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THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES IN FOSTERING EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIA

DR. BADAL RATH
ASST. PROFESSOR
SRI SRI UNIVERSITY
BHUBANESWAR

DR. KALPANA SAHOO
ASST. PROFESSOR
SRI SRI UNIVERSITY
BHUBANESWAR

VIJAYA LAKSHMI MOHANTY
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
SRI SRI UNIVERSITY
BHUBANESWAR

ABSTRACT

Organizations in the modern days are undergoing immense transformation in the wake of industrialization and globalization. Emerging economy like India has drawn the attention of large MNCs for the potential of market growth. However these changes have failed to give due focus and attention to the local and social community, environment and consumers as a result this has led to large scale debate and to take necessary action. In the above context it becomes important to understand that the sustainable business growth is associated with care for the community and markets. In this scenario, there is an increased focus on the social role that is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which remains high on the agenda in the Indian corporate context. The recent economic crisis has highlighted the need for societal commitment towards education as leading economic powers have been spending massively on education as a sound investment for economic recovery and growth. As a fact it was also highlighted that educational institutions have to shoulder social responsibilities. Educational universities now look to education not just to educate students and youth, but to bring out some social change and set a path to peace and sustainable development. Educational outreach efforts have the potential to make a real and lasting difference for all players involved. But educational institutions have the ability to make a tremendous impact. There is no doubt that sustainable and ethical business practice is now a hot topic in international education. A commitment to Educational Social Responsibility (ESR) has seen internal and external projects and developments all focused towards the role that the education sector should play a major role in building a better social community. Higher education mostly Universities have been actively involved in the social community building process, due to the fact that some of the activities are directly influenced and linked to the society. Universities and leading educational groups are compared along with corporate which is seen as trend and will be followed in coming years. The involvement of Educational groups and institutions directly in social development varies from institute to institutes and is seen more in case of educational groups who are imparting management education but the core values lies in the spiritual thoughts. This paper makes an attempt to analyze the various social responsibility initiatives taken by Sri Sri University based out of Cuttack, Odisha. Through this paper, we analyze the fundamental changes in paradigm of corporate social responsibility and the new innovative practices being applied in educational settings in India. Our central argument in the paper is that the rise of private university in the free market setup has radically transformed the perception and understanding that they have of their large role in society and as a result of which there has been a change in implementing the corporate social responsibility programs at the ground level in educational settings which is now known as Educational Social Responsibility (ESR).

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KEYWORDS

Educational Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Growth.

INTRODUCTION

In the current globalized era, broader goals like establishing peace, respecting human rights, poverty reduction and sustainable development must be aligned with personal intellectual development. This paper elaborates the need to build inclusive growth and emphasizes why it is imperative to focus on sustainable growth now. It presents the opportunities available for building a sustainable growth by identifying key levers in education and business model innovation. This paper tries to highlight why educational social responsibility should be undertaken by different universities. In a time of environmental and economic crisis, universities and institutions of higher education should be taken initiations in order to impact social and economic development of the community. The recent economic crisis has highlighted societal commitment to education which was earlier strongly advocated the decision of some of the leading economic powers to spend massively on education as a sound investment for economic recovery and growth. But it has also been highlighted to the fact that society has endowed its educational institutions with greater social responsibilities and the expectations are high. Education is the sector which is the most eligible and socially rewarding effort to be looked upon to discharge its social responsibility. Supporting education at any level will mean, re-energized education sector which can transform our country into a true knowledge power and realize a future of prosperity and sustainable growth. We are now looking towards education not just to educate our youth and children but also to set up a new revolution by changing the society as a whole by looking at macro issues like poverty, unemployment and ultimately leading towards the path of peace and sustainable development. It is the food for thought to analysis whether institutions of higher education carry through on their growing responsibilities in the domain of socio-economic development? For that reason, these responsibilities require a radical re-shaping of the dominant higher educational system and philosophy. Producing the leaders of tomorrow and instilling in them the values and knowledge, it is necessary to building a more sustainable future, that it is also the social responsibility of institutions of higher education to take on an anticipatory role to foresee and alert the society towards emerging trends and to prevent any major crisis which is likely to happen. Current scenario of globalization, workforce diversity, and competitions has given a way to new opportunities for businesses to support education in a win-win situation that benefits everyone. The bottom line is that educational outreach efforts have the potential to make a real and lasting difference for all players involved. These demands have given way to new opportunities for businesses to support education in a win-win situation that benefits everyone through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

CSR has become increasingly prominent in the Indian corporate scenario because organizations have realized that it not only business growth but also building a trustworthy and relationships which can be sustained with the society as a whole. India economy is growing but at the same time socio economic issues like illiteracy, access to healthcare, poverty still exist at large and in a limited resource setting government is unable to effectively tackle these issues. This has opened the door of opportunity for business across several areas to contribute for social development. (Ramya Sathish, Chillibreeze, 2013). Today, CSR in India has gone beyond merely charity and donations. It has become an integral part of the corporate strategy. CSR requires company commitment to balance and improve the social and environment impacts without hampering the performance of the economy. This in turn, leads to a move from the conventional view of the firm, where the main responsibility of the firm is to provide goods and services to society (Chamberlain, 1973; Friedman, 1968, 1970, cited in Williamson et al., 2006), to one which sees firms as contributing to the welfare of society (Carroll, 1979; Steiner and Steiner, 1997, cited in Williamson et al., 2006). There has been a shift in terminology from the social responsibility of business to CSR. Some of the word which is commonly used to relate corporate responsibility in the society is public policy and business, stakeholder management and corporate accountability. Off late there has been renewed interest being generated towards CSR and some of the new concepts that have been proposed include corporate sustainability and corporate citizenship. This is specifically so true for universities where contribution to knowledge and well-being of society is of great importance. Social responsibility is not limited to the present employees of the society, but should also be expanded to its society. Organizations are not operating in vacuum and apparently their operation will affect their external environment. According to Crowther and Aras (2008), this effect can take the following forms:

- (i) The utilization of natural resources as a part of social responsibility
- (ii) The effect of competition between itself and other organizations in the same market
- (iii) The enrichment of a local community through the creation of employment opportunities
- (iv) Transformation of the landscape due to the raw material extraction or waste product storage
- (v) The distribution of wealth created within the organization to the owners of that company and the employees of that organization and the effect of this upon the welfare of individuals
- (vi) More recently the greatest concern has been with climate change and the way in which the stakeholders would be satisfied.

The first phase of CSR is that the central goal is to achieve maximum overall cooperation between the entire system of stakeholder groups and the objectives of the corporation. Next, it is the efficient strategies for managing stakeholder relations involves efforts, which simultaneously deal with issues affecting multiple stakeholders. For that reason, Organizations should understand the role of stakeholders. Management of stakeholders requires integrating groups into managerial decision making with a stake in the organisation. Directed by a sense of pragmatism a great deal of empirical research has been done. This takes into account on topics as how to determine the best practice in corporate stakeholder relations (Bendheim et al., 1998), stakeholder salience to managers (Agle and Mitchell, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997), the impact of stakeholder management on financial performance (Berman et al., 1999), and how managers can successfully balance the competing demands of various stakeholder groups (Ogden and Watson, 1999). Research shows that higher education institutions can cause "significant environmental impacts" (Jabbour, 2010). Firms who are profit oriented would not stay behind to keep the high interest level of those people who have the stake in the organisation. An adequate level of investment in philanthropy and social activities is also acceptable for the sake of profits (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001).

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Now days, the growing importance of CSR in the business world is clear. It is not confined to corporate world. Few educational institutes have come up with CSR activities. As we all know Education has a strategic importance in the current era; meanwhile it can be viewed as a systematic strategy which is used to create desired changes in individual behavior in society .Education produces basic properties and services for meeting the vital needs of a nation like health, security, education, defence, communication and cultural development. But the question is that- Is CSR within educational institutions relevant? How should an institution such as a university practice CSR? CSR seeks to build community capacity and improve the quality of life in communities. Through comprehensive efforts and targeted action plans, communities can improve educational outcomes, employment, and health and well-being of community residents. CSR is a driving force in strengthening the process skills of individuals in the community, enabling people to work together toward common goals and objectives (Rausch and Patton 2004). The CSR activity done by educational institutes are usually refereed as Educational Social Responsibility (ESR). First, Universities must promote true culture of CSR across their institutions. This should be followed by developing social marketing actions in order to better communicate and interact with stakeholders. Initiations of a dynamic CSR culture will nurture the accumulation of current students, future students, local community and corporate supporters and many others. One of the major stakeholders is the current students who are mostly in the age group of 18-25. This group is called the Net Generation or Gen Y and is most technology savvy within the general human population. These youth power should be properly used in understanding the social action of organizations. But the major issue for implementing it is lack of understanding and awareness of sustainability issues amongst the university population. Before implementing CSR activity, University needs to create a process whereby students and employees should understand the process of ESR.

The pertinent area of ESR activities can be done through following areas:

- Workplace (employees)
- Marketplace (customers, suppliers)
- environment
- Community
- Ethics
- Human skills.

Many challenges CSR teams encounter surround issues of sustainability and commitment among CSR team and coalition members. Key to sustainability is the building of commitment through active involvement and a plan for addressing strategic changes (Rausch and Patton 2004).

MAJOR PROCESS AREAS AND AN OVERVIEW

For a comprehensive community such as university, change through the CSR process is based on a set of guiding principles:

- CSR is a grassroots, community-based initiative.
- Community ownership and responsibility is essential.
- The community is expert in guiding its own destiny.
- Campus partnership supports community efforts.
- Community collaborations support shared resources.
- Youth are active participants in community change.
- Assessment and response is dynamic and ever changing.

EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES AT SRI SRI UNIVERSITY (SSU)

Community change process is quite an undertaking. H.H Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has envisioned a remarkable university – one that is uniquely positioned to educate students to become national and international leaders and socially responsible global citizens. SSU is supporting the implementation of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty and achieve education in the world's poorest countries.

- SSU will be stimulating development in Odisha, a state in India whose citizens face remarkable barriers to accessing healthcare and education. Orissa has approximately 36 million people, 5 universities and 7 major hospitals.
- Literacy rate for Orissa is far below at third place from bottom among all states. Also in tribal population the literacy rate is below 20%

- What's more, 72% of children under 3 years old are anemic and 65% of its households lack access to clean drinking water.
- SSU will further the national goal of increasing school and college enrollment in India, including through the education of more women.
- SSU will initiate students flow from across the India and will introduce new professional courses which are needed for the Indian economy (SSU, 2013)

1. LOW-COST & ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND

The architectural plans for Sri Sri University combine environmental responsibility with cost efficiency. The campus design of SSU takes advantage of the existing contours of the land as a natural foundation and harmonizes with the Kathjodi River which runs adjacent to the campus, making water an integral part of the design (SSU, 2013). The campus features eco based green buildings, solar panels and green landscape. Campus structures will include technology learning laboratories, an indoor-outdoor sports stadium, an amphitheater, a 500-bed teaching hospital and a 100-bed Ayurvedic hospital.

2. ECONOMIC IMPACT: INVIGORATING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Sri Sri University is establishing the Center for Excellence in Vocational Training. Vocational school will help quip the community in Orissa by offering education in areas where there is skill gap and market demand. These short term skill based programmes aim to provide livelihood for a poor household and bridge the skill shortage in the country. Professions needed to build and maintain the University. Several trades are being offered, such as hospitality, welding, plumbing, bar bending and steel carpentry and retail. Specifically, in Naraj, the University will stimulate the community's economy and significantly add to the social environment.

It has been shown in various situations and context that new academic institutes bring a gradual improvement in the condition of local infrastructure and commerce. SSU will be enrolling men and women with good qualifications, varied life experiences and background. This will initiate a demand pull for goods and services which is likely to increase in Naraj from Bhubaneswar. It is expected that Sri Sri University will have similar positive effects. Across the world pooled data from census studies have shown a significant positive effect on geographic regions in terms of growth in population, aggregate personal income and state employment by the university set up.

JOB SKILLS FOR VILLAGE YOUTH

1. CELL PHONE REPAIR COURSE

As a part of youth development and empowerment programme, a 3 month cell phone repairing course was started within the SSU campus in Sept 2010. 25 youths have enrolled in this course which is one of the many planned courses to develop the skills of the unemployed and poor youths of, the villages near to the university periphery.

2. CONSTRUCTION SKILL TRAINING CENTRE - VIDYA

Sri Sri University starts its journey with social services to community and imparting life skills to the common people in society as its core competencies. In collaboration with Larsen and Toubro (L&T), thirty-five Students underwent 3 months training skills on masonry, bar bending and advanced techniques in machinery. Till 31st January 2013, this unit has trained and placed 251 youths in different job sites in L&T in Odisha and West Bengal. The passed out trainees can earn from 6k to 20k depending on their expertise and experience. (SSU, 2013)

3. VILLAGE OUTREACH

SSU outreach team has been assigned the goal to strengthen the local development of the community and they have already begun extensive community service in 11 villages surrounding the University campus. In conjunction with the Sri Sri University Outreach Team, youth leaders (trained under the Youth Leadership Training Program) conduct free health camps for local people. Outreach teams have also initiated cleaning functions as part of the outreach programme which included roads, place of worship and sewers. Developments in the surrounding areas are managed by around 100 trained youth leaders benefiting over 2400 rural children and adults.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE

- 11 Villages adopted
- 2 community halls are under construction
- 300 people learnt life skills from 10 workshops
- 600 plantation
- 1322 villagers participated in 50 hygienic camp
- 15 Houses built
- Youth Leadership Training Program for 285 people
- 21 Health Camps for 2145 people
- Imparting Yoga, Meditation, and Breathing techniques: 1229 children; 1,100 adults

Sri Sri University Educational Social Responsibility initiatives are focused not only at its periphery, but it is also extended from local to state and also to national level. This differentiates from the traditional social corporate responsibility which is mostly done at local level or at the site of operations but rarely do these get extended to state and national level.

4. LIGHT A HOME PROJECT

In Sept 2012, SSU youth leaders have identified a hamlet with no access to electricity. Solar electrification project "Light a Home" was inaugurated in Bhalunka hamlet with 90 house hold on 04.01.13. More than 100 villagers were present in the occasion.

In the dark, with the help of solar lamps and head light of the vehicle the project was inaugurated. Funded by Sri Sri Rural Development Program (SSRDP), and implemented by the Social Outreach department of SSU, this project lights the 90 poor tribal household (SSU, 2013).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Universities are the most important academic and educational organizations. For a university equipping students for their future life may be one of the major goals. Growth in student numbers and / or turnover is not objectives in their own right for a university. Indeed this sort of objective, and concomitant performance measure, are not wholly subscribed to in the untrammelled free market of the commercial organization. Along the way, to help make the world a little better, must be main target for all educationalists. The education, values, and, ethical analysis have much to offer to society for justice and human rights, who are "acting to save the world" (Skinner 1987). Hopes for building sustainable communities socially, culturally, and physically most are founded on learning to think and dialogue systemically. Organisation ability to outsmart competitions constantly over a longer time frame is defined as Sustainable development of a community. Within this context successful organisation vary from sustainable development organisation. Success may be of one dimension but sustainable is of multiple dimensional in the organization. CSR plays an important role in sustainable development. Organizations should perceive that certain forces or trends call for change, and the issue is subjected to the organizations' progress, problem solving and decision making Sustainable change only when organization becomes visibly involved in the process. Sustainable Development in organization can be achieved through proper utilization of the basic Human, Physical & financial, resources. The most important part is to satisfy all the community desires and problems and try to generate happiness in the community. For example, Bhutan is measuring the happiness of the people by adding the promotion of happiness factor in education. While this concept is strongly promoted by Bhutan Royal couple the government also is of the impression that this is the only indicator that counts. While Gross National Happiness (GNH) is still in abstract stage, Bhutan has macro-economic issues like inflation, gap between poor and rich, unemployment, by which Bhutan government feels that by encouraging GNH macro-economic issues can be managed and contained. Critics argue that such concepts are highly intellectual thoughts and goes over people's head. Educational responsibility also includes a quality education be freely available to all children.

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed a broad understanding of what is meant by corporate social responsibility and how and why business might undertake such behavior. Most important parameter is how educational institutes play a vital role in shaping community and societal development. Whether actions by university that provides business benefits are ultimately regarded as socially responsible by stakeholders is a criteria for success or something else is there. While emerging

methods are being checked for its effects still these subjects generate a considerable amount of debate. However the common threads of the literature involve establishing principles for action and using stakeholder analysis and engagement for community development as a way of determining accurate activities. However the focus is increasing both by university on community development and also by the society on the actions of business. It is important in this context to understand that the sustainable business growth is associated with care for the community and stakeholder's satisfaction and happiness and the corporations that operate in.

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