THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GROWTH OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDIA AND U.K

Priyanka Gujrati and Snigdha Mishra
Research Scholar
Faculty of Commerce
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi

ABSTRACT

Technology proliferation is happening at a rapid pace. But this technological transformation cannot be slave of a special section of the society. This is the high time when even the last person of the society should be able to avail the benefits of the technology. This dream can be fulfilled by making digital literacy associated with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). As many companies in India are now taking social initiatives proactively. With a concerned approach, it is possible to channelise these initiatives towards sustainable and inclusive growth, notably by making collaborative use of technology for nation good by plunging gaps in India's social development. This paper focuses specifically on the targets which have been achieved by the companies in the area of digital literacy and also gives suggestions by which many more things can be achieved in this area, if the companies, in their CSR initiatives, work not only on providing education to poor children or in adult education but also educate them with e-learning so that even the poorest section of the society may be able to use the technology and may rub shoulder with the world.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Technology, Corporate Social Responsibility, Inclusive Growth, Technological Transformation, Adult Education

INTRODUCTION:

The information society and knowledge economy we live in needs digital literacy and digital skills to function efficiently. This dynamic new world requires new comprehensions and latest communication skills along with new code of conduct. Digital literacy is the ability of individuals to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when presented via computers. It is the ability to appropriately use digital tools to identify, assess, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesis digital resources, create new knowledge and media. Digital Literacy means having the skills one needs to live learn and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasing through digital technologies through internet like internet platforms, mobile devices and social media in simple terms can be defined as the ability to find, evaluate, utilize share and create content and gather useful information using the latest information technology and the Internet. Digital literacy is not limited to use of smart phones, tablets, laptops and traditional desktop, rather its area of scope is much wider than these. In an age of the Digital revolution, only 28% of India's population is digitally literate, which is the cause of concern for Indian government. Considering its importance the Government has launched various digital programs with intension to make India a digitally literate country and it has also partnered with the Nasscom Foundation which is driving the digital literacy initiative with CSR.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

CSR is basically a company's sense of responsibility towards the community and environment or towards social and ecological, by which they manage their business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. It covers a vast area like sustainability, social impact, business ethics etc. World Business Council for Sustainable Development in its publication Making Good Sense by Lord Holme and Richard Watts, used the following definition: "Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to

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."

Most of the Indian companies have been undertaking social initiatives proactively, and focuses childhood education and computer literacy. Many IT companies are looking for opportunities to provide underprivileged children in the communities in which they operate with improved access to computers and digital learning tools. Special focus is also given to seek opportunities to invest in and improve girls' access to education and computer literacy. IT industry forum Nasscom and Nasscom Foundation reveals that their CSR initiatives are aimed at participating in Digital India Programme. R. Chandrasekhar, president of Nasscom, said, "We are not only thinking and talking about creating a fund for the member companies but are also trying to get non-IT industries on board as well. The CSR spend of IT companies will certainly rise from \$0.5 billion to \$2.5 billion and we want to direct this cash flow towards technology for good."

India is the first country to require that a specific category of firms have to spend at least 2% of their profits on socially responsible activities and if they are not able to spend in such case they will have to explain the reason for that. This rule is the part of Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013. Section 135 only applies to firms that satisfy at least one of the three thresholds in any financial year- company either having net worth of 500 crore or having turnover of 1000 crore or having net profit of 5 crore. And in 2014, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has promulgated a set of rules that provides a list of the activities that satisfy the requirement for CSR spending. The activities listed are very broad and cover a large swath of what is typically considered CSR and perhaps more (e.g., spending on education, health, work for poverty eradication, environment, arts, gender equality, reducing other inequalities, some designated government programs and many other things). If NDLM program is linked with CSR or if companies themselves work for digital literacy under spending in education, this may give boast to digital literacy in India.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1- To improve the theoretical and applied knowledge and understanding of CSR relative to Digital literacy

2- To understand and explore the relationship between CSR activities and Digital Literacy.

3- To give various recommendation for promotion of digital literacy by CSR activities.

4- To seek ideas how organisations may impart social change in form of digital literacy with the help of CSR.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

It is evident that increase of CSR initiatives is making impact on social change. A lot of studies have been done to analyze the relation between CSR and CSP, Impact of CSR on environmental aspect, CSR and sustainability and even legal implications associating with CSR. But, unfortunately very less attention has been given to understand if CSR may prove helpful in spreading digital literacy for a developing country like India. Additionally, while the growth in this area can be measured in various ways, but it will certainly prove beneficial if we see what impact CSR can put as a whole in the education sector. The studies in such area may provide a significant missing link in the complete understanding of CSR and its alignment with digital literacy and offer meaningful insight to the companies what they can do in this area.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to National Digital Literacy Mission, "Digital Literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technology for meaningful actions within life situations." Much attention have been given to upgrade the level of digital knowledge and many papers and articles have also been published in this area but very few articles or papers are there which focus on how CSR can be utilized in this section. Because Section 135 of new Companies Act, 2013 requires (on a "comply-or-explain" basis) that the firms satisfying certain size or profit thresholds spend at least 2% of the average of their profit over the last 3 years, if any, on CSR activity(KHANNA, Nov, 2016) and if this policy is transferred towards the direction of making the least section of the society digitally literate, this may prove a big game changer in the education world as by this initiative, more and more people can not only be literate but also digitally literate.

AREAS THAT CAN BE COVERED UNDER CSR FOR PROMOTING DIGITAL LITERACY:

1- THE DIGITAL SAKSHARTA ABHIYAN (DISHA):

Digital literacy is best defined as the ability of the individuals and communities to understand and use digital technology for meaningful actions in their life. DISHA is considered to be one of the largest digital literacy programmes in the world. This scheme is applicable to all the rural areas. This was launched by "Skill India scheme. This announcement was made by our Finance Minister Mr. ArunJaitely in the union budget 2016-17on 1st Feb 2017. According to DISA definition of Digital Literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technology for meaningful actions within life situations"

BUDGET- For this Project is Rs. 2351.38 crore to use it for digital literacy in Rural India till March 2019.

OBJECTIVE – Its objective is to make 6 Crore Indian households digitally literate by 2019.

Under this Scheme Following Candidates will be trained in the respective years

Financial Year	No. of candidates to be trained
2016-17	25 lakh
2017-18	275 lakh
2018-19	300

To ensure equitable geographical reach each of the 250000 Gram Panchayats would be expected to register an average of 200 – 300 candidates.

Following are the entry criteria:

A.   The Beneficiary should be Digitally literate

B.   Only one person per eligible household would be considered for training

C.   Age 14-60 years

ELIGIBLE CANDIDATE INFORMATION
A candidate is eligible only if there is no other digitally literate person in his family

ENROLLMENT:

Enrollment is done in the nearest PMGDISHA Training center using their ADHAAR number.

2- NATIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY MISSION (NDLM)

This mission of this scheme is to provide digital literacy to every Indian. Prime Minister's vision of Digital India is gaining importance these days. It is one of the National Level Certifying Agencies for Govt. of India's National Digital Literacy Mission i.e .making one person in every family digitally literate. Making one person in the family financially literate is one of the integral components of Prime Minister's vision. NIELIT Calicut is one of the approved Training Centers for implementing NDLM scheme in the states of Kerela and Karnataka.

LEVELS OF TRAINING UNDER THE SCHEME

The two level of IT training envisaged under the scheme will have the following broad objectives.

1. Appreciation of Digital Literacy (Level 1)- To make the person IT literate so that he/she can operate digital services , like mobile phones , tablets, etc send and recieve emails and search internet for information.

2. Basics of Digital Literacy (Level 2)- Besides IT literacy at a higher level, the citizen would also be trained to effectively access the various e Governance services being offered to the citizens by the Government and various other agencies.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

LEVEL 1: Non IT literate upto 7th standard passed

LEVEL 2: Non IT literate with atleast 8th standard passed.

AGE: 14 to 60 years

The eligible households can nominate one person from the family. The selected person has to get themselves enrolled from the nearest Training centers.

ROLE OF TRAINING CENTERS:

The training centers have the following responsibilities

1. Conduct of household survey and digitization of data

2. Selecting the beneficiaries eligible under the project and enrolling them for course.

3. Imparting the appropriate training course to the beneficiaries eligible under the project including providing the course material.

4. Registering the beneficiaries, marking the attendance and conducting the continuous assessment using OMA-LMS.

BENEFITS OF ASSOCIATING DIGITAL LITERACY WITH CSR:

The digital world holds tremendous promise for all the communities. Going online can offer access to boundless beneficial information, facilitate new ways of interactive learning, provide for enriching life experiences and foster meaningful cultural exchange. A digital future may look bright, but it is also true that only half of the population in the world use internet and tremendous disparity can be seen in this section. The underprivileged children, girls of poor communities and racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to have access to internet at home. This 'digital divide' highlights inequalities and entrenches situations of disadvantage, leaving children without access to the internet further and further behind. As there is increasing percentage of information digitized and technology is becoming fundamentally integrated into education curricula. Indeed, if the children will not be imparted digital education today, this may create greater obstacles for them to connect with the world tomorrow. A report published by UNICEF on Digital Literacy provides the following data (Nyst, 2017):

- 100 Million school-age children in developing countries do not have access to education, and almost 10 times as many do not have access to quality education.
- 2009 was the first year that children were discussed at the Internet Governance Forum.
- 830 Million young people aged 15 to 24 are estimated to be online and 35 per cent of people using the internet in the least developed countries are young.
- 16% of people in the world's least developed countries are projected to be connected by 2020, as compared with 53% of the world population overall.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 young people aged 15 to 24 who do not use the internet live in Africa and the Pacific.
- 12% fewer women use the internet than men worldwide.

Here are some major points which are related to India and the current demographic and digital literacy condition of India:

- There is vast majority of Indians live in village, with 80% of India's 1.25 billion population lives in villages and small towns.
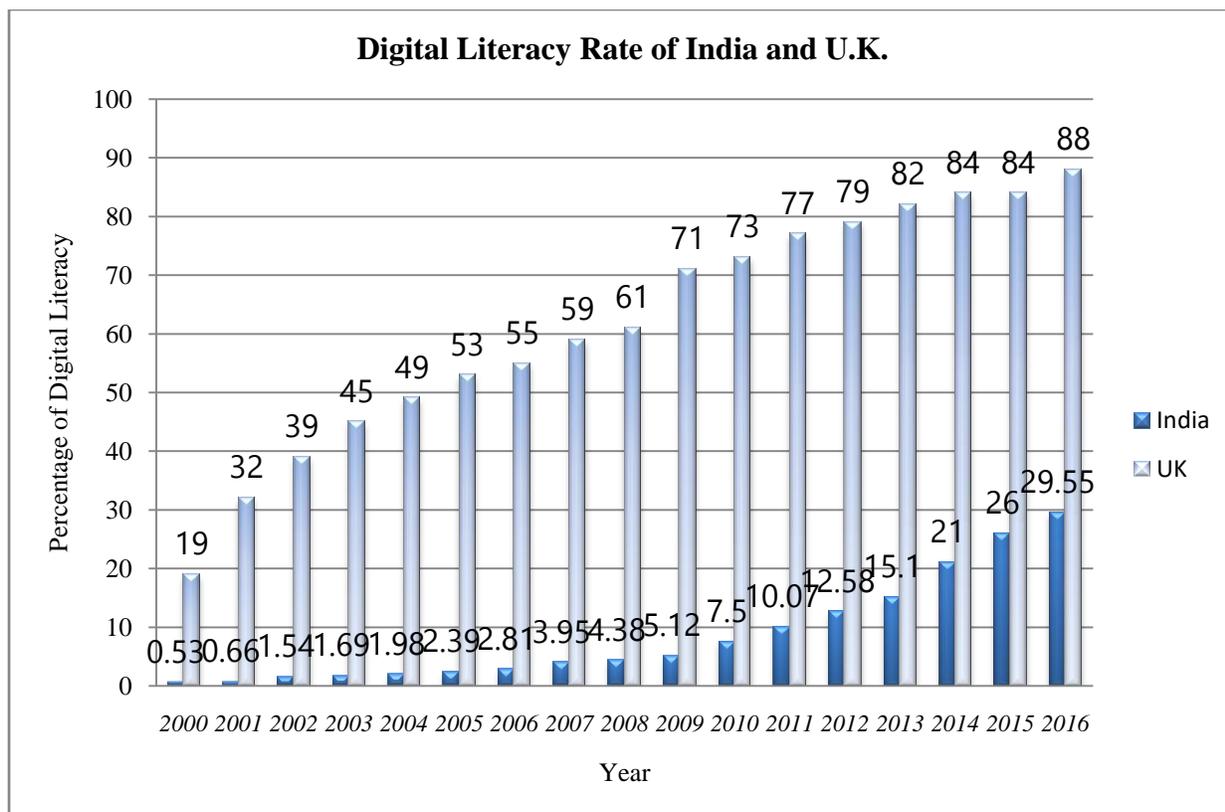
- India has more than 50% of its population below age of 25 and more than 65% of population below age of 35.
- According to world economic forum, India ranks 120th position in personal usage of technology which calls for the need to improve digital literacy.

All such points strengthen the idea of focusing on digital literacy on a greater scale as it may bring a metamorphosis for the nation building and CSR may prove a helping hand of Government in converting India into digitally literate capital of the world. Because this is the time when India is becoming a leading country of the world and competing with many developed nations. If the Govt. calls for the companies to invest in educating the underprivileged section of the society, be it men, women, children, adults or especially abled persons, this may give a leap in the progressive percentage of digital literacy. To prove this ideology, the comparison between India and U.K. has been taken as now India is ahead of almost all the developing nations in the ground of growth. That is why it would not be a surprise if it is compared with any developed country. In this paper the digital literacy level of India is being compared with U.K.'s digital literacy level and have been tried to see in what percentage these two countries are noticing the growth in from year 2001-2016.

THE PERCENTAGE OF DIGITAL LITERACY LEVEL OF INDIA AND U.K.:

Year	Percentage of Digital literacy		Growth in digital literacy level	
	India	UK	India	UK
2000	0.53	19	-	-
2001	0.66	32	0.13	13
2002	1.54	39	0.88	7
2003	1.69	45	0.15	6
2004	1.98	49	0.29	4
2005	2.39	53	0.41	4
2006	2.81	55	0.42	2
2007	3.95	59	1.14	4
2008	4.38	61	0.43	2
2009	5.12	71	0.74	10
2010	7.5	73	2.38	2
2011	10.07	77	2.57	4
2012	12.58	79	2.51	2
2013	15.1	82	2.52	3
2014	21	84	5.9	2
2015	26	84	5	0
2016	29.55	88	3.55	4

Source: The Statistics Data

Digital Literacy Rate of India and U.K.

Chart: Digital Literacy Rate of India and U.K. (Percentage of Digital Literacy vs Year)

India / UK values by year:
- 2000: India 0.53, UK 19
- 2001: India 0.66, UK 32
- 2002: India 1.54, UK 39
- 2003: India 1.69, UK 45
- 2004: India 1.98, UK 49
- 2005: India 2.39, UK 53
- 2006: India 2.81, UK 55
- 2007: India 3.95, UK 59
- 2008: India 4.38, UK 61
- 2009: India 5.12, UK 71
- 2010: India 7.5, UK 73
- 2011: India 10.07, UK 77
- 2012: India 12.58, UK 79
- 2013: India 15.1, UK 82
- 2014: India 21, UK 84
- 2015: India 26, UK 84
- 2016: India 29.55, UK 88

In the above table it is evident that the percentage of digitally literate population was only 0.53% of the total population of the country in year 2000 where as it was 19% of U.K. at the same time. In each passing year there is increase in percentage of digital literacy but a prominent increase has been noticed in recent years where the percent of digital literacy has been in two digits constantly. In U.K. there is a constant increase in the growth of digital literacy and in year 2016 only it had achieved 90% digital literacy level approximately. But being a developed nation it is not the astonishing fact. What is surprising to see is the second column which shows the growth on year basis in literacy level. If we see minutely it is shown that there is not huge difference between these two nations in terms of growth in percentage of digital literacy level from that of their previous respective years and in recent years we may see that the growth rate of India is either equal to or more than that of U.K. which creates a hope in heart that India is working hard over digital literacy mission and CSR may give bounce to this because even though the growth rate is higher that U.K. but we can't deny the fact that even in 2017-18 there is on 30% population in India which is digitally literate and more than 55% population does not have any kind of technology assess. If the Govt. encourages the companies to promote digital literacy in

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rural, semi-rural or even the underprivileged people in urban areas along with their efforts which they are making in education area under their CSR policy, It will open huge opportunity of employment generation, job creation, skill development, better standard of living and eventually a high GDP. Not only the IT companies should work in this area but all the companies belonging to any sector should focus in this area and may support government in such a noble cause.

CONCLUSION:

India is in the midst of great demographic and technological transformation. The country is expected to be the home to largest working age population in the world by the next twenty years. It needs to embrace digital literacy to address the rising demand for jobs. It will help to raise productivity as well as create inclusive growth.There is a great need for collaborative approach under the public private partnership model for creating collective and sustainable Digital India. The National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM), aimed to create digital literacy in one member of each family, may be given an additional boost if the companies associate themselves directly with this initiative and may enhance the digital labour pool that can be utilized by the country to a good extent. And if NDLM program is associated with CSR and the companies pay heed to this aspect, this may prove the biggest change in education sector and India will be represented as a digital literate country in next few years only.

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