



Innovation in Scouting Education

A CONCEPT PAPER

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INNOVATION IN SCOUTING EDUCATION

1. Introduction and Definitions

For more than a century, Scouting has contributed to the education of young people by helping them develop character and competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) to build fulfilled lives, and a sense of responsibility towards their communities and the world. Rooted in the Scout Law (shared code of values) and Promise (commitment towards these values) and delivered through the Scout Method, Scouting remains one of the world's largest and most trusted non-formal educational movements.

At the same time, the context in which young people grow up is evolving rapidly. Social change, digital transformation, environmental challenges, shifting expectations of volunteering, and increasing complexity in local and global realities all shape how young people learn, develop, engage, and participate in society.

In this context, Scouting is called not to change its purpose

"to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens, and as members of their local, national, and international communities",

but to continually renew the way it fulfils it.

This concept paper proposes a shared understanding of Innovation in Scouting Education and outlines a coherent framework through which World Scouting and its Member Organizations, through their NSO leadership and decision makers, can support educational innovation that:

- Strengthens Scouting's **relevance and impact**
- Respects **diversity of cultures and contexts**
- Preserves Scouting's **identity, values, and educational method**
- Encourages **collaboration, learning, and responsible experimentation**

What is innovation?

Innovation refers to the generation and implementation of new or significantly improved ideas, practices, products, or processes that create value and address emerging needs.

Innovation is characterized as the creation of “new combinations” of resources and methods that transform systems and drive development (Joseph Schumpeter).

Within organizations and educational contexts, innovation enables institutions to **adapt, respond to challenges, and increase their impact**. Within education, innovation is the intentional redesign of how and why we learn to develop meaningful competencies, adaptability, and understanding through evolving, learner-centred practices.

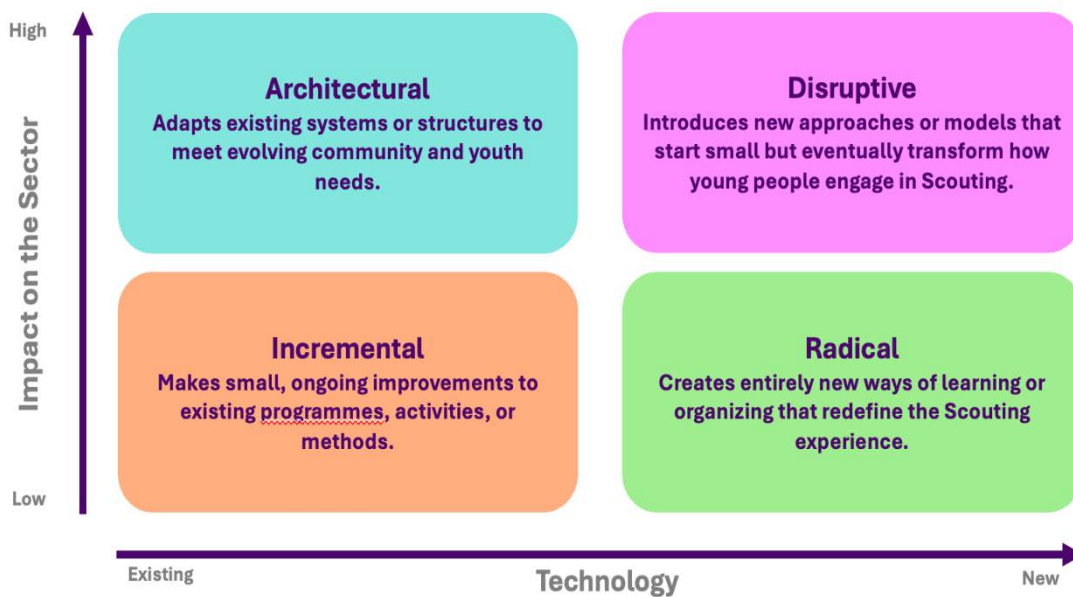
In the current context of exponential change driven by disruptive technologies and increasing global complexity, it is more necessary than ever to prepare people to improve the world's condition—advancing sustainable development and enabling individuals to live and collaborate effectively together: that is why innovation in education is a must.

Defining elements in activating effective innovation include:

1. **Novelty or improvement:** innovation introduces new approaches or significantly enhances existing ones, representing a departure from routine practice.
2. **Implementation:** ideas attain the status of innovation only when they are put into practice and achieve measurable outcomes.
3. **Value creation:** ensures that these innovations deliver positive results for individuals, organizations, or society.
4. **Experimentation and learning,** as innovation is often shaped by testing, iteration, and adaptation informed by experience.
5. **Collaboration and diversity of perspectives:** combining different types of knowledge, skills, and experiences increases the possibilities of creative and impactful solutions.

Innovation does not always entail complete transformation. It may take the form of:

- A. **Incremental improvements** to existing practices
- B. **Structural adjustments** that reorganize systems
- C. **Disruptive approaches** that reshape service delivery, or
- D. **Radical breakthroughs** that introduce entirely new operational models.



Satell, G. (2017, June 2). *The 4 Types of Innovation and the Problems They Solve*. Harvard Business Review.

Significant challenges or unmet needs often trigger innovation by requiring new ways of thinking and acting. Such challenges prompt individuals and organizations to question established practices and develop more effective responses (Schumpeter, 1934; Lakhani & Panetta, 2007).

Innovation frequently emerges in contexts where resources are scarce, where individuals and organizations must achieve greater impact with fewer inputs. These constraints foster ingenuity, collaboration, and experimentation, resulting in efficient, scalable, and high-impact solutions (Drucker, 1985; Radjou, Prabhu, & Ahuja, 2012).

Throughout history, educational innovation has often emerged not from abundance, but from necessity. When societies lacked teachers, schools, books, time, money, or access, educators were forced to question inherited models and design new responses. The [monitorial system](#) responded to the shortage of teachers; Montessori's approach emerged from [work with disadvantaged children](#); Freire's [literacy method](#) responded to social exclusion; [School of the Air](#) addressed geographical isolation; and [BRAC's village schools](#) adapted education to the realities of poverty and rural life. In each case, innovation was activated by a tension between an urgent educational need and the inadequacy of existing practice.

What is Scouting Education?

Scouting is a semi-structured learning environment where meaningful educational experiences are lived by young people. These experiences are enabled by Member Organizations through their Youth Programme and Scouting culture.

They take place in local Scout groups, community and collective settings, and international environments — reflecting Scouting as a global Movement.

Educational experiences are facilitated by adult volunteers and supported by the governance, management structures, and operational systems of National Scout Organizations (NSOs).

The Youth Programme encompasses all learning opportunities available to young people (the what), designed to fulfil the purpose of Scouting (the why), and delivered through the Scout Method (the how). Each programme takes a unique form shaped by local and national contexts, organisational frameworks, and policies¹. (2019)

Scouting Education is the intentional process that enables personal development, facilitated by the Scouting environment, in which young people shape and live meaningful educational experiences.

^[1] *The Scout Method*, 2019.



2. Innovation in Scouting Education

Innovation in Scouting education is understood as a **values-driven culture**, embedded across the Scout Movement, that encourages continuous reflection, learning, and experimentation in how Scouting fulfils its educational mission. It enables individuals, teams, and National Scout Organizations to regularly rethink **why** we educate, **what** we offer young people, and **how** learning is delivered.

This culture is supported by a range of processes, practices, and organisational conditions that foster **collaboration, learning, and responsible experimentation**, allowing Scouting to evolve its educational purpose, programmes, methods, organisational practices, and learning culture.

Since its inception, Scouting has been innovative in continuously finding new ways to fulfill its purpose—contributing to the full development of young people as individuals and as citizens. By ensuring that young people benefit from better and more enjoyable learning experiences that equip them to navigate and shape today's world, Scouting can further strengthen its relevance.

Through this approach, Scouting remains relevant, inclusive, impactful, and responsive to the changing needs of young people and society, while staying faithful to the Scout Method and its core values.

Why Innovation Matters for Scouting Today

Across the world, Scout associations operate in diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts. Despite this diversity, many face common challenges and opportunities:

- Changing expectations of youth towards participation, leadership, and learning
- Digital transformation and its impact on education, relationships, work and civic life
- Environmental and climate challenges affecting communities and lifestyles
- Increasing societal polarization and the need for dialogue, inclusion, and peace
- Evolving patterns of volunteering and adult engagement
- More diverse and complex social structures and relations requiring more intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and collaboration
- Increasing inequalities, calling for social consciousness and justice
- Changing conditions for competency development, employability, transferable skills,
- Digital saturation leads to stress, anxiety and peer pressure, which highlights the need to strengthen self-esteem and develop a clear sense of purpose in life.

When approached holistically, innovation in Scouting education leads to stronger and more relevant outcomes for young people:

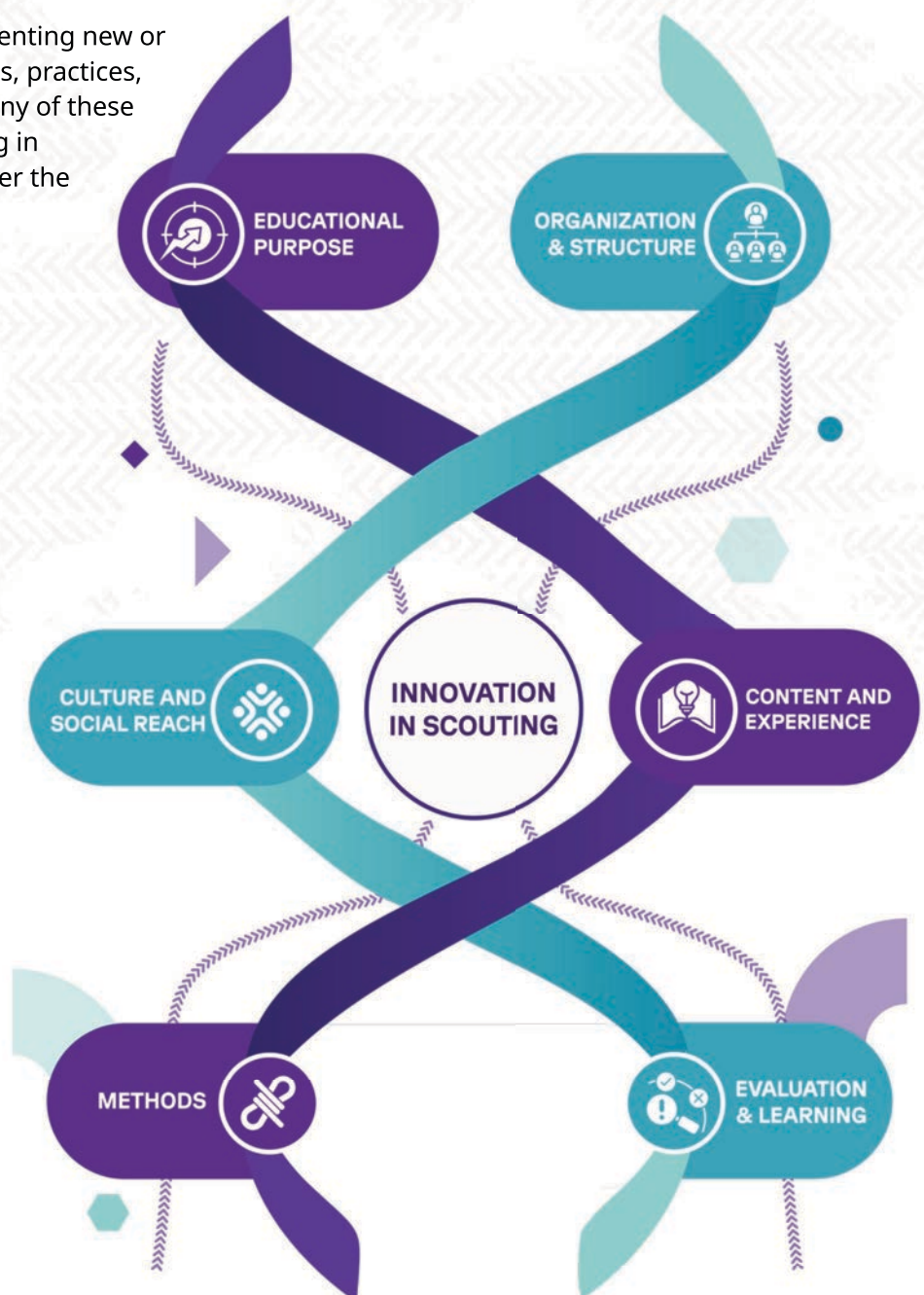
- **Personal development:** resilience, autonomy, ethical decision-making, a sense of purpose and meaning, and the confidence to grow within inclusive and supportive environments
- **Community and societal engagement:** civic responsibility, community leadership, service to others, and the ability to contribute positively to diverse and inclusive societies
- **Future readiness:** adaptability, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving in uncertain contexts, preparing young people to navigate future challenges and opportunities.

3. A Framework for Innovation in Scouting Education

Innovation in Scouting education is not about chasing trends or introducing technology for its own sake. It is about ensuring that Scouting continues to meet the real needs of young people in a rapidly changing world—while remaining faithful to our values and the Scout Method.

At its core, innovation means intentionally improving and adapting our educational approaches, structures, and learning experiences through a mindset of curiosity, critical reflection, and experimentation—continually renewing why we educate, what experiences we offer, and how we deliver, organise, and evaluate them. This happens across several connected areas that constitute the framework for Innovation in Scouting Education.

By generating and implementing new or significantly improved ideas, practices, products, or processes in any of these areas, we will be innovating in Scouting Education, whether the changes are incremental, architectural, radical or disruptive.



Why we educate – Educational Purpose Innovation

We should regularly rethink our educational purpose, learning objectives, and competencies to ensure young people develop the capabilities they need to thrive in today's and tomorrow's world, including critical and systems thinking, creativity and innovation, digital and technological fluency, social and intercultural competence, ethical and global citizenship, well-being and sustainable living, and agency and self-direction.

What we offer – Content and Experience Innovation

We should design meaningful activities, projects, and initiatives with young people as co-creators that engage with the realities they face today while creating opportunities for exploration, connection, and purpose—from outdoor adventure and community engagement to intercultural learning and environmental action.

How we deliver – Methodological Innovation

We should continuously adapt how we apply the Scout Method — learning by doing, small group work, Law and Promise, young people protagonism, adult support, symbolic frameworks, personal progression, community involvement and nature-based education. Innovation here means finding new ways to make each of these elements engaging, inclusive, and impactful for young people today.

How we organise – Organizational and Structural Innovation

We should also reflect on how our organisations support learning: programme development, safe environments, leadership models, volunteer development, partnerships, and decision-making structures. Strong organisational systems enable strong educational experiences.

How we relate to and impact society – Cultural and Social Innovation

Scouting should respond to social change by promoting inclusion, diversity, well-being, sustainability, and active community engagement. Innovation also means reaching out to new publics and communities, ensuring that Scouting becomes accessible and relevant to a wider diversity of young people and volunteers. In doing so, we create environments where everyone feels welcome, valued, and empowered to contribute.

How we learn – Evaluation and Learning Culture

Innovation depends on reflection and learning, that's why we should cultivate a culture that encourages curiosity, exploration, and thoughtful risk-taking, where individuals and organisations are empowered to experiment, reflect on their experiences, and adapt. By regularly evaluating our work and learning from both successes and mistakes, we continuously improve our practices at all levels of the Movement.

3.1 Educational Purpose Innovation

(WHY – Educational Purpose, Objectives, and Competencies)

Educational Purpose innovation addresses the educational aims of the Youth Programme and the competencies young people develop through Scouting. Scouting continues to aim at the holistic development of young people as responsible, autonomous, and engaged individuals guided by the values expressed in the Scout Law and Promise. Innovation here focuses on interpreting these objectives in ways that respond to changing realities without altering Scouting's identity or values.

Key aspects include:

- Recognising young people as **active agents** in their own lifelong and lifewide learning (including the ability to read the signs and adjust by including new learnings in the personal portfolio)
- Integrating **future-oriented competencies** as interconnected elements of personal development, such as:
 - Agency and self-directed learning
 - Critical and systems thinking
 - Creativity and value creation
 - Social, emotional, and intercultural competence
 - Ethical, civic, and global responsibility
 - Digital and technological fluency
 - Well-being and sustainable life management
- Encouraging **meaningful personal learning journeys**, where young people set goals, reflect on experiences, and progressively develop their competencies

3.2 Content Innovation (WHAT – Activities, Projects, and Initiatives)

Content innovation concerns the activities, projects, and initiatives through which Scouting's educational objectives are pursued.

To remain relevant, Scout programmes must continuously evolve in response to young people's lives and societal needs—and crucially, be co-designed with young people as full and active participants in shaping the activities meant for them. This ensures that programmes stay meaningful and engaging, while remaining grounded in action, service, teamwork, outdoor life, and personal challenge. Innovation may involve **reimagining traditional Scout activities** by adapting them, enriching them with new dimensions, or connecting them to contemporary issues, as well as developing **new types of activities** that respond directly to emerging interests, challenges, and opportunities for young people.

Content innovation, at this stage, may include:

- Sustainability and environmental action
- Mental health and well-being
- Peace education and intercultural dialogue
- Digital citizenship and media literacy
- Global responsibility and community engagement
- Social innovation and entrepreneurship

These themes are explored through experiential, transformative, values-based, and youth-led Scouting practices, where learning happens through action, reflection, and shared experience rather than through lecture-based or purely instructional approaches.

3.3 Methodological Innovation (HOW – The Scout Method and Ways of Delivery)

Methodological innovation focuses on how learning takes place through the Scout Method.

The Scout Method, an original educational system that fosters self-education, empowerment, and cooperative learning, remains Scouting's primary educational framework. Innovation does not mean replacing it, but continuously strengthening how its elements are understood, applied, and brought to life in contemporary contexts. Every time we adapt, refine, or creatively apply any of the eight elements of the Scout Method, we introduce methodological innovation.

This includes not only implementing the Method effectively but also reinterpreting and evolving the ways in which its elements interact in practice, so that they remain meaningful and engaging for young people today.

Key areas include:

- Strengthening experiential and project-based learning
- Making young people protagonists of their own learning, through cooperative learning that builds on shared competencies and collective problem-solving
- Connecting different elements of the Scout Method through interdisciplinary approaches that link outdoor life, culture, creativity, and community service
- Adapting symbolic frameworks, challenges, and youth-led structures to sustain motivation, meaning, and personal progression

Technology can complement and amplify these methods when used intentionally and ethically. Digital tools can support learning, reflection, and global connection, while never replacing human relationships, outdoor experiences, or personal challenge.



3.4 Organizational and Structural Innovation (ENABLING CONDITIONS)

Educational innovation requires supportive organizational structures and capacities. A key starting point is strengthening the competencies of those who design and support the Youth Programme — including programme developers, trainers, and programme supporters, recognising that adults are not merely deliverers, but facilitators who co-create meaningful learning experiences in partnership with young people. This includes developing a shared understanding of Scouting's educational foundations, such as pedagogy, youth development, youth work, and non-formal education, expressed in clear and accessible ways that help volunteers translate educational principles into practice.

Organizational and structural innovation ensures that new educational approaches can be sustained, scaled, and made accessible across the Movement, rather than remaining isolated pilot projects. It creates the enabling conditions that allow volunteers and young people to experiment, learn, and continuously improve the educational experience offered through Scouting.

Examples of fields of action include:

- Strengthening the capacities of programme developers, trainers, and supporters in Scouting education, youth development, and non-formal learning
- Flexible and inclusive volunteering models that respond to changing lifestyles and commitments
- Keep Scouting focused on engaging and empowering young people as active participants, rather than simply delivering experiences to early childhood sections
- Adaptation of adult training systems to support innovation and continuous learning
- Creating structures that support experimentation, reflection, and knowledge-sharing
- Recognising the local Scout group as the primary educational environment, and ensuring effective support systems for it
- Greater flexibility in approaches and requirements to reach new publics and communities
- Building partnerships with schools, civil society organisations, and other educational actors
- Encouraging a culture that sees Scouting not only as a structured organisation, but also as a dynamic grassroots movement
- Ensuring the holistic and educational integrity of Scouting when overseen by formal education systems

3.5 Cultural and Social Innovation (SOCIETAL IMPACT)

As a global Movement rooted in local communities, Scouting plays a unique role in fostering dialogue, peace, and social cohesion. Cultural and social innovation strengthens this role by enabling young people to engage actively with society while valuing and revitalising local identities and traditions.

Through exchanges between cultures and communities, global perspectives enrich local practice, while local knowledge and traditions strengthen the global Movement.

Examples of fields of action include:

- Intercultural learning and international cooperation
- Youth advocacy, civic engagement, and participation in community life
- Revitalising cultural heritage through contemporary educational practices
- Reaching out to new publics and communities to broaden participation in Scouting
- Integrating indigenous knowledge and community-based models to strengthen local relevance and intergenerational collaboration

3.6 Evaluation, Learning and Innovation Culture (ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING CYCLE)

Innovation requires reflection, feedback, and evidence. A strong learning culture enables continuous improvement and informed decision-making at all levels of the Movement.

By regularly reviewing experiences, reflecting on outcomes, and learning from both successes and challenges, Scout associations strengthen the quality and relevance of their educational programmes and processes. This culture also encourages responsible experimentation and adaptability, ensuring that innovation remains grounded in Scouting's values and educational mission.

Examples of fields of action include:

- Strengthening a culture of review, debriefing, and reflection on learning experiences—from local units to national and international levels
- Measuring educational outcomes beyond participation in activities or the achievement of badges
- Actively involving young people as co-creators in programme development—including evaluation and reflection—ensuring they are fully engaged and play a central role in keeping the programme relevant and up to date
- Sharing lessons learned from pilot initiatives and promising practices
- Supporting the scaling and adaptation of successful approaches across different contexts
- Creating safe spaces that encourage experimentation, creativity, and responsible risk-taking

Scout associations are encouraged to see themselves as learning organisations, where reflection, experimentation, and continuous improvement are integral to educational quality and long-term impact.

4. Conclusion

Innovation in Scouting Education is essential to ensure that Scouting remains relevant, inclusive, and impactful in a rapidly changing world. Grounded in the Scout Method and core values, innovation should be seen as a responsible process of reflection, adaptation, and learning rather than change for its own sake. As outlined in this paper, innovation can take several forms, from incremental improvements and structural adjustments to disruptive approaches and more radical breakthroughs, depending on the needs and context. By renewing why we educate, what we offer, how we deliver it, and how we organise and learn, Scouting can respond more effectively to the realities and aspirations of young people today. In this way, World Scouting and its Member Organizations can foster a culture of collaboration, experimentation, and continuous improvement that empowers young people to shape a better future for themselves, their communities, and the world.



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