



NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

National Service Scheme shortly known as NSS is a life developing activity. The sole objective of National Service Scheme (NSS) is to increase levels of social consciousness by getting students involved in activities that address individual and community needs. Although there is an incentive, by way of additional marks that students obtain for 120 hours of work, NSS offers opportunities for personal growth, and character development through community service. Participation in NSS activities has instilled in many, the desire to bring about social change. Here the candidates are perceived as the social change agents and social transformers.

Keywords: National Service Scheme; Experiential education; Service learning

National Service Scheme

By the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports under Department of youth affairs more than 11 different programmes are implemented by the government which includes National Youth Policy,



Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), National Youth Corps (NYCs), National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD), International Cooperation (IC), Youth Hostels, Scouting and Guiding Scheme etc...

The National Service Scheme is one of the largest youth development programme in India. The scheme propagates the purpose 'Education through Service' the scheme was initiated, wherein the youth volunteers participate in the community work during regular activities and special camping programmes which in turn develop their personality, character, leadership and other skills.

NSS was launched in 1969 in 37 Universities involving about 40,000 volunteers. Today, NSS has about 33 lakh volunteers on its rolls spread over 336 Universities, 15,908 Colleges/ Technical Institutions and 11,809 Senior Secondary Schools. Since its inception, over 4.25 crore students have benefited from NSS.

1.1. YOUTH

Youth is the age of changes both physical and psychological. It should be taken care that the energies of youth are channelized into right way. When it is channelized positively it contributes a lot to the national development. Youth have full potential and to develop, they need opportunities. At the same time they are also needed to equip with knowledge, attitude and skills. These competencies enable youth to become socially useful. It is essential that youth should be considered as a community resource and it should be harnessed for social development. At large it leads to the national development.



Every third person in an Indian city today is a youth. By 2020, the median individual in India will be 29 years, making it the youngest country in the world with 60 per cent of its population in the working age group. (The Hindu, India is set to become the youngest country by 2020, Girija Shivakumar April 17, 2013)

The following table indicates the presence of youth in major countries of Asia. It is visible that India seems to be a young country in terms of youth population in coming decades.

Percentage Share of Population in the age group 15 to 34 years, 1970-2020. Major Countries of Asia

Country	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020*
Indonesia	32.02	33.06	36.31	37.38	34.85	31.94
Malaysia	31.87	36.03	35.98	34.39	34.19	33.37
China	31.34	35.11	38.40	35.03	30.60	27.58
India	31.79	33.34	34.70	34.43	34.73	34.00
Pakistan	31.18	32.24	32.33	33.25	36.84	36.01
Japan	35.81	30.82	28.13	27.42	22.48	19.61
Bangladesh	30.91	33.57	35.40	35.96	36.28	35.00
Philippines	32.70	32.70	35.29	35.71	36.45	35.41
Thailand	31.77	35.90	39.07	34.66	31.95	28.63
Vietnam	26.97	32.68	36.12	36.82	37.65	33.35
Asia	31.65	34.02	36.02	34.78	33.35	31.38

Source: World Population Prospects: The 2004 revision Population Database, United Nations Population Division. * Projected population.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The term Youth Development has been described in many ways. (Pittman, 1993, p.8) define 'youth development' as:

"...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives."

This definition accurately describes youth development as a process that all young people go through on the way to adulthood. As the definition implies, it is a process or journey that automatically involves all of the people around a youth—family and community. A young person will not be able to build essential skills and competencies and be able to feel safe; cared for, valued, useful, and spiritually grounded unless their family and community provide them with the supports and opportunities they need along the way. Thus, youth development is also a process in which family and community must actively participate.

1.8. YOUTH AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since ancient times the participation of youth is seen in our country in terms of National and Social Development. As Simhadri (1989) says the emergence of youth as a major force in national movement in various parts of the world is a significant phenomenon of the twentieth century. The end of the First World War witnessed the rise of the youth movement in different parts of the world. This phenomenon along with similar other movements, strengthened the sinews of democracy in Europe



and elsewhere. In India, a large number of young men and women were actively involved in the freedom struggle under Gandhiji's leadership.

The process of socialization needs to be modified so that youth may not be subjected to the job phobia. This will save youth from falling into psychological complexes and will enable them to build their career on the basis of their own initiative and self-determination. Social work can play a great role in creating self-determination in the youth by using the common base of social work practiced. Political leadership especially of the ruling party will continue to be more responsible for our social and economic development through a set of policies and legislation. Political youth leadership therefore is to be prepared for this important task of social and economic reconstruction of our country. Youth leaders are not involved in policy formulation of parties therefore have no opportunity to participate in the decision making process of their respective parties. It is formed that those belonging to political youth organizations were mainly responsible for strengthening the party base at different levels by propagating party ideals and enrolling new members.

The vast sources of youth personnel are being used solely for party purposes if our political youth leaders continue to tow in grooming which they are receiving now it is unlikely that they will develop attitudes and values which are urgently needed for the gigantic task of national reconstruction.

1.9. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

The government of India, State governments and other non-official agencies are aware of the potentialities of the youth. They are engaged in directing their energy, and resources to the



development of the youth. As a matter of fact, governments all over the world are concerned about the provisions of necessary facilities for the development of the youth as the future of every nation depends upon the well-being of this important segment of society. The development programmes for Youth are discussed below.

1.16. NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

The overall aim of National Service Scheme as envisaged earlier, is to give an extension dimension to the higher education system and orient the student youth to community service while they are studying in educational institution. The reason for the formulation of this objective is the general realization that the college and +2 level students have a tendency to get alienated from the village/slum masses which constitute the majority of the population of the country. The educated youth who are expected to take the reins of administration in future are found to be unaware of the problems of the village/slum community and in certain cases are indifferent towards their needs and problems. Therefore it is necessary to arouse the social conscience of the students, and to provide them an opportunity to work with the people in the villages and slums. It is felt that their interaction with the common villagers and slum dwellers will expose them to the realities of life and bring about a change in their social perception.

1.16.1. HISTORY AND GROWTH OF NSS:

The National Service Scheme, popularly known as the NSS, is a major youth activity intended to engage the students of colleges and universities in community service on a voluntary basis. It was launched in 1969 on the birth centenary of Gandhiji, who conceived the idea of involving youth in constructive service.



The Government of India from 1948 onwards worked on the idea and entrusted to a number of committees and experts the task of designing an appropriate student programme or a package of activities for the student. The University Grants Commission, headed by S. Radhakrishnan, recommended the introduction of national service in academic institutions. In 1959, the C.D Deshmukh Committee recommended compulsory national service for all students for a period between nine months and one year. In 1960 K.G. Saiyadin studied student national service in various countries at the instance of the government of India and submitted a detailed report in 1961. The Education Commission headed by D.S. Kothari was appointed in 1964. Its recommendation that students at all stages should be associated with some form of social service was accepted by the conference of the state education ministers in 1967, with minor changes. On September 24, 1969, the then Union Education Minister Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao, launched the NSS programme in 37 universities involving 40,000 students with primary focus on the personality development of students through community service and to inspire the Indian Youth to participate in the movement for social upliftment of the down-trodden masses of our nation. NSS, over the years, has made various constructive endeavors in the field of Mass Literacy, Environment Preservation, Health Education, Community and drive against social evils, etc. NSS volunteers have always come into the forefront to extend voluntary service in natural calamities like drought, flood, cyclone earthquake, and Tsunami.

The voluntary nature of the scheme and association of students at all stages of education with some kind of social service, both these propositions constitute the ideological base of the NSS The character of the scheme, with its aims of high social returns in the form of human resource development, is participatory. The NSS experience sensitizes the teachers and the students to social



reality. Each college have a minimum of one unit comprising not less than 100 student volunteers led by a teacher who is designated as Programme Officer (PO). The PO plays a pivotal role as an educator, organizer, coordinator, supervisor, administrator and public relation person. He/she also has to perform complex tasks of human engineering and adolescent psychology. NSS volunteers have to spend 120 hours in regular activities in adopted villages, colleges, school campuses and urban slums, during weekends or after college hours, during one academic year. They have to participate in a special camp for 10 days in adopted villages or urban slums during vacations by involving local communities in specific projects (1997). Today, NSS has more than 3.2 million student volunteers on its roll spread over 298 Universities and 42 (+2) Senior Secondary Councils and Directorate of Vocational Education all over the country. From its inception, more than 3.75 crores students from Universities, Colleges and Institutions of higher learning have benefited from the NSS activities, as student volunteers.

In India, the idea of involving students in the task of national service dates back to the times of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. The central theme which he tried to impress upon his student audience time and again was that they should always keep before them, their social responsibility. The first duty of the students should be, not to treat their period of study as one of the opportunities for indulgence in intellectual luxury, but for preparing themselves for final dedication in the service of those who provided the sinews of the nation with the national goods & services so essential to society. Advising them to form a living contact with the community in whose midst their institution is located, he suggested that instead of undertaking academic research about economic and



social disability, the students should do “something positive so that the life of the villagers might be raised to a higher material and moral level”.

The post-independence era was marked by an urge for introducing social service for students, both as a measure of educational reform and as a means to improve the quality of educated manpower. The University Grants Commission headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan recommended introduction of national service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other hand.

The idea was again considered by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) at its meeting held in January, 1950. After examining the various aspects of the matter and in the light of experience of other countries in this field, the Board recommended that students should devote some time to manual work on a voluntary basis and that the teachers should also associate with them in such work. In the draft First Five year Plan adopted by the Government of India in 1952, the need for social and labour service for students for one year was further stressed. Consequent upon this, labour and social service camps, campus work projects, village apprenticeship scheme etc. ,were put into operation by various educational institutions. In 1958, the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his letter to the Chief Ministers mooted the idea of having social service as a prerequisite for graduation. He further directed the Ministry of Education to formulate a suitable scheme for introduction of national service into the academic institutions.



In 1959, a draft outline of the scheme was placed before the Education Minister's Conference. The Conference was unanimous about the urgent need for trying out a workable scheme for national service. In view of the fact that education as it was imparted in schools and colleges, left something to be desired and it was necessary to supplement it with programmes which would arouse interest the social and economic reconstruction of the country. It was viewed that if the objectives of the scheme were to be realized, it was essential to integrate social service with the educational process as early as possible. The Conference suggested the appointment of a committee to work out details of the proposed pilot project. In pursuance of these recommendations, a National Service Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. C. D. Deshmukh on August 28, 1959 to make concrete suggestions in this direction. The committee recommended that national service for a period of nine months to a year may be made compulsory for all students completing high school education and intending to enroll themselves in a college or a university. The scheme was to include some military training, social service, manual labour and general education. The recommendations of the Committee could not be accepted because of its financial implications and difficulties in implementation.

In 1960, at the instance of the Government of India, Prof. K.G. Saiyadin studied national service by students implemented in several countries of the world and submitted his report under the title "National Service for the Youth" to the Government with a number of recommendations as to what could be done in India to develop a feasible scheme of social service by students. It was also recommended that social service camps should be open to students as well as non-students within the prescribed age group for better inter-relationship.



The Education Commission headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66) recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of social service. This was taken into account by the State Education Minister during their conference in April 1967 and they recommended that at the university stage, students could be permitted to join the National Cadet Corps (NCC) which was already in existence on a voluntary basis and an alternative to this could be offered to them in the form of a new programme called the National Service Scheme (NSS). Promising sportsmen, however, should be exempted from both and allowed to join another scheme called the National Sports Organization (NSO), in view of the need to give priority to the development of sports and athletics.

The Vice Chancellors' Conference in September, 1969 welcomed this recommendation and suggested that a special committee of Vice Chancellors could be set up to examine this question in detail. In the statement of national policy on education of the Government of India, it was laid down that work experience and national service should be an integral part of education. In May, 1969, a conference of the students' representatives of the universities and institutions of higher learning convened by the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission also unanimously declared that national service could be powerful instrument for national integration. It could be used to introduce urban students to rural life. Projects of permanent value could also be undertaken as a symbol of the contribution of the student community to the progress and upliftment of the nation.

1. The details were soon worked out and the Planning Commission sanctioned an outlay of Rs. 5 crores for National Service Scheme (NSS) during the Fourth Five Year Plan. It was stipulated that the NSS programme should be started as a pilot project in select institutions and



universities.

2. On September 24, 1969, the then Union Education Minister Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, launched the NSS programme in 37 universities covering all States and simultaneously requested the Chief Ministers of States for their cooperation and help. It was appropriate that the programme was started during the Gandhi Centenary Year as it was Gandhiji who inspired the Indian youth to participate in the movement for Indian independence and the social uplift of the downtrodden masses of our nation.
3. The cardinal principle of the programme is that it is organized by the students themselves and both students and teachers through their combined participation in social service, get a sense of involvement in the tasks of national development.

Besides, the students, particularly, obtain work experience which might help them to find avenues of self-employment or employment in any organization at the end of their university career. The initial financial arrangements provided for an expenditure of Rs. 120/- per NSS student per annum to be shared by the Central and the State Governments in the ratio of 7:5 i.e. the Central Government spending Rs. 70/- and State Governments Rs. 50/- respectively per NSS student per year. An amount of Rs. 120/- per NSS student per annum on programmes to be shared by the Central and State Governments in the ration of 7:5 (i.e. Rs. 70/- per student by the central government and Rs. 50/- per student by the State Governments). Keeping the inflation in view, it is now under consideration to revise the amount for Special Camping and Regular Activities.

The response of students to the scheme has been quite encouraging. Starting with an enrollment of 40,000 students in 1969, the coverage of NSS students, increased to about 26 Lakhs in 2006.



The scheme now extends to all the states and universities in the country and covers +2 level also in many states. Students, teachers, guardians, persons in authority in government, universities and colleges/schools and the people in general now realize the need and significance of NSS. It has aroused among the student youth and awareness of the realities of life, a better understanding and appreciation of the problems of the people. NSS is, thus, a concrete attempt in making campus relevant to the needs of the community. There are several instances of excellent work and exemplary conduct of NSS units which have earned them respect and confidence of the people. The special camping programmes organized under the themes of 'Youth Against Famine (1973)', 'Youth Against Dirt & Disease (1974-75)', 'YouthforEcoDevelopment' and 'YouthforRuralReconstruction' 'YouthforNational Development and Youth for Literacy (1985-93)' 'Youth for National Integration and Communal Harmony (1993-95)' have resulted in gains both to the community as well as to the students. The theme for the year 1995-96 onwards for Special Camping is Youth for Sustainable Development with focus on Watershed Management and Water land Development'. Themes have been selected in accordance with national priorities. Also, from 1991-92 onwards NSS has launched a nationwide campaign on AIDS Awareness called "Universities Talk AIDS" (UTA) which has earned international attention and appreciation.

Community service rendered by university and +2 level students has covered several aspects like adoption of villages for intensive development work, carrying out the medico-social surveys, setting up of medical centres, programmes of mass immunization, sanitation drives, adult education programmes for the weaker sections of the community, blood donation, helping patients in



hospitals, helping inmates of orphanages and the physically handicapped etc. NSS volunteers did commendable relief work during natural calamities/emergencies such as cyclones, floods, famine, earthquake, etc. from time to time all over the country. The NSS students have also done useful work in organizing campaigns for eradication of social evils, and popularization of the nationally accepted objectives like nationalism, democracy, secularism, social harmony and development of scientific temper.

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