

Awareness Regarding Activities of National Service Scheme: An Appraisal

(A Study with Regard to Students of Sri J.N.P.G. College, Lucknow)

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ABSTRACT The idea of National Service Scheme (NSS) was conceived in 1969 to involve the youth in constructive service. NSS volunteers work in adopted villages, colleges, school campuses and in urban slums for serving the cause of society such as environmental protection, health literacy etc. Present study has been done on the volunteers of NSS of Sri Jai Narain Post Graduate College, Lucknow, affiliated to Lucknow University to inquire about the awareness level of volunteers regarding aims and objectives of NSS and its extension activities. The paper also highlights constraints faced by NSS and suggests measures so that the energy of youth may be utilized in positive direction for building a strong and healthy nation.

INTRODUCTION

The National Service Scheme, popularly known as the N.S.S., 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. Saiyidain studied student national service in various countries at the instance of the government of India and submitted a detailed report entitled National Service for the Youth (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. 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 N.S.S.

The character of the scheme, with its aims of high social returns in the form of human resource development, is participatory (N.S.S. Manual 1987). The N.S.S. experience sensitizes the teachers and the students of social reality (Hans, 1995).

Each college should 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, co-ordinator, supervisor, administrator and public relation person. He/she also has to perform complex tasks of human engineering and adolescent psychology (Saiyidain, 1961).

N.S.S. 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 (N.S.S. Manual, 1997). 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)

N.S.S. is going on in Sri Jai Narain Post Graduate College affiliated to Lucknow University, Lucknow. It is the biggest college in Lucknow city, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). More than

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9000 students are studying here. 04 N.S.S. units are running in the college where 400 volunteers are registered. All the students have completed their regular activity and have also attended special camp in the session 2004-05.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper is to inquire the awareness level about the aims and objectives of N.S.S. and its extension activities amongst its volunteers.

METHOD AND APPROACH

The study was conducted among 200 volunteers of Sri J.N.P.G. College during their special camp from 06 February 2005 to 15 February 2005. All the volunteers were of 17 to 22 years of age. Special camp was organized in Ganeshpur village, Chinhat of Lucknow city.

The study design for data collection was prepared in such a manner so that it could be used both as a schedule as well as a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of close ended questions. The volunteers were divided into two age groups, that is, between 17 to 20 years and 20 to 22 years of age group.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Aims and Objectives of N.S.S.

According to the Manual (1997) some of the objectives of N.S.S. are:

1. Making education more relevant to the present situation and acquainting the students with the rural situation.
2. Enabling the student to play an important role in planning, designing and executing development projects that result in improving the quality of life of underprivileged sections of society.
3. Creating opportunities for students and non-students, urban and rural students, to work together.
4. Upholding the dignity of labour and ensuring the combination of physical work with intellectual pursuits.

The cardinal principle of the scheme 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 (N.S.S. Manual, 1997). Initially, it was envisaged that the scheme's paramount objective would be to embark on converting the energies of the student youth into development inputs with special focus on 'rural development'. However, experience revealed that the programme also motivates the student to achieve complete development of his/her personality (Hasan, 1976). Therefore, in the 1980s, personality development and the enhancement of the social perceptions of the student volunteers were added to the original goal of doing while learning.

When respondents were asked about the aims and objectives of N.S.S. and the reason of their joining it, they gave following responses which is reflected in table 1 and 2.

Table 1: What are the objectives of N.S.S.

Age group	It is a voluntary service of community	It is concerned with cleanness	It is for personality development	For helping poor
17-20 yrs.	78	27	21	43
20-22 yrs.	12	09	06	04
Total	90	36	27	47

When Students were asked about the aims and objectives of N.S.S., maximum (90) respondents said that its purpose is voluntary service of the community, (47) respondents opined that it is a means of helping poor. 36 said it is concerned with cleanliness where as only 27 said that it helps in the development of the personality. Thus table 1 reflects that most of the students are aware of aim and objectives of N.S.S.

Table 2 shows that maximum respondents (123) joined it with the feeling of rendering country service, where as others (48) for personality development as it gives experience and maturity whereas some opted for it as N.S.S. certificate provides a gateway for admission in any academic institution.

Table 2: Why did you take N.S.S.

Age group	Due to will of country service	It gives experience and maturity	It is beneficial for admission
17-20 yrs.	103	40	26
20-22 yrs.	19	08	04
Total	122	48	30

Extension Services of N.S.S.

In 1977 the University Grants Commission (UGC) recognized extension as the third dimension of higher education, in addition to the two fold dimensions of teaching and research. The UGC also recommended that a single mechanism be created in the Universities to encompass activities like adult literacy, continuing and extension programmes, distance education and the N.S.S., to ensure the effective functioning of the extension wing of the Universities (UGC, 1985). National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) established by UGC set some parameters which touch every fact of working and expectations from a university one of them is extension activity, which includes the N.S.S. (NAAC, 1996).

Cartledge (1975) suggests the inclusion of community concerns in all courses, so that the social use of knowledge becomes a normal part of learning, which in turn will convert the universities and colleges into resource centres upon which the community relies. Elaborating on the philosophy of community renewal colleges, Gollattscheck et al. (1976) called for community-college interaction in which the total community is used as a learning laboratory. Saldhana and Velaskar (1993) defined university extension services as a means of encouraging innovations in agriculture and creating awareness about health and population.

The Education commission (1964-6) recommended that universities should supplement the social, economic, educational and cultural growth of society. Following the incorporation of this recommendation into the first national educational policy (1968), adult and continuing education department were established in several universities in 1969, the year that the N.S.S. was launched.

The fact that the country is faced with structural as well as man made deficiencies and crises it calls for concerted social action by institutions like the government and the educational system. Since the N.S.S. plays a constructive role for student youth in the social sector, its intervention becomes imperative. Therefore since 1973 the special camp has been accorded a theme harmonious with contemporary issues. In other words, the activities during the special camp revolve round a particular national issue, problem or need. So far the special camp themes have been the following-

Youth against famine, against dirt and disease, against deforestation, for eco-development, for rural reconstruction, for peace, participation and development, for mass literacy, for national integration and social harmony, Universities talk AIDS (UTA), for sustainable development with a special focus on watershed/management and wasteland development, for a healthy society (since 1999)

In 1991 a comprehensive plan of action called Universities talk AIDS (UTA) designed on scientific lines was initiated by the N.S.S. organization. The basic aim of UTA was to provide AIDS education for the N.S.S. functionaries and students to motivate them to fight the pandemic. The project, which emphasized peer education, is the largest national effort being made to sensitize student youth to HIV/AIDS. The experiment involved 59 selected universities across the country covering more than 1,00,000 students. The WHO termed it an innovative educational intervention (Prakash, 1992).

Of late, concerns like human rights and gender issues have assumed global significance and have emerged as distinct academic disciplines. Human rights education is now a vital dimension in educational epistemology, by promoting harmonious relations, peace and understanding (Punalekar 1998). In 1994 commemorating its silver jubilee, the N.S.S. included gender justice as one of its thrust areas. Subsequently an exhaustive manual on women's development and gender justice was prepared. The manual outlines the strategy and scientific approach to be adopted by the N.S.S. during the process of gender sensitization. It also calls for a collective, interactive and evolutionary approach in regard to gender issues (Dagar, 1998). The N.S.S. Manual (1997) has included human rights and gender issues in the model syllabus for the training of N.S.S. POs and key personnel.

Responses Regarding Extension Activities of N.S.S.

Environmental Protection: In present scenario environmental damages is causing loss to the national economy in billions in the form of deforestation and soil erosion only. On the other hand water air and noise pollution are causing havoc to the health of the nationals. In spite of govt. policies and number of laws, nothing concrete has been done at the individual level to

fight the environmental pollution. The role of N.S.S. becomes very important in this context as constitution of India also envisages that it is fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment [Art. 51A (g)].

Table 3 shows that maximum respondents are engaged in plantation work (170), few of them (20) are engaged in social forestry and only 10 are working for pollution control, not a single respondent is doing anything for the conservation of bio-diversity. It seems that only emphasis is upon the plantation for the conservation of environment and other activities in this regard are being neglected.

Table 3: What measures you take for environmental protection

Age group	Plan-tation	Social forestry	Pollution control	Conser-vation of biodiversity
17-20 yrs.	140	19	10	-
20-22 yrs.	30	01	-	-
Total	170	20	10	-

Health Protection: Progress and development of a nation depends upon the health of its nationals. Every year thousands of mothers and infants die due to lack of post natal care facilities. Even during pregnancy women are not provided with healthy and nutritious food. Overall general health of Indian nationals is very-very poor as they cannot afford even the minimum calorie intake required. What N.S.S. personals are doing in this regard is reflected in Table 4.

Table 4: What are you doing for health protection

Age group	Health edu-cation	Comm-unity health	Pulse polio	Eye camp	Repro-ductive health	Child health
17-20 yrs	27	117	20	05	-	-
20-22 yrs	09	18	02	02	-	-
Total	36	135	22	07	-	-

Table 4 shows that maximum (135) respondents are engaged in community health, 36 are engaged in health education, 22 in pulse polio and 07 in eye camp. No work is being done for improving reproductive health and child health.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS: The problem of HIV/AIDS has reached an acute stage in India. On 31st May 2005 national AIDS control organisation (NACO) reported 1,09,349 cases of AIDS in India. More than 80% cases of HIV/

AIDS are acquired through unsafe sex where as 5% cases are reported due to blood transfusion and injecting drug use. A number of awareness programmes are being organised by the government and NGOs to control HIV/AIDS. Every year 1st December is observed as AIDS day throughout the world to sensitize the people on this very issue. N.S.S. has also been entrusted with responsibilities in this regard. what is being done by the respondents is clear from the table-5.

Table 5 shows measures taken by the volunteers for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. maximum respondents (93) emphasize upon University talk of AIDS which is followed by responses (40) favouring peer education, only 08 respondents are in favour of spreading message for safe sex where as 16 are interested in providing sex education in schools and colleges. 17 favour counseling of the masses on the issue whereas 26 believe that rallies should be organised for the mobilization of public opinion in this regard.

Table 5: What are you doing for preventing HIV/AIDS

Age group	Sex edu-cation	Peer edu-cation	Univer-sity Talk AIDS (UTA)	Ralley	Coun-seling message for safe sex	Spreading
17-20 yrs	12	37	78	20	15	07
20-22 yrs	04	03	15	06	02	01
Total	16	40	93	26	17	08

Literacy Programmes: The constitutions of India provides for the right to education (Article 21), the right to free and compulsory education to all children upto 14 years is also now guaranteed as a fundamental right under Art. 21 A of the constitution (constitution 86th Amendment Act, 2001). But without making right to education a reality the fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution shall remain beyond the reach of large majority which is illiterate. N.S.S. volunteers are required to take up number of activities for the eradication of illiteracy such as adult education, non formal education, women literacy programmes etc. Table 6 shows steps taken by the respondents for spreading literacy amongst the masses.

Table 6 shows that spreading literacy is an important component of N.S.S. activity. Maximum respondents (129) say that N.S.S. is engaged in adult education, 47 say in eradication of illiteracy, where as 24 say that N.S.S. is engaged

in non formal education. Table shows that nothing has been done for women's literacy, NLM and MPFL.

Table 6: What have you done for literacy programme

Age group	Era dic-tion of illite-racy	Adult edu-cation	Non-for-mal Edu-cation	Wo-men's lite-racy	Natio-nal Lite-racy Mission (NLM)	Mass prog-ramme for func-tional literacy (MPFL)
17-20 yrs	40	113	16	-	-	-
20-22 yrs	07	16	08	-	-	-
Total	47	129	24	-	-	-

Table 7 is supplementary to table 6 and shows that not a single village has been made fully literate under the N.S.S. programme.

Table 7: Have you ever heard about any village adjoining Lucknow literated by NSS

Age Group	Yes	No
17-20 yrs.	-	169
20-22 yrs.	-	31
Total	-	200

All the respondents of table 7 say that they don't know about any village adjoining Lucknow which has been made literate by N.S.S. Here it is very important to note that N.S.S. was established in 1969 and every N.S.S. unit of college/university had to adopt a village for literacy. It is an important work to be considered by N.S.S. but it is sorry to learn that nothing has been done in this regard.

National Integration Camp: Constitution of India says that it shall be the duty of every citizen to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India [Art. 51A (c)]. N.S.S. also makes intervention for the participation of volunteers in natural integration programmes.

National integration programme includes social and communal harmony, respect for national heritage, pluralism and multi-culturalism, youth festivals, national integration camps and preservation of monuments, but table 8 shows that no respondent has done any such activity in N.S.S. nor there is any such record in the last 20 years of college history.

Table 8: Did you participate in national integration camp

Age Group	Yes	No
17-20 yrs.	-	169
20-22 yrs.	-	31
Total	-	200

Population Control Programme: Increasing rate of population is another hindrance in the development and progress of a country. Though a number of policies have been made for controlling the growth of population but birth rate in India is still higher as compared to other developing and developed nations. Population control is another intervention area for the N.S.S.. What is being done by the respondents in this regard is given in Table 9.

Table 9: What is being done for population control programme

Age Group	Popu-lation edu-cation	Family plan-ning	Pro-pa-gation of one child norm	Increase in age for marriage	Help from NGO's
17-20 yrs.	17	20	90	32	10
20-22 yrs.	04	07	12	08	-
Total	21	27	102	40	10

Table 9 shows different opinion about population control programme. Maximum respondents said that they are (102) propagating for one child norm, which is followed by the opinion for increase in age for marriage (40), 27 are in favour of propagating family planning, where as 21 are in favour of population education 10 respondents feel that help of NGOs can be taken for this purpose.

Awareness of Rights: Rights has a big canvass under N.S.S. activity as human right/legal aid, gender issue, empowerment of women, sensitization of the public, woman welfare, social justice, affirmative action, eradication of child labour, consumer protection, tribal land rights, problems of displaced and old age persons and

Table 10: Have you done any programme for spreading awareness of rights

Age group	Yes	No
17-20 yrs.	-	169
20-22 yrs.	-	31
Total	-	200

strengthening of civil society but table 10 shows that nothing has been done by any respondent in this regard.

Sustainable Development

Other intervention areas for the N.S.S. activities are sustainable development, rural reconstruction, watershed management and wasteland development. N.S.S. volunteers are required to take steps to develop community assets infrastructure and preserve natural resources of the country. They have to devise measures for water and wasteland management. Besides they are required to tap rural talents, promote handicraft, animal husbandry etc. following table shows awareness level of respondents with regard to above mentioned activities of N.S.S.

Table 11 shows that many N.S.S. activities are not in the knowledge of volunteers though they know about sustainable development but they have not heard of other N.S.S. activities. It is note worthy that year 2004-05 was declared as a “Nadiyon me bade Jal Dhara, ye Sankalp Hai Hamara” (Sharma 2005, 142). But no information is provided by University or Government in this regard, hence many activities of N.S.S. remain behind the curtain.

Table 11: Have you heard of following activity programmes of N.S.S.

Age group	Rural reconstruction	Sustainable development	Water shed management and waste land development
17-20 yrs.	-	169	-
20-22 yrs.	-	31	-
Total	-	200	-

N.S.S. activities are neglected due to inadequate co-ordination between institutions and government agencies. Youth are not very much aware about N.S.S. activities due to improper functioning of authorities. *Present study reveals that respondent volunteers are aware of some of the activities of N.S.S. but not of all.* Therefore they have not been able to play significant role in the development process (Barizerman, 1991) of the country.

Constraint

N.S.S. suffers from following constraints and JNPG College is no exception-

1. Since N.S.S. is a government sponsored scheme, it suffers from bureaucratization and financial crunch. Low participation due to poor incentives for the students and teachers impedes its successful implementation. Besides inadequate qualitative documentation of the work done has affected the scheme's standing (Hans, 1995).
2. Discontinuation of the work done by the volunteers and functionaries on account of constantly changing POs and placements of work defeats the objective of the creation of durable community assets. This converts the social experience of the volunteers into an ad hoc affair and leaves no scope for conceptualization.
3. In the highly competitive educational environment students can hardly spend time in social work, or even think of transforming social reality (Damle, 1989; Hans, 1995; Saraswati, 1999). In India 80 percent of jobs are generated by small business and among the occupations, social work is chosen by the least numbers of youth (Papa, 1998). The situation has become more grave because career consciousness is overtaking idealism and service orientation.
4. Indian youth is confronted with a dearth of normative role models (Sinha, 1997). Absence of inspiring role models may not encourage youth to enroll in a programme like the N.S.S. that shuns fun and excitement and painstakingly addresses community issues.

SUGGESTIONS

Today Indian student community is without direction and ideology (Altbach, 1971; Choudhury, 1989) and requires credible youth movement. The N.S.S. is a useful exercise which provides student youth with a social apprenticeship. It also fulfils the criteria of Kulkarni (1988) that education and training are key to youth development. The scheme of N.S.S. has been reduced to a mere inventory of in and off campus activities. The philosophical base of NSS has degenerated due to lack of intelligent leadership. The scheme should be given in the hands of able and committed persons to train the students as sensitizers. For the better conceptualisation of the scheme permanent and dedicated programme officers (POs) should be appointed.

Since POs have to perform complex task of

human engineering and adolescent psychology, (Saiyidain, 1961), the government of India should establish training and orientation centres to plan, supervise and evaluate N.S.S. activities and to train and orient the POs in the philosophy of the scheme.

It has been observed that social work educators and teachers are preferred as programme co-ordinators at the university level and as POs at the college level. This conventional association between the scheme and the subject should be broken and the scheme should be coordinated with other disciplines also. Their experience in teaching, training the students in community work and action research should be taken into account during their appointments as programme coordinators, training co-ordinators, lecturer cum community organizers and POs. The inter disciplinary approach will help in realizing the goal advocated by Frumkin and Lloyd (1995) that the relationship among practice social work and community should be rekindled to promote social change.

There is need for enablers to stimulate the human resource development (Nanavathy, 1993). More and more students should be motivated to take up N.S.S. as it can mould the students into conscientious enablers to expedite the development process and energize the functioning of society. The chief concern of the N.S.S. should be to identify the youth as a social construct in order to redefine and relocate their position in the society. The authorities concerned should work together for popularizing N.S.S. programmes so that the energy and vigor of the youth may be utilized for building a strong and healthy nation.

NOTES

1. *Right to Education- Article 21A* provides that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the state may, by law, determine. (Constitution 86th Amendment Act, 2002).
2. *Fundamental Duties- Article 51A (c)* It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
3. *Article 51A(g)* It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.

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