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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ITS IMPACT ON SCHOOL EDUCATION**DR. GOPAL KRISHNA THAKUR****CHAIRMAN****SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH FOUNDATION****GREATER NOIDA****ABSTRACT**

The businesses are an integral part of society, and have a critical and active role to play in the sustenance and improvement of healthy ecosystems, in fostering social inclusiveness and equity, and in upholding the essentials of ethical practices and good governance. This also makes business sense as companies with effective CSR, have image of socially responsible companies, achieve sustainable growth in their operations in the long run and their products and services are preferred by the customers. Indian entrepreneurs and business enterprises have a long tradition of working within the values that have defined our nation's character for millennia. India's ancient wisdom, which is still relevant today, inspires people to work for the larger objective of the well-being of all stakeholders. This paper delineates the outcome of a qualitative study that took up survey method to look into the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities of an organisation working in and around Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh in India to cater to the educational needs of children from low income strata of society. The outcome of the study suggests that there is a genuine need of similar efforts to touch the lives of the deprived section of society and improve their life conditions. This will certainly help corporate houses or business groups to make their place in the hearts of people in society with everlasting impact.

KEYWORDS

Corporate Social Responsibility; Human Rights, Social Rights, Inclusive Development.

INTRODUCTION

 Our society in the 21st century is witnessing unprecedented challenges and opportunities, arising from globalization, barrier free flow of information network across the globe, advancement of science and technology and its subsequent impact of environment, the desire for inclusive development and the imperatives of climate change. Indian business, which is today viewed globally as an important economy in the world scenario, is determined now to take up a leadership role in the challenges of our times. It is recognized all over the world that for achieving sustainability in business it is very important to recognize social, environmental and ethical responsibilities associated with the business endeavours and integrate the same into it, if businesses have to succeed on a long term basis. This would also help the businesses to make their presence felt in the society with a positive impact. This approach also accentuates the view that businesses are an integral part of society, and have a critical and active role to play in the sustenance and improvement of healthy ecosystems, in fostering social inclusiveness and equity, and in upholding the essentials of ethical practices and good governance. This also makes business sense as companies with effective CSR, have image of socially responsible companies, achieve sustainable growth in their operations in the long run and their products and services are preferred by the customers.

THE TRAJECTORY OF CSR IN INDIA SINCE ITS ADVENT

The idea of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) first came up in 1953 when it became an academic topic in HR Bowen's "Social Responsibilities of the Business". It has been over more than half a century since this concept of CSR has been around and Governments, society and business houses across the globe are pursuing it more actively now since last couple of decades. The CSR has been defined in many ways by the thinkers all across. However, one of the most contemporary definitions is from the World Bank Group, stating, "Corporate social responsibility is the commitment of businesses to contribute to sustainable economic development by working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large, to improve their lives in ways that are good for business and for development.

Indian entrepreneurs and business enterprises have a long tradition of working within the values that have defined our nation's character for millennia. India's ancient wisdom, which is still relevant today, inspires people to work for the larger objective of the well-being of all stakeholders. Our age old scriptures emphasize on the opinion that the first and foremost use of wealth should be for the betterment of the humanity, for the well being of the society and it should be judiciously spent for bringing peace and harmony in society, for helping others, supporting genuine people in the time of their needs, etc. Such all-encompassing values are even more relevant in current times, as organizations grapple with the challenges of modern-day enterprise, the aspirations of stakeholders and of citizens eager to be active participants in economic growth and development.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES 2009

In year 2009, The Ministry of Corporate Affairs prepared a set of voluntary guidelines which indicate some of the core elements that businesses need to focus on while conducting their affairs. The purpose of this initiative was to facilitate the businesses to adopt responsible governance practices and integrate themselves with society in a meaningful manner. The salient features of these guidelines are as the following:

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

Each business entity should formulate a CSR policy to guide its strategic planning and provide a roadmap for its CSR initiatives, which should be an integral part of overall business policy and aligned with its business goals. The policy should be framed with the participation of various level executives and should be approved by the Board.

CORE ELEMENTS

The CSR Policy should normally cover following core elements:

CARE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The companies should respect the interests of, and be responsive towards all stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, project affected people, society at large etc. and create value for all of them. They should develop mechanism to actively engage with all stakeholders, inform them of inherent risks and mitigate them where they occur.

ETHICAL FUNCTIONING

Their governance systems should be underpinned by Ethics, Transparency and Accountability. They should not engage in business practices that are abusive, unfair, corrupt or anti-competitive.

RESPECT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS AND WELFARE

Companies should provide a workplace environment that is safe, hygienic and humane and which upholds the dignity of employees. They should provide all employees with access to training and development of necessary skills for career advancement, on an equal and non-discriminatory basis. They should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining of labour, have an effective grievance redressal system, should not employ child or forced labour and provide and maintain equality of opportunities without any discrimination on any grounds in recruitment and during employment.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Companies should respect human rights for all and avoid complicity with human rights abuses by them or by third party.

RESPECT FOR ENVIRONMENT

Companies should take measures to check and prevent pollution; recycle, manage and reduce waste, should manage natural resources in a sustainable manner and ensure optimal use of resources like land and water, should proactively respond to the challenges of climate change by adopting cleaner production methods, promoting efficient use of energy and environment friendly technologies.

ACTIVITIES FOR SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Depending upon their core competency and business interest, companies should undertake activities for economic and social development of communities and geographical areas, particularly in the vicinity of their operations. These could include: education, skill building for livelihood of people, health, cultural and social welfare etc., particularly targeting at disadvantaged sections of society.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

1. The CSR policy of the business entity should provide for an implementation strategy which should include identification of projects/activities, setting measurable physical targets with timeframe, organizational mechanism and responsibilities, time schedules and monitoring. Companies may partner with local authorities, business associations and civil society/non-government organizations. They may influence the supply chain for CSR initiative and motivate employees for voluntary effort for social development. They may evolve a system of need assessment and impact assessment while undertaking CSR activities in a particular area. Independent evaluation may also be undertaken for selected projects/activities from time to time.
2. Companies should allocate specific amount in their budgets for CSR activities. This amount may be related to profits after tax, cost of planned CSR activities or any other suitable parameter.
3. To share experiences and network with other organizations the company should engage with well established and recognized programmes /platforms which encourage responsible business practices and CSR activities. This would help companies to improve on their CSR strategies and effectively project the image of being socially responsible.
4. The companies should disseminate information on CSR policy, activities and progress in a structured manner to all their stakeholders and the public at large through their website, annual reports, and other communication media.

PROVISION FOR CSR IN COMPANIES BILL 2012

Till date it is very difficult exercise to analyze the spending of CSR by various firms and private companies and such information is not maintained at government level, even among the top 100 firms by revenue, there are many who don't report their CSR spends or even declare the social causes they support, that is because they are not required to do so by law and no provisions for CSR exists in the Companies Act, 1956 so currently the Ministry does not maintain such details. But all that will change when the new Companies Bill, 2012 (which has already been passed by the Lok Sabha) becomes a law.

The Companies Bill, 2012 incorporates a provision of CSR under Clause 135 which states that every company having net worth Rs. 500 crore or more, or a turnover of Rs. 1000 crore or more or a net profit of rupees five crore or more during any financial year, shall constitute a CSR Committee of the Board consisting of three or more Directors, including at least one Independent Director, to recommend activities for discharging corporate social responsibilities in such a manner that the company would spend at least 2 per cent of its average net profits of the previous three years on specified CSR activities. It is proposed to have detailed rules after passing of Companies Bill 2012 by Rajya Sabha to give effect to this provision.

According to Schedule-VII of Companies Bill, 2012 the following activities can be included by companies in their CSR Policies:-

(i) eradicating extreme hunger and poverty; (ii) promotion of education; (iii) promoting gender equality and empowering women; (iv) reducing child mortality and improving maternal health; (v) combating human immunodeficiency virus, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, malaria and other diseases; (vi) ensuring environmental sustainability; (vii) employment enhancing vocational skills; (viii) social business projects; (ix) contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set by the Central Government or the State Governments for socio-economic development and relief and funds for the welfare of the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women; and (x) such other matters as may be prescribed.

The Companies Bill, 2012, Clause 135 also provides for constitution of a CSR Committee of the Board. The CSR Committee is required to; (a) formulate and recommend to the Board, a CSR Policy which shall indicate the activities to be undertaken by the company as specified in Schedule VII; (b) recommend the amount of expenditure to be incurred on the activities referred to in clause (a); and (c) monitor the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy of the company from time to time; (d) The format for disclosure of CSR policy and the activities therein as part of Board's report will be prescribed in the rules once the Bill is enacted.

The data pack compiled by CSR identity.com together with Forbes India is revealing to some extent how much each company will have to fork out on CSR when they will bound by law and their actual spending for the financial year 2012.

GUIDELINES ON CSR FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

The Department of Public Enterprises had issued detailed guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for CPSEs in April, 2010 which have been issued formally to the Ministries/Departments for compliance in the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) under their administrative control.

THE PRESENT STUDY

If we look at the school education sector in totality, we find complete plurality and heterogeneity in terms of how schools under different managements (Govt. run, Private, Aided, etc.) function. The instructional facilities, physical and academic infrastructure vary from one school to another. We find there are schools catering to the rich people's children having ultra advanced facilities at one hand; on the other hand we find Govt. schools and several others deprived of even basic facilities. In fact, our school system is creating two parallel worlds of our own future citizens with "haves and have not's". Lots of funding is being claimed to be spent on improving schools by the government, however situation is not very encouraging. Of late, the business houses, corporate houses have come up to contribute and support schools of their vicinity in order to bring out some positive change in the lives of those children who are attending such schools in the hope of shaping their future. The present study attempted to look into one such CSR initiative having been started in the Gautam Buddha Nagar of the State of Uttar Pradesh in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the nuances of CSR activities taking place in the schools of Gautam Buddha Nagar of Uttar Pradesh in India. The study intended to collect and analyse information about the aspects of CSR activities being conducted in the identified schools and assess the impact of the same in terms of qualitative output in the selected schools.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive study and took up survey method to collect and the data. The nature of the study is qualitative and the study. The primary and secondary data were collected for analysis during the study. For collecting primary data, semi-structured questionnaire was used to get information from students, teachers and concerned corporate house. For secondary data, company's records, and information placed on the website of the company was retrieved.

SAMPLE

The sample of the study was Steria India Foundation – the organisation that is conducting CSR activities in and around Delhi and NCR and 25 institutions where such activities are being carried out. The students, teachers and the staff of Steria India Foundation also constituted the sample.

DISCUSSION

Steria India Foundation is the CSR arm of Steria India Limited, the India subsidiary of the French IT major – Steria. Steria India community philosophy is focused on 'education', for children from impoverished and rural backgrounds, studying in government schools located near its campuses in Chennai, Pune and Noida. The organisation claims to be giving special emphasis on 'computer literacy', 'English language skills, 'all round development' – with emphasis on the education of the girl child. Steria India Community Services begins in the primary school, with Steria sponsored teachers, play area equipment, computer lessons, nutritious milk supplements, lap-desks, school uniforms, footwear and so on. The organisation supports on these aspects as an ongoing process throughout middle and high school education of the students. It helps in setting up computer centres with English language learning software, mentorship, computer lessons, soft skills workshops, awareness campaigns on a host of issues from the environment to career choices, prep classes for board exams and so on. The Steria India model also gives due importance to extra-curricular skills, like sports, dramatics etc. through leadership clubs running in all Steria supported schools and specially hired professional coaches for sports activities. The objectives for Steria Community Services, as they pronounce, are not merely "charity", but to make the beneficiaries self sufficient to the extent possible, and thus, useful contributing members to society.

COMMUNITY SERVICE MODEL OF STERIA

The Community Service Model, developed and implemented in schools by Steria Foundation India, include - Computer Literacy, English Language, Counselling and Guidance & Employment. Other concerns mentioned include affordability of higher education, sports coaching and science laboratories. The Steria India Foundation Community Model includes; Setting up of computer centres, Setting up of school libraries, Setting up digital classrooms, Play area in primary schools and sports training for high schools, English language skills for high schools, Mentorship sessions for senior children, Teacher training sessions, Vocational skills, Environment awareness campaigns, Merit awards for outstanding academic performance, Summer Camps, etc.

The following are the schools / institutions where are CSR activities of Steria Foundation India are being carried out:

NOIDA KANYA INTER COLLEGE, BHANGEL

Noida Kanya (Girls) Inter College is located in Bhangel village in Noida and caters to 1100 girl students studying from Class 6 to Class 12. It is situated at 20 minutes drive from Steria office. This is a private school recognised by the government and caters to girl students in the age group of 9 to 18 years. The girls come from the surrounding villages and belong to economically backward sections of the community. This school project is being jointly implemented by Steria in partnership with its client – Boots.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the computer centre and library in 2007 in partnership with Boots, Programmes conducted include spelling competition, drawing competitions, art and craft workshops, life-skill workshops, etc.

SGSM HIGH SCHOOL DUJANA

The school is situated in Dujana village in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida, which is approximately 28 kms from Steria Noida office. There are 14 class rooms in the school. The total students in the school are 806. This school is sponsored by "The Co-operative Banking Group" - Steria client.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up a computer centre with 20 thin client computers and library in 2010, Programmes conducted include spelling competition, drawing competitions, summer camps, fun day/outing, henna & embroidery workshops, vermi - composting workshops, computer teacher sponsorship, etc.

ADARSH PRATHMIK VIDYALAYA, HAROLA – SEC 5, NOIDA

Adarsh Prathmik Vidyalaya, Sec 5, Harola in Noida, is a Government School with over 1715 students. The children whose parents are mainly daily wage workers come from the neighbouring community.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the computer centre and library in 2002 and later upgraded with the help of LTSB client, Conducted vaccination camps in partnership with Max India Foundation, Programmes conducted in the school include teacher training in basics of computers, leadership clubs, mentorship programme, football training, drawing competitions, summer camps, art/craft, theatre workshop, donation of durries (mats) for the classrooms, etc., Mentorship program for the existing as well as senior children who have graduated from the school.

POORV MADHYAMIK ABHINAV VIDYALAYA – SEC 12, NOIDA

Poorv Madhyamik Abhinav Vidyalaya (Middle School), Sector 12, Bisrakh, Gautambudh Nagar, is a government middle school which caters to the less privileged children coming from the surrounding urban areas of Sector 12 in Noida. Steria in partnership with Scottish Widows set up a computer centre and library in the school in 2005, when it was a primary school. The school has been upgraded to middle school in 2011. There are 191 children studying in this school from Class 6 to Class 8. 5 new computers were added in the existing computer centre to take the computer literacy programme forward.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Programmes conducted in the school include leadership clubs, mentorship programme, football training, drawing/poster making competitions, summer camps, art/craft, theatre workshop, tree plantation and environment related programmes, sports tournaments, children's day celebrations, etc., Each One Teach One Programme (EOTO) initiated to conduct regular classes, where staff volunteers along with their families participated.

SANSKAR KENDRA SCHOOL

Sanskar Kendra School in Noida is managed by Noida Lok Manch Education Committee. There are 560 children studying in classes 1st to 8th. Children of construction workers and riksha pullers from nearby villages attend the school. Mid day meals are provided to the children. As part of the nutrition plan, children of 1st standard are given a glass of milk everyday in their respective class rooms. Children, especially the seniors are encouraged to help in the school activities. A doctor visits the school once a week for general check up of the children.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the computer centre in partnership with Yorkshire Water in 2006, Programmes conducted in the school include sports training, fun day for the children, drawing/poster making competitions, vermin compost workshops, art/craft, theatre workshop, tree plantation and children's day celebrations, etc.

YASH MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Yash Memorial School is a middle school which caters to more than 747 children from low income groups studying from Nursery to Class 8.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the science lab with in partnership with LTSB in 2006, Programmes conducted include mentorship programme, vermin compost workshops, football training, spelling competition, drawing competitions, art and craft workshops, theatre training, environment quizzes and debates, etc.

SANKALP

Sankalp caters mainly to the children of construction workers in Gurgaon. Started about 9 years ago, as a roadside school, Sankalp has developed into a school which is open not only to children but also to housewives to learn tailoring and thus make a living for themselves. There are 672 children studying from Class 1 to Class 5 in this school, after which children are enrolled into mainstream Government schools.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up a computer centre, Support to 15 girls for their annual academic expenses every year, Nail art and manicure workshop, Programmes conducted include drawing competitions, art and craft workshops, annual sports day, etc.

ADARSH PRATHMIK VIDYALAYA – SEC 22

Adarsh Prathmik Vidyalaya is a Govt Primary School which caters to the less privileged children coming from the surrounding urban area of Sector 22 in Noida. Established in the year 1958, this school has 592 students. Steria is associated with the school since March 2007.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the computer centre and library, distributed flavoured milk once every week to all students for 2 years, Conducted EOTO (Each One Teach One) programme for a period of 4 months by 50 staff volunteers to address the short of teachers problem, other programmes conducted include drawing competitions, art and craft workshops, annual sports days and fun days, summer camps, training in football, karate and yoga, etc.

GOVERNMENT CO-ED. SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILLA – (DENMARK SCHOOL)

Government Co-Ed. Senior Secondary School Chilla, Mayur Vihar Ext. Delhi, is a Govt School which caters to children of the less privileged.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up the computer centre, career awareness sessions, merit awards for 12 students for outstanding academic performance every year, regular football & karate coaching classes, drawing and spelling competitions, conducted Life skill workshop session with senior students.

SANT VINOBA INTER COLLEGE, BAIDPURA, NOIDA

Sant Vinoba Inter College is situated in Village Baidpura in Greater Noida which is about 15 kms away from Steria Noida SEZ office. This is a private school, which is partially aided till Class 10. The school has strength of 1538 students studying in Class 6 to Class 12. The school has 18 classrooms and 17 teachers. Steria is associated with this school from December 2011.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Set up a computer centre with 20 new computers, career awareness sessions, 6 students awarded scholarships for college education, organized summer camp, drawing and spelling competitions conducted for all the children as part of One Day Challenge activities, merit awards given to 12 students for outstanding academic performance every year.

APNA GHAR WELFARE SOCIETY

Apna Ghar is a primary school located in Barola village. The school began in the year 2008, and now caters to 135 students from Nursery till Class 4. A crèche facility is also available for the very young ones. The school follows the NCERT pattern of education and after Class 4, the school ensures that the children are enrolled into the mainstream schools.

CSR ACTIVITIES BY STERIA FOUNDATION

Steria India Foundation is sponsoring the salary of the computer teacher since Nov 2012, Donated books for library.

SHRI DAYANAND INTER COLLEGE, BAMBAVAD

Shri Dayanand Inter College is situated in Bambavad Village, Dadri. The school is located 30 kms away from the Steria office. This is a government school with strength of 1150 students studying from Classes 6 to 12. The school is affiliated under Uttar Pradesh Board. There are 25 classrooms in the school. Steria is associated with the school since October 2012.

STERIA INVOLVEMENT

Donated books for library as a part of students empowerment programme, a computer centre with 20 thin client systems and supporting servers was set up in early 2013.

CONCLUSION

The above described activities of Steria Foundation in the schools of Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh are commendable indeed. Feedback received from students and teachers substantiated the claims made by the organisation. The qualitative data received from the respondents accentuated the fact that the quality of teaching learning has certainly improved in the target schools. Students have better exposure of computers and related curricular areas. Teachers also feel contented with the support that their respective schools received from the Steria Foundation.

The outcome of the study has implications for the schools as well as corporate houses that are in the process of expanding their CSR activities. It is really very nice to see that the CSR initiatives of corporate sectors touch lives of so many children and indirectly of their families as well and brings the glaze of confidence on their faces thus making their place in the hearts of those who are the end recipients of these CSR activities.

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