

Sustainable Education & Research in India: The Role of CSR in Shaping the Future

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Abstract— Sustainable education and Research is essential for fostering long-term socio-economic development, and in India, it has become a critical focus due to rapid population growth, urbanization, and environmental challenges. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a vital instrument in addressing the country's educational needs, promoting sustainability, and ensuring inclusive access to quality education. This paper explores the role of CSR in shaping sustainable education and research in India, with a particular focus on how corporate initiatives contribute to building educational infrastructure, improving teacher training, supporting innovative learning methodologies, and fostering environmental awareness. By examining various CSR programs implemented by both domestic and multinational companies, the study highlights the symbiotic relationship between business practices and educational development. The research also identifies challenges faced by CSR initiatives in the education sector, such as alignment with local needs, resource distribution, and scalability. Sustainable education and research are pivotal for India's socio-economic progress, particularly in a rapidly evolving global landscape. The integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into India's educational ecosystem offers significant potential to address critical challenges such as access to quality education, environmental sustainability, and the enhancement of research capabilities. This paper investigates the role of CSR in shaping sustainable education and research in India, emphasizing how corporate investments in education contribute to building infrastructure, promoting environmental consciousness, and fostering innovation. Through an analysis of various CSR initiatives in India, the study highlights successful models that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The paper also examines the impact of CSR on bridging educational disparities, supporting research advancements, and integrating sustainability into academic curricula. Key challenges, including the need for greater stakeholder collaboration and overcoming resource allocation hurdles, are discussed. The paper concludes with recommendations to maximize the effectiveness of CSR in shaping a sustainable educational future in India, fostering a more inclusive and environmentally conscious society.

Index Terms— CSR Bridging Educational Disparities, Supporting Research Advancements, And Integrating Sustainability.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable education and research are cornerstones of a nation's development, enabling societies to address contemporary challenges while preparing for future uncertainties. In India, where the educational system faces pressures such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and a growing demand for quality education, achieving sustainability in education is a complex yet crucial goal. The importance of integrating sustainability into education and research is amplified by the country's socio-economic disparities, environmental degradation, and the need for a skilled workforce in an increasingly globalized economy.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a powerful tool in addressing these challenges. With India's CSR mandate, as outlined in the Companies Act of 2013, companies are now legally required to allocate a portion of their profits toward societal development. This shift has led to a surge in CSR initiatives aimed at improving access to education, enhancing the quality of learning, and fostering research that supports sustainable development. Many companies are leveraging their resources to fund educational infrastructure, provide scholarships, develop innovative learning programs, and support research initiatives that promote environmental sustainability.

This paper explores the pivotal role CSR plays in shaping the future of sustainable education and research in India. By

analyzing various CSR-driven initiatives, the research examines how corporations are contributing to enhancing educational infrastructure, improving teaching methodologies, and fostering research in fields crucial for sustainable development. Furthermore, the study investigates how CSR can facilitate the integration of environmental sustainability into educational curricula and research programs, which is vital for meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The objective of this paper is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how CSR can drive transformative changes in India's educational sector, bridging gaps in access, quality, and sustainability. By analyzing the challenges and opportunities associated with CSR in education, this paper offers insights into how corporate contributions can shape a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable educational system for future generations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of sustainable education has gained significant attention globally, especially as countries strive to address the challenges of environmental degradation, economic disparity, and social inequities. In the context of India, sustainable education is intricately linked to the country's broader goals of inclusive growth and development, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

adopted by the United Nations. Several studies have emphasized the critical need for an educational system that not only provides access to quality learning but also integrates sustainability principles into curricula and research.

The pressures on India's educational system are manifold, from overcrowded classrooms and inadequate infrastructure to the uneven distribution of resources. According to a report by the Ministry of Education (2020), India's education system is marked by regional disparities, with rural and underserved urban areas facing significant challenges in accessing quality education. Additionally, India's economic growth has created a high demand for a skilled workforce, necessitating an overhaul of the educational system to meet both current and future needs. Research by Kumar et al. (2019) suggests that despite increased investment in education, the quality of learning remains inconsistent, especially in rural and marginalized areas.

CSR has increasingly been seen as a vital mechanism for addressing some of these challenges. Since the introduction of the CSR mandate in India's Companies Act of 2013, businesses are required to contribute a portion of their profits towards social welfare initiatives, including education. Scholars such as Sharma (2017) have argued that CSR provides a valuable opportunity to supplement government efforts in education by targeting areas that are often neglected, such as infrastructure development, teacher training, and the introduction of innovative pedagogical methods. CSR initiatives in education have also been found to play a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability, with companies funding programs that integrate environmental education and green technologies into school curricula (Joshi & Singh, 2020).

Many CSR-driven educational initiatives have focused on bridging the gap between urban and rural education through infrastructure projects, digital learning platforms, and scholarship programs. For instance, companies like Infosys and Tata have developed initiatives that provide digital tools and educational content to rural schools, as highlighted by Patel and Ghosh (2021). These initiatives not only improve access to education but also expose students to global learning opportunities, aligning with global sustainability goals. Similarly, the role of CSR in fostering research has been discussed by Gupta and Rao (2022), who emphasize how corporations support research initiatives in education, particularly in STEM fields and sustainability research, which contribute to the country's long-term development.

The alignment of CSR activities with sustainable development goals, especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), has been a subject of numerous studies. According to Singh et al. (2019), CSR-driven programs in India often focus on creating awareness about environmental issues while promoting sustainable practices within educational institutions. These initiatives include introducing climate change-related modules in school curricula, supporting research on renewable energy, and

encouraging students to take part in sustainability-related projects. Furthermore, CSR has also been seen as a way to foster collaboration between businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations, enhancing the impact of educational and sustainability initiatives (Sharma & Gupta, 2020).

Despite the promising potential of CSR in shaping sustainable education, there are challenges to its full realization. Several studies have pointed out that CSR investments often lack long-term commitment and are subject to changes in corporate priorities (Bansal & Bhattacharya, 2020). Additionally, while many initiatives focus on infrastructure and immediate educational needs, there is a need for more strategic, scalable, and sustainable programs that address the root causes of educational inequity. Some scholars also argue that CSR programs should be more localized, with a deeper understanding of regional needs and better alignment with national educational policies (Reddy & Ranganathan, 2018).

In conclusion, while CSR has a crucial role to play in advancing sustainable education and research in India, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is necessary to ensure that these efforts lead to meaningful, long-lasting impact. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in education, particularly their contribution to achieving the SDGs, and to explore strategies that can make these programs more sustainable and impactful in the long term.

III. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite significant progress in India's educational landscape, the country faces numerous challenges in achieving sustainable education, particularly in addressing the issues of inequitable access, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation. The educational system remains under pressure due to overcrowded classrooms, disparities between urban and rural education, and a lack of resources in underserved areas. This has resulted in an education system that, while large in scale, struggles to provide consistent and high-quality learning opportunities to all students, particularly in rural and economically marginalized communities.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a potential solution to some of these challenges, offering a complementary approach to government efforts in addressing educational gaps. Through CSR initiatives, businesses have the opportunity to invest in infrastructure, improve educational quality, and promote sustainable practices within the education system. However, despite the growing recognition of CSR's importance, there are gaps in understanding its full potential and the challenges that prevent its widespread and effective implementation.

Key concerns include the limited scalability and sustainability of CSR initiatives, as many are short-term or fragmented, failing to address the long-term needs of the

educational system. Furthermore, CSR programs often lack alignment with local educational policies and regional needs, making their impact uneven and less effective. Additionally, while CSR has contributed to areas such as infrastructure development and digital learning tools, the integration of sustainability principles in curricula and research remains underdeveloped. The disconnect between corporate priorities and educational objectives often results in initiatives that do not adequately address the root causes of educational inequities.

This paper seeks to explore how CSR can more effectively contribute to sustainable education and research in India, examining its current impact, identifying existing challenges, and proposing strategies for enhancing the role of CSR in achieving long-term, scalable, and inclusive educational reforms. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of CSR's role in bridging the gaps in India's education system and fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for the country.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology on **CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funding** typically involves studying how companies allocate and manage funds for their CSR initiatives, the impact of such funding, and the strategies employed in CSR investments. To conduct a comprehensive research on this topic, it is important to focus on several key steps, techniques, and approaches.

CSR Activities in India: The Companies Act, 2013 introduced a legal mandate that applies to companies meeting specific criteria: Companies with a net worth of INR 500 crore or more. Companies with an annual turnover of INR 1,000 crore or more. Companies with net profit of INR 5 crore or more. These companies must spend at least 2% of their average net profit from the last three years on CSR activities. The Act also specifies that if the funds are not used in a given year, companies must explain the reasons in their annual reports. The focus areas for CSR activities are outlined in Schedule VII of the Companies Act and include: Eradicating hunger, poverty, and malnutrition, Promoting education Promoting gender equality and empowering women, Improving healthcare, sanitation, and water supply, Environmental sustainability, Protection of national heritage and art, Rural development projects. Companies are encouraged to contribute to initiatives that align with these areas and make a measurable social impact.

Data for analysis: - As per the companies act 2013, under given activities and act provision Corporate Reports data have been collected for study. Analyse CSR and sustainability reports of companies, looking at the amount allocated to CSR activities and the types of initiatives funded. **Industry Reports:** Gather data from industry sources, government publications, or non-profit organizations on CSR funding trends and practices. **Academic Journals and Books:**

Review relevant academic literature on CSR funding trends and challenges and Ministry of Corporate affairs, Government of India (CSR segment) <https://www.csr.gov.in/content/csr/global/master/home/home.html>

V. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis to determine patterns in CSR funding allocation. Use statistical tools (R, or Excel) to analyse numerical data on CSR funding. Analyse trends, correlations, and distributions of CSR funding across different sectors, company sizes, or geographic locations.

VI. OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

In the fiscal year 2023-24, the Indian government allocated approximately INR 1,12,899 crore (1.13 trillion) to the education sector, marking an 8.44% increase from the previous year's allocation of INR 1,04,278 crore. educationforallindia.com. Despite this increase, India's education spending remains below the target set by the National Education Policy 2020, which aims for education expenditure to be 6% of the country's GDP. In 2023, India allocated less than 3.5% of its GDP to education, falling short of this goal. indiatimes.com Globally, India's education spending is lower compared to major economies. For instance, the United States allocated 6% of its GDP to education in 2023, China allocated 6.13%, and Japan invested 7.43%. These figures highlight the ongoing challenges in achieving the desired level of investment in India's education sector.

In the fiscal year 2023-24, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending in India continued to prioritize education, reflecting a sustained commitment to societal development. According to report 2023-24 reported a 53% increase in CSR spending over the previous eight years, totaling INR 1.53 lakh crore from 2014 to 2022. In the fiscal year 2022-23, education accounted for approximately 44% of total CSR expenditure, amounting to INR13,209 crore. 2023-24 indicated that education received 32.4% of total CSR spending, highlighting its continued prominence in corporate philanthropic efforts. CSR funds in the education sector have been directed toward digital literacy, skill development programs, and infrastructure development.

In the past fiscal year Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending in India exhibited notable sector-wise variations, reflecting corporate priorities and societal needs. Here's a sector-wise comparison note based on CSR spending in India, highlighting key areas of focus and changes in allocation. The data have been collected from the reports of Ministry of Corporate affairs GOI. The data have been tabulated for last six financial years (2017 to 2023) for analysis using statistical tools R and Excel. Table with detailed development sector wise and year wise given below:

Table-I

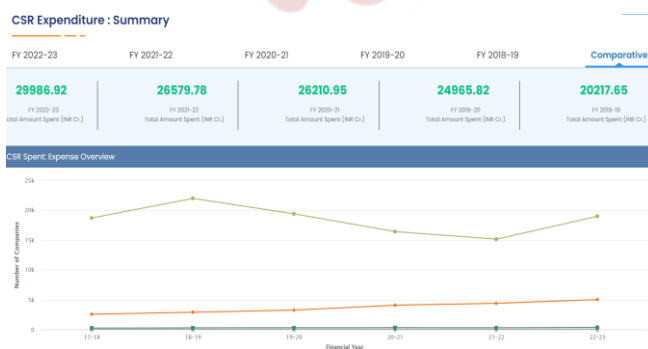
SR.	Development Sector Name	Amount Spent		Amount Spent		Amount Spent		Amount Spent		Total (INR Cr.)
		FY 2017-18 (INR Cr.)	FY 2018-19 (INR Cr.)	FY 2019-20 (INR Cr.)	FY 2020-21 (INR Cr.)	FY 2021-22 (INR Cr.)	FY 2022-23 (INR Cr.)			
1	Education	5763.45	6111.66	7179.51	6693.25	6557.13	10085.38	42390.38		
2	Health Care	2776.95	3617.15	4905.72	7325.83	7806.3	6830.41	33262.36		
3	Rural Development Projects	1724.07	2434.17	2301.02	1850.71	1832.82	2005.37	12148.16		
4	Environmental Sustainability	1301.96	1368.27	1470.53	1030.16	2432.26	1959.96	9563.14		
5	Poverty, Eradicating Hunger, Malnutrition	811.2	1195.78	1159.71	1407.58	1894.08	1232.62	7700.97		
6	Livelihood Enhancement Projects	832.4	907.98	1077.72	938.91	854.48	1654.39	6265.88		
7	Vocational Skills	546.46	798.36	1181.23	717.65	1033.84	1164.19	5441.73		
8	Prime Minister'S National Relief Fund	200.42	322.19	798.43	1698.38	1214.84	815.85	5050.11		
9	Other Central Government Funds	292.73	731.06	932.16	1618.17	309.22	179.02	4062.36		
10	Art And Culture	395.22	225.94	933.57	493.13	248.09	441.02	2736.97		
11	Sanitation	460.68	506.66	521.72	338.97	313.1	429.91	2571.04		
12	Training To Promote Sports	285.41	310.16	304	243.39	291.75	526.14	1960.85		
13	Women Empowerment	251.37	236.54	259.57	206	259.82	396.85	1610.15		
14	Conservation Of Natural Resources	228.14	173.55	160.6	92	273.82	580.37	1508.48		
15	Safe Drinking Water	220.87	228.23	253.4	203.13	182.54	246.36	1334.53		
16	Special Education	140.01	186.13	196.88	209.24	190.51	305.57	1228.34		
17	Socio-Economic Inequalities	155.95	167.92	214.88	149.81	164.85	154.01	1007.42		
18	Animal Welfare	63.52	98.33	106.12	193.55	168.59	315.98	946.09		
19	Swachh Bharat Kosh	272.07	95.5	53.47	161.35	34.92	55.32	672.63		
20	Gender Equality	24.01	51.86	82.93	43.83	104.63	119.83	427.09		

Data source: Ministry of corporate affairs report(s) ()

These figures highlight the diverse focus areas of CSR initiatives in India, with a significant emphasis on education, rural development, and environmental sustainability. Education consistently receives the largest share of CSR funding, reflecting the importance of educational reforms and the need to address learning disparities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in education increasing, when combined with government grants and initiatives, can be a powerful tool to address the challenges in the Indian education system. While CSR contributions can provide immediate relief, long-term sustainability is a challenge. Government support and planning are crucial to ensuring that CSR efforts are sustained even after the initial funding.

A diagrammatic CSR comparison in India for the last five financial years to showcase trends, changes, or patterns over a period of time. This is useful for highlighting the growth or decline in specific areas, comparing data points year by year, and drawing conclusions from the progression.

Table-II

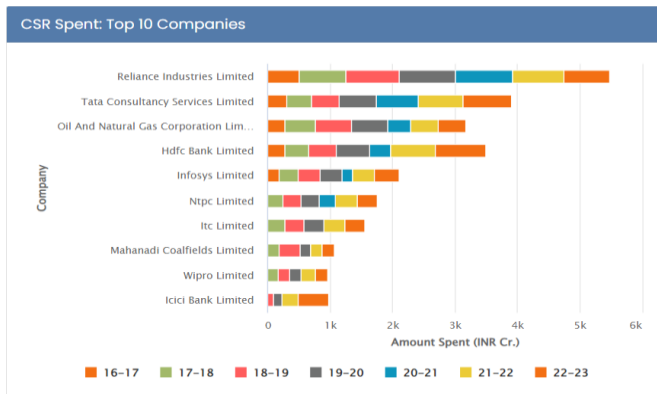


Data source: Ministry of corporate affairs report(s)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has seen a significant increase over the last five years, with growing awareness among companies about their role in contributing to social, environmental, and economic causes. This surge in CSR activities can be attributed to various factors, including legal mandates, changing public expectations, and an increasing focus on sustainability and community development. This study we are focused on the CSR funding for the Education sector only. The proper utilization of the CSR funding is very important, in rural and underserved areas, access to quality education remains limited due to insufficient schools, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of teaching resources. CSR initiatives help bridge this gap by funding school construction, setting up e-learning platforms, and providing access to educational materials and technologies. CSR initiatives in education help address these gaps by providing financial support, resources, infrastructure, and innovative solutions that can significantly improve the quality of education.

Over the past seven years, In India, many companies are leading the way by significantly contributing to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) sector, particularly in education, healthcare, environment, and community development. Below are some major companies actively providing CSR support. These efforts play a pivotal role in addressing the educational challenges faced by underserved communities, particularly in rural and remote areas. As companies continue to expand their CSR efforts, the potential for creating a more inclusive and sustainable education system in India grows stronger.

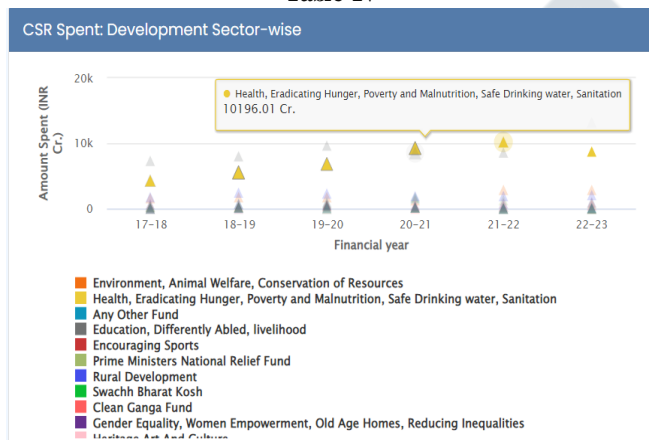
Table-III



Data source: Ministry of corporate affairs report(s) (Table-III)

Over the past six years, CSR spending in India has consistently increased, with a significant portion directed towards education. According to available data, the education sector often receives about 30-35% of total CSR expenditure (Shown in table-IV below). This growth is largely driven by companies' increasing awareness of their social impact, as well as government regulations that encourage corporate investment in social development.

Table-IV



Data source: Ministry of corporate affairs report(s)

VII. FINDING

Coordination: Effective coordination between the government, CSR bodies, and local authorities/ Institutions/ University/ Education board is essential to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that resources are used efficiently. When CSR initiatives are aligned with government efforts, they can significantly enhance the reach and impact of educational reforms in India. While the government focuses on broad access and policy-level interventions, CSR can focus on areas like quality enhancement, infrastructure development, and digital literacy, making education more inclusive and impactful, particularly for underserved communities. This synergy helps bridge existing gaps and creates a more holistic approach to improving the education system.

Many companies may contribute funds to education without clear guidelines on how the money should be used. Without a structured framework for allocating CSR funds, there may be confusion or inconsistency in how funds are utilized. This can lead to money being spent on short-term projects or activities that do not create lasting change. CSR projects in education can be fragmented and isolated. Often, companies may sponsor one-time events like workshops or provide funds for a specific initiative, but without long-term planning, these initiatives may not have a sustained impact on the education system.

The requirement for a separate compulsory regulation for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding in education could stem from several reasons. These would focus on ensuring that CSR funding effectively contributes to the educational sector, aligns with societal needs, and promotes sustainable development in the long run. CSR funding for education should aim at creating lasting improvements. A separate regulation could encourage corporates to commit to long-term initiatives rather than short-term or one-off donations. By focusing on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and long-term educational reforms, CSR funding would have a greater positive impact on the system.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Education has a pivotal role in nation building and mouldings superb wings of human resource. In globalized economy and the privatization, the education has been transformed into rural or root level of sustainable development in all sorts of human life. Adopting a business-like approach which emphasizes a strategic CSR is important to survival in this increasingly competitive arena. It does not appear as a surprise to see universities and colleges discover the opportunity to move the focus beyond the classrooms into their own institutional operations. Universities, colleges, and schools are the centres of knowledge generation and sharing perform a very important role in addressing the Triple Bottom Line of the world' socioeconomic and environmental issues by promoting sustainable solutions. This paper discusses the good CSR practices and some suggestions that can boost up the CSR management and make invites on the education sector. Corporate contributions help bridge the funding gap by providing additional financial resources. CSR can be directed toward initiatives like building infrastructure (schools, libraries, etc.), providing digital learning tools, and offering scholarships for marginalized communities. To ensure CSR funding aligns with real needs, there should be in-depth assessments conducted before allocating funds. Input from educators, policymakers, and local communities should guide funding decisions to target areas that require urgent intervention. Governments should enact policies that ensure CSR funding is directed toward priority sectors like education, health, and environment. The policy framework should include clear instructions on how funds are to be allocated, monitored, and reported. Companies and

organizations should actively publicize the outcomes of CSR-funded education projects. This transparency not only boosts credibility but can also inspire other organizations to contribute to the sector. To ensure CSR funding in education achieves its full potential, there needs to be greater focus on accountability, transparency, long-term planning, coordination, and alignment with the needs of the education sector. Establishing clear regulations, focusing on quality, involving local stakeholders, and ensuring robust monitoring mechanisms will go a long way toward improving the outcomes of CSR investments in education. When done right, CSR can significantly contribute to the transformation of the education system and create meaningful, sustainable change.

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