

Bee the Solution - Newsletter 11, September 2017

By Chrystel Vert-Pré

ALL ABOUT THE PROJECTS

The newsletter articles are inspired by the situations that we have encountered while working on the projects. In addition to those articles, we are also writing more specifically about each project that we are working on.

We want to tell the stories of the people we are trying to help: about the individual we have met, how we came across each other, what was the seed of the project, how the projects are coming together...

We will sometimes link to those stories in the Newsletter, but you can read them @ www.projects.beethesolution.org

TOPICS OF THE MONTH

[CONSTANT LEARNING: LEAVE THE STATUS QUO, KEEP QUESTIONING, CHANGE, IMPROVE](#)

We celebrated our 1st year of existence “out of the closet” with a special edition on 13th September 2017. If you have missed it, you can find it [here](#).

Before launching the website and Bee the Solution, we had a certain idea of how we would do things. We learnt a lot on how to do it and when we were happy with it all, we had the launch. But learning never ends.

The past year has been a constant learning experience, especially on the communication channels and the “how”. We constantly question what/how we are doing, ask for feedback, listen and learn new ways to improve what we do. This is a constant process.

Changes are always difficult. When we do something, we think it is the best way. It is then easy to keep doing the same thing, it is comfortable and comforting. But we have to keep learning, improving and adapting. To do so, we need to walk away from the status quo and keep questioning ourselves and others so that we can always strive for better. At whatever levels. Changes might not seem big from one end, but can ask for a lot of work and effort and/or have great impact on someone else.

Leave your comfort zone, query what you do and how you do it, learn new ways, change something for the better.

And this is coming from someone who likes things to remain constant, who needs a vision/goal, who has a daily routine that is easily perturbed, who needs advance warning... If I can manage, so can everyone...

What is Education?

“The most common forms of education result from years of schooling that incorporates studies of a variety of subjects.” ([Business Dictionary](#))

When talking about education, the first thing that comes to mind is school education. But altogether, what is Education?

It is much wider than “just” schooling. The general definition from the [Business Dictionary](#) does help see different aspects of education.

“The wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something. Education requires instruction of some sort from an individual or composed literature.”

Education is about **acquiring knowledge**.

Education is about **gaining an understanding**.

Education is about **getting instructions, guidance**.

Knowledge comes from someone else or through our own experience. We need to have a ‘teacher’, teach ourselves, a combination of both or learn from our daily life.

There are many ways to educate someone, resulting in different forms of education.

To educate is:

1 a :to provide schooling for

b :to train by formal instruction and supervised practice especially in a skill, trade, or profession

2 a :to develop mentally, morally, or aesthetically especially by instruction

b :to provide with information

3 :to persuade or condition to feel, believe, or act in a desired way (educate the public)

([Merriam-Webster dictionary](#))

So when we are talking about education, we are talking about schooling (formal education) or apprenticeship (skill training). But we are also talking about individual development, societal and moral behaviours or about provision of information on a variety of topics.

Think about the different ways we use the term education without referring to school... For example, how many times do we say of someone with bad manner: “He/She has no education”, without any reference to his/her schooling level?

Schooling is critical in the process of education. It provides the basis of knowledge and of life in society, teaches normalised ways to process and analyse information and much more.

But schooling is not all the education that an individual can, should or will receive.

We are starting a new series on education, where we aim to talk about different types of education, what is the right to education, how to access different forms of education, etc... Watch out for future articles in the newsletter.

We will try to illustrate each article with a story from the field, starting today with the story of [Douglas](#). His story highlights what can be perceived as “being educated” and what one can achieve through motivation.

[Finance Micro Management](#)

The overall vision that I have is to help people help themselves, that they can improve their condition. Through my travels, I have come to realise that sometimes part of the issue is not necessarily money itself but money management. Both in Africa and in Europe...

I am not a finance person... far from it! But I look at my budget, I make choices, I compare prices...

One of the issues in Africa, is poverty. For a lot of people, there is no or little money. But sometimes, there is also gross misconception of cost and affordability.

Over time, I have come across people who could not afford to buy something but who did have a little money... I am not talking about those who literally have nothing in term of cash. This is a different story...

But the perception of cost and available funds is an important point. There are things that we can't afford at all, but there are some that we could if we look at things differently.

One of the first things to look at is what is essential and what is not... and we will all have different answers. Still, I believe that you can't complain that you can't afford to eat when you can afford sweets and soft drinks. My point of view... Maybe because I don't eat sweets and don't drink soft drinks... But still...

A soft drink is around €0.50 - One egg is around €0.10
I choose the egg anytime...

And so, in some occasions, I have shown people the money they have, where it is going, how they could afford something that they say they can't... I have shown that we sometimes have to make a choice about what you want to buy or when we buy it...

My lesson here is to make people think about the money they have and don't assume that others have more... They might just manage it differently...

This "project" is about those small stories of teaching about basic finances... What we see as improvement is only down to how the individual applies it and what is important to him/her.

Maybe someone will choose soft drink over egg... but now, they make the choice as to what is actually important and they feel better about their condition (they can have a soft drink).

Most of us, in Africa or in Europe, do have to make choices about where we spend money. Is it clothes, shoes, fancy bath foam or gadgets? Even for food, we might choose to spend more to buy out-of-season or foreign dishes.

Who can really always afford anything they want when they want it?

This article is the main page linking the Budget projects on Bee the Solution website. Find out the stories behind this project at [Finance Micro Management Stories](#).

[Why do we need to be on the ground? Part 6 - Gathering more meaningful information](#)

or

Being an ethnographer

When we are in the field for a while, we have a different perspective than when just “come and go” for a short period of time.

We also have more discussions, and, after some time, the outcome of those discussions are often different to the ones we get the first time.

What I have always noticed is that people first say what they think you want to hear. They might also not show their usual behaviour, just because there is someone external.

But with time, you build relationships, you create and foster trust. And then you start to become “part of the furnitures”. People start to forget that you are there (as an external member). And so, while you will never truly be part of the community, people feel more comfortable and start acting again in their natural way. Listening to “normal” conversations (those that people have when you are not here), you can gather different information to the one that was originally provided. Watching people going about their daily life, and living it yourself as well, you can truly see the how and what. You can see and experience the struggles and the positives. Now, there is no need to put on a show.

In a way, it is similar to being an ethnographer... (not that this is what we are doing). We are looking at what people do, and how they do it, we are listening to what they say, we are experimenting what their life looks like. We are observers and participant, to gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and behaviours.

And, like ethnography studies, this does take time (and therefore has a high cost) and does introduce some level of bias. Time and cost is increased by long and/or regular time spent in the field. Biases are introduced based on our own experience (past and in the field), how we interact and how we analyse what we see or hear.

But this is all worth it! It allows to find out what is truly needed and how to bring it - teaching, motivating, demonstrating - to make a more sustainable difference.

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Find all our newsletters in pdf format @ www.newsletter.beethesolution.org

To make sure that you receive our monthly newsletter, sign up on the website, for the English and/or the French edition: www.newsletter.beethesolution.org

FEEDBACK

Please do not hesitate to contact us @ info@beethesolution.org.

Feel free to send us feedback. We are open to suggestions and comments. As we are still young and learning, we value your opinion even more than usual and are very grateful for it.

Let us know about what you want to see in the Newsletter, which projects you are interested in, any ideas you have for a project.

Have a safe month ahead

Chrystel, (Maya), Odile, Hélène and Jean-Louis