Chapter Ten

A MODEL FOR COMMUNITIZING EDUCATION

Abstract

In continuation of Chapter IX this chapter proposes a model for the process of communitizing education through NSS. In this model two basic deviations from the existing style of functioning of NSS are implied. These relate to (1) networking, which has to be made an essential (not optional) part of the functioning of NSS, and (2) community placement (CP) which is to be included as a foundation course in all degree programmes.

Networking is defined and the possible benefits from networking are established. The proposed essential networking is with a suitable voluntary organization and the benefits of such an alliance are also established. The concept of catalytic intervention leading to synergistic effect is established and the pattern of interaction is indicated in Figure – 6.

The objectives of CP, expected outcome from CP, suggested course content for CP and a modus operandi for implementing CP are given in the later half of this chapter. The example of Avinashilingam Deemed University, where every student is an NSS volunteer, is highlighted. For the policy-formulation and co-ordination of CP and a number of bodies from National CP co-ordination council at Delhi to the department-level co-ordination team in college have to be formed.

The concluding paragraph points out that in a study of this nature only the concepts and broad strategies could be indicated. The specifics have to be worked out at appropriate levels without doing violence to the norms and general pattern.
3.10.1 Introduction

Having suggested that time is ripe for an OD exercise in NSS, and having suggested a set of five consultations at zonal level followed by a national consultation to formulate the exact direction in which the OD interventions should take place, three recommendations have been put forward for consideration by the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of India. These recommendations could be used by the consultant-facilitator as a kind of working paper for the consultations.

Now, in continuation of the recommendations, this chapter proposes to develop a model for the process of communitizing education. In this model, two basic deviations are implied from the existing style of functioning of NSS. These relate to (1) the networking, which NSS has to
make mandatory in the interest of ensuring sustainability, participation and empowerment.

The networking, which has been proposed as an essential part of the model, is to be done with an NGO or a voluntary organization in the community. Hence before presenting the model, it is necessary to establish the desirability of having an NGO as a partner in the process.

3.10.2 Networking

If communitizing education is a matter of relationship, then networking becomes one of its core concerns. The rationale for networking can be stated as follows: Individually we are mere threads, together we are a net. Nets are stronger and more protective than threads. Nets have a 'holding capacity', which individual threads cannot have. A net represents synergy while thread represents individual energy.

National Service Scheme has certain built-in advantages for networking by virtue of the fact that it is a Govt-sponsored voluntary organisation. It has links at the level of the Central Government and State Governments. It has a base in the University as well as in colleges. It has a national coverage cutting across all boundaries of region, language and religion. Therefore a very relevant rte-vitalisation strategy for NSS, which could be made use of in an OD intervention, is the strengthening of its networking potential.

In this context it is worthwhile to examine the major benefits of networking relevant to NSS.

(1) Networking with people’s organisations in the City/Village where NSS functions enhance the extent and quality of people’s participation in NSS activities. It will involve the beneficiaries (of
village adoption), and other important groups in the area, in the work of NSS.

(2) It will facilitate mobilization of resources to serve the target group better.

(3) It will help NSS to ensure that programmes and activities are need-based.

(4) It will promote the formation of a fraternity of like-minded agencies/individuals in the locality. They will understand the difficulties and problems, and the constraints within which NSS is operating.

(5) It will help NSS to establish an image and profile of its own consistent with its objectives, philosophy and work. It may be noted that the image or credibility of NSS or any agency depends not only on the quality of work done by it, but also on the dissemination of proper and correct information to a range of relevant agencies, groups and individuals.

(6) Fitting the work of NSS into the overall development framework is another benefit from networking. NGOs often work at micro level. Sensitising people, conscientizing them, organizing them, doing advocacy work for them and empowering them are all roles which NGOs perform. NSS can collaborate in all these, and thereby contribute to national development. NSS can do justice to such roles only if it does suitable networking at appropriate levels.

(7) Sharing of resources is another benefit. In these days of increasing specialization, it is impossible for any agency to be specialists in a variety of fields at the same time. The best way to overcome this limitation is through networking.
3.10.2.1 The Message of Nalpathimala Experiment

The Nalpathimala Experiment, which has been analysed in detail, has a unique feature. It is the feature of having an NGO as a regular collaborator in the process. In the absence of such an agency it would have been almost impossible for the university to go on with this experiment for such a long time.

3.10.2.2 NGOs cannot be Ignored

NGOs (Voluntary Organizations) are increasingly invited to various international conferences on development-related issues, and their views are heard with respect. The need to find out ways to foster meaningful, productive and mutually understanding relationships between governments and NGOs is emphasized in all these conferences. As Bhagban Prakash points out, “NGOs are recognized as important actors for a civil society, as potent and parallel forces for social and economic development and partners in nation building”.

A number of factors have generated world interest in the NGOs. In justification of NSS seeking collaboration with NGOs these factors may be listed here.

- Many of them work among the poor, the disadvantaged and marginalized;
- They are more energetic, responsive, creative, flexible and they operate with speed;
- They are closer to the people, involve and mobilize them for development, the best catalytic agent for change;
- They are low on infrastructure and high on output;
They are non-profit, non-political, value-oriented organizations;
Their work is constantly under public scrutiny;
They are optimists and their work approach is professional and humane;
Their priority is participation and power to the people.

Some of the inherent strengths of NGOs are indicated in Figure - 6

**Figure – 6: Strengths of NGOs**
3.10.2.3 Networking: Possible Synergy Output.

Both NSS and NGOs have their own strengths and limitations. The regular net-working between them can produce a wide range of synergistic effects as demonstrated in some of the cases discussed in section II. Each collaborating agency has its own unique aspects of strength. The strengths of NGOs have been mentioned and illustrated in detail above. Synergy takes place when these various agencies interact among themselves for a common goal.

3.10.3 The Networking Model

This model envisages the following interaction channels involving six agencies. They are:

(1) The Government, Central and State, and their various arms.
(2) The University, the NSS cell, Adult Education Department, etc.
(3) The college and its NSS units
(4) Funding Organizations in the NGO sector.
(5) Voluntary Agencies which function as intermediary organizations.
(6) People's organizations and the community.

The networking pattern is indicated in the following figure.
The benefits from such a system are obvious: cross-fertilization of ideas, supplementary and complementary performance, synergistic effect, avoidance of duplication of facilities, co-ordination for common purposes, more resources, exposure for NSS volunteers to the functioning of NGO’s and vice versa, reaching the unreached, sustainability, continuous presence in the community (to make up for the sporadic nature of student intervention in the community), etc.

(1) Government: Both the Central and State Governments are involved in the process Semi-Governmental bodies as well as local administration bodies (panchayats) are also part of this agency. Government provides guidelines and funds.
(2) University: University is involved as a co-ordinating agency in the implementation of NSS. It is also a resource centre for programme development in NSS. At present NSS funds are channelled through the Universities.

(3) Non Governmental Organizations (NGO): NGOs are specialists in various development sectors, such as poverty alleviation, environment, women's empowerment, health, etc. They have the technical knowhow as well as financial resources. NGOs operate at international level as well as national level. The programme priorities of NSS and the programme priorities of NGOs have a lot of commonality between them.

(4) College: NSS units are located in colleges and other educational institutions. Volunteers are students in these institutions. They are the primary target-group in NSS activities.

(5) Voluntary Organizations (VO): These are local agencies which act as intermediaries between NGOs and People's Organizations. They are also specialists in different development sectors. They have access to NGO funds. They also have personnel to implement programmes. They are keen to network with educational institutions as well as to work at grassroot level.

(6) People's Organizations (PO): These are organizations of the people in their communities. They are not mere beneficiaries or receipients. They are active players in the communitizing of education. POs have to be formed in the communities through the efforts of the NSS Unit/Colleges.

The Interaction Process

The prime mover in the communitizing process is either the University or the College. The role of the University, as indicated above, is that of a resource centre which includes the responsibility to motivate colleges to get down to the communities in their vicinity. The college identifies a community and through the Community Placement Programme
(CPP) or village adoption programme begins to interact with the people, leading to the formation of people's organizations.

In the process the college seeks the collaboration of a voluntary organization which is interested in the same community. The college serves as a link between the community and the VO. All three of them together work out an action plan. As they begin to implement the action plan they may feel the need for linkage with Government Departments and/or Funding Organizations (FO) in the Non-Governmental Sector.

University is a reservoir of resources which the college can make use of as and when required.

3.10.4 Community Placement Programme (CPP)

The second element which is essential to the model of communitizing education though NSS is *Community Placement* (CP). As stated earlier, it is envisaged that community placement be offered as a foundation course or paper to be taken by all students in the degree classes irrespective of their subject of specialization. In the case of arts / science courses of 3 - year duration the CP syllabus is to be spread into all the three years. In the case of professional courses the CP could be administrated during any three years consecutively. In the case of MBBS students this paper could be integrated into the social and Preventive Medicine paper and can also be administered at convenient stages including during internalship.

CP is the action which initiates the networking process and the players involved are the College and the Community.

3.10.4.1 Objectives of Community Placement

The specific objectives of Community Placement are:
1. to provide curricular time for exposure to socio-economic realities in the community in the college’s immediate vicinity;
2. to facilitate a cross-fertilization between academic notions/abstract theories on one side and hard day-to-day realities on the other;
3. to provide opportunities to students to organize people into neighbourhood groups and to facilitate non-formal education and collective development action through them;
4. to ensure that in this process the students pick-up some of the essential skills and tools for working with people on a basis which is clearly above all considerations of caste, creed and party politics.

3.10.4.2 Expected Outcome

The expected outcomes from the community placement course are:
1. Increased awareness about the realities of life, particularly in rural areas;
2. Confidence to interact with the common people, humility to learn from them and skills to work with them;
3. An overall sense of social commitment, which will affect the student’s outlook on life in his/her future career.

3.10.4.3 Suggested Course Content

1st Year: Orientation on community placement
- Orientation on National Service Scheme
- Initial visits to the selected community and informal interaction
- Preparation of project proposal (group work)
- Community organization: initial steps.

2nd Year: Community organization
- Extension education
Facilitating community action, wherever possible.

3rd Year: Strengthening community organization
Extension education (contd)
Evaluation of three-year-placement
Preparation of project report.

3.10.4.4 Suggested Modus-operandi

(a) The community placement is to be integrated into the curriculum in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd years of the degree course.

(b) The syllabus for this purpose is to be developed by giving appropriate field-level application to the main subject of study at the degree level.

(c) As such, the responsibility of implementing the community placement programme will belong to the departments offering the degree courses.

(d) The syllabus for the community placement has to be developed keeping in mind the fact that this is not a 'service programme' but an academic activity.

(e) When new batches of students join in subsequent years they are to be inducted into the same process either in altogether new communities or into old communities with minor changes in the agenda or going into finer areas of organization of an old community.

(f) It is desirable to have scope for group work as well as individual work by students in the community placement. Groups of five would be ideal.

(g) The group works together all through the process, and submits two assignments — initially the proposal and finally the report. Out of 100 (total) marks, these could be evaluated out of 30 each. In every month of
placement the student submits his personal learning experience in report form. This could be evaluated treating 40 as the total marks.

(h) The college may start the placement in the panchayat where it is situated and in the case of city colleges in a nearby panchayat. It is important that the concerned panchayat members are informed of this programme.

(i) City colleges may be given the option to work in nearby slums, or hold the whole programme in a condensed manner in the form of a 15-day camping programme, every year in a village in the suburbs. Other options such as holding minicamps of suitable duration to make up a total of 15-days a year could also be considered.

(j) It is desirable that colleges be helped purchase one or two buses to provide transport facilities to the students who go for community placement.

(k) At the university level there should be a 'servicing cell' to facilitate the implementation of CP. This cell which may include the faculty members of the Dept. of Adult Education/Extension and NSS Programme Co-ordinator should provide the following services: training and orientation in collaboration with the TOC of NSS, monitoring, quality assurance and co-ordination.

(l) Since all teachers will be sharing the tasks related to implementation of CP, the present system of having one programme officer for every 100 volunteers will have to be discontinued. Instead one teacher (preferably a senior teacher with experience as NSS programme officer) may be given full-time charge as CP co-ordinator at college level. Depending on availability of funds the Department of Youth Affairs may consider appointing one teacher from each department as Programme Officer.

(m) Co-ordination at the inter-department level in the college is very crucial for the successful implementation of the community placement
programme. With Principal as chairman and Heads of Departments as members there should be a Community Placement Co-ordination Committee to plan and implement the programme.

(n) The finer details of community placement will have to be developed at workshops to be organized regionally involving all principals, and centrally at the university-level involving regional representatives of Principals and Head of Departments. The Syndicate Members, Heads of University Departments and University officers should also attend the Central Workshop.

3.10.4.5 Organizational Structure  (Figure – 8)
3.10.4.6 Policy-making and Co-ordination

While introducing CP into the curriculum there has to be room for flexibility/creativity/innovation at various levels such as state-level, university-level and college-level. This is because of the diversity that makes these institutions in terms of proximity to community, development needs of the people, nature of subjects taught, semester system or annual system, professional course or non-professional course etc. CP should be implemented doing justice to its core-concerns and course-content, but exercising maximum freedom regarding the peripherals such as which part of the year, how many in a group, what kind of activities, collaboration with which NGO etc. (Care has to be taken, however to ensure that party politics, religious differences, caste differences etc. do not figure in the choice of NGOs and the community). As far as possible the community should be within walkable distance from the college. In the case of city-colleges this would be difficult. In such cases they should set apart a whole day on fortnightly basis or so, and the students could be asked to report at their place of placement directly without coming to the college. Such logistics have to be worked out at the local level.

3.10.5 Conclusions

To conclude this chapter the following aspects may be re-stated.

(a) Communitizing education can be realized through NSS by adopting a model in which functional networking is established involving the community, voluntary organization, college, NGO, Govt. and
University. The model also includes making community placement a part of the curriculum.

(b) All the students and all the teachers in all the graduate programmes in all the universities are to be involved in the process of communitizing education.

(c) Since all teachers will be sharing the tasks related to implementation of CP, the present system of having one programme officer for every 100 volunteers will have to be discontinued. Instead one teacher (preferably a senior teacher with experience as NSS programme officer) may be given full-time charge as CP co-ordinator at college level.

Communitizing education through National Service Scheme is a massive nationwide endeavour in which there are several stake-holders. The most encouraging aspect of the endeavour is that all these stakeholders are eagerly awaiting to get a role clarified for them. Government is always waiting for good proposals and good implementing agencies. The idealism of the NSS volunteers is crying for inspiring leadership and enthusiastic collaborators. Voluntary organizations know very well that if they have a good idea and a team of workers to translate it into reality, there is no scarcity for funds. And as far as funding organizations in the private sector (NGOs) are concerned, they want to get funds off their hands. Unless they give away funds they cannot survive as an NGO which gets government support too for their bi-lateral assistance schemes.

What is missing is a catalyst. NSS can very effectively fill the role of the catalyst. The thrust of this study has been to establish the fact that NSS can do it, provided it re-discovers for itself its original vision and fervour. This calls for an earnest exercise in organization development (OD).