the interviewee:

Date of the meeting:

Knowledge of the organization, its clients with little schooling and activities with these clients

Of the total clientele, what proportion has little schooling?

What are the characteristics of these clients?

What services, programs, measures, etc. does the organization offer to these people? What difficulties or problems does it encounter in its activities with these people? What are the limitations of its activity? What does it hope to improve in its activity?

Presentation of the reciprocal knowledge exchange network and reactions from the organization

What is a reciprocal knowledge exchange network? Why pursue this project? What do people do in a reciprocal knowledge exchange network?

Questions, comments from the organization concerning a reciprocal knowledge exchange network.

Interest in the project? Link with the organization's concerns? Feasibility of the project in the organization's view? What conditions would facilitate or hinder its implementation, in the organization's view?

Conditions for the organization's involvement. List of potential resources

Spokesperson, contact-person for this project? Name and contact information?

Does the organization have facilities to offer (for exchanges, meetings, celebrations, etc.)? What are the conditions for accessing these facilities?

What role(s) is the organization ready to play in the project?

46. Source: the team of the Centre de educational services populaires (CSEP) du Haut-Saint-François.

Referral to other resource-persons to be contacted in the community?

Conveying information to people with little schooling:

- ⇒ Using displays in its offices? By explaining and distributing leaflets during individual or group meetings? Through direct referrals to the CSEP—through group activities in which the CSEP could intervene? What group activities are planned for the future?
- ⇒ Using a specific information session given by the CSEP in the organization? What information materials are required to allow the organization to assume this role? Delegation of one person on the facilitator team, coordination? Person's name.

Is the organization prepared to provide other resources to the project? If so, which ones?

APPENDIX 5

STARTING UP A RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK AS A GROUP⁴⁷

PRESENTING THE RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK AND MOBILIZING THE COMMUNITY

BEHIND A CONCRETE PROJECT

According to Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin, “an active minority exists above all through its ability to disseminate, which makes it visible and conditions the extent of its influence. The reciprocal knowledge exchange network is no exception to this general rule.”

What is reciprocal knowledge exchange network? Why create one?

Dissemination occurs in three phases:

- first, it is always possible to identify one person who started a network; for a network to be created, someone has to have heard about knowledge exchange
- second, this intermediary takes ownership of the knowledge exchange project then seeks out a team to carry it out (interest people who might like to implement it)
- third, once the team has been set up, the group tries to interest and call upon more people to take part in the project (dissemination through each person's relational networks).

Dissemination is an act of knowledge exchange. We explain our knowledge, understanding and interest in the networks to you. We then expect to hear your comments, your opinions and your way of viewing or not viewing what implementing a network with you and in your organization would involve. The network thus branches out through its own coherence, because its dissemination exemplifies its practice, the exchange of knowledge.

How is a network established?

- Prepare information, presentation and promotional tools for the networks (e.g. invitations, brochures, posters).

Note: Both the form and the content of these tools must be adapted to the target group (i.e. use the same language, use accessible language). Two of these target groups can be distinguished from the outset: individuals and organizations.

- List the organizations (stakeholders), individuals and leaders and/or decision-makers who might be interested in the process.
- Select a few among them, based on a few criteria.

47. Source: CSEP du Haut-Saint-François.

Possible criteria for selecting organizations:

- organizations serving people who have little schooling (all “categories” together or separate “categories” such as women, youth, etc); ensure that different categories are represented
- educational organizations
- organizations belonging to different categories (parish organizations, formal and informal secondary networks); ensure that different categories are represented
- organizations sharing the values advocated by the reciprocal knowledge exchange network
- the extent of the organization's relationship with the Centre de services éducatifs populaires (CSEP): partnership, collaboration, institutional setting
- the organization's degree of credibility in the community

Possible criteria for selecting individuals:

- current clients, members of your board of directors or former clients
- other known persons who could serve as resource people. It is important to distinguish three kinds of resource people:
 - o knowledge resource people (people I know through their knowledge)
 - o relational resource people (my relational network: people in my entourage who know everyone); base the project on existing relationships, use and value the most natural networks
 - o resource people “on hold” (uninterpreted expectations that have already been communicated to me by people I know)

Note

It is important to build on the expectations and desires of others rather than focus on their shortcomings. Thinking in terms of overcoming shortcomings from the outside means risking failure and taking control over others. *For example, do not visit someone because he or she is isolated but because he or she has expressed a desire to be in contact with others.*

- List possible places in which to meet other people (setting up a kiosk) or put up posters: the CLE, CLSC, city hall, grocery store, convenience store, pharmacy, shopping centre, arena, etc.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities for meeting others that are organized by others. Look for community activities in the newspaper, direct invitations through organizations, structured or informal local events, etc., or events organized by your organization
- individuals sharing the values advocated by the reciprocal knowledge exchange network

Possible criteria for selecting leaders/decision-makers:

- Previous ties with your organization
- Accessibility/availability of these individuals
- Concern for people with little schooling, etc.
- Personal values of these leaders/decision-makers

Other actions:

- Organize individual and sequential meetings with stakeholders and leaders/decision-makers and/or meet with them at the *tables de concertation* where they sit; divide up meetings among members of the pilot group

See the sheet: "Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group. Interview questionnaire (to be used at meetings with organizations)" and the organizational brochure

- Have each member of the pilot group call on people they know. *See the sheet "Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group - Inviting someone to an information meeting," individual invitation and text.*
- Organize an initial information meeting as soon as ten people or so have expressed an interest.

See the sheet "Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group - Facilitating an information meeting."

For more information, see:

Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin, *Échanger les savoirs* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, Épi/Formation, 1992), 89-91.

<www.mirers.org/Outils/DEMARRER.htm>.

APPENDIX 6

STARTING UP A RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK AS A GROUP⁴⁸

INVITING SOMEONE TO AN INFORMATION MEETING

During a meeting with the pilot group (a group of people who want to carry out the project), draw up a list of resource people (knowledge, relational and “on-hand” resource people) whom you want to interest in the reciprocal knowledge exchange network.

Each member of the pilot group **personally invites the people** he or she has included on this list. Since the member already has a relationship of trust with these people, the invitation: “I thought of you and of asking you to join in a project I am interested in” is not at all impersonal, it is fundamental.

What is a reciprocal knowledge exchange network? Why create one?

This invitation works two ways: the person is asked to take a closer look at the project and the project is brought closer to the person, into his or her life. The person makes a decision (a commitment) about whether or not to attend this meeting. The reciprocal knowledge exchange network is thus created as a network (offers and requests have already been collected) and an initial timeframe (necessary in any group project).

How is a network established?

Three actions must be taken as a result of this invitation:

- make a simple presentation of the project so that the person you are talking to understands; give concrete examples
- note what interests the person about this project and ask him or her to try to formulate an initial offer and/or a request.
- ask the person to participate in the information meeting, give him or her the presentation text *Starting up a reciprocal knowledge exchange network as a group--Presenting the reciprocal knowledge exchange network and mobilizing the community behind a concrete project* and ask him or her to bring along some food for a potluck dinner

Note

Belonging to a network but not attending meetings

Some people will not want to attend meetings, because this is not part of their “culture.” Just because someone does not want to participate in a group meeting does not mean they are not interested in the project or that they don't have knowledge to offer and/or to request. In order not to exclude anyone, attendance at an information meeting should not be considered the only way of joining a reciprocal knowledge exchange network or that attendance at subsequent meetings is the only way of remaining a member.

48. Source: CSEP du Haut-Saint-François.

A telephone reminder a few days before the meeting

Three or four days before the meeting it is important to call back the people invited and make sure there are last-minute impediments (e.g. transportation or babysitting problems). This contact renews the relationship and expresses the pilot group member's interest in meeting these people.

For more information, see:

Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin, *Échanger les savoirs* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer,Épi/Formation, 1992), 92-94.

APPENDIX 7

Knowledge exchange networks⁴⁹

Presentation for facilitators

First, why set up a knowledge exchange network?

Broadly speaking, the purpose of a network is to promote the sharing of knowledge, build bridges among individuals and create genuine community life. For this network project, it is important to add that sharing knowledge is above all a tool, a way of fostering the social inclusion of people who have been marginalized by their low level of schooling. We hope that the knowledge exchange network will help people who are more or less paralyzed by repeated academic failure and low self-esteem to get moving again.

What do we mean by knowledge?

Knowledge is anything that a person knows and is likely to be of interest to someone else. To clarify and to help you guide participants as they identify their knowledge, we suggest you break knowledge down into five categories. These categories are relatively arbitrary. Human knowledge could certainly be subdivided in a different way. The sole purpose of grouping knowledge in this way is to illustrate what we mean by knowledge:

- Functional knowledge: organizing one's time, planning and organizing a trip, basic care of animals, budgeting, etc.
- Skills: plumbing, mechanics, cooking, sewing, gardening, etc.
- Artistic knowledge: music, painting, sculpture, dance, etc.
- Classical knowledge: languages, reading, mathematics, history, botany, etc.
- Life experience: child-rearing, difficulties surmounted, etc.

What is an exchange?

This term does not require an explanation. However, we should stress that in order for an exchange to occur, it is not enough that a person presents what he or she knows about topic x to a number of requesters and that he or she takes part in someone else's presentation. For an exchange to occur, the knowledge must be transmitted and received. This requires proper preparation based on appropriate material conditions. The network facilitator plays a crucial role in this respect.

49. Source: team of the CSEP du Haut-Saint-François.

The importance of reciprocity or why participants must be encouraged to become both requesters and suppliers

Basically because the people targeted by our knowledge exchange network have developed the habit of perceiving themselves and acting as requesters. Because they are often claimants, beneficiaries, or users, they are often perceived as only existing in passive, receptive mode. The participants targeted by our network are relegated to the status of people who must be taken care of. They are seldom considered as people who have something to offer or something valuable to transmit. And they are just as convinced that this is the way it is. We set up knowledge exchange networks to prove that this is false. We want to validate what people know, we want to equip them so that they can transmit what they know and at the same time help them to perceive themselves not as spectators of their lives but as full-fledged actors and citizens.

That said, for some people, the mere fact of taking part in the network is a process of social inclusion. Accordingly **the idea that each person becomes a supplier is not a formal obligation but a goal to be attained.** We have to accept and deal with the reservations and fears of those who are shy. It is up to the network facilitator to gradually guide these people toward assuming the status of supplier.

Is more than one network needed?

The very principle of a network is simple and does not really require an explanation. Briefly, networks involve exchanges among three or more people. However, the networks will be implemented differently in each of the regions covered by the action research. One question needs to be asked: are we aiming at implementing one large network in each region or several small networks? In fact, this will depend on the approaches adopted, the time available, the availability of a suitable facility, etc. Basically, this question is secondary, to a degree (but only to a degree). It is important to prevent the ghettoization of women, the elderly, young people etc. This might be unavoidable at the outset, but we must avoid creating closed networks. We have to aim at interconnection.

Beyond knowledge exchange

As we have maintained, we believe that networks are tools and ways of promoting the social inclusion of people with little schooling. To attain this objective, it would be useful to foster a sense of belonging by simultaneously implementing activities focused on socialization. In a word, this is about creating community life for all participants.

APPENDIX 8

The knowledge exchange network

Guide for facilitating a meeting to identify knowledge

Preamble

Provide participants with the following information:

- Maximum duration: 2 hours
- Set aside 10 minutes at the end to allow participants to evaluate the facilitation (this is very important to us).

1. Presentation of a knowledge exchange network

Answer the following questions:

- What is this?
- Major principles
- How does it work? (Each participant chooses what he or she wants to learn and transmit, the duration and the frequency and place of the exchanges, etc.)

Illustrate how it works using a *Classified ads* sheet and the diagram.

2. Facilitation to identify knowledge

A) Presentation of the knowledge identification process

B) Identification of offers of knowledge using the index cards

- Spread the cards out on the board.
- Ask each person to draw an index card containing an area of potential competencies.
- Each person must then match the knowledge to be offered with the area of competencies indicated on the drawn index card.
- The knowledge offered is then written down on a yellow card.
- The cards are then pinned to the display board.
- Everyone consults the displayed offers and chooses the offer that suits him or her, based on needs.

Reminder: The index cards are tools. If they help you, that's great. If you think of ideas without the cards, that's OK too.

C) Identification of requests

- Next, we write our requests on another index card (orange).
- We check to see if the requests can be met with the previously formulated offers.

D) Relating requests and offers on the pieces of cardboard

- The facilitator goes over the offers and requests on the board and pairs suppliers/requesters.
- The board contains the following categories:
 1. OFFERS
 2. REQUESTS
 3. OFFERS THAT HAVE BEEN MET
- The facilitator records the relationships created on an observation checklist.

E) Putting individuals in touch:

- Suppliers/requesters agree on the technicalities (content, place, frequency, format, etc.).

Questions, comments, evaluation

APPENDIX 9

Examples of knowledge exchange

UPCOMING EXCHANGES JANUARY-JUNE 2006

	SUPPLIER	YES/NO
Organ	Lucie	
English conversation	Pierre	
Wood sculpture	Lucie	
Aromatherapy	Diane	
Violin basics	Édith	
Weaving	Rita	
Massage	Pierre	
Maps (three-dimensional)		
Sewing		
Decorative painting	Rosay-Rhodina	
Polarity basics		
Lymph drainage	Rosay-Rhodina	
Painting on wood		
First aid	Lucie	
Healthy eating	Guy	
Introduction to welding	Jean-Yves	
Burner servicing	Jean-Yves	
Introduction to electrical wiring	Jean-Yves	
Treatment of joints		
Ceramic tile installation		
Body work	Francis	
Bicycle maintenance	Francis	
Making Christmas wreathes		
Making dream-catchers	Louise	
Asian cuisine		
Volunteer experience	Louise	
Reflecting on the meaning of life	Guy	
Digital photography	Robert	
Relaxing with mandalas	Nathalie	
Making birthday cards		
Reflecting on the present	Édith	
Priority management	Édith	
Business plan	Robert	

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