

## **CSR in Higher Education**

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**Abstract:** *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the commitment by business to enhance economic development, while at the same time improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families and the society at large. Components of CSR are corporate governance, business ethics, and workplace and business relations. To get good reputation and a competitive advantage, CSR is one of the highly preferred strategies by higher education. Today to survive in a highly competitive scenario, higher education institutions and universities are in need of strong corporate strategies. CSR facilitates continuous improvement in higher education institutes with external impact and internal capacity, performance and management.*

**Keywords:** *CSR, Higher Education, CSR Elements, Business ethics*

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### **I. Introduction**

The phrase Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was coined in 1953 with the publication of Bowen's 'Social Responsibility of Businessmen'. Further in 1984, the renowned Management Consultant Peter Drucker spoke of the need to turn social problems into economic opportunities. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as, "The continuous commitment by the business organization to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large." European Union (EU) describes CSR as "The concept that an enterprise is accountable for its impact on all relevant stakeholders. It is the continuing commitment by business to behave fairly and responsibly, and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the work force and their families as well as of the local community and society at large."

CSR can be considered as a crucial bridge between organizations and society and also a means which can create awareness among corporates, NGOs, civic bodies and government about the values and importance of social responsibility. CSR can be considered as a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programs that are integrated into business operations, supply chains and decision making throughout the organization. It simply implies the involvement in addressing the legal, ethical, commercial and other expectations which the society has for business and take decisions which balance the claims of all stakeholders. CSR drivers are globalization, deregulation of companies, rise of corporate power, corporate crises, rise of civil society and activism and ICT revolution. One of the New Act's which came into effect on April 1, 2014 has been to impose compulsory CSR obligations upon Indian companies and foreign companies operating in India. These obligations mainly come in the form of mandatory amounts where companies must contribute to remediating social problems. CSR is now widely regarded as a legitimate dimension of global corporate decision making. Social responsibility is very important and relevant topic for business today. Business leaders are expected to lead by values – legal values, moral values, and socially responsible values.

The paper addresses CSR in higher education, areas of CSR practices in higher education and different aspects considered to implement CSR in higher education followed with conclusion. The topic under consideration is purely a descriptive one and therefore only secondary sources of data are used. The information has been gathered from authentic books, journals and articles for the study.

### **II. CSR In Higher Education**

CSR as a strategic practice, is a key to organizational success, which can positively impact three elements like economic, social and environment which contribute to a healthy bottom line and long-term sustainability. As per schedule – VII of company bill 2012, promotion of education is considered as CSR policy of company. The Act provides mandatory contribution towards CSR with education being specified as an eligible activity. The higher education sector is expected to be a major beneficiary of this mandatory CSR provision resulting in improved funding for the institutions. The term USR -University Social Responsibility states the relevance of social responsibility of the university. The changes and challenges universities face with regard to operations are in terms of mass expansion of higher education, increased accessibility of higher education, internationalization, student access and mobility, decrease in public expenditure, diversification and

commercialization of higher education, and the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT). All these have impacted on the delivery of quality education as well as on the notions of autonomy, academic freedom, its changing focus and responsibilities towards society.

Under the new circumstances such as the globalization, privatization of the education institutions and competition in higher education industry, many higher education institutions are struggling in order to compete and survive in the changing face of the industry ( Gumpert 2000, Gioia and Thomas 1996). During this adaptation some institutions are discovering the importance of corporate image, corporate identity, corporate reputation and mainly CSR as a reputation and an advantage building strategy (Stensaker 2007, Melewar and Akel 2005). By implementing CSR strategies, higher education institutions are now using this approach as a part of their competitive strategy. Hence by developing such strategies higher education institutions are also discovering the opportunity to move the focus beyond the classroom into their own institutional operations. Moreover higher education are expected to function as social institutions actively for the development of individual learning and human capital, the socialization and cultivation of citizens and political loyalties, the preservation of knowledge, and the fostering of other legitimate pursuits for the nation-state (Gumpert 2000). Thus the behavior and actions of the higher education institutions reflect directly back to the society through their alumni and through their daily operations , Since higher education institutions have a direct and immediate impact on the society, therefore implementing CSR strategies in a higher education institution should be considered in order to obtain a true competitive advantage and a positive reputation. Moreover practicing what is taught and thereby generating a real example of the academic knowledge can create a unique proposition for any higher education institution. Thus responsible higher education practices not only contribute to the well-being of the shareholders and the public in general, but also these practices will increasingly become a long-term value proposition for the institution itself. (H.Kashyap, 2014). Hence in this competitive edge, the role of CSR as a subject in higher education is rapidly evolving and most business schools today are providing CSR courses and training to ambitious students to make them responsible citizens. CSR facilitates continuous improvement in higher education institutes with external impact and internal capacity, performance and management.

### III. Areas of CSR Practices In Higher Education

In higher education, different areas of CSR practices are discussed below:

- 1) Design of courses related to social responsibility subject: Higher education institutions should design the courses around social responsibility subject open to students and staff to promote human rights and social inclusion values and ethics among them.
- 2) CSR on Environment: It covers the activities to reduce the consumption and waste and to create further understanding on the importance of conserving and protecting the environment. For example , higher education can initiate different activities like awareness programmes about green cities or cleanliness, conservation of forest, birds conservation , reduce pollution and sustainability of the environment.
- 3) Recycling of Wasted papers: Students can be trained to use the wasted papers and prepare paper bags of different size which can be distributed to local health foundation for their self earning .
- 4) CSR at Workplace : It includes the activities commonly attempt to maintain high standards of recruitment, development and retention of employees via employee volunteerism, health, safety and welfare, sports and wellness programmes, employee training and employees' communication channels. Other activities stimulate innovation for green business and technology.
- 5) CSR on Community: It is based on institutions investment to communities such as donation of money, time, services, technology, experts and other resources to make a positive contribution towards local communities. Higher education institutions should contribute social and educational supportive activities for women, children and youth, who live under severe social discrimination and poverty in nearby location .
- 6) CSR by establishing Research Center: Higher education institutions should conduct scientific research, training and vocational programs, publications and documentation of the social, economic and cultural development of the civil society by establishing research center.
- 7) CSR towards Stake holders: The activities should cover collaborations among stakeholders like students, parents, alumni, organizations and government departments.

### IV. Different Aspects Considered To Implement CSR in Higher Education

From the above discussion, it is clear that use of CSR in higher education is emerging in competitive environment . The following major aspects need to be addressed while implementing CSR in higher education:

- CSR strategy should be implemented with the mission of higher education institutions.
- Highly motivated staff and management's involvement and willingness in supporting and implementing social responsibility actions is an important signal to faculty, staff, students, alumni and other stakeholders that the institution's citizenship engagement is an operational priority.

- Since today's students and potential students do not have enough theoretical knowledge of the concept of CSR, so there is a strong desire to change the structure of education system for the successful implementation of CSR in higher education.
- There exists some gap between perceived and desired importance awarded to CSR contents in academic programs, showing a high demand of education in issues concerned to responsible relationships with employees and consumers and environmental sustainability.
- Higher education institutions need to boost its relationship with host communities through constant social supports.
- There is need to take follow-ups, evaluation, control mechanisms and support systems necessary to ensure that the academic services provided to society are consistent with the institutions' objectives.
- Higher education institutions should reform the syllabi and include CSR subject at the operational level and at the academic level.

## V. Conclusion

Modern public universities should be aware of the real necessity of updating any educational program according to society's requirements. By considering CSR as source of sustainable socioeconomic welfare, it has a great potential to contribute to marketing of university academic curricula. Collaborations between government, educational institutions and corporate will accelerate educational reform and thus bring about the desired social development. B-Schools must add CSR related subjects in their curricula. There is a need of creating a centralized governing body of CSR and PAN India CSR activities should be started after its consultation. Government must help and encourage by promoting the education related activities by any corporate group. There is a need that national governments can provide a mainstream evaluation mechanism to set rules for the system, bringing more motivation for companies to switch CSR strength from other fields to education. There is a need that NGOs as well as policy-makers should address education problems in developing countries through the means of CSR, so as to maximize its contributions to education. In order to compete in the changing education industry, higher education institutions must recognize that their own actions should reflect the values and norms. CSR helps the higher education institutions to attract skilled labors and best students and benefits in terms of submission of balanced report in economic environment, social performance and the impact of its operations. There is a need that management should involve actively to support and implement social responsibility actions which is the important signal to faculty, staff, students, alumni and other stake holders and reflects the institution's image.

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