Higher Education and CSR

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility is the company's initiatives to help and serve the nation towards its growth and development. The concept of CSR has brought about awareness and responsibility among the companies to contribute towards the society, its workforce, labours, their families and the society at large. With globalization and the increasing demand of industries, education and skills have become a pre-notion for any person. India's literacy rate being only 77.7% as of 2022, there appears a need for the companies to train and educate the youth to contribute to the overall development of the country. The CSR contributions have made it possible for the companies to spend a percentage of their budget towards the education sector.

Keywords: CSR, higher education, skill development, vocational skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility, often abbreviated "CSR," is a corporation's initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on environmental and social wellbeing. The term generally applies to efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environmental protection groups.

CSR in Higher Education is an emerging concept. With the companies recognising the importance of education for the growth and development of the nation, and understanding their responsibilities towards society, they have now started focusing on the Education Sector as a part of their CSR contributions to the society and country.

II. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CSR may be referred to as "corporate citizenship" and involves incurring short-term costs that do not provide an immediate financial benefit to the company, but instead promote positive social and environmental change. The term 'Corporate Social Responsibility' has many definitions –

The European Commission defines CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society. To completely meet their social responsibility, enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social,

environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders"

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as "the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large."

According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), "Corporate social responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (Triple-Bottom-Line Approach), while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders."

The Companies Act, 2013 has introduced the idea of CSR to the forefront and through its disclose-or-explain mandate, is promoting greater transparency and disclosure. Schedule VII of the Act, which lists out the CSR activities, suggests communities to be the focal point.

III. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Higher Education refers to the education in industries or similar educational establishments, especially to degree level.

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world that stands second in terms of the higher education network. The term 'higher education' with respect to India denotes the tertiary level education that is imparted after 12 years of schooling (10 years of primary education and 2 years of secondary education). The entire higher education ecosystem in India comprises around 1000+ universities and 42,000+ colleges imparting exceptional education. All these institutions fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education.

IV. CSR UNDER COMPANIES ACT, 2013

The Companies Act, 2013 vide its Section 135, provides for a CSR provision where –

"Every company having net worth of Rs.500 crores or more, or turnover of Rs.1000 crores or more or a net profit of Rs.5 crores or more during any financial year, shall contribute at least 2% of its average net profits made during the three immediately preceding financial years, in pursuance of its Corporate Social Responsibility Policy"

Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 enlists the activities where the companies can contribute towards CSR. Clause (ii) of Schedule VII states that –

"Promoting education, including special education and employment enhancing vocation skills especially among children, women, elderly and the differently abled and livelihood enhancement projects."

V. VARIOUS INITIATIVES BY TOP INDIAN COMPANIES IN EDUCATION SECTOR UNDER ITS CSR ACTIVITIES

1. Reliance Industries
➢ Initiatives:
• Reliance Foundation Education and Sports for All

- Dhirubhai Ambani Scholarship
- Reliance Foundation Schools

The Reliance Foundation Education and Sports for All partners with 14 NGOs to provide education to underprivileged children. They focus on encouraging literacy, sports and life skills among children. It also provides a Digital Learning Van, embedded with technology, which has been providing quality education to more than 4000 children across 10 government schools in Mumbai and Thane districts.

The Dhirubhai Ambani Scholarship valued on the vision and values of the Founder of Reliance Induatries, Dhirubhai Ambani, awards meritorious students and promotes academic and leadership excellence. More than half of the scholarships are granted to girls, while one-fifth to specially abled students. These scholarships help provide financial assistance to meritorious students to pursue graduation in any institution and stream of their choice.

13 schools have been established under Reliance Foundation Schools, educating over 14,500 children annually.

2. Wipro

➢ **Initiatives:**

- Systemic Reforms in School Education
- Wipro Earthian
- Azim Premji University
- Wipro Academy of Software Excellence Programme
- Mission 10X

The Systemic Reforms in School Education was the first CSR initiative taken by the company in 2001. It focuses on supporting primary education. It also focuses in providing education to children with disabilities. It provides tutoring, assistive technology, health and nutrition to these children.

Wipro Earthian is the company's flagship programme set up in 2010. It focuses on Education and Sustainability. It has 2 components; the PAN India Outreach Programme and the Continuous Engagement Programme. It focuses on spreading awareness relating to care about the environment and for the youth to come up with new and innovative solutions for its protection.

The Azim Premji University commits towards social change, using education as a driver. It provides need based scholarships to students.

The Wipro Academy of Software Excellence programme in partnership with Birla Institute of Technology and Science, provides academic exposure and practical professional learning at workplace to science graduates.

Mission 10X, a non-profit initiative, helps in enhancing employability skills of engineering students. It helps building the engineering education infrastructure. It focuses on training teachers on pedagogy and engagement philosophy.

3. Infosys

➢ **Initiatives:**

- Eliminating hunger in classrooms in collaboration with Sri Ramakrishna Vidya Kendra
- Providing quality STEM education and peer learning pedagogy in partnership with Avanti Fellows
- Spark IT programme

The company collaborated with Sri Ramakrishna Vidya Kendra in the Bannerghatta Forest area in Bengaluru to provide free meals to students. With an increase in drop out rates of children from low income families, the

company started providing free meals to children falling under below poverty line to promote educate among them.

Infosys in partnership with Avanti Fellows helps under privileged students gain STEM education. It provides unique peer learning pedagogy developed after 20 years of research at Harvard University. This helps the students getting admission in IITs and NITs.

The Spark IT programme is a 3 months course, providing technology and communication skills, specifically designed for engineering students.

4. Tata Steel

➢ **Initiatives:**
- 1000 Schools Project
- Jyoti Fellowship and Moodie Fellowship
- Tata Steel Scholars and Coaching Initiative

The company launched a 1000 schools project in January, 2015, with the aim to create a scalable model of universalisation of elementary education. The project was based on the Right to Education framework of the government of India. It focused on 2 tribal blocks, Noamundi and Jagannathpur, of Jharkhand.

The Jyoti and Moodie Fellowship aimed at providing equitable and quality education to various students belonging to ST and SC categories and who are from economically challenged families in Jharkhand and Odisha.

The Tata Steel Scholars and Coaching Initiative helps under privileged students from class 8, 9 and 10 to hone their skills in Mathematics, Science and English subjects. It focuses on the students belonging to the ST and SC categories.

5. Mahindra and Mahindra

➢ **Initiatives:**
- Mahindra United World College
- Project Nanhi Kali
- Mahindra Pride Programme
- Mahindra Saarthi Abhiyaan

The Mahindra United World College established in Pune, provides vocational courses for youth belonging to low income families and provides scholarship for remarkable students to pursue higher education abroad.

The company's flagship project Nanhi Kali, is the largest programme for girl child education in India. It provides 360 degree support to girls belonging from Class I to X. It also helps sensitise parents to become the childrens collective guardian and spread the importance of education.

Mahindra Pride Programme trains youth from ITIs, Polytechnics, Arts and Science Colleges in life skills, jobs, etc.

The Mahindra Saarthi Abhiyaan provides experience to under graduate engineering students in aspects of automobile engineering.

CSR CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND SKILL SECTOR (FY 2021-22)

Thematic Distribution of CSR	No. of Projects Implemented	No. of Companies	Amount Spent (in INR Cr.)	Percentage of CSR Fund
Promotion of Education, Special Education and Vocational Skills	2046	271	3196.7	25.3%

CSR FUND DISTRIBUTION IN EDUCATION AND SKILL SECTOR (FY 2021-22)

Education and Skill Projects	No. of Projects Implemented	Actual CSR Spent (in INR Cr.)
Education Projects	1706	2448.16
Skill Development	340	748.54
Total	2046	3196.7

Source: ICOR Report 2022 Final Report

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