

Research Article – Education

Scouting and Education

A. Rajamanikam

Department of English, RJM Christian College, Ambalikkai, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

“The greatest contribution to education in the 20th century was made not by an educationist, but by a soldier who founded the scout movement”, says George Benard Shaw.

The scout movement was started by Lord Baden Powell of Gillwell in 1907. Scouting is not only a training but a supplement to education. And it itself is an education, since it has the similar forms and process of education such as aim, objectives, curriculum, teaching-learning methods and so on.

But generally, education means the school and collegiate education, which aims at mental, moral and physical development of the youngmen (boys) and women (girls). We teach systematically, sincerely and scientifically; but with all that, we find education in the doldrums. We hardly find the positive results of teaching or training of mind and character. More so, we find education that makes the boys good and useful citizens.

The definition, “Education is the superior adjustment to the environment” has ended in a fiasco. The development of the four Hs (Head, Heart, Health and Handicraft) remains still at the policy level. The three prongs of the policy – man-making education, career-making education and bread-making education – have become a farce.

Regarding teaching and learning process, the former gets deteriorated into a dull, routine and lifeless programme; and it has gone into a rut. And hence, there is not life in the latter either. The education, which does not help the younger

generation to equip themselves for life, which does not bring out strength for character, a sense of duty and a spirit of service to others, is not worth the name. At this stage, scouting can rise to the occasion and accomplish the aims, objectives and policy of education.

The four original ideas of Lord Baden Powell are,

1. Strengthening the character and personality.
2. Strengthening of capacity and resistance.
3. Development of manual skills and sense of security in one’s ability.
4. Development of religious feeling and reverence to God.

These ideas insist on the mental, moral, physical, social and spiritual growth of the boy. Lord B.P. wanted to develop in the boy the power of observation and deduction and also self-examination (vigil) at the Rover level.

The founder taught the boys the little stunt of ‘service with a smile’ and developed the ‘daily good turn’ which paves a path to community service. The aim of Scouting is the good citizenship through the development of character, health, handicraft and service. We have a decisive programme (syllabus) with which the aim can positively be fulfilled. The scrupulously chalked out syllabus is consistent with the mental caliber and needs of the different age groups of the boys.

Excepting a few, the major parts of the programme carry skill subjects very much relevant to life-oriented education. Even the few knowledge subjects cater to the needs of moral development (discipline and good order) and spiritual development (reverence to God) in the boy. When we talk of discipline, we mean the discipline grows from within and not from without.

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*Corresponding Author

Dr. A. Rajamanikam, Honorary Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English, RJM Christian College, Ambalikkai, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

Lord Baden Powell says “The programme of the Boy Scouts is the man’s job cut down to the boy’s size. Step by Step it takes him from the place where he is until he reaches the place where he would be.”The programme has been modified in the wake of national education policy, without shacking out the fundamentals, which are the main traits of Scouting. Some new subjects based on the modern trend of the world and the needs of the boys, have also been incorporated in the new programme.

Lord Baden Powell rightly puts, “It is not the curriculum of Scouting, that is the most striking feature, but it is the method. The teaching method, nothing but the Patrol System, is unique, since it is not the traditional pedagogical method, but it is more guiding and counseling and less instructional.

Learning is very much purposeful, useful and goal-oriented. It is an active process and more practical. It helps the growth of experience and insight of boys. It provides formation of new mental patterns. The Scouts learn many things from the self-example of the Scout Master and from their own peer and friend, the Patrol leader. They learn themselves individually. Learning by doing, learning by trial and error method and play-way method are really interesting and the Scouts therefore would not feel boredom or monotonous.

The subjects are not explicitly and elaborately taught. Most of them are simply introduced by the Scout Master and practically sometimes implicitly learned by the boys. What all subjects the Scouts learn – Estimation, Pioneering, First Aid, Wood craft, Camp – craft (including cooking), Handicraft, Map reading, Nature study, Forestry, Star gazing, Axemanship, Compass Reading and so on – are very much practical. These subjects raise the intellectual, physical and technical qualities in the boys. They lead the boys to the new avenue of

- a) Sharing their knowledge, thoughts and feelings.
- b) Developing healthy attitude.
- c) Contributing to effective community life.
- d) Motivating them to act according to worthy ideals and

- e) Stimulating them to cultivate worthwhile interest.

The Scout curriculum is unparalleled, since it involves Moral education, Social education, Spiritual education, Citizenship, etc., all received by self-education. Even sex education is provided to the Rover Scouts who are in the adolescent period.

Lord Baden Powell introduced ‘life in the open’ to the Boy Scouts so that every boy can develop the practice of self-help with self-reliance. Camping and Hiking provide a chance to the boy to experience and enjoy living in the open under canvas, living with nature, cooking food and exploration. With this experience the boy gains health and happiness. Living upto the Scout Law and Promise and practicing the law in daily life, bring about desirable changes in the boys; and build up personality and character in them. Ultimately the boys are bestowed with the virtues of head and heart.

Barring the professional courses, the school and collegiate education, which is not at all job-oriented, offers a mere qualification. But scouting provides practical knowledge and useful skills. And it develops self-reliance, self-confidence and even a sense of self-employment in the boys. ‘It is enough to be good’ may be our Indian philosophy. And the school and collegiate education may per chance make the boy good. But Scout philosophy insists on being good and doing good. It therefore says, ‘Do good to others’.

So education makes one a man. But it is only scouting that makes him a perfect man and a useful citizen as well. Hence it is high time for our boys to

- enroll themselves as members of the Scout movement
- enjoy the fun and game in Scouting with fellow Scouts
- enrich knowledge and skill
- exemplify good Scouts and
- emerge as good citizens.

Let me conclude with the words of Mahatma Gandhi. “I pray that every house in India should have children trained like Scouts.”