

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Presented by the Adult Resources Service
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During their last meeting in Geneva (23-25 June 2000) the World Programme Committee and the World Adult Resources Committee held a joint meeting to discuss the "Involvement of young members in decision making".

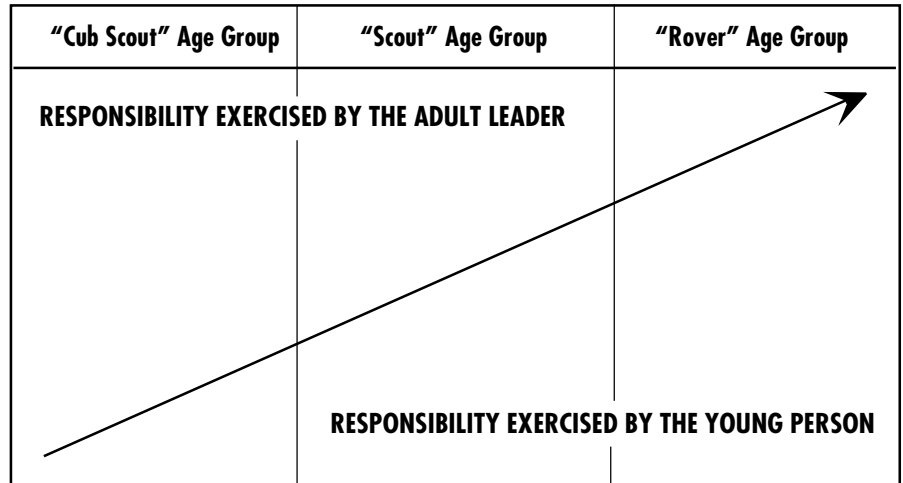
A large part of their discussion was based on a paper which we are reproducing here for your information. This paper, which had been circulated to members of the two committees prior to their meeting, had been prepared jointly by Philippe Pijollet and Dominique Bénard.

"INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEMBERS IN DECISION MAKING"

With the adoption of a policy statement on "Involvement of young members in decision making", at Bangkok, in 1993, the World Organization of the Scout Movement clearly defined itself as a Movement *of* young people, not just a Movement *for* young people. After the adoption of this policy, a number of decisions have been made to facilitate the participation of young delegates in World Scout Conferences and resolutions have been passed to govern the organisation of Scout Youth Forums at World and Regional levels. This, however, also revealed a number of problems related to the adoption and implementation of this policy, hence this document for consideration by technical committees within the Educational Methods Group to stimulate and facilitate an in-depth reflection on the above subject by the WOSM bodies concerned, particularly the World Scout Committee on the basis of a recommendation to be formulated by the Educational Methods Group.

1. Involvement of young members: two dimensions

We would like to suggest that the concept of "Involvement of young members" as used in the Scout Movement is often very loose! Indeed in practice, no difference is made between an "educational dimension" and an "institutional dimension", although this has been spelled out in the policy from the very beginning.



- *The "educational dimension"*

This is how Scouting helps individuals develop their capacity to act in a responsible way and contribute to making decisions (learning by doing). It is quite clear that, from an educational point of view, the concept of "involvement" must be part of the Scout Programme at all ages, starting long before 18 since it is part of the Scout Method. Indeed, a Cub Scout will learn responsibility through exercising responsibilities at his/her own level. This in most cases will be on the occasion of activities carried out within the unit and which require "making decisions" involving direct member participation, which go far beyond choosing one activity out of two.

Such choices cannot be the only opportunity for a young person to be involved in decision making: participation in the selection of a Patrol Leader would provide another example.

Participation of young people in decision making should not be restricted to "activity selecting, planning, etc..." and could, at a later stage, also have other dimensions, including institutional.

Many associations do not have a "Rover section" (or its equivalent) where decision making is best learned; such a section is therefore necessary and should be developed in all associations.

In Scouting, as shown on the above diagramme, the "amount of responsibility" given to a young person increases with his/her level of personal development.

- *The "institutional dimension"*

This relates to influencing an Association or Scouting as a whole, depending on where and how it is exercised. It is directly related to "running the institution" and is distinct from the "educational dimension". The "institutional dimension" should involve many "young people". It will have a direct influence on the priorities and policy choices of an Association or of the World Movement.

Being a member of a national delegation at the World Scout Conference will influence policy choices that govern WOSM as a whole. Participating in an Annual General Meeting will influence the Association. Contributing to deliberations at provincial/county level will influence Scouting in the area.

In order to be effective in this role, young people must have reached a stage in their own development where they can act responsibly and make real choices. This implies, when they have grown through the Movement, that opportunities have been provided for them to develop such a responsible attitude and therefore that the "educational dimension" of

(continue overleaf)

participation has been given due consideration.

2. "Young members": who are they?

Two categories of "young people" can be identified in Scouting, although both are "members" of the same Movement. Some of them will be Rovers (*users* of WOSM's Youth Programme) and others will be young leaders (*providers* of WOSM's Youth Programme). In some associations, some may be both since being a "Leader" in another section (e.g. Cub Scouts or Scouts) is part of the "Rover Programme".

If we retain the age 18 to 26 as an acceptable definition of "youth" and as a result of the two considerations above, we feel entitled to suggest that:

- a) the involvement of young members in decision-making is a must and
- b) within the Scout Movement, a distinction should be retained between "*users*" and "*providers*" of the Youth Programme.

3. "Young people" : what age?

We would suggest that the very concept of "young people" needs to be defined more clearly. Generally speaking, WOSM has adopted a widely accepted definition of "young people" (currently used by UNESCO) which goes from 18 to 26 years of age. The age group 18 to 26 is used for Youth Forums and special registration rates for World Conferences apply up to the age of 26. Furthermore, it has been suggested elsewhere that the age limit be raised to 30.

Obviously, many "young people" of that age, particularly those above 23 or 24, will have reached a "responsible" position in society. Some will have completed University and already started a professional career, some will have completed their National Service and in certain societies, some will have already started a family. Why should they in this case be maintained in a position of minority in Scouting when they already are fully "involved" and recognized in other sectors of their lives.

4. Some pitfalls of participation

It is clear that, if young people are actively involved in the decision making process at their own level - the educational dimension - that will prepare them for decision making at the institutional level. This may not be enough however and the development

of specific skills may also be required. These include assertiveness, the ability to analyse a situation and propose structured solutions, etc... It also includes the ability to avoid some of the pitfalls of participation and, in particular, *Tokenism*: a situation which occurs, for example, when "young representatives" are elected to a given body, essentially composed of "elders" who make all the decisions and will be happy with the "silent presence" of younger ones at their meetings! Avoiding such situations will require:

- A complete change of mentality on the part of many Adults in Scouting; they must accept that they have to share decisions, establish partnership with young members.
- Rejecting the use of "quotas" whereby "a certain number" of young people must be elected to committees, regardless of their real competence.

As inspired by a diagramme presented by Roger Hart in "Education for Human Development", here is a "*Scale of participation*":

8. Young people initiated, decisions shared with adults.
7. Young people initiated and directed decisions.
6. Adult initiated, decisions shared with young people.
5. Young people consulted and informed, but adults make the decision.
4. No choice but informed: although a decision that young people would participate was made by adults, young people adhere to the aim of the project, they know who made the decision and why.
3. Tokenism, where an "illusion" of participation is created whereas adults continue to make all decisions.
2. "Decoration", to have young people on the Committee, as long as they keep quiet and smile.
1. Manipulation: adults make all decisions and "convince" young people that these are right!

5. Youth Forums, a particular case

Scout Youth Forums have been recommended as a particular way of implementing this policy of "involvement of young members in the decision making process", both through discussing specific problems

and areas of interest to young people and developing skills. In practice, however, they have been seen as a means for young people to exercise pressure on the decision making bodies of WOSM. (e.g. the World Scout Conference) and many think they should be discontinued.

6. Establishing partnership

As part of its original method, Scouting is also based on equal *partnership* between adults and young people. This cannot be ignored.

Obviously a place where all decisions are made by adults for young people has nothing in common with Scouting but, similarly, a place where one has to be "young" (under 26) to make decisions is not Scouting either!

In Scouting, decisions are discussed in a responsible way between young people and adults and they are implemented under the responsibility and control of both.

Conclusion

The implementation of the policy on "Involvement of young members in decision making", adopted in 1993, has been very incomplete and unsatisfactory.

The Educational Methods Group - working on the conclusions of the discussion held by the Youth Programme and Adult Resources Committees has prepared specific recommendations for the World Scout Committee, and the Committees in preparation for the Educational Methods Group meeting explored such questions as:

- What action needs to be taken by National Scout Organisations to introduce or increase youth participation, in defining learning objectives, selecting and running activities?
- How can young people be actually involved in the decision making process of their National Scout Organization?
- How can existing rules be amended to ensure that more young people can run for elections, selection to the various committees, and other WOSM bodies, according to their capacities and technical ability in a given sector?
- What steps need to be taken to ensure that the above can be achieved in the foreseeable future, rather than remain theoretical objectives that are never actually achieved?