

Scouting: Creator par excellence of Human and Social Capital, or Modern Adults leading Post-modern Youngsters



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Introduction

Scouts, Ladies and Gentlemen:

C'est un grand honneur de prendre la parole devant cette grande assemblée qui réunit des représentants du scoutisme du monde entier. Je vous salue au nom du Commonwealth of Learning, mon organisation actuelle, mais aussi de l'UNESCO où j'étais sous directeur-général pour l'éducation au moment où vous avez commencé la planification de cet événement. J'ai bon souvenir d'une réunion dans mon bureau à Paris à laquelle vos représentants m'ont décrit les diverses manifestations que vous comptiez organiser afin de célébrer le centenaire du scoutisme. Je vous félicite de votre centenaire et vous remercie de m'avoir invité à m'adresser à vous aujourd'hui.

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 programme I felt immediately at home. The titles of your workshops are: moral and spiritual development; self-fulfilment; 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.

Il y a six ans, lorsque l'on a lancé la nouvelle monnaie de l'Europe, l'Euro, j'ai remarqué que les divers billets étaient une bonne métaphore pour la fusion du capital humain et du capital social. Ces billets représentent les différentes époques de l'architecture européenne de l'ère des romains jusqu'à nos jours. Mais ils ont tous la même conception graphique. D'un côté on voit soit une porte, soit une fenêtre, ce qui peut symboliser l'ouverture sur le monde qui permet aux individus d'acquérir les connaissances et les compétences qui les feront sortir d'eux-mêmes. Appelons cela le capital humain. De l'autre côté de chaque billet on voit un pont, ce qui peut représenter la communication et la création des rapports entre individus et entre communautés que nous appelons capital social.

Votre texte de base, *Scouting for Boys*, publié en 1908, présente une fusion remarquable de ces deux types d'activités. D'une page à l'autre on passe d'une leçon axée sur l'individu à une présentation d'activité de groupe.

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 globalisation and pointed out that on many indicators the world was more globalised 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.

Mais le livre de Baden-Powell illustre le même phénomène. C'est un texte très international. Dans un échantillon de dix pages j'ai trouvé des références aux Kashmiris, à l'Italie, à l'armée américaine, à un

crime en Russie, à la France, et l'Afrique du Sud. J'ai de la difficulté à imaginer un livre contemporain pour enfants qui intégrerait aussi naturellement tant de références au grand monde.

Son livre suppose aussi que ses lecteurs sont exposés régulièrement à des aspects de la vie dont les enfants d'aujourd'hui sont protégés. Je pense, par exemple, à ses instructions sur la façon de s'y prendre en examinant le terrain autour d'un cadavre, d'aller à la recherche de voleurs, ou de sauver les vies dans un bâtiment en feu. 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 judgements 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 organised 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's 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.

Prenons l'exemple de l'UNESCO. C'est le symbole international du modernisme. Elle a été créée après la deuxième guerre mondiale, sous l'inspiration de l'humanisme éclairé et avec la confiance qu'un monde meilleur était possible. L'UNESCO fait partie du système des Nations-Unies, dont les textes fondamentaux sont la Déclaration universelle des droits humains et les diverses conventions auxquelles elle a donné naissance.

Mais le post-modernisme, c'est autre chose. Tout d'abord c'est difficile à décrire, car le post-modernisme conteste chacune des trois composantes d'une description. Une description est un récit qui met de *l'ordre* dans notre *connaissance objective* de ce que nous voulons décrire. Or, le post-modernisme ne croit pas à la possibilité d'un récit général; il est sceptique quant à la possibilité d'ordre; et il nie l'existence de la connaissance objective.

Le post-modernisme a vu le jour en architecture, non pas comme un style nouveau, mais plutôt comme un collage éclectique de styles et d'idées venant de n'importe où. C'est l'équivalent architectural de l'hypertexte qui vous permet de sauter d'un site à l'autre sur le Web. D'ailleurs, le pirate informatique est un assez bon symbole du post-modernisme.

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 emphasises 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 organisation based here in Geneva, the International Baccalaureate Organisation. I must give you some context because there are many parallels with Scouting.

Que veut dire le mot 'international' dans Baccalauréat International? Nous pouvons interpréter ce mot de deux façons et le défi pour l'organisation est toujours d'intégrer ces deux interprétations.

Premièrement, on entend par Baccalauréat International un diplôme qui est largement accepté au plan international. Le développement du programme du BI trouve ses origines à l'École internationale de Genève et aux Collèges du Monde Uni. Ces institutions attireraient une clientèle multinationale et l'on voulait lui offrir un diplôme d'études qui serait accepté par les universités d'un grand nombre de pays. Au début c'était tout un défi, car les universités, à juste titre, acceptent difficilement ce qui est nouveau.

Aujourd'hui c'est chose faite. Non seulement les meilleures universités du monde acceptent les diplômés du BI, mais elles cherchent activement à les recruter. C'est d'autant plus remarquable, quand on y pense, dans la mesure où l'intégrité du curriculum, et du diplôme, est assurée par un organisme non-gouvernemental tout comme le scoutisme.

Mais le mot international, dans Baccalauréat International, a aussi une autre signification. Il doit désigner un curriculum qui, plus que les autres curriculums, crée chez les étudiants une perspective internationale. C'est un autre grand défi, pour deux raisons.

Tout d'abord, il peut facilement y avoir une tension, même, aux yeux de certains une contradiction, entre ces deux objectifs. Si l'on veut faire accepter un nouveau diplôme à côté des diplômes nationaux il ne faut pas trop innover dans le choix des matières à étudier.

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 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. Realising 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 organisation.

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 programme 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 organised 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 programmes 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!

Enfin, un domaine qui m'intéresse tout particulièrement est la façon dont vos diverses associations nationales du scoutisme intègrent les principes du scoutisme aux cultures politique, sociale et religieuse de leurs pays. C'est au niveau de l'élaboration de la constitution de chaque association que ce processus se réalise formellement. Je suis sûr qu'une étude comparative de ces constitutions illuminerait de façon très intéressante le phénomène de la globalisation.

In a similar way, at a less macroscopic level, I am sure there is a study to be done on how different organisations, such as churches and schools, organise 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 organisation, or indeed any individual, to organise 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's relationships with the many organisations 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 programmes 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.

Encore une fois, je vous sais gré de m'avoir invité à votre congrès et je vous remercie de votre attention.
Thank you.