

Evaluating the impacts of a network on the practices relating to promoting good quality nutrition in schools.

Oral research report

Field: health promotion in schools.

Theme: Why create a network? What can we expect from a network? Network objectives

C. Vandoorne, A. Van Hoye (APES-ULg)

Context

This evaluation focuses on the creation of a network of actors involved in offering healthy food in schools, through a series of seven visits to projects in the French-speaking community. This initiative was launched and financed by the Fondation Roi Baudouin in 2007 and was evaluated between December 2007 and March 2008.

Objectives and methods

The impact of this network on the spread of good practice and encouragement of exchanges between actors were explored through analysis of the documents inviting and encouraging participation in the visits, analysis of the coverage of network participants and other initiatives for promoting healthy eating in schools, and a questionnaire to 18% of participants.

Results

Analysis of attendance at the visits and the professional profiles of the participants clarified the various audiences in terms of their involvement in one or more visits, their proximity to the place where the visit took place; their role in the school on one hand or school partner organisation on the other, their experience of health promotion projects.

Discussion

This “network” appears to have operated on two levels relating to different audiences and different impacts. The study on the impacts of the network in terms of the spread of new practices only affected one of these audiences.

- According to the school-based actors, the network mainly served as a means of awareness-raising and of supporting fledgling activities. For this type of actor and this type of function, the proximity of the activity remains a crucial motivating factor.
- Exchange of good practice particularly involved people with particular motivation, belonging to organisations already with experience in promoting healthy eating in schools. These people gladly participated in a greater number of visits, even when these took place far away.