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Reinvigorating Youth Organisations Like NCC and NSS with Ex-Servicemen



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National Cadet Corps is not about uniform or uniformity, it is about unity.

– Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at
NCC Day Parade on January 28, 2018

Youth Organisations and Framework

As per the National Census 2011, approximately 30% of the youth, i.e., 31.5 crore are in the age bracket of 10 to 24 years.¹ There are scores of youth organisations and NGOs in the country which are working towards national integration and social awareness campaigns. However, the potential of the youth has not been channelled optimally to drive the government programmes and awareness campaigns for the benefit of society. A closer examination of the functioning of the major youth organisations under the government is essential to improve the efficacy of these organisations. Also, there is a need to look at the role Ex-Servicemen (ESM) can play to energise these organisations with their work ethos.

There are four important youth organisations in India of which three work under the aegis of

Key Points

1. Out of 31.5 crore youths in the age bracket of 10 to 24 years, only 1.83 crore youths are enrolled with NCC and NSS.
2. National Youth Policy 2014 has been promulgated with the aim of focused development and empowerment of youth aged between 15 and 29 years.
3. Based on Prime Minister's assertion during NCC Day 2018, government has set up a committee to suggest measures to strengthen NCC and NSS.
4. Nearly 60,000 ESM retiring in an age bracket of 35 to 45 years constitute a valuable, disciplined, dedicated and talented pool available for nation building.
5. The youth organisations like NCC and NSS can be made effective by harnessing ESM capabilities.

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an independent think-tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflict and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

Reinvigorating Youth Organisations ...

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) and one under Ministry of Defence (MoD). MYAS looks after the functioning of the following organisations:

- Nehru Yuva Vikas Kendra (NYVK) launched in 1972 has almost 85 lakh youths enrolled through 3.01 lakh Youth Clubs/Mahila Mandals.² The age profile of volunteers is 18 to 29 years.
- The National Service Scheme (NSS) was introduced in 1969 with “Education through Service,” as its purpose. It has about 36.58 lakh volunteers enrolled in 39,695 NSS units, which are spread over 391 Universities/plus 2 Councils, 16,278 Colleges/Technical Institutions and 12,483 Senior Secondary Schools.³
- Bharat Scout and Guides (BSG) formed in 1950, has 36.83 lakh volunteers in Scouts Wing and 20.48 lakh in Guides Wing as per annual census of 2016-17. It thus has a total strength of 57.31 lakh volunteers in the age group 17 to 25 years.

MoD looks after the functioning of National Cadet Corps (NCC) which was established in 1948. With a strength of 13.78⁴ lakh cadets, enrolled in 11,022 schools and 5,575 colleges across India. It is the world’s largest uniformed organisation and has its presence in 703 out of 716 districts of India.⁵ Students in the age group of 12 to 26 years can join NCC.

On July 21, 2018, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) started the new Youth Programme called Student Police Cadet (SPC). The programme aims to build a bridge between Police and larger community through school students by inculcating values and ethics in them by holding concerned classes in school and outside. This programme was launched nationwide by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh in the presence of Union Human Resources Minister Prakash Javadekar with a budgetary provision of Rs 67 crore initially. The programme focuses on students of classes 8 & 9,⁶ i.e., for children in the age group of 12 to 16 years.

National Youth Policy and Challenges

In January 2014, Government of India (GoI) instituted National Youth Policy (NYP) 2014, with its aim being focused development and empowerment of youths aged between 15 and 29 years. For achieving this aim, the Policy identified five objectives and 11 priority areas (see Figure 1) and suggested policy interventions in each priority area.

Figure 1⁷

Objectives	Priority Areas
1. Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India’s economic development	1. Education 2. Employment and Skill development 3. Entrepreneurship
2. Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges	4. Health and healthy lifestyle 5. Sports
3. Instil social values and promote community service to build national ownership	6. Promotion of social values 7. Community engagement
4. Facilitate participation and civic engagement at levels of governance	8. Participation in politics and governance 9. Youth engagement
5. Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunity for all disadvantaged and marginalised youth	10. Inclusion 11. Social justice

Almost 1.83 crore youth volunteers are deployed by the government. According to the NYP 2014 document, “GoI invests more than Rs.90,000 crores per annum on youth development programmes or approximately Rs 2,710 per young individual per year.”⁸ Eighty per cent of the targeted expenditure of Rs 37,000 crore is incurred by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE).⁹ Besides this, the

State Governments and numerous other stakeholders are also working to support youth development and to enhance productive youth participation. MYAS with a budget of Rs 621 crore for FY 2017-18¹⁰ and NCC with a budget of Rs 2,200 crore (Rs 1,600 crore central and Rs 600 crore by state governments)¹¹ are entrusted with managing youth affairs. MHA with Rs 67 crore budget has joined the league. The 303 Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development 2018 has been critical about the lack of coordination between various stakeholders and small and fragmented structures of individual organisations in non-Government sectors. It also underscored the issue of increasing the number of youth volunteers and methods to improve their recognition. However, NCC and NSS are plagued with numerous challenges. Some of them are:

- Both NCC and NSS draw their volunteers from the same student base. Now with SPC also coming about, it will further add to the enrolment dilemma for the student.
- NCC and NSS volunteers get no benefits in the academic results and neither is any skill certification for their contribution given. Thus they feel that the social commitment is a waste of time as it does not add to career enhancement. A modest beginning has been made with the “Swachh Bharat Summer Internship 2018,” however, the delay in announcement of the scheme and its implementation has been poor.
- Today both NCC and NSS are understaffed by almost 50-60 percent strength.
- Some state governments see NCC and NSS as a non-productive entity and are reluctant to share the funds and resources for the same.
- The teachers and lecturers appointed by schools and colleges as Programme Coordinator (PC) or Associate NCC Officers (ANO) are not provided with requisite support from the management.

- Most of the schools and colleges supporting NCC and NSS are government affiliated. Hence, a large number of youth from private colleges and schools are not part of the government initiative.
- The apathy of the district and village level functionaries to get integrated with various schemes is the major impediment in achieving the desired result.
- Absence of correct mapping of requirements at the district, lack of quantification model and ICT tools prevents programme efficacy.
- Most of the trainers are themselves not aware of the schemes and its benefits. Hence, training of trainers is a very essential aspect for the success of the programme.
- While the Youth programmes are run by MYAS and MoD, the programme implementers like PC and ANO are on the payroll of MHRD, and hence their loyalties are divided.
- In 2013, UGC had asked all the universities to expand the activities of NSS to the postgraduate level and asked them “to recognize NSS as a co-curricular activity under the credit based semester scheme for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and consider giving grace marks for admission to graduate and postgraduate levels.”¹² However, it still remains on paper.

Government Initiative to Strengthen Youth Organisations like NSS and NCC

Sensing the problem of lack of synergy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who himself is an alumni of NCC, during the PM Rally in Delhi, on January 28, 2018, urged all stakeholders to review the role of the NCC so that the NCC experience becomes even more effective in the years to come.¹³ Consequent to this, a meeting was held in PMO to revamp the NCC and NSS. Government has set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup, former Secretary, School Education, with suitable representations from NCC, MYAS and MHRD

to suggest measures to strengthen NCC and NSS.¹⁴ The Committee will deal with issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalising resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS. The Committee will also recommend building synergies between these two institutions, namely, NCC and NSS, and further strengthen them for empowering the youth.¹⁵

NCC with 814 Units has its presence in 703 out of 716 districts of India.¹⁶ GoI has approved a five-phased expansion of NCC taking its strength to 15 lakh cadets which entails adding 40,000 cadets per year primarily from left-wing extremism affected areas and coastal areas. Raising of five Group Headquarters and 61 NCC units has been approved.¹⁷ NYKS has presence in 623 Districts through Nehru Yuva Kendras¹⁸ and NSS with 39,695 NSS units spread over 391 Universities/plus2 Councils has pan-India presence. GoI has rightly identified the need to strengthen these organisations so that they can look after the stated objective and priority area (refer Figure 1). MYAS has merged NYVK and other seven other schemes into a new “umbrella” Scheme called “Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK).” However, in FY 2018-19, the finance ministry still allocates budget to individual schemes.

With a modest central budget of Rs 1,600 crore for NCC and Rs 621 crore for Youth Affairs, it is essential to strengthen the existing organisation by bringing other stakeholders on board. The role of these organisations needs to be relooked and aligned with the national objectives as given by NYP 2014 (Figure 1). To harmonise the functioning of various entities, the following is recommended:

- MYAS and all youth organisations are placed under MHRD.
- NCC and NSS should be incentivised to attract students from all schools and colleges. Appropriate marks or awards should be instituted for the amount of community service/awareness undertaken by the students.

- Existing NCC and NSS organisations be beefed up with manpower presently deficient.
- Each school/college must have short camps of 2-3 days per class per year from Class 8 onwards to undergraduation along with a certification programme.
- Vocational classes should be introduced at select schools in each district based on skill set requirements.
- All Youth organisations have no financial resources to implement any programme in the adopted villages or slum on its own. Therefore, the government agencies and voluntary organisations working in this field should be affiliated.
- Private schools and colleges should be encouraged to join NCC or NSS as part of social responsibility.
- Necessary ICT backbone needs to be provided to NCC and NSS and the data should be linked with National Informatics Centre so that the work can be effectively tagged and monitored.
- Affiliation of District Welfare Officer and other programme directors with NCC and NSS units will help in creating mutual ownership and understanding.
- Harness ex-servicemen expertise as programme coordinator in NSS similar to what is being proposed in the NCC.

Harnessing ESM Skills to Energise Youth Organisation

To improve the efficacy of NCC and to attract more students to join the organisation without worrying much about their academics, a proposal to have NCC as an elective subject was mooted in 2012. CBSE notified it in April 2013, for all schools and UGC in November 2016 for all universities. However, according to Lt Gen Vinod Vashisht, former DG NCC, only 49 colleges introduced this subject out of more than 400 autonomous colleges and 700 universities. Thus, NCC as a subject has failed to find favour with the state

government and students due to lack of qualified staff. NSS also suffers from similar problems of dedicated staff and multitasking by the faculty members in colleges and schools.



The problem of staffing and skill can be overcome by employing ESM as nearly 60,000 ex-servicemen retire every year in the age bracket of 35 to 45 years. These personnel constitute a valuable, disciplined, well-trained, dedicated and talented pool available for nation building.¹⁹ Even Shekatkar Committee report of 2017 has recommended restructuring of NCC to improve its efficacy by drawing ESM and relieving regular officers for the core activities. MoD has initiated Assured Placement Training scheme since 2015-16 to ensure skill development and guaranteed employment to ESM.

Institutions such as Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) and the training academies of NCC at Kamptee and Gwalior can run courses structured to impart necessary skill sets to ESM. After successful completion of these courses the ESM could be enrolled as Whole Time Officers/Staff, as was done with Emergency Commission Officers, and can be assigned to NCC or NSS on secondment or deputation.

Language skill set is another critical requirement as these ESM will have to deal with students and state functionaries in local languages. ESM after the

gruelling service conditions wants to be posted closer to home. The service ethos will help him in contributing to community development being son of the soil. The centre and state governments can harness their skills to improve the penetration of awareness campaign.

ESM can be co-opted in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects dealing with youth and skill development. It will be a win-win situation for the MSMEs and the industries operating in defence sector. The ESM having hands-on experience can play a pivotal role in "Skill India" initiative.

Large numbers of ESM participate in sports events across multiple disciplines. Some of them are trained as coaches also. With the government keen in pushing "Khelo India" at the school and college level, harnessing their talents will add to the coaching at the grass-roots level, which is lacking in the current context.

Reskilling and Re-employing

Synergies at all levels are required for judicious employment of ESM. Directorate General of Resettlement in consultation with MHRD, MYAS, State Governments and Corporates can work out the pool of ESM required annually. These ESM can be reskilled and then can be employed with NSS and NCC based on the programme requirements. A synergised methodology of harnessing youth talent will go a long way in achieving the governance at the grass roots and reinvigorating the youth organisations across the nation. The programmes run by Directorate of Re-employment can lead the reskilling and re-employment of ESM.

Conclusion

ESM with their pan-India presence, work experience and ethics can be gainfully employed to create effective ecosystems to guide the youth development initiatives of the government. The strengthening of NSS and NCC with required budgetary and organisational support will go a long way in connecting youth with the national schemes. A meaningful participation will drive the transformation which the country seeks.

... Like NCC and NSS with Ex-Servicemen

Notes

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