

Proactivity: Principles of Action Based on Experiential Knowledge



2008 - 2009

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

SARCA

STATE OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL,
COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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State of Reception, Referral,
Counselling and Support Services

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Introduction

For the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport,¹ reception, referral, counselling and support services² are a strategic link between their milieu and continuing education and training services. Some of their functions may only be properly executed if permanent links are established with this milieu (for example, for information, referral and monitoring support)" (2004a, p. 40). This is especially the case for the proactivity function that is now attributed to SARCA. The SB³ will have to assume responsibility for the promotion of SARCA and develop proactivity in order to reach the goals set by implementing activities in the communities and innovative means for promotion and information. The proactivity function is therefore defined as one of the general responsibilities that "involve an active relationship between the services and the community and its different players" (MELS, 2006, p. 16). More specifically, proactivity measures "involve interaction with the community, and partnership, which demonstrates a desire to contribute as a member of the community" (MELS, 2006, p. 16).

This proactivity function will contribute to greater diversity in the exploration of ways to help with the expression of demand. As we know, the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* makes this expression one of its main strategies for increasing participation in the basic education of the population (MEQ,⁴ 2002). Moreover, the term "expression of demand" is "all-encompassing" (MELS, 2006, p. 12). This term "emphasizes the importance of listening to adults, helping them express their situation and providing them with the assistance they need at this point in time. This is when the nature of the demand and the type of solution become evident" (MELS, 2006, p. 12). It is also important to understand that the central concept of learning plan should be understood in its broadest sense. In our knowledge-based society, there are numerous opportunities to learn, and this is a necessary ingredient for lifelong learning. *A thousand and one ways of learning* is an expression ..." (MELS, 2006, p. 15).

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1. The official abbreviation is MELS.
 2. The generally accepted abbreviation is SARCA.
 3. The letters SB mean "school boards."
 4. The name of the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) was changed on February 28, 2005 to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). That is why we write MELS solely for ministry publications published after that date.

Proactivity is related to the so-called proactive approach (sometimes called the environment approach), which itself is relatively new. "The appearance of the proactive approach is very recent in Québec. It is considered to be a third current that complements two other important currents, that is, community organization and the community approach"¹ (Guay, 2001, p. 274²).

As for the definition of proactivity, "two words sum up the professional practice of the proactive approach: visibility and accessibility" (Guay, 2001, p. 269²). And for good reason, continues Guay, "the workplace of the practitioner becomes the community" (p. 269²). In particular, according to Brown et al. (2008), the proactive approach does not directly target persons in difficulty but the persons who share the same living environment. The priority objective of the proactive approach is to restore "the pathways and processes through which empowering community settings influence their members, the surrounding community and the larger society" (Maton, 2008, p. 4).

Proactivity would thus ask SARCA to play a role in the active watch over lifelong learning, that is, the role of proactive guardian of the development of the culture of lifelong learning in the entire community (Riverin-Simard and Simard, 2008). Proactivity would thus require that SARCA could, among other things, foresee social events, anticipate the needs of the potential clientele, predict the changing characteristics of this clientele, and become informed about any trends that could have an economic impact in a knowledge-based society. Moreover, it is necessary to recognize, it seems, "the diversity of orientations within the field (e.g., those emphasizing prevention, empowerment, and the ecological perspective) and the wide range of human problems of interest to community psychologists" (Toro, 2005, p. 9).

But a central question remains. Faced with this great diversity, how then should SARCA act in their daily practice with respect to this proactivity function?

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1. Unlike the proactive approach, "the starting point of the community approach is not the community, but the person in difficulty on the basis of whom the perspective is expanded to encompass his or her social environment" (Guay, 2001, p. 275 [free translation]). Unlike the proactive approach, "the targets of community organization are the formal groups, the associations. The approaches are: social action, local development and social planning. The values are of fighting social inequalities and increasing the power of the poorest people. The targets of the community approach are the client identified and his or her primary network. The approaches are social network intervention. The values are to engage the social network in the intervention" (Guay, 2001, p. 276) [free translation].
 2. (Free translation).

The procedures and processes used

In order to suggest many answers to this central question, this document is based, in turn, on the identification of the components of the practice of proactivity, the selection and classification of approaches, the highlighting of experiential knowledge, and the formulation of principles of action.

The identification of the components of proactivity

The components of the practice of proactivity are defined on the basis of two ministry publications (MEQ, 2004a; MELS, 2006). There are six components, and they are the subjects of six chapters called, respectively: visibility, increasing awareness in the community, collaboration with the community, the characteristics of social groups, the changing organizational culture, and community animation. Their descriptions, which are inevitably interrelated, come at the beginning of each of the chapters under the heading "Description." In order to make things clearer to the reader, however, we will first provide a brief overview.

The first component, visibility, will remedy a current deficiency, since SARCA "are rarely publicized or promoted; continuing education and training services are the focus of most centres' promotion" (MEQ, 2004a, p. 37).

The second component, increasing awareness in the community, is essentially intended to better play the role of helping with the expression of demand, as desired by the MEQ. "Given the nature of their functions, RRCSS make a significant contribution to the expression for the demand for learning. This increases when the services become more visible and active to people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions" (2004a, p. 37).

The third component, collaboration with the community, is directly related to another MEQ recommendation. In fact, "RRCSS cannot exist without concerted action, partnership and coordination between resources both within and outside school boards and with organizations working with the target population" (2004a, p. 37).

The fourth component, the characteristics of social groups, would mainly target the whole range of "people with little or no formal education" (MELS, 2006, p. 3). This contributes to fulfilling another major objective: meeting the major challenge of "reversing this tendency to reproduce educational and social inequalities" (MELS, 2006, p. 3).

The fifth component becomes essential because of the change in orientation required by the practice of proactivity. This component refers to making SARCA part of a changing organizational culture so that they will be capable of playing their role in helping with the expression of demand. That in particular is why the MELS speaks of a "reorganization of reception, referral, counselling and support services" (2006, p. 1).

Finally, the sixth component, animation organizing, is concerned with the essence of proactivity itself. In fact, this type of work would be "a proactive approach that fosters both the integration of the school board in the community and its contribution to community development" (MELS, 2006, p. 28).

The selection and classification of approaches¹

Let us recall first of all that these approaches were generated thanks to a major action research operation initiated by the DFGA. According to this organization, before "carrying out massive changes, it is necessary to experiment, in real situations, with what might be new services, new approaches and new practices. This was the purpose of the action research projects initiated by the Ministère de l'Éducation with the school boards. The school boards can thus make an essential contribution to the definition of the future reception, referral, counselling and support services" (MEQ, 2004b, p. 1²). Regarding the action research projects related in particular to proactivity, the MEQ clarified its intentions as follows: "The reception, referral, counselling and support services are not well understood by the population and are not seen as being open to everyone. The action research will consist of designing and testing strategies aimed at increasing the presence and visibility of SARCA in their community and facilitating access to the services by the target populations" (2004c, p. 6²).

It was in this context that the action research projects were carried out, leading to the presentation of well-structured reports in spring 2005. It should be noted that the approaches selected and classified in this document come from these reports. It must, however, be pointed out too that there were meetings with the authors (or their representatives) in order to refine the understanding of their intentions and to be able to highlight the most important elements.

The approaches are related to explanations of the various ways of intervening in the practice of proactivity. These approaches are presented through various excerpts from the action research reports, because they provide good illustrations of the realities and issues of proactivity in everyday practice.

The complete references to these action research reports are included in the bibliography of this document. Throughout the text, however, we have omitted the name of the originating school boards and replaced them with various combinations of the letters X, Y and Z. This is intended

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1. The authors think that the results of their action research appear to be very promising in spite of the project not lasting long enough (six months), and it is possible to measure the real impact of community organizing. It should be noted that the principles of action being highlighted in this document are often expressed by using verbs in the conditional, which is an indication of the caution that is required, but makes it possible to emphasize the great richness that seems to emerge for the possible practice of proactivity in SARCA.
 2. (Free translation)

to respect the anonymity of the authors of the reports, since the excerpts come from draft versions.¹

The excerpts from these action research reports are reproduced in italics. They are classified according to each of the six proactivity components mentioned previously. They therefore appear in the six corresponding chapters of this document.

The emphasis on experiential knowledge

This knowledge is based on approaches and is generated through practice. This experiential knowledge plays the role of postulates. They are assertions or assumptions based on the representations of proactive practice.

This knowledge, developed gradually through day-to-day professional experience, is generally more or less tacit. It is necessary to highlight it. This is what we have done in this document. For every element related to the approaches of practitioners, we have extracted the experiential knowledge. It should be noted that this knowledge constitutes, in a way, the rationale of the day-to-day practice of proactivity.

Throughout the six chapters of this document, this experiential knowledge is shown indented and in bold underneath every element related to the approaches. In this way, readers can judge, as they go along, if each instance of experiential knowledge from the reports corresponds to the representation that is made of the practice of proactivity.²

The formulation of the principles of action

The experiential knowledge should make it possible, in turn, to formulate the principles of action. These principles are related to the identification of broad guidelines for action deduced from the experiential knowledge, and their formulations can be used immediately as objectives, for example, in the strategic plan of an institution. In this document, these principles of action appear in a section by that name in each chapter.³

Note, however, that these principles of action are not recipes. By definition, it seems, "the proactive approach consists of an open supply, that is, not predetermined" (Guay, 2001, p. 283⁴). It plays the role in a way, it should be noted, of active watch over lifelong learning. As such, every SARCA could opt for a strategic plan giving, for example, priority to one or another of the principles of action corresponding to the six components.

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1. The final versions were not yet available when this document was being written.
 2. A number has been assigned to each category of experiential knowledge in order to establish the correspondence with the contents of each of the six headings named "Principles of Action."
 3. The principles of action are each preceded by a number, making it possible to refer back to the corresponding experiential knowledge in the preceding pages of each of the chapters.
 4. (Free translation)

The importance of experiential knowledge in the knowledge economy

As a key element in the identification of the principles of action in the area of proactivity, we are proposing highlighting the experiential knowledge of people working in the field. It should be noted that these people are the authors of the action research reports mentioned previously. In both the research and practice communities, there is now general agreement that considerable credibility should be given to this experiential knowledge, which has increased substantially in the past 20 years or so. The field of research related to knowledge based on practice is becoming a legitimate site for intellectual and professional investment (Gould et al., 2004).

Great attention is therefore paid to experiential knowledge (St. Clair, 2004) and it is presented under various terms. According to Simard (2005; 2006), there is, for example, the term knowledge which is based on the work of practitioners. There is also the term know-how, that is, knowledge acquired in the action involving collaboration between organizations. One of the reasons why businesses are working more and more in networks is precisely because they feel a need to combine elements of their reciprocal know-how.

In the knowledge economy, practitioners are seeing, now more than ever, a need to produce meaning and continually renew their representations of the world and their daily practice (Argyris, 2006; Bradbury and Reason, 2003; Martin, 2000).

It should be noted especially that, while the credibility of practitioners is based in part on the knowledge they possess of certain recognized scientific principles, it also stems from their experience-based knowledge. This knowledge is combined in various idiosyncratic intervention models that have been developed over the course of specific situations they have faced in their professional practice. Hence the crucial importance of extracting experiential knowledge from the approaches developed by the practitioners themselves.

Moreover, in the knowledge economy, one recognizes immediately that experiential knowledge is both very valuable and very difficult to codify. It is very valuable since it constitutes a natural resource indispensable to the new economy (Gould et al., 2004; Beaty, 2003; Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2003). It is also a form of knowledge that is difficult to codify since it is acquired in particular situations and is accumulated in layers of experience from which it is difficult to separate" (Rifkin, 2005; 2000).

Through its major action research operation carried out in 2004-2005, the MEQ has put in place many of the numerous conditions necessary for the highlighting and greater systematization of experiential knowledge.

It should be noted that the importance of action research in the emergence of experiential knowledge has now been widely recognized (Stein and Mankovi, 2004; Bradbury and Reason, 2003; Kahnemann, 2003; Mebane and Galani, 2003), both in North America (Rennie, 2004) and

in Europe (Frommer, Langenbach and Streek, 2004). Action research favours the discovery and articulation of the processes related to innovative practices (Argyris, 2006), and it is therefore of great interest for the knowledge economy. There is also an important principle frequently cited by proponents of action research. For example, according to Habermas (1975), the *raison d'être* of all knowledge is the emancipation of individuals [practitioners or others], and this knowledge can be encouraged by critical self-reflection on practice. According to Dolbec, "whatever the methods used, action research is perceived as a true commitment for the purpose of developing or improving the practices of individuals, their understanding of what is happening and the situation in which they are developing" (2003, pp. 514-515¹). Action research makes it possible, in fact, to attain the level of consciousness required for collective action.

The analysis of the representations and practices of the authors of the five action research reports could thus stimulate a more extensive reflection on the nature of experiential knowledge constructed around the practice of proactivity in SARCA. Moreover, there are many practitioners who recognize and understand the need for proactivity and its importance with respect to the expression of demand. When they read this document, these practitioners would become more aware of their representations and of their practices. They will no doubt discover that they share concerns with their colleagues, the authors of these action research reports, who have taken farther their reflection on the application of proactivity.

1. (Free translation)

Chapter 1



Visibility

Description

According to the MEQ, "Very few centres promote their reception, referral, counselling and support services; only education and training services are publicized" (2004a, p. 8). Increasing the visibility of SARCA therefore needs to be a priority objective. In fact, according to the *Discussion and Policy Document*, SARCA should focus on promoting the fact that they "form a focal point for the people, organizations, institutions and network of resources and services linked to school boards and education and training centres" (2004a, p. 22). The community should be aware of this position. "RRCSS have a strategic position in their milieu, reaching out to adults and the Policy's target groups and promoting the expression of their demand for learning" (MEQ, 2004a, p. 37). Moreover, it should be noted that the values of the proactive approach are precisely "providing social ties and critical mechanisms for connecting residents to their neighborhood and fostering the social networks needed to engage residents in change efforts and in collective action" (Foster-Fishman et al., 2007a, p. 94).

Increasing the visibility of SARCA would prepare the ground socially. The community should be made aware of their presence, in particular the potential candidates for these services. These potential candidates should realize that SARCA will in a way anticipate their training intentions and the preliminary or subsequent steps they will have to take in the course of their training process. Proactivity will prove to be "an approach that is applied before there is a formal demand for services" (Guay, 2001, p. 268¹). This approach requires that we "stimulate the social imagination, that is the sociological imagination ... [because] how individuals within a system understand that system — particularly their collective imagination — is a fundamental aspect of social and personal changes" (Christens et al., 2007, p. 229).

Experiential knowledge

Let us now look at how the practitioners involved in the action research projects described their approaches. On the basis of these approaches, it should be possible to identify their experiential knowledge with respect to the visibility component of proactivity.

1.01 Opening up to the community would mean, among other things, making ourselves known to it and doing a better job of offering services.

- *Referral should be favoured in centres in rural communities... opening up to the community and making ourselves known... have greater visibility in the region*

¹ (Free translation)

and demonstrate our desire to join forces with other players to provide adult students with everything they need for their training (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 5).

1.02 Promoting SARCA with various forms of publicity would ensure greater visibility.

- *The reception, referral, counselling and support services offered... are still not well known by the population... No publicity of any kind (newspapers, radio, television) has ever been done to make these services better known. No pamphlets describing our services have been distributed to our main partners (Emploi-Québec and Immigration-Québec) or to the community organizations that are likely to direct training candidates to our services... We also believe that by being known and used more, our services will be able to promote the expression of demand for training by a greater number of individuals than is currently the case (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 15).*

1.03 The information on SARCA would be disseminated more effectively through networking compared to traditional modes of publicity.

- *Traditional publicity (newspaper ads, posters, and news releases) had minimal impact compared to the effectiveness of the network in generating requests (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 31).*

1.04 The information related to SARCA would be appreciated by many social players if it came through networking.

- *There is a thirst for more information. Many of those interviewed (both potential clients and potential advocates) stated that they found the meeting and information provided useful. Most indicated that they would be interested in participating in an informal network to keep abreast of changing programs and services and provide the adult education sector with information about their community as well (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 31).*

1.05 The visibility of SARCA in the community would be better ensured if the emphasis was on a permanent presence and not on periodical or occasional services.

- *Sustainability is important on a community level to develop and maintain relationships both with partner organizations and community leaders – periodic and punctuated community presence does not build credibility or establish trust (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 32).*

1.06 An increase in the visibility of SARCA would sometimes be achieved through the creation of service points outside the centres, for example, in the facilities of the collaborators. This would make it possible to reach relatively inaccessible clientele.

- *A location outside the training centre and in a grass-roots, community setting should make it possible to reach clients who have needs but are not conscious of them, or who are apprehensive of the image of the traditional school. The support of partners as well as the establishment of warm, personalized relationships should make it possible to break through preliminary resistance and explain the reality experienced in the adult education centres (SB XZY, 2005, p. 10).*

1.07 To avoid reducing the visibility of SARCA, one rule could be respected: avoid having these services perceived as competitors by current or potential collaborators.

- *We were sometimes perceived in our mandate much more as competitors than as a recognized government institution with the mission of providing training and education to the population. These organizations are afraid of possibly losing part or all of their hard-won grants (SB XZY, 2005, p. 30).*

1.08 It would be advantageous if the details concerning SARCA activities were better known. Similarly, the distinction between their activities and those of academic training could be better emphasized.

- *The promotion of reception and referral services goes unnoticed in the publicity for the general supply of training (publicity according to the number of places to fill) (SB YZX, 2005, p. 1).*

1.09 Being concerned with establishing formal cooperation would make it possible to enhance the visibility of SARCA in the community and to better emphasize their essential role in education.

- *This integration [into the community] should be manifested through the continuation of the development of partnerships that would lead to a regular, substantial presence in a community centre... as well as through occasional presence according to the activities of social or municipal partners (SB XZY, 2005, p. 9).*

1.10 Increasing the visibility of SARCA in the community would also involve the possibility of promotion with local businesses.

- *One aspect of this action research [related to the proactivity of SARCA] had to also be carried out with a few target businesses with which we would hold activities focusing mainly on counselling for workers with insufficient schooling or ineligible job candidates (SB XZY, 2005, p. 10).*
- *The development of a partnership, according to opportunities, with one or more businesses with cyclical labour shortages (SB XZY, 2005, p. 11).*

1.11 The creation of a community committee would make it possible to better specify the promotion procedures to be used to ensure greater visibility of SARCA within the community.

- *A community committee was supposed to, among other things, clarify the issues around community concerns regarding the mandate of the school board and their respective mandates. It was supposed to have decision-making powers with regard to the process... (SB XZY, 2005, p. 12).*

1.12 For better visibility, SARCA should be concerned with being seen as educational services in the broad sense. They would thus avoid being defined as promoters of academic programs by the public.

- *In the years since the school boards ceased being funded for... community animation, adult education and vocational centres have become limited within the public conception of strictly being dispensers of academic and vocational programs. The population generally seems unaware of the centres and of the services offered (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 18).*

1.13 The use of ICT (information and communications technologies), such as production of a DVD, would be likely to increase the visibility of SARCA.

- *This strategy comprised the development of the music DVD lauding the benefits of adult education and the support aspect of the SARCA services with corresponding advertisements in the media outlets identified by survey respondents as being the primary sources of community and educational services information (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 26).*

1.14 The conception and development of non-traditional information tools would make it possible to ensure a greater visibility of SARCA.

- The development of non-traditional tools and approaches to reach the target clientele of adults lacking a basic education. Several non-traditional tools were developed and tried during this action research. These included tabling at local community events where educational-type displays are unheard of, the development of links with social service organizations that are sources of potential client referrals, and the production of a DVD musical video on life choices using local resources and talents. These are non-traditional in the sense that traditional efforts have tended to consist primarily of distribution of written materials (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 19).

1.15 Contributions from community leaders who know the community well would help increase the visibility of SARCA.

- *These community leaders are an excellent source for network members and tend to know people in the community who might be in need of SARCA services. Such community leaders tend to be well respected and have considerable influence within their communities that may generate increased expression of demand. These moral leaders are well positioned to provide insights into community needs that may enable adult education service providers to design services in response to identified needs (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 31).*

1.16 The community leaders likely to help increase the visibility of SARCA could be chosen carefully from activity sites according to diversity criteria.

- *The emphasis has to be on targeting community and moral leaders... given the premise that each community has informal leaders possessing significant powers of moral suasion, emphasis was placed on identifying and seeking appropriate community and moral leaders. These leaders included owners of corner stores (often the only store in town), community volunteers (e.g., literacy tutors, youth club volunteers and parent committee participants), and occasionally individuals in formal leadership roles (e.g., mayor or councillor). The expectation was that these community leaders would be able to effectively refer potential clients to SARCA services while disseminating information within the communities and offering encouragement to those considering an expression of demand (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 18-19).*

1.17 For better visibility of SARCA, the use of advocates or friends of the culture of lifelong learning could be promising. They could be staff working in a video club or a corner store.

- *In distributing DVDs to video stores and dépanneurs, it became clear that personnel working in these establishments are good targets to become advocates (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 43).*

1.18 Becoming associated with popular community events would help increase the visibility of SARCA.

- *We have to improve general community visibility which we assumed would be well served by making a presence at several grassroots community events (four multi-day agricultural fairs and a one-day community celebration...) with brief surveys and brochures about all educational services available to adults, including the SARCA services. These five events were very time-consuming, but were attended by literally tens of thousands of people (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 25).*

1.19 If SARCA could be actively integrated into many activities in the community, they could consolidate more the mutual connections between these activities and the training.

- *Our desire was to increase our presence... This presence was to be expressed through active integration into the social, community and municipal fields and as well as with businesses. This is in order to develop and consolidate the activities of general education and vocational training (SB XZY, 2005, p. 9).*

1.20 One strategy for increasing the visibility of SARCA seems promising. This strategy is to integrate into the special activities of municipalities and to engage in discussions with them on the possibility of promoting educational and counselling projects.

- *The organization of periodic interventions in SARCA... should make it possible to immediately make known the potential SARCA services in these municipalities, to develop relationships of trust and, if need be, to make appointments with individuals interested in undertaking, still in their communities, actions to explore educational and counselling projects in the first steps of their process (SB XZY, 2005, p. 11).*

1.21 The visibility of SARCA at public events could be supported by varied, relevant incentives (e.g. contests) according to the circumstances.

- *In addition to table displays and surveying passers-by at community events, meetings were held with numerous individuals, organization representatives and groups. At table displays, it is important to have a "hook" (e.g., free candy) to draw the public in, particularly in settings where educational services are not normally promoted (i.e., agricultural fairs) (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 24).*

1.22 The beginnings of collaborative work are often manifested in increased generation of information activities.

- *The adult learners also wanted greater community involvement in the centres, as shown by this comment: "At lunchtime, organizations could come and present their services. We could be better informed. They could hand out leaflets and posters. Perhaps we could meet them at the centre." Some adults even wanted the community, the agencies and the organizations to better recognize their training process (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 35).*

1.23 One of the consequences related to the increased visibility of SARCA would be manifested through a noticeable increase in the demand for information on these services.

- *Following our intervention, we noticed that we created a need among the organizations we met with, since they wanted us to return because their cohorts were being renewed regularly at variable intervals according to the activity programs of the different organizations. When they become aware of the contents of our activity, they recognize the importance of being informed about the services offered by SARCA for their staff (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 31).*

Principles of action

Experiential knowledge would seem to impose, explicitly or implicitly, certain principles of action related to visibility that could now be applied by SARCA.

In order to increase their visibility, SARCA could, among other things:

- 1.01 be open to the community and present their services better
- 1.02 promote their activities with various forms of publicity

- 1.03 become aware that the relevant information is disseminated more effectively through networking as opposed to traditional publicity
- 1.04 disseminate relevant information through networking
- 1.05 favour a permanent presence in the community and not a periodical or occasional one
- 1.06 think about the possibility of creating service points in the facilities of the collaborators
- 1.07 clearly define their role in order to avoid being perceived as competitors by current or potential collaborators
- 1.08 distinguish their activities from their training activities
- 1.09 explore the possibility of creating formal cooperation that facilitates the circulation of information
- 1.10 promote themselves at local businesses
- 1.11 create a committee to better specify the promotion procedures to be used in the community
- 1.12 be concerned about being defined by the community as educational services in the broad sense of the term
- 1.13 consider a more extensive use of communications technologies (ICT)
- 1.14 create non-traditional promotional tools
- 1.15 remember the importance of calling upon community leaders who know their milieu well and who can help with the promotion of services
- 1.16 choose community leaders carefully from activity sites according to diversity criteria
- 1.17 join forces with friends of lifelong learning who would be prepared to do publicity for the services
- 1.18 associate with popular community events to become better known
- 1.19 intensify their active integration in various community activities in order to consolidate the mutual connections between them and training

- 1.20 integrate into the special activities of municipalities and formally discuss with them the possibility of promoting educational and counselling projects
- 1.21 make a presence at public events using various incentives
- 1.22 increase the number of information activities
- 1.23 provide for a resulting increase in the demand for information on their activities.



Chapter 2



Increasing Awareness in the Community

Description

For the MELS, SARCA have a very particular major role to play in increasing awareness of the community of its own needs in the area of training. "The Policy's goal of encouraging expression of the demand is a major challenge for all involved. Given their position in the milieu, RRCSS can certainly make a significant contribution toward attaining this goal" (2004a, p. 17). In fact, SARCA should "support the development of a culture of lifelong learning; contribute to an increase in the basic education level of Quebecers" (MEQ, 2004a, p. 11).

Increasing awareness in the community of its own needs should thus affect both the rational (the continuing education and training required by the knowledge economy; the autonomy and economic independence of every adult or citizen) and emotional aspects (the need to increase self-esteem as a responsible citizen; the importance of enhancing the feeling of being useful to the community within established or informal networks).

The strategies for increasing the community's awareness of its own needs should first of all be aimed, as advocated by the MEQ, at various organizations in the community. "A continuing education culture or culture of lifelong learning assumes that all individuals, groups, organizations and employers have a natural tendency to consider education and training as a development factor and necessary habit in the main areas of life" (2004a, p. 16).

These strategies for increasing awareness in the community should not only go through the organizations, but also through pivotal individuals, sometimes called, in the action research reports, friends of lifelong learning or advocates for continuing education and training. "Pivotal individuals are people whose type of work puts them in contact with many citizens (merchants, servers and laundromat staff); they are the eyes and ears of a community and help us better understand the networks" (Guay, 2001, p. 251-252¹). "With respect to the support from individuals who are part of the community, it is geographical proximity that determines their relevance, that is, the nature of the needs requires an intervention that is available as close as possible to the domicile" (Guay, 2001, p. 251-252¹). It should be noted in particular that these pivotal individuals have a multiplier effect. In fact, "resident perceptions of neighborhood readiness (i.e., hope for the future and collective efficacy) and capacity for change (i.e., social ties and neighborhood leadership), and the level of neighborhood problems were strongly related to whether and how much residents were involved in individual and collective action efforts" (Foster-Fishman, 2007a, p. 91). Moreover, "only perceived support and not received support has been regarded as consistently linked to health, individual development and socioeconomic growth" (Harber et al., 2007, p. 133).

¹ (Free translation)

To make the community aware of its own needs, relatively exhaustive knowledge of the community is required. In fact, according to Miller and Shinn, "a contextualist position involves understanding the contextualistic constraints on any particular piece of knowledge... as opposed to specific intervention programs" (2005, p. 177). Similarly, according to Luke, "human competencies and problems are best understood by viewing people within their social, cultural, economic, geographic, and historical contexts" (2005, p. 188).

Experiential knowledge

Let us take a closer look at how the authors of the action research projects explain their approaches. Thanks to the knowledge of these approaches, it would thus be possible to better highlight their experiential knowledge with respect to this proactivity component: increasing awareness in the community of its own needs in the area of training.

2.01 Raising awareness in the community of the importance of lifelong learning should be inherent to the social role of SARCA.

- *We must emphasize building community awareness... Future success will be built on creating increased community awareness of lifelong learning services. Without awareness there can be no expression of demand. Building awareness through community partnerships must be sustained to the point that each community is empowered to have a voice in the development and delivery of the educational services available to them (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 32).*

2.02 One way to increase awareness in the community of the need to improve its services would be to have the various actors characterize the ideal or desirable situation.

- *The data collected in interviews also made it possible to draw up a profile of the desired situation by each of the groups interviewed. Each group expressed its expectations regarding services as well as their vision of the system... A preliminary look permits us to observe that the desire to know more about the services provided in the community is shared by all groups. For the centre and the agencies and organizations, there is a desire to know themselves and to know each other. Everyone wants to establish links (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 33).*

2.03 Better awareness in the community of its own needs would make it possible to better know how the various local organizations interact.

- *A question needs to be asked such as: Why make a referral?... [it is necessary] to specify the implications of a referral and the values we are promoting... What*

are we referring? Who will make the referral? Where do we refer? How do we refer? (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 13).

2.04 A culture of exchange among the various organizations would help the community increase awareness of its own needs.

- *For the staff of the centres, the desire to participate in community activities was mentioned by a few... Other people suggested exchanging resources with community organizations* (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 34-35).

2.05 If SARCA were able to ensure that the various organizations take into account the most crucial problems in the community, they would be assured of obtaining a major multiplier effect. This effect would be the following: the aware organizations would raise the consciousness of others.

- *We noticed this when the main actors are adequately aware and asked to collaborate on common actions and goals. Each one seeks to have an impact and take into account the issues and various aspects of a situation, and thus strengthens contacts with other organizations* (SB XZY, 2005, p. 31).

2.06 Assistance with the expression of demand for training would long precede taking steps towards SARCA, which is why it is essential to increase awareness in the community of its own needs.

- *The effective expression of demand for basic education is inevitably the result of negotiation and an integration that is always difficult to achieve between the external requirements set by the institutions ("you have to get your Secondary III, IV or V") and the specific expectations of every individual. If the latter are not taken into account, the crucial development of motivation could be compromised. This mediation begins long before the adult comes knocking on the door of the training centre or is approached by it. If before this contact, the adult is not in a situation and does not find the immediate support to "rise from the ranks" and take action that is still seen as exceptional with respect to the common practices of his or her milieu, the reception, referral, counselling and support services may prove more difficult to access* (SB XZY, 2005, p. 3).

2.07 The need to offer services to assist in the determination of training needs should be explained.

- *It is necessary to offer services to assist in the determination of training needs to the adult population who do not go to a training centre* (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 5)

2.08 Increasing awareness in the community would be a permanent process that would require constantly spreading to new territories while providing for the continuity of the new services offered from the start.

- *Stimulating demand while opening up new territories assumes that investment will be made in those territories to respond to the new requests. Proactivity therefore implies that continuity, or at least the periodic recurrence of the new services offered, is planned for from the start (SB ZYX, November 2005, heading "En guise de conclusion".*

2.09 In order to make the community aware of its own needs, it could be important to clearly understand how the community, considered as a whole, sees training.

- *Collecting information on the perception by participants of training and on the information procedures undertaken or not regarding it... Transmit information on the services offered... Stimulate among participants the expression of demand for our training services (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 24).*

2.10 A reading of the needs of the community would be more complete if it were initiated by SARCA and was done in collaboration with various actors in that community.

- *We realized that each of us possesses information that could be useful to others, but most of the time we work alone in our organizations and try to get needs recognized, but without support. If we could present our requests jointly, perhaps we would have more impact and we could get positive answers more quickly and thus be capable of meeting the glaring needs of our populations (SB XZY, 2005, p. 31).*

2.11 Proactivity should mean, among other things, improving awareness of poverty, that is, becoming more conscious of this issue and its critical consequences for training.

- *The implementation of SARCA and future actions should be truly addressed to less privileged individuals. The renewal of SARCA services needs to be part of a broader vision of society with the objective to fight poverty and improve living conditions for the people most affected by poverty, unemployment, academic failure and illiteracy and, above all, ensure that concern for the prevention of educational exclusion is shared by all ministries and organizations touched by this issue (SB XZY, 2005, p. 64).*

2.12 While SARCA become more aware of the diversity of the needs of potential clients, according to personal resources and the quality of the environment with which they are interacting, they would be better ensured of the success of the actions they undertake in the community.

- *It is necessary to acquire better knowledge of... [adults], of their resources and limitations, appropriate information concerning their environment, a better capacity to define their objectives and aspirations...[it is necessary] to decide on their training projects and the actions to implement in order to carry them out and receive the assistance they may need to succeed in their undertakings (SB XZY, 2005, p. 10).*

2.13 Proactivity would require taking into account the multiplicity of mentalities within the community.

- *It is important to take mentalities into account in order to be able to integrate into the social fabric of various communities (SB XZY, 2005, p. 43).*

2.14 Assistance with the expression of the most varied social, economic and cultural needs of the community would be inherent to the socio-educational role of SARCA.

- *The adult population must be enabled to make known their social, economic and cultural needs through the pooling of part of the resources available to... adult education organizations (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 5)*

2.15 Any adult can, among other things, answer two difficult questions concerning the appropriateness of the path they have chosen to facilitate their occupational integration and enhance their capacity to succeed. This is an indispensable prerequisite, which SARCA could make better known to the community so that it can better understand its own needs in the area of training.

- *In fact, to be able to achieve this by looking inside themselves and envisaging the possibility of undertaking training, adults, living in their own environments, have to first of all answer for themselves two questions of equal difficulty. First of all, will engaging in such training contribute to improving my life and the conditions in my immediate environment? And, if they are able to answer the first question positively, they would be faced with a second issue: will I be capable of succeeding? And if I fail, what will the people in my immediate environment say? (SB XZY, 2005, p. 3).*

Principles of action

The experiential knowledge thus seems to suggest implicitly or explicitly to SARCA certain principles of action that could now be applied to make the community aware of its own needs, in the area of training in particular.

In order to improve awareness in the community, SARCA could, among other things:

- 2.01 remember the importance of making the community conscious of the need for lifelong learning
- 2.02 define the situation that the various actors consider ideal or desirable
- 2.03 better know how to interact with the various local organizations
- 2.04 develop a culture of exchange with the organizations in the community
- 2.05 ensure that the organizations in the community themselves take into account the problems there in order to obtain a multiplier effect (the organizations that are aware would make others aware)
- 2.06 understand that help with the expression of demand for training long precedes taking steps towards SARCA
- 2.07 clarify the need to offer services to assist with the determination of training needs
- 2.08 constantly expand to new territories while providing for the continuity of the new services offered from the beginning
- 2.09 understand in a more restricted way how this community perceives training
- 2.10 initiate a reading of community needs in collaboration with the various actors in the milieu
- 2.11 become more conscious of poverty and its key consequences for training
- 2.12 inquire about the needs of the community in terms of its resources but also the quality of the environment in which its citizens are interacting
- 2.13 take into account the specific characteristics of the mentalities within the community
- 2.14 stimulate the expression of the most diverse collective needs (social, economic and cultural)

- 2.15 remember that potential candidates always ask themselves two things: the appropriateness of the path they have chosen to facilitate their occupational integration and their capacity to succeed.



Chapter 3



Collaboration with the Community

Description

Proactivity cannot be undertaken or achieved independently of a network of collaborators. According to the MEQ, it should be noted, "SARCA cannot exist without concerted action, partnership and coordination between resources both within and outside school boards and with organizations working with the target population" (2004a, p. 37).

These collaborators are in contact with various groups of citizens, including the potential users of SARCA, whom they know particularly well. SARCA would benefit from trying to make use of this knowledge (knowledge of the language, cultures, prejudices and attitudes favourable to continuing education and training) in order to reach these potential users where they are, and to communicate with them in accordance with their emotional experience (personal pride or low self-esteem) and rationale (representations). The more collaborators there are who can suggest strategies to reach these users, the better the chances will be of making them aware of their urgent needs in the area of training.

Moreover, according to the MEQ, "SARCA operating out of school boards and education and training centres are in contact with a variety of partners: the closest partnerships inside the school board are with schools and other centres and the closest external ones are with local employment centres (CLE). Furthermore, adult education centres establish partnerships with CLSCs and community organizations while vocational training centres have more specific relationships with businesses and the Carrefour Jeunesse-emploi." (2004a, p. 37).

In order to bring about this collaborative action with the community, many researchers have emphasized the importance of setting up an "advisory board consisting of key stakeholders in the problem being studied. Stakeholders may include representatives of consumers who may eventually participate in the intervention, potential providers of the service, organizations in which these services may be provided as well as researchers with experience in this area" (Sandler et al., 2005, p. 135). SARCA should, for example, try to bring the various collaborators together around a single round table, while assuming the necessary leadership *role*. The members of the advisory committee are usually experts in organizations and on local culture, providers, and users; they should identify variations during the implementation of the main components of a service (Sandler et al., 2005). In particular, "the advisory board can be used to provide critical feedback on scientific issues, to propose questions that are generated based on consumer or provider experiences, and to anticipate issues which will later be important at the implantation phase of the intervention and the research" (Sandler et al., 2005, p. 135). Moreover, as pointed out by Miller and Shinn (2005), the interventions in community should be more adopted by local decision-makers. In fact, "programs developed in communities may be more congruent with local values, may fit better with organizational capacity, may be more effective in local contexts because they draw on indigenous knowledge, skill, and craft, and may be more likely to be adopted by local decision makers" (Miller and Shinn, 2005, p.180).

Moreover, there are tools available to better choose the organizations and the pivotal individuals who, in the community, are the most likely to best collaborate, for example, with SARCA (Degenne and Forsé, 2004). According to Luke, "network tools are based on the analysis of relational data -- information about the connections among a set of actors, be they persons, agencies, etc." (2005, p. 192-3). For example, "Freeman's actor betweenness index... measures how often an individual actor is involved in the communication between other pairs of actors in the network" (Luke, 2005, p. 195). SARCA should, for example, identify the leaders, designated or not, and the collaborators who show considerable openness. The so-called relational data technique "uses network tools on a complete network.... looks at the exchange relations within and between interorganizational alliances" (Luke, 2005, p. 194). It is based, for example, on the analysis of the presence or absence of interactions between various actors and organizations in the community. This technique, according to Luke (2005) "collects data on a complete interorganizational network making it possible to determine the dynamics of the organization and of its members. It can also identify the alliances within the organization as well as inside the network of agencies and organizations related more or less closely to that organization and its activities. In fact, this technique of "collecting data on the complete interorganizational network... determines that organizational membership on alliances was associated with a broader variety of exchange relations" (Luke, 2005, p. 194).

Experiential knowledge

To establish effective collaboration with the community, the authors of the action research projects present their approaches. This presentation would make it possible to highlight their experiential knowledge with respect to this component of proactivity: collaboration with the community.

3.01 It seems impossible to talk about the proactivity of one's own organization without speaking of collaboration.

- *We are discovering through the course of our interventions that it is very difficult, if not unthinkable, to talk about the proactivity of SARCA without first establishing a partnership with community and employability development organizations... we should be the instigators of relationships with the designated partners... making it possible for the organizations that receive us to be more familiar with us and to be able to create complementary relationships with us (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 31).*

3.02 Collecting information on the needs of the clientele would cause the actors in the community to feel a stronger need to collaborate.

- *We would like to carry out interviews with potential partners and organize discussion groups to gather large quantities of information on reception at the school board and in each of the organizations. The purpose of this would be to ensure transferability of the information to possible SARCA at the school board... In addition, we would like to use this information to increase awareness among the members of the advisory committee of the importance of reception in partnership. By collecting data on the needs of the clients, it was easier to convince the actors in the community of the need to work in collaboration, and consequently, in a working committee that would make it possible to develop a procedure for reception in partnership (SB YZX, 2005, p. 37).*

3.03 The motivation to explore the resources of the community and above all, to establish close contact between the actors would be a significant asset for action in the community.

- *The desire to explore the resources of one's milieu certainly represents a significant asset. This means more than just knowing the names of the agencies and organizations in the community; it means establishing close contact with them to collaborate in training and supporting adults in their educational plans (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 55).*

3.04 The pooling of information on social issues would intensify the desire to establish collaboration.

- *The agencies and organizations made similar comments. Their representatives also said they would like to share views about common problems, in the hope of finding solutions. This desire can certainly be related to the needs of the centres (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 35).*

3.05 Proactivity would require the constant creation and consolidation of links with the community, including the identification of complementary strengths between organizations.

- *It seems significant to us that the culture of the centre favours links with the community... Visits to the centres as well as extensive discussions, talks and reflections throughout the process appear to have triggered a shift in that direction. This work requires more than a few months... (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 36-37).*

- *It is important to build a network of contacts on the basis of complementarity with another structure, another organization. In joining forces, we believe we will be better able to meet the needs of adult learners (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 42).*

3.06 The establishment of a network of volunteers seems to be essential. As soon as it is set up, it would be important to establish mechanisms to continually maintain and rebuild it in order to protect the social fabric and ensure an active watch over lifelong learning.

- *In the past, the school board had a network of volunteer adult education representatives... These individuals were well known in their communities and were effective front-line representatives for the school board... Often these volunteer representatives were popular education teachers who allowed the school board to publish their contact information, thus facilitating a local telephone call to a person with whom the potential client felt at ease. Over time, these volunteers became very knowledgeable about services available to the community. Telephone contact was frequent between the volunteers and adult education staff... the population and its social constructs have changed considerably since the era of the volunteer representative network. There does not appear to be the same willingness on the part of community volunteers to engage with the school board at present, and it seems that it will take several years to regain the confidence of the population and rebuild a network (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 20).*

3.07 Taking into account the expertise of the various practitioners who are working within the community seems to be necessary to intervene effectively in the spirit of proactivity.

- *The practitioners working with poorer people, in fact, have experience in various fields (health, family, school) and it is this experience that provided the starting point for their work on the identification and development of potential actions. The dialogue was facilitated by the fact that many of these individuals are members of associations and they are therefore used to discussing these themes (SB XZY, 2005, p. 30).*

3.08 Trying to promote the culture and values of collaboration within the community seems to be part of the social role of SARCA.

- *Partnership culture and values need to be promoted (SB YZX, 2005, p. 7).*

3.09 In order to become proactively engaged, it often seems to be necessary to establish formal collaboration to ensure greater consistency in the services provided for adults.

- *One of the objectives that we are pursuing with this research is to increase the consistency of the supply of services and the intervention of SARCA with the adult population in the territory... through collaboration and the expansion of partnerships with community organizations and organizations working in the field of employability development. Inevitably, we will have to negotiate partnership agreements with the... target organizations, since we are asking them to open their doors, to welcome us and to collaborate on the organization of group meetings. The title of our project "Sortir du cadre" ["Out of the box"] means that our intention is to establish various types of partnerships with the target organizations and that this desire is key to our action research (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 20).*

3.10 Trying to work with a wide variety of collaborators would increase the chances of success in the objectives pursued in proactivity.

- *This was indisputably a challenge, because... of the large number and diversity of the partners involved... (SB XZY, 2005, p. 14).*

3.11 It would be desirable for SARCA to be able to better convince the actors in the community to share their power and work together with practitioners belonging to various organizations.

- *It is important to create a committee made up of key people from the different groups. By key people, we mean individuals who have decision-making power, [who are] part of the project, and who agree to share this power with all the individuals involved... for the improvement of the situation (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 47).*

3.12 To be able to work directly with businesses, SARCA could try to meet the challenge of obtaining their collaboration in order to propose activities to them whose efforts would be beneficial both to themselves and to the adults associated with them.

- *Through this partnership, we wanted to make the target businesses conscious of how appropriate educational services can support them by filling their cyclical labour shortages... occasional SARCA activities in these businesses... would lead to the development, in these businesses, of reception activities through which we would establish links with those people, so that they would participate in activities to explore educational plans and so we could agree on counselling and support processes for their future actions. The challenge was to obtain the*

collaboration of businesses in order to intervene directly in their milieu (SB XZY, 2005, p. 12).

3.13 Getting committed collaboration from people in the community would ensure a multiplication of the contacts and ideas necessary to effective practice in proactivity.

- *From discovery to discovery, the number of contacts increased and ideas were generated for possible projects with certain organizations (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 21).*

3.14 This would be a principle to adopt for SARCA: any collaboration is delicate. It does not depend solely on the actors in place, but also on limiting factors and sometimes demobilizing, contextual factors such as ministry budget cuts.

- *In 1985, a regional reception and referral service was created for the entire greater region of... This service is the result of a partnership of organizations in the fields of education, employability and community action... In 1989, substantial budget cuts aggravated the lack of cohesiveness among practitioners resulting in poor local services. From 1990 to 1996, the SAR went through an interesting period. The restructuring of services with new employees and a new location bringing together several organizations working in employability and grass-roots education favoured an increase in referrals from year to year. In 1996, close to 2700 clients obtained SAR services from... However, this situation did not prevent the cessation of activities in 1997... the administrators... at the same time ended a partnership that had lasted twelve years (SB YZX, 2005, p. 3-4).*

3.15 The presence or creation of relationships of trust between practitioners belonging to various organizations would help create better collaboration.

- *We already knew each other and we started from relationships of trust (SB XZY, 2005, p. 8).*
- *Within a few weeks, it was barely possible to hope to obtain convincing results in the establishment of lasting partnerships (SB XZY, 2005, p. 14).*
- *We could then develop a relationship of trust with them, as well as various activities to analyze their situation, explore possible educational plans and offer counselling and support in the process if they decide to return to training (SB XZY, 2005, p. 10).*

- *We knew at least one person in every organization, which enabled us... to establish a relationship of trust (SB YZX, 2005, p. 20).*

3.16 The technique of transparency and partnership would be a winning strategy to establish collaboration.

- *In order to make potential partners adequately aware and to facilitate the interview process, an introductory document describing our project and its approach was forwarded. Therefore, this approach was another way to prepare properly while still maintaining a transparent, cooperative attitude towards those organizations. They therefore knew what to expect yet did not know the questions, which preserved the spontaneous quality of the research replies (SB YZX, 2005, p. 23).*

3.17 In order to avoid the risk of being perceived as a threat by possible collaborators, SARCA could specify, from the first meetings, their own expectations in terms of proactivity.

- *We arrived from the school board, and that fact, we knew, scared certain organizations. We felt we were perceived by some... as a threat that could... take away their clients... It was therefore necessary... to regularly mention to them that we were talking about a reception service for training as part of SARCA. That had the effect of reassuring people and permitting us to continue our process (SB YZX, 2005, p. 25).*

3.18 The technique of using a meticulously pre-established template for first contact with a social actor would lead to healthy collaboration.

- *In preparation for possible meetings, it was necessary to eliminate suspicion and resistance in order to get an appointment. To do this, a telephone call template was created so the same information was given to the different organizations in a community where they knew each other well... Following calls, it was possible to obtain interviews with each of the organizations, and even in certain cases, to meet a leader, a practitioner and a support employee... (SB YZX, 2005, p. 22).*

3.19 It would be very important to plan the order, type and content of the meetings with the different actors in the community.

- *All territories are not equally promising... organizations that are connected to training and employability development are given priority without, however, neglecting to knock on the doors of community organizations where the mission seems to us to be more remote from those concerns (SB ZYX, November 2005, heading "By way of conclusion").*
- *First of all, we had decided that the first meetings would be done with the potential partners with whom a certain relationship of trust had been established following common projects carried out over the years... Second, it seemed essential to meet them on their own ground where the different actors would feel less threatened and therefore free to answer questions. In addition, since they were in their workplaces, it would be easier for us to meet several individuals from their work team... Third, we met with those who, in our view, would present the greatest resistance and who would be significantly suspicious toward the research given the whole history... [of the region]... Fourth, given the scope of the project and meetings, it was decided to recruit a person who would help us throughout the process... Fifth, it was important to meet the maximum number of actors (administration, practitioners, support staff) in order to gather information on: their reception, their strengths and weaknesses, their vision of a partnership for a possible reception service for training in the school board. Finally, we wanted, as part of the same process, to compare the vision of managers and their employees on their own reception service (SB YZX, 2005, p. 24).*

3.20 Concerning each of the meetings with the partners, it would be very important to plan a meticulous preparation involving various points of view.

- *A specific procedure was established for the presentation. We reminded each actor of the objective of the action research. We presented the basic issues in our milieu for which the action research seemed to be able to contribute solutions. We resituated the impacts of our action research at the local and provincial levels. We mentioned to them once again the main stages in the action research. We mentioned to them once again the great importance of their involvement in the research up until now. In fact, their collaboration had permitted us to meet them in interviews, and each of the organizations was nice enough to refer us candidates for the discussion groups. We mentioned to them the wide variety of clientele clients who came to our meetings (SB YZX, 2005, p. 35).*

3.21 Collaboration would really only be possible with a jointly defined action plan.

- *A clear, well-defined action plan known to all the actors for all referred clients does not exist (SB YZX, 2005, p. 1).*

3.22 Various elements would need to be planned with the possible collaborators. An operational collaboration protocol would be developed that includes referral mechanisms, the identification of target partners, and the creation of contact with new sectors.

- *A research protocol was established with partners whom we are currently developing actions with... Through this protocol, we are hoping to establish referral mechanisms for clientele in "educational" difficulty through our partners, identify the services that we will be able to offer, as well as the follow-up to be carried out with the people referred... We believed that the target partners were best able to support the action research in our milieu, measure its effects in the short term and evaluate the possible medium-term effects... We had to establish contacts with LECs that we are currently working with and that have small municipalities under their responsibility XZY, 2005, p. 10).*

3.23 In proactivity, the creation of a working or advisory committee would be essential to the establishment of collaboration.

- *In order to put reception activities into place, it is important to ensure that a working committee has been previously created with the different partners in order to develop a reception structure in partnership... [it is necessary to] provide for the establishment of an advisory committee following and not before the discussion group stage (SB YZX, 2005, p. 38).*
- *Establishing a working committee. The objectives are to: develop a reception process and tools in partnership, take into account the needs of the clients, consolidate the concerted action between the different organizations, validate the professional competencies required by practitioners in reception within the action research framework, confirm if the reception component in a partnership perspective is viable within the territory of the school board... (SB YZX, 2005, Appendix 11).*
- *The objectives of the implementation of an advisory committee that brings together the interested partners... The objectives of this committee are to: specify the expectations and the reservations of every party, explain the modes of functioning, capacities and limitations of every structure, define the objectives and the means of collaboration, establish the procedures to make their*

implementation possible, define and develop a reception structure as well as a common core of information, develop opportunities for the exchange of information, facilitate the implementation of adapted means of intervention (SB YZX, 2005, Appendix 11).

3.24 To ensure greater collaboration with SARCA, the follow-up committee could be made up of various actors in the community.

- *To form the follow-up committee, people were chosen among various groups of actors, namely leaders of community groups and employees of government institutions... This follow-up committee... helped to identify the various issues related to the communities concerned with respect to the mandate of the school board, and also to take part in the research on avenues for action (SB XZY, 2005, p. 32).*

3.25 SARCA could try to bring together practitioners from various local organizations. This coming together would make it possible to offer services that are better adapted to the adults throughout the numerous transfer and follow-up processes.

- *By making prior contact with the various community resources, it would be possible to obtain the names of contact people and thus avoid the never-ending telephone transfers that very often discourage even the most tenacious adults. The partners recruited will be able to agree with the centre on the most appropriate measures for referring an adult (e.g. provide the right information, fill out a form, perform a follow-up, etc.) and on procedures that will provide adults with the help they need to continue their training. (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 4).*

3.26 The technique of a confidentiality protocol related to the client files would contribute to bringing together partners; this technique would increase their trust and reduce their resistance or suspicion.

- *Following agreement from the organizations to participate in the action research, it was then necessary to go on to develop a confidentiality protocol. It should be noted that this document, as short as it is, will help establish a relationship of trust, especially with practitioners and support staff. In fact, this approach has contributed to making them more at ease following their signature of the confidentiality agreement. We believe that this way of doing things with people probably made a more open dialogue possible, since they were not afraid to express themselves (SB YZX, 2005, p. 23).*

3.27 The most effective collaboration would be through the creation of an inventory of resource persons working in the community.

- *It is necessary to set up a living inventory of resources and services available in the... adult education centres in rural communities... This means exploring the milieu and identifying the services already there, while putting in place a guidance system method that meets the needs of the adults and ensures the elimination of as many obstacles as possible. It is more than a list of resources; it means establishing contacts with resource persons working in agencies, organizations, etc., and exploring with them the contributions that each of them can make to provide the support required to the adults in their training process. Whether at the beginning or at the end of their training paths, adults have various needs that can be met if we share resources (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 4).*

3.28 The more collaboration progresses in the community, the more it would become important to create an interactive site to show the advancement of community activities on a continual basis, to send out new invitations, and thus to stimulate an intensified collaborative movement.

- The valuable help given by the programmer-analysts enabled us to create our resource bank, which will be available on the school board's Web site in the near future. (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 22).

Principles of action

The experiential knowledge mentioned above reveals, either directly or subtly, certain rules that SARCA could borrow with respect to this component of proactivity: collaboration with the community.

In order to cooperate with the community, SARCA could, among other things:

- 3.01 become aware that we cannot talk about proactivity without collaboration
- 3.02 provide community actors with data likely to give them a better sense of the need to work together
- 3.03 become motivated to explore community resources, and above all, establish close contact between actors
- 3.04 propose the sharing of problems to intensify the desire to establish collaboration
- 3.05 work to determine the complementary strengths between organizations

- 3.06 count on a network of volunteers, and above all, continually maintain and rebuild this network to protect the social fabric and ensure an active watch over lifelong learning
- 3.07 take into account the experience of practitioners who are already working within the community
- 3.08 promote the culture and values of collaboration
- 3.09 recognize the need to establish formal collaboration to ensure greater consistency in services for adults
- 3.10 work with a wide variety of collaborators
- 3.11 convince key people in the community to share their power and work in collaboration with practitioners from various organizations
- 3.12 meet the challenge of obtaining the collaboration of businesses and propose activities to them whose efforts would be beneficial both to themselves and to the adults associated with them
- 3.13 maintain and intensify collaboration in order to ensure a certain multiplication of contacts and ideas
- 3.14 be conscious that any collaboration is delicate, since it not only depends on the actors, but also on the limiting factors and sometimes demobilizing, contextual factors such as ministry budget cuts
- 3.15 rely on the relationships of trust that exist between the practitioners of various organizations
- 3.16 use the winning strategy of a transparent, cooperative attitude
- 3.17 specify their own expectations before meeting with potential collaborators, thus avoiding being perceived as a threat
- 3.18 prepare in detail using a meeting template when first meeting with a possible partner
- 3.19 plan an agenda (type and content) for meetings with the different voluntary actors
- 3.20 prepare carefully for each of the meetings planned with collaborators, neglecting no predictable aspect and setting objectives for contribution
- 3.21 define an action plan with the collaborators;

- 3.22 establish an operational collaboration protocol including, among other things, referral mechanisms, the identification of target partners and the establishment of contacts with new sectors
- 3.23 proceed with setting up a working committee before establishing an advisory committee, even though both of these committees are essential to the establishment of effective collaboration
- 3.24 elicit the support, as members of a follow-up committee, of various actors in the community
- 3.25 bring together practitioners from various organizations to offer services that are better adapted to the adults throughout their transfer and follow-up processes
- 3.26 establish a confidentiality protocol for the files of adults who do not have secondary school diplomas; this intervention will contribute to bringing partners together, increasing their confidence, and reducing their resistance or suspicion
- 3.27 create a directory of resource persons working in the various organizations in the community
- 3.28 create an interactive site to review the activities carried out in the community on a continual basis, send out new invitations, and thus intensify collaboration.



Chapter 4



The Characteristics of Social Groups

Description

The MEQ has stressed the importance of being concerned with the specific characteristics of the social groups in the community. "The population targeted by RRCSS is one that requires basic education, but particular attention must be granted to specific groups. RRCS services must be adapted to these target groups" (2004a, p. 20). This in particular is why The Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training identifies different groups that should receive particular attention... These groups are:

- generally, those who do not have basic education, i.e. all Quebeckers without a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) or Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS), regardless of their age or employment status (working or not working), but especially those under the age of 30 and particularly between 16 and 24, and those who are illiterate
- immigrants
- aboriginals
- handicapped people
- workers 45 years old and above
- employees in small businesses, self-employed workers and those who carry out unusual duties" (MEQ, 2004a, p. 19-20).

The potential candidates for SARCA are not a homogeneous group. Every social group is distinctive and each faces particular barriers.¹ Paying special attention to the characteristics of social groups essentially means respecting differences. "Identity building and community

¹ According to Lavoie, Lévesque, Aubin-Horth, Roy and Roy (2004) [quotations are free translations], there are four categories of barriers to the participation of adults with little education in training activities as part of formal and informal education. 1. There are institutional barriers. These include "the socio-economic, financial and political conditions that affect the decisions of individuals with regard to participation in training." This category "also includes all the aspects affecting supply of training, that is, the content and practices of adult education, schedules, the training and ethics of staff, the locations of institutions and the environment." 2. There are dispositional or psychosocial barriers. These include "the values and attitudes of individuals toward education and the acquisition of knowledge in general. These careers are related to attitudes and perceptions of the self (as a learner)." These barriers also include "the social context that constructs the perceptions, beliefs and values of individuals with regard to education... [they can be called] psychosocial barriers." 3. There are informational barriers. They are "related to essential information." It is necessary to recognize "the importance of the information received on the educational resources and training opportunities [p. 6] [such as] the messages, the content and the different training sites where it is possible to take courses, the means that are offered to adults and the image that information projects toward people with little education." 4. There are situational barriers. This category "refers to contextual elements that affect individuals in their daily lives, in their immediate physical and social environment... situational barriers are related to economic, cultural and family structure... Lack of time and lack of money are the reasons most frequently mentioned to justify non-participation in training activities" (abridged, p. 5-6).

affirmation were also prominent themes in the prevention of workers' problems" (Miller and Shinn, 2005, p. 176). SARCA should therefore consider personalizing the presentation of their services to various social groups.

Various methods are aimed at identifying the specific characteristics of social groups. For example, there is the "geographic information systems (GIS)" method (Luke, 2005, p. 191). This method "is a set of database, mapping, and statistical tools that allow for the visual and quantitative assessment of geographic information (geographic in the broad sense, meaning any type of information that has a physical location)" (2005, p. 191). This means there is an "analytic method that can be used to capture community context" (2005, p.186). SARCA should be well informed of the realities of the community. To substantiate them, they should include supporting statistics in their files, for example, statistics cross-tabulated with those of their partners. This preparation would make it possible to avoid having certain actors in the community disputing data on, for example, the levels of education attained in their own community.

Similarly, it can be observed that, with an analytical method using the geographical information in the system, certain potential candidates for SARCA would be relatively disinclined to take the initiative of using existing resources. In fact, according to Guay, "many are suspicious of the assistance that could come from the extended social network or from informal systems of aid in the community, or are still not very familiar with it. The general observation is the following: the assistance available is largely underused" (Guay, 2001, p. 257¹). SARCA would therefore have a prominent social role to play in order to reach, according to their characteristics, the groups in the community who need more support to express their demand and gradually acquire a culture of lifelong learning.

Experiential knowledge

We will now analyze how the practitioners involved in the action research projects presented their approaches. This presentation would make it possible to better identify their experiential knowledge with respect to this component of proactivity: the specific characteristics of social groups.

4.01 To fully commit to proactivity, SARCA would try to reach a very wide diversity of social groups.

- *Through proactivity, we can expand and prepare contacts to people, organizations and associations that can reach the target populations* (SB XZY, 2005, p. 59).

¹ (Free translation)

4.02 Before planning community action, SARCA could take an inventory of the history of the training processes of the target groups.

- *We did not suspect that more than half of the participants (55%) had already undertaken a process for the purpose of discussing training with the resources of various organizations and institutions such as: adult education centres, vocational training centres, local employment centres, organizations working in the field of employability development, the university... This information led us to believe that the organizations we collaborated with for the project had clientele who had already received some form of reception service when seeking information on a possible return to studies (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 34).*

4.03 To reach the target groups, the implementation of certain measures to ensure the protection of their anonymity would be required. These measures would enable them to avoid any embarrassment if they are seeking out a service, or else, if they have to recognize, in particular with SARCA practitioners, their need to upgrade their competencies.

- *Part of the challenge of reaching the target clientele may revolve around issues of embarrassment or shame at the need to upgrade their training or skills. One interviewee suggested that potential clients need to be able to procure information anonymously without risk of being ridiculed or teased by peers about seeking educational support services (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 29).*

4.04 There should be particular attention accorded to those who have been excluded from education.

- *There is a need to improve the SARCA action plan through the inclusion of a prevention of educational and social exclusion component... while promoting collaboration between the actors in the education sector and the potential partners (SB XZY, 2005, p. 60).*
- *Perhaps because of historical difficulty with access to training, education beyond the elementary level does not tend to be valorized within the community (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 17).*
- *It is important and urgent to implement concrete actions in the area of educational and social exclusion (SB XZY, 2005, p. 61).*

4.05 The practitioners concerned with proactivity could anticipate the needs of potential clients, include people who are economically inactive, have little education, are looking for a job or are in danger of losing one.

- *This proactivity in SARCA could make it possible to anticipate the needs of people who are inactive, have little education, are looking for a job or are in danger of losing one by relying on partners established in the community or by using community activities to bring us closer to the people who have needs (SB XZY, 2005, p. 8).*

4.06 The 18-to-30-year-olds were difficult to reach. For SARCA, this is a significant challenge.

- *Our research data indicates that potential clientele aged 18–30 are a very difficult population to reach (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 29).*

4.07 Another challenge is trying to reach target groups who are distinguished by specific issues, for example, immigrants and heads of family.

- *Our action research focuses on... people who belong to the populations targeted by the policy, and one group of people whose problems are very present in the territory of the SB... These are: immigrants, people under 30 without qualifications, people over 45 and single heads of families (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 10)*

4.08 The social groups who have identified educational deficiencies seem to implicitly require the implementation of specific measures for contact to be successful.

- *In spite of the fact that the adult education centre... has a service point in..., it is still difficult to convince the people who have educational needs to do something to remedy their educational deficiencies. It was therefore necessary to go where the needs have been made obvious in these statistics and offer the services expected by this disadvantaged population (SB XZY, 2005, p. 8).*

4.09 SARCA should remember that the social groups dealing with geographic constraints have very special needs to be met before they consider adopting a culture of lifelong learning.

- *Secondary students... spend an average of 4 hours per day in a school bus to attend the... regional high school. Adult students who wish to complete their secondary studies at the nearest adult education centre and who lack alternative transportation may spend close to five hours per day on a school bus. The dropout rate... is extremely high and very few local families can afford the tuition fees at the private high school located within the community. There is no public transportation... which further limits access to all educational services (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 17).*

4.10 It would be up to SARCA to take into account any population segment that is isolated and has difficulty making its voice heard.

- *The organization representatives also regretted the fact that the...[x] community was not used to asking for help. It is isolated, they stated. When the centres do not participate on the regional tables, the concerns of the... [x] community are not heard (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 32-33).*

4.11 Creating false hopes among isolated adults would not only be ineffective, it would also create feelings of disappointment which would have unpredictable harmful effects.

- *The first challenge is to make contact with these [isolated] people. These individuals are often not even conscious of the seriousness of their own situations and in addition, they are isolated. Even though we are not able to reach them, can you imagine the impact and the negative effects once there was the hope of a kind of solution, once hope has been created... many participants strongly emphasize the need to come up with concrete proposals that would be maintained... (SB XZY, 2005, p. 32).*

4.12 The main motivations and problems in registering for training activities should be expressed using the adults' own words. Sometimes it is surprising to see the similarities between different target groups in the way they express their motivations and obstacles.

- *[For example], immigrants who belong to our discussion sub-groups perceive training rather negatively (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 44).*
- *Many of the comments made by participants are shared by all groups and are related to the three following themes: the importance of training (positive factor),*

the factors that can hinder the return to training (negative), and the steps taken related to training (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 37).

4.13 SARCA could better take into account the opinions of practitioners in the community to distinguish people taking advantage of the system from adults who really want to improve their situations.

- *Proactivity [should be] a tool to be promoted in regions with low population density... [where] the people most in need are often those who are the most isolated. Even community services are difficult to access, and since there is no public transportation, these people shut themselves off in their isolation and tend more and more to cut their social and community ties (SB XZY, 2005, p. 63).*
- *The perception of certain practitioners should also be taken into account and adjusted in order to respond appropriately to the needs and motivations of people coming for consultation. "There're people who want to change their lives and others who like to take advantage of the system, you can see it in their faces" (SB XZY, 2005, p. 42).*

4.14 In some cases, it would be preferable to give priority to adults who are ready to receive assistance.

- *When we were not well received in certain places, we lost our enthusiasm... We decided to concentrate on those who were clearly open (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 22).*

Principles of action

The experiential knowledge previously highlighted seems to indicate, either tacitly or explicitly, certain principles of action that make it possible to better take into account this component of proactivity: concern for specific characteristics of social groups.

In order to properly take into account the specific characteristics of social groups, SARCA could, among other things:

- 4.01 try to make contact with a very wide diversity of these groups
- 4.02 take inventory of the history of the training processes of the target groups
- 4.03 ensure the protection of anonymity of those target groups to protect them from any embarrassment due to the fact that they are seeking out services
- 4.04 concern themselves with those excluded from education

- 4.05 anticipate the needs of the pool of potential candidates, including people who are economically inactive, have little education, are looking for employment or are in danger of losing their job
- 4.06 reach 18-to-30-year-olds
- 4.07 reach target groups who are distinguished by specific issues, such as immigrants and single heads of families
- 4.08 go directly to groups who have educational deficiencies
- 4.09 concern themselves with groups who face geographic constraints
- 4.10 take into account any isolated segment of the population that is having difficulty being heard
- 4.11 avoid creating false hopes, particularly among groups of isolated adults
- 4.12 take into account the fact that different target groups sometimes express their motivations and problems in similar ways
- 4.13 distinguish those who just want to take advantage of the system from those who really want to improve their lives
- 4.14 give priority, in some cases, to the adults who are ready to receive assistance.



Chapter 5



The Changing Organizational Culture

Description

There seems to be another indispensable requirement for the practice of proactivity with respect to SARCA. This requirement is related to a change in organizational culture, in particular with respect to actions in the community. In fact, according to the MEQ, "education and training assumes strategic importance not only at work but also in community and personal life; SARCA must be open to all these dimensions by offering a structured intervention that responds to the variety of adult interests and promotes involvement in society" (2004a, p. 16). More flexibility is required so that the structures of SARCA can adapt to the changes required by the proactive approach.

This change of organizational culture is in a way inherent to the integration of proactivity into SARCA. The proactive approach, which requires greater openness to the community, leads to changes in the intervention paradigms, i.e. thinking above all about the expression of demand of adults and a lot less about the existing structure or programs.

The new organizational culture of SARCA would require, as well, constant adjustments to the services provided, according to the constantly fluctuating needs of the pool of potential candidates. The proactive approach "provokes researchers, educators, and community activists to think more deeply about how diversity-related dynamics affect their work" (Bond and Harrell, 2006, p. 158). If they applied the proactivity approach, SARCA could no longer be seen from the same perspective. The practitioners "will have no other choice but to better adapt their services to the needs of the community and local characteristics" (Guay, 2001, p. 276¹). This, among other things, is why a change in organizational culture can sometimes prove unavoidable. Because "community activities needed to be examined and negotiated with multiple system stakeholders" (Foster-Fishman, 2007b, p. 193). Moreover, the values of the proactive approach consist of "bringing the services closer to the citizens, and filling the gap between services and local communities" (Guay, 2001, p. 276¹); similarly, the key to the proactive approach is "targeting the community, but from a perspective of services" (2001, p. 276¹).

The key elements of the change of organizational culture include the obligation to better follow the examples of certain actors in the community. For example, according to Miller and Shinn, it is necessary to learn from other practitioners in the community, and "although elements and principles that are reflected in well-regarded theories of behavior change were evident, cultural symbols as a route to personal and community transformation emerged as key theoretical mechanisms for change" (2005, p.176). This learning from other practitioners in the community would have certain advantages, including being able to enhance social involvement. In addition, "having close links with the community seems to stimulate the staff positively..." [for example] "when a lot of activities are organized in the community, the staff talks more enthusiastically

¹ (Free translation)

about their work. They demonstrate a stronger desire to take initiative, be creative and to innovate¹." (Bélanger and Voyer, 2004, p. 76). Thus by improving the quality of life in the community, practitioners learn within this community itself (Miller and Shinn, 2005). In fact, according to these authors, "studying policies, programs, and practices that are already in place and how to make them better may have more promise for promoting well-being in the population as a whole than disseminating carefully researched boutique programs" (2005, p.181). These are all impacts that should persuade SARCA to invest even more into a change in organizational culture.

Moreover, in the very beginning of the implementation of the proactivity function, SARCA should be prepared to receive many unusual requests. This is another reality that would impose a change in organizational culture, since the practitioners could, in fact, receive all sorts of disparate requests. And this is precisely what their managers should realize. The proactive approach "led, at the beginning, to an increase in informal requests... this increase, which happened at the first stage, is normally followed by a levelling-off, and finally a decrease" (Guay, 2001, p. 286¹). In fact, "when practitioners become more visible and accessible in the community, people tend to contact them on an informal basis, and often for types of problems that do not correspond to the specific, specialized services offered in the public services... One of the consequences of the proactive approach is therefore a decrease in specialization in favour of versatility" (Guay, 2001, p. 283¹). SARCA should try to immediately meet the periodic needs of collaborators in order to better show their usefulness to the community. They would thus demonstrate their change of organizational culture. Moreover, it is important to never underestimate the nature of a request for SARCA, or to underestimate the person formulating the request.

Another element in the change of organizational culture brought about by the practice of proactivity would perhaps concern the use of programs existing in the community rather than the creation of new ones (Miller and Shinn, 2005). In fact, "building upon our traditional skills and training, we can increase our emphasis on spanning the boundaries between the academic and community world by looking for opportunities to work with and study existing programs" (Miller and Shinn, 2005, p. 181). According to these authors, sometimes "introducing small innovations in existing practice based on powerful ideas has the potential to improve the lives of far more people than creating new programs" (2005, p. 177). A promising idea proposed by SARCA could favour more concerted action with community collaborators. Such an idea could be integrated into existing community programs. It would be implemented using various application processes making it possible for SARCA to play a proactive role while respecting the mission and specific values of the other associations or organizations in the community.

¹ (Free translation)

Experiential knowledge

The authors of the action research projects reveal various approaches. The explanations of these approaches would make it possible to identify certain types of experiential knowledge related to this component of proactivity: the changing organizational culture.

5.01 Thinking in terms of proactivity would require, in itself, a change of culture. This change could, among other things, require a more extensive exploration of community resources.

- *In our view, thinking in terms of referral means first of all going in a direction that engages all the actors [of SARCA], and sometimes that means a change of culture. It also means having a good knowledge of the needs of the adult learners. The desire to explore the resources of one's own milieu certainly represents a significant asset. (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 55).*

5.02 Thinking outside the box of one's own organization would be important. This movement could mean an even more intense involvement toward a change of culture marked among other things by more openness to new populations targeted by the ministerial policies.

- *Becoming proactive therefore means going outside the box and being open to new populations. In this regard, the targets are known and clearly defined by the Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training. (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 9).*

5.03 Proactivity is applied not from inside four walls, but truly from inside the field itself. This means inside the respective living environments of the adults, the community and industrial organizations.

- *It goes without saying that ... [to fulfill] our stated desire to increase visibility and the presence of reception, referral, counselling and support services in the community... and in particular with community and employability organizations, we had to go outside the walls of the Centre... in order to reach the adults in their respective living environments (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 23).*

5.04 SARCA practitioners could themselves initiate contacts with agencies and organizations. Intensifying these contacts would require, in itself, a change of culture.

- *We found it significant that it was the staff of the centres who made the contacts with the agencies and organizations, since it was their responsibility to set up a referral system with them and maintain the relationships (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 20).*

5.05 A change of culture would require developing more tools in collaboration with the community in order to have a common understanding of their use.

- *Following this experience, we think that discussions with the research committee could have made the development of another tool more appropriate to the reality of the centres possible. In addition, we believe that a tool developed by the group itself would have perhaps facilitated its implementation. Everyone would have had a common understanding of the use of the tool and of its purpose (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 14).*

5.06 SARCA would have the challenge of better defining themselves through the creation of links with businesses by attempting, for example, to draw lessons from previous disappointing experiences.

- *Corporate emphasis tends to be on the bottom line and on the productivity that stems from it, and administrators remain convinced of the benefits of SARCA services for their employees... [for example] a previous experience at attempting to implement a workplace literacy program in one of the few companies... failed, mainly due to the reluctance of management to engage in the effort (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 30).*

5.07 Organizational changes that could be anticipated are the following: the many elements of intervention, which would most often need to be applied simultaneously, would require much more time spent in the community rather than in the office.

- *Establishing relationships of trust, changing the image of adult education, making the first inroads and then disseminating the first examples of success... transforming the mentalities of practitioners, changing the image of adult education centres in the local media and in the local oral culture, introducing a variety of training services into these centres to make them normal, positive places of learning for the WHOLE local adult population... All of this can be initiated, but not carried out within twenty weeks... (SB XZY, 2005, p. 3).*

5.08 Among the new organizational mentalities to be developed, it would be good to see the representatives of the institutions and the municipalities among the best potential allies of SARCA in their proactive interventions, in particular with respect to the issue of poverty and its consequences for training.

- *With regard to representatives of institutions and the municipalities, we are speaking of people who are particularly concerned with and interested in the issue of poverty and its consequences, which makes more constructive, and no doubt easier, dialogue possible (SB XZY, 2005, p. 31).*

5.09 A change of culture for SARCA would even result in a certain change of culture among the actors in the community toward their greater openness to collaboration.

- *Our goal: the acceptance and creation of openness by the main actors in order to attain objectives... The success of this step was essential, because through it, we could gain access to the community (SB XZY, 2005, p. 25).*

5.10 Leadership in the area of development of a regional culture of collaboration could be the responsibility of SARCA, and in particular the services related to proactivity.

- *For tasks [in a context] of proactivity, it is necessary to put in place the necessary human, cultural, financial and material resources. One of the prerequisites is the development of a regional culture of partnership and collaboration (SB XZY, 2005, p. 63).*

Principles of action

The various kinds of experiential knowledge identified in the previous section would seem to call for, either directly or subtly, certain rules for a change in organizational culture, which could now be adopted by SARCA, who want to intensively engage in the practice of proactivity.

In order to engage in a change of organizational culture, SARCA could, among other things:

5.01 know that adopting a policy on proactivity inevitably means undergoing some kind of transformation (for example, more extensive exploration of outside resources)

5.02 be open to new populations targeted by ministerial policies

- 5.03 remember that proactivity is carried out not inside four walls, but truly in the field, in the respective living environments of the adults and of community organizations and businesses
- 5.04 establish contacts with agencies and organizations and be conscious that this initiative, in itself, brings about a change of culture;
- 5.05 create tools, not exclusively internally, but in collaboration with the community, in order to have a common understanding of their use
- 5.06 define themselves before acting together with businesses and trying to learn from disappointing experiences with outside partners
- 5.07 anticipate the many elements of intervention that would need to be applied simultaneously, which would require spending much more time in the community
- 5.08 perceive the representatives of institutions and the municipalities as their best potential allies in the planning of proactive interventions, above all with respect to poverty and its consequences for training
- 5.09 anticipate a possible ripple effect on the outside, in the sense that actors from the community might themselves become more inclined to work collaboratively
- 5.10 realize that leadership in the area of the development of a regional culture of collaboration should now be integral to the tasks related to proactivity.



Chapter 6



Community Animation

Description

Community animation is key to proactive processes. Finding the best approach to act within the community would be the key to success in the area of proactivity and in helping with the expression of demand. Moreover, it should be noted, "given the nature of their functions, SARCA make a significant contribution to the expression for the demand for learning. This increases when the services become more visible and active for people, organizations, associations, businesses and institutions. "The *Action Plan*¹ calls for the implementation of community work, which will contribute to this visibility" (2004a, p. 37). And therefore, "[the] leadership projects are based on existing local networks, since community and nonprofit organizations usually work with people in difficulty or the economically or culturally disadvantaged, and these are target populations of reception, referral, counselling and support services" (MELS, 2006, p. 28).

SARCA should keep informed about social movements on a constant basis in order to better support potential candidates, since they need to learn to intervene on the basis of actions carried out in the community (Miller and Shinn, 2005). SARCA should also be involved with acting as mentors of society to improve contact with individuals. In fact, effective interventions in the area of community animation should go well beyond the individual aspect and encompass the entire environment in which the individuals are developing (Luke, 2005; Tseng et al., 2002). SARCA should thus play a significant complementary role in what is sometimes called a support society, in which everyone has to interact. The individuals and organizations are constantly in flux, and these multiple movements have simultaneous repercussions on the various elements of society. Moreover, according to the MEQ, "The SARCA environment puts service providers in an ideal position to make contact with the *Policy's* target groups² and to encourage the expression of their demand for learning. SARCA help adults gain highly significant and relevant knowledge transferable to various life situations and conducive to increasing autonomy" (2004a, p. 37).

The community animation component is thus related to the idea that the proactive approach is much more centered on the community (community-centred practice) than on the potential candidates (client-centred practice): "instead of targeting individual users... [it] targets the local community... [it has objectives related] to the knowledge of social networks" (Guay, 2001, p. 275³). Among the community-centred practices, it is necessary, however, to make clear that the proactivity exercised by SARCA is part of the approach called the "locality development approach [which] is defined as community change initiated through broad participation of people in the community" (Julian et al., 2006, p. 141). This proactivity is therefore less related to "two

¹ The reference for this Action Plan (MEQ, 2002a) is included in the bibliography of this document.

² The Policy is a MEQ document (2002b) included in the bibliography of this document.

³ (Free translation)

other approaches... the social planning approach [which] places the most emphasis on professional expertise ... the social action model defines community practice in terms of the shifting of power from traditional actors to other social groups..." It should be noted that "these three dominant approaches [the social planning approach; the social action model; the locality development approach]... include roles for community practitioners" (Julian et al, 2006, p. 141). Therefore, the proactive approach is "an intervention model that is characterized by the substantial decentralization of services toward small local communities (or neighbourhoods). It would result in greater proximity between professional practitioners and citizens, and close collaboration with the informal systems of aid" (Guay, 2001, p. 268¹). SARCA should, however, establish a clearly defined procedure to direct adults to the agencies and organizations, and ensure that there is a follow-up procedure in place.

Similarly, special attention should be paid to small associations in the community. These "small volunteer neighbourhood associations represent the best that society has to offer, because they are the link that best expresses solidarity in the living environment of people, while at the same time, often acting as sources of social innovation" (Guay, 2001, p. 273¹). SARCA should avoid being perceived as intruders coming to upset things. Hence "the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in ongoing dialogic processes with community members" (Foster-Fishman, 2007b), p. 195). Similarly, SARCA need to avoid pointing the finger at the weaknesses of collaborators with respect to how they play their roles in ensuring an active watch over lifelong learning. Their strengths should instead be emphasized to show that, through joint efforts, weaknesses can be overcome.

It should be emphasized that the proactive approach requires the full support of the administration. Proactivity is part of the general responsibilities that "are assumed by all reception, referral, counselling and support services in accordance with the school board's mission" (MELS, 2006, p. 27). Certainly, according to this document, "[each] school board is responsible for choosing how it will carry out its responsibilities in accordance with its vision and situation" (MELS, 2006, p. 27). But it seems to be very desirable for actors in the education system, supported by their leaders, to officially choose community animation as an ideal means to support the expression of demand. In this context, they should expect the designated organizers to devote themselves to specific tasks. In fact, to succeed in community animation, "managers should support the practitioners who find themselves in the role of resource persons, helping helpers without trying to change how they do things" (Guay, 2001, p. 293¹).

Experiential knowledge

With respect to this crucial topic of community animation, let us look at how practitioners involved in the action research projects explain their approaches. These explanations would

¹ (Free translation)

make it possible to better identify their experiential knowledge that is related to this component of proactivity.

6.01 The proactive interventions could be directly based on the community animation method.

- *Action research also illustrates that, for this purpose [a proactivity project with SARCA], the community organizing method of this project... turns out to be entirely appropriate (SB XZY, 2005, p. 3).*

6.02 A community animation process would ultimately lead to the creation of a culture of continuing education and training.

- *A community animation process will lead to a greater familiarity with services, especially SARCA, increase the expression of demand, and ultimately contribute to the development of a culture of lifelong learning (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 18).*

6.03 The principles of community animation in SARCA would be aimed, among other things, at transforming the community by inviting people to become actors who have the power to act on themselves and on their community.

- *The aim should be to influence a community, to transform it by asking its people to become actors at every stage of the process... to understand what is happening in order to act better... to facilitate a change that comes from the community itself rather than from the outside (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 6).*

6.04 Community animation should imply the paramount need to call on a large number of collaborators or networks in the community.

- *Such an outreach effort would not be possible without contact with community organizations. Thus, several community organizations were contacted and solicited to facilitate their presence within the community. Links were either founded or re-established with... many groups and community service organizations, including a few from within the school board itself (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 24-25).*
- *One can infer... that networking is vital to the eventual accomplishment of our mission] (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 30).*

6.05 The community practitioners should have excellent interpersonal communication skills.

- *The community animators must be familiar with the milieu and have excellent interpersonal and communication skills, as well as group animation skills (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 24).*

6.06 The practitioners' skills would be critical throughout the process, in particular to the creation of a climate of trust, which is an essential part of community animation.

- *Following meetings, we observe that the discussion dimension turned out to be more important than we thought it would be at the beginning of the project. The facilitators of these meetings play a crucial role since the success of the intervention depends on them. Their facilitation should induce the participants to express themselves freely without feeling judged and give each one an opportunity to state their opinion, while remaining open to self-expression and listening to opinions that differ from their own... This climate of trust is the foundation for the success of the intervention (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 31).*

6.07 The establishment of social conditions (e.g. incentives) that facilitate personal development would be paramount.

- *It is necessary, among other things, to think of the development of actions aimed at encouraging and supporting people in the development of their autonomy and skills... encouraging them to take action through direct and indirect strategies (SB XZY, 2005, p. 47).*

6.08 Various actions aimed at social development would be indispensable to community animation. They would make it possible to engage effectively and intensely.

- *It is necessary to recommend actions for the purpose of making the regional political actors aware so that issues are recognized and taken in hand with the objective of social development using political channels (SB XZY, 2005, p. 47).*

6.09 Community animation would require not only proposals for action, but above all, operational procedures to implement them.

- *Certain agencies and organizations have mentioned to centre staff the procedures to follow to refer people to them, but no specific method was clearly established (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 45).*

6.10 The exploration and preparation of the terrain, for example, the creation of links with key people in the community, would be essential prerequisite stages.

- *Since contacts were quite limited or non-existent in certain places, we preferred to emphasize the exploration of the community and the creation of links with the agencies and organizations... (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 19).*
- *To date we have not had the opportunity to develop a structured referral system, but we have prepared fertile ground that gives us hope for a very promising future (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 55).*

6.11 Community animation would require solid knowledge of the main actors in the territory.

- *The first requirement is to ...identify the organizations that offer services for our territory... [and] identify the educational resources intended for the adult population in the region (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 4).*

6.12 It would be important to regularly set aside time for reflection, to review the actions taken and the adjustments that need to be planned.

- *Throughout the process, we provide time for reflection that will make it possible to review the actions taken, the discoveries and the adjustments that need to be made to the process. These reflections could take place with members of the research committee, the director of adult education and vocational training services of the school board, the director of the centres and key people in the centres (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 10).*

6.13 For more effective community animation, the reflection sessions with internal and external bodies could be held on a monthly basis.

- *In retrospect, we believe that regular meetings (once a month) would have encouraged the exchange of ideas and stimulated the centre staff (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 12).*

6.14 It would be desirable to have action guides that would most often be developed from the data collected in interviews.

- *The interviews with practitioners and candidates make it possible to give a channel to each person while providing for details and a sharing of experience that answers to a questionnaire may not bring out. This collection of data*

appears, to us, to be very important to targeting the contacts and processes to be carried out in the community. The information collected... enabled us to guide our actions and support our reflections in the exchanges with resource persons from the community (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 48).

6.15 Only sustained community animation work would make it possible to raise awareness in the community of the nature and availability of the services provided by SARCA.

- *There has been... a rich history of community engagement ... Some of the communities... have had literacy or employability projects delivered locally in the past two to three years. However, services and course delivery have not been continuous and therefore have not provided the sustained level of community presence needed to build solid community partnerships. Experience over the decades has shown that it takes three to five years of sustained effort to build a widespread awareness of available adult educational services (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 19-20).*

6.16 It would be important to base ourselves, among other things, on the rich history of actions already carried out, while integrating a specific new complementary dimension.

- *One of the most recent accomplishments... [of association x] was the publication of a community resource guide and the establishment of community resource centres... Literacy in Action (the reading council) was also initiated through community organizing efforts by the school board several decades ago... A laudable partnership has been developed in the east end of the school board... between Emploi-Québec (EQ) and the adult education centre... The EQ regional office contracts with the school board to provide front-line career and educational planning services as well as employability support for job seekers; this service exemplifies many of the key elements of SARCA and should serve as a model to be emulated in the context of the government's lifelong learning policy. Unfortunately, EQ seems to be systematically reducing funding each year despite the fact that [program X]... renders service to over three hundred... clients per year (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 20-21).*

6.17 The identification of a network of motivated individuals to promote a sense of community and to develop its economic health would appear to be essential to the practice of community animation.

- *The establishment of a solid foundation [is necessary] for a sustainable network of SARCA and adult and vocational education advocates... In addition to identifying and seeking moral leaders, individuals were identified as being willing*

to participate in a sustainable network of community-minded individuals interested in improving the educational, and ultimately, the economic health of the community in which they reside. These individuals were invited and agreed to become part of an informal network to exchange relevant information. Adult and vocational education centres would provide information on developing and existing services while community leaders could provide direct input about their respective communities and on the educational needs of the target clientele (SB YXZ, 2005, p.19).

6.18 It would be essential to go ahead with the creation of tables aimed at creating joint action based on the interventions initiated by the various organizations in the community.

- *We need to create an interinstitutional round table... This table would enable practitioners in the different educational institutions that offer reception and referral services to discuss and exchange information on their practices in order to better serve the adults (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 6).*

6.19 It would be desirable to organize activities, for example, during social events, and to identify allies or supporters there.

- *Decide upon an approach to community animation... The outreach format adopted began with its presence at multi-day community events during the summer months followed by extensive meetings with community and service organizations and interviews with community leaders who were considered to be good candidates for the network of "friends." These individuals were identified strictly through a networking approach of referrals from community members (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 23).*

6.20 A certain reality that is both fundamental and concrete should be noted: short-term results are inconceivable, since community animation would require, by definition, a lot of time to really be productive.

- *The project findings clearly suggest that it takes time and commitment to establish a community presence and build awareness among community leaders and potential clients of educational services. The community animation approach has been very well received and seems to be successful (SB YXZ, 2005, p. 33).*

6.21 To anticipate social needs, proactive watch could be expressed through various initiatives in the area of community animation.

- *We are thinking, for example, of "identifying all the potential partners and going to look for them... creating a political action committee... decentralizing the services [or] setting up proximity services... identifying key people at the municipal level in order to organize and mobilize the MRC... setting up annual meetings... identifying common projects for each organization in order to create partnerships and innovating through shared actions... naming a representative for each city and municipality... reaching the people concerned with getting established: Their geographical location – Where are they in their lives? – What services are they looking for? (SB XZY, 2005, p. 47).*
- *In addition, we could think of improving the action plan in SARCA by including an aspect on the prevention of educational and social exclusion... the creation of favourable conditions and support for research in this area... a tool to be promoted in regions with low population density (SB XZY, 2005, p. 59).*

6.22 Community action seems to be fragile in many respects. The end of certain community actions would indicate a considerable weakness in the area of proactivity. It would imply an immediate negative effect: only internal clients are thus taken charge of.

- *Dismantling... The managers of the institutions resulting from joint action are no longer finding it beneficial. The professionals who were working in this regional service are then reassigned to their original institutions. It was the end of the... pooling of reception and referral services... [certain institutions, however,] maintain a partnership agreement in reception and referral... [for example] the partnership agreement with Emploi-Québec is still in effect (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 7).*
- *Each of the work teams concentrates on their interventions almost exclusively internally with adults registered in training... We observe today that SARCA has thus become distant from the population... The absence of a SARCA management policy at the SB... is therefore manifested through the prevalence of the concept of service for registered clients (SB ZYX, 2005, p. 8).*
- *The links forged with the community organizations... can turn out to be fragile, and more resources need to be devoted to maintaining them. In the context of maintaining resources and current budgets, we should not neglect reflection on our priorities (SB ZYX, heading "En guise de conclusion").*

Principles of action

Experiential knowledge seems to set out, implicitly or explicitly, certain relevant rules that could be adopted by SARCA with respect to this important proactivity component: community animation.

In order to become involved in community animation, SARCA could, among other things:

- 6.01 become aware that interventions related to proactivity should be directly related to the community animation method
- 6.02 recognize that the ultimate objective of community animation is to contribute to creating a culture of lifelong learning
- 6.03 endeavour to transform the community by inviting people to become actors with the power to act on themselves and on their community
- 6.04 recognize the paramount need to call on partners to act effectively on the whole community
- 6.05 ensure that the practitioners assigned to the tasks related to proactivity possess excellent skills in interpersonal communication and group facilitation
- 6.06 remember that the skills of the practitioners are critical throughout the process to creating and maintaining a favourable climate
- 6.07 aim to establish social conditions (for example, incentives) that facilitate personal development
- 6.08 plan various social development actions
- 6.09 propose an action plan without forgetting to include operational procedures
- 6.10 explore and prepare the ground socially before undertaking any community animation process
- 6.11 ensure a good knowledge of the educational interventions of the main actors in the territory
- 6.12 provide time for reflection to review the actions taken and make the necessary adjustments
- 6.13 plan monthly exchange meetings

- 6.14 develop action guides that are based primarily on data collected through interviews
- 6.15 remember that only through sustained work is it possible to ensure that the community knows the nature and availability of their services
- 6.16 base themselves on the rich history of actions already carried out in the community by integrating a new specific complementary dimension
- 6.17 target a network of motivated people to promote a sense of community and improve its economic health
- 6.18 create community round tables for joint action on the interventions initiated by various organizations in the community
- 6.19 take advantage of social events to constantly recruit allies for community animation work
- 6.20 realize that it is inconceivable to expect good results in the short term
- 6.21 understand results are manifested through various initiatives that make it possible to anticipate social needs
- 6.22 be sensitive to the great fragility of this work and the harmful and inevitable consequences of its disappearance.





Conclusion

For the purpose of suggesting various ways of playing their role in the area of proactivity to SARCA, this document highlights the rich experiential knowledge of the practitioner authors of five action research reports. According to this experiential knowledge, the proactivity function of SARCA should be defined primarily through an active watch over lifelong learning. This function is related to many requests addressed to SARCA: foresee social events, anticipate the needs of potential clientele, predict the changing characteristics of this clientele and become informed about any trends that could have an economic impact in a knowledge-based society. The proactivity function attributed to SARCA would thus refer to approaches that should be applied even before there is an official request for services.

In addition, the proactivity function of SARCA would be defined by the visibility and accessibility required to favour assistance with the expression of demand. This professional practice would have SARCA implementing community animation processes and innovative means of promotion and information. It would imply that the practitioner's workplace would no longer be within the school boards but rather in the community in order to bring the services closer to citizens.

The highlighted experiential knowledge would be expressed in various principles of action related to six components. Very broadly, these principles would, respectively, require SARCA to:

- enhance their visibility
- raise awareness in the community of its own needs in the area of training
- work in collaboration with the community
- concern themselves with the specific characteristics of social groups
- engage in a change in organizational culture
- engage in community animation.

Thanks to the emphasis on this experiential knowledge, every SARCA could choose a strategic plan that gives priority to one or more of the principles of action related to each of these six components. SARCA would thus engage in self-reflection that would help them better define their practice of proactivity. In this way, their work would be more in keeping with the broad orientations outlined in the MEQ's discussion and policy document (2004a) and in the recent General Framework (MELS, 2006).¹

1. January 2006 version.

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