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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CSR IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the underlying relationship between corporate social responsibility and higher educational institutions and calls for a more clearly defined goals for universities to involve themselves with the wider world where the objective is not only to increase the profit and maximize the wealth but also to improve the environmental and social impact of doing the business. It analyses the current status of higher education in India, strength and the challenges faced by this industry and aims to establish that, by incorporating CSR into the governance of higher education institutions it can empower and transform the society especially in a developing country like India where significant disparity exists in terms of access, equity and quality of higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the Academy of Management Review, Corporate social responsibility is the corporate self-regulation integrated into the business model which goes beyond compliance and engages in actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law, firms financial interest and international norms. Education is perceived as the basic and powerful tool that links economic, environmental and societal aspects together under sustainable development strategy and helps to move the individuals, households, society and nation to more sustainably developed future. It was explained by Antal, 1992; Lindgreen Swaen, and Maon, 2009; the literature on corporate social responsibility recognizes that implementing CSR depends not only on organizational actors participating in CSR initiatives but also on the social context within which CSR occurs. CSR has been called a "moving target" because the external contexts within which organizations operate are continuously changing and increasingly complex.

Defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The term corporate social responsibility (CSR) has many definitions.

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The green paper of European Commission (2001) defines corporate social responsibility as "A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" The document identifies two distinct dimensions of CSR: internal and external. From this view, socially responsible practices within a company primarily involve employees and relate to issues such as investing in human capital, health, and safety, and managing change, while environmentally responsible practices relate mainly to the management of natural resources used in the production. For the external dimension, CSR extends into the local community and involves a wide range of stakeholders, including business partners and suppliers, customers, public authorities, and NGOs representing local communities, as well as the environment (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Similarly, the more recent ISO 26000 defines CSR as "the responsibility of an organization for the impact that its decisions and activities (products, services, and process) has on society and the environment, by means of an ethical and transparent behavior that takes into consideration the expectations of all interested parties". While Nazari, Parvizi, and Emami (2012) argue that CSR can be broadly defined as the activities making companies good citizens who contribute to society's welfare beyond their own self-interests. Kumar, Murphy, and Balsari (2001) synthesized these different CSR strands in India and proposed four models of CSR. These are (a) the ethical model, based on Gandhi's trusteeship theory,

calling for voluntary commitment to public welfare; (b) the statist model, based on state-driven policies, including state ownership and extensive corporate regulation; (c) the liberal model, based on Milton Friedman's conceptualization of CSR as primarily focused on owner objectives; and (d) the stakeholder model, based on Freeman's concept of stakeholder responsiveness. Universities are considered the most appropriate societal actor in educating future generations. Many authors have identified a significant gap between the theoretical thinking and development of academic CSR models and the incorporation of the concept in real business practices. In addition, a study has revealed the increasing tendency for universities and business schools to include CSR in their syllabi (Mahoney, 1990). Others, however, have attempted to propose and identify different teaching methods and approaches at the university level (McDonald, 2004). Grigore, Stancu, and Zaharia (2013) argue that social responsibility of higher education concentrates on the responsibility of students, academics, staff, and the community.

This is mainly expressed through the ethical behavior of academics and staff, honesty and moral conduits, and performance of higher education institutions, all of which should contribute to the general development of society. Grigore et al. add that the concept of university social responsibility emerged as a consequence of the roles that universities play in society. They note that the integration of CSR into the university curricula is a process that needs time, but can lead to a spread of knowledge to students, faculty, and other stakeholders. Several international and regional initiatives are in favor of increasing CSR education. Some of those initiatives are discussed below. It is very important to incorporate the CSR into the Higher education industry. If it is added to the curricula of a university, it will have access to thousands of students. If it is unified and mandated nationwide the access is to the crores of students, who are the potential employees and managers, academicians and business people. The other important reason for incorporating CSR in higher education institution is that, by CSR it can stretch the benefits of education to economically backward segment of the society, women and rural population etc.

The Initiative of the Bucharest Declaration on Ethical Values and Principles of Higher Education in the Europe Region, adopted at the 2004 International Conference on Ethical and Moral Dimensions for Higher Education and Science in Europe, provides a framework for problems associated with the ethical and moral dimensions at universities. It includes the following principles. Universities cannot be regarded simply as "factories" producing scientific and technological experts within a global knowledge economy. Universities must have key intellectual and cultural responsibilities in a knowledge-based society. The values and ethical standards that universities espouse will not only have a crucial influence over the academic, cultural, and political development of their academics, students, and staff but also help shape the moral contours of society at large, promoting the highest possible ethical standards. High ethical standards should be respected and put into effect not only at a rhetorical level, but in every aspect of the work of institutions, including their internal governance and management, engagement with external stakeholders, and their teaching and research programs. Thus, the major points of the Bucharest Declaration (2004) support the promotion of CSR education and research in all universities.CSR in IndiaAs per government of India mandate corporates with at least 5 crores net profit or turnover more than 1000 crores or net worth more than 500 crores have to devote 2% of average net profits of last 3 years to Corporate Social Responsibility. Schedule VII defines the range of activities that would qualify as CSR activities. In order to streamline the philanthropic activities and ensure more accountability and transparency, the government of India made it mandatory for companies to undertake CSR activities under the Companies Act, 2013. The concept of CSR is defined in clause 135 of the Act. Under this clause, these companies are supposed to set aside at least 2% of their average profit in the last three years for CSR activities. The law has listed out a wide spectrum of activities under CSR, which cover activities such as promotion of education, gender equity and women's empowerment, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, eradication of extreme poverty, contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund and other central funds, social business projects, reduction in child mortality, improving maternal health, environmental sustainability and employment enhancing vocational skills among others. The companies can carry out these activities by collaborating either with an NGO or through their own trusts and foundations or by pooling their resources with another company. The law also entails setting up of a CSR committee which shall be responsible for decisions on CSR expenditure and type of activities to be undertaken. This committee shall consist of three or more directors, with at least one independent director whose presence will ensure a certain amount of democracy and diversity in the decision-making process. The law is very significant, because India is at the threshold of the demographic dividend, and there is an urgent need for the creation of human and physical capital to reap its rewards. Investment in education, health, skill development and social infrastructure will enhance capabilities of the youth by improving their nutritional, skill and educational level, which in turn will better their employment prospects.

Traditionally, this has been the responsibility of the government, but since public delivery of goods and services has been riddled with corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency and the welfare schemes are plugged with leakages, CSR is being seen as an alternative to the governmental provision of merit goods. CSR will increase the availability of funds for welfare activities and may lead to delivery of goods and services to the people in a cost-effective manner. The clause on environmental sustainability will help in bringing down pollution and emission of greenhouse gases and will help in compliance with international norms and regulations. Therefore, the clause on CSR is a step towards achieving social and environmental sustainability, which will benefit society in future. In the first section, the trend of CSR expenditure incurred by the top firms in the country in the last three years and the changes that have occurred in the wake of the enactment of the new Act have been looked at. The second section highlights the positive correlation between profits and CSR and how this relationship gets accentuated as the firm size increases. In the third section, we have detailed the types of CSR activities undertaken by various companies across ten major industries in India. Disclosure of CSR Activities Made Compulsory: Prior to 2012-13, many firms were voluntarily making donations and spending on community development and mitigation of environmental pollution. It is only since 2012-13 that firms have started allocating funds for CSR activities specifically. This was in response to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) circular dated August

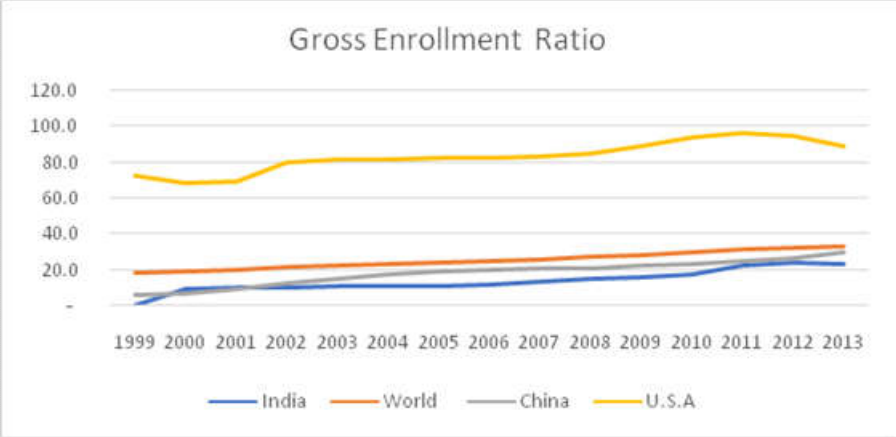
2012, which mandated all top 100 listed companies to include business responsibility report as a part of their annual report. Therefore, the year 2012-13 marks a turning point, where we can see a marked difference in the CSR initiatives adopted by the firms. We have compared the donations made and CSR expenditure incurred by firms in the last three years, using firm-level data from Prowess (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy). Even though it was not mandatory to spend on CSR initiatives in 2012-13, there was a marked increase in the average CSR expenditure by the firms in 2012-13 in response to the passage of the Act in August 2013, as compared to the previous year.

Private Degree Colleges, In Academic year 2014-15, the strength of the teaching faculty in universities and colleges has gone up to 12.61 lakhs as compared to 10.49 lakhs teachers in the previous year. Out of 12.61 lakh teachers, 84.66% teachers were in colleges and the remaining 15.34% in universities. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. The total estimated student enrolment is 32336234 out of which nearly 54% are male and rest 46% are female students.

Current CSR Spending in India

Industry	Health	Education	Community Development	Environment
Oil & Gas	23.50%	35.29%	29.41%	11.76%
Automobile	40.00%	10.00%	40.00%	10.00%
Consumer Durables	24.76%	21.34%	15.25%	28.75%
Iron & Steel	35.29%	23.53%	35.29%	5.88%
Banking & Financial Services	8.57%	20.00%	48.57%	35.00%
Power	10.00%	10.00%	45.00%	35.00%
Infrastructure	8.35%	30.55%	44.44%	16.66%
Cement	22.20%	25.00%	29.00%	23.80%
Paper &Pulp	19.90%	24.10%	18.00%	38.00%
Pharmaceutical	30.00%	28.00%	22.00%	20.00%
Average	22.26%	22.78%	32.70%	22.49%

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Trend
India	..	9.5	9.7	10.2	10.7	11.0	10.7	11.5	13.2	15.1	16.1	17.9	22.9	24.4	23.9	
China	6.5	7.7	10.0	12.8	15.6	17.9	19.3	20.5	20.8	20.9	22.5	23.9	24.9	27.2	30.2	
U.S.A	72.2	68.1	69.0	79.3	81.3	81.5	82.1	82.1	83.0	85.0	88.6	94.2	96.3	94.8	88.8	
World	18.3	19.0	20.0	21.5	22.6	23.4	24.1	24.9	25.7	26.8	27.8	29.3	31.0	32.2	32.8	



Source: UNESCO statistics; Education: Gross enrolment ratio by level of education

Higher Education in India

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. In the last decade the country has witnessed a particularly high growth rate in student enrolment at a CAGR of 10.8% and institutions at 9%.The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the Centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission. Currently there are total 744 Universities in India which are from 46 Central Universities, 343 State universities, 123 deemed to be Universities and 232 private Universities. Other institutions include 40760 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. Total enrolment in higher education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage to the eligible official population (18-23 years) in a given school year. Estimated Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 23.0%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 17.1% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 11.3%. GER for the male population at all India level is 23.9%. Similarly, GER for female population at all India level is 22.0%. For international comparability, GER has also been calculated taking 18-22 years Population and it comes out to be 26.6 at All India Level. College density, i.e. the number of colleges per lakh eligible population (population in the age-group 18-23 years) varies from 7 in Bihar to 60 in Puducherry as compared to All India average of 26.

Distance enrolment constitutes 12.15% of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 45.39% are female students. Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Universities and Colleges is 25.

Statement of problem

Access, Equity and Quality are the fundamental challenges faced by the higher education sector. The Indian Higher Education system is characterized by large rural-urban, different classes of society and gender divide. These issues are addressed by this study in the context of CSR activities incorporated into the governance of higher educational institutions.

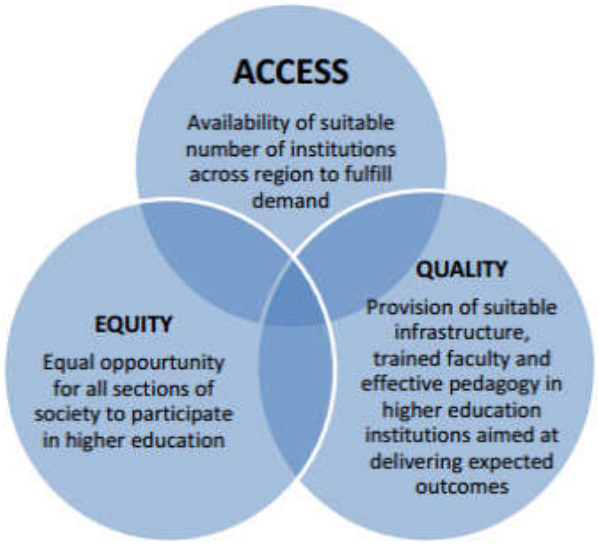
Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the current status of education industry giving emphasis to the higher education sector in India.
- To find out the different levels of challenges and problems prevalent in the Indian higher education sector.
- To ascertain how CSR can effectively help to resolve the major problems faced by the higher education sector.

Issues with Higher Education

The main issues with higher education industry in India is in three areas; access, equity and quality.



There are significant differences in Number of Colleges and GER of urban and rural India: India has a rural population of 83.3 Crore which is 70% of total population, whereas only 56% Colleges are located in Rural Area. The urban population which constitutes only 30%, has access to 44% of colleges. This clearly indicates the lack of accessibility faced by the rural students, which is evidenced by the wide contrast of GER among the rural and urban population.

Lack of Quality

The higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation in so much so that a NASSCOM- Report-2005 has said that not more than 15 percent of graduates of general education and 25-30per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment.

First, the quality norms of which are not comparable with international standards can't be maintained by the higher education institute of rural areas. Secondly, the enforcement process is not stringent. Further political interference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these intuitions in ensuring the desired quality standards. This is a serious concern that quality of the graduates makes them employable and productive in the job market and will enable them to compete in the national and international market. This also very seriously affects the reputation of the workforce of India. As per Higher Education in India- Moving towards global relevance and competitiveness report by EY, while India has second largest higher education enrollment in the world after China, and the largest number of Higher education institutions in the world, only 6 institutes are included in World University ranking for top 500 universities for the year 2014-15.

Inadequate number of Faculty

The student-teacher ratio, on the whole, is at a lamentable state. While it is still lower in the urban areas, the rural areas take the brunt of the scene with the ratios being at a very high rate. Around 35% of faculty positions in state universities and 40% in central universities are lying vacant. While enrolment in higher education has grown 6 times in the last 30 years, faculty strength has only grown 4 times as is amply reflected in the increasing student-faculty ratio, it has raised from 14 in 1980 to 25 in 2014. The student-faculty ratio in the US and China is 13.6 and 16.8 respectively. Quality of the faculty: Even as the woes of inadequate faculty remain, a major part of the ones who are present to impart higher education are woefully unequipped in terms of either qualifications or experience or proper training. The untrained and unqualified faculty is a major issue, the number of PhD holders in the higher education industry is very limied. Poor government and corporate funding – With government funding in higher education receding over the years, many institutes themselves suffer, barely managing to survive. In such a scenario, employees are more focused on sustaining themselves rather than deliver quality education.

Less Representation from SC ST and Minority communities

At All-India level, teachers belonging to General category are more than half, that is 67.6% of the total number of teachers in India; OBC follows with 23.5%; while SC and ST with 6.9% and 2.0% respectively. Merely 3.1% teachers come from Muslim minority group, and 3.2% are from other minorities group. It shows that the representation of minority communities are less than the percentage of their population. Scheduled Casts students constitute 13.1% and Scheduled Tribes students 4.6% of the total enrolment. 32.4% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 4.3% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.0% from other Minority Community.
Low impact research output and patents filed given relatively low government and corporate spending on research, insufficient doctoral students, missing research focus and culture in most institutions, and lack of international research collaborations. As per World Intellectual Property Organization, research publications from India significantly lag behind those of other countries, as do the country's patent filings. While the number of research papers published in India has increased continuously for the past few years, it still significantly lags behind that released in other countries.

The number of research papers published in India is less than half compared to US and China. Also, the quality of Indian research papers is suspect, as reflected in low citation impact. China and U.S have filed 561377, and 488744 Patents in 2012 whereas India has filed only 18173. As per MHRD and CII report on Annual Status of Higher Education of States and UTs in India- 2013, this is driven by several factors including low output of PhDs, limited and skewed government funding, and lack of international research collaborations. India produces fewer doctorates than other countries, which limits the number of patents it files. The Indian Government spends only 0.9% of its GDP on R&D, as compared to 4.38% by Israel, 2.77% by the US and 1.2% by China. Limited focus on entrepreneurship on campus as reflected in the fact that there are few institutes that offer programs in entrepreneurship and have active incubation/ entrepreneurship cells. Entrepreneurial culture on the campuses of Indian HEIs is still evolving, since the start-up ecosystem including incubation centres, venture-funding and governmental support is still at its early stages. The number of start-ups incubated in Indian institutions is limited in number, compared to the US. Incubation centres are a relatively recent phenomenon in Indian HEIs. Incubation centre in IIM Ahmedabad was incorporated in 2002. There are other issues such as complex regulatory requirements and hurdles, poor institutional governance standards, and lack of professional management and Outdated Curricula.

Measures to Improve Access to Quality Education

The vision is to build a 21st century model for higher education that is of high-quality, yet equitable and affordable, and be exemplary of a higher education system that is not just the best in the world but the best for the world The Indian government has made ambitious plans to achieve a threefold increase in terms of number of institutions and enrolments by the end of the current five-year plan. While this does seem achievable, there are issues which must be retrospectively and holistically measured and diligently handled so that the results may fall within the projected framework. In addition to the government activities, Universities and Colleges must put in place an effective monitoring system to ensure the results in its endeavor to make quality higher education within the reach of all and more so to the under-represented communities. Include CSR in financial and strategic plans – This is imperative for the institutions before setting any unrealistic goals as financial planning becomes the key factor in the achievement of all objectives. Any mismatch between budgets and targets will lead to unsuccessful results. Therefore as a socially responsible activity, higher educational institutions must allocate enough financial and operational resources for the development of the society. Also, the government grants and facilities should be more transparent enough for the higher education institutions to be aware of and should be able to utilize these benefits. It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to focus not only in financial goals but those actions which are beneficial to the society and environment.

Infrastructure Development – While urban infrastructure has definitely seen progress, the rural sector still lies in dismal neglect over a larger proportion. The higher educational institutions must ensure proper physical access to the rural population and emphasize on the construction of Universities and Colleges in closer proximity to villages. Further ample focus must be given to the development of technology to enable education through Information Technology.

Now the cities have a high concentration of higher education institution, whereas in rural areas, where India's 70% population lies, does not have adequate access to Universities and colleges. Provision of adequate trained and qualified faculty – Student-Teacher ratio must be brought up to an ideal level and all faculty must possess adequate qualifications and training before taking up education. Periodical refresher training is an indubitable necessity to ensure adherence to performance standards. While updating curricula the faculty must be acquainted with the newer studies and technologies to keep them abreast and conduct proper delivery. Promote the use of Internet and Communication Technology – Demand for quality education and trained personnel will not be easy to quench because it takes time, funds and quality human resource to set up good institutions. Adequate emphasis must be placed on improvement of internet and communication technology as it enables easier access to information and educational content and facilitates better education than traditional methods. Proper use of information technology can tackle the issue of accessibility and shortage of faculty in the country. Proper eLearning technology can seamlessly integrate social media, making it possible to create online communities that are course specific. Along with the traditional textbooks, blogs, tweets, podcasts, webcasts, online chats, discussion boards, virtual study jams ensure that learning becomes multidimensional. Online courses can also help all those who are already in jobs to reskill and remain competitive without taking time off from their careers.

Make curriculum industry oriented

The higher education system must provide for updating of curriculum over regular frequencies to help to learn match industry requirement. This way employability skill would be better and so do the prospects. The requirements of industry need to be monitored in local, national and international level to include it in the curriculum and to equip the students with all the necessary knowledge and skill required. An outdated syllabus will affect the employability if the students adversely and will affect the reputation of nation's education system. Including CSR in the academic syllabus: Inclusion of CSR as a mandatory subject in the academic syllabi will help to reach the concept clearer to millions of students who in turn enter into the corporate world and can act as the advocates of good corporate citizenship. They can remind the companies in which they are part of about the importance of looking into the societal and environmental aspects of running a business rather than merely concentrating on the financial aspects. In this way, the organizations can achieve the short term profit and wealth maximization goals without compromising the long-term goals that strive for a better society and a sustainable environment.

Eliminate ethnic inequalities

Weaker sections of the society should be benefitted by the access to higher education, through the CSR activities, economic backwardness must be made criteria for extending support to all communities. All sections of the society should have equal access to the higher education. The benefits should be allocated to those based on 'how are they' rather than 'from where are they'. The education empowers the society and helps to narrow down the gap between the different levels in the society. This inclusion should be there at all levels from the accessibility of education as students, the inclusion of academic and administrative staff personal etc.

Initiate CSR and Sustainability reporting

OECD Organization for economic co-operation and development has guidelines on CSR reporting, which includes mandatory and voluntary standards. CSR reporting has mandated by certain types of companies, mainly listed and large public companies in countries like UK, South Africa, Malaysia, China and Brazil. It is observed that the transparency in reporting enhances the economic, social and environmental concerns within the company.

More CSR spending by corporate

Higher education industry should coordinate with the corporates for the allocation of a significant portion of the CSR spending to the higher education industry. CSR spending by Indian corporates are done by many companies including Tata which aims at launching 1,000 educational institutes in Odisha, Tata Education Excellence Program aims to reduce the dropout and improve the pass percentages. Similar initiatives are taken by other giants such as 'Applying Thought in Schools' project by Wipro, ITC Limited, Indian Oil Corporation's over 2600 scholarships to meritorious students every year as their CSR initiative, Aditya Birla Group's merit scholarships for girls to pursue higher education and technical education for boys to make them industry-ready. Maruti Suzuki has adopted over 10 state-run ITI colleges to transform them into centers of excellence in their respective fields. Companies also contributed by making donations to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their own trusts, which were deductible under Section 80 G of the Income Tax (IT) Act. – An Analysis of Corporate Social Responsibility Expenditure in India.

More Spending on Research

More fund should be allocated towards research and development activities. Good inventions have the ability to create greater companies and boost the economy. Stanford University's graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, whose basic research was supported by a National Science Foundation grant, generated the idea which is the root of Google. Supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), SAS began as a research project at the North Carolina State University to analyze agricultural data. It is today the world's largest privately held software company and the leader in business analytics software and services. SAS employs more than 11,000 people. Similar innovations can lead to the formation of large corporates within India and reduce the phenomenon of brain drain.

Conclusion

India has historically been a nation divided on social, ethnic and economic fronts. Successive governments have attempted to analyze and overcome the divide but have not made much headway chiefly owing to political compulsions. With the onset of higher technology, easier access to communication and information technology, the divide has shown definitive signs of narrowing down even though only to a marginal extent. In the higher education industry, the government and the private sector will continue to play a key role in improving the reach of good quality education to all the corners of the country. Most of the under-represented communities today are able to access better education at elementary and higher levels. However, the ancient system of the social divide as a whole remains unshakably strong and continues to resist change howsoever economy or technology attempts to. Still, it is appreciable that several policy initiatives undertaken by the government are continuing to demonstrate better efficacy and gradual success. The turn of the twenty-first century has brought about a revolution in technology and with it have tremendous changes been made to the education system of the country. Though the community divide exists still and perhaps will continue to do so, it is shown that equity in higher education and a healthy economy is not at too far a distance. The CSR initiatives must aim at a long-term vision of India as a major knowledge economy. In this connection, there is considerable merit for Indian companies to take leadership in setting up world-class full-fledged universities, combining high-quality teaching, research and consultancy activities. In India, education is under state jurisdiction. Therefore, companies with the major presence in a state can work together with the state government to enable such world-class institutions of higher learning to be established.

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