

National Service Scheme (NSS): A Youth Development Programme in Higher Education**Shashanka Sekhar Roy,**Asst professor in history
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Swarupnagar, West Bengal.**Abstract:**

National Service Scheme (NSS) is an extension service programme run by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Govt. of India in +2 to PG levels in all higher education institutions. The two major components of this scheme are youth and society. Youths are the future citizen and administrator of India. So, the main goal of this programme is to student youth's overall development by engaging themselves in social and nation building work. It is purely a selfless service by the students. The watchword of this scheme is "NOT ME BUT YOU." The UGC in its policies frame of 1977 envisaged extension as an important third dimension of higher education and emphasized that the university should absorb the concept of extension culture and efforts should be taken to allot a 25 per cent time-period for the off-campus, extension work through community education. Now National Service Scheme (NSS) became one of the best youth and community development programme in India. This study involves identifying the importance of NSS and how it keeps motivation among students in higher education. How NSS plays a catalyst role for better understanding and making peaceful ambience in campuses to curb out students agitation, problems, social barriers, harassment, rowdyism and channel all the negative activities into positivity and learn them to be a better citizen of India.

Keywords: Youth, Social development, education, institution, service, NSS.

Student youths are the most vibrant and vulnerable section of society. They have the energy, courage and ability to change society. However, before that, the youths should be oriented with a holistic scheme, which will make them sensible, positive, confident, self-respect and hard-working mentality. To shape their innocent mind, education and some extension activities play a vital role. When all these students come to the arena of higher education, they are usually sixteen (16) years old. At this age, they learn to understand all the things around them like social problems and needs, social responsibly, social work, nationalism, patriotism, communalism etc. By which they can foster this attitude for the wellbeing of the society throughout their entire life.

As the apex body of H.E described no educational Institutions should be permitted to be isolated from the community so that education could be made mere meaningful and need-based. If educational institutions should be accountable to society, they can survive. The accountability and commitment could be expressed through the extension programmes, which every educated person could take up (Pankajam G, 2015)¹

Educational Institutions play a vital role to shape Young mind as Rousseau (2) explained, "Plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education. ... We are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally unprovoked, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment. Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education." The purpose of education is to learn to know society better whether it is higher education or secondary education. True education is a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude. It makes an individual civilized, refined, cultured and perfect. It is the key weapon to solve the various problems of life and society. Education has been described as a process of learning walking up to life harmonious development of physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social faculties. The great educationist and philosopher john Dewey explained, "A society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims. The common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling. The radical

reason that the present school cannot organize itself as a natural social unit is that just this element of common and productive activity is absent.”(Dewey,1899)3.

To ensure teaching learning in higher education we should follow the experiences, which can get through learning. As there are four pillars of learning. It is the fundamental principles for shaping out quality education. Education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of personal aims. Jacques (Delors report,1996)4. “Higher education is defined as the education which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of the duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. The education may be of the nature of general, vocational, professional or technical education.”(AISHE, 2013)5.

Now the question is what is the present scenario of higher education in India? In rural area 90%, students remain outside in the periphery of higher education. After completing their secondary education, they fell less interested to peruse education. Therefore, they join their household occupation, roaming and sink into despair. Even this trend is much more prevalent among SC, ST, OBCs and MINORITY prone area. Even if anyone completes the minimum standard of education, he/she becomes alienated from society but education having no social relevance is useless. It is a challenge to all stakeholders to bring out the students into the campus. Once they enroll in a higher educational institution it is our responsibility is to keep them attached to a different type of skilful, life-changing, joyful and value-added programmes. In India, youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5% of the population. The Govt. of India(GoI) currently invested more than Rs 90000 Cores per annum on youth development programmes or approximately Rs 2,710 per young individual per year, through youth-targeted higher education, skill development, health care etc. (NYP, 2014)6.

Some common picture we see in higher education that is: 1) Low percentage of GER (Gross

Enrollment Ratio), 2) Abrupt rise of dropout rate, 3) Students agitation in campus,4) Political interference in campus, 5) Faculty shortage, 6) poor infrastructure, 5) disinterested curriculum (Ahamad,2017)7. Hence, the question arises here that why students are not feeling interested in higher education. It might have some causes: 1) present education system like curriculum, syllabi pattern, a pattern of repeated examination and absence of youth extension activities. Some emerging social problems are frequently disturbing the pupils. It creates a big burden on the student. Our education system does not have any effective interaction with their locality and it is a great threat to our social life.

As Kothari Commission (1964-66) strongly recommended that education should be a constructive linkage between the educational institution and the community. The commission emphasized that today's student are the future citizen and policymakers of tomorrow. Therefore, they should know everything before becoming an administrator. The commission recommended, “Some form of social and national service should be made an integral part of education at all stages. It was also pointed out that this could be done by providing for students participation in programmes (1) community leaving on a school campus and (2) of community development and national reconstruction. (Education commission-1964-66)8.

So, to make education socially relevant and to reach the education among the underprivileged class of rural and urban slum areas all higher education institutions must adapt or implement some social Service Scheme by which education might be more acceptable to them. Considering all the issues related to youth and social development the concept of the National Service Scheme (NSS) was introduced by the Govt. of India in the year 1969 on the birth centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi for social and youth development. NSS volunteers work in rural area's adopted villages, urban slum areas and inside the institutional premises with need-based social issues like education, health, social prejudice, rescue operation caused by natural calamity, eradication of social evils, environmental awareness, build up communal harmony and other burning problems.

The prime aims of the National service scheme are to give an extension dimension to the higher education system and orient the youth student to community service while they were studying in educational institutions. The first Education Commission which was built in 1948(Radhakrishnan Commission) understood that if a student doesn't have a sense of social service, there is no use of higher education. The educated youth who expected to take part in an administrative job in future must need to be aware of the problems of the community. Therefore, it is necessary to aware of the social conscience of the student and to provide them with 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.

The overall objectives of the National Service Scheme are to arouse the social consciousness of students and provide the opportunity to work with the people around the educational campuses creatively and constructively. It has been noticed that the scheme helps students to upgrade their personality and inspires them towards community service. It ends up with the improvement of physical and mental behaviour. Students can understand themselves concerning their community. Identify the needs and problems of the community with a solution. Develop competence requires for group living and sharing responsibilities. Gain skills in mobilizing community participation. Acquire leadership qualities and a democratic attitude. Develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters. (NSS Manual,2006)9.

NSS promotes quality improvement in higher education and provides an opportunity for the holistic development of youth including adolescents for the realisation of their fullest potential. It develops the leadership qualities and personality of youths and channelizes their energy towards socio-economic development. NSS provides positive stimulation and a congenial environment for their all-around development. This Scheme fosters the spirit of adventure, risk-taking, teamwork, the capacity of vital response to challenging situations and endurance among youth. It develops values like democracy, socialism, and secularism, which foster

national unity among youth, Promote the spirit of national integration, and unity in diversity and persuade a sense of social harmony amongst the youth. NSS motivates the youth to act as a focal point for the dissemination of knowledge in the rural area and involve them in the nation-building process. It stimulates action for the development and empowerment of youth particularly for the economically and socially neglected/backward sections of society.

Many regular programmes have been done under NSS and more needs to be done. The NSS volunteers host blood donation camps, tree plantation programme, pulse polio immunization campaign, rainwater harvesting work, preservation and cleaning of historical monuments. The dedicated volunteers engage in the formation and renovation of playground, construction of water tank, parks, new drain ways, low-cost toilet, digging up sock pits, repeating of kachha road, house, cleaning of hospital premises, drain, road, water body, park, temples etc. The volunteers also arrange different health camps, environmental awareness camps, Women sensitization programme, stop women trafficking campaign, digester rescue operation. Besides that national integration camp, youth motivational camp, save girl child camp, child labour protection camp, digital India camp also organize here. Even, NSS volunteers have done well amid the covid-19 situation. They sent food and medicine to the doorstep of people even in full lockdown period.

The student volunteers are young Indians and they represent the most dynamic and resonant section of the Society. They worked on the 'Digital India' initiative seeks to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. 'Skill and Smart Cities Project has been launched for developing infrastructure. 'Swachh Bharat Mission' and 'Clean Ganga' Mission have been launched for building a clean and green India. NSS volunteers can be contributors as well as beneficiaries of these initiatives. The programme design of NSS needs to constantly evolve to reflect the priorities of the Government and the nation. (Parmar,2019)10

The Govt. of India has, over time implemented various programmes/projects for the development of youths' as NCC, NSS, Nehru Yuva

Kendra Sangathan, Bharat Scouts & Guides, National Service Volunteer Scheme but among them, NSS is the best youth development programme. During the 11th Five Year Plan more initiatives were taken to youth development programmes like- Youth Leadership and Personality development camp, National Integration Camp, Inter-State Youth Exchange Programme, Multi-Cultural Activities, National Youth Festival, State Youth Festival, National Youth Awards, Promotion of adventure at the basic and intermediate level in India, Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awards, Life Skills Education, Counseling, Career Guidance, Residential Camps, Environment Building, Research & Studies on youth issues, Documentation & Publication, Seminars, Conferences, Exhibitions and Workshops on Youth or Adolescent Issues, National integration and adventure.

There are several instances of excellent work conducted by the NSS units in higher education institutions, which have earned them the 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)', 'Youth for Eco-Development' and 'Youth for Rural Reconstruction 'Youth for National 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 by 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. NSS programme has expanded both quantitatively and qualitatively over the years. The Government of India set a review committee in August 1984. The committee highly appreciated NSS in which one of the most important recommendations was that the programme of NSS had great potential and, therefore, should continue and expand. The committee also recommended a 10 per cent rate of growth of coverage of students under NSS in each year(NSS Manual,2006)11.

The importance of NSS has been mentioned in an Evaluation Study conducted through the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) by MYAS GoI. In their Study Report, TISS concluded that NSS has been a well-intentioned and ideologically motivated scheme of the Government of India and that NSS is one of the greatest experiments in the field of youth work in the world. The value orientation is to instill an obligation of community service while promoting self-growth in the youth. The notion of volunteerism is inherent in the scheme – young people are motivated to share their knowledge, skills and opportunities with people less privileged than they are. This scheme has performed well in locations and institutions with leadership and individuals committed to contribute to the public good In fact, TISS recommended that NSS should be made mandatory for all public and private funded universities, colleges and institutions and should be integrated as part of the curriculum. (TISS, 2008-2009)12

Another study has been done in Assam, found that the National Service Scheme (NSS) is a tool for the best social programme initiated by the Govt of India for the students to serve the society at large. The student community and society are highly benefited by NSS. (Das, 2020)13.

Simultaneously, University Grants Commission is highly pleased by NSS work and considered NSS as the third dimension of education. Thus, UGC on 13 August 2015 requested all the Vice-Chancellors of all Universities to implement NSS as an elective subject in higher education Institutions. (UGC letter,2015)14.

Conclusion:

NSS has successfully crossed half-century years in the field of youth development. During this period, thousands of volunteers shaped their life by NSS in higher education institutions. Day by day number of NSS Units and NSS volunteers are incising. Since NSS has its benefits, private institutions are opening NSS units. Therefore, it can be said that students must join NSS to build the new India by which citizens will be physically-mentally strong and congenial.

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