

# INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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The following is reproduced from World Scout Bureau, Geneva "SCOUTING: AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM"

## WHAT IS SCOUTING'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION? (p. 11-12)

Scouting's approach to education has to be coherent with what it seeks to achieve. Here again, it is the principles, the fundamental beliefs on which Scouting is founded, that guide its educational approach. Thus, Scouting's approach to education could be described as being person-centred, community-related and spiritually-oriented.

### Person-centred

Scouting's approach is person-centred in the sense that:

- Scouting accepts each young person as he or she is – a **unique** human being with his or her own personal background and experience of life thus far, variations in needs, capacities, interests and pace of development.

It recognises the uniqueness of each person through:

- respecting each person's free will to decide to join Scouting or not
- proposing a framework of self-education (ie as Baden-Powell described it: "education from within", as opposed to "instruction from without")

- inviting each young person to develop to the best of that person's ability ("doing one's best"). There is therefore no comparison of achievement between young people

- the flexibility of Scouting's educational system which enables each young person to develop in the way which is most relevant to him or her through:

- translating the general educational objectives proposed for the age section into a set of personalised objectives, with help from the adult leader
- progressing through pursuing his or her interests and exploring his or her concerns

- developing at his or her own pace. The approach takes into account that development does not take place at the same place in each dimension, nor does it take place in a constant surge forward. There are no absolute deadlines.

- Scouting's approach is also person-centred in the sense that it seeks to help each young person to develop his or her **whole** self through:

- educational objectives which cover knowledge, skills and attitudes in each of the dimensions of the human personality

- a multi-faceted method which emphasises personal experience (as opposed to, for example, just intellectual understanding

- many, varied opportunities for experiences, spread over time, likely to contribute to a young person's development.

### Community-related

Scouting's approach is community-related in the sense that:

- the very goals that it pursues, ie to help young people to live and develop as ever more autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed individuals are necessary for the long term development of society

- it seeks to help each young person to recognise him or herself *as a part of a whole*, ie the world in which he or she lives. It does so through:

- emphasising the development of constructive relationships with others - young people and adults - based on mutual respect

- offering young people the experience of a micro-society, based on a democratic way of life, taking into account the needs and interests of all

- promoting a sense of belonging in young people - to their Scout unit and to their local, national and international community

- offering varied opportunities for young people to interact with, and make a meaningful contribution

to, the world of which they are a part (local, national and international community, natural, cultural and spiritual environment, etc.)

- helping young people to adapt constructively to changes in society and to cope effectively with issues that they face or are likely to face.

### Spiritually-oriented

Scouting's approach is spiritually-oriented in the sense that it seeks, through everything that it proposes, to help young people to:

- look beyond the material world in search of a Spiritual Reality
- to discover for themselves those values which give meaning to life
- continuously strive to put into practice those values in the way in which one lives one's life.

Of course, however ambitious what Scouting seeks to achieve may be, and however comprehensive its educational approach, it cannot help young people to develop without the right educational tools, and thus we come to the Scout Method.

## ADULT SUPPORT (p. 57-59)

### 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.

The nature of the educational support provided in Scouting is different from the other kinds of adult support which are normally present in a young person's life – for example, parents, a school teacher, or a sports coach. In

(continue overleaf)

## Information Exchange (page 2)

each case, the reasons why the adult and the young person are in contact with each other are different, the goals sought are different, the nature of the role played is different, the affective relationship is different and the interaction that occurs is different. In short, the educational relationship is different.

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. While an adult leader may be a parent in private life or a teacher in professional life, in Scouting life, ie when he or she is working with the young people in the group, the adult leader is not there as a substitute parent, nor as a teacher.

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 a 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 everything 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.
- 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

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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.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DELIVERY?

The adult leader is the person entrusted by the Scout association to promote, convey and implement the association's educational proposal. This involves having a thorough knowledge, understanding and personal identification with the theory underlying Scouting's purpose, the principles on which it is based and Scouting's method. It also requires knowledge of the stages of development of young people and the general educational objectives.

At the same time, the adult leader is working with a group of real young people and needs a certain level of personal development if Scouting is to offer more than a series of activities. Scouting as an educational system remains complete theory until it is applied in the group.

Areas to examine include:

- Do the adult leaders truly understand Scouting's educational proposal?
- Are they able to translate the theory into practice in a way that really makes it a multifaceted learning experience for young people?
- What kind of support do leaders need to be able to turn around difficult situations so that they become constructive learning situations for the young people?
- What kind of support do they need to be able to move from the use of ready-made activities to enriching activity ideas that the young people propose?
- What kind of support do they need to be able to fine tune the way in which the group functions so as to provide the young people with the progressively greater room that they need to take initiative and assume responsibility?
- What kind of support do they need to be able to make sure that the routine activities of group life and the relationships within the group provide a rich learning environment?

These are only a few of the points that could be examined. There are certainly many more.