

# INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Presented by the Adult Resources Service  
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## ESSENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS AND FUNCTIONS IN SCOUTING

The following is from Ka-on Man, Trainer, The Scout Association of Hong Kong (Senior Lecturer, The Hong Kong Institute of Education)

Scouting is a kind of voluntary non-formal education. There are essential educational elements involving the aim, training program, method and outcome of the Movement. It is important for the aims and objectives of the training scheme to cover physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development so as to foster our young people to be all-rounded.

To cater the developmental needs of different age groups, a comprehensive balanced and progressively designed program for the local context without neglecting the cultural aspect has to be carefully planned. The program should also reflect a set of values of the Scout organisation and at the same time offer young people an opportunity to clarify their values and to build over time a personal set of values that will guide their lives.

A global outlook and a sense of responsibility towards the self, the family, the community, the country, the world and the ultimate concern should not be neglected in any of the process. Experiential learning with peer interaction, opportunities of learning by doing and co-operating with each other should be provided so that the self-learning ability and inquisitive mind of our members can be enhanced.

The element of fun is also essential in all the Scouting activities. It is hoped that with all the above essential elements included in our program and method, young people can be helped to strengthen their character to be responsible world citizens with mind and body spiritually integrated.

From World Scout Bureau - Geneva - "Scouting: An Educational System"

## A SYSTEM OF EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS

The fact that Scouting's method is referred to as the Scout Method (capital "M") is because it is composed of several different educational tools.

These are: a law and promise, learning by doing, a team system, a symbolic framework, personal progression, nature and adult support.

Taken individually, many of these educational tools are used in other forms of education – working in teams on projects, for example. In Scouting, however, these different tools are referred to as elements of the Scout Method – as each one is only one part of the whole. The fact that all of these elements form a whole and are used as a system is part of what makes Scouting unique.

In the sense used here, a system could be described as a network of elements in which each element:

- has a specific function;
- interacts with the other elements so as to reinforce the effectiveness of each one;
- contributes to the overall purpose to be achieved – and therefore must be present.

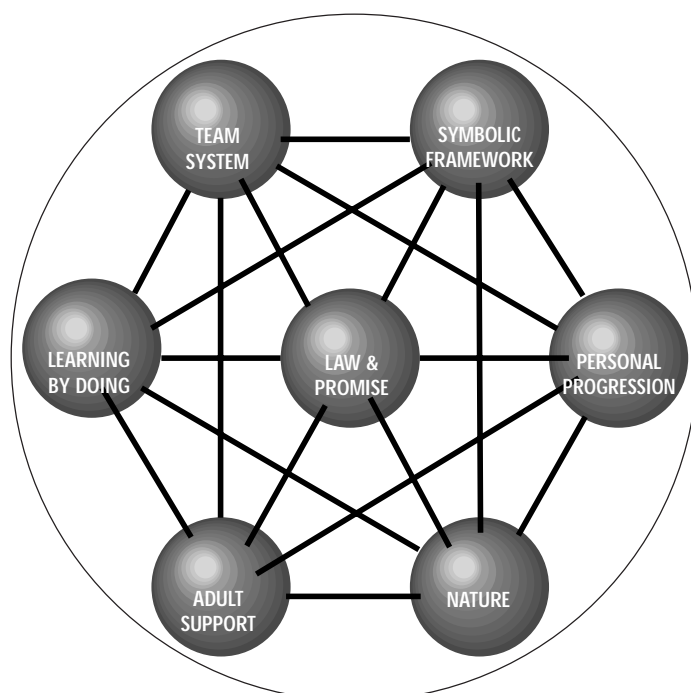
An important characteristic of a system is the synergy that is created – in other words the effects of a system are greater than the sum total of the effects of its parts.

The same is true of the Scout Method. Each of the elements has an educational function; each element complements the impact of the others. If any of the elements is missing or is not being used as intended, then the system as a whole cannot serve its original purpose – the progressive, holistic development of the young person. We cannot, therefore, apply certain elements and disregard others, nor can we use any of them in a way which is not consistent with Scouting's purpose and principles.

The Scout Method is designed to stimulate the development of young people throughout the age range that Scouting serves. This means that the educational function of each of the elements and the way in which they work together as a system are just as valid and effective when working with young people in the junior age section as they are when working with young people in the senior age section.

Evidently, however, the way in which the elements are applied (i.e. the way in which the educational "tools" are intended to be used) needs to reflect

THE SCOUT METHOD



(continue overleaf)

the maturity of the young people in the various age sections.

Finally, it would be unrealistic to imagine that each element of the Scout Method can be in the foreground during every activity that the young people take part in. Young people cannot physically be in nature, for example, while they are performing a puppet show for sick children in a hospital in town. However, the element of nature could still be present, albeit in the background – for example by taking time to walk through a part on the way back or by using recycled materials to make the puppets.

### THE SCOUT METHOD: SEVEN ELEMENTS

As shown on the diagram, on the front page of this issue of Information Exchange, the “Scout Method” combines seven elements. These cannot be dissociated and for the genuine “Scout Method” to be used adequately they must all be in interaction over a period of time, although not all of them may be present at all times in all activities.

In the April issue of Information Exchange (N°19) we have quoted in extenso a particular section of “*Scouting, an educational system*” on “Adult support”, one of seven elements. We would like to refer our readers back to the entire publication and, as a bridge between exerts presented in April and the full text, we are now offering a new set of quotations describing briefly each of the seven steps:

#### *The Scout law...*

The Scout law is a code of living based on Scouting’s principles. It is a personal code of living in that it serves as a reference, guiding the way in which each member of the Movement lives his or her life today, and guiding the direction of development for tomorrow. It is also a collective code of living in that it is the basis on which the Scout unit functions. The Scout law is therefore at the heart of the Scout Method.

#### *...and promise*

The Scout promise is a pledge that every young person makes before a group of peers when he or she chooses to join the Movement. By making the Scout promise, the young person acknowledges that he or she is familiar with the Scout law and makes a personal commitment to do his or her best to live according to this code of living.

#### *Learning by doing*

- reflects Scouting’s active approach to education. In other words, young people are helped to develop through opportunities for concrete, “hands-on” experience as opposed to passively listening to a lecture or watching a demonstration.

- applies to the way in which young people gain knowledge, skills and attitudes in each of the areas of development and thus progress towards their educational objectives. Learning by doing is thus not limited to “doing” in the sense of learning practical or manual skills. For example, young people learn the meaning of responsibility through taking on responsibility.

- reflects Scouting’s practical approach to education based on learning through the opportunities for experiences that arise in the course of pursuing one’s interests and dealing with everyday life. In other words, Scouts do not gain knowledge, skills and attitudes in an abstract context, divorced from reality. In Scouting, young people would not learn to sew for the sake of knowing how to sew, but because, for example, they want to put on a play and want to make their own costumes. Or, for example, Scouts would not learn to manage conflict simply through a specifically-designed activity, but through the natural process of sorting out whatever disagreements arise in the group (in a manner which is consistent with the Scout law!).

#### *The team system*

Young people have a natural tendency to form groups of roughly the same age. The team system is a way of making use of this natural tendency in order to provide an environment in which young people enjoy being and in order to channel the substantial influence that peers have on each other in a constructive direction.

In Scouting, young people of roughly the same age operate in small groups of six to eight members. Each small group operates as a team. Within each team, the young people organise their life as a group and decide upon, organise and carry out their activities. Each young person has a specific responsibility which he or she carries out for an agreed length of time which contributes to the life and welfare of the team and the success of their activities.

In each of the teams, one of the young people, acknowledged by the others to be the leader, assumes a general coordinating role and convenes meetings with the other members, giving each member the opportunity to take part in the decisions and to be fully involved in the life of the team. Several of these teams (usually four to six) form a Scout unit, supported by an adult leader and adult assistants. The Scout unit is managed by a council involving the team leaders and the adult leader.

#### *A symbolic framework*

In Scouting, a symbolic framework is a set of elements which represent

concepts which Scouting seeks to promote.

The very name of our Movement - Scouting - refers to a symbolic framework invented by its founder, Baden-Powell, and was intended to appeal to boys in late childhood-early adolescence (the only age section - and gender - catered to at the time).

Originally, the name of Scouts came from soldiers in the armed forces who went on reconnaissance trips ahead of the rest in order to determine whether or not it was safe for the others to follow. They survived through their knowledge of nature and general resourcefulness.

#### *Nature*

Nature refers to the natural environment - the woods, the plains, the sea, the mountains, the desert - as opposed to artificially created environments, such as the school yard, concrete campsites and crowded cities. Nature also refers to what Baden-Powell called the “harmonious whole” of the “infinite, the historic and the microscopic”, and humankind’s place in it.

#### *Personal Progression*

Personal progression focuses specifically on helping each young person to be consciously and actively involved in his or her own development.

The progressive scheme is the main tool used to support this element of the Scout Method. It is based on a set of educational objectives prepared by the national association for the age section, established according to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a young person could reasonably be expected to have gained in the various areas of development by the end of that age section.

Presented in an attractive and stimulating way, it provides a tool for each young person, with the help of the adult leader, to:

- work out a set of personal development objectives;
- establish how, in concrete terms, he or she or she intends to reach those objectives;
- carry out his or her intentions at his or her own pace;
- evaluate, recognise and celebrate the progress made.

#### *Adult support*

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.