

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Presented by the Adult Resources Service
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The Mission of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

This is achieved by:

- involving them throughout their formative years in a non-formal educational process,
- using a specific method that makes each individual the principal agent in his or her development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person,
- assisting them to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social and personal principles as expressed in the Promise and Law.

The 35th World Scout Conference which met in Durban (South Africa) from 26 to 30 July 1999 finalized and adopted a "Mission Statement" for Scouting.

The text is the end result of a long process that has taken place throughout the Scout Movement over the last few years. Already at the 34th World Scout Conference in Oslo (Norway), 1996, two days had been spent in commission to explore the questions: "Scouting for what?" and "Scouting for whom?" and provide the material from which the "Mission statement" finally came out.

It should be noted that throughout the process the World Scout Committee, through a task force that had been specially appointed to prepare for the 35th World Scout Conference, called on contributions from members of the Scout Movement and refused to produce its own "draft Mission Statement" for approval by the Conference. The intelligent and difficult contribution of all those concerned has been called on to produce at the Conference itself a "Mission Statement". The final text was produced by a "select committee" (one representative from each national delegation) and then put to the conference for formal adoption.

It will be a major task for the new "Strategy Task Force", appointed by the World Scout Committee, to disseminate this "Mission Statement" throughout the world so that it will soon become familiar to all in the Scout Movement. Of course, the

Statement will not always be used in its entirety as presented in this bulletin but, should there be adaptations to fit a particular culture or the requirements of a particular usage of the "Mission Statement", these should never distort the original meaning and thus change "The Mission of Scouting".

Before arriving at an agreed formulation of the Mission, it has been necessary for all those involved to consider "*The Essential Characteristics of Scouting*" and make sure that they indeed agreed on the "essentials" on which a "Mission Statement" was to be based.

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- through a system of progressive self-education...
- based upon a value system
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- for young people...
- voluntary...
- open to all...
- non-political...
- independent

Clearly, Scouting is an educational movement, its purpose is to make a contribution to the education of young people which, far from being restricted to "school learning" as is too often the case, does encompass the full development of an individual, in all the dimensions of his/her personality so that he/she will become a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person. "*The Essential characteristics of Scouting*" start with a definition of education.

1. WHAT IS EDUCATION?

a) Definition

The Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement states clearly that Scouting is "an educational movement".

Education in the broadest sense is a life long process which enables the global and continuous development of a person's capacities both as an individual and a member of society. Contrary to the commonly held view, education goes far beyond formal education (i.e. school) in both scope and duration.

A life long process: the development of an individual does not take place exclusively during the "formative years" (childhood and adolescence). It will continue throughout his/her life. As a "process", it will have ups and downs - periods that will be more active, intensive, significant than others - and it will need to be supported.

The continuous development of a person's capacities: the purpose of education is to contribute to the full development of an autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed individual:

- **Autonomous:** able to make his/her own decisions and to manage his/her life
- **Supportive:** who actively cares about and for others
- **Responsible:** able to assume the consequences of the decisions he/she makes, to keep commitments and to complete what he/she undertakes
- **Committed:** who seeks to live according to his/her values and supports the ideals which he/she finds are important.

As an individual: the development of all the abilities of an individual in all areas of growth - physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual.

As a member of society: the development of an awareness of and concern for others, the sense of belonging to a community and being part of its history and evolution.

These two dimensions cannot be dissociated since there is no "education" without a search for the full development of a person's own potentials and there is no "education" without learning to live with others as a member of the local, national and international communities.

b) The "four pillars of education"

In its broader definition, education throughout life is based on four pillars:

Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth in a few subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life.

Learning to do, in order to acquire not only occupational skills but also a

(continue overleaf)

broad range of life skills including interpersonal and team relationships.

Learning to live together, developing an understanding of other people, an appreciation of interdependence, skills in team work and conflict resolution, and an adherence to the values of democracy, mutual respect and understanding, peace and justice.

Learning to be, so as to better develop one's character and act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect in the development of a young person's potential.

c) Educational Agents

A variety of educational agents make a contribution to the full development of an individual. The UNESCO definition shows three distinct types: *Formal education* is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, educational system running from primary through to tertiary institutions. *Informal education* is the process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience, such as from family, friends, peer groups, the media and other influences and factors in the person's environment.

Non-formal education is organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives.

2. SCOUTING'S SPECIFIC APPROACH

As an educational movement for young people, Scouting identifies fully with the elements of education as stated above.

Its **purpose** is to contribute to the development of young people's full potentials as autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed individuals and members of society.

It includes all **four pillars of education**: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be, the last two requiring a particular emphasis.

It belongs to the category of **non-formal education** since, while it takes place outside the formal educational system, it is an organized institution with an educational aim and is addressed to a specific clientele.

In addition, Scouting's educational approach is characterized by the following:

- it adopts a **holistic approach** to a young person's education;
- it seeks to achieve its educational purpose on the basis of an **educational proposal**;
- as a non-formal educational agent, it plays a **complementary role** to

that of other educational agents;

- it recognizes that it can only make a **contribution** to the education of young people.

These characteristics are developed below:

a) A holistic approach

Scouting considers each young person as an individual who is:

- a **complex being** whose identity is formed, in part, through interaction and relationships between the various dimensions of the individual (physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual), between the individual and the external world and, ultimately, between the individual and a Spiritual Reality. As a result, Scouting addresses the development of the *whole person* through seeking to stimulate development in all dimensions:

– it recognizes that **the various dimensions of the human personality are connected** and influence each other;

– it acknowledges that **the development of the person as a whole can only take place as a result of a multiplicity of experiences** which are necessarily spread over a period of time.

- a **unique individual**, each with his/her own personal history, set of characteristics, variations in needs, capacities, and pace of development. As a result, Scouting addresses the development of the whole person as *a unique individual*:

– it recognizes that the development of each young person's capacities takes place *at his/her own pace*, with bursts of growth in certain dimensions and with dormant periods in others. Scouting therefore seeks to meet each young person's educational needs as they emerge, while continuing to stimulate development in all dimensions;

– it acknowledges that each person's potential is different and thus seeks to help each young person to *develop his/her capacities to the best of that person's ability* ("doing one's best").

- and **an integral part of the world** in which he or she lives. As a result, Scouting addresses the development of the whole person as a unique individual *who is also an integral part of the world* in which he/she lives:

– it seeks to help each young person *to recognize him or herself as a part, albeit a small one, of a whole and to develop a sense of belonging*, which helps to give meaning to life. This requires a multiplicity of opportunities for the young person to interact with, and make a meaningful contribution to, the world of which he/she is a part (the family, local, national and international community, cultural heritage and natural environment).

b) An educational proposal

Scouting seeks to achieve its educational purpose as described above – to contribute to the development of young people's full potential – on the basis of a number of ideals or values – its principles – and in accordance with a clearly defined educational method – the Scout Method. Scouting therefore offers a specific **educational proposal**.

This educational proposal:

- is not an empty shell that anyone can fill up with whatever one likes depending on one's beliefs and wishes. The proposal cannot be accepted in part or rejected in part and, once accepted, it becomes binding. Of course it will evolve with time but not at the whim of any individual member.
- does not aim to make the young person conform to a pre-set ideal model. He/she is invited to do his/her best to develop to the full all the dimensions of his/her unique personality.

Scouting is fully successful when a member leaves the Movement with a positive attitude towards entering adult life and has the abilities to do so in a constructive, assertive and responsible way, realising that he or she will need to continue his/her development as an autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed person.

c) A complementary role

It is often said that Scouting has a complementary role to play in the personal development of an individual. As noted in Section 1.c (Educational Agents) above, three distinct educational "agents" contribute to the full development of any individual. Scouting forms part of the non-formal educational "agency", and thus its **contribution complements that provided by the formal sector and by the informal sector**. Scouting is not a formal educational agent, like school, nor is it an informal one, like the family, peers or other influences. Scouting has a distinctive role to play; it is not a repetition of - or a substitute for - what happens at school, at home or in any other institution that has an influence on the development of a young person. A Scout leader, therefore, has a distinctive function; he/she is not simply another teacher, parent, officer or priest. Scouting, therefore, must play a specific and distinctive role in the education of young people; it must identify its own "niche" in the spectrum of educational provision for young people. Scouting is **non-formal** in the sense that it is **organized and structured**, with a **specific educational proposal** which includes a clearly defined **method**.

The complete document "The Essential Characteristics of Scouting" can be unloaded from the WSB website: <http://www.scout.org>