Study-Service: Past Experience, Present Relevance and Future Urgency for Nepal

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Abstract

Tribhuvan University ran a programme called National Development Service (NDS; 1973-1988). Later NDS was classified under the Study-Service Programmes (SSP). Students enrolled in degree programmes (after completion of 4 years of college) were required to spend one academic year (10 Months) in rural areas working with villagers on socio-economic developments. This field assignment was sandwiched between two academic years of degree programme. Initially their task was to fill in the shortage of school teachers in remote rural areas. Although the programme had good impacts, it was stopped abruptly for political reasons. I was associated with NDS from scratch in creating a working design for a series of pilot projects with help of two consultants from New Zealand. The full scale programme ran from 1973 to 1979. Thereafter it was run in different forms until 1988. In 2000, the National Planning Commission implemented the National Development Volunteer Service during the celebrations of the International Volunteer year. Since then political instability, economic disparity, environmental problems, and alarming natural and manmade calamities have taken their toll on Nepal.

Amidst the different turmoil, there are many who think revamping NDS will solve many of the present problems in rural Nepal. I had written notes about my experiences of NDS programme in those days. Now, I am preparing to publish the notes and to call upon all stakeholders to rethink about initiating SSP, which can solve many of the current problems in Nepal. This presentation is divided into five themes: (1) introduction to the country; (2) past experience of NDS; (3) its achievement and impact; (4) situation between 1979 and 1999; (5) current issues and problems and future urgency. It contains a simple working model along with an outline of a plan to initiate similar programmes, either in Nepal or elsewhere. It concludes with general remarks and recapitulations.