CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES TOWARDS EDUCATION SECTOR

A. Sabeena* & Dr. N. A. Krishnamoorthi**

* Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce (CS), Vellalar College for Women, Erode, Tamilnadu

** Associate Professor, Research Department of Corporate Secretaryship, Erode Arts and Science College, Erode, Tamilnadu

Abstract:

"Good quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies." – Desmond Tutu

Education is the backbone of every society in this world. But what matters the most is the quality education- a dream for many. In India, out of the 229 million students enrolled for class I – XII, only few receive quality education with good teachers and teaching aids. According to UNICEF specialist, 40-50 per cent of the children from 15-18 years age group are dropping out of schools. These drop-outs become child-labourers denying themselves access to quality education and professional skills. Some Indian companies have always strong philanthropic activities and target to education sector as the part of CSR, many initiatives are executed by corporate in partnership with Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are well versed in working with the local communities and are experts in tackling specific social problems. As per schedule – VII of company bill 2012, promotion of education is considered as CSR policy of company, even though some high profiled companies running their institutions for profit making by marketizing the education. So this paper explains prospects and challenges on both the social and corporate managerial perspective. This study tries investigates the significances of CSR for promoting education and various initiatives of companies in education sector as a corporate responsibility to expansion education.

Key Words: CSR, Higher Education & CSR Activities

Introduction:

Over the past few years CSR, as a concept, has been the focus of many deliberations and research. It has grown in importance both academically as well as in the business sense. It captures a spectrum of values and criteria for measuring a company's contribution to social development. As the term "CSR" is used continually, many complementary and overlapping concepts, such as corporate citizenship, business ethics, stakeholder management and sustainability, have emerged. These extensive ranges of synonymously used terms indicate that multiple perspectives and by those in facilitating roles such as the corporate sector, government agencies, academics and the public sector.

After higher education, the state government has now introduced a dedicated policy for the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities associated with the school education and sports department. Setting up a 'single-window' approach to facilitate and streamline the proposed CSR activities from the corporate sector at Mantralaya is one of the key provisions of the policy, which has been notified by the government through a government resolution (GR). "The provision regarding CSR in the New Companies Act 2013 has brought within its ambit all the companies with at least Rs 5-crore net profit or Rs 1,000-crore turnover or Rs 500-crore network, making its mandatory for them to spend 2 per cent of the three years' average net profit on CSR activities. This present a big opportunity for the department to seek CSR funding, further accentuating the need to have a full-fledged CSR policy". As part of the policy, a state-level CSR committee, having secretary, school education and sports department, as its chairman, will be formed. It will have education commissioner and sports commissioner among the six members with deputy secretary (training) as member secretary.

Evolution of CSR in India:

India has a long tradition of paternalistic philanthropy. The process, though acclaimed recently, has been followed since ancient times albeit informally. Philosophers such as Kautilya from India and pre-Christian era philosophers in the West preached and promoted ethical principles while doing business. The concept of helping the poor and disadvantaged was cited in several ancient literatures. In the pre-industrialized period philanthropy, religion and charity were the key drivers of CSR. The industrial families of the 19th century had a strong inclination toward charity and other social considerations. However, the donations, either monetary or otherwise, were sporadic activities of charity or philanthropy that were taken out of personal savings, which neither belonged to the shareholders nor did it constitute an integral part of business. During this period, the industrial families also established temples, schools, higher education institutions and other infrastructure of public use. The term CSR itself came into common use in the early 1970s. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a shift in focus from charity and traditional philanthropy toward more direct engagement of

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business in mainstream development and concern for disadvantaged groups in the society. In India, there is a growing realization that business cannot succeed in isolation and social progress is necessary for sustainable growth. An ideal CSR practice has both ethical and philosophical dimensions, particularly in India where there exists a wide gap between sections of people in terms of income and standards as well socio-economic status (Bajpai, 2001).

Review of Literature:

Dr. Sumanth S. Hiremath & Dr. Dasharath R. Albal (2016), the paper is an outcome of a review of a substantial number of secondary sources on the current scenario and challenges of higher education in India. The following are the three major areas, for instance: The Quality of Education in terms of infrastructure, teachers, and accreditation. The Affordability of Education, ensuring poor and deserving students are not denied of education and the Ethics in Education avoiding over-commercialization of education system, are to be focused to ensure that Indian Higher Education system is sustainable and meets global standards.

Abha Chopra, Shruti Marriya(2013) The study will help the organisations to mitigate the skill gap with considerable experimentation, and learning-by-doing along the way. In this process, the affected individuals, companies, and society at large are likely to benefit. Major findings of the study is their will be a strong desire to change the current state of education, and of the current less-than-adequate regard for the impact of business on larger societies are, however, prerequisites.

Objectives:

The study is conducted to know whether higher education institutions might also be considered as corporations and whether the current ideas of CSR might have any say in principles and practices of the institutions where work is done.

Methodology:

Secondary sources have been adopted for study. Various newspapers, Journals, Articles and websites have been accessed to collect the information for study.

Education in India:

The 'Higher Education' (HE) system in India has grown in a remarkable way, mainly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest organisation of its kind in the world. There has been considerable improvement in the 'Higher Education' scenario of India in both quantitative and qualitative terms. 'Higher Education' in India is seen as one of the ways to upward social mobility. However, the system has many issues of concern at present, like financing and management including access, equity and relevance, re-orientation of programmes by laying importance on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are significant for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century.

Carl Dahlman and Anuja Utz in their article "India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities", state that, "Higher Education in India suffers from several systemic deficiencies. As a result, it continues to provide graduates that are unemployable despite emerging shortages of skilled manpower in an increasing number of sectors. The standards of academic research are low and declining. Some of the problems of the Indian higher education, such as – the unwieldy affiliating system, inflexible academic structure, uneven capacity across various subjects, eroding autonomy of academic institutions, and the low level of public funding are well known. Many other concerns relating to the dysfunctional regulatory environment, the accreditation system that has low coverage and no consequences, absence of incentives for performing well, and the unjust public funding policies are not well recognized".

Current Indian Higher Education Scenario:

While many reasons can be cited for the current scenario, these all boil down to decades of feudally managed, colonially modelled institutions run with inadequate funding and excessive political and bureaucratic interference. India should try to become "knowledge economy" to promote inclusive growth. The three major areas to be focused to ensure that Indian Higher Education system is sustainable and meets global standards are:

- ✓ Quality of Education - in terms of infrastructure, teachers, accreditation, etc.
- ✓ Affordability of Education - ensuring poor and deserving students are not denied of education.
- ✓ Ethics in Education - avoiding over- commercialization of education system.

Government Initiatives:

The Indian Government is taking initiatives to improve the situation. In 2013-14, the government had allocated a huge amount of Rs .65,869 crore and Rs.70,505 crore for the year 2014-15.for the total education outlay. Important milestone in Government's measure to offer education for all is the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" which has been in operation since 2000-2001. It promises to offer free and compulsory education to children of 6-14 years. The late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K.Kamaraj, was the pioneer in introducing mid-day meal scheme for schools in the year 1962 to encourage parents to send their kids to schools and reduce dropout rates.

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To improve quality while providing access to secondary schools at the same time, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA, 2009) scheme was brought into action. Sakshaar Bharat Mission was launched in 2001 to prevent alarming drop in female literacy. On the infrastructure side, District Information System for Education (DISE) reported in 2012 that more than 91% of primary schools have drinking-water facilities and 86% of schools built in the last 10 years have a school building. But that is not enough because the challenge is huge and not only government but everyone has to take efforts towards imparting quality education. This will not only deliver workers but thinkers, innovators & leaders to the society.

Like government, Indian corporate sector can play a big role in improving quality of education. As per government mandate corporate with at least 5 crore revenue have to devote 2% of its annual revenue to Corporate Social Responsibility. That is where corporate can contribute to this worthy cause.

CSR in Education:

Several private organizations are joining hands with the Government to make that ultimate dream of offering quality education in India come true. As an important part of it, the role of corporate with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is crucial in improving the educational conditions in India. A globalized economy and the privatization of higher education institutions have transformed the nature of academia. Adopting a business-like approach which emphasizes a strategic CSR framework is key to survival in this increasingly competitive arena. It does not appear as a surprise to see universities and colleges discover the opportunity to move the focus beyond the classroom into their own institutional operations. Universities, as the centres of knowledge generation and sharing, perform a very important role in addressing the world's socio-economic and environmental issues by promoting sustainable solutions. Several private organizations are joining hands with the Government to make that ultimate dream of offering quality education in India come true. As an important part of it, the role of corporate with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is crucial in improving the educational conditions in India.

CSR Activities:

TATA Group in Education Sector:

Tata group leads from the front with a whooping 1000 crores budget on CSR for the year 2013-14. Among which Tata Steel is the highest spender. It aims at launching 1,000 schools project in Odisha, for improving the quality of education in government primary schools. Tata Education Excellence Program is an award winning education program in Pune, launched by Tata Motors. Every year it identifies 600 boys and girls, enrolled in secondary schools. This program has helped improve the pass percentage of students to 98% and reduced the drop-out rates from 35 to less than 5%. According to Gajendra Chandel, Chief Human Resources Officer of Tata Motors, the company supports 11 schools in Jamshedpur, Asha Kiran a special-needs children school and many municipal schools in Mumbai. They also organize coaching classes for weak students and provide scholarship assistance to meritorious students. Tata Tele -service is also doing its best by providing education for students from underprivileged community in government schools. They have Teacher Training programs to enhance the quality of education being imparted to students studying in Government schools.

Wipro in Education Sector:

Wipro's "Applying Thought in Schools" is a part of its CSR initiative "Wipro cares". This program has brought together 1000 schools, 10,000 educators and 30 social organizations across 17 states in the country to create a complete reform in the field of education. Wipro also supports workshops and seminars that empower teachers.

ITC in Education Sector:

ITC Limited was ranked number 1 for the second consecutive year in the CSR category in the Nielsen Corporate Image Monitor 2012-13. ITC's Primary Education Program has benefitted over 300,000 children. ITC in its rural endeavor provides primary education in order to address the problem of economic weakness rural families. Their initiatives aim at improving infrastructure in Government schools, providing supplementary education to support children with school learning, building community and parental involvement with school education. It also has a network of 353 libraries, resource centres', Roaming Laptops program and mobile library services covering 310 schools.

Indian Oil Corporation in Education Sector:

Indian Oil Corporation rewards over 2600 scholarships to meritorious students every year as their CSR initiative in the field of education. They reward students from all walks of life, especially girls, physically handicapped and students from J&K.

Aditya Birla Group in Education Sector:

Aditya Birla Group fulfill their CSR responsibilities by concentrating on awarding merit scholarships for girls to pursue higher education and technical education for boys to make them industry-ready. Aditya Birla Schools are spread over 11 states along with Balwadis and Aditya Birla Vidya Mandirs providing education for

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every genre of kid. They also promote computer education and distance education for schools all over the country.

Maruti Suzuki in Education Sector:

Maruti Suzuki's CSR initiative in the field of education takes a technical education-oriented route. They have adopted over 10 state-run ITI colleges in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Goa and Haryana to transform them into centers of excellence in their respective fields.

Reliance Industries in Education Sector: Reliance Industries partakes in CSR activities by constructing & renovating school buildings, providing free note books and text books to students, rewarding the meritorious with scholarships, building remedial centers and spreading awareness about the need for computer education in rural India.

Canon India in Education Sector:

As a part of its CSR responsibilities, Canon India has adopted 2 government schools in Ferozepur Namak village and Maharaja Katta Village. They take care of these two schools by improving the basic infrastructure, building resource centers and libraries, providing training for the teachers and equipping the schools with sports kits.

Tech Mahindra in Education Sector:

TMF is a CSR player within the Mahindra Group is a leading social organization at a national level. Tech Mahindra's social initiatives are carried out by Tech Mahindra Foundation (TMF), its corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm. It has worked tirelessly towards the vision of 'Empowering through Education' with a budget of INR 35 Cr for 2015-16. The Foundation is running 150+ projects in ten locations of India. More than 50 schools where the Foundation intervened in 2014-15 have shown better performance on academic, social, organizational and infrastructural domains. Corporate in India have already seen the opportunity in spending their CSR share in Education in India. And there is a scope to do more. Corporate can look at innovative CSR ideas in education to reach remote areas. One such innovative Corporate Social Responsibility idea is Mini Science Centre.

Mini Science Centre for CSR Activities:

A Mini Science Center includes 60+ interactive table top science and math working models along with informative backdrops. The Mini Science Center includes working models for subjects like biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geometry and mathematics. These working models are often based on textbook syllabus of class 5th to 10th of SSC, CBSC and ICSE boards. These are available in English as well as regional languages. Recently Maharastra State Government Resolution (GR) has approved the installation of Mini Science Centers in Government, Aided and Local Self Governing schools. Government is planning to sponsor these Mini Science centers through MLA funds. Once installed Schools will be responsible for maintaining the center and monitor the effectiveness through self assessment. Corporate can also pick this government initiative and sponsor Mini Science Centers to government schools in India through their CSR share.

STEM Learning Pvt Ltd is a pioneer in installing Mini Science Centers in India. STEM Learning has developed Mini Science Center models based on textbook syllabus of class 5th to 10th of SSC, CBSE & ICSE boards. STEM Learning has installed over 250 Mini Science Centers all across India in Government & private schools. STEM Learning is associated with CSR initiatives of JSW Foundation, L&T Infotech, Bank of Baroda, Lupin Foundation & Ultratech Cement.

Conclusion:

India has to restructure the education system at all the levels i.e. elementary, secondary and higher education level. This is possible when the corporate also perform their responsibilities towards society. In order to reap concrete benefits they must help these universities /colleges to produce such skilled and trained manpower by providing funds for research and development, organizing various workshops, training and development programs, cross over exchange programs, infrastructural support and last but not least providing facilities for qualitative education that quantitative. The role of CSR in education is thus mitigating the skills gap with considerable experimentation, and learning-by-doing along the way. In this process, the affected individuals, companies, and society at large are likely to benefit.

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