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## UNDERSTANDING YOUTH WORK IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO YOUTH IN INDIA



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### INTRODUCTION:

Youth form an important segment of any society. The future of any society depends on how well their energy is harnessed. Today, young people are growing up in a micro-chip age characterised by economic uncertainty, steeply rising unemployment and major technological changes arising from factors which were unknown until globalization took hold of the world. These rapid changes affect the personal and social development of young people. In this context, a greater grasp of the different aspects of youth work is of paramount importance for a youth worker in order to meet the needs and expectations of young people. A prosperous, happy and safe world is possible when young minds are

empowered with an indomitable spirit and the youth worker plays a vitally important role in this process.

Youth work is an empowering process and working with young people though challenging yet satisfying. Working with and for the youth is all about providing a space where young people genuinely have the power to make decisions, follow them through and take responsibility for their consequences. The aim of the youth work is for the personal and social development of young people.

Youth work is not to be equated with any arm-chair work done in offices; rather, it is a special vocation where the youth worker wins the youth over to him/her not only through his/her professional skills. The role of the youth worker should be one of empowering and facilitating in their integral growth. This article aims to explore the purpose and nature of youth work, the principles and values of youth work, voluntary participation of young people, the role of the youth worker, the educational dimension of youth work, and the current challenges of youth work practice in India. The aim is to interpret the youth work from the perspective of globalized work starting from the present Indian context.



**KEYWORDS:** *Youth, Indian Youth, Youth Work, Youth Worker, Youth Participation and Youth Empowerment*

## INTRODUCTION

Young people are a great asset and the future of any nation depends on the way they are cared, attended to and formed. When ignited their minds are possibly the earth's greatest resources. No doubt the young people of our times are growing up in a micro-chip age characterised by economic uncertainty, steeply rising unemployment and major technological changes arising from factors typically novel to their times. The changes that they experience affect the personal and social development of young people. More often than not they are ill-equipped to handle the mess around them and end up succumbing to forces both within and without. In other words, our busy world has no time to listen to the anguish of the younger generations.

Our TV volume is so high that  
We can't listen to our young people around.  
Our work load is too heavy that  
We pay no attention to young people around.  
Our busy schedule blind our mind that  
we have ignored the young people around.  
our Facebook posts and tweets cloud our thinking that  
we don't think of young people around.  
we have become workaholics and  
fail to listen to young people.

A recent article titled "The Power of 1.8 Billion," points out that the major share i.e., '89 per cent of the world's 10 to 24-year olds', are in the developing and in the underdeveloped countries. The presence of youth in India is significant containing the world's highest number of 10 to 24-year-olds, with 356 million surpassing the youth population of China. The demographic dividend of youth suggests the potential for growth and what India can offer in terms of human resource to the rest world. What needs to be borne in mind is the fact that the demographic dividend in itself does not suggest anything for growth unless it is utilized and channelized properly. We cannot rule out the possibility of a demographic disaster if we do not seize the opportunity to educate and empower the youth especially, in India.

In this context a greater understanding and knowledge of the different aspects of youth work is of paramount importance for a youth worker in order to meet the needs and expectations of young people. A prosperous, happy and safe world is possible when young minds are empowered with an indomitable spirit and youth work plays a vitally important part in this process. Youth work is a vocation and a profession. It is a vocation because those who are involved need to have a passion and commitment to the work and the well-being of young people. It is a profession because those who work with young people need to have a standard and accountability for their actions. Ord states:

Youth work can be accountable for the quality of its educational input, the quality of the process of the learning environment, the preparations youth workers make in enabling and facilitating discussions, the extent to which they develop participative practice, as well as the creative methods employed in providing vehicles for learning.

Youth work is an empowering process and working with young people today is challenging and satisfying. Youth work seeks to provide a platform for young people to make decisions, follow them through and take responsibility for their consequences, all in a safe and supportive environment.

## 1. The Understanding of Youth Work

The purpose of this section is to give a clear understanding of youth work. This unit consists of five sections and looks at youth work in the international context. The first looks at the nature and purpose of youth work. The second deals with the principles and values of it. The third discusses the voluntary participation of young people. The fourth discusses the role of the youth worker. The fifth describes the educational dimension of youth work under the following headings: informal, non-formal, social, political, development/global and peer education.

### 1.1 The Nature and Purpose of Youth Work

There has been significant development in our understanding of the nature and purpose of youth work since the early philanthropic efforts of the pioneers. A shift from the 'character-building' approach aimed at the social and moral development of young people to the 'personal development' approach of youth work is clearly indicated in the Bruton and O'Sullivan reports. 'Youth work provides opportunities and support to young people, for association, the development of personal autonomy, and the essential values and competencies to participate effectively in a changing society'.

The Costello Report (1984) suggests a further shift in thought regarding the purpose of youth work as it emphasises the importance of empowerment and advocates the social and political education of young people while encouraging them to be critical participants of society. Further, the concept of empowerment, education and participation of young people in youth work is developed by a number of researchers and practitioners. Forde states that youth work is about enabling young people to grow up and this does not happen in isolation. It is complementary to developments that take place through home and family life, education, social institutions and so on. It is not about keeping young people "off the street" and "out of trouble".

The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in the UK (2002) identifies the purpose of youth work as to work with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society in a period of their transition from dependence to independence. Informed by youth work values, the role of the youth worker is, therefore, to work with young people in ways that are educative, participative, empowering and promote equal opportunity and social inclusion'.

In Northern Ireland research on youth worker's perceptions of the nature of youth work states the following broad agreement: "youth work has a different approach to formal education, it is applied differently; 'youth work is not about doing things for a young person, but doing things with a young person'; 'it's not like formal education or carried out for a set period of time'; 'you can't work with young people alone, you've got to work with community'; youth work is not controlling young people" (Harland and Morgan, 2006: 9).

Recent study done by Youth-Link Scotland (2006) to produce a statement on the nature and purpose of youth work defines the purpose of youth work as: "building self-esteem and self-confidence, developing the ability to manage personal and social relationships, creating learning and developing new skills, encouraging positive group atmospheres, building the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control, developing a 'world view' which widens horizons and invites social commitment".

Youth work engages young people in a process of reflection so that they can make sense of themselves and the world. In this rapidly changing high tech world, the nature of youth work could be approached creatively in four areas which distinguish it from other forms of contact with young people:

- The issues to be addressed, (crime, sex, health, drugs, education/employment).
- The methods used (detached work, group work, and peer education).
- Activities undertaken, (outdoor pursuits, arts, sports).
- Roles of the youth worker, (advocate, friend, role model, mentor)

A variety of individuals and group experiential learning methods and activities are used in youth work to achieve its purpose. They include: recreational and sporting activities, indoor and outdoor pursuits, artistic and cultural programmes, spiritual development, health promotion, issue-based activities, intercultural and international programmes and exchanges.

Youth work opportunities add value to the lives of all young people, enabling them to develop lasting skills and attributes. Youth work helps build confidence, provides role models, opens up new avenues for growth and gives young people a sense of belonging. It encourages self-awareness as well as awareness of others and society. All of the above mentioned achievements are gained through educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning.

### 1.2 Principles and Values of Youth Work

The purpose and nature of youth work is underpinned by a set of principles and values at the heart of the work undertaken to distinguish youth work from others, sometimes related activities involving young people. They are like compasses pointing the way to true youth work practice. Jeffs and Smith describe the core values of youth work as: 'respect for persons, the promotion of well-being, trust, democracy, fairness and equality'. Effective youth work stays true to these values and being true to these values leads to the increased empowerment of young people. This profession is value-driven. Devlin (2009) suggests the following key principles which inform youth work practice:

- Young people are at the centre of youth work practice which is fundamentally concerned with their education and their personal and social development.
- It relies on the voluntary participation of young people as full and active partners in youth work.
- Youth work should aim to empower young people and give them a voice, individually and collectively; it should uphold and promote the rights of children and young people as citizens.
- Youth work should aim at openness and inclusiveness and at the active promotion of equality; no individual young person, and no group of young people, should feel excluded or diminished in a youth work context.
- Youth work has a community dimension and a social purpose; it has benefits for adults as well as young people; it strengthens social solidarity and contributes to positive social change.
- Youth work should be experienced as both challenging and enjoyable, both fulfilling and fun, both enriching and uplifting, for young people and for adults.
- In youth work, the role of voluntary organisations, and individual volunteers, is vital.

### 1.3 Voluntary Participation of the Young People

The voluntary principle distinguishes youth work from almost all other services provided for 4-25 age groups. Devlin states that young people participate in youth work voluntarily: they can 'take it or leave it', a situation which is markedly different from their relationship with the formal education system that shows that they have the ultimate choice. Davies concurs arguing that: 'the principle of young people's voluntary participation is a – perhaps the – defining feature of youth work' and it is stated as the first of his manifesto principles: 'Have young people chosen to be involved, is their engagement voluntary?'

Youth worker's ethos and process strongly emphasises a voluntary relationship between the

worker and the young person, which is based on honesty, respect, mutuality and a concern for the well-being of the young person, as well as importantly a degree of power at the disposal of the young person. The young person retains the right to freely enter into relationships with youth workers and to end those relationships when they want. This voluntary principle has implications for the ways in which workers operate and the opportunities open to them. It encourages them to think and work in rather more dialogical ways, develop programmes attractive to young people, and to the place where they are. Further, Ord argues that targeted youth work with young people who are at risk may have the initial barrier of compulsory attendance to overcome, but targeted work may also put youth workers in touch with the young people with whom they would not have had the opportunity to meet. What is required is a balance between targeted and universal provision.

#### 1.4 Role of Youth Workers

First of all, youth workers are educators in the broadest sense of the term and all other roles they may carry out at certain times are secondary. The essential nature of their work is concerned with bringing about change. Devlin suggests that: The youth worker should approach any activity or programme, any situation or eventuality – however structured or unstructured and however expected or spontaneous – asking him/herself what opportunities it presents to further the education and development of the young people, both individual and collective.

Young states that the roles of the youth worker are to befriend, advocate and mentor. The process of working with young people entails the involvement of the whole person in which the personal cannot be entirely separated from the professional. It is not unusual for youth workers describe what they do by comparing themselves with other professionals in order to give meaning to their practice: 'We don't have an agenda for them, like social workers would have or teachers... It's open, it's open and it gives them free space, as well, that they don't get anywhere else'.

Youth workers depending on the needs of the young people, operate in a club setting, detached work and in specialist projects such as health, drugs or crime. They are in a unique and powerful position to engage effectively with young people in creative ways and build relationships where young people are challenged, listened to, valued and encouraged to share their stories and explore new possibilities. Devlin in answering the question 'what youth workers do?' states:

An important part of the response is that how they do things is at least as important as the things that they do. This is often described in terms of 'process' and 'product' (or 'process' and 'task'). It is not helpful (despite what some earlier writing in youth work would seem to suggest) to see these in terms of a polarity (whereby an emphasis on one must inevitably be at the expense of the other). It is better to see them as different dimensions of the youth worker's role, one enriching the other.

The values that youth workers profess or adhere to are also important because they can impact directly on the young people and the issues they are dealing with. Youth workers are the keys who can unlock the potential of young people; they are also the facilitators of change, organising the group with skilful group dynamics. Hurley and Treacy state that 'the role of the youth worker is to assist young people to define their world and to act upon it'.

#### 2 Educational Dimension of Youth Work

Youth Work is primarily an educational endeavour and it complements other types of educational provisions. In fact, it is sometimes called 'out-of-school education', but that description is misleading because it can in some cases take place in school buildings. Historically, youth work did not



develop simply to 'keep people off the streets', or 'to provide amusement'. Ever since its inception many different programmes were initiated for the purpose of learning. This interest in learning, often of the most informal kind, was augmented by a concern for the general welfare of young people (Smith, 2001). In youth work practice education is clearly a central theme and the terminology of social education, non-formal and informal education are at different times and in different places used to identify the distinctiveness of the youth work .

Today young people live in challenging conditions where the regular school system is not in a position to provide the necessary skills they require. Young people may need a form of education that starts 'where they are at', identifies their specific needs and proceeds accordingly . Failure to provide opportunities for young people to increase in capacity can lead to social exclusion . Many youth programmes aim to be flexible, relevant and ensure progression through what is being learned. In many cases, the opportunities and experiences brought about by youth work are complementary to what young people encounter in school .

Youth work is a process of liberating rather than domesticating. It offers young people opportunities to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in the new cultural climate indeed to reflect on the very power of praxis. For instance, Paulo Freire's revolutionary problem-posing educational approach underpins informal education. There is much that is relevant to youth work here, in particular the emphasis on dialogue and an awareness of the power relations between the educator and the educated . Learning is a continuous and life-long process. It is not restricted to schools and universities. There are in fact three different kinds of learning:

- Formal learning, which is given in schools (Knowing).
- Non-Formal learning happens in any organisation outside the formal system (Doing).
- Informal learning takes place in every kind of context (Being) .

## 2.1 Informal Education

Informal education is a process, a way of helping people to learn but it tends to be unpredictable. In a conversation 'Going with the flow' opens up different possibilities for the educators. On the one hand youth workers may not be prepared for what is coming next while on the other hand he/she can get into rewarding areas. Informal education:

- Works through, and is driven by, conversation.
- Involves exploring and enlarging experience.
- Can take place in any setting .

Informal education is neither structured nor curriculum based but takes place in daily life activities, including those within peer, family groups, etc. In a shared engagement with everyday problems, new learning occurs. The learning is of immediate significance to those involved, rather than derived from a pre-established curriculum .

Nowhere is informal education the language of policy . It is driven by conversation and informed by certain values . Ord argues that conversation is not necessarily educational. Importantly, what makes conversation educational is its purpose, its intention, combined with a commitment to facilitate learning . Williamson makes this point very well:

Youth work should be about the capability to engage young people (as individuals or in groups) in serious conversation and discussion on key issues affecting their lives. Sensitised and sensitive reactions to experiences, incidents and comments always provide a learning opportunity. Cursory and fleeting banter is clearly not enough (though it may be a launching cornerstone of positive relationships) .

Voluntary relationships between youth workers and young people are fundamental to the practice of informal education. The fact that people choose to take part in youth work rather than being required to do so has been consistently recognised as essential. This relationship strives for optimum mutuality, cordiality and conviviality and makes the most of spontaneously arising 'daily life activities'.

## 2.2 Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education refers to learning and development that takes place outside of the formal educational field, but which is structured and based on learning objectives. The dynamic of non-formal education lies in the ways in which young people participate in structures and programmes. Non-formal education relies upon the informality of youth work relationship building for its success, especially with those young people who are targeted because of exclusion or disaffection.

In November 2005 European Youth Forum published a policy paper on non-formal education recognition, defining it as: ...an organised process that gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competencies other than the ones developed in the framework of formal education. Those skills - also called 'soft skills'- include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility.

## 2.3 Social Education

Davies and Gibson stated that social education should be concerned with a young person's ability to cope with ideas, thoughts and opinions as well as motives and emotions inherent in inter-relationships. Young people will discover for themselves the values implicit in relationships which form as a result of human contact and they will experience directly the conflicts, strains and effort, as well as the opportunities, which are created by them.

The Costello Report (1984) emphasises the social and political contexts of young people's lives and strongly espouses the notions of 'participation' and 'empowerment'. The same report defines the purpose of youth work:

Youth work must empower young people and enable them to emerge from the enveloping state of dependency... young people must know, feel and believe that they have some control over their situations in the sense of having ability to influence intentionally what happens to them and their community. The ability of young people to assess alternatives and choose the most appropriate one in any given situation, is central to our views of Social Education.

Youth work often responds to young people on the margin, at risk of harm to themselves and others through early school leaving, crime and drugs. Its primary purpose is to offer young people developmental and educational experiences which will equip them to play an active part in our democratic society, as well as meet their own developmental needs through a challenging programme of social education which assists the young person to be an active and critical participant in society. In other words, social education is the process of educating and empowering a young person through a series of social encounters in non-formal settings.

Smith argues that social education is the conscious attempt to help people to gain for themselves, the knowledge, feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others developmental needs. The major reason for wanting to 'socially educate' people and for the definition itself is based on the following two beliefs:

All members of society have the right to a full emotional, social and intellectual development.

Society has an obligation to ensure that people have access to the resources and opportunities that enable such development .

Therefore, Youth work must be involved in the social education of young people, encouraging and enabling to:

- Identify needs and learn to meet them.
- Increase their self-understanding.
- Increase their control over their own lives by being able to exercise a greater choice and make decisions.
- Work more effectively with others exercising great responsibility .

Youth work is also generally defined as the social education of young people in an informal context. Learning within youth work clearly occurs through both the non-formal context which refers to planned learning out-of-school and the informal contexts in which young people interact with each other and with adults .

## 2.4 Political Education

While youth work must work towards meeting the developmental needs of the individual through social education, it must also be concerned with enabling the individual to develop his/her vision of society and social skills needed to play an active “political” role in society. If youth work is to have any impact on the problems facing young people today then it must concern itself with social change. This implies that youth work must have a strong political role, both in enabling young people to analyse society and in motivating and helping them to develop political skills and power to become involved in effecting political change .

Political education emphasises the position of the young person in society in terms of their class, gender and race. It looks at the external factors that may have a say on them as a result of their position, such as poverty, sexism and racism. It views them as active participants who have the ability to effect change .

## 2.5 Development Education

Development education is an educational process which aims to link the experiences of people in their local environment to that of people around the world, in particular the southern hemisphere (Asia, Africa and Latin-America). It seeks to highlight issues of injustice and inequality that affect people locally. Through the process of development education, participants are enabled to learn why and how the decisions that affect their lives and communities are made .

In the field of youth work the term ‘global youth work’ is also used in different places instead of the term ‘development education’. The Development Education Association (2004) defines it thus:

Global youth work is essentially good youth work, which responds to young people’s changing circumstances. It also recognises that globalisation increasingly influences young people’s lives and environments, creating new opportunities, challenges and concerns. Global youth work aims to enable young people to develop the knowledge and skills to tackle these new issues and explore their own connections with the wider world .

### Hopkinson (2006) concurs that:

Youth work has a long tradition of supporting young people’s understanding of the world around them and encouraging them to reflect on global issues. Often, though, these have been seen as an optional extra, a bolt on to perhaps the more traditional curriculum areas .



## 2.6 Peer Education

Peer Education provides education for and by people from within the same peer group. It is a pedagogical response to the new situation experienced by young people, and a process in which young people themselves are players and decision-makers. It is delivered in a variety of ways including drama and role play. Within the field of youth work and informal learning, peer education is most often associated with issues such as health, drugs and alcohol, relationships, violence and bullying which suggests that it has become a standardised method of delivery within clearly defined subject areas .

Peer education is the process whereby well-trained and motivated young people undertake informal or organized educational activities with their peers. Young people get a great deal of information from their peers on issues that are especially sensitive or culturally taboo. Peer education makes use of peer influence in a constructive way. It is also a way to empower young people; it offers them the opportunity to participate in activities that affect them and to access the information and services they need to protect their health .

## 3 Youth Work in India

Demographic dividend shows that by far India is the youngest nation in the world surpassing its neighbour China and obviously others too. There are more than a billion people living in India today – and almost 70% of them are under the age of 35. Among that massive young generation, some 225 million are aged 10 to 19 – making India's teens the largest group ever to make the transition to adulthood together. Moreover, 70% of the youth population in India is rural. According to current estimates, India is and will remain for some time one of the youngest countries in the world. In 2020, it is estimated that the average Indian will be only 29 years old, compared with an average age of 37 years in China and the US, and 45 years in Western Europe and Japan. What do these figures entail? As per the India Labour Report around 300 million youth would join the work force by 2025 constituting 25 per cent of the global work force.

There is no universal agreement on the age categorization of young people. Some national youth policies have strict lower and upper age limits, while others have rather blurred boundaries between children and youth. The concept of when a person is “young” and consequently a “youth policy” are indeed subjective. While some national youth policies have strict lower and upper age limits, others have rather blurred boundaries between children and youth. From 1998 to 2003, Indian national youth policy applied to everyone aged from 13 right up to 35 years. Taking some account of the fact that the concerns, needs and responsibilities of a teenager would vary enormously from those of a thirty something, the policy considered young people in sub-groups of adolescents aged 13 to 19 and young adults aged 20 to 35.

Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. ‘Youth’ is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she leaves compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. Often, the age parameters of youth vary according to different contexts and institutional definitions: the United Nations classifies youth as persons 15–24 years old, the World Bank considers persons belonging to 12–24 years. In host of developing countries the age limit extends up to 40.

In India youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5% of the population. At present, about 34% of India's Gross National Income (GNI) is contributed by the youth, aged 15-29 years. This great throng of youth could be a valuable resource and the absolute making of their country – or it could present a challenge of unthinkable proportions if the young people's concerns are not properly addressed nor their energies harnessed fruitfully.

### 3.1 Changing Needs

The advent of globalization, with its multifaceted challenges and opportunities, has forced the government of India to review its once-made-for-all-time-youth-policy. The NYP 2014 aims to cover all youth in the country within the age bracket of 15-29 years with a view to have a more focused approach, as far as various policy interventions are concerned. However, it needs to be recognized that all youth within this age-group are unlikely to be a homogeneous group. Different segments of the youth would have different needs and concerns, which need to be addressed. The NYP 2014 provides a holistic vision for the youth of India which is: 'to empower youth of the country to achieve their full potential, and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations'.

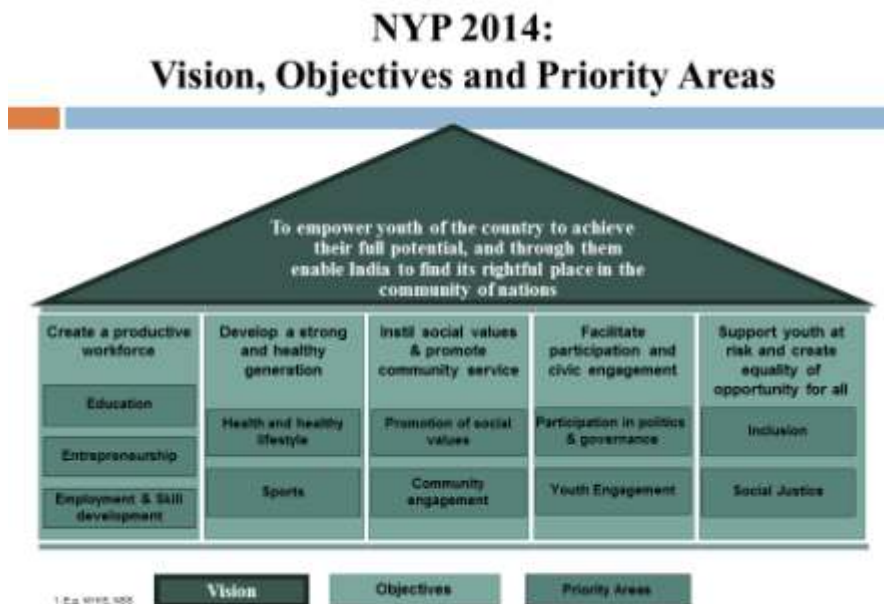
### 3.2 A Place in History

Though a systematic and documented youth service is of recent origin, it cannot but be affirmed that the history of youth work dates back to the freedom struggle days. Amid growing student unrest in the country in the late 1960s, as in many other parts of the world, the Government of India began to think of formulating an integrated youth service programme. The Planning Commission appointed a Working Group in 1966 to develop a comprehensive National Plan for Youth. The Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Youth Services and it convened a conference of representatives of youth organizations, youth services agencies and youth leaders in April-May 1969. Out of that emerged the National Youth Board, which was set up with the Union Minister for Education and Youth Services as chairman.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development evolved a little later – it was established in 1985 to deal with the ?ve named areas affecting youth. These were: art, culture, education, youth affairs & sports, and women's welfare. The National Youth Policy came into being in 1988, a product of the Indian Government's belief in the importance and resourcefulness of the youth population. Its central theme was the promotion of the personality and functional capability of the youth. The goal it set was the all-round development of productive, self-confident youth committed to national development and achievement of excellence as well as due share in life and progress.

### 3.3 An Altered Society

An altered society keeping in mind the changing nature of society in the technological era, the NYP 2003 moved on to formulate proposals for how young people might be galvanized to rise up to these new challenges. It also aimed at motivating them to be active and committed participants in the 'exciting task of national development'. The NYP 2014 moves the cause of youth forward even further. It provides following vision, five objectives and eleven key priority areas as given in the table below:



The NYP 2014 includes the introduction of a Youth Development Index (YDI) with sub-indices such as Youth Health Index, Youth Education Index, Youth Work Index, Youth Amenities Index, and Youth Participation Index. YDI helps to recognize youth as a population category that needs separate consideration and the development of a summary index would help to make comparisons across regions. The NYP 2014 targets the following groups:

Socially and economically disadvantaged youth, including but not limited to youth belonging to SC/ ST/ OBC groups, migrant youth and women; Out-of-school or drop-outs from the formal educational mainstream; Youth living in conflict affected districts, especially those affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and youth from Jammu & Kashmir and the North East; Youth living with disability or suffering from chronic diseases; Youth at risk, including but not limited to youth suffering from substance abuse, youth at risk of human trafficking and youth working in hazardous occupations, sex workers; Youth that suffer from social or moral stigma including but not limited to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth, youth infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; Youth in institutional care, orphanages, correctional homes and prisons.

### 3.4 Structure of Youth Work

Youth work in India can be divided into six different types of activities – recreational; educational; personal; social; cultural; and economical. Youth services and programmes are currently being planned, delivered and evaluated by the Government of India Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports through The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), the Nehru Yuvakendra Sangathan (NYKS), the National Service Scheme (NSS) and other national youth related schemes. The RGNIYD is a government funded autonomous organization of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. It functions as a vital resource centre coordinating Training, Orientation, Research, Extension and Outreach initiatives for State, Central Governments and national level youth organisations.

NYKS was started in 1972 by the then Ministry of Education to provide nonstudent rural youth an opportunity to grow and become involved in the nation building-activities. It has evolved over time and grown to have Kendras in 501 districts of India with a network of about a quarter of a million youth clubs in a number of villages. In India, the idea of involving students in the task of national service dates

back to the times of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. The main aim of NSS is personality development of young people through social service or community service. The NSS was formed in 1969 – starting out in 37 universities with 40,000 volunteers taking part. Today, more than 2.6 million volunteers take part, spread over 200 Universities, Polytechnics, Schools and other Institutes of higher learning. The motto of NSS, 'Not Me but You', reflects the essence of democratic living and upholds the need for self-less service.

### 3.5 Daanaand Seva

The voluntary or non-governmental 'youth sector' has a particularly a role in the field of youth work and it works throughout the country for the empowerment of young people. The civic involvement in India is based on the concepts of daana (giving) and seva (service). Voluntary organizations that are voluntary in spirit and without profit making objective were active in cultural promotion, education, health, and natural disaster relief as early as the medieval era. During the second half of the 19th century, nationalist consciousness spread across India and self-help emerged as the primary focus of socio-political movements.

According to the Indian Committee of Youth Organizations, (ICYO) there are over 393 youth organizations registered under their umbrella who are committed to the welfare and wellbeing of young people, spread in 122 districts of 26 states representing all corners of India but it does not have the formal recognition or statutory role. This reflects the more general fact that the idea of 'civil society' is less well developed in India. The Indian National Youth Policy 2014 itself describes the non-governmental stakeholders in youth policy as 'small and fragmented'.

### 3.6 Gapping a Few Potholes

Perhaps, it is proper not to give into the illusion that with the demographic dividend of India we are progressing leaps and bounds as we could do. First and foremost, youth work in India becomes increasingly a difficult task to be carried out given the socio-economic-cultural-religious context. Besides, there is a little documentation of what has been carried out and the involvement of the non-governmental agencies is limited to providing certain services alone without any official tie up with the State. The few potholes in our system include the plight of the marginalized youth - in other words untouchables - unemployment, underemployment, radicalization of youth in dangerous ideologies, lack of access to higher education, etc. Youth have shown time and again that when guided well they could take on unjust practices and structures to create a better world. This was evident in the movement against corruption headed by Anne Hazare and the relief work carried out by youth in the recent floods that devastated Chennai and its surrounding places. To better to tap their energy and utilize it in their interest and in the development of the nation for certain these things need to be addressed.

### CONCLUSION

Youth work is an empowering process and I feel that working with young people can contribute towards greater good. Youth work is all about letting the young to grow responsibly in an ambience where they are safe and free. Youth work tips the balance in young people's favour. Youth work cannot be reduced to recreational activities alone. If youth work is to have any impact on the problems facing young people today then it must concern itself with social changes. In other words, it must aim at the personal and social development of young people. The process of working with youth is educative, participative, empowering, for the personal and social development of young people, complementary

to other formal educational systems, distinct from other forms of working with young people, based on the voluntary participation of young people and the relationship between youth and youth workers.

Youth workers, through their informal and non-formal interactions, encourage them to think and reflect critically upon themselves and society. Youth workers engage young people through a variety of programmes (such as art, drama, games, youth café), to meet their fundamental needs and to develop their skills. The understanding and practice of youth workers shows that voluntary participation of young people and a robust relationship between youth and youth worker are fundamental elements necessary for the effective delivery of youth services. The purpose of youth work is achieved through a variety of activities and methods which take place in informal and non-formal environments. Youth workers play a unique and principal role in creatively and interestingly encouraging young people to challenge and to be challenged, to critically look within and outside their world, to grow and enable their peers to develop. Youth work is a vocation and profession which is obliged to deliver quality and standard service to young people.

In the context of India, what strikes most is the fact that it is the youngest nation with enormous potentials to contribute towards the rest of the world. The demographic dividend is a boon if there are policies and they are carried out to the effect intended and spoken about. Youth participation in civic movements and organizations is praise worthy. The Government too has revisited its policies keeping in mind the changes taking place globally. However, it should be borne in mind that the multi-facetedness of India society – which has been a unique characteristic of Indian ethos and culture – has made things difficult for everyone especially for the youth of the present times. Unless the few shortcomings are rectified, the mission 2020 of the Former President of India, Mr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam would fade away.

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c. We leave out here even to mention the violence against young women in work places and places of learning, health hazards, delinquents, and young prisoners.



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