CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVES AND ORGANISATION OF NSS

Professor V.K.R.V. Rao, ex-Minister for Education and Youth Services, government of India, emphasised that NSS had been launched with the object of providing students with opportunities to devote their leisure time in the service of the nation. Through programmes undertaken under the scheme it was hoped to develop among the students a sense of participation in nation-building by providing creative outlet for their energies. Our universities, even after independence, tended to exist, in an isolation from the masses. Our students had little idea of the problems and hardships suffered by those at the bottom rung of the social ladder, particularly in the rural areas. He further stressed that if India was to progress, this common consciousness, this sense of brotherhood and partnership between the students and the masses, must somehow be generated.

Against this background the government was very keen to introduce the NSS. As a matter of fact the NSS was looked upon as an educational programme through service. The Education
Commission (1964-66) was also emphatic in this regard. It was one of its recommendations that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of social service. It was felt that the NSS would provide the students with an opportunity to participate in a variety of social service programmes. It would also strengthen their understanding of the social environment around them. The state education ministers' conference in 1967 (April) also welcomed the proposal of involving the students in the nation-building programme.

The conference of Vice-Chancellors in September 1967 welcomed this recommendation and suggested that a special committee of Vice-Chancellors should be set up to examine this question in detail. All these developments were based on an initial report submitted by Professor K.G. Saiyidain, Secretary, Department of Education, government of India, New Delhi. He was deputed by the government of India in July 1960 on a special assignment to study what was being done in the field of youth development and youth service in other countries and to examine what light their experience could throw on the scheme of national service for the youth. He had a valuable opportunity of visiting a number of European countries, the UK, the USA, and Japan and the Philippines and seeing something of their general
educational activities as well as special measures taken to deal with the pressing problems of youth adjustment.

Professor Saiyidain came to hold the view that, if this scheme was to be properly conceived and developed, we should not envisage it as standing by itself but as part of the effort to achieve the wider objective of bringing education into closer and more vital relationship with community life. In most countries there was a time-lag between education and social change and, in many of them, there was a gulf between educational content and methods, on the one hand, and the demands and urges of national life on the other. In India, this divorce between education and life, which had long been a feature of our system, became more accentuated during the British regime when education was geared to certain narrow and limited objectives.

Educationists had therefore been concerned a good deal during the last couple of decades about the need to bridge this gulf so that the transition between school (or college) and the wider world outside might be smooth and easy and did not create tension and maladjustments.
The national service scheme, when it was in the making, was termed as National Youth Service Scheme. The scheme was designed to bridge the gulf between education and life.

One of its essential aims was to vivify some of the important national objectives in the minds of the youth and transform them into motive forces of conduct. Besides a sense of dignity of labour was to be inculcated among the youth.

As mentioned above, Professor Saiyidain visited the various countries and produced his report. The main features of the report could be summed up in terms of the following questions:

a. Should the scheme be initiated on a voluntary or compulsory basis?

b. Should it be started in the form of a carefully selected pilot project or on a national scale?

c. What would be the optimum duration of the service?

d. Should there be only one set pattern and time-table for all youth or can there be several of these to meet the different needs and situations?
e. What should be the nature of the projects undertaken and how should they be selected?

f. Should the scheme be mainly concerned with manual work or include other forms of social service too?

g. What would be the most suitable organisational set-up?

h. How to enlist the intelligent cooperation and support of the public, the leaders, the student community and the parents in the implementation of the scheme?

The broad objective of the national service scheme in India, as presented in the Deshmukh committee report, was to provide nine months of work camp experience for all youths. Professor Saiyidain's conclusions and recommendations formed the basis for the formulation of the NSS at a later stage.

These findings deserve mention in this context:

1. The idea of introducing national service scheme in India has a strong educational justification.

2. It is not necessary to introduce the NSS on a compulsory and universal basis.

3. It should be adopted on a voluntary basis.
4. If the idea of compulsion is contemplated, then the approach should be to make all youth liable to such a service.

5. The question of duration should be envisaged on a flexible basis.

6. Camps should be open to students as well as non-students.

7. The scheme should be launched in an imaginative manner.

8. Organisation of short-term camps of labour and social service should be encouraged.

9. It would be useful to create a certain sense of continuity in the minds of youth and adoption of village concept should be encouraged.

10. Orientation to new entrants be conducted.

11. Highest emphasis should be placed on the training of the right kind of leaders.

12. The overall direction of the policy and programmes should be in the hands of educationists.

13. In order to make the work camp programmes truly
educative and appealing to youth, they should be made varied and broad-based.

14. The possibility of starting a variety of short-term technical courses for the campers be explored.

15. There should be no restriction on the size of the camps which could be tailored to differing needs.

16. The selection of the right kind of projects is crucial to the success of the scheme.

17. The organisational structure could be designed later with the required degree of decentralisation.

18. To keep the movement lively and creative, opportunities should be provided to encourage exchange of ideas and experiences amongst workers at various levels; the camps may be occasionally visited by advisory committees of educationists and others who will not only assess the work but also carry over promising ideas and experiments from one part of the country to another and thus guard against the possibility of the movement becoming mechanical.
Professor Saiyidain tried his best to adhere to the terms of reference. He was advised that his report should not be a kind of "essay in theory" but should make concrete suggestions and proposals for the implementation of the scheme. Obviously, the report was to cover action points and indicate how the scheme could be put into operation in a practical way. But Saiyidain felt that, considering the nature of the scheme and its far-reaching social and psychological implications, it was not one of those proposals which could be put into practice with any reasonable hope of success. He felt that no government resolution or legislation in parliament could make so many thousands or lakhs of students go into work camps on a particular date and start digging the earth or participate in other prescribed projects.

In dealing with modern youth, with their emotional and psychological stresses and strains and their lack of adjustment to a rapidly changing and challenging world in which many of them had lost their moorings, the advocates of the scheme were playing with a dynamite. A dynamite can be of very great value if used intelligently. Otherwise it can prove dangerous and destructive. It was therefore necessary to view the scheme in the total context of India's educational effort and squarely
face the many issues which arose out of it. The scheme as envisaged had its theory and philosophy which should be appreciated not only by the concerned educationists but also by the intelligent public and it should be progressively developed and elucidated in the light of experience.

While defining and designing the objectives of the NSS several factors were to be taken into account. It was felt that only economic considerations cannot be incorporated in the youth programmes though they might appear at the initial stage as most important. The great American experiment of Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s suffered to some extent due to the fact that, at the outset at least, there was an inadequate appreciation of the educational values of the experiment. In fact the educational aspect of the project came in later as an after-thought.

In the Indian case where the main objective as well as approach was educational and psychological and not economic, as was the case with the American project, it was obviously more important to understand the educational implications fully and plan the educational orientation and contents carefully.
The main objective to be included in the scheme revolved round the educational input. In the work camps to be organised for the educated youth, there was to be a provision for suitable educational activities. These educational programmes should be provided on a voluntary basis but made so interesting and attractive that almost everyone would join. The courses, lectures, discussions, seminars and so on should not reproduce ordinary classroom conditions treating the students as children to be spoon-fed. The scheme should adopt informal and elastic techniques of independent work and study. It would be necessary to provide good libraries in the camps and encourage reading for pleasure. Great books as well as popular books dealing with current problems of interest should be made available to them. The emphasis should be not on an accumulation of information but on quickening interest, lighting the torch in the minds and cultivating the capacities for independent work and study.

Inculcating a sense of discipline was another objective to be kept in view in the scheme. A question was raised as to how the scheme could make an impact on the problem of discipline. Two views had been expressed. Firstly, it was said that we should hand over the general supervision of
discipline over the camps to the army which would be able to enforce the habits of discipline on the youth. The other view was that this was not primarily a problem of military discipline. It was essentially an educational problem which should be tackled on educational principles. It was emphasised that our scheme should attempt to encourage freedom, self-discipline and self-government. Discipline of work should be the basis of the system. Such discipline should be built up through the magic of hard, regular, socially significant and productive work.

The objectives of the NSS in a capsule form were designed in a seminar conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, in March 1969. They were put into two categories:

A. Overall objectives and

B. Specific objectives.

The overall objective of the national service scheme was the educational service to the community rendered through the activities of the scheme.
The more specific objectives of the NSS were to
arouse the student's social conscience and to provide him
with an opportunity:

a. to work with and among people.

b. to engage in creative and constructive social
   action.

c. to enhance his knowledge of himself and the
   community through a confrontation with reality.

d. to put his scholarship to practical use in mitigating
   at least some of the social problems.

e. to gain skills in the exercise of democratic
   leadership.

f. to gain skills in the programme of development to
   enable him to get self-employed.

In consideration of the objectives of the scheme, a
major question that should receive our attention relates to
the emphasis and orientation of the service programme. Do we
see the scheme as providing opportunities for growth and for
constructive work to the students or do we look upon it as a
means of mobilising students for meeting the community needs?
We should be clear about the educational and service goals.
Students cannot be considered as mere instruments for meeting community needs. Yet it is the community needs and the efforts to meet them that give relevance to the student activities.

The educational and service goals need special mention in this context. The educational goals can be spelt out in some detail thus:

i. To give the students a sense of participation in the national development.

ii. To promote the students' concern for fellow citizens and understanding of the conditions in which majority of the citizens live.

iii. To narrow the gap between the rural and the urban people, the rich, middle and lower classes in and through the activities of the student community.

iv. To put the students in a situation in which their knowledge of the subjects learnt through books and teaching aids in the classrooms could be deepened.

v. To help the students to discover themselves and facilitate selection of careers and settings for future work according to their aptitudes.
vi. To provide work experience as might be useful and helpful to the students in finding avenues of employment.

vii. To provide experience in group living with a view to promoting better realisation of the importance of team work.

viii. To create conditions in which the students will work together constructively, learn to be tolerant and to function as a team.

ix. To help the students to have healthier and richer personalities.

At the seminar, while narrating the service goals of the scheme, Mr. V. M. Kulkarni, of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, highlighted the following points:

i. To identify the urgent needs of the various communities and agencies.

ii. To undertake and execute the various programmes to meet the community needs.

iii. To establish and maintain supplementary services to meet the community needs.
iv. To develop programmes of welfare significance.

v. To build infra-structure for economic and social development.

vi. To promote productivity in fields and factories through significant supplementary work.

vii. To strengthen social solidarity, national integration, etc.

In short, the objectives of the NSS could be all those things that helped the students to develop their personalities. The philosophy of the scheme was aptly summed up later in the four words "Not me but you" as a motto of the NSS. This expresses the essence of democratic living and upholds the need to appreciate the other man's point of view first and to show consideration for fellow human beings.

The range of purposes, projects or activities which can be taken up or pursued by the NSS volunteers and which generally figure in this work may be roughly listed as follows:

building houses, repairing them, building roads, repairing them, repairs of bridges, planting trees, digging
lakes, desilting them, soil testing, distribution of ploughs, flood water prevention, execution of bunding works, provision of borewells, development of adopted villages, examination and treatment of (sick) cattle, staging of plays, skits etc. for creating awareness and removal of social evils, fighting of pollution and promotion of clean environment, cleanliness drive, health check-up drive, fighting of epidemic diseases, vaccination drive, blood donation drive, conduct of Yoga classes, digging soak-pits and construction of latrines, construction of temples, school buildings, provision of playgrounds, identification of the poor and handicapped for state assistance or pension, conduct of literacy classes, arrangement of lectures for promotion of social reform, slum clearance and urban renewal, building and cleaning gutters, removal of parthenium grass etc.

It is interesting to note that the NSS symbol which is a wheel with eight spokes is patterned on the wheel of the Konark Sun temple in Orissa. The eight spokes represent 24 hours and this means that the NSS organisation and the volunteers are ready for service all the 24 hours, round the clock. The NSS symbol is used everywhere, in all NSS activities, and it also appears on the badge which the NSS
The organisational aspects of the NSS have four levels: the national level, the state level, the university level and the college level. The national level is at New Delhi and the state level exists in the state capitals. The university centres in the country represent the next level and the colleges represent the lowest level in the hierarchy. A university has an NSS coordinator whereas a college has a programme officer. The advisory committees at the national and at state level are headed by the Education Ministers. This is significant in two ways. As pointed out elsewhere, although the NSS volunteers constitute the regular cadres, they are not the cadres of a police department or an army. They are essentially cadres of the educational institutions. And hence Education Ministers are associated with the national and state level NSS organisations. The second aspect to be kept in view in this regard is that, in the Indian context, unless a minister is associated with the coordination committees or advisory committees, the members of the advisory committees may not be available on time or a few of them may delay their attendance at the meetings. When a minister heads such an advisory committee, the administrative
officials (and even others) tend to be particular and make it a point to attend the meetings. The Vice-Chancellors also attend these meetings because the Education Ministers are in some ways associated with the universities and in some cases they may be pro-Chancellors of the universities. At the university and college levels, the Vice-Chancellor and the Principal respectively preside over the advisory committee meetings. As we have noted elsewhere, the university level advisory committee meetings are generally well attended and decisions are taken periodically as per schedule. At the college level however the officers or others may find it difficult to attend the meetings of the advisory committee convened by the principals.

At the level of the government of India, New Delhi, there is an NSS officer called Programme Adviser and below him there are assistant programme advisers stationed in the state capitals. Their business is to coordinate and supervise and generally keep in touch with the NSS administration and programmes and report the same to the government of India.

As is pointed out elsewhere, most of the NSS coordinators at the university level and at the college level are selected
temporarily for a period of two years or maybe another two years in continuation. However, specially at the university level, there is a great need to make appointments on a permanent basis so that better planning and programme implementation are possible. Such a change has been made in some universities with regard to the officers in the sister section of Adult and Continuing Education. At the college level the NSS officers are essentially professors of their respective subjects and the NSS charge, like the NCC charge, is an additional charge. There are definite disadvantages in this arrangement. The NSS work generally turns out to be heavy and the programme officers generally stand in need of assistance of others in carrying out the programme.

As regards the budget for the NSS activities, it comes from the government of India. But there are certain projects and activities where the budget is shared by the government of India and the various state governments in a certain proportion.

At the national level the whole population of youths, particularly the students, is viewed to enter into three streams. One is that of the National Cadet Corps; the other is that of the National Service Scheme; and the third is the
various sports organisations. It is expected that college students choose to get into one of the three streams. It is in this sense that the NSS cadres are very vast, nation-wide, and strong, although they do not have to possess the military discipline which is intended for the National Cadet Corps. The sports stream is meant for those students who show talents in sports early enough in their careers.

There are country-wide arrangements for the training and orientation, seminars and such other academic and training activities for the NSS officers, coordinators and students etc. As regards the training of students, it takes place locally, in suitable batches. The training is given soon after the students are selected as NSS volunteers. The programme officers and coordinators are given training from time to time in the various centres spread over the whole country.

There is an elaborate reporting system. The programme officers are to report from the college level to the university level and the universities are to report to the state and central levels. The NSS organisation, at the national level, has brought out an elaborate manual, both
in English and Hindi, providing the details and specimens of the various forms of reporting procedures and the financial code to be adopted by the concerned officers and coordinators throughout the country.