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Elevating The Entrepreneurial Ability Among Vocational Students: A Novel Approach

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Abstract

Unemployment continues to be an important issue in developing countries, with rates increasing year after year. The education system, encompassing both formal and informal channels, has failed to instill confidence in students, instead fostering dependency on external organizations. What is needed is an education system that not only promotes competitiveness, but also ensures fairness and strong ties to employment opportunities. Balancing these two aspects can better meet the abilities and aspirations of students leaving school. To address the shortcomings of the vocational education system, it is crucial to establish strong industry-institution relationships, implement skill assessments, and provide on-the-job training that caters to local needs. The involvement of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in offering value-added vocational and occupational education would be an innovative step in the Indian education system. This approach would help empower marginalized groups and provide them with the necessary skills to participate in social entrepreneurship, ultimately including them in employment opportunities. This paper explores the potential means through which CSR can contribute to imparting value-added vocational and occupational education, analyzing various courses of study and identifying the groups that would benefit the most from these initiatives.

Keywords: Vocational & Higher Education, Entrepreneur Culture, Technopreneur Education, On-the-Job Training, Self-Employment

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1. Introduction

From days of the pre-independent period, there has been loud cry for the introduction of value added-vocational and occupational-education as the solution to the educational problems of the country endorsed subsequently by several Commissions and Committees of both British and Independent India. The national leaders of India such as Mahatma Gandhi had supported it to be introduced in school education. Value added education is concerned with providing facilities for a sizeable section of students for whom bread-winning is far more important than the pursuit of higher education, and to prevent unemployment by preparing the students for prospective vocations. Indeed, all traditional educational institutions paid scant attention to the educational and training needs of the growing number of persons entering world of work where competence rather than degrees matter. Such institutions are elitist in their approach to higher education, and aimed at preparing students for degrees.

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In this way the traditional colleges are unable to satisfy the educational needs of the contemporary society and aspirations of the people. Therefore, it is a felt need both to discuss and develop a new paradigm to satisfy the educational needs of the marginalised communities for their livelihood thereby entrepreneurship and hence the advent of corporate in the sphere of education for the benevolent of these sections is inevitable. Prior to discussion on CSR initiatives in offering value added education for marginalized to promote social entrepreneurship it is indispensable to overview the plight of vocational-occupational education being offered in Tamil Nadu at higher secondary school level and the socio-economic profile of the students pursuing vocational-occupational education in higher secondary Vocational Stream of Education (VSE).

2. VSE in Higher Secondary Level

Vocational education focuses on catering to a significant segment of students for whom securing a livelihood takes precedence over pursuing higher education. To curb an undesirable influx into tertiary education, it is imperative to establish an educational system distinct from general education. This system aims to equip students with skills for specific vocations. The vocational programs at the higher secondary stage are designed to cultivate skilled manpower across various occupations, particularly addressing the needs of the unorganized sector. They prepare individuals for the workforce through a range of self-employment-oriented courses while not disregarding the wage employment orientation present in many programs.

To achieve the dual purpose of steering individuals away from aimless higher education pursuits and reducing the tendency towards tertiary education without clear goals, it is essential to pinpoint major occupational areas. These areas should be the focus for introducing diverse production and service-oriented courses. Following a meticulous survey, Tamil Nadu has identified seven major occupational areas: Agriculture, Home Science, Commerce and Business, Engineering and Technology, Health and Para-medical, Computer Science, and Miscellaneous. Numerous allied vocational subjects are offered under each of these areas. Presently, Tamil Nadu provides instruction in 67 vocational courses, with 53 of these courses at the higher secondary level and the remaining 14 at the secondary level under the category of Generic Vocational Courses.

According to a study conducted in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, it was found that not all vocational areas are taught at the higher secondary level under the vocational stream of education, except for Computer Science and miscellaneous courses such as Tourist Guide, Photography, and Music. The district has a total of 152 higher secondary schools, with 60.5% of them being government-aided or unaided schools, while the remaining 39.5% are government schools. The majority of the schools, both in rural (64.8%) and urban (70.2%) areas, are government-aided schools.

Out of the total sample schools, about 55% (22 schools) offer only Business and Commerce vocational courses, and an additional 18.5% of schools offer Engineering and Technology along with Business and Commerce courses. Around 18% of the schools offer Engineering and Technology, Health, Agriculture, and Home Science as standalone subjects. Only one school offers both Business and Commerce and Health courses. Interestingly, none of the government-aided schools offer Agriculture, and the same is true for Home Science in government schools.

Who is Pursuing VSE: While considering the socio-economic and academic background of the students pursuing vocational stream of education, it is found that the students who are third by their order of birth has the maximum chance to pursue vocational education and they have to commute to the school in which they pursuing from an average of 4.5km distance from their place of residence. Their normal family size is five people, and they are from medium-sized or small families with an average monthly income of Rs. 3,362/-. As far as their annual expense for pursuing vocational education is concerned they spent an average of Rs. 2,236/- and they secured an average of 284 out of 500 marks in secondary school leaving examinations (S.S.L.C.).

3. Promotion of Social Entrepreneurship Through CSR

The overall discussion suggests that students enrolled in vocational education at the higher secondary level often come from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds. Their primary goal is to acquire education that will support their livelihoods, enabling them to pursue self-employment opportunities in the future or secure decent middle-level jobs in service sectors, given the on-the-job training provided by such educational programs. It is evident that relying solely on educational institutions (schools and colleges) and government sectors may not fully meet the needs of these students, particularly in terms of fostering social entrepreneurship and enhancing their employability.

Therefore, the involvement of corporate entities becomes crucial to extend their social responsibilities by providing training to this adolescent group. This initiative is seen as beneficial not only for the individuals but also for the broader

society and nation. To make vocational education more valuable for marginalized students and promote social entrepreneurship through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the following suggestions are proposed:

Collaboration with Corporates: Foster partnerships between educational institutions and corporate entities to create tailored vocational programs that align with industry needs. This collaboration can include curriculum development, training modules, and mentorship programs.

CSR Initiatives for Skill Development: Encourage corporate entities to invest in CSR initiatives focused on skill development for marginalized students. This could involve sponsoring vocational courses, providing infrastructure, and offering expertise to enhance the quality of education.

Internship and On-the-Job Training Opportunities: Facilitate internships and on-the-job training opportunities in collaboration with corporate partners. This hands-on experience can significantly contribute to the students' practical skills and enhance their employability.

Career Guidance and Counseling Services: Corporate entities can contribute to career guidance and counseling services, helping students make informed decisions about their future paths and aligning their aspirations with market demands.

Financial Support and Scholarships: Corporate entities can offer financial support and scholarships to deserving students from marginalized backgrounds, easing their financial burden and making education more accessible.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in vocational education. This ensures accountability and allows for continuous improvement based on feedback and outcomes.

By implementing these suggestions, the aim is to create a more holistic and impactful vocational education system that not only meets the immediate needs of marginalized students but also empowers them for long-term success in the workforce and encourages social entrepreneurship.

4. The Flaws in India's Education System and the Role of CSR

India's educational system has come under attention for its drawbacks, especially with regard to vocational education and the gap that exists between the classroom and actual life situations. The system has been accused of prioritizing white-collar jobs over manual work, leading to a lack of practical skills among students. This has resulted in a mismatch between the skills possessed by students and the requirements of the job market. To address these issues, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can play a crucial role in integrating knowledge and skills, providing on-the-job training, and promoting apprenticeship programs. By collaborating with vocational institutions and community colleges, CSR can offer practical training and exposure to real-life work situations, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

4.1. Integrating Knowledge and Skills

Vocational education, such as polytechnics, ITI, and similar institutions, primarily focuses on teaching occupational skills or techniques. However, technological advancements suggest that students need a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical training to be truly useful in the workforce. CSR initiatives can cater to this need by providing a variety of mental and manual skills in students' chosen fields and offering practical training opportunities.

4.2. Providing On-the-Job Training

While academic success is important, vocational-occupational education also emphasizes preparing students for high-skill employment. To achieve this, vocational-occupational programs collaborate with industries to provide on-the-job training. This training takes place both in schools and community colleges, as well as in the industries associated with CSR. By facilitating on-the-job training, CSR initiatives can promote self-confidence, adaptability, and the learning of new skills among students.

4.3. Apprenticeship Training Through CSR

Linking schools with industries is a crucial aspect of vocational-occupational education. By collaborating with nearby CSR industries, schools can share facilities, workshops, and experts, providing internship opportunities for students. This partnership reduces the cost and time spent on vocational-occupational education and increases the chances of employment for trained individuals. CSR programs have the voluntary capacity to create these kinds of linkages with academic institutions that provide vocational-occupational education to the students.

4.4. Letting School Leavers Take Something on Completion

Vocational-occupational education aims to provide students with the skills and confidence to venture into their chosen fields or find suitable jobs. By diversifying students' paths at the end of their education, vocational education promotes initiative, self-reliance, and the dignity of labor. It also helps prevent the swelling of educated unemployment by offering training in various vocations.

4.5. Promoting Partnership Between School and Industry

To improve collaboration between schools and industries, on-the-job training at CSR industries and the employment of trained personnel in schools have been implemented. This partnership creates a healthy relationship between education and the corporate sector, benefiting both parties. By conducting on-the-campus interviews, CSR initiatives can provide employment opportunities for students immediately after completing their formal education.

4.6. Collaborating in Curriculum Designing

Central and state governments can collaborate with CSR to include possible employment areas for the application of learned theory and practical knowledge in vocational-occupational course materials. By providing an "Employment-Entrepreneurship Opportunity Spheres" appendix at the end of textbooks, students can be made aware of the potential job opportunities in their chosen fields.

4.7. Promoting Equality and Gender Equity

CSR initiatives can contribute to achieving equality and equity in education by offering scholarships and sponsorships to socially and economically marginalized students. After completing their education, these students can be sent for apprenticeships in the industry, leading to permanent employment. CSR can also encourage females to enroll in vocational-occupational courses and provide equal opportunities for employment in all sectors.

5. Analysis of Students Doing Vocational Education at Higher Secondary Level

Based on the information provided, we can observe certain patterns among students pursuing vocational education at the higher secondary level. These patterns include:

Birth Order: Second or third-born children have a higher chance of pursuing vocational education.

Family Size: Students come from small families with an average of five members.

Proximity to School: Students reside within an average radius of 4-6 km from their place of residence to school/college.

Academic Performance: Students secure 55-61% out of the total marks in annual school leaving examinations (SSLC).

Parental Income: The average monthly parental income ranges from Rs. 3000-4000/-.

It is important to note that these students belong to socially and economically marginalized sections of society. By providing educational scholarships, sponsorships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, on-campus interviews, and promoting social entrepreneurship through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), vocational-occupational education at the higher secondary level can become "Value Added Education for Marginalized".

It is worth mentioning that the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 addresses education for the age group of 3 to 18 years, encompassing diverse institutions in India. This framework aims to provide a comprehensive approach to education across different stages.

The promotion of social entrepreneurship through CSR can have a positive impact on students pursuing vocational education. It can help bridge the gap between marginalized students and opportunities for employment and economic empowerment. By providing equal opportunities and support, CSR initiatives can contribute to the overall development and well-being of these students.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of students pursuing vocational education at the higher secondary level reveals a discernible pattern. Typically, those with a higher likelihood of pursuing such education are second or third-born children, originating from small families with an average of five members. They tend to reside within a 4-6 km radius from their place of residence to school/college. Academic performance shows that these students secured between 55-61 percent of total marks in the annual school leaving examinations (SSLC), and their average parental monthly income falls within the range of Rs. 3000-4000/-.

In essence, students engaged in this form of education often come from socially and economically marginalized backgrounds. If Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) intervenes positively, offering educational scholarships, sponsorships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, on-the-campus interviews, and ensuring equity while providing equal opportunities for employment, social entrepreneurship can be encouraged. This way, the vocational-occupational education provided at the higher secondary level transforms into “Value-Added Education for the Marginalized.” The collaboration between CSR and these students has the potential to create meaningful impact, promoting inclusivity and empowerment within the realm of vocational education.

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