

The Open Minds Global Initiative

in pursuit of a vision:

a world in which young people have the opportunity to develop their full potential, are empowered to exercise their rights and to assume fully their responsibilities as active citizens in a global world

“Change towards a future harmonious society should be built on a foundation of peace and cooperation in order to create better living opportunities for all. To a large extent, this will depend on the involvement of young people acting as open-minded, responsible citizens. The mission of education is to build knowledge, instil values and develop character.”

Peder Wallenberg. Founder of the Carpe Vitam

A joint initiative of:

The Carpe Vitam Foundation
The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
The World Organization of the Scout Movement

The initiative at a glance

Aims

- To pave the way for open-minded and flexible societies playing their part on the global scene without sacrificing their cultural identity and inheritance
- To use innovative approaches to education to enable and empower the young who will be future initiators of change
- To foster the growth of sustainable intellectual and personal development in young individuals
- To create new opportunities for community development and youth leadership

Actions

- Creation, in collaboration with local and national authorities, of Open Minds Academies providing training courses for youth leaders and for teachers, for potential leaders of community development and employment creating projects
- Creation of Open Minds Centres developing synergies between formal and informal education in the community
- Provision of long term support for participants' projects through the Open Minds Network
- Creation of Open Minds International to manage and support the Open Minds Initiative

The initiators

- The Carpe Vitam Foundation
- The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- The World Organization of the Scout Movement

Their partners

- Cambridge University (United Kingdom)
- Harvard University (USA)

Financing

- Structural costs and running costs of the Open Minds Academies will be covered by the regular budget of the Open Minds Initiative
- Support for participants' projects will be sought through a system of fund raising organized by Open Minds International

Legal Structure

The Open Minds Initiative is the work of the Open Minds Foundation, a non-profit private Foundation legally established in Switzerland.

The Open Minds Academies

The Open Minds Academies are training centres working with the national education authorities and also with Open Minds International. They offer youth leaders, teachers and potential project leaders training opportunities and support for developing their personal skills in approaches to education and for implementing specific community, educational or employment creating projects after their training period. These leadership training schemes will also be supported by the Global Education Network led by Cambridge and Harvard Universities.

1. The people we want to reach

We envisage potential students in Open Minds Academy training schemes as falling into three main groups:

- Youth leaders and teachers (Guide and Scout leaders, leaders of youth centres or youth organizations, school teachers ...), whose main motivation is to improve their practice of education and to develop a synergy between formal and informal education.
- Young project managers, committed to improving the conditions of life in their community, who want to acquire the skills needed to manage community development projects and to ensure their sustainability
- Young entrepreneurs who want to acquire the business and management skills needed to develop small businesses, thus creating employment for themselves and for others

2. The skills we want to give them

Underlying all the training schemes offered by the Open Minds Academies is the intention to provide students with the experience and skills required to assume fully their role as responsible citizens in a democratic society. At the most general level, all need to develop communicational, relational and organizational skills; the ability to express their own views, to hear and understand the views of others, the skill to negotiate, to find satisfactory compromises, to resolve differences and the ability to work with others. For each of the three groups, fostering these skills takes on a colour influenced by the specific needs and interests of the participants, as well as by the basic philosophy of the Open Minds Initiative as applied to that particular group.

• Youth leaders and teachers

In many of the poorest countries where a large number of children, especially girls, have no access to formal education, Scouting and Guiding are well implanted. In rural areas this may very often be the only opportunity for education of any kind. Although, unlike official schools, they do not offer a formal and systematic curriculum, Scouting and Guiding follow a specific method and programme, fostering learning and helping children to acquire life skills. They also encourage children and their parents to look at school opportunities, and it is often the Scout or Guide leaders who help the

community to establish a school, as is currently the case in Bangladesh and in many African countries. Strengthening the synergy between formal and informal education is a good way to make educational programmes more active and attractive to all young people and to open education to all children, both girls and boys.

In many countries too Guide and Scout leaders are also teachers. Motivating them and enabling them to implement more efficient and attractive educational methods inside as well as outside school helps to boost the effectiveness of the educational system, to reduce inequality of access to school between girls and boys and to encourage children to stay in school.

We want to offer to youth leaders and teachers a training programme based on the educational principles of Scouting and on the most up-to-date research in formal and non-formal education. It will be focused on the following topics:

- The characteristics and needs of children and young people at different stages in their development towards adulthood
- A holistic approach to education which takes into account all the dimensions - physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and character development - of personal growth.
- The principles and conditions of active learning ("learning by doing" is the Scout motto): creating an appropriate learning environment, helping children to define personal objectives, understanding and using the dynamics of groups, encouraging the young to participate in their own education and organizing for peer education (on the model of the Scout/Guide team system)
- Development of intellectual autonomy by training children to think and learn by themselves
- Creating a synergy between school and after-school programmes in order to work towards the development of moral autonomy and of a sound value system, thus preparing for responsible citizenship by empowering the young, fostering leadership skills and developing life skills
- Developing a diversity of educational activities inside and outside formal school which respond both to children's needs and to the needs of society, covering areas like Health Awareness and Sports, Self-expression and Arts, Technologies and Creativity, Outdoor Activities and Environment Education, Community Involvement and Community Service ...

• **Young Project Managers**

In many countries young people, particularly in Guiding and Scouting, are active in involving the young in community projects. The projects are very varied – protecting the natural environment, improving conditions of every day life (food, habitat, sanitation), preventing AIDS and HIV infection, preventing malaria and other diseases, fighting against violence and promoting peace, developing appropriate technologies - and a host of others. Whilst the will is obviously there, many of these projects have a limited impact, primarily because their leaders lack the skills and resources needed to ensure their sustainability.

We want to offer young project managers and potential project managers the skills they need in order to develop relevant, sustainable and effective projects, which will contribute directly to the development of their society. Their training programme will focus on the following topics:

- The phases of effective management in the life-cycle of a project: programming, identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation
- Implementation of the Logical Framework Approach to project development
 - Analysis: stakeholder analysis, problem analysis, objective analysis, strategy analysis
 - Planning: activity scheduling, resource scheduling
- Creation and fostering of community participation
- Developing networking and partnerships
- Mobilizing human and financial resources
- Efficient project documentation and reporting

- **Young entrepreneurs**

A young person who cannot find work loses his sense of worth. Society is effectively telling the unsuccessful job seeker that he or she is useless, and even within the family and peer group inability to contribute to financial and other needs diminishes self-esteem. The result is a loss of confidence and deepening hopelessness.

Throughout the world, growing youth unemployment is a major problem. In many countries it has become the norm for young people to face considerable, sometimes insurmountable, difficulties in finding their first job. The consequences undermine first the individuals themselves and then, as the problem persists and more and more people are affected, the stability of society as a whole.

In recent years, some young people have begun to resist the descent into hopelessness by creating and developing small businesses, often co-operatives, thereby creating jobs for themselves and for other people. For such an attempt to be successful, the young entrepreneur needs to acquire business and management skills.

We want to offer a training scheme for young entrepreneurs focused on the following topics

- Business planning: how to define goals and write a business plan
- Marketing: target market analysis, making a marketing plan, sales and networking
- Managing finance: assessing financial needs, estimating and finding start-up funding, managing cash-flow, accounting
- Personal skills: getting organized, managing the self and others, managing stress, managing time

3. Access to what we have to offer

To be accepted into a training scheme, the potential trainee must have identified a specific project he or she wants to implement. The list below sketches some possible types of projects

- The creation of a school in a local community with a focus on learner-centred, activity-oriented educational methods
- The development of more effective learning environments to improve the learning process in a formal educational setting, such as an existing school
- The better training of leaders and potential leaders of non-formal educational programmes in youth organisations such as Guiding and Scouting
- The development of an improved range of activities in an educational setting
- The creation of a centre (an Open Minds Centre) to develop a synergy between school and after-school programmes, thereby providing young people with a wide range of educational activities and offering more opportunities for the acquisition of life skills
- Launching a community development project in response to the needs of the local community in areas like health promotion, protection of the environment, improvement of living conditions, conflict management, prevention of delinquency or of violence, training of rescue teams able to intervene in catastrophe situations and so on.
- Creation of a small business or co-operative supported by a micro-credit system to help provide employment for the young

4. Organization of the training schemes

Flexibility: the Open Minds Academies are planned as offering additional skills to young people who very often already have commitments in the adult world. They must therefore take account of when potential trainees can be available. Thus, in all of the training schemes the approach will be modular and will be implemented through a variety of scenarios, for example through afternoon, evening or holiday courses.

Group work and personal research: the trainees will be invited to form small groups of people working on similar projects. With the support of a tutor, they will help one another in personal research aimed at preparing their projects.

Use of information and communication technology: the Open Minds Academies will ensure that trainees have access to documentation, resources and case studies through the Internet. Where appropriate, distance learning will be made available and used.

Focused workshops: the trainees will attend workshops on specific topics aimed at providing the knowledge and skills needed to prepare their projects. These workshops will be run by qualified trainers using interactive methods, such as case studies, role playing and simulations.

5. Certification and validation

At the end of the training scheme, each trainee will present his project to a board of examiners where the partner universities are represented. They will assess the competences acquired by the trainee and deliver a certificate reflecting those

competences.

Open Minds Global

The Open Minds Initiative is being developed through local national organizations supported by an international network.

At the national level, Open Minds National Initiatives are developed through the involvement of national Guide and Scout Organizations, with the support of national government and national academic authorities. Currently, Open Minds Initiatives are being launched in some ten countries in the Middle-East, Asia and Africa. Other initiatives will gradually be launched, building on the experience and, if all goes well, the success of these pioneers.

At the international level, the Open Minds Initiative is managed through a light structure made up of a non-profit Foundation, a small international executive team and a partnership with Universities.

The Foundation has its legal home in Switzerland. The founding members are the Carpe Vitam Foundation, the World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts and the World Organization of the Scout Movement. All three founder organizations are represented on the Board of the Foundation. The formal aims of the Foundation are to administrate the Open Minds Initiative and to gather funds to support the various projects.

The executive team is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Board and for day to day management of the Open Minds Initiative.

The founders' qualifications and contributions

Carpe Vitam, a Swedish charitable foundation, supports education reform, innovative leadership and excellence in the arts. Lemshaga Academy in Sweden, a primary and secondary school at the cutting edge of educational practice, was founded by Carpe Vitam. The school works closely with Harvard University and the Stockholm Institute of Education in research and development projects.

Carpe Vitam contributes its experience in the field of formal education and the expertise of the growing global educational network it has created with the universities of Harvard and Cambridge. It has also contributed the seed money needed to launch the common initiative.

The **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS)** and the **World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM)** are represented in more than a hundred and fifty countries. Between them, they have more than 38 million members. They represent a unique world educational network bringing together adults and young people from all cultures and all religions working to promote the same humanitarian values. They are working with young people, for young people, to promote education and leadership training in an effort to bridge cultural differences and to build mutual respect between people. Their mission is to help young people, girls and boys, become active and responsible citizens at local, national and international levels.

WAGGS and WOSM contribute their vast experience in the field of non-formal education and in training youth leaders, their expertise in community service and their world network of volunteer workers. WAGGS also has unique expertise in promoting responsibility and leadership in girls and young women.

A partnership has been established with two prestigious universities, Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Harvard in the USA.

Cambridge University has experience of leadership training for people with no academic background, and with learning out of school. It will support the development and the assessment of the leadership training schemes proposed by the Open Minds Academies.

Harvard University will contribute the expertise of its Visible Thinking project, whose aims are to find concrete ways of helping people to think more effectively.

Harvard, Cambridge and Carpe Vitam are developing a **global education network**, which will be open to students having completed the Open Minds leadership programme. Through this network they will receive support in implementing and following up their leadership development and work.

Actions underway

Egypt and the Middle-East

In Egypt, the Egyptian Scout and Guide Federation, the Ministry of Education and the library of Alexandria have created an Association with the aim of opening an Open Minds Academy to support initiatives in Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and other Middle Eastern countries.

The Open Minds Academy will be supported by the Guide and Scout Arab Offices. It will benefit greatly from the active partnership of the celebrated Library of Alexandria, which is making available its unique documentation and educational resources.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, a national association chaired by Mrs Zobaida Jalal, the Federal Minister for Social Affairs and Special Education and Chief Commissioner of the Pakistan Scout Association, has been created. The association includes representatives from the Scout Association, the Guide Association and the academic world.

An Open Minds Academy is being set up to support educational projects particularly in Kashmir, Islamabad and Belochistan.

Central and Eastern Africa

The Open Minds Initiative supports the Amahoro-Amani project developed by the Guide and Scout National Organizations of Burundi, Congo and Rwanda. This project aims at training and supporting a network of about five hundred Community Peace Mediators leading 25,000 young Peace Workers mobilized to challenge ethnic prejudices and build reconciliation and peace among Tutsi and Hutus communities.

To complete this action, an Open Minds Academy will be established to provide youth leaders and teachers with training programmes, and to support community development projects and Open Minds educational centres in the three countries.

Western Africa

With the support of an Italian Bank Foundation¹, the World Organization of the Scout Movement has prepared a substantial programme designed to fight against youth unemployment by encouraging the creation of youth co-operatives supported by a micro-credit system in three countries, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Conakry and Senegal. The Guide Associations will also be involved in this programme, whose sustainability will be ensured by the creation of an Open Minds Academy to train young entrepreneurs.

¹ Capirio

The thinking behind the initiative

Today's world and its needs

The world has become a smaller place. What our neighbours in other countries do and think affects us in ways undreamt even a hundred years ago. For many people, growing globalization is seen as a threat: they feel that increasing interdependence implies increasing uniformity, and that their distinctive qualities, traditions and character may disappear. The loss of cultural diversity would indeed be a tragic loss for mankind, and it is easy to understand the reflex that wants to fight against it by striving to shut out the outside world, insisting on a return to traditional values and developing a fundamentalist approach to religion.

However, the proposers of this initiative do not think this an appropriate response. Refusing to work towards an open society based on freedom of thinking and a democratic decision-making process is likely to prove self-destructive in the long run, and even in the short term to create internal tension and difficult external relations. They consider it far better to encourage members of the society, especially the young, to re-discover and promote their cultural identities and the values inherited from earlier generations whilst also exploring the virtues of the outside world and finding out the human values shared by all cultures around the world.

Increased contact between peoples and nations enhances awareness of our kinship and of the shared code of ethics that underlies all civilization. It is these values that we must now promote to create a common vision and means for moving forwards toward a more peaceful and sustainable world.

The success of globalization may in the future be judged by our ability to maintain our cultural distinctions while giving birth to a new understanding of global community. A new sense of unity will thus emerge to battle the current threats to human security and the security of our natural environment.²

The world at present does not encourage the development of the mind-set we advocate. Viewed pessimistically, we are living in a world of competition and conflicts where nationalistic prejudices still prevail and where twenty per cent of the people consume eighty per cent of energy and natural resources. The potential for a real-life nightmare scenario is already emerging with *the growing social divide between the rich and the poor, the potential danger of things like biotechnologies and escalating violence around the world.*³

Countering the danger implies putting great emphasis on developing an awareness of the human values underlying all societies:

- *The innate dignity of human life*
- *Respect and consideration for the “other”*
- *The interconnection between humankind and the environment and thus the need to care for and preserve the earth*
- *The importance of integrity and service*
- *The individual quest for peace and happiness*⁴

² The International Association for Human Values: <http://www.iahv.org/humanvalues>

³ ‘Presence, Exploring Profound Change in people, Organizations and Society’, Peter Senge

⁴ The International Association for Human Values: <http://www.iahv.org/humanvalues>

A society based on these values is by definition both democratic and egalitarian, allowing all citizens, men and women, to assume their responsibility for the way in which their society acts, changes and develops. In particular, discrimination based on gender becomes unthinkable:

While “sex” refers to the biological differences between males and females, gender describes the socially constructed roles, rights and responsibilities that communities and societies consider appropriate for men and women. We are born as males and females, but becoming girls, boys, women and men is something we learn from our families and societies.

This set of assumptions, which we construct out of the biological differences between men and women, is what creates gender identities and in turn gender based discrimination.

Being a social construction, gender is a very fluid concept. It changes not only over time, but also from one culture to another and among different groups within one culture. Therefore gender roles, inequities and power imbalances are not a ‘natural’ result of biological differences, but are determined by the systems and cultures in which we live...

Socially constructed roles too often thwart the potential of girls and women. Discrimination denies them health care and education ... Discrimination robs girls and women of the power to make decisions, to earn a living and to be free from violence, abuse and exploitation. Often it deprives them of any legal protection.

By recognizing and addressing discrimination against girls and women, success in the fight against all forms of discrimination – class, race, ethnicity and age – will become more likely, and more lasting. We have learned that entire societies develop when girls and women are enabled to be fully contributing community members.⁵

Effective change in society starts at the roots: if we want to build a future of peace, if we want to develop a co-operation across national boundaries for managing conflicts, creating sustainable forms of human-environmental interactions, fair trade and cultural exchanges, we need to help young people develop their capacities for inter-cultural communication and to understand the world as a system of interdependence.

We also need to help the young to acquire the skills and attitudes required in a democratic society, including *the capacity to love, to give oneself to others and to purposes bigger than self: it is this emotional capacity that sustains the disposition to act, the desire to engage with others in solving public problems, the willingness to use one’s talents and time to support the institutions that make democracy possible.*⁶

Striving towards the sort of society we envisage requires a radical change in the way young people are educated:

How do we get a sufficiently large number of citizens to appreciate the value of the freedom to think for oneself when most have been educated in schools and raised in families that have rewarded obedience and indoctrination in an authoritarian culture? How do we get consensus on the importance of developing the competency to think deeply and to seek understanding in a given disciplinary domain, when most people have only learned to think superficially about these topics? How do we get consensus on the importance of helping every citizen to develop the skills that will build democracies that are the result of the daily works of ordinary citizens when most people have been raised in cultures that glorify single historical heroes as the engines of progress? How do we get consensus on the value of tolerance and open mindedness when intolerance and dogmatism are the values most widely shared?⁷

Education is the only key to finding answers to all these questions. Sadly, though, over the world there are still over 100 million children out of school, including 58 million girls. Many

⁵ UNICEF

⁶ The Purposes of Education in Latin America, Frenado Reimers, May 12th, 2006

⁷ The Purposes of Education in Latin America, Frenado Reimers, May 12th, 2006

children and adults in the developing world do not master basic literacy and numeracy skills, even if they complete primary education. And although the average level of achievement is higher in the developed world, low achievement also affects significant minorities in high-income countries. One way to improve access to education for all and to encourage children to stay in school is to make use of out of school, non-formal means of providing education. Another, and even more important way, is to ensure that the education offered is of a very high quality. The Open Minds Initiative intends to pursue both these paths.

The need for innovation in education

The importance of quality

The Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary school education by 2015.⁸

Every year, their Global Monitoring Report, independently prepared and published by UNESCO, assesses progress towards this goal. The Global Monitoring Report for 2005 emphasizes the importance of quality in education:

Quality is at the heart of education. It influences what students learn, how well they learn and what benefits they draw from their education ...

How well pupils learn and how much they learn can have a crucial impact on how long they stay in school and how regularly they attend. Furthermore, whether parents send their children to school at all is likely to depend on judgements they make about the quality of the teaching and learning provided, upon whether attending school is worth the time and cost for their children and for themselves.⁹

Attitudes to teaching and to learning

The report points out that undesirable teaching practices undermine the quality of education in many developing countries. The practices criticized in the report follow a rigid, chalk-and-talk, teacher dominated pedagogy where all learning is seen as rote learning. Students are placed in a passive role, their activity limited to memorizing material to be repeated back to the teacher. The pedagogy reflects what Peter Senge¹⁰, in a different context has called ‘the industrial age assumptions’ about learning:

- Children are deficient and schools fix them
- Learning takes place in the head, not in the body as a whole
- Everyone learns, or should learn, in the same way
- Learning takes place in the classroom, not in the world
- There are smart kids and dumb kids
- Schools are run by specialists who maintain control
- Knowledge is inherently fragmented in separate categories
- Schools communicate “The Truth”
- Learning is primarily individualistic and competition accelerates learning

⁸ <http://www.fasttrackinitiative.org/education/efafti>

⁹ http://portal.uniseco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35939&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201

¹⁰ ‘Schools That Learn’, a Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents and Everyone who Cares about Education. Doubleday Currency. ISBN 0-385-49323-1

It is hardly surprising that children subjected to such a system of pedagogy should find it repugnant. The Open Minds Initiative prefers a vision of education whereby

Learning does not take place by means of transmission or reproduction. It is a process of construction, in which each individual constructs for himself the reasons, the 'whys', the meanings of things, others, nature, events, reality and life. The learning process is certainly individual, but because the reasons, explanations, interpretations and meanings of others are indispensable for knowledge building, it is also a process of relations – a process of social construction. We thus consider knowledge to be a process of construction by the individual in relation with others, a true act of self-construction.¹¹

The holistic approach

Nearly a hundred years ago, Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting and Guiding, made a strong distinction between education and instruction¹²:

The two main methods of training are:

By education: that is by 'drawing out' the individual boy and giving him the ambition and keenness to learn for himself

By instruction: that is by impressing and drumming knowledge into the boy

Number 2 of these is still too often the rule. In the Scout Movement we use Number 1.

Baden-Powell was inspired by the ideas of Maria Montessori, an Italian educator who based her practice on what she called active learning, seeing the child as *strong, powerful and rich in potential and resources, right from the moment of birth.*¹³

The early childhood programme of Reggio Emilia, in Italy, puts into practice the ideas of Maria Montessori, and, in its turn, inspired the school of Lemshaga in Sweden, created by Peder Wallenberg, the Founder of the Carpe Vitam Foundation.

In this tradition, the child is seen as *driven by the enormous energy potential of a hundred billion neurons, by the strength of wanting to grow and taking the job of growing seriously, by the incredible curiosity that makes children search for the reasons for everything. A child who knows how to wait and who has high expectations. A child who wants to show that he or she has all the strength and potential that comes from a child's ability to wonder and to be amazed. A child who is powerful from the moment of birth because he is open to the world and capable of constructing his own knowledge. A child who is seen in his wholeness, who possesses his own directions and the desire for knowledge and life. A competent child!*¹⁴ Such a child does not need instruction, he needs education. And to be effective, education must consider the child as a whole:

These holistic educators believe that education should nurture emotional health, interpersonal sensitivity, self-understanding, creative abilities and original, critical ways of thinking. They also believe that when education helps foster whole, healthy human beings, it

¹¹ In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia : Listening, researching and learning. Carlina Rinaldi, Routledge, 2006

¹² Robert Baden-Powell, Headquarters Gazette, October 1913

¹³ In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia

¹⁴ In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia

*enhances the health of the society's institutions as well. We must start with the principles of human development, they say, for those will guide us in shaping a good society.*¹⁵

Learning to think

In order to be able to carry out the process of self-construction through learning, the child needs above all to be able to think for himself. This is not a skill much in evidence in our modern world, where a culture of mass communication does not encourage people to develop their ability to think critically or to seek for deeper understanding. Worse still, many people are locked inside mental models of which they are unaware and which limit their ability to think outside the model and to change.

At the same time, we are facing a world of flux: change is constant and extremely rapid and the problems we face are complex. For example, environmental change and the increasing scale of conflicts between people create problems that cannot be understood or solved without consideration of extremely complex interactions between many and varied factors. But education, even at the University level, tends to narrow specialization rather than to training people to think systematically about unfamiliar and intricate systems.

The Visible Thinking project, developed at Harvard, tries to counteract this.

We learn best what we can see and hear ('visible thinking' means generally available to the senses, not just what we can see with our eyes). We watch, we listen, we imitate, we adapt what we find to our own styles and interests, we build from there. Now imagine learning to dance when the dancers around you are invisible. Imagine learning a sport when the players who already know the game cannot be seen.

Strange as it seems, something close to it happens all the time in one very important area of learning: learning to think, which includes learning to learn. Thinking is pretty much invisible. To be sure, sometimes people explain the thoughts behind a particular conclusion, but often they do not. Mostly, thinking happens under the hood, within the marvellous engine of our mind-brain.

Visible thinking includes a number of ways of making students' thinking visible to themselves, to their peers and to the teacher, so they get more engaged by it and come to manage it better for learning and other purposes.

*When thinking is visible in classrooms, students are in a position to be more metacognitive, to think about their thinking. When thinking is visible, it becomes clear that school is not about memorizing content but exploring ideas. Teachers benefit when they can see students' thinking because misconceptions, prior knowledge, reasoning ability and degrees of understanding are more likely to be uncovered. Teachers can then address these challenges and extend students' thinking by starting from where they are*¹⁶.

As well as its obvious relevance to the development of analytic and critical thinking, a training in visible thinking also supports and nourishes those other skills in communication, inter-personal relations and organization that Open Minds trainees need to acquire. Putting into practice the theory of visible thinking is one of the corner stones of the Open Minds training schemes.

The role of the educator

¹⁵ The emerging education revolution – aims of the holistic approach to education, Ron Miller, Mothering, Fall 1991.

¹⁶ <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking>

In learner-centred holistic education, the educator plays a very important role: *the teacher is not removed from her role as adult, but instead revises it in an attempt to become a co-creator, rather than a transmitter of knowledge and culture.*¹⁷

Seen from this perspective, the primary purpose of the educator is to create an efficient learning environment where, for example:

- A variety of kinds of intelligence are cultivated
- Students pursue problems that challenge and fascinate them and seek the knowledge and skills they need to follow through
- Learners have substantial control over the purposes, the content and the pace of learning
- It is recognised that out of the questions of students come some of the most creative ideas and discoveries
- Students and teachers spend time thinking about the results of their actions

The role and importance of peers

A fruitful way of implementing the switch to learner-centred, activity oriented pedagogy and away from teacher-dominated instructional practices is to organise students into small teams with a system of representation whereby the students can express their views and take part in communal decision making. This is what is called the ‘team system’ or the ‘patrol system’ in the Scout method.

*The object of the patrol system is mainly to give real responsibility to as many of the boys as possible ... Through it the Scouts gradually learn that they have considerable say in what their Troop does. It is the Patrol system that makes the Troup, and all Scouting for that matter, a real co-operative effort.*¹⁸

The relational and social skills to be acquired by co-operating with peers inside a small team are also recognised by the Reggio Emilia programme:

*The role and importance of peers and working in small groups is clear. It is a reciprocal relationship that creates a strong sense of solidarity and fosters organisational and self-organisational dynamics from which differences can emerge, and these differences in turn generate extremely significant acts of negotiation and exchange ... The small group work becomes a source of cohesion, a space in which thoughts can take shape, are expressed and compared with others’ different interpretations; new thoughts are generated; meanings are negotiated; and the “hundred languages” can emerge.*¹⁹

The synergy between formal and non-formal education

Formal and non-formal education necessarily feed off each other. The child who goes to school and who also joins a youth organisation is one and the same child: what he learns in school enables learning outside school, what he learns outside school influences his attitudes towards education as a whole and enriches his capacity to benefit from it.

At the level of the local community, non-formal education may offer opportunities where no formal opportunities exist, and may encourage the community to try to provide more formal education.

¹⁷ In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia.

¹⁸ Robert Baden-Powell, ‘Aids to Scoutmastership’

¹⁹ In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia.

The holistic methods advocated in previous sections apply to both formal and non-formal education. Where they are to be found predominantly in education outside school, their success in attracting children and in making learning more effective may well have a beneficial side effect on more formal education in the same community.

And it is here of course that Scouting, Guiding and the Carpe Vitam foundation come together in the specific context of this proposal: creating the desired synergy is a key commitment of the Open Minds Initiative.

In summary

The ambition of the Open Minds Initiative is to promote in and through their training schemes a new holistic approach to education on the same principles as those already present in Scouting and Guiding. They can be summarized in the words of Peter Senge:

- **Learner-centred learning rather than teacher-centred learning**
- **Encouraging variety, not homogeneity – embracing multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles**
- **Understanding a world of interdependency and change rather than memorizing facts and striving for right answers**
- **Constantly exploring the theories in-use of all those involved in the education process**
- **Reintegrating education within webs of social relationships that link friends, family and community**

The special flavour of the Initiative is to recognise and put to work the synergy between education in school and education through youth organizations, especially Scouting and Guiding.

Through the training schemes, the Open Minds Centres and the on-going support offered by the Open Minds International network, the Open Minds Initiative hopes to:

- **Foster the development of a democratic and egalitarian culture**
- **Promote equity in participation for girls and boys, men and women**
- **Support young people in finding their role in society and developing creative ways for a successful economic and social integration**
- **Prepare young people for inter-cultural communication and co-operation across national boundaries**