



TB 010 - How to present the Scout method

The Scout Method is an essential part of the Scout educational system. It may be defined as a system of progressive self-education, which is complementary to the family and the school, and is based on the interaction of several elements. The key elements of the Scout Method are: progressive system of objectives and activities, stimulating adult presence, learning by doing, adherence to the Promise and Law, symbolic framework, Patrol System, learning through serving others, life in nature, learning through play.

will never sound tuneful and harmonious.

Often the elements of the Method are analysed in an isolated and fragmented way, which hinders our understanding of how the whole works. If we take an equally fragmented approach to applying the Method, we may expect only poor results.

Like any other system, the Scout Method has a certain dynamic complexity, but if we understand the links between the different parts, as leaders, we may gradually become familiar with these mechanisms and incorporate them naturally (diagram 1).

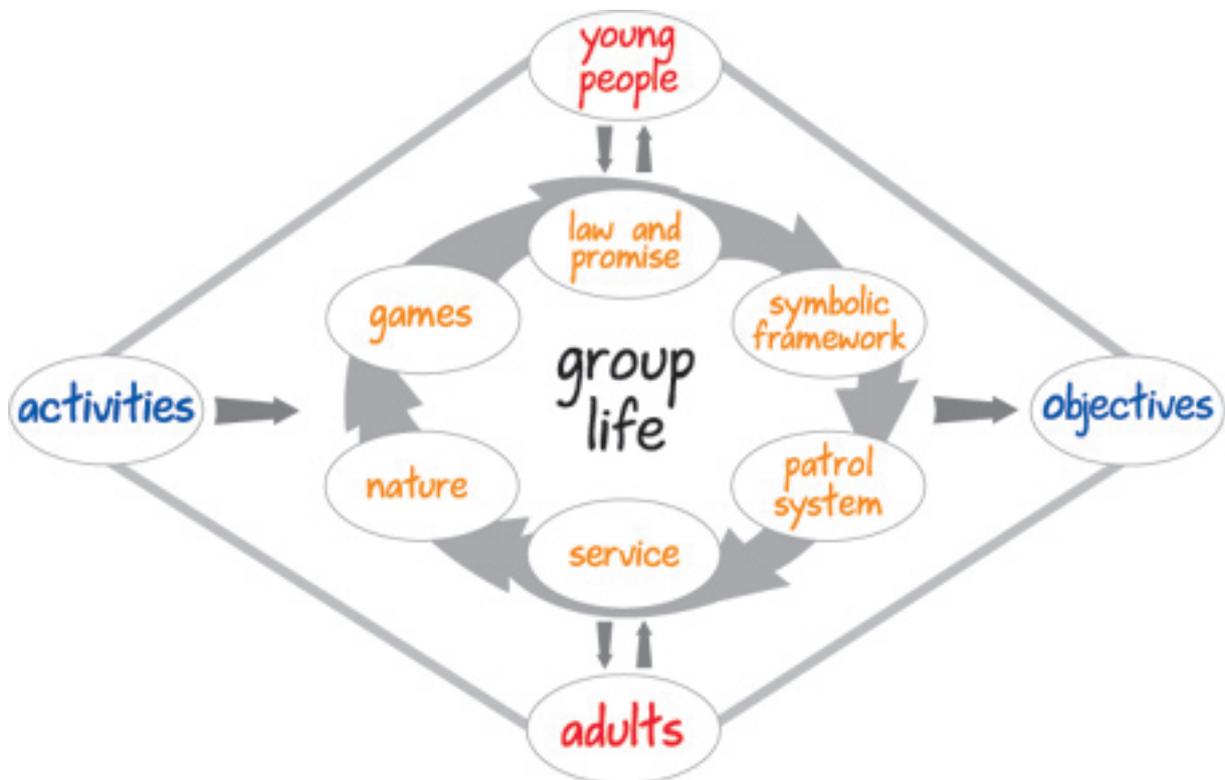


Diagram 1

A dynamic system

It is possible to single out these elements. However, in order to understand the Scout Method we have to grasp how they work together in combination and appreciate the connections and processes between them. The Method is what it is because the elements that make it up are coordinated and balanced.

If some instruments are missing from an orchestra, or out of tune or too loud, the totality

First, the people

The **young people**, the **adult leaders** and the **relationship** between them. At the top of the diagram are the young people, and at the bottom are the Leaders, who are adults of different ages; with the arrows representing a two-way relationship between them (diagram 2).

This represents:

- The central role of the interests and educational needs of young people in the

Scout Method.

- The stimulating adult presence, i.e. the Leaders –adults of different ages– who are at the bottom of the diagram, symbolizing their educational and supportive – not hierarchical – role.
- The contribution that young people make to group life, whether individually or through their Patrols.
- The interactive relationship of educational cooperation and mutual learning between young people and Leaders.

Second, what the people want to achieve

The **educational objectives** and the **activities** which help to attain them (diagram 3).

At the sides of the diagram are the activities on the left and the young people's personal development objectives on the right, joined by arrows showing the relationship between them.

This means:

- That in the Patrols and the Scout Unit everything is done through activities which emphasize discovery, in keeping with the principle of learning by doing.
- That young people are asked to set themselves educational objectives which, at this age, are agreed between each young person, the other members of the Patrol and the Leader who monitors his or her development.
- That the activities give the young people personal experiences which, little by little, enable them to achieve those objectives, with the help and mediation of their friends and Leaders (diagram 4).

Third, how they propose to achieve it: the other elements of the Scout Method.

In the centre of the diagram, all the other aspects of the Method form a continually rotating circle of (diagram 5):

- The Scout Law, a code of conduct which sets out the principles that guide us in language that is readily understood by the young people; and the Promise, a voluntary and personal commitment to live in accordance with the Scout Law.
- The symbolic framework which, in the Scout Unit, is the adventure of exploring new territories with a peer group.
- The Patrol System, which organizes the mechanisms of the informal peer group into a learning community.

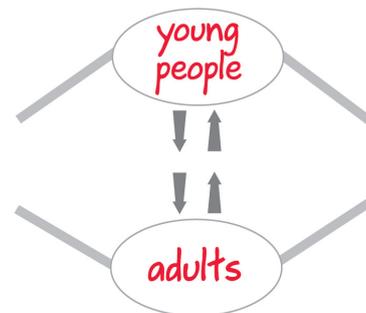


Diagram 2

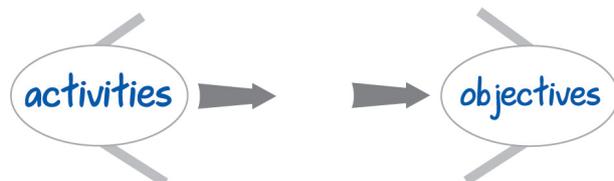


Diagram 3

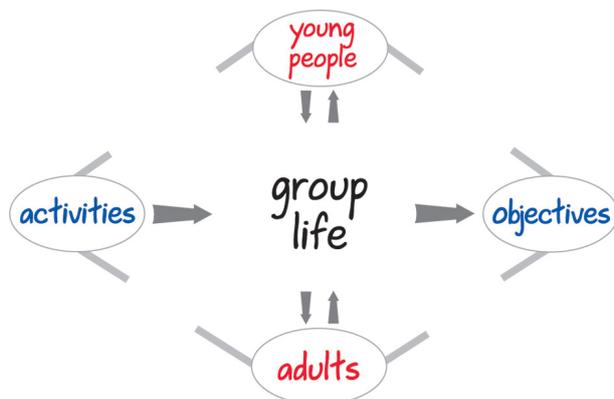


Diagram 4

- Service to others, which is fostered by the habit of individual good turns and consists of activities and projects which bring the young people closer to those most in need, generating a permanent willingness to serve.
- Life in nature, a special environment in which to carry out many of the activities of the Patrol and Scout Unit.
- Learning through play, which is attractive to young people, facilitates their integration into the group, helps them to discover their abilities and encourages an interest in exploring, adventure and discovery.

Group Life

Group life results from the application of the Scout method.

The main result of applying the Scout Method as a whole is that a special environment is created in the Unit and in the Patrols, a particular

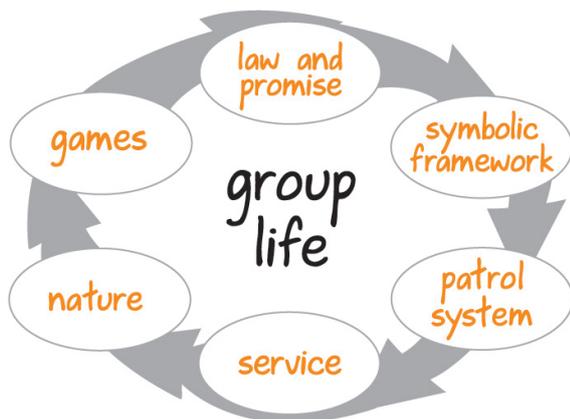


Diagram 5

atmosphere, which we call *group life* (diagram 5).

This special atmosphere is generated by a combination of things:

- the rich experience of life in the Patrol
- the welcoming attitude of the Leaders
- the attractive activities
- the challenge of the personal objectives
- the values of the Law and the spontaneous rules which govern shared life
- the commitment generated by the Promise
- the sense of purpose provided by the symbolic framework
- the attractiveness of life in the outdoors
- the joy of serving others
- the democratic decision-making processes
- the sense of belonging that comes from the symbols
- the significance of the celebrations
- the games and songs.

In short, everything that happens as a result of the coordinated application of the Scout Method.

Group life is what makes young people stay

Group life is what makes Scouting attractive to young people. This atmosphere is so powerful that anyone coming into the Scout Unit immediately realizes that they are in a different environment that it is worth making the most of. The fact that they perceive this is what makes them stay. The richness of group life leads them to prefer Scouting to any other option.

If group life is rewarding, the Patrol System will unfold all its potential, the young people will come to identify powerfully with it and it will never cross their minds to leave.

Group life helps to create a learning field

No activity can achieve educational objectives alone; these can only be achieved through the application of all the elements of the Scout Method.

And so, when we talk about learning in the Patrol, we say that the spaces in our Scout Unit are not empty, but shot through with an invisible weave of conducts and dialogues which facilitate learning. This learning field is part of group life: it brings together, interlinks and harmonizes all the elements of the Scout Method. The learning field is conducive to learning by experience, non-frontal learning with no classes or talks, memorizing or marks, prizes or punishments, with no vertical or authoritarian figures, but with the friendly participation of Leaders who "accompany" the young people's development process.

Group life creates lifestyles and forms moral conscience

As well as being a warm and participative atmosphere which enables young adolescents to express their natural tendencies, explore new worlds and satisfy their thirst for discovery and adventure, group life helps them to build up their own personality in the company of a group of friends who have similar dreams and anxieties, monitored by adults who exemplify the values that are offered to them. In this atmosphere they develop a moral conscience and build a personal scale of values.

Moral conscience is a uniquely human faculty. It is what enables a young person to acknowledge good and evil, and to distinguish those rules and values that steer their actions and are worthwhile precepts on which to base a future life plan. The atmosphere in the Unit helps young people to perceive and identify these values, react to them and opt for those which they consider worth living by.

At the same time, they learn to accord each value the importance it deserves, gradually and implicitly establishing a scale of values which will shape their life plan.

For example, productivity is a technically useful value, but it is not in the same category as the right to a fair wage, which constitutes an ethical duty, or respect for life, which is a transcendental value. We must not forget that the quality of education is determined by the worthiness, depth and scope of the values that the young person has been inspired to acknowledge and decide to live by.

What is original about Scouting in educational terms is that the young people adhere to these values while participating in a genuine process in which they are the main actors. Immersed in this atmosphere, young people live values and widen their awareness without even intending to.

This is much more than an intellectual or sentimental bond. It is a lifestyle which they really take in and incorporate, and which will shape their personality for ever after.

The intensity of group life depends on the leaders

We have said that the special atmosphere which constitutes group life is generated by applying the Scout Method as a whole in the Unit. As we will see in chapter 7, applying the Method and ensuring that it remains faithful to Scouting's mission is a task for the Leaders.

The quality and richness of group life therefore depend on the Leaders and is one of their main responsibilities.

This handout is extracted from the "Handbook for Leaders of the Scout Section. A method of non formal education for young people from 11 to 15", edited by the Interamerican Scout Office in co-operation with the European Scout Office and the Youth Programme Unit of the World Scout Bureau (copyright registration 126.335 - ISBN: 956-8057-08-0)

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