

Social Audit of NSS Activity

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Introduction

The concept of social audit was originated in the European and American countries in the middle of the 20th century as a process of monitoring, appraising and measuring the social performance of the business organizations. The term 'social' was anticipated by Howard R Bowen in 1953 in his article, 'Social Responsibilities of a Business Man '. Charles Medawar pioneered the concept of Social Audit in 1972 with the application of the idea in medicine policy, drug safety issues and on matters of corporate, governmental and professional accountability.

Benefits of Social Auditing for Government Departments

The following are the benefits of Social Audit:

- Ñ **Enhances Reputation:** The information generated from a Social Audit can provide crucial knowledge about the departments'/institutions' ethical performance and how stakeholders perceive the services offered by the government. The social angle in the delivery of services, real or perceived, can be a major factor adding to the reputation of the department and its functionaries.
- Ñ **Alerts Policymakers to Stakeholder Trends:** Social Auditing is a tool that helps managers understand and anticipate stakeholder concerns. This tool provides essential information about the interests, perspectives and expectations of stakeholders facilitating the interdependency that exists between the government and the community.

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- Ñ **Affects Positive Organizational Change:** Social Auditing identifies specific organizational improvement goals and highlights progress on their implementation and completeness. Also, by integrating Social Audit into existing management systems, employees responsible for day-to-day decision making can more effectively consider stakeholders' issues and concerns.
- Ñ **Increases Accountability:** Due to the strong emphasis on openness and accountability for government departments, the information disclosed needs to be fair and accurate. Social Auditing uses external verification to validate that the Social Audit is inclusive and complete. An externally verified audit can add credibility to the department's efforts. But the greatest demonstration of a Social Audit's authenticity must be seen in how the performance of the department improves over time in relation to its mission, values and objectives.
- Ñ **Assists in re-Orienting and re-Focusing Priorities:** Social Auditing could be a useful tool to help departments reshape their priorities in tune with people's expectations.
- Ñ **Provides Increased Confidence in Social Areas:** Social Audit can enable departments/ institutions to act with greater confidence in social areas that have been neglected in the past or have been given a lower priority.

History and Growth of NSS

- **The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948)**

The early years of the post independence era in our country was marked by an urge for reinforcing the social content of education, both as a measure of educational reform and as a means to improve the quality of educated man-power. The University Education Commission headed by Dr. S.Radhakrishnan recommended introduction of national service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand, and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other hand.

- **Kothari's Recommendations (1966)**

The Education Commission headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66) recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of social service. This was taken into account by the State Education Ministers during their conference in April 1967 and they recommended that at the university level students could be permitted to join the National Cadet Corps (NCC) which was already in existence on a voluntary basis, and as an alternative to this could be offered a new programme called the National Service scheme (NSS). Promising sportsmen, however, should be exempted from both and allowed to join another scheme called the National Sports Organization (NSO), in view of the need to give priority to the development of sports and athletics.

- **National Service Scheme Launched (1969)**

The details were soon worked out and the Planning Commission sanctioned an outlay of Rs.5 crores for National Service Scheme (NSS) during the Fourth Five Year Plan. It was stipulated that the NSS programme should be started as a pilot project in selected institutions and universities. On September 24, 1969, the then Union Education Minister Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, launched the NSS programme in 37 universities covering all States and simultaneously requested the Chief Ministers of States for their cooperation and help. It was appropriate that the programme was started during the Gandhi Centenary Year as it was Gandhi who inspired the Indian youth to participate in the movement for Indian independence and the social uplift of the downtrodden masses of our nation.

Basic Concepts of NSS

The overall aim of National Service Scheme as envisaged earlier, is to give an extension dimension to the higher education system and orient the student youth to community service while they are studying in educational institutions. The reason for the formulation of this objective is the general realization that the students in the +2 level and above have a tendency to get alienated from the village/slum masses that constitute the majority of the population of the country. The educated youth who are expected to take the reins of administration in future are found to be unaware of the problems of the community and in certain cases are indifferent towards their needs and problems. Therefore it is necessary to arouse the social conscience of the students, and to provide them an opportunity to work with the people in the villages and slums. It is felt that their interaction with the common villagers and slum- dwellers will expose them to the realities of life, and bring about a change in their social perception.

Broad Objectives

The broad objectives of NSS are to:

- understand the community in which the volunteers work;
- understand themselves in relation to their community;
- identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in problem solving processes;
- develop in them a sense of social and civic responsibility;
- utilize their knowledge in finding practical solution to individual and community problems;
- develop competence required for group-living and sharing of responsibilities;
- gain skills in mobilizing community participation;
- acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude;
- Develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters and;
- Practice national integration and social harmony.

Conclusion

A survey of the evolution of educational thought in India clearly indicates its bias towards social commitment. And a review of the planning process which preceded the formulation of National Service Scheme reveals that NSS has been designed to promote the social goals of higher education. Unfortunately, even after 30 years of implementation, NSS has not succeeded in influencing the mainstream of educational activity in the country. NSS is an extra-curricular activity today. Until and unless it becomes a curricular activity, its role in community wise education will remain an unfulfilled promise.

References

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