Role of Corporate Social Responsibility on Empowerment of Women through Education

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Abstract:

This study shall reflect the very essence of CSR engagements by several organizations towards school education, higher education in dynamic service sector, computer based functional literacy and skill development for women employability to address the education challenges in Tamil Nadu. The evolution of CSR is as old as trade and business for any of corporation. Industrialization and impact of business on the society led to completely new vision is discussed elaborately. Different Phases of CSR approaches is been addressed. The importance of empowerment in women and the relevant CSR contribution towards education is been focused in this current study.
Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Corporate Social Responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

"The phrase Corporate Social Responsibility was first mentioned in 1953 with the publication of Bowen's Social Responsibility of Businessmen" (Corporate watch report, 2006). By 80's and 90's academic CSR was taken into discussion. The first company to implement CSR was Shell in 1998.(Corporate watch report, 2006) With well informed and educated general people it has become threat to the corporate and CSR is the solution to it.1990 was CSR as a standard industry with companies like Price Water house Copper and KPMG. CSR evolved beyond code of conduct and reporting it started taking initiative in NGO's, multi stakeholder, ethical trading. (Corporate watch report, 2006).

The history of CSR in India has its four phases which run parallel to India's historical development and has resulted in different approaches towards CSR. However the phases are not static and the features of each phase may overlap other phases.

In the first phase charity and philanthropy were the main drivers of CSR. Culture, religion, family values and tradition and industrialization had an influential effect on CSR. In the pre-industrialization period which lasted till 1850, wealthy merchants shared a part of their wealth with the wider society by way of setting up temples for a religious cause.

In the second phase, during the independence movement, there was increased stress on Indian Industrialists to demonstrate their dedication towards the progress of the society. This was when

Mahatma Gandhi introduced the notion of "trusteeship", according to which the industry leaders had to manage their wealth so as to benefit the common man.

The third phase of CSR (1960–80) had its relation to the element of "mixed economy", emergence of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and laws relating labour and environmental standards. During this period the private sector was forced to take a backseat. The public sector was seen as the prime mover of development.

In the fourth phase (1980) until the present) Indian companies started abandoning their traditional engagement with CSR and integrated it into a sustainable business strategy. In 1990s the first initiation towards globalization and economic liberalization were undertaken. Controls and licensing system were partly done away with which gave a boost to the economy the signs of which are very evident today.

CONTEXTUALIZING CSR IN INDIA

CSR is not a new concept in India. Corporations like the Tata Group, the Aditya Birla Group, and Indian Oil Corporation, to name a few, have been involved in serving the community ever since their inception. Many other organizations have been doing their part for the society. CSR has become increasingly prominent in the Indian corporate scenario because organizations have realized that besides growing their businesses it is also vital to build trustworthy and sustainable relationships with the community at large. Another reason fuelling this rapid adoption of CSR is the state of the Indian society.

Though India is one of the fastest growing economies, socio-economic problems like poverty, illiteracy, lack of healthcare etc. are still ubiquitous and the government has limited resources to tackle these challenges. This scenario has opened up several areas for businesses to contribute towards social development. Today, CSR in India has gone beyond merely charity and donations. It has become an integral part of the corporate strategy. Companies have CSR teams that devise specific policies, strategies and goals for their CSR programs and set aside budgets to support them. These programs, in many cases, are based on a clearly defined social philosophy or are closely aligned with the companies' business expertise. Employees become the backbone of these initiatives and volunteer their time and contribute their skills, to implement them. CSR Programs could range from overall development of a community to supporting specific causes like education, environment, healthcare etc. For example, organizations like Bharat Petroleum

Corporation Limited, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, and Hindustan Unilever Limited, adopt villages where they focus on holistic development. They provide better medical and sanitation facilities, build schools and houses, and help the villagers become self-reliant by teaching them vocational and business skills. On the other hand GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals' CSR programs primarily focus on health and healthy living. They work in tribal villages where they provide medical checkup and treatment, health camps and health awareness programs. Many CSR 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.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Status and the empowerment of women through Education has been an important topic of discussion and debate from the dawn of history however, women empowerment through has been an area of priority of most of the welfare state and popular democracy.

. In this context, the present research is interested in analyzing the following questions:

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives shall be considered for the present study:

1. To study the overall Educational empowerment measures for women initiated by the Tamil Nadu Government at Coimbatore District.

2. To study the overall Educational empowerment measures for women initiated through CSR Funding and Policies at Coimbatore District.

EDUCATION

According the terms of Social and National Development, Education refers to following divisions,

      i. Social Transformation

      ii. Modernization

      iii. Productivity

      iv. Community Participation and

      v. Acquisition of Values

EMPOWERMENT

According to Business Dictionary, empowerment means, "A management practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction"[1].

Empowerment is a word widely used, but seldom defined. Long before the word became popular women were speaking about gaining control over their lives, and participating in the decisions that affect them in the home and community in government and international development policies. The word 'empowerment' captures this sense of gaining control of participating in decision making. More recently the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies, including international organizations and the United Nations.

According to Pillai (1995), "empowerment is an active, multi dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as aims". Power has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved.[2]

Strategies of Empowerment

Empowerment Strategies are varied and refer to those strategies which enable women to realize their full potentials. They consist of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and finally factors which would free them from the shackles of custom beliefs and practices. Unless they themselves become conscious of the oppression meted out to them and show initiative to push forward it would not be possible to change their status much. Some of the empowerment mechanisms could be identified as follows:[3]

• Literacy higher Education

• Better health care for herself and her children

• Higher age at marriage

• Greater work participation in modernized sector

• Necessary financial and service support for self employment

• Opportunities for higher positions of power

• Complete knowledge of her rights and above all

• Self- reliance, self respect and dignity of being a woman.

Women Empowerment

According to UNESCO, women empowerment means the following:

• Having decision-making power of their own

• Having access to information and resources for taking proper decision.

• Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or.).

• Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.

• Having positive thinking on the ability to make change.

• Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.

• Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means.

• Involving in the growth process and changes that are never ending and self-initiated.

• Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

The women Empowerment frame work reconceptualises the development objectives of gender responsive programming. Rather than focusing in economic objectives such as enabling women to be more productive or use their labor time more effectively in order to reap the benefits of development, it views women's equality and women's empowerment as central development objectives in their own rights.[4]

Women empowerment is a bottom up process of transforming gender power relations, developing awareness of women's subordination and building their capacity to challenge the power relation. It encompasses a wide array of things that are common like economic independence, effective communication, discrete thinking etc.

Educational Empowerment

It is often argued that education is a powerful tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. Indeed, the different organs of United Nations (e.g. UNICEF) and experts on women's liberation argue for women's education as the basic step in women's equality. Education is a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self confidence required to participate fully in the development process.

In order to neutralize the accumulated advantages of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favour of women. The national education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision- makers and administrators.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The main objectives of this section are the following: firstly, to have a thorough knowledge of the works on the area of study, secondly, to get a comprehensive idea on the research methods adopted by various scholars in different disciplines and places and thirdly to identify the research gap available in the area of research and finally to formulate the objectives of the study and to delimit the area of research by identifying the variables. Further it shall help the researcher to identify the suitable methodology to be adopted to pursue the research in an innovative manner.

Geraldine Forbes (1998) in "*The New Cambridge History of India: Women in modern India*"[9], highlights the role of male reformers in the 19th century India for the upliftment of women from the traditional mind set. The researcher underlines the arguments of the Indian leaders of the 19th century that educating the women is the best means of emancipation of women. According to his findings, education helps so many women to understand their problems well. Understanding the problem is the first step for the solution. Education helps the uneducated women of rural India to understand the dynamics of various day to day problems. The author argues that women movements in India were strong even before national movement in India. Even today Women should be empowered to play new roles in the society with new perspectives. They should be taught about their rights and privileges in the society. The researcher highlights the role of Indian women from 1930s until the early 1950s and argues that from 1940s onwards women were part of all movements, conservative and radical and began to view themselves differently. Increasingly, they found social feminisms wanting and began to borrow from more radical ideological framework specially Marxism and its offshoots. However, by independence in 1947 the hegemony of the women organization, who claimed to speak for all women, had been destroyed. The author argues that the promises of the freedom movement were honoured only in laws, regulations and policy documents than in practice.

Nalini Visvanathan , Lyne Duggan, Laurie Nisonoff and Nan Wiegersma, (1997) in their research work entitled, *The women, Gender and Development Reader*[5] discuss the following

topics: Theories of Women ; Gender and Development ; Households and families; Women in the Global Economy; International women in Social transformation; and Women Organizing Themselves for Change. The study touches upon various aspects of women empowerment and emphasises the need for global efforts for women empowerment.

Vlassoff, Carol (1994)[6] in his article *"From Rags to Riches: The Impact of Rural Development on Women's Status in an Indian Village"* systematically highlights the role of the forces of prosperity, modernization and more wide spread education for girls in empowering them and liberating them from the patriarchal structures. He argues that their education and economic independence help them to take independent decision and liberate them from their husbands and relatives. Education has helped the rural girls to be self assertive and independent. He advocates that the best women empowerment measure is providing them proper education. He further argues that greater prosperity, modernization and more widespread education for girls has actually reinforced patriarchal structures by defining an economically dependent role for women relatives and their husbands. Moreover it is only in theory that education is seen as a means of financial independence for girls, in practice girls are educated to see a husband, not to get a job.

Bharat Jhunjhunwla and **Madu Jhunjhunwala** in their research work, (2004)[7], *"Indian Approaches to Women' Empowerment"* systematically explore the weakness of Indian educational system in addressing the challenge of Women illiteracy and suggest that the present traditional mentality of the policy makers should be changed and new policies should be formulated to address the problem of the rural women. The need of the hour is liberating women from the clutches of illiteracy. Similary **Bharati Raj**, in his study, *Women of India: Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods,* - also explores the status of women from the colonial period to the Post colonial India and systematically explains the reasons for the plight of Indian rural women in spite of our independence and insists the need for a comprehensive plan to address women illiteracy.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

'Women empowerment' means initiatives taken by Tamil Nadu Government and CSR Policies of Companies in Tamil Nadu for empowering women through education during the period 2012-

2018. The first definition of 'Women' here, is "women who belong to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) i.e. the income groups having an annual income of Rs.24,000/- and below who get some benefits based on their educational qualification".

The second definition of 'Women' is the College girls who are getting some benefits from the State Government.

The third definition of 'Women' is the school going girls who belong to the first generation and BPL, studying from 8th to 12th standard from the rural areas of Coimbatore District.

'Through Education' means governmental benefits given to the women and girls from the schools and colleges who belong to the BPL because of their entry into any stage of education.

'Case Study' here means various educational empowerment measures for women initiated by CSR Policies by the Companies in Coimbatore District during the period 2015-2018 and the government private rural schools.

ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

It is assumed that various empowerment measures initiated and implemented by the Tamil Nadu State government and CSR Activities of the Companies located at Coimbatore District through education would empower the women.

METHOD ADOPTED FOR THIS STUDY

The researcher shall employ case study method to investigate the various Educational empowerment measures initiated by Tamil Nadu government in particular with Coimbatore District for women of BPL of rural areas. "A case study is an in-depth study of an institution or an event or a person or a policy". Here, 'women empowerment through education' is the case for which various measures initiated for women education by CSR Model shall be studied.

The study shall insist on major focus of which to analyze and compare the women education empowerment measures initiated by Tamil Nadu government and CSR Model through education for poor women who belong to BPL.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

Women empowerment is an important area of study in the modern era of gender equality. The study reports on the educational empowerment measures initiated by the Government of Tamil Nadu and the CSR Policies of the Companies at Coimbatore District for a period three years – 2015 - 2018 and the initiatives taken by the Government at Coimbatore District for empowerment of Women. Application of qualitative techniques focused on the settings, theoretical aspects of the study, importance of women empowerment, importance of education, role of CSR in empowering women through education, objectives of education, status of women over history, types of empowerment, need for the study, objectives and hypotheses. The second objective been analyzed by concentrating on the Review of related Literature. Various works on women empowerment and educational empowerment been systematically reviewed to identify the research gaps.

By adopting qualitative technique, the educational women empowerment measures initiated by the Tamil Nadu Government and the CSR Policies of the Companies located at Coimbatore is been critically analysed in the particular study period. The UN's millennium goal of eradicating illiteracy from the earth before 2015 may be a day dream, if the governments fail to empower women. Empowerment of women consists of four important factors:

• First empowering the uneducated and unemployed women to encourage their future generation for better education. Few measures is been taken it from the government but still, it needs a lot of awareness programs and incentive measures through monetary and other benefits.

• Secondly, measures with strategic alignment should be focused like empowering the educated, unemployed and underemployed women from the poor sectors by creating job opportunities and assisting them to be independent entrepreneurs. From the company's focus still good quantum of vision towards of Women centric opportunities can be provided, it needs a lot of innovativeness in long term schemes of microfinance, self help groups, small industries, cottage industries etc. to be implemented.

Keeping this background in mind, the researcher realizes that studying the women educational empowerment initiatives of Tamil Nadu Government in association with the CSR Funding Policies of the Companies located at Coimbatore District and the empowerment measures initiated by the Government and Private partners is an important area for further research.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Women empowerment is an important area of research which is multidimensional in nature. Educational research, like any other research is an unending phenomenon. This piece of research shall concentrate on the women Empowerment through Education measures initiated by Tamil Nadu Government and the CSR pattern of funding towards education.

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