

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Presented by the Adult Resources Service
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The present issue is a compilation of texts on the role of adults in Scouting and their recruitment. These texts have been selected from "Scouting in Practice" a recent World Scout Bureau publication and "Recruiting Adults" a package published in 1990.

4. ADULT SERVING YOUNG PEOPLE

(a view from "Scouting in Practice", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, revised edition, 1997)

Scouting is first of all a youth movement, an environment in which young people can express and assert themselves, experiment, discover things through activities that they enjoy, make room for themselves within the group and play an active role in it, and develop constructive relationships with other young people and adults.

Men and women who are willing to listen to young people and to their aspirations and needs are there to support them, to accompany them for a time on their path of life, and to ensure that the activities that the girls and boys want to take part in contribute to their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development.

The adult is not there to behave like a young person, nor to prolong his own youth. As an adult in an environment of young people, he has to remain the adult that he is in order to carry out his role, while being able to listen to them and understand them.

To be a leader, it is essential to recognize each young person as an individual. A child is not a blank page to be filled as the adult wishes. Nor is a child a block of raw material that an adult can trim and model as he wants. A child is a living, unique being, with particular capacities, destined to develop throughout his existence.

The role of the adult is to stimulate this growth process, to set pointers to enable the young person to find his way and make informed decisions, and to create an environment that can help each person to develop.

After all, you cannot make a plant grow by pulling on the stem!

• *An environment*

We live in a number of different environments. The work environment, for example, involves a number of specific characteristics - place, setting, atmosphere, people, perception of oneself and of others - which are not the same as those of the family environment, which also comprises a setting, an atmosphere, people, and a perception of oneself and others. Both of these differ from the leisure environment, for example.

When we define Scouting as an environment for young people, this is what we mean. This environment comprises a number of specific characteristics which differentiate it from other environments in which a young person develops.

In the Scout environment, each person has to take on real responsibilities to make the activities and projects happen, and to ensure the welfare of the group. When the young person feels that his efforts make a difference and are appreciated, he will gradually develop the self-confidence that will enable him to feel more integrated, to assume more responsibility, etc.

Having a meaningful role to play is essential for development and it is one of the main functions of the Scout environment. Other environments, such as the family or school, do not offer this possibility to the same extent, precisely because of their different characteristics.

The family environment is often full of ambiguities and undercurrents. It can sometimes be a battle field of power struggles in which relationships are really based on relative positions of power between individuals, between individuals and subgroups and between subgroups. It is an environment in which everyone has plans for others and where roles and life scripts are predestined to a large extent ("you will be a man, my boy!"). Of course, not all families are like that... or are they?

The school environment, on the other hand, fulfils a function of social inte-

gration. This institution often gets trapped in the ambiguity of what it claims to do, namely to educate (equal opportunities and development of everyone's qualities), and what it does in practice, namely selecting the "best", i.e. those who are able to enter the system and "succeed" by conforming to the demands placed on them.

There is no doubt that the family and the school play an irreplaceable role, and there is no shortage of examples showing how personal development is affected and compromised when either is lacking.

Unfortunately, however, neither can totally overcome its internal contradiction.

• *A relationship*

In Scouting, the educational relationship between the adult and the young people is above all a partnership. Both "partners" acknowledge each other's qualities and both have an equally important contribution to make to their common project.

In the case of Scouting, the project is to lead a "happy, active, useful" life. Both young people and adults are committed to pursuing this project as partners in the process of living and each is enriched by the richness of the other.

This relationship implies mutual trust and respect, a willingness to listen to each other, and to accept that the other "partner" may have different hopes and needs and may see the world in a different way.

The relationship is also based on the acknowledgement of the fact that each of us faces decisions and choices that we alone can make. No one can put himself in someone else's shoes... even if he is a wise adult with lots of experience!

This kind of relationship between a young person and an adult is quite rare, but if you really want to be a Scout leader, this is what you have to strive for.

(continue overleaf)

5. "RECRUITING ADULTS"

(an introduction to a recruitment guide published by the World Scout Bureau, 1990)

Scouting is a youth Movement in which adults play a coaching and supporting role. An adult in Scouting contributes to providing an environment in which young people are free to be themselves, an environment in which their natural dynamism and potential are channelled so as to foster their development.

In most associations, obtaining the strong commitment of a sufficient number of adults with all the qualities required to fulfil their mission is a problem. It is a question of ensuring both quantity (sufficient numbers of adults in Scouting) and quality (adults that are motivated to accomplish a task and possess the necessary competencies). In most cases, the problem remains unsolved and adult leaders in the Movement are too few, often too young, sometimes too old, always full of good will which, as everyone knows, is a necessary condition but not sufficient. In their efforts to solve this problem, most associations find themselves faced with difficulties. Some of those difficulties come from outside while others come from within the association itself.

One of the external difficulties, in certain societies, is the belittling of the educational function, particularly when it is performed in a non-formal educational context. Of course everybody claims that "youth is our future, our wealth of tomorrow" - who would say the contrary? But at the same time youth leaders are looked at with a smile: "they are grown-up children"; suspicion: "why should they be interested in young people?"; or even with a contemptuous smile: "they are unable to do anything else" (making money, for example). An association can do very little against all this, except perhaps to avoid being subject to criticism by being very careful in the selection of adult leaders and by taking an interest in their motivation.

Another external difficulty, which is particularly serious in developing countries, is the never ending struggle for life. The necessity for people to get enough resources makes it impossible for them to offer their time in a volunteer capacity. How could it be otherwise when - in most developing countries - you need to have at least two paid jobs simply to survive and feed the family?

Whatever the external difficulties may be, it is necessary to get away from a sit-and-wait attitude: "don't worry,

they'll come when they understand what we really are"; or a giving-up attitude: "that's the way it is, there is nothing we can do, and if there are few of us, it's only because our standards are so high". This is the sublimation of failure, an easy way of comforting oneself!

In order to move away from such an attitude, internal obstacles have to be removed. Here are a few of them. They have been formulated from frequently heard objections which some may recognize:

- *Scouting is a volunteer Movement. People join of their own free will, because they want to get involved. In the Movement we do not recruit!*

In order to join, however, people must know that the Movement exists, that it needs the contribution of adults, that it may be a place where they can grow roots, that it may be the appropriate answer to their need to belong, a place where they can act in a significant manner and provide essential services. And why on earth would accepting an invitation, or answering a request, be inconsistent with a free and voluntary commitment, or be the suspicious sign of hidden interests?

- *To be a leader you must have been a Scout before (and if, in addition, you have also been a Cub and a Rover, this is even better).*

The aim of Scouting is not to produce adult leaders for the Movement itself. Scouting is successful when a young adult leaves the Movement to take his place - a responsible place, not necessarily as a leader - in society. Inbreeding usually leads to genetic and biological decline. Sociology also shows how societies that live in a closed world of their own finally die. Openness is a source of enrichment and so is cross-breeding. Bringing new strengths into a Movement can only generate it, make it more dynamic. Of course this may be uncomfortable for those who were there before and are happy with the status quo!

- *True commitment will never come from outside.*

To some extent, this objection is only a continuation of the previous one, but it also reflects a very narrow vision of the Movement. What it actually means is that the Movement is not capable of offering to adults who do not already belong to it, a commitment that they feel able to make and carry through, a commitment that is a valuable alternative to other possibilities in the community of offering service to others, whether it be through religious or political organizations,

The "six steps of recruitment"

(*"Recruiting adults"*, World Scout Bureau, 1990)

1. Define the job
2. Specify the ideal profile
3. List potential people
4. Meet people on the list
5. Finalize agreement and mutual commitment
6. Get the person started

trade unions, charities or the commitment to such causes as protecting the environment, defending human rights, etc.

- *A systematic process of recruitment is administrative, impersonal and therefore in contradiction with the spirit of the Movement.*

In many cases, it is the very idea that recruitment should be for a function or task which is rejected. It is the concepts of job description, recruitment interview, contract and term of office which are rejected. Those are considered too formal, too binding. In fact they are only tools, neutral in themselves, and it all depends on how they are used and on the attitude of those using them. In order to overcome this objection, an association should provide those who will use these tools with the necessary training so that they are used properly.

Without any doubt, many other internal obstacles exist which are not listed here. All of them in fact are rooted in the same defensive attitude, in the same fear of openness and change. It is therefore the attitude of self-confidence of an association, of confidence in its mission and the relevance of what it has to offer to the young people and adults who join, that will be the firmest base for an open and dynamic attitude. By building on this, an association will find the ways of resolutely embarking on systematic search for competent and motivated adults for the effective management of its human resources.

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

1. *"Scouting in practice"*
2. *"Recruiting adults"*

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