



INTRODUCING CONFERENCE

Scouting: Creator par excellence of Human and Social Capital

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Introduction

Scouts, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honour to take the floor in front of this grand assembly of Scout representatives from around the world. I send you greetings in the name of the Commonwealth of Learning, my current organisation, but also in the name of UNESCO, where I was Assistant Director-General for Education when you started planning this event. I remember well a meeting in my office in Paris where you described the various events that you planned to undertake to celebrate Scouting centenary. I congratulate you on your centenary and thank you for inviting me to address you today.

It is an honour to be here and something of a surprise. You would think that a global movement with 28 million members could find someone more versed in the Scouting movement than me to kick off this conference on Education and the World Scouting Movement: Experiences and Challenges.

My credentials as a scout are poor. I was briefly a Beaver Scout leader in Montreal, Canada around 1970 but gave it up when I moved to Quebec City a year later. My wife has stronger credentials because she fought her way into the Girl Scouts of America against her parents' scepticism because she thought she would enjoy the activities. She was not disappointed.

But I was reassured when I started reading *Scouting for Boys*, which is a most compelling book, and came to the following passage:

"In the old days the knights were the scouts of Britain and their rules were very much the same as the scout law which we have now...one great point about them was that every day they had to do a good turn to somebody and that is one of our rules."

I have had the honour of being a modern knight ever since Queen Elizabeth tapped me on the shoulder with her sword in 1994. So, maybe as a modern knight I do have a close kinship with modern scouts. I hope you consider that by making this speech I am doing you a good turn!

When my former Open University colleague Dr Derek Pollard invited me here on your behalf

I assumed that you wanted someone from the international development community to tell you what a great job you are doing. I further assumed that you wanted that done in language that blends the discourses of education and development. Having worked for two international intergovernmental development agencies, UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning, and various universities in Canada, France, the UK and the US I thought that I fitted the bill.

Indeed, when I read your program I felt immediately at home. The titles of your workshops are: moral and spiritual development; self-fulfillment; skills and knowledge; gender issues; employability; health education; youth participation; national development; culture of peace and inter-religious dialogue; education for sustainable development; world citizenship and the north-south divide; leadership and intercultural education. All these could have come from the agenda of a UNESCO meeting and maybe they did. I see that Federico Mayor, the former director-general of UNESCO is closing your conference.

Human and Social Capital

My plan was to compliment you on the way that Scouting develops both human and social capital. What do I mean by these terms?

Human capital refers to the unique capabilities and expertise of individuals. It means the stock of knowledge and skill, embodied in an individual as a result of education, training, and experience that makes them more productive. Developing human capital is the central focus education and a major element of Scouting. It enables people to improve their capabilities and expertise. Improving human capital is a big concern of governments, because unless a country has abundant natural resources, which can be a mixed blessing, it depends on the education and skills of its people to have a successful economy.

But today countries are also concerned about social capital. This refers to the way in which a community or society collaborates and cooperates (through such mechanisms as networks, shared trust, norms and values) to achieve mutual benefits. It is networks of relationships among persons, firms, and institutions in a society, together with the associated norms of behaviour, trust and cooperation that enable a society to function effectively. This also is an aim of Scouting, because a scout must get on well with everyone.

Conventional wisdom has it that the developing world, Asia in particular, is stronger in social capital than more individualistic parts of the world such as Europe and North America. Is that conventional wisdom manifest in the scout movement? How does Scouting in Asia and Africa differ from Scouting in Europe and North America? Has anyone researched that?

More generally you might ask whether your 21st century 'Strategy for Scouting' as adopted by the World Scout Conference is blending the creation of human and social capital in an optimal way.

Six years ago, when the new European currency (the Euro) was introduced, I noticed that several notes were a good metaphor for the fusion of human and social capital. These notes represented the different periods in European architecture from Roman times up to today. But they all have the same graphic concept. On one side one can see either a door or a window, which can symbolise an opening out to the world that enables people to gain knowledge and skills that will help them to surpass themselves. Let's call that human capital. On the other side of each note, one can see a bridge, which can represent communication and the creation of relationships between individuals and between communities that we call social capital.

Your founding text, *Scouting for Boys*, which was published in 1908, offers a remarkable fusion of these two types of activities. From one page to the next, one goes from a lesson about the individual to a presentation of a group activity.

That is a simple analogy which I could explore further but you get the message. Scouting seems naturally to achieve the balance between the creation of human capital and the development of social capital that our education systems are all striving for.

Scouting and the Academic Community

But you already knew that. When I tried it on Derek Pollard I could see that he found it a bit anodyne. His brief to me was that the Scouting movement doesn't need an extra pat on the back from me. It is already pretty complacent - justifiably, perhaps, given its global success. He suggested that I should do more to challenge you and, in particular, to have you do more to engage the interest of the world's academic and intellectual community in Scouting.

That was when this assignment started to get interesting. Sometimes it's good to go back to the source, so I began reading *Scouting for Boys*. I was lucky that I chose the Oxford edition with a remarkable introduction by Elleke Boehmer. Her brilliant analyses and breathtaking comparisons intrigued me.

Some years ago, when I was at the Open University, one of my colleagues, Graeme Thompson, wrote a book in which he pointed out the similarities between the turn of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century. In particular, he talked about globalization and pointed out that on many indicators the world was more globalized in 1900 than it was in 2000. This was true, for instance, in patterns of trade and in the ease with which individuals could cross national frontiers.

But Baden-Powell's book illustrates the same phenomenon. It is a very international text. In a sampling of 10 pages, I found references to Kashmiris, Italy, the American Army, a crime in Russia, France and South Africa. I find it difficult to think of a contemporary book for children that integrates so many references to the outside world so well.

His book also supposes that his readers were regularly exposed to aspects of life from which children are protected today. I am thinking, for example, of his instructions on how to examine the ground around a dead body, going after robbers or saving lives in a burning building.

Reading it reminded me of a comment that the Duke of Edinburgh made some years ago, when he lamented that almost any activity a modern youth find exciting is illegal today.

What began to fascinate me as I pursued my research into Scouting was the discovery that the Scouting movement seems rather embarrassed by its founding text. Or perhaps I should say that the adults in the Scouting movement are embarrassed by a text in which there is political incorrectness and robust judgments on almost every page.

A typical example is his comment that the young Romans "lost the Empire of their forefathers by being wishy washy slackers without any go or patriotism in them". However, I suspect that youngsters still get on fine with that kind of language.

This was captured nicely in an article in the UK's Sunday Telegraph newspaper, which read:

"It's reassuring that today's teenagers, often written off as surly couch potatoes, respond to Baden-Powell's century-old formula of organized outdoor adventure with the same enthusiasm as their parents and grandparents. If more could be encouraged to join up Scouting could make a sizeable dent on problems such as childhood obesity and antisocial behaviour. But in the current atmosphere of excessive child protection there just aren't enough adult volunteers to go round, hence the waiting list to join the Scouts has reached 30,000. Perhaps the unpalatable truth is that the young are little different. It's the adults of Britain who have changed."

A similar piece in another UK newspaper, the Sunday Times, had this to say:

"Scouting is often seen as absurdly old-fashioned, yet the ethos that Baden-Powell bequeathed to his movement was in some ways perfect for our age. A firm believer in social equality he insisted, "A Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout, no matter to what country, class or creed the other may belong". And these days Scouting emphasis on individual responsibility and the outdoor life makes it perfectly poised to take advantage of a backlash against the nanny state and the culture of overweening health and safety".

Modernism and Post-modernism in Scouting

These are rather obvious points but Ms. Boehmer's introduction Scouting for Boys takes us into much more subtle territory that gave me a deeper understanding of the disconnect. She points out that Scouting for Boys is a thoroughly post-modern work.

By contrast - and this is my comparison, not Ms Boehmer's - the Strategy for Scouting that you adopted in 2002 is a thoroughly modern work. Ms. Boehmer implies that the post-modern Baden-Powell leapfrogs over the modern adults who run Scouting to connect with today's post-modern youth. Pleased understand that calling you modern is not a criticism. I've spend much of my working life in institutions imbued with the spirit of modernism, UNESCO being a prime example.

What do I mean by modernism and post-modernism? Let me try to explain it in French.

Let's take the example of UNESCO. It is the international symbol of modernism. It was created after the Second World War, inspired by enlightened humanism and with faith in the possibility of a better world. UNESCO is part of the United Nations system, whose fundamental texts are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the various conventions to which it gave birth.

But post-modernism is something else. First of all, it is difficult to describe, as post-modernism contests each of the three components of a description. A description is a narrative that puts order in our objective knowledge of what we want to describe. But post-modernism does not believe in the possibility of a general narrative; it is skeptical about the possibility of order; and it refutes the existence of objective knowledge.

Post-modernism came into being in architecture, not as a new style, but rather as an eclectic collage of styles and ideas emanating from anywhere. It is the architectural equivalent of the hypertext that enables you to jump from one site to another on the web. Moreover, a hacker is a fairly good symbol of post-modernism.

If you want another example my slides are somewhat post-modern, a collection of images that I've taken, like a magpie, from wherever I could find them. This is analogous to what

Baden-Powell did when he wrote *Scouting for Boys*. It is a tremendously engaging collage, full of repetition, that hops from concept to activity to story in a most interesting way.

Post-modernism doesn't have a core. It holds that in our societies, as in our personal lives, everything is relative and diverse. It rejects the idea of the autonomous and sovereign individual and emphasizes rather our more anarchical and anonymous collective experience. It doesn't like making distinctions, preferring to see things as merging together. Finally, of course, post-modernism rejects the modern idea of progress. Life has no meaning and we shouldn't try and give it one.

You will say that this is caricature, both of Baden-Powell's writing and of the youngsters drawn to Scouting. Perhaps, but I believe it contains an element of truth. Your 2002 Strategy for Scouting is a modern narrative, just the kind of thing we prepare at UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning. *Scouting for Boys* is a post-modern intellectual collage, and I was particularly startled by the parallel that Elleke Boehmer drew between the style of Baden-Powell's book and T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*.

So where does this leave us? What I am saying, to paraphrase Hamlet is that there may be more ideas and realities in Scouting than are dreamed of in your current philosophy.

I urge you to give much more attention to research on Scouting and to engage more fully with the academic community. Some of you may well be suspicious of academics and it's certain that many academics think of Scouting as old-fashioned or even sinister. When I mentioned Scouting to a Turkish colleague I got the response, 'That's fascist!' That's all the more reason for dialogue.

A Research Agenda for Scouting

The world's burgeoning universities are always on the lookout for interesting research topics and Scouting has them in abundance. Let me give you an analogy from another organization based here in Geneva, the International Baccalaureate Organization. I must give you some context because there are many parallels with Scouting.

What does the word 'international' mean in the International Baccalaureate? We can interpret the word in two ways and the challenge for the organisation is to always integrate these two interpretations.

Firstly, an International Baccalaureate is a diploma that is widely accepted internationally. The development of the IB programme originated from the Geneva International School and the Collèges du Monde Uni. These institutions attracted a multinational clientele and wanted to offer them an academic certificate that would be accepted by a large number of countries. In the beginning it was a huge challenge as universities, and rightly so, have difficulty in accepting anything new.

Today, this has been achieved. Not only do the best universities in the world accept IB graduates, but they actively seek to recruit them. This is all the more remarkable, when you think that ensuring the integrity of the curriculum and the diploma is done by a non-governmental agency just like Scouting.

But the word international in International Baccalaureate also has another meaning. It must reflect a curriculum that gives students an international perspective beyond what others offer. That is a big challenge for two reasons.

First of all, there can easily be a certain tension - some might even find a contradiction -

between these two objectives. If one wants to get a new diploma accepted alongside national diplomas, one should not be too innovative in the choice of study subjects.

Scouting has a similar challenge. You want to be authentically international and authentically national in each of your countries at the same time. Second, just like Scouting, the International Baccalaureate (IB) is taught under very different conditions across the world. The IB had its roots in the international schools where, because of their international student bodies, each pupil picked up something of an international perspective just by being with classmates of different nationalities. But now the IB is offered in many schools that have a homogeneous national student body. Any international impact of the IB must therefore depend much more on the curriculum.

My point is that the IB, like Scouting, raises some very interesting issues about the education of young people for life in a fast-changing unpredictable world. Realizing this, about a decade ago the IB started to engage more systematically with the academic world to encourage the study of international education. Partly as a result there are now university research groups and departments dedicated to international education and there are now learned journals on the subject.

These research units and journals do not only study the international baccalaureate, because today international education manifests itself in many forms, but I am sure that this work of researching and documenting the approach and impact of the International Baccalaureate has strengthened that organization.

Not all research results are what you want to hear - but that, of course, is the point. I remember that in the early days of the Erasmus program for university student mobility in Europe, one researcher found that many students came back from such experiences more xenophobic than when they left. The people who organized the exchanges were up in arms, but I'm sure it made them raise their game. Similarly research finds that putting different nationalities in the same school doesn't always produce harmonious international understanding but can spark enmity and the formation of cliques.

So, what are the kinds of topics in Scouting that would benefit from research and academic dialogue? I think there is a tremendously exciting list. You don't mention research in your Strategy for Scouting but the connection is easy to make. Your justification for the strategy talks about mental models and mind shifts. Conceptual models and paradigm shifts are what academic discourse is all about.

For example, strategic priority number 3 talks about gender and number 6 about volunteering. You also talk about needs analysis. These are all areas where you could benefit from dialogue with academics.

I expect that there are already good contacts in countries between the Scouting movement and the growing number of outdoor education programs in colleges, but this is another obvious link.

It would also be worthwhile to take to a much deeper level the analysis of Scouting in terms of the creation of human and social capital, something that I only touched on superficially.

For example, a term that is much abused today is mentoring. Having a mentor is important to almost everyone at some stage in their lives, but I suspect that if each of you look back the number of real mentors that you have had is small. Yet the discourse today suggests that one can turn mentoring on and off at will. Scouting provides a context where real mentoring can take place - and real mentoring contributes to the creation of both human and social capital. There is an important research topic there.

If you are feeling really strong, then an analysis of the relationships between the adults and

the youngsters in Scouting in terms of modernism and post-modernism would be interesting, although you might have difficulty understanding the jargon that the academics would use!

Finally, an area that particularly interests me is the way in which your various national Scout associations integrate the principles of Scouting into the political, social and religious cultures of their countries. This process takes place formally in developing each association's constitution. I am sure that a comparative study of these constitutions would shed an interesting light on the phenomenon of globalization.

In a similar way, at a less macroscopic level, I am sure there is a study to be done on how different organizations, such as churches and schools, organize scout troops at the local level. Reading Baden-Powell's book, another shocking thing to modern eyes is how careless he was about what we now call branding. He was happy for any organization, or indeed any individual, to organize a scout patrol. Perhaps he was confident that the Scouting 'brand' would quickly emerge as a strong brand. But anyone starting Scouting today would have an army of lawyers dictating what symbols, logos and words could or could not be used without official permission.

Scouting relationships with the many organizations that are home to patrols and troops is a source of strength but it must also generate conflicts. It would be interesting to document these relationships in a perspective of identifying good practice.

Conclusion

That is enough from me. It is up to you to develop, nationally and internationally, some research programs on Scouting. You know better than I what issues are really salient.

But I urge you to do it. Scouting is the world's biggest and most widespread non-governmental movement. 350 million people have been involved in Scouting since Baden-Powell wrote his book. 28 million are active today and, according to the quotation that I read from the UK Sunday Telegraph, the number could be much larger if enough adults would join up.

I believe that researching Scouting more fully and publishing the results would do much to help the Scouting movement shake its old-fashioned image and contribute even more strongly to the creation of better communities.

Once again, I appreciate having been invited to your congress and thank you for your attention.

Sir John Daniel

President of Commonwealth of Learning