

# **Innovation at L'Amarrage after an Ecett internship at APGSE, Le Mans (France)**

## **The "Break Stays" Cap Solidarity**

### **1. What did you return from your internship?**

We did this internship in 2007 and for 48 hours Bernard Lesbros and his wife told and shown us how the break stays they organized in Africa for adolescents with complicated behavior were functioning. The Break Stays of APGSE last one year and their work philosophy is analytical while our approach is systemic, but the results seemed positive and this practice has convinced us. Upon our return, we have adapted this good practice to our reality: stays limited to three-month mandates, involvement of families before and after the departure of the young person and articulation with the experience that we already had in sport- adventure and humanitarian stays in Benin.

### **2. How did you handle the communication with the team to accept this innovation?**

We presented to our Board an educational project of 25 pages (before, during and after the break stays) but the time seemed not yet appropriate and we put the project in a drawer until a representative of the Minister of youth challenged me telling his interest for this kind of formula to help young people. I immediately picked the draft from my drawer and it corresponded exactly to his expectations. We then received funding as a "pilot project" which was renewed from year to year.

### **3. Thus, what innovation did you bring to your institution?**

We have therefore launched the "Cap Solidarity" breaking stays in Benin for young people in great difficulty. The goal is for the young to break with its usual context of life, be faced with new benchmarks, and experiment with new modes of interpersonal relationships.

This project extends over several months:

First, a month of preparation in Belgium (administrative and medical preparation, intercultural training), then the stay: three-month immersion in a Benin village (the youngster lives at the rhythm of his home family, gets involved in the village, helps the head of his family in his work, testing different jobs, lives exchange moments with his teacher). Finally, the youngster enjoys an accompaniment of the educational team from two to four months to implement his projects in Belgium.

As the experience has been very positive in 2016, the Office of the Minister has approved L'Amarrage permanently, for the organization of these break stays.

#### 4. **Have you assessed whether this innovation is satisfactory?**

Benefits of the innovation: This innovation at L'Amarrage allowed a diversification of the supports, and today can offer new answers (sometimes more appropriate) to youth issues. Indeed, although the return is not always easy, the youngster returning from a break stay has been valued in this project, has been to the end of a positive experience and can be proud of himself.

Difficulties linked to innovation: We had to gradually adapt to ground realities. For example, after a while, we went from this project that was collective to an individual project. Group stays experiments have proven to be complicated, young people pulling themselves down.

The project coordination in Belgium and Benin was also hard at first and we have put in place tools for communication and telephone meetings, for example.

Finally, the return phase back in Belgium has always been more difficult, so we intensified the educational support and set up different tools to make sense and create links (action courses, day center).

Possible improvements: It is always possible to improve, innovate, and create other tools especially to accompany the return (further develop peer coaching). Much improvement has been to open these breaking projects to other destinations than Benin: thus, for a year now, stays take place in France, Moldova and Romania.

#### 5. **What was the cost of this innovation?**

The human cost: a motivated, dynamic and enthusiastic team that could dare and take the risk to do something else.

The financial cost: for 8 young people going simultaneously through a breaking project for a period of 6 to 8 months, the cost is about € 100 per day per child. Grants are awarded to us by the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, and especially the Ministry of Youth Assistance. For these projects, we welcome young people at risk and in great trouble who no longer cling to any other project and for whom all other solutions fail, and also young people who have committed acts defined as offense. It is therefore a vulnerable group and likely to be supported in IPPJ, known to cost about € 500 per day for the "closed" treatment..

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