



The Big Seven – an alliance of the world's largest youth Movements

PROMISING PRACTICES

The 'Alliance of Youth CEOs' (also called the 'Big Seven'), is an informal network of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the following youth organisations:



The initial Meeting of Youth CEOs (1995) was chaired by Prince Philip (UK)

- Four world-wide youth Movements, WOSM (World Organisation of the Scout Movement), WAGGGS (World Organisation of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts), YMCA (World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association) and the YWCA (World Young Women's Christian Association).
- One world-wide humanitarian Movement with a very large youth component, IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).
- One world-wide youth programme, IAA (International Award Association).
- And the world's largest youth focused foundation, IYF (International Youth Foundation).

The Results

We set out a definition of the term 'non-formal education'. This is now part of the international language which was certainly not the case 6-7 years ago. The seven organisations involved are now seen as educational movements for young people rather than organisations providing recreation. The definition of non-formal education is set out in the document 'The Education of Young People. A statement at the dawn of the 21st Century'.

Governments now give much more importance to the development and implementation of National Youth Policies. Through the publication of the working document 'National Youth Policies', states were encouraged to adopt a long-term national youth policy, based on consensus of all the country's social and political forces, concerning all youth NGOs in the country and all the ministries in any government. A number of countries have used the framework which was developed as a blueprint for their own national youth policy.

A joint statement and recommendations for action were produced on the situation for girls and young women in the world today. All the Movements work with young women and recognise that throughout the world gender discrimination and stereotyping limit the full development and participation of girls and young women, as well as boys and young men.

A joint HIV/AIDS programme in southern Africa was launched, based on the idea that prevention through the education of young people is the long-term solution to the HIV/AIDS situation. It also builds on the methodology used in non-formal education (peer education) and has the potential to be replicated throughout Africa and further afield.

The Reasons

It was recognised that there were common elements in all the Movements, and through working together we could create a synergy, setting common objectives, which each organisation could meet in its own unique and distinctive style. The key initial



World Organization of the Scout Movement
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout



agreement was on the understanding of 7 key characteristics of non-formal education which are:

1. *Volunteerism* – youth organisations are voluntary, young people and adults choose to be involved of their own free will.
2. *Experiential learning* – non-formal education offers a practical field of experience in a particular area and learning is a result of the practical experience.
3. *Progressive programmes* – there is a progressive dimension to the programme - helping young people to measure their growth over a period of time, rather than follow a fixed syllabus.
4. *Peer groups* – groups of peers plan and implement projects, undertake responsibilities, experience relationships and reflect and evaluate with others to learn from these experiences.
5. *Youth-Adult relationships* – non-formal education requires a real partnership to be established between young people and adults, where they realise that they can learn from each other.
6. *Leadership Development* – almost invariably as part of their programme, young people are given the opportunity to take on leadership roles, which enables them to develop and use leadership skills.
7. *Development of a value system* – the organisations offer young people the opportunity to discover, understand, analyse and understand values and their implications, and to build over a period of time values that will guide their lives. The values explored are part of the ethos of each organisation.

Through identifying these 7 common elements, a synergy was created. All the organisations can remain true to their

purpose and ethos but can also work with others on areas of common concern, bringing these issues to the attention of a wider audience. This creates a win:win situation.

The Methods

The 'Big Seven', which started as the 'Big Six', is and remains an informal network of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). There are no statutes and no chairperson but there is a personal commitment from all the CEOs to work together on the task in hand to achieve real results.

The chairmanship and the meeting places are shared, as is the responsibility for drafting and printing documents. This builds on the strengths of the individual organisations.

It originated in 1995 from a joint initiative of Dr Jacques Moreillon, Secretary General of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement and Mr Paul Arengo-Jones, Secretary General of the International Award Association

Our Learning

- That there is considerable power in positive collaboration, even if it is undertaken in a informal way and does not involve specific structures.
- That by working together results can be achieved and money obtained, which would not be available to the individual organisations.
- That it is possible to create synergies and work on common objectives without having to adopt a common way of working. This allows the individual members of the coalition to reach the end-result in their own way.

Our Future Plans

There is a commitment to work together, taking direct action and producing policy papers on areas of common concern e.g.

AIDS/HIV – developing a holistic approach to countering the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with an initial focus on the situation in Africa, where it is estimated that 8.5 million young people between the ages of 15-25 are already infected. The programme seeks to work initially in five countries, building on existing good practice and then expand to other African countries. It also has the potential to be replicated in countries on other continents.



The 'Big Seven' reach young people in all continents and cultures in the world

Volunteerism – is another area of common interest and concern as the contribution of volunteers is crucial to all of our organisations. There is also a commitment to share the results of the Big Seven in the hope that partnerships can be developed between the organisations at regional and local levels.

For more information on the Big Seven, visit the WOSM web-site <http://www.scout.org> or contact worldbureau@world.scout.org

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