

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Presented by the Adult Resources Service
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The present issue is a compilation of texts on the place and role of adults in Scouting. These texts have been borrowed from "RAP - Renewed Approach to Programme" developed by the European Region, "The leaders we need", a publication of the Interamerican Region and "Scouting: An Educational System" a recent publication of the World Scout Bureau, Geneva.

1. THE VARIOUS ADULT FUNCTIONS

(a European view, presented in "RAP - Renewed Approach to Programme" - User's Guide, European Scout Office, 1998)

The various tasks which adults carry out within a Scout association can be grouped into three main functions:

- Leaders who implement the youth programme;
- Leaders who are in charge of disseminating the youth programme;
- Managers.

The leaders who are responsible for implementing the youth programme will ensure that each child and young person has opportunities to develop him or herself in all aspects of his or her personality (physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, affective and character). This is done by organising activities adapted to the needs, aspirations and capabilities of young people of different ages, by determining relevant educational objectives and by establishing supportive relationships between adults and young people and among the young people themselves.

The leaders responsible for disseminating the youth programme will ensure that those responsible for implementation have the information, resources, knowledge, attitudes and skills to implement the youth programme well.

The leaders who organise and manage are responsible for providing the necessary logistical, administrative and financial support to the young people and adults.

Although these functions are clearly distinguishable from each other, many posts within the structure of a Scout

association combine tasks corresponding to more than one of these three groups. Such is the case of the group leader who, whilst having essentially a management function, is closely involved in the implementation of the youth programme. There are many other cases of individuals occupying posts which involve different functions. For example, it is quite common for a leader who is involved in recruitment tasks to also have responsibilities directly relating to young people and management.

However, one thing is certain and has to be clearly understood by all, and that is that within Scouting, an educational movement for young people, the most important function is that carried out by the youth leader. On this basis, all the other functions have to be perceived as being of service to the youth leader and designed to facilitate the success of that particular function.

If an association overlooks this principle, it falls into a bureaucratic type of functioning. The mission, i.e. the education of young boys and girls, takes second place, and the functioning or management of the association itself, takes priority. One way of identifying a drift in this direction is the number of young people per adult leader. The normal ratio can be said to be about one adult to six or seven young people, although some associations have a ratio of one to three. However, such associations maintain that they have trouble recruiting leaders, which quite simply means that the teams responsible for managing the association at district and regional level are excessive. Once a unit leader acquires experience and shows a certain degree of success in his or her work, he or she is "sucked up" by the structure and finds him or herself at district or regional level. Consequently, most units leaders are inexperienced beginners who do not stay where they are for long. In an effort to overcome this difficulty, the tendency is to strengthen the support structure. This vicious circle has to be broken by leaving good leaders in their function as unit

leaders and by keeping the district and regional team as light as possible.

2. THE VARIOUS TASKS WHICH ADULT LEADERS CARRY OUT IN A SCOUT ASSOCIATION

(an Interamerican view, presented in "The leaders we need", Interamerican Scout office, 1998)

The various tasks which adult leaders carry out in a Scout association can be divided into three groups of functions:

- 1) Organizing, designing, putting into practice and evaluating a programme of activities chosen by the youth members in accordance with their ages, to their respective educational objectives and to the specific conditions in which they live. These functions correspond to the *youth leaders*.
- 2) Running the organization which provides logistic, administrative and financial support for the tasks of the young people and adults. These are the functions of the *institutional leaders*.
- 3) Training adults to carry out the work of the previous two groups effectively, which is the function of *training*.

Although in themselves these functions are clearly distinguishable from each other, many positions within the structure of a scout association are a combination of functions corresponding to more than one of the three groups. Such is the case of Group Leader which, despite being basically an institutional management position, is closely involved with the functions of a youth leader.

There are many other cases in which individuals occupy positions which involve different groups of functions. For example, it is commonly found that a leader who is involved in recruitment tasks also has a position directly related to young people or institutional management in which he works at the same time.

Given the wide variety of abilities which these groups of functions require, the low regard society has for educational activities and the limited

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availability of volunteers, most associations have difficulty in obtaining a *stable commitment* from a *sufficient number of adults* with the *right qualities* for the tasks in hand.

There are other difficulties too, often stemming from ingrained beliefs or customs within the associations, most of which tends to accept adults solely by reason of their previous experience in Scouting or the amount of time they have available. This practice restricts recruitment to a small circle which cannot be renewed. On the other hand, some associations tend to accept such adults as they offer their services spontaneously, many of whom rapidly reach positions of responsibility without having gained the experience and qualifications which their job actually requires.

This situation has led world and regional adult resources policies to place a special emphasis on the recruitment of leaders. From the regional perspective, two situations which have arisen recently have made the need to obtain sufficient and suitable volunteer staff even more pressing. These are:

- the adoption of MACPRO (Method for the Creating of Continuous Updating of the Youth Programme) as a regional policy is causing a demand for more trained adults and a relearning process on the part of existing youth leaders.
- the renewal of structure and management methods in the associations of the Region, which is giving rise to a need for institutional leaders with a different vision.

3. ADULT SUPPORT

(a view from "Scouting: An Educational System", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1998)

What is it?

In Scouting, adult support involves a voluntary partnership between the adult leader and the young people, both individually and as a group. In this partnership, the role of the adult leader is to facilitate the process of self-education through the way in which he or she applies Scouting's purpose, principles and method.

The support provided by adult leaders to young people is of an educational nature - the adult plays a particular role aimed at helping each young person to develop.

In order to facilitate the process of self-education, the educational relationship in Scouting needs to be of a different nature from that of a parent-child or teacher-student relationship.

The particular kind of educational relationship between adult leaders and young people in Scouting could be described as an educational partnership.

What is it intended to do?

As an element of the Scout Method, adult support is intended to stimulate the young person's development through:

- bringing adults and young people together in a rich learning partnership, based on mutual respect, trust and acceptance of each other as a person;
- the fact that, in the partnership, each person is personally committed, dedicates time and energy, participates in decision-making and the sharing of responsibilities, and seeks to create a constructive atmosphere that benefits everyone;
- the role played by the adult, which is to be an active member of the group in the sense that he or she is beside them in their adventures and their difficulties, while constantly seeking to assure all of the conditions needed for the young people to take charge of their development in the direction of Scouting's educational proposal.

How does it work?

• *A partnership*

In Scouting, the partnership is a voluntary one. Both the adult and each young person are in contact with each other out of choice, and both have an interest in what Scouting has to offer.

The young people want to take part in exciting activities that, for the time being, they are not able to organise fully on their own. The adult identifies with Scouting's educational proposal, has an interest in young people's development, and feels that it would be personally enriching to be involved in facilitating the development process of the young people. Neither partner is an empty vessel, and neither partner knows everything. In Scouting, all of the "partners" can learn from each other, enrich each other and complement each other.

• *The role of the adult leader*

The role of the adult leader is to facilitate the development of each young person through:

- presenting to them what Scouting can offer them, how it works and what is expected in return;
- helping them to become familiar with all of the elements of the Scout Method - and to make sure that it is used. This includes every-

thing from the code of living in the group, personal progression, how the Scout unit functions as an association of teams, responsibilities to be shared, what the adult leader is prepared to assume, and what the young people are going to need to deal with themselves, etc., etc.;

- observing and reacting to the group dynamics so as to maintain a welcoming, constructive and motivating atmosphere;
- developing a leadership style that is a balance between friendship (to encourage them) and authority (to get them back on track). The adult leader is not an army general or a company president giving orders to be obeyed - he or she needs to encourage ideas, initiative and decision-making. At the same time, he or she is an adult with responsibility for the physical and emotional security of all concerned and for ensuring that each young person progresses in the direction of Scouting's educational proposal. He or she cannot, therefore, abdicate from the role of adult leader. The balance between friendship and authority will depend largely on the level of maturity of the young people at a given time and in a given situation. It is up to the adult leader to judge an appropriate balance;
- providing support to each young person and to the group as a whole. The adult leader needs to be able to make use of his or her knowledge of each young person to help to find ways in which the young person can progress, while bearing in mind how to integrate the young person's interests and educational objectives in what the group as a whole wants, and is able, to achieve. The more the group is able to achieve, the more each young person benefits.

For further information on any of the documents quoted in this bulletin, please contact:

1. "RAP":

European Scout Office
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1050 Brussels, Belgium

2. "The leaders we need":

Interamerican Scout Office
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Providencia, Santiago, Chile

3. "Scouting: an educational system":

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