



Learning Opportunities

Introduction

Step 6 of the GPS shows the importance of generating learning opportunities that respond both to the interests and needs of young people as well as to the educational purpose of the Scout Movement.

What attracts young people to Scouting is the prospect of taking part in exciting, fun activities with friends. They do not come to Scouting to be better people or good citizens, much less to receive lessons about values. These are not the things that move them. They come to do fun, challenging things, to meet other young people, to make friends, to have adventures and to go beyond the limits of their home and neighbourhood.

"The child wants to do things, so let us encourage him to do them by pointing him in the right direction, and allowing him to do them how he likes. Let him make mistakes; it is through making mistakes that his experience is formed."

(Baden-Powell, Headquarters Gazette, January 1916).

Taking into account the vitality and energy of young people, Scouting's proposal is based on the concept of learning opportunities, meaning that every activity, project, experience, role, and responsibility within group life contributes to the young person's development.

These learning opportunities are how young people **learn by doing**, i.e., they learn by playing, serving, exploring, projecting, reflecting, debating, etc.

Learning opportunities concept and educational value

In a broader sense, learning opportunities are "all the experiences and situations that young people can learn from, both organised and spontaneous",¹ so that they have the potential to gather and process knowledge and to acquire attitudes and skills that will help develop their individual character.

The organised aspect of this concept includes all the activities *per se* developed in each age section as well as all the roles and responsibilities that young people have in making these happen.

¹ World Scout Youth Programme Policy, WOSM, 2018



"The Youth Programme encompasses all **learning opportunities** that young people in Scouting encounter: camping and outdoor activities, community service and community development projects, achieving progressive goals or standards symbolised by proficiency badges, games, ceremonies, patrol and troop life, etc. Learning opportunities are the instances in which young people have the potential to gather and process knowledge, to develop attitudes and skills that will help develop their individual character. The Youth Programme is therefore not about the activities per se, but rather about the learning opportunities that activities can offer within Scouting fundamentals and shared values."²

Experiential learning principles

1. The relationship between learning opportunities and experience

When reflecting on the content of your NSO's Youth Programme, it is vital to consider that young people learn through the experiences they get from learning opportunities. You must distinguish between the learning opportunity (activity, role, responsibility, unplanned situation) that everyone participates in and the experience that each young person obtains through the learning opportunity.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY	EXPERIENCE
What is happening externally; the action that involves everyone.	The internal part, which happens within each person; what each person gets from the action.
A way to generate different learning experiences.	The result that occurs in young people when they are faced with different learning opportunities.
An educational purpose	The result offered by the learning opportunity is experiential learning for the young person.

2. Experiences are personal

The learning part is the experience, since this is the personal relationship that each young person has with their reality.

² World Scout Youth Programme Policy, WOSM, 2018

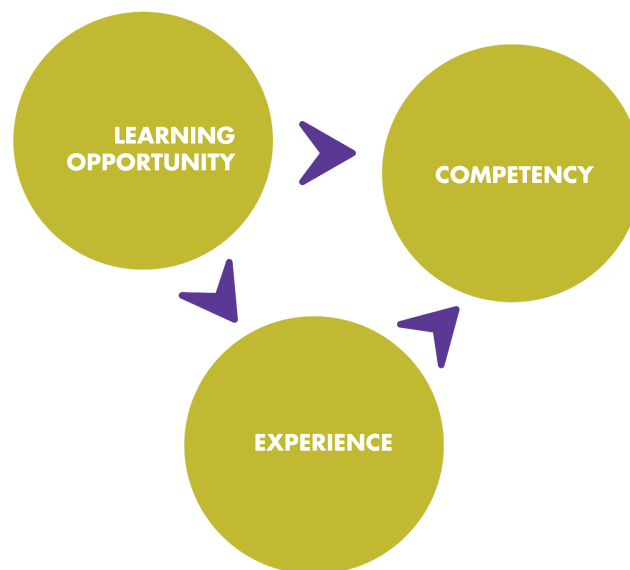


Fig.1

A single learning opportunity, be it an activity, a role, or a function, will generate different experiences in the young people who take part in it. The experiences depend on a large number of factors, but are mainly influenced by the characteristics of each young person.

An educational activity can be executed impeccably and collectively evaluated as very successful, but in some young people it may not produce the expected results. Conversely, an activity may not be evaluated as successful and yet produce, in one or several participants, experiences that contribute to their acquiring the intended competencies.

Experiential learning is the result of the individual young person processing everything that happened during the activity. As an internal process, we cannot anticipate their learning with any certainty; we can only provide educational activities and scenarios to generate experiences conducive to their acquisition of the competencies.

Experiential learning, as described by Kolb's learning cycle, happens when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observing and reflecting on that experience, which leads to (3) forming abstract concepts (analysis) and generalisations (conclusions), which are then (4) used to test a hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.



**Application of
Kolb's Experiential
Learning Cycle**



Fig.2

Though learning is an internal process, the adult leader (the “educator”) can interact with the young person’s learning process at all stages, supporting and guiding the learning process throughout the full learning cycle.

The adult leader should be aware that other competencies may be developed in any process, even if they were not intentional.

Given this:

- Your NSO’s Youth Programme must include a wide variety of learning opportunities in the form of activities and projects, as well as a balance of roles and functions. This increases the opportunities for experiences and learning in each young person.
- Activities and projects should be selected, prepared, developed, and properly evaluated by young people with necessary and age-appropriate, but restrained, adult support.
- It is not enough that activities are successful; the personal experience that each young person obtains must also be attended to. This is achieved by promoting space for reflection on personal processes and by monitoring personal progression.
- All learning opportunities generate experiences that contribute to the eventual acquisition of competencies.



3. Learning opportunities contribute to the achievement of competencies

There is a two-way relationship between learning opportunities and competencies:

- An activity may be chosen in light of a previously determined educational competency. For example, organising a show during a campfire to develop the skills of oral and body language, organisation, time management, etc.
- A completed activity can be evaluated to identify the educational competencies it achieved. For example, Daniel chose to take responsibility with his team to make a wall newspaper during a camp. From the final evaluation, it was noted that Daniel had acquired new communication skills and put them at the service of the group. He deserves his journalist badge.

There is no immediate cause-and-effect relationship between the learning opportunity and the acquisition of competencies, i.e., the realisation of an activity or the completion of a role does not automatically lead to the achievement of a competency. Acquiring competencies is more a gradual and cumulative sequence of varied learning opportunities that generate experiences.

By being actively involved in dreaming, planning, creating, organising, and participating in activities and projects over time, and then reflecting on those experiences, young people have the opportunity to learn and develop competencies.

Through the reflection process, it is also possible to identify competencies developed that were never intended when the project was first developed. These are no less valuable, and all contribute to the young person's growth and development.

The evaluation of competencies will be further developed in the Personal Progression Scheme, as step 8 of the GPS.

Learning opportunities characteristics

Learning opportunities dimensions

According to their form, their frequency, what is predetermined by your NSO, and what is determined by the young people's interests, you can identify several dimensions when talking about learning opportunities, and together they ensure that your Youth Programme is not static, but diverse and relevant to young people.

- **Fixed dimension:** When the learning opportunities usually take a single form, are carried out continually, and can contribute strongly to the sense of belonging and atmosphere in the NSO and instil the traditions of Scouting. They may include



- unit meetings, ceremonies, games, songs, and symbolism.
 - the team system as a peer learning environment and the democratic process of the team council.
 - camps, where the challenges of nature and society are presented and negotiated.
- **Variable dimension:** When the learning opportunities take different forms and refer to a variety of subjects, creativity, and challenges. Usually they are not repeated, unless the young people particularly want to, and then only after a certain length of time. They may include
 - activities determined by the dreams and interests of young people.
 - activities aimed at stimulating new experiences, pushing boundaries, and broadening horizons.
 - activities and partnerships outside of the local group.
- **Internal dimension:** When the learning opportunities are mainly developed within the Scout programme (individually, in the team or unit, in the local community, etc.).
- **External dimension:** When the learning opportunities mainly occur outside the Scouting context (school, sport, art, science group) and generate experiences conducive to the acquisition of competencies that could be recognised and used within Scouting (e.g. a science project created by a Scout at school that can be run during a summer camp).
- **Innovation dimension:** When the learning opportunities change over time, Scouting adapts and transforms to the changes that are taking place within society. It is also true that traditional learning opportunities are created over time as new learning opportunities may become a normal, constant part of the Youth Programme that is relevant to young people.

Educational learning opportunities vs Scout learning opportunities

You might be tempted to use the term "Scout activity" to refer to traditional learning opportunities. This should be avoided since it implies that the proposal of the Scout Movement is based on certain activities that are ours. It is a mistake to think that some activities are "Scout" and that others are not. Accepting this notion means limiting activities to those that are on a pre-selected list. We should not talk about "Scout activities" but about "Scout experiences", i.e., those activities that are carried out and experienced through the Scout Method.

In the educational framework of the Scout Movement, the number of learning opportunities is unlimited. Their selection only depends on

- the interests and needs of young people.
- their being experienced through the Scout Method.



- their contributing to the purpose of Scouting.
- acceptable margins of physical and emotional security.
- adult support showing novel and challenging options.

Achieving a balance between learning opportunities

In Scouting, the range of learning opportunities is unlimited. However, the key to a successful Youth Programme is to strike a balance between all kinds of learning opportunities to ensure an impactful group life and the progression of young people.

If the focus is exclusively on learning opportunities with a variable dimension, the Youth Programme could become a set of activities without a purpose, without giving young people the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing.

This can contribute to the de-characterising of your NSO, losing consistency of ceremonies, councils and the sense of belonging and unity with the movement. The local groups will then have difficulties to achieve stability.

At the same time, if learning opportunities with a traditional dimension fill your NSO's Youth Programme, there is a risk that boredom may set in and group life will deteriorate. There is also the probability that young people's needs and aspirations are not being met.

Your NSO will become self-centred and isolated from events around it. This will not prepare young people for life and it could affect the harmonious development of young people in all the different areas of growth.

Characteristics of learning opportunities

"Childhood today is defined by overprotection. It became a rarity and not just in numerical terms. There is like schizophrenia, a contradiction in child development because, while there is an early accessibility to means and technologies, which give children more and more facilities to learn and communicate, they are denied their autonomy to play, go outside, play hide and seek with adults... That is, they are denied the basic experiences on which they build the foundations that allow you to acquire skills or have social relationships."³

In reality the concept of overprotection can be seen only in regard to children but also to young people. This reinforces the importance of learning by doing in Scouting as an essential element of the Scout Method to ensure youth engagement and development at all levels.

In Scouting, all the experiences lived through the different learning opportunities, enabling young people to build foundations that allow them to acquire skills or develop positive social interactions.

³ La Opinión, A Coruña: "A los niños se les niega ahora su autonomía para jugar", Francesco Tonucci:



A good educational learning opportunity, experienced through the Scout Method, has seven characteristics which make it an excellent learning opportunity: challenging, useful, rewarding, attractive, playful, safe, and inclusive.

- **Challenging**

The learning opportunity must present a challenge proportionate to the abilities of children and young people, stimulate creativity and inventiveness, and encourage participants to excel. The challenge must be proportionate to the capacities and level of maturity of young people. If the challenge is not challenging enough, it will seem silly and will not motivate young people to overcome it. If, on the other hand, the challenge is too great, it will immobilise young people and not motivate them to overcome it.

- **Useful**

The learning opportunity should offer young people experiences that allow them to discover and learn new things. To be considered educational, spontaneous, entertaining, repetitive or action-packed activity is not enough. It is necessary to offer young people the opportunity to learn.

- **Rewarding**

Young people must see the learning opportunity as beneficial. Perhaps they enjoyed taking part in something exciting, took pride in doing something for the first time or achieving something unexpected; or were pleased to be recognised for their contribution.

- **Attractive**

As the interests of young people vary according to their stages of development as well as their sociocultural context, it is necessary to offer a wide range of possible learning opportunities, appropriate to the different situations and contexts in which we have to act as adult leaders.

The learning opportunity should awaken the interest and willingness of the young person to participate and be active, because it is original, because they like it, or because they are attracted by the values inherent in the activity.

- **Playful**

All learning opportunities in Scouting have a playful dimension, i.e., a component of play, of joy, of fun. They also offer time for socialisation and expression; space for imagination, fantasy, and creativity; room for agreements and learning the rules; and opportunities for trial and error. Without this playful dimension, they may tend to become formalised and, curiously, lose their educational potential.

- **Safe**

While all learning opportunities are subject to a certain risk, young people and adult leaders must be able to perceive and control that risk, setting clear limits and safe procedures.

- **Inclusive and diverse**

Inclusion, along with diversity, means that learning opportunities are inclusive and value the diversity of the individual and the community in which Scouting operates.



Activities and Projects

Activities and peer groups

Peer education is particularly stimulated when young people are truly motivated by an activity that requires a special effort from each of them. Each young person is aware that the activity will not happen by itself. It will be necessary to combine individual skills and talents, assume responsibilities, and cooperate. In order to keep the activity or project running, it will be necessary to help those who have difficulties. The feeling of success is on one hand collective – "we have done it" – which strengthens the bonds between members, and on the other hand individual – "I did not believe that we would be able to do it." Thanks to the effort from everyone, each person is able to prove and achieve something unusual.

Young people should meet, interact, and get to know one another by planning and taking part in activities, sharing ideas, making decisions, working together, assuming responsibilities, joining resources and talents, and evaluating and celebrating successes. Activities in this sense represent the driving force behind the group's dynamic. To stimulate group life, activities must offer opportunities for constructive interactions.

Activities and adults

There are many ways activities can be initiated. The ability and developmental stage of young people must be considered when deciding which will be most appropriate in a given situation:

- Young people formulate their own activities based on their interests while being aware of the competencies they want to achieve. Adults act as facilitators and mentors for the development of the project. Young people organise and participate in the activities.
- Young people are encouraged to express and organise activities that correspond to their interests, with the support and guidance of adult leaders. Adults identify the learning opportunities that the activity could offer and link these opportunities to the competencies provided for the age section. Young people co-organise and participate in the activities.
- Adult leaders, having considered the needs and aspirations of young people, prepare and propose activities that offer stimulating learning situations coherent with the educational competencies for the age section and corresponding with the interests expressed by the group. Young people participate in the activities.

Regardless of the initiator, the proposed activity will need to be carefully analysed to determine how all elements of the Scout Method are integrated, and with *Safe from Harm* best practices also considered as part of risk management.



Young people must be involved at all levels and always in a manner appropriate to the abilities of the specific group. The leadership team's role is to actively engage young people in the entire life cycle of the activity, from conception to evaluation, and not just during the execution phase. Every stage is a rich source of learning opportunities. The Scout Movement advocates that the educational value of an activity increases significantly when young people are involved throughout the activity life cycle, and not mere consumers of the activity organised for them.

Adult leaders should actively facilitate the young people's learning experience.

- Supporting them in the development and refinement of their personal learning goals and subsequently creating a feasible plan and realistic schedule for reaching these goals, either for a single activity or over a period of time. Facilitating and scaffolding the learning experience helps young people to develop a deeper awareness and appreciation of themselves, the people around them, and their surroundings.
- Adult leaders help young people crystallise their thoughts and form opinions, be it on self-improvement or the betterment of future activities. Adult leaders should encourage young people to explore and discover and arrive at their own decisions. Only where health and safety are at stake should adult leaders impose their beliefs on the situation.
- Facilitating and scaffolding the learning experience builds on those decisions made in the previous stage to create a new experience. The new experience here may refer to a similar activity in the future or another activity.

Where a young person is at in their development determines their involvement in each phase of the activity life cycle as well as the intensity of adult support they receive. For a young Cub Scout or an inexperienced member of an older section, involvement in developing an activity plan could be challenging and require close support and regular coaching from adult leaders. The aim here is to progressively increase their level of autonomy and for adult leaders to slowly reduce their involvement. As young people advance, they should be more heavily involved in the unit's programme cycle as well as taking greater control in their learning experience.

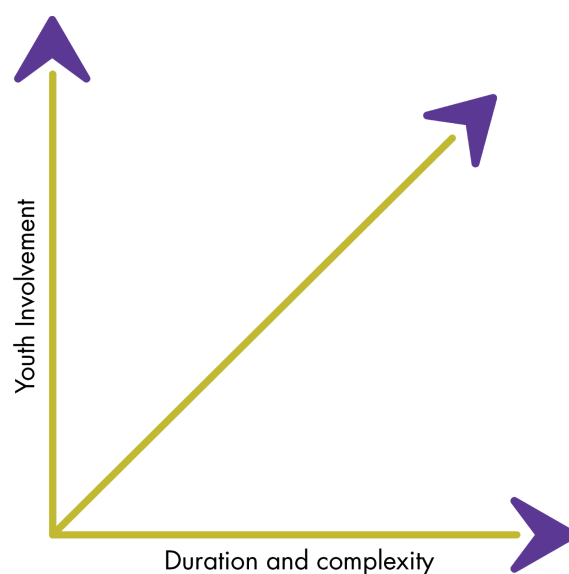


Fig.3

Figure 3. The relationship between the level of youth participation that can be achieved at different levels of maturity depending on the complexity of the activity

Even young children can have full autonomy in very simple situations, but more adult support and guidance is needed for more complex activities. Young people at the edge of adulthood can run most activities and projects themselves with only occasional advice and support from adult leaders.

From activities to projects

Young people should actively engage in the Youth Programme. The coaching, mentoring, and level of facilitation assumed by the adult leaders in the activities should diminish progressively as the young people acquire more knowledge and experience and assume greater responsibilities. This evolution is not aimed at making the adult leader's task easier, but ensuring that young people are empowered to make decisions and maximise the developmental outcomes of learning opportunities. It also ensures that the Youth Programme content remains relevant to all young people participating. In fact, it corresponds to a fundamental objective of Scouting, which is to help young people become autonomous and responsible for themselves.

The directed activities

At the most basic level, we have what could be called a directed activity. The adult leader prepares, organises and proposes the activity. This type of activity is usually undertaken for a short period of time. If it is carried out with good results, it has the advantage of invigorating the group and increasing self-confidence (provided that the activities correspond to the interests of young people).



However, the educational impact of this type of activity is necessarily limited; it is usually restricted to the acquisition of practical knowledge. If young people only participate in the activity and are not involved in the planning or reviewing stages, then the learning opportunity may be lost. Although the young person may view the activity as fun or engaging, it will not benefit the young person's development in the long term. In addition, since most of the responsibilities for preparing and organising the activity are taken by the adult leader, it is difficult to use all the elements of the Scout Method.

Youth-driven activities

If the activity allows each team to have a specific function in its implementation (or in its preparation), the next stage is reached, i.e., a youth-driven activity. This type of activity has a greater educational content: it offers young people the opportunity to try different functions and assume a wide range of responsibilities, which increases participation and enriches their experience.

In addition to preparation and implementation, it is also important that young people review the activity or project. This step ensures that young people have the opportunity to reflect on their own development as a result of the activity and consider what they did and how so that if they undertake the activity again it can be improved on or done in a different way to ensure that it remains relevant to them and to others.

Projects

At the highest level of combined complexity and participation, the activity can be considered a project. By a project we understand a set of interrelated and complementary activities that are carried out to achieve a specific purpose. A project usually combines several activities of a common theme and with a common goal. It is done during a period of medium or long duration. In this case, young people are involved in all levels of the activity from selection, preparation, and organisation to implementation and evaluation. They may form project teams, taking into account the skills and knowledge needed or those they want to develop as a result of the project. If the project does not go the way they intended, they will still learn from the experience and how they can improve upon it. The role of adult leaders is to support and mentor young people as they develop their projects and maximise the participation of young people. Even if the project does not go to plan, offer support and help them realise what they have learned from the experience.



Evaluating learning opportunities

Learning opportunities are evaluated on two levels:

1. The way the learning opportunity was prepared and implemented.
2. The experience created by the learning opportunity, taking into account the relationships within the group and between the young people and the adult leaders. It also includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which each individual acquires as a result of this experience that can lead them to achieving the educational competencies set for their age section.

Young people have a key role to play in evaluating both the learning opportunity itself and their personal experience. Helping young people to do this is an important part of leader training. The team councils, the unit assembly and the unit council are privileged settings to evaluate learning opportunities and young people's personal progression.



Fig.4



Annex 5

Programme Cycles

Introduction

Step 6 of the GPS shows the importance of generating learning opportunities that respond both to the interests and needs of young people as well as to the educational purpose of the Scout Movement.

In a broader sense, learning opportunities are all the experiences and situations that young people can learn from, both organised and spontaneous, so that they have the potential to gather and process knowledge, and acquire attitudes and skills that will help develop their individual character.

Programme cycles are an essential part of the experiential learning that takes place as a result of the individual young person's processing everything that has happened during an activity.

Programme Cycles

In this annex, we explore programme cycles and how they contribute towards the development of young people.

The programme cycle is a period in which learning opportunities are prepared, conducted, and evaluated in a sequence of phases; the way we apply the Scout Method is analysed; and the personal growth of young people is observed and recognised.

A programme cycle comprising many different learning opportunities is therefore made up of many experiential learning cycles where young people reflect on their own development and experience gained from a learning opportunity, experience which is then used in the development and implementation of a new programme cycle.

Features of a programme cycle

1. A planning tool

The programme cycle is a planning tool used to evaluate the current situation in the Section, plan changes and adjustments for the future, carry out the Youth Programme, and evaluate its results.

Length of a programme cycle

The length of the programme cycle can vary from three to four weeks or three to four months, depending on the learning opportunities proposed as part of the cycle. Often, it is young people through the Section Council, who determine the length of each cycle in line with past experience, the situation of the Section and – the most influential factor of all – the type of learning opportunities the young people have chosen. In younger age sections this may require additional adult support to facilitate and determine which learning opportunities young people to include in their programme cycle, ensuring that a balance of learning opportunities is achieved.



The cycle should not be shorter than the minimum time agreed because conducting interlinked sections and team activities requires time for organisation and for both types of activities to run smoothly. In some cases, adolescents may prefer medium- and long-duration activities, which cannot easily be accommodated in too short a cycle. It takes time to form an impression of whether young people have achieved the behaviour patterns envisaged in the objectives, since several agents are involved in this assessment

The cycle should not last longer than the maximum time agreed because a very long cycle is not suited to the rapidly changing interests of young people, especially the younger members. Young people need constant encouragement in their personal development, which they receive through recognition seals and progress badges. In a longer cycle these would be spaced far apart, as they are awarded usually at the end of a cycle.

The programme cycle is an empowerment tool

The process of designing and implementing a programme cycle should have young people at the centre as they are the primary consumers of the programme. As an empowerment tool, it presents an opportunity for young people to not only maximise their engagement in the programme, but also their decision-making and ownership for the youth programme. Overall, the more young people are involved in the design and implementation of the programme cycle, the more they will learn and experience as a result of being actively involved.

Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation demonstrates this involvement and how it translates to what young people will learn and experience as a result of actively participating and making age-appropriate decisions as part of the programme cycle. Within Hart's Ladder model, young people have a right to choose the level of participation that they are comfortable with. This may depend on their abilities or the complexity of the learning opportunities.

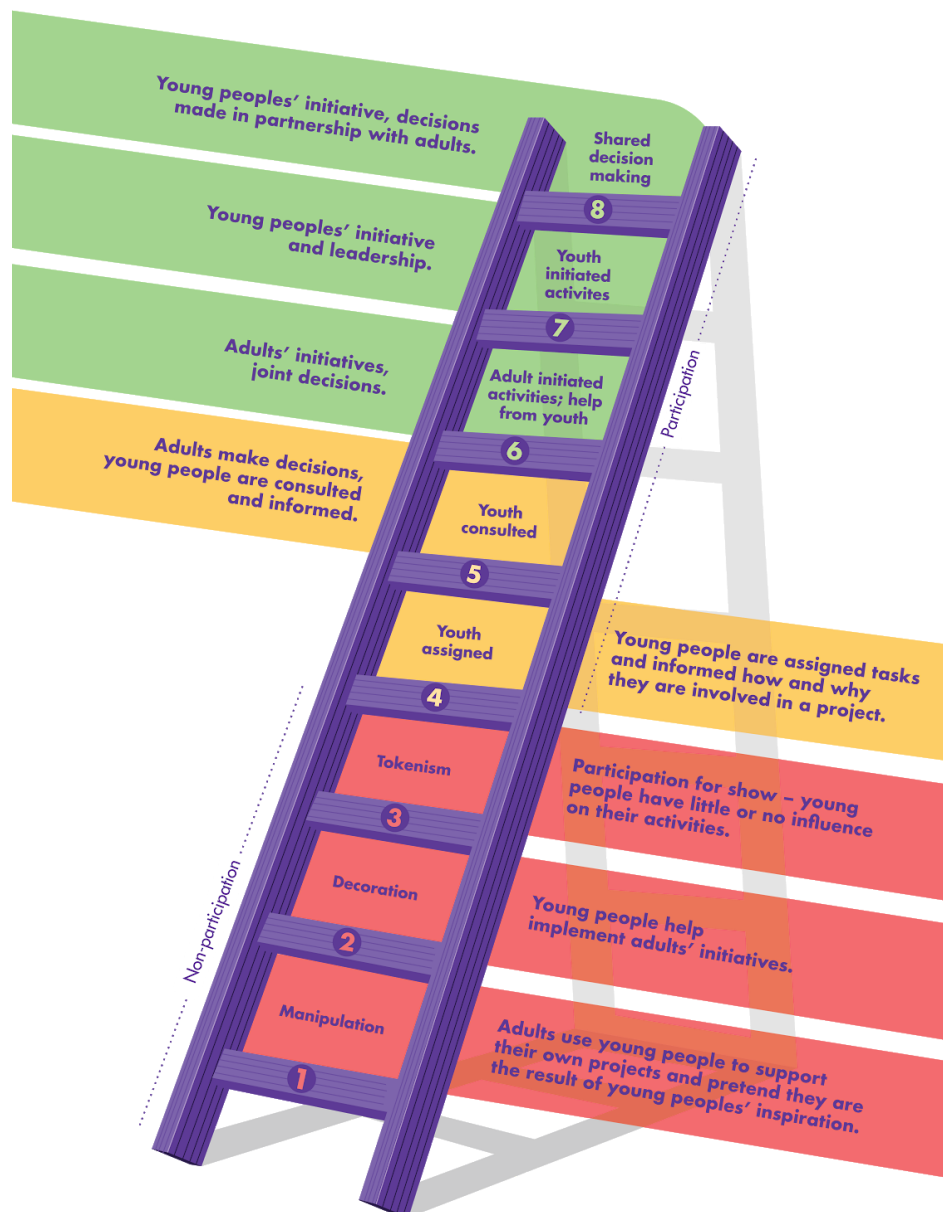


Fig.5



The various phases of the programme cycle

Programme cycle restructure of graphic:

1. Unit analysis and proposing/selecting learning opportunities
 - a. Conclusions of the personal assessment, analysis of the unit, and the preselection and proposition of the learning opportunities
2. Organising and preparing the learning opportunities
 - a. Design, organise and prepare the learning opportunities
3. Carrying out the learning opportunities
 - a. Run/experience the learning opportunities itself
4. Programme evaluation, reflection, and Review
 - a. Evaluating the learning opportunities and monitoring personal progression

The different phases of a programme cycle, especially the first three, coordinate different points in time and situations which give young people the opportunity to participate and to practise democratic life.

At first these steps may seem to represent a more complicated approach than some age sections usually take, but they are simply a sequence that orders and puts names to what is needed to encourage young people to actively participate naturally.

Baden-Powell used to say that "the Patrol system helps Scouts to understand that they hold considerable sway over what their section does. This system is what makes the Scout Section, and therefore Scouting in general, genuinely cooperative."⁴

The programme cycle is an efficient tool for listening and for young people to make this attitude part of their personality. New ideas emerge when we listen, and when there are no new ideas, we run the risk of "making the Scouts do activities that we think they should like".⁵

The Founder raised this concern repeatedly in different texts. He even brought it up in his farewell speech at the World Conference in The Hague in 1937⁶, when he said that "...before I take any decision of this kind [choosing activities], I ask the best authority: the young people themselves."

⁴ Baden-Powell, Aids to Scoutmastership, 1919

⁵ Baden-Powell, Aids to Scoutmastership, 1919

⁶ World Scout Conference, Baden-Powell, Robert, 1937



Fig.6

Phase 1: Unit analysis

While one cycle is ending with the conclusions of the personal progress assessments and achievements are being acknowledged, another cycle is beginning with unit analysis, which includes setting an emphasis, pre-selecting activities, and preparing a proposal of learning opportunities for the next programme cycle.

This analysis is adapted to the developmental age sections in an age-appropriate way, whereby the areas of personal growth are analysed and as part of the emphasis, ensure the new programme cycle is attractive, playful, challenging, inclusive and diverse, useful, rewarding, and safe and addresses the developmental needs of young people.

Often, the unit analysis may be conducted by a team council or unit council, particularly in more mature developmental age sections with support and mentorship from other more experienced young people or adults. This is a democratic process in the selection of learning opportunities that takes into account the developmental needs of young people in the section. In younger developmental age sections, more adult support may be required to analyse the programme and the activity proposal.

We can consider some of the following factors in the analysis of the programme cycle:



- **Team system.** The dynamics of young people in the section and how the Scout Method is applied to the section. The atmosphere in the peer group, the relationships between its members, internal roles of authority within the peer group (team leaders), the progress achieved, problems that have been carried over, outstanding tasks and future activities or projects.
- **Balance of learning opportunities.** A balanced programme is made up of multiple learning opportunities that allow young people to explore and develop across the six areas of personal growth (social, physical, intellectual, character, emotional, and spiritual development).
- **Experiential learning cycles.** The experience gained from the learning cycle is an important factor for young people in the analysis and proposition of a new programme cycle, whereby from the experience gained the decision to further explore other competency areas or challenges may be made.
- **Adult support.** Adults apply support and mentorship to young people in the analysis of the learning opportunities and help provide guidance to young people in the development and implementation of the next programme cycle.

Young people formulate an emphasis

Based on the general analysis, an emphasis is defined for the new cycle, with particular reference to the growth areas that need the most work.

The emphasis is a certain tone given to the new cycle, which arises from the unit analysis. It's a way of meeting the needs expressed by the analysis by strengthening the positive aspects that were identified, trying to mitigate or eliminate the negative ones, and directing corrective action for the cycle that is beginning. The emphasis represents a framework within which the programme cycle will operate.

ANALYSIS	EMPHASIS
Young people find the learning opportunities attractive. There is a good balance between the different dimensions of learning opportunities. All the growth areas are covered. However, there is a lack of diversity among the learning opportunities experienced.	Increase the variety of learning opportunities to keep them attractive.
There are too many unit learning opportunities and not enough for the individual teams.	Reduce the number of unit activities and encourage team-based learning opportunities
The life and atmosphere of the teams are not very intense	Strengthen the internal culture of the teams and work on the training of the team leaders' other youth roles.
Individual monitoring is not constant.	Each adult leader to enhance their coaching and mentoring of young people within their group.
No contact with other educational agents.	Establish links with the families and schools of the young people.
Too many learning opportunities are carried out in the meeting place and young people's progress shows they lack experience of life in nature.	Organise more outdoor learning opportunities in the next programme cycle.



Proposition and selection of learning opportunities

When you have established the areas of development for the next programme cycle, pre-select learning opportunities to help stimulate the flow of ideas from young people to what they may like to learn or achieve as part of the new programme cycle.

The proposition and selection of learning opportunities can commence as part of the programme cycle. From the established emphasis, young people can then propose and select the learning opportunities they choose to develop as part of the new programme cycle.

This proposal and selection process should be a collaborative and democratic, ensuring young people are actively involved in decision-making around the new programme cycle,

Acknowledging the roles of the small team, the process of proposing and selecting the learning opportunities should be a democratic one involving all young people and maximising their participation in the decision-making process, taking into account their ideas, aspirations, and developmental needs.

Competency assessment

As part of the selection process, emphasis must be given to the achievement of competencies and the developmental needs of young people. Repetition of the previous programme cycle does not meet the needs of young people, nor does it challenge or motivate young people to achieve a new competency base.

In this assessment of competencies, we do not want to follow a “checklist” approach in the race to attain badges, etc., but assess the skills and abilities of young people to help guide and mentor them in the direction to assist their developmental needs.

Adult support

Adult leaders people in the selection of the proposed learning opportunities. Having considered the needs and aspirations of young people, adults ensure the programme is best suited to these developmental needs and that the proposed learning opportunities achieve a balanced programme cycle for all young people in the section.



Phase 2: Programme organising, designing, and preparing the learning opportunities

In this phase the team and unit activities that have been selected are organised into a calendar. Once the unit assembly has approved the calendar, each activity is designed and prepared.

Programme cycle plan

Incorporating all selected learning opportunities into a plan, timeline, or calendar for the new programme cycle is a useful way to capture the sequence of learning opportunities for the programme cycle and provides a pathway for completion, noting all learning opportunities and potential achievements through the progressive scheme.

These calendars or plans may also take into account any special events or occasions that factor into the programme cycle as determined by the country in which you NSO operates.

Some NSOs have introduced the concept of Programme Areas, which are used in the context of programme planning and provide a bridge between the learning opportunities of the Youth Programme and the progressive scheme.

Defining learning opportunity objectives

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITY OBJECTIVES	
Learning Opportunity	Objectives
THE TEAMS GOT RHYTHM! Choosing a melody, composing a song, making instruments, needed to play it, organising a festival, presenting the song and choosing a winning number are some of the challenges of this learning opportunity, which puts the young people's musical skills, creativity, and humour to the test.	To become familiar with and learn to make simple musical instruments.
	To develop artistic and musical skills.
	To develop team-working skills.
A COMMUNITY VEGETABLE GARDEN It was decided to create a community vegetable garden on the land behind the Scout Group premises. Each team will be responsible for one part and will have to dig up the ground, plant the vegetables, water and maintain it and finally harvest it. The vegetables will be given to families in need.	Discover the natural process of plant growth.
	Experiment with the different tasks required to achieve a good harvest.
	Experiment with cooperative work.
	Experience working for the community.

The objectives of a learning opportunity are the practical outcomes we hope to have achieved in the group of participants at the end of the learning opportunity. The individual learning that has occurred during the learning opportunity relates to the holistic competencies and what experience young people have gained as a result.

Defining the objectives in writing is essential for evaluating the activity afterwards, since evaluation consists of establishing whether the proposed objectives were achieved.



Phase 3: Carrying out the learning opportunities

Once the activities have been selected and organised, the sections and teams move on to the central phase of the cycle, which represents most of the time available. This phase involves what young people love most: doing things! It also involves what interests adult leaders most: supporting young people in their individual development.

Based on young people's plans and aspirations

The plan and design of the programme cycle are determined by the young people who are the participants and primary consumers of the learning opportunities that make up the programme cycle. Therefore, the learning opportunities carried out in the “doing” phase of the programme cycle are based on the plans and aspirations they have set. This might include goals that they are trying to achieve or a specific project they are working on.

Active participation

Execution varies depending on the complexity of the learning opportunity that is being implemented. However, it is important that young people have the opportunity to actively participate in the learning opportunity so that the experience of the activity, project, role, etc., is maximised.

Programme risk management

The programme cycle learning opportunities must also take into consideration *Safe from Harm* practices, ensuring that the learning opportunities selected are within the competencies range for the section.

Not only does this mean that the learning opportunities are carried out in a safe way for young people, but also that they can help young people to discover their own abilities and the abilities of their peers. For example, many learning opportunities such as rock climbing or sailing will always have some degree of risk; however, it is how this risk is managed to provide a safe environment for young people that makes all the difference, remembering that learning happens in the proximal zone.



Phase 4: Programme Evaluation, Reflection and Review

The evaluation and reflection of learning opportunities is a crucial phase in the programme cycle. This phase is where young people have the opportunity to reflect on their development, the development of their teams or peers, improvements for the next programme cycle, and what went well and what could have been done better. It also is the final phase that links into the next programme cycle.

Evaluation of learning opportunities

This step ensures that young people have the opportunity to reflect on their own development as a result of the learning opportunity and to consider what they did so that if they undertake the learning opportunity again it can be improved on or done in a different way to ensure that it remains relevant to them and to others.

From the evaluation of the learning opportunities and overall programme cycle we can also determine how well the programme cycle went in terms of motivating young people and how engaged they were in the delivery and participation of the programme.

The programme cycle evaluation is not only useful in terms of recognising the achievements and development of young people, but also in determining how engaging the programme was and what could be changed so that the next programme cycle is more attractive.

Reflection on personal progression

The reflection on individual personal progression is also an important part of the programme where young people not only evaluate the learning opportunities, but also have an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and development as a result of their participation in the programme cycle.

Continuous improvement

At the end of one programme cycle, we begin another. Taking into account the experiences of the previous programme cycle young people can build on and improve the learning opportunities they wish to undertake as part of the next programme cycle.

Let's look at an example.

As part of the programme cycle, a team of Scouts decide to go on a two-day hike, taking on new skills and testing their abilities. At the end of the programme cycle and the evaluation of the learning and experience gained from the hike, they may decide to go on another hike as part of the next programme cycle to further test their newly developed skills or in a different location/terrain to offer different experiences. This element of continuous improvement means that they can further develop competencies needed for different learning opportunities and improve or build on similar activities they have done as part of previous programme cycles.



LO.01 Tool to Improve Educational Activities: the Reference Activities

Introduction

Many of the day-to-day activities observable in units and Scout groups are inspired by activities carried out in national or international events, training courses, and even presented in the traditional literature of the Scout Movement, which is produced by NSOs or WOSM.

Many of these activities experienced by young people and adults, either in Youth Programme events or on training courses, served as reference to educators when designing or proposing activities for their units.

When we talk about reference activities, we refer to a type of educational activity that functions as a source of ideas or inspiration for activities that can be carried out in the units while introducing innovative elements and improving the quality of the Youth Programme.

With reference activities, young people and adults have the opportunity to have a full first-hand experience of the concepts that are proposed by literature, training, and guidance.

Strategically speaking, reference activities are valuable tools to support the implementation and improvement of the Youth Programme. Showing the concepts that arise from theory through practice facilitates the understanding to later adapt and implement these concepts to the educational practices of our NSOs.

Objectives

This tool is intended to

- explore the concept of “reference activities” and analyse their importance in an innovative and quality-improving strategy for the Youth Programme.
- identify your motives, procedures, and styles of event organisation in relation to reference activities.

This tool is intended for

- the team responsible for the process of designing or reviewing your NSO’s Youth Programme.
- participants of a study or discussions (seminars, workshops, etc.) organised by your NSO while designing or reviewing its Youth Programme.



How to use this tool

1. Individually, read the text "Reference Activities" (annex).
2. Split into teams:
 - a) Analyse the concept of reference activities and its usefulness.
 - b) Answer the questionnaire and report your findings.
3. Have each team draw conclusions and later, in a plenary session, reach final conclusions with the whole group.

Questionnaire on the Reference Activities in our NSO

Educational Quality Improvement Strategy	
1. Do our events respond to a strategy to improve the quality of the Youth Programme?	<p>Organise activities according to the strategic needs. You should not organize events just because you think this is one of our core functions to comply with a calendar, to generate economic income for your NSO, or because it has been a long time since you held an event.</p> <p>When the Youth Programme's field representatives are considered only as event organisers and not as the ones in charge of improving and adequately implementing the programme in their territory, events in themselves are considered a goal.</p>
2. Do we design our events from clearly defined objectives that are aligned with the NSO's strategy for the area of Youth Programme?	<p>Sometimes, events have the exchange of knowledge between young people or fundraising for the organisation as the main and almost only objective. We don't mean that these aspects are not important, but when prioritising them almost exclusively, the content and activities are not the central aspects in the design of the event.</p>



Innovation	
3. In our events, do we propose something different from what is being done in the units and Scout groups?	In other words, do we offer "more of the same"? The event must ensure that young people and adults have the opportunity to experience activities that they do not usually have the opportunity to carry out in their units or groups.
4. Do we dabble in unexplored youth programme areas or topics creating difficulties for those responsible for the units?	For this, the Youth Programme team must clearly identify the unexplored areas or topics that create difficulties for those responsible for the units.
5. Do we give a new approach to traditional activities?	Are you updating activities that, for some reason, have ceased to be done but that we still consider valuable?

Event Organisation	
5. Do we consider the young person's point of view in the design of our national activities?	When organising the NSO's events, do you consult young people about the content for it?
6. Are the decisions, design, and definition of the events in the hands of the Youth Programme team?	Do you entrust the design and core formation of events to your Youth Programme Team, or a team assigned by the Youth Programme.
7. Do we explore activity models carried out by different levels of our NSO or other NSOs?	The Youth Programme team explores permanently the activities and events organised by districts, regions, or areas of your NSO and other NSOs as a source of ideas for our events.



ANNEX

Reference Activities

Introduction

Many activities traditionally carried out in units are inspired by several sources:

- Literature produced by NSOs and WOSM
- Training courses
- National or international events

These sources work as inspiration or reference for Scout educators when they are designing and adapting activities and projects in their units.

We call them reference activities.

Concept

Reference activities are one type of educational activity organised by various levels (district, region, global), which work as a reference and are part of a strategy to improve the quality of a Youth Programme.

They not only have an educational value but also a strategic value since they introduce innovation. They are a “plus” to the activities that are usually performed by the units.

Unlike a text or a training session, the main strength of a *reference activity* is realising many of the suggestions and ideas promoted in theory.

Throughout the reference activities, both young people and adults have the opportunity to go through a full first-hand experience of educational concepts that are presented in the literature, training, or given as advice to the adult volunteers.

Prerequisites for reference activities

- Form part of a strategy for the improvement of your NOS's Youth Programme. Introduce innovation. The activity must offer both young people and their educators the opportunity to experience activities that are not usually done in the units, either because of the complex planning required, or because the programme content is considered new and not bound to pre-set formats. For example, a Moot may be a camp of a week or three days, performed in an urban environment or rural, containing routes of exploration, etc.
- Introduce content that, by its difficulty or novelty, is rarely explored in activities. This is especially important in the processes of change and implementation of a new Youth Programme.



- Venture into unexplored areas of the Youth Programme. Offer a new approach to traditional activities or update activities that for any reason have ceased to be done but are still considered valuable.
- Give the possibility of experiencing the dimension of the Scout Movement, beyond the traditional activities from the unit or Scout group.

Some common problems with reference activities

- a) The execution of an activity is considered an end in itself. This usually happens when the role of the Youth Programme team is seen as to organise events not to manage and improve the quality of the Youth Programme.
- b) The decision and definition of an activity is not in the hands of the Programme teams but under the responsibility of other areas that do not take into account the considerations, criteria, or strategy of those who manage the Youth Programme.
- c) Activities have other purposes. For example, when activities are motivated by financial profit, or the sole purpose is the exchange and understanding between young people, or simply because it has been a long time since they held an event. These reasons should not be the only reasons for organising an activity.

Conclusion

Reference activities are part of the tools your NSO can use to improve its Youth Programme. They must be organised as part of a clear strategy of improvement of the Youth Programme.

The decision to carry out a reference activity, and its style and content should be defined by the National Programme Team, even when diverse actors from the NSO intervene in the event organisation.



LO.02 Tool for Developing Educational Activities and Learning Opportunities

Introduction

Scouting's proposal is based on the concept of learning opportunities, in that as well as having fun together, every activity, project, experience, role, and responsibility within your NSO contributes to the young person's development.

In the main, the young people are protagonists of the activities, as in they propose, select, prepare, develop, and evaluate them, and above all, they have fun!

In this tool we invite the teams responsible for designing or reviewing your NSO's Youth Programme to prepare some examples of educational activities, and interpret the learning opportunities to share with their NSO.

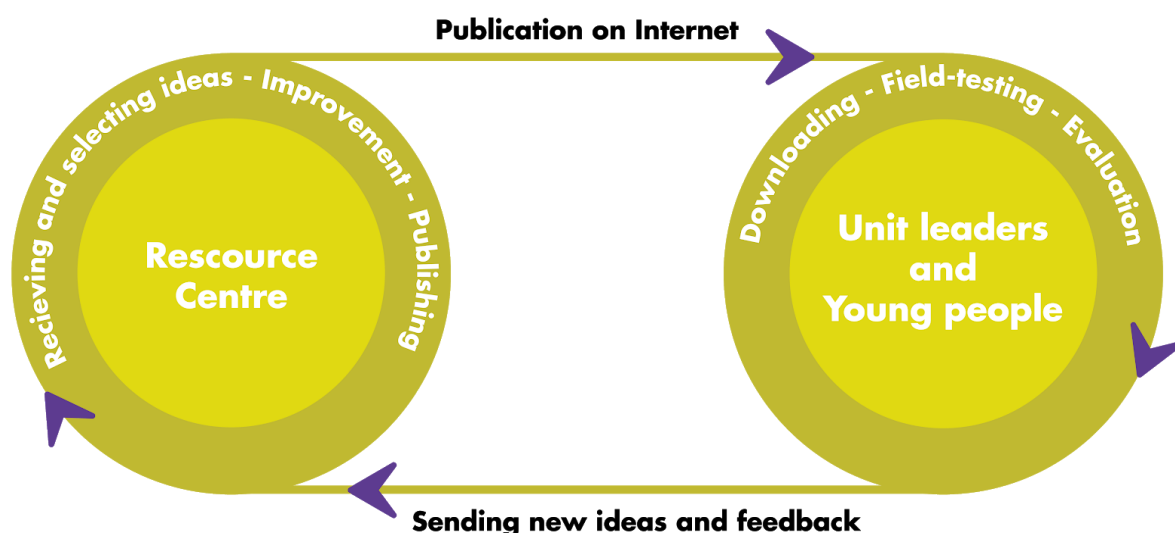


Fig.1



Objectives

This tool is intended to

- help understand the characteristics of a good educational activity.
- help design an educational activity.
- consider activities as a source of learning opportunities.

This tool is intended for

- the team responsible for the process of designing or reviewing your NSO's Youth Programme.
- participants of a study or discussions (seminars, workshops, etc.) organised by your NSO when designing or reviewing its Youth Programme.

How to use this tool

This tool is best used in a small group of young people, or including young people.

1. Choose a template that will best suit the needs of your NSO (example below).
2. In a small group, follow the text and ask the questions from the sections below.
3. In a plenary session, discuss the group's findings and agree the content to complete the template.

A learning opportunity is a flow of experiences that gives the young person the possibility to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that may correspond to one or more competencies. Those experiences are built around the interaction of young people in group life and also in the creation, development, and evaluation of educational activities, as well as their participation in the activity itself, or the celebration of the same.

You are likely to develop a new educational activity for one of two reasons:

1. Young people want to take part in a specific activity.
2. To enable young people to build specific educational competencies.

Mostly it will be for the first reason, but either way the approach is the same.



Characteristics of a good educational activity:

- Experienced through the Scout Method.
- Has seven characteristics: (step 6)
 1. challenging
 2. useful
 3. rewarding
 4. attractive
 5. fun
 6. safe
 7. inclusive

WHY: Mission of Scouting

The Mission or Aim of your NSO, reflective of the Mission of Scouting, is WHY you do what you do. It is presented as the goal of your Educational Proposal and as educational competencies in your Youth Programme. The educational competencies will cover each area of growth: social, physical, intellectual, character, emotional, and spiritual. Each of the learning opportunities will offer young people the chance to build on their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values and ultimately develop the competencies they set out to achieve. The Youth Programme is everything we do in Scouting and the Learning Opportunities are all the pieces that together become your Youth Programme.

Example of Educational Competencies

See step 3 for Final Educational Competencies, and step 4 for Section Educational Competency examples

As well as educational competencies, each activity has general activity objectives.

Example of Activity Objectives

1. All Scouts have the opportunity to participate in the planning and the agreed plan is followed with everyone playing their part
2. All arrive home safely having enjoyed the experience and learned from it.
3. Each Scout has the opportunity to gain some knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values that contribute to specific competencies they wish to develop.



HOW: The Scout Method

The Scout Method guides the HOW in Scouting. The Scout Method is defined as a system of progressive self-education. It is one method based on the interaction of equally important elements that work together as a cohesive system. The implementation of these elements in a combined and balanced manner is what makes Scouting unique.

The following questions can be useful when considering how your activity includes each of the elements of the Scout Method:

The Scout Method Questions for Learning Opportunities	
Promise and Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How are the values of our NSO and the Law reflected in this activity?- Is there a practical way to enhance the activity using the Promise and Law?- How will the values of Scouting be evident in the way the team works together to create, organise, prepare, carry out, and reflect upon the activity?- What do the individuals contribute?
Learning by Doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How will this activity enable the individuals and the group?- Will the learning happen in an exciting and enjoyable way?- What role will everyone play in the design, organisational, development, participation, and evaluation processes, and does the role suit their development needs?- Will this activity provide opportunities for young people to be the advisors or instructors, to pass on the knowledge they have gained, or to be supportive of others' participation and learning?
Personal Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Which of our NSO's educational competencies can be the main focus in this activity (less is more)?- What other specific competencies can individual young people progress towards during this activity?- What methods of reflection and/or recognition are suitable to capture the learning and individual development?- What are the unintended competencies that may be encouraged?



Team System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What are the roles of the team members in developing and organising the activity?- How is the team system visible during the activity, and which of the elements will be enhanced by it?- How is the learning environment of the team evident?
Adult Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What supporting role will the adult have in this activity?- How is the adult's knowledge utilized to benefit the outcome of the activity and young people's development?
Symbolic Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What concept or themes will facilitate learning through dreaming up, creating, developing, practising, evaluating, and celebrating this activity, and what form will it take in the different phases?- How will the symbolic framework engage everyone's learning and development?- What is the added value that the symbolic framework brings to the activity?
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How does this activity benefit from its connection to nature?- What will be learned about which part of the natural world and our responsibilities to it?- What opportunities and challenges can be harnessed from nature to improve this activity?
Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What are the participative skills used/encouraged in this activity in the group, and how are they transferable to development in the wider community?- How is diversity evident in this activity?- How will it be improved with intercultural and/or intergenerational engagement/exploration?



WHAT: Learning Opportunities

Scouting contributes to the education of Young People through its structured and active Youth Programme. Activities are its essence, and the involvement of young people in their creation, development, and evaluation, as well as their participation in the activity itself, or the celebration of the same, provides valuable learning opportunities.

Create a template for activity handouts, using the headings in the example below.

The template should be kept as simple as possible while still including all pertinent data. It should be easy to understand and attractive. Ideally it is two sides of an A4 page. Additional technical knowledge or cut-out patterns, etc., may be added as appendices.

Content of an Activity Handout	
Identification	Name of activity; age section name; area of growth; date of issue
Logistics	Most suitable place for this activity; duration; number of participants
Objectives	Both activity objectives and specific competencies (as above). The activity is evaluated to assess the experience of young people. The competencies are reviewed to assess young people's learning.
Description	A breakdown of the activity including the steps involved in prerequisites, preparation, implementation, evaluation, and celebration. Information may be allocated against time, those responsible, and materials required.
Reflection	Reflection is most important to capture young people's learning and development during the activity.



Fig.2