

# The Remote Networked School (RNS) Model: An ICT Initiative To Keep Small Rural Schools and Their Local Community Alive

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The importance of peer interaction for learning purposes is a well-known fact in educational theory, and a school of a small size is particularly challenged to engage same-age students in social exchange of this nature. For almost a decade, an action research partnership (Laferrière & Breuleux, 2002) has been established. A systemic approach was applied (Banathy, 1991; Engeström, 1999; Seidel & Perez, 1994). It has meant tackling an educational challenge and social one as well as distance from urban areas using the support of the Internet. Partners' objective was to design and study (see design experiment methodology: Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992; 1999), from an ecological perspective (Nardi & O'Day, 1999). The model that was cocreated was meant to enrich interactions for learning purposes in rural schools. More concretely, with the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), we designed a model whose purpose is to bring classrooms of different schools and regions to work and learn together. This paper focuses on two poles of results of the Remote Networked School (RNS) model: 1) the advantages of collaboration between schools from teachers' point of view; 2) parents' social representations of the RNS model and its value as it pertains to their children's education.

*Keywords:* Collaboration with ICTs, Rural schools, School-community partnership.

## Introduction

The Province of Québec (Canada) has a vast territory and a small population, in comparison to many European countries. Population is concentrated in urban regions and, for many years, Québec has been struggling with demographic movements and rural exodus.

These downward movements have important consequences for village schools and their communities. For instance, some schools are threatened of closing because of population decrease. Considering the interdependence between a school and its community's vitality (Egelund & Laustsen, 2006; Prévost, Lussier, Boyer & Authier, 2007; Prévost, 2004), when such a situation occurs, the whole community suffers.

Indeed, whose parents would want to buy a house in a rural community where there is no school for their children? However, when a small school remains open, its small size may become a

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challenge to insure a learning environment of quality.

The new learning sciences have shown the importance of social interactions in a learning environment (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Khine & Saleh, 2010; Sawyer, 2005). Communication and collaboration abilities are included in the various lists of twenty-first century skills for citizens of that evolve in knowledge societies and knowledge economies. In this paper, we first provide some background to this study, including a description of the networked learning environment that is being fostered. Secondly, we present the methodology used to document advantages of collaboration between schools from both teachers' point of view and parents' representations of such a model. Thirdly, we communicate results of data collection, and analyze teachers' and parents' representations of the Remote Networked School (RNS).

### **Background**

The RNS initiative was born of a desire to maintain small schools in remote villages in Quebec (through the use of ICTs) to address rural exodus and prevent the closure of these small schools, but also to provide quality service related to teachers' professional development and children's learning. This initiative began in 2002, with three participating sites (two small elementary schools and one small secondary school) and a knowledge transfer organization (Francophone center for computerization of organisations, CEFRIO). After searching for best possible uses of ICTs in small schools (Laferrière & Breuleux, 2002), we chose what we considered to be a powerful electronic forum (Knowledge Forum, KF). We chose it on the basis of its affordances for learning and knowledge building that support written asynchronous discourse and a videoconferencing system (iVisit) that permits synchronous verbal discourse. KF won the award for best collaborative tool at the 2005 Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) conference in Taiwan. Teachers and students were told to use the same tools for their professional development and student learning, and then the initiative began. By having them use these tools, we wanted to develop a model that would allow small classrooms from different schools and regions to work together and to, hopefully, enrich the learning environment through social interaction.

A proof of concept resulted from phase 1 (Laferrière, Breuleux & Inchauspé, 2003) and phases 2, 3 and 4 followed to implement the model on a larger scale. Now in its fifth phase, the RNS model has taken root in more than twenty school districts, and in over 120 rural schools. Some school districts are still in the early stages of implementation whereas others have institutionalized the model (Seidel & Perez, 1994; Laferrière, Allaire, Breuleux, Hamel, Turcotte, Gaudreault-Perron, Beaudoin & Inchauspé, 2009). Conditions of innovation (Ely, 1999; Turcotte & Hamel, 2008) played an important role in the way the model has spread.

### **School involvement**

In a small school there may be two, three or four teachers. Teacher participation in the RNS initiative is voluntary. The school principal often manages more than one small school. For each school, large or small, there is a school council, and parents as well as teachers are represented. The school council's decision to participate in the RNS initiative is critical, and so is the school district's technical, administrative and pedagogical support. In most active schools, our own participating observation of the initiative led us to note that there comes a time when non-participating teachers may feel some pressure from their colleagues to join in on this project. Students are also likely to ask for it as they generally enjoy the hour devoted each school day to RNS learning activities.

Each school is considered a learning community (Sergiovanni, 1994). We speak here of community because participants have a shared goal. Teachers and students join together, and outside classrooms and experts bring their contribution to the initiative.

### **Community involvement**

The role of all stakeholders is crucial, including parents, local experts and social leaders. A strong partnership between these key players often develops as a consequence of this educational project having been implemented. In a few cases, small town leaders have played a key role regarding the promotion of the RNS<sup>1</sup>.

A great number of the RNS schools are in a deprived socio-economical environment, according to the scale by which the Ministry of Education (Québec) conducts activities and analyses.

Families' low income has a significant impact on student perseverance in school until graduation (Coleman, 1966; Claes and Comeau, 1996). The educational level of parents also affects children's schooling (Epstein, 1988; Dornbush, Ritters, Mont-Reynaud & Chez, 1990; Lightfoot, 2003; Deblois, Deslandes, Rousseau & Nadeau, 2008).

### Parental involvement

Deslandes et al. (1999, 2005) argued that what is important is not so much what parents are, but rather what they do (see also Potvin et al., 1999; Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Parental participation takes on many forms such as homework supervision, emotional support, time management supervision, conversation about school (Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, 2000) or preparing a child for school and welcoming him or her back, interacting with the school and, finally, volunteering at school (Deslandes, 2003, 2004).

In the RNS, parents have to agree that their children take part in the research that documents this innovation process. However, the children's participation in the RNS is a school decision; it is a matter of pedagogy. Parents' support is considered a factor. Moreover, their participation is also considered a positive factor (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2000; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2004). "*Doing with students* comes in parallel with *doing with his/her family*", stated Kanoute and Vatz-Laaroussi (2008, p. 259). Research shows that it is the democratic but structuring parent who contributes most to the cognitive development of the child and encourages the development of his/her autonomy (Dornbusch, 1988; Deslandes & Royer, 1994; Deslandes, 1996; Steinberg, 2000). There are several components in democratic parenting style: praise, support, approval, encouragement, cooperation, expressing affection and physical affection (Manscill & Rollins, 1990).

Other authors point to the following three components of a democratic parenting style: a high level of parental involvement, a high degree of parental supervision and a high degree of autonomy granting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg, 2000).

How do parents perceive the RNS, and what do they expect from it? How do they participate in the academic life of their children enrolled in an RNS school? What are the roles that parents play? What are their responsibilities? What do they do to support the RNS in their community? In other words, what are the social representations that these parents have of the RNS? It is these questions that this paper addresses in addition to the teachers' point of view about school collaboration promoted by the RNS model.

### Methodology

Two poles of results are presented here: 1) the advantages of collaboration between schools from the teachers' point of view; 2) parents' social representations of the RNS model and its value as it pertains to their children's education.

### Data collection

To report on the first pole, we focused on teachers, their sense of isolation and their own professional development experience within the RNS initiative. Over two hundred teachers or so had responded to questionnaires over the years, and at least 80 of them in a recurring manner. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with about 30 of these teachers. For the purpose of this paper, we will report results about questions that deal specifically with the way they characterize students' learning experience in the RNS context.

To address the second pole of results, we focused on social representations. Parental participation is being recognized as an important outside-school factor in childrens' education (Deslandes, 2006), and one linked to a number of variables, including the understanding that parents have of their role, their sense of competence to help their child succeed in school and invitations to participate on the part of teachers (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

Parental involvement may also depend on beliefs, values, expectations, needs, perceptions, attitudes, etc. that the parent maintains toward the school in general and the RNS in particular. Some educational researchers have shown the important role played by values and attitudes (Joseph, 1979; Bouchard, 1989), prejudice and stereotypes (Lightfoot, 1981). These symbolic sets can be studied separately or comprehensively with the theory of social representations (SR). The study of SR seemed appropriate here because much like Abric (1994), it is recognized that the

<sup>1</sup>Such an example may be consulted here: <http://csdessommets.qc.ca/myscriptorweb/scripto.asp?resultat=595334>

SR is an essential element in understanding the determinants of behaviour and social practices. In other words, each time a subject acts in the face of a phenomenon, every time he says what he thinks about a phenomenon, it is in its representations that he or she learns how to behave or think about the phenomenon. Through SR, we access the modes of thought of the subjects, their vision of the RNS and social practices guided by these SR. The study of SR offers "a new voice to explain the mechanisms by which social factors affect the actual educational process and affect outcomes" (Gilly, 1989, p. 364).

While parental participation may be impossible or difficult for some (Hohl, 1996), especially when there is no understanding of the school's inability to help their children, other studies have shown that parents do get involved in the academic life of their child (Comeau & Solomon, 1994; Montandon, 1994; Saint-Laurent et al., 1994; Epstein & Lee, 1995). Parental practices are grouped under five categories (Epstein, 1992; Deslandes, 1996): emotional support, communication with teachers, interactions between parents and adolescents on school life, parent-school communication and parent-child communication.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 parents, of which 5 were interviewed during phase 1 of the RNS initiative, and 7 during phase 5. We precise that parents are not the same and do not come from the same villages, so our goal here is not to report any change or evolution of representations over time. Two main types of questions were considered: parents' representations of the RNS, and their expectations of the RNS. Examples of questions asked are the following ones: In your words, how would you describe what goes on in a networked school? What differences do you see between RNS and regular schools? What do you expect from the RNS initiative?

With parents interviewed during phase 5 and considering the initiative had been implemented for a while, we added two other types of questions. These types covered their conception of child development and of their participation in the RNS. We asked questions such as the following: What types of abilities do you think your child was able to further develop since taking part in an RNS? Have you noticed changes in his/her motivation toward school, grades, social skills, ways he/she uses ICTs? How are you involved in

your child's RNS activities? How could you describe your collaboration with the school?

### **Data analysis**

We used descriptive statistics for questionnaire data. Interview data was searched for emergent themes and patterns (Moustakas, 1990). Our procedure was based on content analysis (L'Écuyer, 1990). We read over interview transcriptions a few times and identified emerging recurrent themes. Our unit of analysis was the idea. Each time a new theme was added, transcriptions already classified were read once again to ensure that their classification still corresponded to the original. Once all transcriptions were codified, we looked for redundant themes and we adjusted our classification accordingly. We skipped the step of formal quantification of statements corresponding to our unit of analysis as our goal was mainly to account for the diversity of representations and points of view.

## **Results**

### **Teachers' perspective on the benefits of collaboration between schools**

Teachers that feel professional isolation can go beyond school's borders to interact and share ideas with colleagues from other regions (Allaire, Laferrière, Gaudreault-Perron & Hamel, 2009). In 2007-2008, 40% (N= 58 teachers) said they felt isolated before joining the RNS initiative. This rate dropped to 2% after engaging in their RNS. Collaboration was judged as one of the main competencies developed in this context. Many advantages were stated, as illustrated in Table 1.

<b>Collaboration Advantages for Teachers</b>	<b>Teacher's Discourse</b>
Planning together	"Considering I'm working in a distant school, I don't have many teamwork opportunities to build learning projects with colleagues. I'm always in my small classroom, planning my schedule alone and this is a bit boring at times."
Getting more ideas	"It is sure (this context) is richer. Two heads are better than one! We often say that, and now I'm experiencing it. In regards to ideas, it is richer. Our projects can be more ambitious because we have the opportunity to share tasks. This helps a lot."
Comparing practices	"We are linked to each other. We feel less alone and this allows us to verify if what we are doing with kids is right or not. To some extent, we are guides to each other."
Creating and enlarging a teacher network	"It is fun because we feel less isolated. For instance, we were three teachers who often worked together. This year, we tried to increase our network and to include new people, so we are more than three. Sometimes, we want to discuss something but we don't have time to get to the next village. In RNS, we are able to be part of a network without travelling."

Table 1. Professional collaboration advantages from teachers' perspective

<b>Advantages for Students</b>	<b>Teachers Discourse</b>
Motivation	"We can think about kids' motivation: I saw it! I have students that have created strong relationships with students from distant schools. I have other students who had a lot of fun with people they didn't know before. At the beginning, I thought it would be 'cold' but this allowed us to concentrate on learning goals. They quickly asked each other: 'What have you found out on this topic?'" "They create friendships without being in actual contact and seeing each other."
Benefits for learning	"As students have to explain things to others, they play to some extent the role of teacher and I think they learn more this way." "It allows (them) to experiment spontaneous communication, in comparison with a well-planned oral presentation". "They noticed that people from elsewhere were able to complete their ideas, to enrich them."
Worldwide opening	"Our current project is about villages. This allows kids to learn about villages that they have never had the chance to visit." "A student went to a tennis competition organized by the school board. She recognized students with whom she spoke prior to this year." "My students will spend 6 years in the same classroom with the same people. This is a great opportunity for them to meet and share with other people." "For them, this is simply worldwide opening! They realize there are students like them, on the other side of the river, that need and want to learn almost the same things they are actually learning."
Elementary-secondary transition	"It creates relationships so that when the (pre)teenager graduates to the secondary level, it makes it easier to introduce him or herself the school community." "When they arrive at the secondary level, in the "big school", sometimes they already know up to five students. It makes them more confident, more secure and then the transition is easier."

Table 2. Advantages for students from a teacher's perspective

However, collaboration is not always easy to manage, especially when there is no routine installed. The following statement comes from a teacher that faced difficulties:

*RNS is interesting but, in my case, I often didn't receive any answers from my 'partner'. I wrote to plan meetings but he didn't answer most of the time. Sometimes he was available but I wasn't. Sometimes we faced logistics problems. On one occasion, there was a snowstorm so his school was closed. On another occasion, it was the end of semester for him and the beginning for me, so we were not able to fit in a project for evaluation purposes.*

Students can learn with teammates from other schools, thus enriching their social interactions for learning and knowledge building purposes (Laferrière, Allaire, Breuleux, Hamel, Turcotte, Gaudreault-Perron, Beaudoin & Inchauspé, 2009). Table 2 shows such benefits for students from teachers' perspective.

**Parents' social representations of the RNS**

**The RNS and regular classroom activities**

Seven major themes emerged from our content analysis regarding what RNS is about. Table 3 illustrates what was said.

Types of Representations of the RNS Concept	Parents' Discourse
Connect school communities	<p>"Maybe this will let children, as I was saying, have at least some possibility to communicate. When you are two or three 11<sup>th</sup> grade students well, sometimes you would like to discuss the subject matter...I remember that when I was in school, you had a problem with physics and you could discuss it with you're your friends at the school library. "</p> <p>"When you're just the same group of fifteen people well, it's always fun to "network" when you're a teenager or even if you're child, so you can create relationships even if you aren't visually close, you communicate with that person, you see his or her face, it still creates a relationship, a communication, no matter if it's by correspondence, by phone, these are relationships that will remain for life..."</p> <p>"The feeling of not being all alone in your own little world. Even for teachers. For teachers as well as for students. It gives them the opportunity to make new friends. Not friends really...virtual friends and they can share experiences with them, you know, the fact that they are a group, it lets them exchange all kinds of different ideas that come from all over."</p>
Connect teachers	<p>"It could be useful, too, for teachers to communicate among themselves...maybe they could get some kind of training this way, that also was excellent."</p> <p>"... instead of those teachers being isolated, there is a marked improvement concerning subject matter, by way of team teaching. For him, the RNS is a means of making collaboration between teachers happen."</p>
Expansion of local community	<p>"I think that Air Inuit and many other companies could use this videoconferencing that we are bringing here to the school. Hmmm, this is a tool that we don't have and, hmm, I'm sure there are many companies that, including Air Inuit, that could use this new system."</p> <p>"If we could use this media here, it would save a lot of time, hmmm costs, distance traveled, accident risks and everything that comes with it."</p> <p>"The hospitals, surely they don't have the same office as where I work –</p>

Opening on the world of children	<p>I mean instead of traveling 1000 km to go to a meeting there, about a conference that we could have with them over there.”</p> <p>“It’s an experience, a learning about differences and that adds up to a community that is not just closed in on itself.”</p> <p>“When you talk about globalization, of the Global Village, the RNS gives a different perspective to children.”</p> <p>“... this will let children from Sainte-Rose open up to the world, to accept differences.”</p> <p>“The RNS also lets you communicate outside of your own little community. It makes them see that there is something besides their own little village.”</p> <p>“Since they are mainly a remote small school, well they are more up-to-date on what’s going on elsewhere.”</p>
Survival of the local school and community	<p>“What I see about the RNS is that it’s a more global approach where the student can consider himself as a citizen of the World.”</p> <p>“For us, what we can see is that if we can keep our students here, if we can show them that we have the technology that will let them learn as well as, hmm, as adequately as hmm, down south, well that is going to keep people here.”</p>
Familiarization with technologies	<p>“It will certainly help to demonstrate that the RNSs can survive either by multiple-level classes and a certain emulation among teachers.”</p> <p>“Yes, RNSs are important, it lets us keep certain schools open that may otherwise have shut down.”</p>
Developing knowledge communities	<p>“Our children, well, they will grow from this experience and practically know how to use a computer hmmm, with their eyes shut.”</p> <p>“It permits the democratization of knowledge and interregional sharing of information.”</p>

Table 3. Parents’ representations of the RNS concept

A parent whose daughter has been part of the RNS since 2nd grade (4 years) made the following exemplary distinction:

*I love it. My daughter has almost no memories of a non-RNS school. I now know the RNS through what my daughter is saying in our house. Instead of isolating teachers, there is mutual improvement in the subjects, with team teaching. The RNS is a good way to encourage collaboration among teachers. The RNS also shows that the schools of the region can survive with multigrade classrooms and some competition between teachers. What I see so far in the RNS is a more holistic approach, one where the student can consider himself as a global citizen. It is a revolution. I now know the RNS tools, iVisit and KF. The KF is interesting, with its neural way of transmitting information. It democratizes knowledge and its sharing across regions. iVisit is more for distance*

*learning and simultaneous classroom activities. iVisit was designed as a tool for simultaneous distance learning between classrooms.*

*During regular classrooms activities, the teacher is facing a class in a ‘dominated/ dominating’ relationship. The RNS is a school with a broader vision, one that allows for team teaching and diversity. It allows for a greater range of possibilities than what is happening in one’s town or region. It offers possibilities to be a better global citizen. In my daughter’s class, they work 1-2 times per week cycle on iVisit and they work more often on the KF.*

Like in any other model, there are parents who do not know what the RNS is. However, the very fact that they had a consent form to sign regarding the research dimension of the RNS assured that a minimum of information was brought into the home.

**Expectations toward the RNS**

The main expectation of parents combines hope and skepticism, and can be summed up by the following statement: "Are we going to be able to do it?". Some parents are aware that the RNS is an important social innovation, but they are wondering if all people involved in it will have the capacity to participate in it properly.

Talking about what's going on in the classroom, a parent with numerous expectations pointed to the diversification of pedagogical approaches. His understanding was that it allows for more focus, long-term concentration and motivation.

*My daughter adores it. It is very stimulating, but she would not like to be in an RNS all the time. What she likes about it is the diversity of ways of learning. The more diversity there is, the more likely it is to have a better picture and be less surprised by the result when we meet someone who thinks differently.*

Other expectations were as follows:

*The RNS should allow students to acquire a larger background, one that gets them closer to a knowledge community. Other classrooms in our region, and city classrooms, would then benefit from the way an RNS operates.*

*Yes, the remote networked schools are important. I hope they will allow certain schools to remain open. Otherwise, they would be closed.*

In relation to their local community, the real impact of the RNS 'is tomorrow': "It can energize a community for tomorrow, change attitudes and foster an interest in ICTs. It will have a long-term effect and it will expand the horizons of citizens who are currently students."

In spite of these expectations, some parents interviewed during phase 1 mentioned an important concern about RNS. "With this project and all these new resources, are we going to lose a teacher?". This comment reflects the fear that teachers could be replaced by computers and the Internet, although this is not the intention of the RNS design. Such comments were not mentioned by parents interviewed during phase 5.

#### **Parents' perceptions of their child's learning in a RNS**

The primary skill children develop, according to parents, is the skill to work with ICTs:

*The RNS has provided some tools for exploration. My daughter likes to go on the Internet. She uses technologies with interest. She likes to use the videoconferencing tool and the forum. She works with PowerPoint and writes texts. She sees how easy it is to transmit these.*

Another skill is open-mindedness and capacity to accept difference: "She gained an awareness of the existence of difference. This is an intellectual skill." In the same way, another parent stated the following: "It is great that they can communicate together. They realize they are not alone in their small corner. This increases their tolerance."

Parents are not likely to know that the RNS has improved their child's grades in a systematic way, but one parent strongly asserted that the RNS "has helped her motivation." He added:

*There is no particular area, but she likes everything connected to the RNS, regardless of the subject matter. She verbalizes a lot about the presentations to do on iVisit or the act of composing a creative tale on KF. It's really positive. She has a vision of the world she would not have had without iVisit.*

Some parents identified that RNS helped their child develop communication skills.

*She learned to talk better because of the videoconferencing system that requires her to express herself more clearly than in face to face communication. She's able to talk to small groups of students, all the while using precise words.*

One last thing identified by some parents about children's learning is development of social skills. "It's all about the social aspect. She has learned to work with people she didn't know before. This requires being able to make concessions."

#### **Parental involvement**

*Participation in school activities.* RNS activities to which parents contribute are the following ones: presentations, field trips, schoolyard surveillance. For instance, some parents are invited to explain what they do in life. In a few cases, the videoconferencing system is used to give information access to other distant classrooms. Parents provide help to support teachers during special activities such as a snowshoe excursion or any other outside school activity that requires more supervision. Such surveillance is also provided during recess, when students go to play in the schoolyard.



Some parents are members of the parents' committee, and others respond when needed.

Parents with a special expertise or interest in the educational system may bring data, objects or documents that feed the learning projects. There are parents who answer questions during an interview, give comments and encourage new developments to build or improve educational systems.

*Parents' role in the child's academic success.* In best cases, there is a fixed amount of time for homework, and a parent will answer his/her child's questions and offer support. Some parents offer more freedom and provide more flexibility than others. They believe that their child must do what he/she loves, and do not put too much emphasis on academic tasks. Another important aspect concerns giving encouragements to their child so he/she can feel he/she is supported.

*Other contributions.* Some parents have bought computers for their child(ren), and see it as a plus: "At home, it's been three years since he has gotten a computer. She plays, making a PowerPoint, talking with friends on MSN. She uses technology as learning tools. Sometimes she accesses the KF from the house, but this is rare."

Of course, there are parents who, like in any other cases, are not involved. Very few have refused to sign the consent form regarding the research dimension of the RNS initiative. Above all, parents have been curious of what the RNS is, and no resistance has been organized to counter its development and their children's learning in the RNS model. Some schools have been active in explaining to the parents the RNS activities: they held special meetings, they had children showing their parents and local citizens how the RNS tools work and what they do with them. In other places, parents would like to have more information about RNS, as they consider they don't know enough about it to really know what is all about: "We received some chunks of information about it at the beginning of the school year and, sometimes, during parents meetings; but that's it."

### Discussion

Almost 10 years after its inception, the RNS initiative is more and more part of small rural schools in Quebec, and its appropriation (or institutionalization) by school districts is in sight. Teachers mainly recognize that it has contributed to the reduction of their feeling of isolation. They see that this model is pedagogically effective with

their students. Moreover, the initiative has shown the sustainability of professional collaboration and the emergence of a collaborative culture.

Although most parents do not participate actively in the RNS activities, they are aware of the model, and agree to the gathering of data regarding their child(ren) who is/are part of it. This is, in itself, a manifestation of openness to change. It could also be reflective of a democratic parenting style. Further inquiry will link RNS parents' representations to democratic parenting style found in scientific literature (Dornbusch, 1988; Deslandes & Royer, 1994; Deslandes, 1996; Steinberg, 2000). Encouragement and direct involvement in the RNS activities are valued by both teachers and school principals. Parents are often shy to offer their help because of the fear of being judged or not doing things the way educators expect.

Moreover, the very fact for a child of having the feeling that his/her parents support what's going on in school can have a positive impact on his/her relationship to school. However, it is striking how parents see the value of the RNS in its social aspects rather than its academic one. They are pleased that their child(ren) have more friends and the like. Deeper understanding is recognized by only very few parents. Nonetheless, the fact that no parent interviewed in phase 5 shared a worry about seeing teachers being replaced by ICTs, in comparison to what they expressed during phase 1, is found positive. This suggests a rather successful degree of implementation of the model in schools and school boards that have adopted it.

Parents who are the most knowledgeable about the RNS see it as a growth opportunity for children to become world citizens. However, most parents still do not connect the RNS with the development of their community. More direct interventions towards them could be a path of development that could insure that the RNS not only be an efficient model to enrich students' learning environment, but also a true way to insure communities' vitalization and emancipation.

It is certainly a good sign for small villages needing revitalization that these parents are open to change. The RNS model has confronted their thinking regarding what school is all about, and they are rising up to the challenge facing both their academic institutions and their communities.

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