Abstract

In the first part of this chapter an effort is made to deduce learning points from the cases presented in the preceding chapter. From each of the four cases six lessons are drawn, to make a total of twenty-four points, which can contribute, to the success of communitizing education. All of them have their base in the conceptual framework established in Section I.

The second part of this chapter is a thematic concordance of the practices evident in the four cases. It asks twelve probing questions, resulting in a set of guidelines, cautions, priorities and norms related to the process of communitizing education.

Though altogether thirty-six aspects of the 'how' of campus-community interaction appear on the pages of this chapter, there is no presumption that the A to Z of the process are laid bare here. These points, on the contrary, are presented as a sample set.

Communitizing education is first and foremost an educational activity. It is an action-research jointly undertaken by the educational institution and the community. Its purpose is to generate learning experiences, which will lead to integrated development of the individuals involved, the community concerned, and the nation at large. This ought to be the orientation of the process, and this chapter is intended to carry this message.
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2.8.1 Introduction

This chapter takes an evaluative look at the four experiences and tries to derive learning points from them. The first part of it presents six such points from each of the four experiences, while the second part examines twelve probing questions, which relate to communitizing education.

2.8.2 Learning from Pauta Experience

2.8.2.1 Motivation is a Key Factor

The poverty of the people in Pauta, their community feeling, the caste system, the money lender, the absentee-teacher, the parents who are unconcerned about their children not attending school, people welcoming the Principal of a school to live among them, and yet someone among them robbing the principal of all his belongings - these are all typical Indian rural
realities. Schools and colleges, particularly the English medium ones, have a tradition of keeping aloof. The interaction between the school and the community became possible only because of Joseph’s sense of social commitment. A learning point that emerges from this case is that unless there is a person or a team of persons, who are motivated to spearhead the process of communitizing education, nothing significant is likely to happen. *Training and motivation, therefore, becomes important pre-requisites for the communitizing process.*

2.8.2.2 Start with What the People have

As Joseph and his team entered the village they found themselves surrounded by problems, yet they looked around to see what resources were there. They found a school that existed just on paper. As they were themselves teachers, they decided to make use of available resources to start a school. Gradually the acceptance of the team in the village was well-established fact, and they entered into medical service, co-operative store, construction of pucca buildings for the school, etc. A learning point from this is that *it is always wise to start with what the people have.* Joseph later mobilized resources to establish a number of assets in the village. He could not have started his experiment with foreign money.

2.8.2.3 Relationship is of Pivotal Importance

In the Pauta experiment of communitizing education, the team leader went to the people, loved them, lived *among them*, and started with what they had. Particularly notable is the type of accommodation which Joseph and his two colleagues chose for themselves - a mud-walled rented hut.
Communitizing education is a matter of relationship: the stronger the bond of relationship, higher the scope of educational impact.

2.8.2.4 Triple Faith

Problems are bound to be there. The higher castes did not initially appreciate the entry of Joseph and his friends. Moneylenders, and petty merchants, if any, would have been annoyed. The rumour that Joseph could have come to baptize them is a typical way in which the status-quo-forces register their annoyance at interventions of this kind. The team withstood the resistance. Not even the wholesale theft would shake them. This reveals the high level of idealism and adherence to spiritual values, which strengthened these social workers. The team had faith in themselves and faith in the people (in spite of the fact that some of them proved to be thieves). They had, apparently, faith in God too, otherwise they could not have lived through the challenges.

2.8.2.5 Educators are Generally Acceptable

In rural India educational institutions always have a credibility of their own. Joseph and his team could find easy acceptance in the community, and enjoy the support of the Panchayat, probably by virtue of the fact that they are teachers from a well-known educational institution, and also because their own (i.e., the team’s) dealings were decent. One of the reasons why communitizing education is bound to produce good results is the fact that education is held in high regard in India, and educators are traditionally respected.

2.8.2.6 Empowering Leads to Sustainability
The Pauta Experiment was a time-bound experiment. The team had decided to spend only five years in the village. They made no secret of it. Instead they used this information as a signpost to prepare the people to take charge (hold the keys of the schools) at the time of withdrawal of the team. This strategy indicates that the team was conscious about the social sustainability to which the development process ought to lead the community. *People’s participation was ensured in the experiment, the empowering process has been taking place through all the decision-making exercises; that is why the committee could confidently accept the keys, demonstrating the sustainability of the development in Pauta.*

2.8.3 Learning from HMT Colony Experience

2.8.3.1 If the Approach is Good, the Response is Good

One lesson yielded by the HMT colony experience relates to cooperation of the teaching staff in the extension work of the college. Here is a case where the Principal took great interest in the venture, visited the village, addressed the people, and convened staff meeting to discuss the matter. Also we see a team of teachers inquiring what their roles would be. The spirit of that question is one of participation and sharing of responsibilities.

This is an important lesson because there is widespread apprehension regarding the response of teachers to the idea of communitizing education. It is also a matter of experience that a good number of teachers are unwilling to become programme officers of NSS. HMT colony experience points to the possibility that if the approach is good, the response is bound to be good. Now that UGC has included extension and activities like NSS as
an item in the performance appraisal of teachers, there is added incentive to take interest in the tables related to communitizing education.

2.8.3.2 The Spirit of being a Change Agent

Another aspect of the HMT colony experience is the dovetailing of the extension work into the training and orientation of NSS Programme Officers. Very often NSS Programme Officers do not get an opportunity for exposure to a gradually unfolding process of development action in a rural community. They are often taken to a community to conduct a socio-economic survey, and after that they do a group work on consolidation of data and report-writing. But what does not happen in such an assignment is the imbibing of the spirit of being a change agent in the process of communitizing education.

2.8.3.3 Survey becomes Participatory Research

Socio-economic survey is often a misused tool in community-organization. Many social workers think survey should be the entry-point. In HMT colony, the Programme Officers asked the group about the probable number of families in the community. They gave figures ranging from 200 to 310. This was used as an occasion to tell them: “how can you talk to the Collector about the problems in HMT colony, if you don’t even know the actual number of families residing there?” On hearing this they actually wanted a survey to be conducted.

The empowering process consisted in the community (here the representatives) taking the decision regarding the survey. The conscientization process that preceded the decision-making had given them the critical consciousness regarding the need for fact-finding, and this led to
action: 18 members of the community participated in the data collection. This is people's participation in the planning and implementation stage of activity.

Socio-economic surveys by voluntary organization are often suspected as a means for secretly cooking up projects and making money. Apart from that they also raise false hopes in poor people about some ameliorative measures that may be taken by the agency to solve their problems. In HMT colony both these elements - of suspicion and of false hopes - did not create difficulties because of the way in which the survey was organized.

2.8.3.4 The Entry Point

Another aspect of the HMT colony experience is related to the question of "entry point". There are various ways in which an agency or a social worker may enter a community for development work. In this case it was a spontaneous academic entry because the college concerned is a college of social sciences teaching social work. In the case of other educational institutions also, the response pattern is not likely to be any different. Educational institutions all over India, probably all over the world, are held in high esteem. Being associated with a college or a college teacher is a matter of prestige in the case of the uneducated poor people in the community. College students also are admired for their privileged position. This is an atmosphere highly conducive to campus-community interaction.

2.8.3.5 Getting Invited into the Community

Yet another aspect of HMT colony experience, which has relevance to NSS, is the visit of the eight representatives to the college. They met the Principal, apprised him about the conditions prevailing in the colony and requested him to choose their colony for development work. This is a great
achievement of the change agent. Here the college got invited into the colony. This is perhaps the best way to go to the community.

When NSS plans to 'adopt' a village it is possible to follow this strategy and method. After establishing preliminary contacts the Programme Officer may inform the representatives of the people (or leaders) that the Principal is the chairman of the NSS unit and that it is desirable for them to meet him and invite him and the college to their community. In Paulo Freire’s vocabulary this puts the community in the position of the subject rather than that of the object.

2.8.3.6 Skills for Facilitating Development

A very important event in the HMT colony episode is the one-day-workshop organized in the college for the development committee. It was appropriately entitled “HMT colony – problems and possibilities”. The title communicates the fact that the people of HMT colony have problems, but they also do have possibilities.

The process of communitizing education involves the identification of problems and possibilities. It involves the process of developing the critical consciousness of the people so that they can identify the root causes of problems. From here one natural step forward would be to enable them to ask themselves the question “how can we change this”. That leads to action, sharing of responsibilities, personal development, and social development.

The students and interested teachers who participate in such a workshop should sit on the outer ring of a ‘fish bowl’, observing the process in the inner circle. Brainstorming should be a preferred mode of communication because it has the capacity to generate confidence in the participants, as well as generate ideas creatively. This leads us to the conclusion that NSS needs to develop a training methodology appropriate
for human and institutional development through the process of communitizing education.

2.8.4 Learning from Kottayam Literacy Campaign

2.8.4.1 Appropriateness of Campaign Approach in NSS

A unique aspect of the case from Kottayam is that it brings the example of a campaign. We may define campaign as an intensive, time-bound target-specific action with definite objectives for social benefit. A campaign often calls for volunteers who are willing to undergo sacrifice. A good campaign generates healthy social emotions. The synergy of various agencies which act together, motivated by the mobility of a cause, often produce unforeseen positive results.

A campaign is a highly suitable method of social intervention in NSS because the student volunteers have only a limited time at their disposal. They are young and energetic, therefore they like to take up something which has thrill in it. A campaign needs to be planned meticulously. Therefore it offers scope for a number of planning sessions where creative thinking, collective thinking and decision-making by consensus can take place.

2.8.4.2 National Service Volunteers

Yet another unique aspect of the Kottayam case is the deployment of National Service Volunteers (NSVs). These are graduate volunteers who have completed a minimum of two years in NSS during their college studies. The scheme known as National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS) provides a stipend of Rs 750 to such volunteers. In Kottayam 32 such volunteers were made available to give leadership to the campaign in the 32
wards of the municipality. These young and enthusiastic workers proved to be the mainsprings of the campaign.

NSVS is a scheme to be made use of in NSS. The NSVs can work with the Programme Officers providing supportive leadership to the volunteer secretaries. Most of them will develop into social workers.

2.8.4.3 Attractive Target, Catchy Slogan

Attractive targets and catchy slogans do play a significant role in making campaigns succeed. Kottayam Literacy Campaign is a typical example of that too. Here the target was very specific, particularly in the first part of the campaign where 2209 illiterates were to be made literate as per NLM norms in 100 days. The momentum which the slogan created in the town is best testified in the statement made by Khadija, an illiterate woman. In spite of the severe inconvenience at home she decided to learn because she did not want the concept of 100% literacy to fail on account of her non-co-operative

NSS borrowed the idea of a catchy slogan from Singapore where campaigns have been successful in creating a national emotion around several valid themes. Campaigns are educational activities, which have great value in the process of communitizing education.

2.8.4.4 Using the Media

The media has a great role to play in the process of communitizing education. In Kottayam Literacy Campaign we had the experience of newspapers competing with one another to cover the event. Particularly impressive was the 'literacy count down' which started on the 90th day. The urgency created by the count down was incredible.
Today the electronic media has become far more popular and effective than it was during the days of the Kottayam campaign. The creative use of the media is an important lesson for NSS in its effort to communitize education.

2.8.4.5 Motivating People to Participate

In Kottayam as many as 700 local people came forward to collaborate with NSS in the actual process of imparting literacy on a one to one basis. Looking back on the event it looks surprising that such a large member of people from different age groups and different walks of life volunteered to join the campaign.

The lesson here is related to the question of motivation, which is a complex psychological phenomenon. In Kottayam a large number of factors contributed to generate the required level of motivation. They felt they were creating history, they felt they were engaged in doing a most valuable service to fellow-human beings, they felt proud to be associated with a university-sponsored programme, they felt happy to work shoulder to shoulder with professors and senior NSS volunteers, they were happy to figure in the media, they felt their ideas were accepted and that their leadership was recognized.

In communitizing education, the motivation factor will always have an important place. And the factors underlying motivation will always be situation specific. The Programme Officers/teachers will have to use their ingenuity to design strategies for generating motivation.

2.8.4.6 Combining Creativity with Commitment
Imagination and commitment proved to be the most critical factors contributing to the success of Kottayam Campaign. The relevance of these two qualities in any activity undertaken for communitizing education cannot be ignored.

An important challenge for national-level leadership of NSS is to ensure that NSS Programme Officers are known for their creativity and commitment. It may be debated whether these are in-born qualities or qualities which can be cultivated through training. The Kottayam experiment reveals that training can play a great role in this area. The lesson, once again, for the NSS organization is to take steps to strengthen its training dimension.

2.8.5 Learning from Nalpathimala

2.8.5.1 Creating the Necessary Administrative Will

The Mahatma Gandhi University set apart 2.5 acres of its lands for a Gram Vikas Kendra (GVK) in 1991. This played a crucial role in the implementation of the Nalpathimala Experiment.

The administrative will, whether it is at the university-level, college-level or school-level, plays a pivotal role in the communitizing of education. Programme Officers often comment that their principals are more in need of training and orientation because they do not see the relevance of communitizing education. It is not a priority for most of them. Programme Co-ordinators very often have the same complaint about their Vice Chancellors and syndicates. It is only exceptionally that we come across a Vice Chancellors who has the vision to issue orders of the type that brought the GVK into existence.
The lesson, which could be derived from this leadership scenario, is this. All Vice Chancellors and all Principals act on the basis of their values and priorities. Some have it in their blood as in the case of the Kottayam Vice Chancellor; others may have to get it from above, say from the UGC or from the government in the form of a written order; only then they will act. The policy documents of the government need to become administrative orders so that heads of institutions find it mandatory to implement programmes for education.

2.8.5.2 Camps are Tools for Communitizing Education

NSS camps – particularly the National Integration Camp of 1991 – played an important role in laying the foundation for the Nalpathimala experiment. Thousands of NSS camps take place every year, all over the country, but it is rarely that a camp becomes the starting point for a long-standing relationship between the organizing agency (university/college) and the host-community.

The learning point here is related to the way the camp is conceived and organized. The two aspects of the Nalpathimala camp are worthy of special reference. One is the home-stay element, and the other the idea of precipitating a village-development committee at the end of the camp. The home-stay element created opportunity for the message of the camp to go deep into the community, deep into the families. The strategy of forming a committee to continue the relationship, and of nurturing of this committee with exposures and trainings played a crucial role to make the experience possible.

2.8.5.3 Motivating Volunteers
The home-stay element in the National Integration Camp at Nalpathimala holds another special learning point. This is in the way the idealism of youth was kindled in order to get enough volunteers to opt to stay in harijan huts. The camp director's speech on this aspect established home-stay with harijans as a value, which only the super cream from among the cream of creams is capable of. In the absence of this exercise in motivation for home-stay with the poor could have been perceived as a penalty to be rebelled against. Also the disclosure that the camp director and a few of the programme officers have already decided to stay in harijan huts further accentuated the motivation.

2.8.5.4 Institutionalizing the Interaction

The Gram Vikas Swasraya Sangam has the Vice Chancellor of the Mahatma Gandhi University as its chairman. There are three vice-chairmen. They are NSS Programme Co-ordinator, HOD of Adult Education, and a person nominated by the vice chancellor from among the leaders of neighbourhood groups.

This organizational structure is an attempt at institutionalizing the campus-community interaction. This serves as a safeguard against party-politics entering into the process.

2.8.5.5 Creative Use of Exposures

The exposure programme at Aiswaryagram offered a special learning point, too. In the process of influencing the community and its leaders, the institution can resort to a number of strategies. The most important strategy is that of role modeling; that is to say the model projected by the Programme Officers and volunteer leaders are great sources of influence.
Next to this could be placed the effect of exposure programmes. Seeing, it is said, is believing. The group of family heads who visited Aiswaryagram were exposed to the dynamics of co-operative action in a village. Back home they decided to replicate it *mutatis mutandis*.

Also to be noted is that exposure programmes have to be carefully planned, otherwise they become mere sightseeing trips.

### 2.8.5.6 Success Breeds Success

After the formation of the Sangham, the committee at Nalpathimala sat down to do programme planning. One of the committee members stated: ‘At present the people do not have any trust in us. In order to win their trust we have to make the first programme really successful’. This is a marvelous piece of wisdom. The committee chose to implement a summer institute for the school children of Nalpathimala. It was carefully planned and implemented. It succeeded. This success acted as a foundation for a series of successes in the village. Success, it is said, breeds success. The learning point from Nalpathimala in this regard is that care should be taken to make the first activity particularly successful.

### 2.8.6 Commonalities in the Four Experiences

Having seen four experiences of communitizing education – viz. the Pauta Experiment, the HMT Colony Experiment, the Kottayam Literacy Campaign and the Nalpathimala Experiment - and having looked into the outcome from a PRA exercise analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the ongoing involvement in Nalpathimala, we may now examine these experiences to identify possible commonalities in the various elements that have gone into the making of these experiences. The basic reason for the selection of these cases has been that they are all cases in which educational
institutions have reached out to communities, producing a certain impact. The focus is on the process of interaction with a view to identifying elements of it which has a relevance to NSS as a whole, and which might possibly find a place in the model which this study is trying to formulate. With this purpose in mind, the following eleven questions pertaining to different aspects of the cases have been identified.

2.8.6.1 Proximity of the Target Area and Urgency of the Situation

In all the four cases the communities were in the vicinity of the educational institutions concerned. They were so close to the institutions that there was room for sensitive persons in these institutions to feel that they have an obligation to get down to those communities. The Vice Chancellor of one of the institutions (Mahatma Gandhi University) described this emotion aptly when he said that the proposed interaction should “add a chetna dimension to the chinthna pre-occupations” of the University.

Regarding the condition of the communities prior to the intervention, in general terms it can be said that they were all “communities in need”. Socio-economic surveys had been conducted in HMT colony and Nalpathimala. In the case of Kottayam the situation was different. There the intervention was uni-dimensional because it was a literacy campaign. And even from the point of view of literacy the town was not much ‘in need’ because the literacy rate was already 95%. It was macro-level considerations (the need to produce a model for literacy campaigns), which prompted the intervention.

2.8.6.2 Initiative and its Social Costs
The lead persons in all four cases were members of the teaching faculty who had the charisma to empathize with the communities in question. They were daring people because they pioneered the ventures. They were individuals who had a concern for social justice. They felt that it was their duty to bridge the chasm that existed between the campus and the community, and they did it on behalf of their institutions.

In the case of HMT colony, Kottayam Literacy Campaign and Nalpathimala the lead person's motivation was linked with NSS. He acted as an NSS functionary. A question relevant here is whether it was a case of NSS animating his social commitment, or his social commitment impelling him to use NSS as a forum for the outreach attempt. In these cases the latter was the reality. But this does not detract the potentials of NSS because NSS always succeeds in attracting persons who have an inclination for altruism and social justice. Through training, exposure and work experience this inclination gets fueled, and this leads to producing visible results at institutional/organizational level.

All four cases reveal that the lead persons had support from their colleagues and their institutions. They mobilized this support more by their "personal power" than by their "positional power". In Pauta a team of colleagues went and stayed in a mud-walled hut and worked self-effacingly. They worked as a team and faced many a storm. They took leave to be in the community, which meant a lot of sacrifice for them, but also it brought the disadvantage of not being able to take the students and colleagues with them on an ongoing basis. In the other three cases the institutions were very much involved, and the lead persons made the work part of their job-description, though even then it meant going the extra-mile.

2.8.6.3 Students's Involvement
In all these three cases – which were NSS experiments – volunteers were regularly and seriously involved. They conducted socio-economic/literacy surveys. They conducted special camping programmes and closely interacted with the community for the accomplishment of tasks, which were mutually agreed upon. The success of Nalpathimala Experiment as revealed by the PRA was mainly due to the interaction between the students and the local people. The NSS culture in Nalpathimala, even today, is such that the male volunteers who participate in the special camping programme here invariably stay in the local homes. In Kottayam, NSVs (National Service Volunteers) played a crucial role in identifying and mobilizing the local resources – i.e. instructors – in support of the literacy campaign. There is no doubt that NSS volunteers in spite of their time-constraints can do meaningful work in the adopted villages.

2.8.6.4 The Nature of the Community Organization Process

In all four cases there was a clear emphasis on the formation of people’s organizations at grass-roots level. At Pauta they started with a students’ co-operative store, then a savings bank and finally the School Management Committee. It is to be noted that this particular experiment centred round formal school system, which they later non-formalized to include self-employment, vocational training and savings bank. The effectiveness of these organizations is clearly indicated in the fact that because of the Savings Bank the moneylenders lost their grip on the village, and the School Management Committee was able to take the keys from the lead persons in five years.

In HMT colony, Kottayam and Nalpathimala the organizers followed the neighbourhood group (NG) model for promoting collective learning, economic action and empowerment. A special feature of Nalpathimala
Experiment is that within each NG there are, on an average, four Self Help Groups (SHGs). These Self Help Groups are affiliated to the Department of Adult education in the University.

2.8.6.5 Networking as a Strategy

In Pauta Experiment they made use of the "non-existent Govt. school" when they wanted to start one. And they networked with the panchayat and the Department of Education. In HMT Colony networking was attempted from the very beginning. It was the District Collector who inaugurated the one-day meeting of the Community leaders. The first special camping programme held in the colony was by the NSS unit of a college other than the one, which initiated the intervention. In Kottayam it was NLM that provided financial support. The Municipal Council and the District Administration were collaborators. Over seven hundred local instructors collaborated too. In fact in Kottayam the role of NSS was genuinely catalytic and the result was synergistic. In Nalpathimala, in addition to the collaboration of a number of Government organizations and NGOs who collaborate on specific events, there is one NGO – namely the Oblate Women’s Development Resource Centre (OWDRC) – which has identified itself with NSS as well as the community. A team of OWDRC members now stay in the village. This indicates the extent to which they are committed to this cause.

2.8.6.6 The Making of a Social Movement

A social movement may be said to be taking place when a large member of people participate enthusiastically in reform-oriented activities. What happened in Kottayam is indeed a movement. It was a literacy
movement. One limitation of this movement, however, was that it did not consolidate into relevant people’s organizations (institutions) to plan and implement future-oriented programmer particularly in the area of post-literacy.

In Nalpathimala, initially i.e. at the time of the National Integration Camp of 1991, there was a fervour which engulfed the whole village. Gradually this fervour seems to have yielded place to institutionalized behaviour and programme development as described in the experiment.

The lesson from the experiences is that a movement can be generated by campus-community interaction and that it can in course of time be made to consolidate into people’s organizations.

2.8.6.7 Vision and Mission Animating the Process

In three of the four cases (HMT colony, Kottayam and Nalpathimala) NSS was the driving force. Naturally the philosophy of NSS has helped to animate the processes in the communities. The major aspects of this philosophy are given below.

(a) Educational institutions are run on public money which is made up of the tax-payers’ contribution; as such they have an obligation to share the benefits of education with the masses.

(b) The educational process that goes on in the classroom is incomplete in the absence of interaction with the social realities in the country; that is, personality development of students requires community exposure, attainment of social skills and attitudes.

(c) We as a nation have always upheld the philosophy of altruism; ‘Not-me-but thou’. NSS gives an opportunity to practice this at a level which transcends the boundaries of caste and creed.
(d) In Pauta the philosophy is not different. It tried to establish: the equality and inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of race, religion, culture or any ascribed status, and it sprang form the realization that society as it is presently structured does not help each individual to develop to his full potential.

2.8.6.8 NSS and Structural Change in Society

NSS should educate people so as to empower them, and lead them to sustainable development, which is not possible within unjust social structures. But it is to be clearly understood that an NSS unit is not a band of social activists. What NSS should aim at is to conscientize the people using the Freirean pedagogy and to organize them to liberate themselves. What is expected is not an overnight revolution (such sudden changes often prove to be unsustainable), but a gradual re-orientation of community’s outlook, and capacity building of people’s organizations, which should eventually prove to be liberative. For example, moneylenders disappeared from Pauta; this was demolishing an unjust structure. Vocational training, self-employment and producers co-operative can easily be promoted so as to demolish bonded labour, which is another unjust structure. The grama sabha under the Panchayatraj can be used as a forum for more radical changes.

At present NSS does not have a development perspective, though it has a sublime value-content. The perspective will take shape when NSS itself attains a critical consciousness of the culture of silence prevalent in Indian society, and then begins to respond to it on the basis of the values of the organization. Programme Officers and volunteers of NSS are members of the academic community, and they, more than any other segment in our society, have access to the tools needed for social analysis. Unfortunately
the educational system, as it is presently structured, does not favour critical reflection. Hence the present education does not liberate. NSS is intended to be a corrective to this intellectual inertia and lethargy.

NSS has to be aware of the fact that development is politics, in the sense that it deals with power distribution. Structural change is nothing but re-distribution of power or removal of unjust social structures. Unequal educational opportunities, discrimination on the basis of caste, gender and religion, bonded labour, exploitation by moneylenders, manipulation of democracy – these are all situations, which call for intervention. Now the question is who should do it? Any educated, socially committed person should feel called to do it. But, for viability-reasons it is best undertaken by social organizations, not educational organizations like NSS. NSS therefore should prepare the people (i.e. conscientize them), and help them build their own organizations and strengthen their capacity. And leave them to liberate themselves.

2.8.6.9 Built-in Strengths of NSS which Makes it a Suitable Agency for Communitizing Education

The experiences reveal that educational institutions and NSS have great potential to be agencies for communitizing education. On the one hand they can bring about attitudinal and organizational changes in the campus and on the other hand they can influence the pattern of social change in the community. Following are some of the aspects of this potential.

(a) NSS has the educated, idealistic, vibrant youth of the country in its fold.

(b) It is Government sponsored, and therefore has every access to a large number of Government Organizations.
(c) It is campus-based, therefore it can mobilize campus-resources—teachers, large number of students, infra-structural facilities—in favour of the community.

(d) NSS has funds at its disposal for organizing camps and other programmes; further it is in a position to mobilize further resources if needed.

(e) NGOs working in the field often run the risk of falling into sectarian interest-traps. Even if this does not happen, people have a tendency to attribute sectarian/selfish/political motives for the service activities initiated by them.

NSS goes to the community with the professed aim of sensitizing the students and making them socially committed future citizens of India. It is also made known to the people that in this process, if they co-operate, they can get themselves organized for development and social change.

2.8.6.10 Major Hurdles and Challenges

Major challenges were, and are, from within. In the case of NSS taking the lead for communitizing education, challenges are faced from the institution (University/College), which does not fully appreciate the mission. In spite of the fact that UGC gives extension a place on par with teaching and research, even today Vice Chancellors and Principals tend to see extension department and extension-oriented activities like NSS as extra-curricular activities. This is reflected in a number of ways in the campus. There are teachers who discourage students from joining NSS, as well as parents who discard their wards from extra-curricular activities like NSS.

A second source of challenges is from within NSS itself. Even today NSS is interpreted as a student-organization for sram-dan based personality
Village adoption is the most neglected aspect of NSS. Parachuting into a village in order to conduct a special camping programme of ten-days duration may be a good experience in itself, but such a limited community-interaction cannot be expected to realize even one-tenth of the social and educational possibilities of NSS.

Yet another major hurdle/challenge comes from the vested interest groups in the communities. In Nalpathimala, for example, NSS is clearly on the side of the dalits in an effort to help them regain their lost self-image. Out of the three Vice Chairmen of the Gram Vikas Swasraya Sangham (GVSS), one is to be nominated from among the conveners of the Neighbourhood Groups. This opportunity is conventionally given to the dalit community. Also the Grama Vikas Youth Club, Nalpathimala Unit, is dominated by dalits. These are not appreciated by some of the ‘traditional’ families according to whom NSS is ‘spoiling’ the dalits by giving them ‘undue importance’.

Yet another factor, which surfaced in Kottayam, is political. Politicians feel threatened when NSS, or for that matter any organization, gains popularity. They feel threatened when people are educated and grama sabhas become forums for critical and creative response to existing socio-economic conditions. Outwardly they cannot oppose NSS because it is popular and has an educational background, but inwardly they are often not fully reconciled to it. This surfaces in a number of ways from time to time.

2.8.6.11 Theory of Education Adopted in the Process

The fact is that often there is no clear theory of education used in the community organization processes. It often centres round the dissemination of knowledge, which would help them in areas such as health, hygiene, children’s education, co-operative action, skill development, recreation etc.
In the best of cases the adult education principles are adhered to. In such instances the ‘teaching’ approach is replaced by discussion; the classroom structure is replaced by people sitting round for discussion in an atmosphere of equality; the person who leads the discussion becomes a facilitator, not a teacher.

In the adult education processes initiated in all cases under discussion, the capacity-building dimension has been invariably stressed. The development of goal-setting and decision-making capacities in the genuine spirit of ‘participation, empowerment and sustainable development’ has been stressed, leading to effective social organization. Obviously this is not enough. In a society which is ridden with structural injustice and which is characterized by the ‘culture of silence’, there is great relevance for an educational strategy, which raises the critical consciousness of the people. Problem posing type of education and PRA are among the best strategies available today. The need for adopting a training methodology, which is conducive to personal change, is discussed later in this study. Theme-Centred Interaction, which is proposed as a suitable model, has great potentials not only in the training of Programme Officers and volunteer secretaries; it has great potential in the training of leaders of the community also.

2.8.6.12 Visible Results from the Interventions

One obvious result of these interventions is the fact that it has brought tens of thousands of somewhat passive people to a point of involvement in society. They developed confidence in themselves; they became masters of their own destiny.

In Pauta the community organization process succeeded so much that the people could take over the management of the school from the team.
Under the revised system the children found time not only for formal education, but also for learning crafts (as emphasized in Gandhian basic education), and for engaging themselves in income-generating activities such as agriculture, along with their parents. The community, over a period of five years, grew up to be able to shoulder the responsibilities of running the Pauta Community Development Project (PCDP) which employed 40 persons at the height of its activity.

In Nalpathimala the group of 86 local leaders (consisting of committee members of NGs and SHGs) listed the following aspects as achievements of the collaboration between NSS and the village:
(1) gained a new image for the village, (2) realized co-operation and harmony (3) gained opportunities for training and self-employment (4) realized conscientization and knowledge for life, (5) gained improved facilities for life, and (6) realized women’s development. (The details of the achievements under these titles are given in the previous chapter).

In Kottayam where the effort was more task-oriented than process-oriented, the major successes were in the attainment of 100% literacy and the promotion of voluntarism. The town is now in a position to respond to any campaign, which aims at improvement of quality of life. Already a campaign for ‘healthy city’ (sponsored by WHO) is underway.

2.8.7 Conclusion

Summing up, it can be observed that there are a number of similarities in the experiences shared in Section II, cutting across diversities in cultural and geographic boundaries. It is also possible to generalize and say that the community’s response to interventions of educational institutions was warm and healthy. It was a partnership in development that took place; it was a learning experience for the campus as well as the community. Major
hurdles in the process are within the institution and within NSS. It is up to the authorities concerned to make necessary changes. Some recommendations are made in this regard in the next section.
Notes and References

1 Self Help Groups (SHGs) are becoming a highly popular move among women all over India. It is hardly a decade since this trend started. NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) has done commendable work for organizing women into SHGs. However it may be noted that SHGs are a world wide phenomena. In several of the African countries these have been in existence for several decades.

Self Help Groups can be defined as organizations whose members have joined together motivated by common interests in order to pursue their higher goals on a long term basis by bettering their economic or social situation. These organizations may be seen as a revival of the “mutual benefit” groups that have existed in several of the third world communities, including those that suffer acute poverty. Even today the informal financial institutions known as ‘chit funds’ are seen smoothly operating in many of the Kerala villages.

Self-help promotion as a development approach tries to build up on the existing self-help potential of individuals and families. As pointed out in Chapter One, poverty very often is not a condition of ‘not having’ or ‘not being able to’. We tend to forget what the poor ‘possess’ and are ‘capable of doing’. They have saving potential, as demonstrated by the work of NGOs all over the country. This can be used for capital formation and/or micro-credit cooperatives. They know their social environment. They are capable of analyzing their development constraints. Most of them are able-bodied and capable of hard labour. Most of them have a piece of land. They have some technical skill. Moreover they have their cultural wealth as is easily visible with the scheduled caste and tribes. Without all this they would not have been able to survive the way they have done.
What the poor want to have is sufficient opportunities to widen and diversify their resource base. Through self-help groups they may be able to acquire access to some additional non-material resources (knowledge, skills) as well as some material ones (credit, raw material, land, water, etc.)

The role of NSS vis-à-vis SHGs is obvious. It is essentially a facilitator-role in which the volunteers help the self-help groups to rediscover their self-help potential. It is also a role in which they help the members of the self-help groups to see for themselves the synergistic possibilities of group action. Volunteers can strengthen the human resources in the group in a number of ways. In fact the essence of the commmunitizing role of education lies here. This will lead to the mobilization of other resources, often material resources, from a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources.

In political terms self-help promotion can be seen as a deliberate effort to democratize the economic sector. The organizations, which emerge in the process, ideally are ‘of the people, by the people, for the people’. But as in all democratic institutions - micro as well as macro – eternal vigilance is the price to be paid. This vigilance is an educational factor which can be strengthen through the academic (nonpolitical) intervention of students and teachers. Their presence as ‘observers’ in the election processes in the SHGs can strengthen the ‘internal democracy’ of these groups. SHGs have to safeguard themselves from factionalism, internal rivalries, domination by self-centred leadership, lack of solidarity among members, shortsighted or inefficient management etc. the spirit of self-help would want the SHGs themselves to do this safeguarding. But here also the collaborating educational institution can be of great help.