Shakin' the classroom
Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool.
What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

School of freedom is a method of designing and realising educational programmes that is based on needs and competences of participants in the learning environment. It pairs learning needs with teaching competences through the process in which everyone lists what they would like to learn and what they could teach. Through several circles, needs and offers are paired and the programme is created in which everyone is at the same time teacher and learner. The main element of the method is the pairing process during which all participants of the learning process (say a seminar or a summer school) nominate skills and knowledge they can offer to others or would love to acquire. Once pairs or groups are formed based on demands/offers, programme is created and the exchange can start.

In which way is this method alternative?
How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

It departs radically from the usual logic of learning, where those who are organising or enabling the meeting design a programme with clear goal and outcome. Instead, those who participate in the knowledge sharing are at the same time designing the programme in co-creation - based on resources and needs they have. As a result, the outcomes are very open-ended and shifting. Another important aspect is that most participants end up in both teaching and learning roles although they also overlap. This produces a varying level of teaching (some people are not confident in such roles), but it also distributes responsibility. As such, it can be very stimulative for those who find it uncomfortable to assume teaching roles, because it is more of an exchange and groups are often smaller.

What are your experiences with the method?
In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

I have participated in several summer schools / youth exchange programmes that have implemented this method in the role of participant as well as organiser (of the summer school, not the method itself because it has no organiser). In most of those the programme was very diverse (from knitting and singing to arts and philosophy). The very fluid nature of the method can render a whole process somewhat vague, messy and individual responsibilities unclear. A possible tweak is to narrow the scope of knowledge shared (e.g. natural building, or music) and let participants still share very diverse knowledge but within one area. Another issue in practice is that because the programme ends up being very organically assembled, some people cannot participate in some workshops they might have wanted to (because they had another workshop at the same time for example).

In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for?
E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

As far as I know, it is mostly used in a bit more relaxed, informal settings like summer schools and similar. The method excels in settings in which enough time and space can be offered to participants for them to open up to the possibility of teaching and learning from others who are usually their peers.

What are the requirements for applying this method?
Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for

the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

Due to its vague structure, it might be hard to implement it within a setting that has clear requirements - like professional trainings or formal schools. It is also not adapted to the strict time frames. Finally, since it usually end up splitting participants in smaller groups, its proper implementation requires many different spaces. Finally, it is a method that is a bit hard to organise and support. If workshops require tools and materials (for example paint for a painting workshop), it is hard to prepare those beforehand because the requirements will be known only after the programme has already begun. A possible way around is to let participants know that such a process will happen and to ask them to bring some basic tools needed for the skills they might offer to others.

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed.
Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contexts?

Could you provide any relevant testimonies?
If possible, please provide testimonies, reflections, evaluations and statements about the method, by yourself or method's author(s) or other users.

Additional references and links
If possible, please provide additional links, literature, instructions and/or other relevant content.