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## The Organisational and Educational Contexts of the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association: their Impact on Youth Participation

Mariana Rodrigues\*, Isabel Menezes\*\* and Pedro Ferreira\*\*\*

### Authors' information:

\*Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal.

\*\*Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal.

\*\*\*Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal.

### Contact authors' email addresses

\*mrodrigues@fpce.up.pt

\*\*imenezes@fpce.up.pt

\*\*\*pferreira@fpce.up.pt

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## **The Organisational and Educational Contexts of the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association: their Impact on Youth Participation**

*Mariana Rodrigues*<sup>\*</sup>, *Isabel Menezes*<sup>\*\*</sup> and *Pedro Ferreira*<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

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*Abstract:* Notwithstanding its relevance as a context for youth participation, research is lacking regarding how the scout organisational and educational settings contribute to development of civic and political competences. Using a mixed methods approach, combining document analysis, interviews with scout leaders and a pilot study with a non-probability sample of 199 scout youth, this paper presents results from the analysis of the organisational and educational framework of the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association. We found a hierarchical organisation, which institutes itself as a kind of micro society based on principles of representative democracy. Somewhat paradoxically, non-adult scouts are excluded from having direct involvement in the highest levels of the organisational decision-making processes. This is in some ways consonant with the educational approach where youth are seen as citizens-in-making, on their way to becoming good citizens, ready for service and volunteering – a portrait consistent with the most frequent forms of scout youth participation.

*Keywords:* youth participation, youth work, educational context, scout movement

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<sup>\*</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal. E-mail: mrodrigues@fpce.up.pt

<sup>\*\*</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal. E-mail: imenezes@fpce.up.pt

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto, Portugal. E-mail: pferreira@fpce.up.pt

## **Introduction**

The legitimacy of a certain political order, especially when we are speaking of a democracy, depends on the support and participation of its citizens (Zimenkova, 2013) and on the respect it demonstrates for their right to participation (Sullivan & Transue, 1999).

It has become increasingly visible that a political and educational priority is given to active citizenship and community involvement within the European context (Marinetto, 2003; Zimenkova, 2013), in order to promote social cohesion (Hoskins, Jesinghaus, Mascherini, Munda, Nardo, Saisana, Van Nijlen, Vidoni & Villalba, 2006; Hoskins & Kerr, 2012). The European Union and the Council of Europe emphasise the importance of youth voluntary participation and work in local communities, as well as in civil society (Mairesse, 2009; Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999), and of young people assuming their roles as agents of social equality in political, social and economic systems (European Commission & Council of Europe, 2004, 2011).

In the current context of social transformation, where young people's "transitions [are] more open and diverse" or "uncertain and difficult for some", and where the "traditional grounds for affiliation and belonging" have been changing (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999, p. 512), non-formal and informal education initiatives and activities are described as boosters of "active processes by which young people negotiate their transitional status", enabling them with opportunities to "nurture and explore their emergent sense of themselves as individual people" (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999, p. 506), and to "locate some sense of belongingness and community through their shared identities" (Lawy & Biesta, 2006, p. 44). Therefore, voluntary organisations may "provide a democratic environment that stimulates discussion, openness of opinion and deliberation" (Quintelier, 2008, p. 365).

The assumption that youth participation in voluntary organisational contexts has always a positive impact may emerge as more complex and controversial than what is reported by the political and educational discourses (Milligan & Fyfe, 2005). Some empirical studies have shown the negative impact of participation experiences, particularly through reinforcing stereotypes (De Piccoli, Colombo & Mosso, 2004) or promoting conformism, scepticism or

mistrust, as happened in the case of Swiss younger students who more frequently participated in cultural organisations but displayed more negative attitudes towards immigrants (Menezes, 2003), or with members from homogeneous groups that demonstrated higher levels of civic participation but did not show high levels of generalised trust and cooperation with people from different groups (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). Notwithstanding the belief that the members of voluntary organisations are more civically and politically active than non-members is widespread in the scientific literature (Almond & Verba, 1963; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Verba, Scholzman & Brady 1995). As they hold an undeniable role as agents of civic and political socialisation (Flanagan, 2004; Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Putnam, 2000), voluntary organisations are, particularly in the context of youth participation, understood “both as incubators of youth skills and as vehicles for their potential for social change”, and their effectiveness “lies in the offering of educational resources belonging to the adult world on which young people feel they can rely in order to build their own autonomy, express their individuality and exercise their potential” (Morciano & Scardigno, 2014, pp. 45-46). Still, it is important to remember that different voluntary organisations demonstrate different impacts on youth participation behaviours (Quintelier, 2008) and on the attitudes of their members (Huckfeldt, Johnson & Sprague, 2004), depending not only on their organisational structure and goals (Putnam, 1993; Van der Meer & Van Ingen, 2009), but also on their location and capacity for collective action (Warren, 2001).

Even though a growing body of literature has been looking at the involvement of young people in voluntary sector organisations (Christens, 2011; Flanagan, 2004; Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Putnam, 2000; Quintelier, 2008; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003), some have, so far, clearly been understudied. We believe scouts are among these.

The World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is one of the largest inter-cultural and multi-faith networks for youth education and action (Mayor, 1995). Existing literature shows that the youth participation in scouting has a positive impact at the various levels, such as: the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, solidarity (Mayor, 1995); altruistic pro-social behaviours (Ruiz-Olivares et al., 2013); mutual aid, respect for humans,

animals, and the environment (Palhares, 2009), self-confidence, respect for authority, sense of community service, self-sufficiency (Proctor, 2009) sense of identity (Warren, 2009); and leadership (Jabr, 1998). Although the scout associations are described as not so successful in socialising and engaging young people into politics as other types of voluntary associations, they constitute contexts for the development of politically relevant skills (Quintelier, 2008).

At the core of scouting, the organisation places the double concept of “citizen-subject” (Mills, 2012; Wittemans, 2009). Young scouts are perceived as “citizens-in-the-making”, learning relevant knowledge, values, and skills while being prepared to exercise their citizenry in the future, when they reach adulthood, in a *good* way by adopting “a distinct set of responsibilities as *active citizens* whilst Scouts” (Mills, 2012, p. 121).

Looking at the frame created by the organisational and educational contexts, as well as the expectations regarding the roles and behaviours of young people, we hope to understand not only how the organisation embraces some political and civic ideas while rejecting others (Weir, 1992), but also how it contributes to the development of civic and political competences in youth.

This study is part of an ongoing and broader empirical research project developed by the Centre for Research and Intervention in Education (CIIE) and commissioned by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). This research project focuses on the experiences of Portuguese Catholic Scout Association (CNE) members and uses qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data to investigate the quality of participation experiences in this associative context and their impacts on socio-political and cultural development of young people, as well as the opportunities for citizenship education that are favoured by the involvement in CNE.

CNE is the largest organisation acting in the field of non-formal education in Portugal. It had more than 71.000 children, youth and adult members in 2012, as shown in Table 1. Given its long history of social implantation (92 years) as well as the number of children and young people involved, we believe it is important to gain a greater understanding of CNE’s organisational culture, structure and characteristics, and of their citizenship education project.

*Table 1. Number of members in each scout section and number of members who are leaders and their distribution by sex*

	Female	Male	Total
Section I – The Cubs (6 to 10 years old)	8569	8523	17092
Section II – The Explorers (10 to 14 years old)	9418	10329	19747
Section III – The Pioneers (14 to 18 years old)	6340	7412	13752
Section IV – The Rovers (18 to 22 years old)	3472	3589	7061
Scout leaders	8084	5676	13760
<b>Total</b>	<b>35883</b>	<b>35529</b>	<b>71412</b>

*Source:* CNE Census 2012.

Therefore, in the present paper we address the following questions:

- What are the organisational and educational goals, principles, values, and practices underpinning this scout association?
- What kind of citizenship education (CE) does it promote?
- How does CNE foster young people's involvement and participation within the association as well as in other social contexts?
- What forms of civic and political participation do the scout young people have?

So, this paper aims to examine the possible impact of CNE's organisational and educational settings on the opportunities provided for scout youth involvement and participation in the decision-making processes both in the context of the organisation itself and in other social contexts of civic and political action.

## **Method**

Different qualitative and quantitative methods were combined, including document analysis of official documents from the organisation (CNE General Regulation and Educational Programme), four interviews with organisational leaders (one WOSM former leader and three CNE National Board leaders), and a questionnaire-based survey of 199 young scouts.

### *Qualitative study*

The analysis of the organisational framework entails a comprehensive description of youth membership conditions and of participation opportunities (within the scout organisation), which emerge from the analysis of the organisational definition, goals, membership conditions, structure, and decision-making processes incorporated in the CNE General Regulation.

Similarly, the analysis of the CNE Educational Programme allowed us to develop a description of how CE is framed in the organisation, and how it is supposed to be performed, by looking at their educational mission, goals, contents, and methods. This contributed to build an understanding of how the scout educational proposal might foster youth involvement and participation both in and out of the context of the scout organisation.

The results from the analysis of the CNE regulation and educational programme was articulated with the perspectives of European and national organisational leaders. These people were selected to be interviewed due their current leadership roles in the National Board, and also because of their long term involvement within the scout movement, especially in the case of the former European leader in the WOSM. Data was collected between May and November 2013, during four semi-structured interviews, where interviewees could express their views and positions regarding: the role of the CNE and its practices in promoting CE; the assessment they make of the work done by CNE, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses and challenges for the future of the scout's method; the role of adults in the educational process; and the impact of participation in the scout movement and activities on the socio-political development of youth, as well as in fostering participation within the association and in other social contexts.

The interview material was transcribed and all documents were collected and assembled before being coded. Qualitative data collected in this study has been analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical method which provides a *rigorous* and *inductive* analysis based on a “set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible” (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 15). The qualitative analysis was performed using NVivo 9.0.

*Quantitative study*

Quantitative data was drawn from a pilot study conducted between October and December of 2013. This pilot study is part of a longitudinal study exploring dimensions of youth socio-political development (Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999), as well as the developmental quality of participation experiences (Ferreira & Menezes, 2001) in this Portuguese scout organisation.

The non-probability sample of the pilot study included 199 (out of a population of 20633) young scouts members, aged 14 to 22 years old, as presented in Table 2, a sample size considered fair for exploratory factor analysis procedures by Comrey and Lee (1992). Following the recommendation of CNE's Central Board, a first request for collaboration was addressed to the chiefs of nine scout groups in five different cities in the north of the country. The chiefs transmitted our request to the scout members. All participants voluntarily accepted and signed an informed consent request. The respondents filled out the questionnaire individually either online or offline, depending on the expressed preference of the scout group.

*Table 2. Sample of the pilot study by age groups and sex.*

	Female	Male	Total
14 to 17 years old - Pioneers	62	53	115
18 to 22 years old - Rovers	42	42	84
Total	104	95	199

In this paper we look at the results attained regarding the forms of civic and political participation (e.g., direct participation, participation online, civic engagement) enacted in the 12 months prior to the time of response. As part of an exploratory stage, this instrument results from an adaptation of the Portuguese version (developed by Menezes, Ribeiro, Fernandes-Jesus, Malafaia and Ferreira in 2012) of the Political Action Scale designed by Lyons (2008). Looking at the Cronbach's alpha, the whole scale reliability was .800. This self-report scale consists of 10 items (e.g., signing a petition; voting in elections; volunteering) and employs a five-point Likert-type scale - from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently) - displaying anchors for the extreme positions.



The quantitative data collected was analysed using SPSS 21.0.

## **Results**

### *The organisational framework*

CNE is part of a wide movement scout, as member of the European region of the WOSM, the Catholic International Conference of Scouting, the Scout Federation of Portugal, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Scouts, respecting the principles of their Statutes and Constitutions (Art. 6).

In accordance to CNE's Statutes (1992), the General Regulation was revised and approved at the National Council level in 1997, after an open consultative process, “involving all interested members” (Preamble, p. 2). The Statutes and the General Regulation are the central normative and regulatory documents in the organisation, having legal supremacy over all regulatory standards from any other level of the organisation (Art. 74, 1).

In legal terms, the organisation is defined as a youth association, based on volunteering, devoted to the comprehensive education of young people of both sexes; a movement with no political character, open to all, in accordance with the purpose, principles and method as conceived by the Founder, Baden-Powell; a movement of the Catholic Church; an institution with legal personality and recognised as a public service organization (Art.1, 1-2).

The goals of the organisation are to contribute to the comprehensive development of young people, “helping them to achieve their complete fulfilment with regard to their physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual possibilities, as responsible people, Christians and citizens”, as well as “members of the communities that they are part of” (Art. 2, 1).

To become scout, a member of the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association, it is necessary to be catholic and fulfil the Scout Promise ritual. There are two types of effective members designated as *non-leader effective members* and *leaders*. The non-leader members are all children and young people, aged 6 to 22, distributed into four scout sections organised by age of four-year increments. After 16 years of membership, the non-leader scout members can continue in the scout group until they are 25 years old, if they are in a

transitional process to become leaders (Art. 23, 1).

The CNE's regulation clearly describes the *rights* and *duties* of non-leader and leader members. Non-leader members have the right to access information about CNE's life, participate in the CNE's activities, elect and be elected or designated to carry out functions in their team; participate in the decisions at their team level; use the national and international scout identification and wear the uniform (Art. 23, 2). Regarding their *duties*, the non-leader members shall respect the CNE's principles and the Scout Law; evolve in the progress system and participate in the scout activities (*ibid.*).

To get involved in the organisation as a leader, a member must be at least 20 years old, attend and conclude a specific training course, and comply with the provisions of the organisational statutes and regulations (Art. 26, 1). In legal terms, leader and non-leader members do not have the same *rights*. In fact, leaders have access to information about the international scout movement, can attend leader training courses; have the right to elect and be elected or nominated to carry out positions or functions within the organisation, as well as to participate in the organisational decision-making processes (Art. 26, 2). Leader members also have the *duties* of properly performing their missions and functions for which he or she was elected or nominated, regularly paying the membership dues, and obeying the scout laws and principles (Art. 26, 3).

All leader and non-leader members can cease their membership and leave their organisational status voluntarily or as result of a disciplinary sanction (Art. 23, 2; Art. 26, 4).

CNE presents a well-defined and nested hierarchical structure, relying upon a system of networks of groups and people. The association is organised into four territorial levels (national, regional, subregional, and local), each level with a set of interrelated administrative bodies (deliberative, executive, jurisdictional and consultative) represented by members with elected or nominated positions.

In accordance with their representative governance system, leader and non-leader members must elect their representatives, who can apply individually or as part of a candidate list. All administrative bodies and leaders with elected positions hold three-year mandates (Art. 11, 2). At the local level, in the

sections, all team members elect their Team Guide, who nominates the Team Sub Guide. In principle, Team Guides hold their positions for a period of one year (Art. 11, 6).

A *hierarchy of standards* exists across the organisational chain guaranteeing that regulatory standards from any level of the organisation cannot go against those of a superior level, or they might be annulled (Art. 74, 2). Thus, leader and non-leader members are arranged in increasing rank order of authority and function, from within section teams all the way to the national umbrella organisation, where overall goals, policy and control regulation – such as statutes, general, justice and electoral regulations, uniforms, educational programme, rituals, progress system, standards for camping, among others – are decided and upheld (CNE General Regulation, Annexe 1). All normative acts, resolutions, recommendations, and other deliberations made at the national level are published in their official newspaper “Flor de Lis” (Art. 16).

Therefore, the effective involvement and participation of children and young members occurs essentially within their own teams. This happens in two ways: on one hand, by taking part in the decision-making processes regarding the life of their teams and, on other hand, by electing their team representatives, which will represent them in the Council of Guides, where important information is shared and decisions are made concerning the team and section. Therefore, it is clear that the association “reinforces the role of the team guide” (Organisational Leader 4), who through “a democratic process, after listening to all team members, decides what should be done” (Organisational Leader 2). The Team Guides and Sub Guides “help to manage the section and the progress system of the young people within that section” (Organisational Leader 3). However, one leader called our attention to the fact the team system sometimes may be misunderstood and improperly operationalised:

[I]t was confused with a military system, where you have the adult leader who is the officer and the team leaders are the step officers and it was conceived, perceived and understood as very interesting system to convey orders from the top of the pyramid to the bottom of the pyramid, [rather than] an effort of cooperation between adult and young people (Organisational Leader 1).

The Rovers, members aged 18-22 years, have more opportunities of active involvement and participation within the organisation given, not only their process of progression, but also their phase of transition to leadership. The Rovers can voluntarily play a supportive role in the central, regional and sub-regional services. Furthermore the Rovers in transition to become leaders, can participate in the Team Animation meetings of their section even if only in a consultative role. In addition, all the Rovers can have a seat and the right to the deliberative vote in the Scout Group's Sub-regional and Regional Councils. At the National level the non-leader members do not have a seat or the right to vote in the organisational decision-making processes, "it is presumed that if the scout group leaders are there, he or she will represent the young members at this level" (Organisational Leader 2).

Working groups, commissions and teams exist, such as in the case of the Cenacle within the Rovers section, which is described as a *participation school* where the older Rovers can reflect on important issues and present and share their conclusions with the rest of the organisation (Organisational Leader 3). They can, eventually, help and support the national administrative bodies in the performance of their functions (Art. 11, 6). Notwithstanding the fact that some Rovers members "can participate, giving their opinions and helping in the development of projects" (Organisational Leader 4), they mainly assume a consultative role. Some of the interviewed leaders were concerned about youth participation at all levels of the decision making processes that exist across the organisational structure, as one explained:

You cannot implement the Scout method without youth involvement in decision-making. Decision-making to organise the team because the team should not be organised by the adult leader alone, the young people should decide with whom they want to be, (...) to choose who will be the leader on the small team, the young people should also be involved in that, (...) what kind of activity we have to do, (...) which rules we have to put in place to live well together and so on. If you don't have this decision-making at several levels, which we call empowerment of young people, we don't have true education we have instruction (Organisational Leader 1).

The prevalence of the adult leadership is specially regarded as a complex

and delicate issue by all interviewed leaders, whereas it may make the young members remain excluded from having real opportunities to get involved in the discussions and influence the decisions that are directed at improving their conditions as members.

*The educational framework*

In the nineties, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, new and complex challenges emerged in the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of many European countries. Within this framework, the European Scout Office of WOSM designed and published a document denominated *Renewed Approach to Programme* (RAP), which was for the first time presented in the first European Forum on Youth Programme and Adult Resources (PERA) in 1999, as explained by one of the interviewed leaders:

In the European countries of the former Soviet Union, which suddenly gained their independence and where Scouting was dormant for thirty years or so, they found themselves with an educational programme that was thirty years old. (...) Then came the need to produce a tool [RAP] that could somehow help national associations to start anew, to build an educational programme or renew an existing one. (...) We brought the tool to Portugal in 1999 and soon after we made the first congress of PERA here, where one of the tool's authors was present, and we started to present it. One year after, the association and the Central Board understood it was time to initiate the process of the renewal of the educational programme (Organisational Leader 4).

Thus, the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association began to work on the renewal of their educational programme in 2001 and completed it in 2009. This process counted “with the collaboration of the hundreds of leaders from local, regional and national structures, over the eight years that it lasted in different types of sessions and events (Educational Programme, 2009, n. pag). The existing educational programme proposal was tried out during a pilot phase in 2008-2009, involving 92 scout groups of 19 regions. It was finally approved by the Plenary National Council in 2009 and entered into effect nationally in 2010.

The CNE Educational Programme congregates important information regarding their non-formal and informal educational proposal, presented as the

total description of their educational activities, method and goals. Therefore, this document can be seen like a visiting card of the scout organisation, as described by one of the leaders:

It is our definition, our presentation of what we propose, our goal regarding the education of the young people that go through our educational process that starts at six until 22 years old. It is 16 years of educational route. Our educational proposal, as we used to say, is a good way to present the association and what we do to parents and to other external entities (Organisational Leader 4).

The Portuguese Catholic Scout Association is presented as a context of non-formal education, aiming at the comprehensive education, enhancement and the personal development of children and young people of both sexes, based on adult volunteering, in accordance with the goals, principles and methods conceived by the Scouting founder, Robert Baden-Powell (Educational Programme, 2009, p. 1). The educational mission statements affirm the core values of the organisation's educational project, thus

CNE helps young people to grow (...) to search for his or her own Happiness and contribute decisively to that [happiness] of others, to discover and live in accordance with the Values of the New Man (sic), and with the Being, Knowing and Acting they become responsible men and women and active members of communities in the construction of a better world (CNE Educational Programme, 2009, p. 2).

CNE's entire non-formal and informal educational proposal is structured around the Scout Law and the Promise that "constitute the foundational and fundamental ideals of Scouting" (*idem*, p. 19). The Scout Law is presented as a moral code of conduct, which sets out the broad principles that should guide the lives of scouts. The adhesion and practice of the Scout Law is fostered through the realisation of the Promise that is a voluntary and individual commitment to live according to the law, to fulfil duties to God, Church, Country, and others (*idem*, p. 20). Furthermore, the central role of the Law and Promise in the Scout Method (which is described as a "system of progressive self-education") is based on six educational strategies:

- a) the *mystic and symbolism* which is a set of visual and linguistic symbols within each section, for example represented through a story with heroes and symbols, “inducing a sense of belonging in relation to the group and allowing for the transmission of certain values” (*Ibidem*);
- b) the *life in nature* is seen as one of the most important element of Scouting, to enable children and young people to confront their own limits, to use natural resources, to learn to live with simplicity and to enjoy healthy outdoor experiences (*idem*, p. 23);
- c) the *learning by doing* is operationalised not only through games where they “find challenges and obstacles, develop capacities and solidarities, learn and grow with each other”, but also through the use of the project methodology which allows scouts to “transform dreams and aspirations into meaningful activities and experiences, in a participative, collaborative and safe way” (*Ibidem*);
- d) the *patrol system* is presented as the place where children and young people experience life in a group, “under the leadership of one of them, they establish relationships and are called to assume different tasks in promoting common good, to encourage thus the co-responsibility that enables the learning of democracy and solidarity”, as well as “an understanding of the role of the leader and the importance of a good and balanced leadership to the group’s development” (*idem*, p. 25);
- e) the *progress system* that is based on the *self-development* of children and young people, where the personal progression process depends on the personal characteristics, interest and experiences in and out of the context of the scout organisation in accordance with the educational goals that constitute “the metric proposed for each age group” (*idem*, p. 26);
- f) the *educational relationship* between children or young people and the adult leader.

The leader is described as “a guarantor of the comprehensive education of the children and young people of his or her unit, in principle his or her intervention is subsidiary”, this means that his or her pedagogical action is supposed to be focused on the children and young people, as protagonists of their own development (*idem*, p. 34). However, the influence and dominance of

the adult leader in the educational process can become problematic, corrupting the purposes of the scout method, when adults act “not limiting themselves to be subsidiary before the young people, but wanting to be the principal actor, in a paternalistic way or more in a teaching way. (...) The adolescents can still oppose it but the younger ones can not” (Organisational Leader 3).

To take into account “the needs and aspirations of young people in a specific time and socio-cultural context”, the educational project of the CNE is defined as a set of six areas of the personal development of children and young people, namely affective, social, intellectual, physical, character and spiritual, being each one translated into particular themes and educational goals, as synthesised in Table 3.

The CNE educational project is described as “being simultaneously singular and plural” (*idem*, p. 3). Its singular dimension relies on the fact that there is an ideal of young person, the *New Man* (sic), which is the final and expectable result of the 16 years of scouting learning educational experiences. The citizen ideal contained in this *New Man* (sic) is presented as someone who is able to:

make a difference in the world where he or she is inserted. When he or she finishes his or her personal progress at the age of 22, the Rover scout does his or her Departure, in a symbolic way (..) at this moment he or she is ready to have an active role in the society, to be an active adult in society. Even if it is an ongoing learning process, it signals the end of his or her personal progress, after that moment he or she is a full citizen, who constitutes an asset to society (Organisational Leader 2).

Therefore, at the end of the scout educational programme the scout is “a person who has baggage in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills enough to deal with society and make part of it”, and besides “these skills are being increasingly recognised in the labour world” (Organisational Leader 4). Regarding its plural dimension, the educational programme is different in different sections, even if they are sequential, cumulative and complementary.



*Table 3. The six personal development areas and their themes and educational goals.*

Area	Themes	Educational goals
Affective	Relationship and sensibility	Self-expression, peer education; valuation of family ties; life option; sense of beauty and aesthetic
	Emotional balance	Coping with emotions "control/express"; maintain a state of inner freedom; maturity
	Self-esteem	Know, accept and value herself or himself
Social	Exercise of active citizenship	Rights and duties; tolerance; social intervention
	Solidarity and tolerance	Service; mutual aid; tolerance
	Interaction and cooperation	Assertiveness; team spirit; assumes his or her role in groups of belonging
Intellectual	Search for knowledge	Curiosity; search and selection of information; initiative; self-training
	Problem solving	Ability to analyse and synthesise; use new techniques and methods; select strategies for problem solving; critically analyse of the solution; ability to adapt to new situations
	Creativity and expression	Logic presentation of ideas; creativity; appropriate speech
Physical	Performance	Monetize and develop his or her skills; physical dexterity physical prowess; know its limits
	Self-knowledge	Knowledge and acceptance of its body and maturation process
	Physical well-being	Maintenance and promotion: exercise; hygiene; nutrition; avoid risk behaviours
Character	Autonomy	Become independent; ability to choose; build his or her frame of references
	Responsibility	Be consistent; Perseverance and commitment; fully carry out projects
	Coherence	Live according to her or his value system; defend her or his ideas
Spiritual	Discovery	Inner availability; progressive internalisation; search for the transcendent (Christian)
	Deepening	Bear witness by everyday acts; live in community; be open to inter-religious dialogue
	Service	Integration and active participation in the Church; participate in the construction of a new world; evangelisation

Source: CNE Educational Programme, 2009, pp. 3-4.

This means that “there is a connecting thread, and the educational project of each section is intimately linked to the educational project of the next one” (Organisational Leader 4). While recognising the existence of pre-defined educational goals, it is understood that young people progressively gain more autonomy and opportunity to choose and decide when, what, and how to

achieve their educational goals. This was affirmed by one of the interviewed leaders, who told us that “the system of progress must be different in different sections. (...) The objectives are defined, however the personal development path is individual”. Besides, particularly after the first two scout sections, “it is possible and desirable to enable young people to identify their own educational opportunities to work on some of the educational goals” (Organisational Leader 4). Different individuals can share educational goals in the context of collective experiences, however the educational goals are considered to be individually achieved.

When we look deeper into the content and goals of the educational programme, citizenship education appears to be implemented as a cross-programmatic theme in all personal developmental areas, notwithstanding “the social area ends up having its educational goals more effectively oriented to citizenship education” (Organisational Leader 2). Regarding content and goals of the social area of the personal development, the social integration of children and young people is placed at the centre of the social development of children and young people and seen as dependent of their active exercise of citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, interaction and cooperation. All these domains are interconnected and complement each other in order to meet social integration needs.

The domain of the exercise of active citizenship is set in such a way that at the end of the scout educational process, young people should be aware of, and act in accordance to their rights and duties as a citizen within a democratic framework and this implies full acceptance and respect for democratic procedures (e.g. elections) and rules (e.g. the power of majority). Besides this, he/she should actively and consciously feel the will and obligation to participate in different social contexts. The concept of active citizenship is deeply connected to participation through voluntary work and service in communities. This is seen as something that will effectively “help young people to fully develop to become active citizens in society” (Organisational Leader 4). From the Cubs up to the Rovers, who are almost at the end of their scout educational journey, the organisation expects an observable growth in terms of active participation through voluntary work in the communities, as one of the interviewed leaders explained, “when we go to [collect food for] the

food bank, there are the cubs, explorers, pioneers (...) or fund-raising, or sometimes renovating decayed areas in our villages, or collaborating in a day-care centre or an orphanage or whatever”, in the end, the educational goal is to “show them that by serving others, not only they make the world a better place, but also they become better and happier people. Therefore, this practice to work with others and for others should take root in them” (Organisational Leader 3).

The social integration of youth continues to prepare young people to become caring and tolerant citizens, reinforcing, as an educational priority, the role of youth service and work in communities. Displaying solidarity is viewed as a necessary condition to actively participate through volunteering and service, and to work on solving real problems in their communities, given that young people “can do service for the community and then they can discover an existing problem in the community: a problem of poverty, an environmental problem, a problem of international solidarity... and they can get involved in action where they can really do something real and concrete, which serves the community” (Organisational Leader 1).

So, the scout organisation “works a lot on the concept of good deed, service, volunteering, helping others”, underlining the importance of the individual involvement in the mission to “leave the world a bit better than how you found it. We believe that during the sixteen years [the educational project lasts] we instil the liking for doing good” (Organisational Leader 4).

Being a tolerant citizen is also crucial given its connection to democratic requirements, such as the ability to express their own opinions and respect those of others, and for the organisation this means that it is also necessary to “have conflict resolution skills (...) and to know how to manage emotions” (Organisational Leader 4).

Therefore, the social integration of youth also relies upon the acquisition of the social skills necessary to interact and cooperate in a group context (such as assertiveness when communicating personal opinions), sense of belonging and identification with the group, or to properly assume leadership roles. The scout team, also known as patrol, in particular, is described as a *micro-society*, a place “where each scout plays a role, assuming responsibility for certain tasks within the patrol, the scout becomes responsible for himself or herself and...

grows” (CNE Educational Programme, 2009, p. 26). One interviewed leader underlines the importance of the team system as an educational strategy and as a tool to promote youth participation within the organisational context since “they have to organise their overnight accommodation, food, internal articulation [of roles and functions] to win the game or challenge, internal leadership, administrative organisation, etc.”, and this way they develop social skills that are useful in other social contexts, “where they need to know how to live with others in community, sharing, managing effort and challenge, and experiencing defeat and victory” (Organisational Leader 3).

#### *The forms of participation of scout young people*

Since the emphasis of the CNE educational framework on active participation goes beyond that which is performed in the context of the scout movement organisation, we decided to directly inquire scout members, aged 14 to 22, about their participation behaviours. Specifically, we asked them how frequently, in the 12 months prior to response, they were engaged in different forms of participation in a scale varying from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently), consisting of 10 items adapted from Lyons (2008). The results are presented in Table 4.

Voting in elections is the most frequent form of participation of those in the 18 to 22 age group. Voting is also the most conventional form of political participation and is also an important part of some organisational procedures. Nevertheless, volunteering and collecting or donating money to social or political causes or organisations emerge as very frequent forms of participation, regardless of age group.

It is also interesting to note that the least frequent forms of participation, for both groups, are the potentially illegal actions and other actions that express opposition or conflict, such as demonstrating or protesting.

As reported in Table 4, differences between younger and older regarding the frequency of their civic and political participation is always statistically significant except for participating in political actions that might be considered illegal ( $t = -.532$ ;  $p = .595$ ). In all other cases it was possible to verify that scouts from the older age group participate more frequently.

Table 4. Forms of participation of the young scout members in the 12 months prior to response, according to age groups and results for a t test comparing results for age groups.

Forms of participation	Age groups	Mean	Std. deviation	t (df)	p
Signing a petition.	14-17	1.79	1.081	-3.021 (141.387)	.003
	18-22	2.33	1.277		
Participating in a public demonstration or protest dealing with social or political issues.	14-17	1.36	.775	-2.580 (126.849)	.011
	18-22	1.74	1.105		
Volunteering.	14-17	3.55	1.276	-2.783 (183)	.006
	18-22	4.05	1.104		
Voting in elections.	14-17	1.23	.828	-16.851 (123.773)	.0001
	18-22	4.14	1.407		
Wearing symbols or emblems to show support for a social or political cause (e.g., badges, t-shirts with message).	14-17	2.29	1.297	-2.295 (184)	.023
	18-22	2.76	1.479		
Donating or collecting money for a social or political cause or organisation.	14-17	2.92	1.448	-4.081 (179.883)	.0001
	18-22	3.70	1.159		
Buying or boycotting certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons.	14-17	2.18	1.242	-2.562 (183)	.011
	18-22	2.65	1.257		
Participating in political actions that might be considered illegal (e.g., to graffiti walls, to throw stones, to burn a flag...).	14-17	1.28	.674	-.532 (194)	.595
	18-22	1.33	.812		
Discussing social or political issues with other people on the net.	14-17	1.89	1.189	-2.308 (183)	.022
	18-22	2.32	1.249		

Cronbach's  $\alpha = .800$

One could say that some of the results that are expected and fostered by the organisation were observed. In accordance to CNE's educational intentions and practices, the results reflect the emphasis on a disciplined form of civic behaviour, a high frequency of pro-social forms of participation and show older scouts as being more active than younger ones.

These results could be interpreted as a possible effect of both the organisational and educational frameworks and of their emphasis on active participation (in volunteering and service) and on the respect for rules and civility but given that we use a non-probability sample and a correlational design we cannot fully demonstrate this.

## **Conclusions**

This paper holds the premise that youth participation in voluntary organisations has an impact on their socio-political development (Christens, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The involvement of young people in these contexts is seen as influencing the way young people critically reflect and act on the social, political, economic and cultural “forces that shape one’s status in society” (Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003, p. 185). This study contributes to the literature on voluntary organisations as contexts, and on youth participation, by analysing the case of the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association, and exploring how the scouting experience affects young people’s exercise of citizenship in their current democratic context.

CNE is defined as a youth organisation that stands for the comprehensive and personal development of all its members, girls and boys, and it sees the active involvement and participation of youth in their communities as a main priority.

By analysing its organisational framework, it became clear that CNE is a formalised and hierarchical organisation that values normative aspects and tries to institute itself as a micro society. In that sense it conforms to principles of representative democracy establishing management structures controlled from above, emphasising the role of the election of leaders and of the representation and managerial roles they assume. Its vertical structure reinforces the importance of rules, embodied in the obligation to live and behave according to the Scout Law, and is expected to produce respect for values, rights and duties within the organisation, as well as in other social contexts.

Another issue that emerged from this analysis was the exclusion of younger scouts from leadership positions. This effectively excludes them from direct participation in the most important decision-making processes, which take place mainly at the upper-organisational level. Thus, the young members do not have opportunity to directly take part in discussions, and to directly have influence over and decide major organisational issues (e.g., mission, regulation, educational programme, etc.) that directly affect them. Hence, the organisation lacks the balance of power between young people and adults, which is considered an important structural condition not only to overcome the

*prejudice of adultism* (Roche, 1999) but also to facilitate “authentic experiences of agency through opportunities to exercise decision-making authority. (...) [Furthermore, the] belief that one’s actions in an organization or on a project can make a difference requires a level of ownership in that project or organization” (Amstrong, 2007, p. 83). Young scouts’ opportunities to participate within the organisation happen mainly when they take part in scout educational activities or in the process of electing their team leaders. It is possible that, even though it might have negative effects in terms of youth empowerment, it can contribute to a valuing of voting and elections at least judging by the high frequency of voting displayed by the scouts with ages between 18 and 22.

The expectation that whatever is done by and to the young scout members should contribute to their growth and transformation is deeply embedded in the educational framework of the organisation. It states explicitly its intention of contributing to shaping a New Man (sic), a kind of good citizen, committed to following the Scout Law, responsible and active in the fulfilment of his/her duties as in serving others and their communities. Therefore, CNE's educational framework follows a vision of children and young people as “citizens-in-making” (Mills, 2012), and it structures their (in)ability to assume certain roles and take part in some processes. The CNE is committed to creating non-formal educational learning and recreational experiences, endorsing the transmission of a set of knowledge, values, and skills, considered relevant in constructing good citizens. A disciplinary intention is in fact present throughout the educational framework. This contributes even more to our understanding that what is present is a conception of citizenship as outcome (Biesta, 2008) where citizenship is seen as a result of a specific educational and developmental process. Biesta (2011) describes this kind of education as a *potential danger*, because it is “maneuvered into a position where it contributes to a domestication of the citizen—a ‘pinning down’ of citizens to a particular civic identity—and thus leads to the erosion of more political interpretations of citizenship” (p. 142).

In terms of CNE’s conception of citizenship education and the opportunities for learning citizenship provided, two main points should be stressed. First, the importance given to the patrol system and the way it helps building the social

skills necessary to lead and be lead in a disciplined manner, an exercise the organization considers central to the learning of democracy. The quality of these collective contexts, as well as the developmental quality of the participation experiences happening in community contexts (Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012; Ferreira, Coimbra & Menezes, 2012) will be essential to fully understand how involvement might be transformative and contribute to socio-cultural development. Second, they value learning by doing, not only in the patrol system, but also by fostering involvement in activities of service to others and to their communities. The dominant perspective of this citizenship education effort seems to be based on the power of socialization. As a perspective it advocates for involving youths into a moral framework forming citizens who care for the public good and who take care of the problems and needs of their communities with their voluntary work and service. To a certain extent, scout youth participation can be seen as based on “a sticking plaster approach that treats the symptoms of societal problems, rather than tackling the underlying social injustice and structural inequality that cause these problems in the first place” (Priestley, 2013). Therefore, CNE’s organizational and educational settings may run the risk of contributing to the depoliticisation of citizenship education, and to transforming it “into a mere pedagogic project without providing power for real political intervention” (Hedtke & Zimenkova, 2013, p. 2). The potential for the educational framework and organizational structure to influence young people in the intended direction seems to be there. Indeed, the results regarding the civic participation of scouts from both age groups did show high frequency of volunteering and service related activities, systematically higher for the older group, and low frequency of potentially illegal and more conflict oriented (protesting or demonstrating) forms of participation.

An emphasis on participation through service and volunteering, a strong trend both at the European and national levels, has been previously considered potentially problematic especially for its connection to depoliticized forms of citizenship education (Viegas, 2004; Zimenkova, 2013), and for falling short in promoting the kind of socio-political development of youth which is necessary for a more challenging and critical engagement with the process of co-determining their communities and the way they live. Moreover, even



recognizing that these voluntary practices stimulate “a strong commitment to their environment, community and/or state” and that they might have positive pro-social consequences, they are not particularly oriented to “inform about and provide skills for influencing political decisions” (Zimenkova, 2013, p. 182), but they work, above all, to maintain social cohesion and existing political order.

Finally, while recognizing that CNE might constitute a *locus* of democratic experience and learning and that this does not depend only on their specific institutional mechanisms, but also on their broader institutional setting, as part of the Portuguese civil society (Boje, 2008), we believe, with Camino and Zeldin (2002), that a change in the organizational structure, in order to effectively include young people at all organizational levels, and therefore formally strengthening the ways in which their opinions and decisions are taken into account, would improve the practices of the organization and support its mission and goals.

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