

SCOUTING'S ROLE IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTINUUM

Scouting as an agent of non-formal education

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Résumé

Depuis l'extraordinaire camp de l'Ile de Brownsea, il y a maintenant un peu plus de 100 ans, le Mouvement Scout s'est nettement positionné comme un des acteurs de la construction d'un monde meilleur et ce à travers l'engagement à une Loi et une Promesse de centaines de millions de femmes et d'hommes. Nous allons tenter de démontrer la persistance de cette « foi », de ce discours que le Mouvement a su préserver depuis ses origines.

Nous utiliserons ensuite le lien entre paradigmes socioculturels et éducationnels comme cadre explicatif de la relation entre le Scoutisme et les sociétés dans lesquelles il évolue. Nous nous poserons la question de ce qu'est le développement de la personnalité et sa perception par le Scoutisme avant de mettre en évidence la continuité du processus éducatif et de situer les pratiques non formelles, comme le Scoutisme, dans ce continuum. Nous soulignerons enfin la pertinence du Scoutisme dans le développement de la personnalité et donc son rôle et sa contribution au développement holistique des enfants et des jeunes.

Mots clés :

Scoutisme, éducation non formelle, paradigme éducationnel, paradigme socioculturel, développement de la personnalité

Abstract

Since the extraordinary camp on Brownsea Island just over 100 years ago, the Scout Movement has clearly positioned itself as one of the agents in creating a better world through a commitment to a Law and a Promise made by several hundred million women and men. We will try to show the perseverance of this 'faith' or discourse that the Movement has been able to preserve since its inception.

We will then use the connection between sociocultural and educational paradigms as an explanatory framework for the relationship between Scouting and the societies in which it evolves. We will ask ourselves the question of what personality development is and how Scouting perceives it before highlighting the continuity of the educational process and situating non-formal practices, such as Scouting, in this continuum. Finally, we will highlight the relevance of Scouting in personality development and thus its role and contribution to the holistic development of children and young people.

Key words:

Scouting, non-formal education, educational paradigm, sociocultural paradigm, personality development

A Greek digression

According to Hesiod¹, the world is built on Earth, a perpetual material structure.

According to Thales², it is water that allows life; it is governance that animates structures.

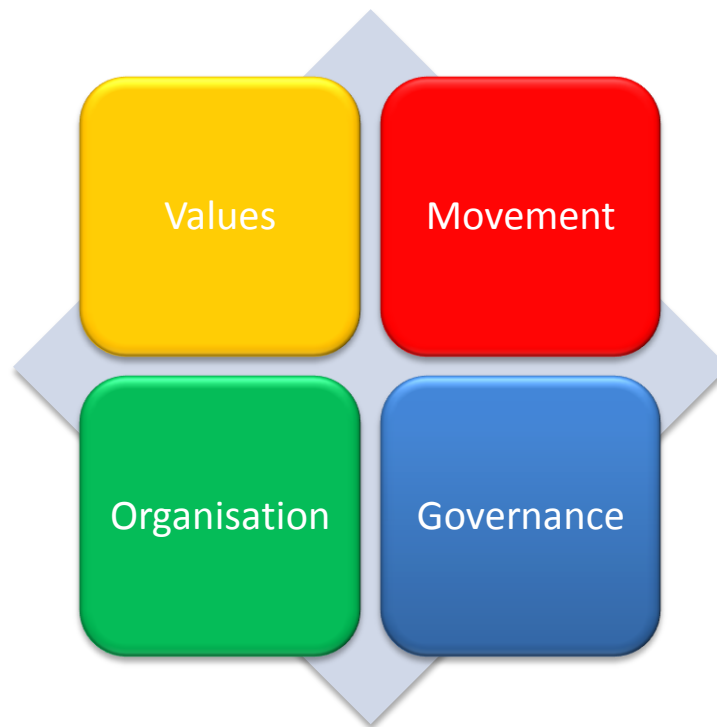
According to Anaximenes³, air is the spirit that gives life to structures.

According to Heraclitus⁴, the principle of universal movement is in fire.

In his analysis of the fight between love and hatred amongst these four elements, Empedocles⁵ discussed the emergence of either the disintegration of all of them or their fusion in union.

This ancient Greek vision of the world can apply to Scouting today, both at local and at world level. It is a lesson in wisdom concerning a holistic approach of what Scouting is and will need to be.

Scouting is:



Our remarks will only deal with the two elements at the top of this model:

- the spirit, values, aim and principles
- strategy, method

¹ Hesiod (Ἡσίοδος *Hesiodos*) was an early Greek poet and rhapsode, who presumably lived around 700 BC.

² Thales of Miletus (Θαλῆς ὁ Μιλήσιος (pronoun, ca. 624 BC–ca. 546 BC).

³ Anaximenes (Ἀναξίμενης) of Miletus (c. 585 BC–c. 525 BC).

⁴ Heraclitus of Ephesus (Ancient Greek: Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος — *Hērākleitos ho Ephēsios*, English *Heraclitus the Ephesian*) (ca. 535–475 BC).

⁵ Empedocles (Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, ca. 490–430 BC).

Adventuring into the land of concepts...

Scouting as an educational paradigm

“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.”⁶*

This mission statement of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) can only make sense if the conceptual notions and frameworks that run through it are clearly stated.

We will begin by trying to clarify them, starting with an attempt at defining the term ‘Scouting’. One of the many definitions that Robert Baden-Powell (B-P) himself had given is: *“Scouting is a school of citizenship through games, for boys and girls,”* (quoted by Mario Sica)⁷. This conscious or unconscious reductionism on the part of the Founder boils Scouting down to three fundamentals:

- An educational process with a societal ultimate goal;
- A pedagogical orientation: one which gives preference to play and which was transformed into an original method: the Scout Method. See the diagrams below.
- A target: youth.

FIG. 1 SPONTANEOUS GAME

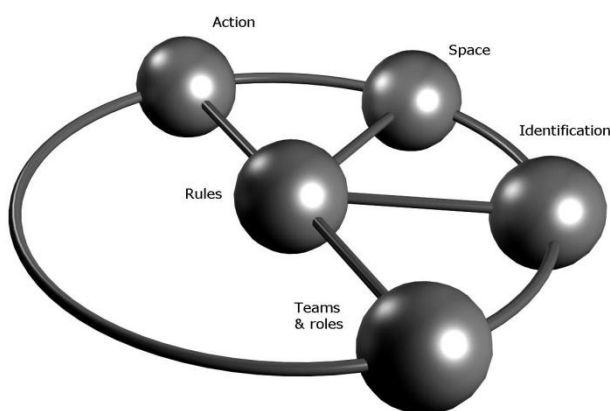
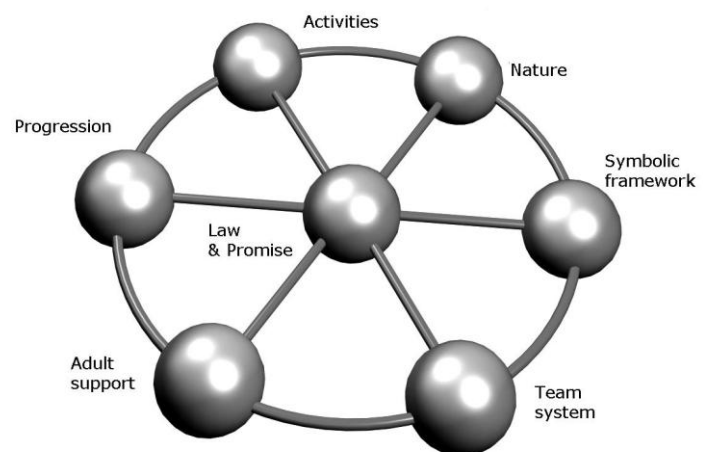


FIG. 2 THE SCOUT METHOD

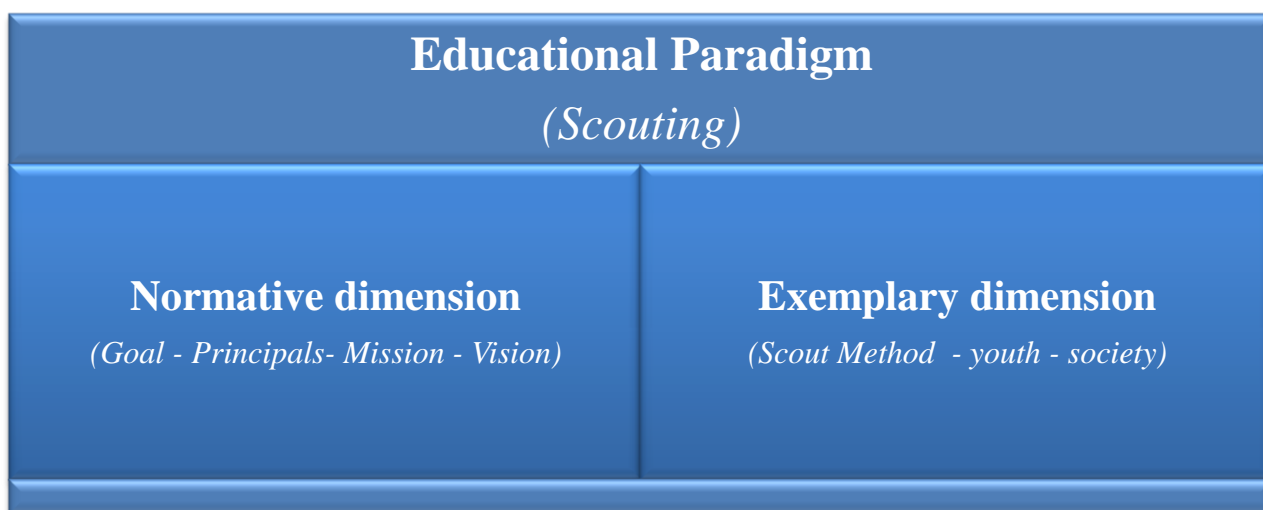


⁶ WOSM. (1999). Mission Statement. *Conference Resolution 3*. Durban.

⁷ Sica, M. (2006). *Footsteps of the Founder*. Roma: Fiordaliso.

Another way of defining Scouting is to refer to WOSM's documents, which unambiguously highlight the educational nature of the Movement. In its publication, 'The Essential Characteristics of Scouting'⁸, the Movement redefined not only its nature, but it also very clearly specified its educational reference family as being that of 'non-formal education'; this has also been stated in many other publications such as 'The Education of Young People'⁹ or 'Achieving the Mission of Scouting'¹⁰.

It is important to note that WOSM's official documentation, which defines its philosophy, principles, method, etc., does not give any definition of the term 'Scouting' as such. Nevertheless this self-definition of the Movement makes it possible to deduce Scouting's educational paradigm in the end. According to the definition of Bertrand and Valois^{11 -12}, there are two dimensions to an educational paradigm: the normative dimension (which defines its ultimate goals, aim and objectives) and the exemplary dimension (which defines the pedagogical approach).



As mentioned above, the Scout Movement not only specifies its ultimate goals and objectives, it also clearly defines the method by which to reach them. Scouting's educational paradigm is characterised by the following¹³:

It is:

- person-centred: by accepting each individual as he/she is, i.e., as a unique being, with his/her own life story, experience and life thus far, specific needs, interests, and a rate of development that is specific to him/her, but which also uses this to help each individual to develop all aspects of his/her personality;

⁸ WOSM. (1998). The Essential Characteristics of Scouting. Geneva: WSB.

⁹ WOSM; IFRC, WAGGGS; WYWC; WAYMC; IAA. (1997). *The Education of Young People*. Geneva.

¹⁰ WOSM. (2000). 2. Achieving the Mission of Scouting. Geneva: WSB.

¹¹ Bertrand-Valois. (1982). *Les options en éducation - 2e édition revue et corrigée*. Quebec: Ministry of Education – Research Department.

¹² Bertrand-Valois. (1992). *Ecole et sociétés*. Montreal: Agence d'Arc.

¹³ WOSM. (1998). Scouting: An Educational System. Geneva: WSB.

- connected to a community dimension: since the development of the person must be made concrete through a benefit for the development of society;
- directed towards spirituality: because it invites each young person to seek a 'spiritual reality', to discover values that give meaning to life and to integrate them by applying them in everyday life.

Scouting: an answer to a sociocultural paradigm?

We propose to use these 'educational and sociocultural paradigms' as a framework to analyse Scouting. For Bertrand and Valois, a sociocultural paradigm is a system of five elements in interaction. These elements are:

- 1) a vision of the world encompassing individual/community/environmental relationships. It is the 'real' world seen by a society;
- 2) an approach to knowledge as a representation of 'reality';
- 3) a set of values and principles shared by the individuals and the groups who express them;
- 4) a way of doing things, as a technical response or as something done to ensure the life of the community/society;
- 5) a global sense of human activity as a synthesis of the four preceding elements.

It is not useful within the context of this presentation to carry out a comparative analysis nor, moreover, a study of any society or 'culture'. We consider that each of us is capable of imagining examples that perfectly illustrate these elements for one's own society as for another.

Can one consider that Scouting is naturally consistent with - and complementary to - the existential sociocultural paradigm, as per the definition of Bertrand and Valois¹⁴, who associate it with person-centred societies?

- Is this interaction valid for all national Scout organisations?
- What does the existential paradigm represent today in our societies?
- What impacts do the trends we note today in various societies have on this paradigm?

These are all questions that deserve to be examined in depth in order to refine our analysis and to highlight the changes that need to be introduced into other existing or emerging paradigms so that they integrate what seems important to us.

Even a superficial reading of the world 'Scouting' literature (right since its inception) places Scouting's educational practice at the crossroads of several theoretical models. The Founder¹⁵ was influenced by various well-known people, such as Maria Montessori, William Alexander

¹⁴ Bertrand and Valois cite other paradigms (paradigms of industrial societies, paradigms of working-class societies, paradigms of newly democratic communities). The existential paradigm's general function is to concentrate on the development of the 'subject', and to promote personal skills and development within a holistic vision.

¹⁵ Smith, M. K. (2008). Robert Baden-Powell as an Educational Innovator. www.infed.org/thinkers/et-bp.htm

Smith¹⁶ and Ernest Thompson Seton¹⁷. His intuition, consolidated by what he read, people he met and what he observed gave rise to a Movement with an ideal. B-P's outlook on society and his vision of the world, on the one hand, and the collective expression of expectations and norms in many societies (not only within the British Empire), on the other hand, coincided marvellously. Amongst other reasons, the success and longevity of the Movement is a result of the mirror effect between what we described above as Scouting's 'educational paradigm' and this existential 'sociocultural paradigm'.

Beyond the extraordinary influence that B-P had and continues to have on Scouting, numerous Scout leaders have shaped Scouting. They have done so either through 'empirical' educational practices that have gained the right to feature in the doctrine of ways and customs, or by the introduction of models and approaches resulting from action-research¹⁸ methodological processes. These exchanges between actors and structures, and between local and global levels, made it possible to adjust and develop not only educational practices but also Scouting's educational paradigm so that they are in agreement with the sociocultural paradigms in which they fit.

At the World Scout Conference in Durban, WOSM's former Secretary General, Jacques Moreillon, said in his address: *"It is my conviction that Scouting has been, can be, and should be an active agent of social change. The expression 'agent of social change' is just the modern way of saying that we must "leave the world a better place than we found it" in B.P's language. B.P wanted to improve boys and girls from the inside not only so that they should be more useful to others, to their friends, their families, their nation, the world, and this not just while in uniform but as future men and women, as citizens of tomorrow, locally, nationally, internationally. B.P wanted young people who were autonomous and responsible, committed and supportive, young people who, today and the next, would make a difference in society, a society of which one could say that it was better thanks to the fact that these young people had made their Scout promise."*¹⁹

While continuing along the lines of his predecessors, Jacques Moreillon's successor, Eduardo Missoni, questioned the Movement's positioning in terms of this will to change the world: *"But to respond to continuously evolving social needs, Scouting needs to constantly reinvent itself, from where comes this need for questioning which is yours today. The true tradition of Scouting is innovation. Without this capacity for social innovation, which is its trademark, the Movement runs the risk of losing Baden-Powell's original intuition. While the founder was not a doctrinarian, he nonetheless theorised his method on the basis of perpetual experimentation resulting from his observation of the political, economic, cultural and social movements of his era. One of the challenges for modern Scouting is to understand the times*

¹⁶ Founder of the "Boy's Brigade" in 1883.

¹⁷ Smith, M. K. (2002) 'Ernest Thompson Seton and Woodcraft', <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/seton.htm>.

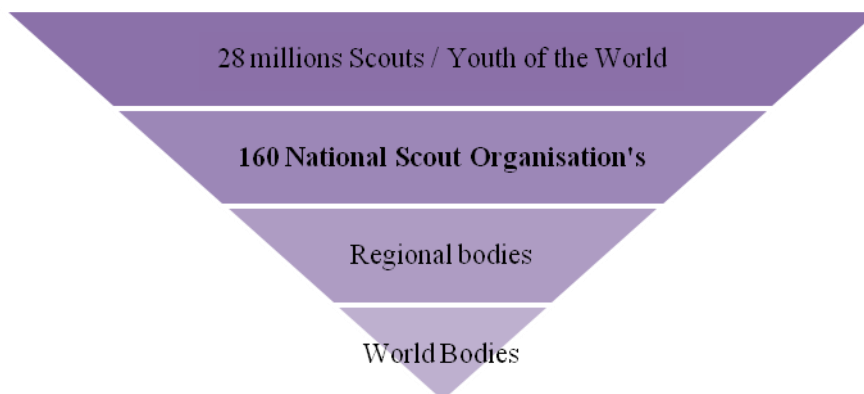
¹⁸ In 1986, during a lecture at the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique (INRP, Paris), the researchers took the following definition: *"It concerns research in which there is deliberate action to transform reality; research with a dual objective: to transform reality and produce new knowledge concerning these transformations"* (Hugon and Seibel, 1988, p.13). (Wikipedia). Own translation.

¹⁹ Moreillon, J. (1999). *35th World Scout Conference*. Durban: WOSM.

we live in and to detect new trends, without necessarily supporting them. It can propose its own educational alternatives in order to answer the question of ‘living together’²⁰.

Very recently, Rick Cronk, the new Chairman of the World Scout Committee, shared his philosophy of WOSM’s work and all of its structures with the World Committee by pointing out: *“The National Scout Organizations around the world are the centre-piece of Scouting. It is their responsibility to orchestrate a Scouting program that is uniquely suited to their nation’s young people. Every other group of us lower in this organization chart is to work at optimizing the success of the NSOs. Obviously, at the top of the ‘upside-down’ pyramid (Figure 3) are the most important people in WOSM - the 28 million Scouts around the world and even the youth of the world who are not Scouts.”*²¹

FIGURE 1 UPSIDE-DOWN PYRAMID



These quotations of key people in the Movement are a reminder of B-P’s ultimate goal and his modern way of thinking. But they also highlight Scouting’s vocation as a catalyst for change and as a component of innovation through its national structures and particularly through these young people (the subject and object of change!).

“Creating a better world”, what a project!

Our deep conviction is that:

1. each young person is a potential agent in this project;
2. the first fruits of change begin with the global development of each young person’s potential in the following areas:
 - physical development;
 - intellectual development;
 - social development;
 - spiritual development;
 - emotional development.

In the next chapter, we will examine this final aspect, i.e., personal development.

²⁰ Missoni, E. (2007). Opening speech. *Apprendre à vivre ensemble*. Economic and Social Council - Paris: Scoutisme Français. Own translation.

²¹ Cronk, R. (2008, Oct.). http://www.scout.org/circulars2008/circular_n_23_october_2008.

Scouting: a tool for personality development

Winfried Huber, quoted in 'Le Comparatisme dans les Sciences de l'Homme'²², points out that personality development has been a recurrent issue since ancient times. He specifies that it is Plato (428 - 347 AD) who was the first to develop a general theory explaining individual differences in personalities. Plato makes the distinction between the following components of the psyche: intellect, will, feelings and needs. *"The adaptation of the person's psyche depends on the intellect's well-balanced monitoring of its functions, on the active development of the dominant features of the personality and on occupying a social position corresponding to its features. If successful, it results in happiness for the person and a just society"*. For Plato, this success has little to do with education: it is above all a product of innate aptitudes. While taking up Plato's vision, Aristotle added the important role that society plays in this development process. From an Islamic point of view, the Arabic philosophers refined both the concept of development, i.e., a progression in time (from the cradle to the grave), and the notion of a double achievement or success (in life 'here' and as a preparation for life 'in the hereafter')²³. In turn, the Christian Middle Ages offered an interpretation of the concept of personality development, but it was only later that scientific work was carried out to try to define the notion of 'personality'. We have adopted that of the *Grand Dictionnaire de la Psychologie*²⁴: *"Personality is the totality of relatively stable and general affective, emotional and dynamic characteristics in terms of how a person is in his/her way of reacting to situations in which he/she finds him/herself. The term 'personality' does not cover the cognitive aspects of behaviour (intelligence, aptitude, knowledge): it always relates to the affective, emotional and dynamic aspects. Personality is described in terms of 'features' much more than in reference to types."*

On its side, the Scout Movement gives the following definition of emotional development: *"Developing the ability to acknowledge, recognise and express feelings and emotions and to take responsibility for managing these in daily life."*²⁵. This definition sends us back to that of Maurice Reuchlin in Larousse (see note 19).

This overview of the evolution of the concept of personality development teaches us several points:

- a) a dynamic of internal mechanisms;
- b) personality is to be understood in the context of a person/situation relationship;
- c) the happiness or well-being of a personality relates just as much to the social dimension as it does to the metaphysical or spiritual one.

Here again we find this positive orientation of Scouting's 'educational paradigm', which proposes an articulation of three fundamental duties for the development of each young

²² G. Jucquois, C. V. (2000). *Le Comparatisme dans les Sciences de l'Homme*. De Boeck University.

²³ Affes, H. (2000). *L'éducation dans l'Islam*. Paris: JSF.

²⁴ Larousse. (2007). *Grand Dictionnaire de la Psychologie*. Larousse.

²⁵ WOSM. (1998). *Scouting: An Educational System*. Geneva: WSB.

person: duty to self, duty to others and duty to God, and a method through which to apply them: the ‘Scout Method’.

This paradigm not only makes it possible to create an educational activity in line with the intended educational objective, but also to recognise that what each young person experiences is unique, that it is the result of something that has happened, of an understanding of things, an appreciation of values, etc. The experience expresses both the cognitive and the emotional aspects! It continues to grow and constructs the individual in all his/her dimensions.

Finally, in terms of personality development, what is educational (in general and in particular) is the person’s experience and not the activity itself.

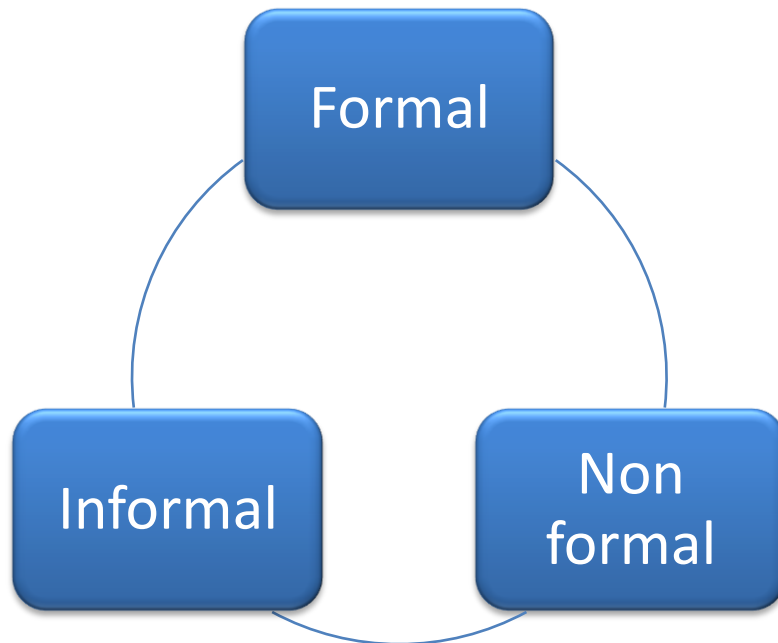
Scouting in the educational continuum

For Scouting, education is a life-long process, through which a person continuously develops all of his/her capacities, both as an individual and as a member of society. This implies that education does not just create a ‘human capital’ but that it also plays a part in creating a ‘social capital’ – and both go hand in hand.

The history of mankind cannot be dissociated from education. In the past, just as today, it is part of family or community life, work, leisure, ceremonies, exchanges... everything offers an opportunity for education. This informal education is permanent; it is fundamental right from birth for the development and the structuring of the individual, and comes before all the structured educational processes.

For its part, school, as an institution, gradually developed in all societies, although at different times. This development is primarily related to expansion in the use of writing. Learning to write involved pupils around a teacher. A framework and a formal process.

Lastly, the third form of education, often considered as a “compromise” between two poles (one representing ‘formal = structured’ and the other ‘informal = unstructured’), is non-formal, which is also a ‘negation’. We will not argue about the term; we adopted it, and it has the merit of joining together the three components of the same continuous process that we call the educational continuum.



It is important to note that personality development, as defined above, is beyond the ‘traditional’ framework of the formal curriculum, which is mainly concerned with cognitive content. However, this does not mean to say that formal education does not contribute to the development of the personality; it is simply to point out that it is not its main goal.

If one considers the ‘four pillars’ of education’²⁶:

- Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on 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 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 this respect, education must not disregard any aspect in the development of a young person's potential;

Scouting, which includes these four pillars, particularly emphasises the last two, namely learning how to live together and learning how to be. These two pillars clearly refer to the ‘personality’ dimension. A non-formal movement undertaking this is making a contribution to the integral development of the individual. It overcomes the weakness of formal systems when they do not sufficiently emphasise this aspect of a person. That said, through its holistic approach, Scouting also recognises that the individual develops through the interaction and

²⁶ Delors, J. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure within*. Paris: UNESCO.

relationship between all of the dimensions (including the intellectual dimension, obviously). In turn, it thus draws on the contributions of the formal and informal agents of education.

During the course of its history, Scouting became convinced that young people and society would benefit more from the work carried out by agents of education - and in particular by that of the formal system - if the latter:

- endeavoured to integrate the individuals' experiences and stories in consolidating knowledge and skills;
- reinforced horizontality (young people - young people) in education, alongside the educational relationship (adults - young people);
- considered that access to knowledge is not the prerogative of just books or the Internet, but that the daily life is an inexhaustible source of knowledge;
- emphasised learning by doing and collaboration with others as opposed to passively listening.

Our role is not to give lessons to the formal systems, but to invite them to take action around a common project and to reinforce each other. We need to strengthen the bridges between the systems. We want to contribute actively to the debates of our societies, because it is in these melting pots that the sociocultural paradigms of tomorrow are forged.

The critical view that we have of others also applies to ourselves.

Scouting is asking for more co-operation in order to broach its educational practices in an objective way. It is through this exercise that we can validate our assertions or embark on any necessary innovations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, after a century of millions of people practising and developing Scouting, we would like to reaffirm the remarks of Laszlo Nagy, WOSM's former Secretary General: *"We venture to affirm that Scouting is not as old-fashioned, archaic, sterile or ridiculous as so many believe. At this agonising time in human history [1984], the unique World Movement known as Scouting could play a special role in aiding men and women everywhere to meet the challenges of the coming decades. It could be a powerful partner for all work for the benefit of humanity. After all, what Scouting offers is not material gain but a sense of responsibility, respect for others, a lifestyle which blends with our environment, and ways to achieve all these desirable things. The pity is that so many see the Movement through different lenses."*²⁷

Scouting wishes to fully play an important role in the educational continuum. It has advantages: it is person-centred in its connection with the community; it believes in a spiritual dimension that affirms values and transcendence. It is equipped with a method that has proved reliable. It has shown its capacity for innovation and adaptation to needs.

²⁷ Nagy, L. (1984). *250 Million Scouts*. Lausanne: Pierre-Marcel FAVRE.

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