



SHILPA GURUKULA REVISITED

This paper is a temporal case study of the Shilpa Gurukula, an art school for stone and wood carving and a creation of Cauvery Handicrafts, a government-owned corporation. It follows the evolution of the school since its conception in 2009 until the present day, analyzing its history, challenges, constraints and opportunities.

Conventional scholarship associates Corporate Social Responsibility with the private corporate sector. But how does a public enterprise balance its largely social developmental role with a commercial presence? This is an area hitherto unexplored by CSR scholarship. The paper uses a case study methodology with a qualitative grounded theory approach to explore the formative process of the Gurukula. The study adopts a temporal approach, looking at the Gurukula at two points of time over a decade apart alternating flashbacks into the past with flash-forwards that revisit the school at the present. In addition, the utility of using a CSR initiative for the preservation and dissemination of knowledge, rather than mere distribution of benefits, is also uncharted territory. By studying processes, and how constraints are faced and overcome, the paper aims to make recommendations for the design and implementation of unconventional CSR initiatives customized to transitional societies on the cusp of change.

Introduction

Can a government corporation complement its commercial presence with corporate social responsibility? The Shilpa Gurukula, an initiative of Cauvery Handicrafts, Government of Karnataka is living proof that it can. With a clear practitioner orientation, this case study explores the micro managerial processes and challenges in the making of this unique institution; and studies of a slice of its contemporary history. The study is temporal in scope. As Managing Director of Cauvery Handicrafts in 2013, I had written a short piece on the Shilpa Gurukula for a Springer publication. In this piece, I revisit the school and describe its present status.



Source: (Krishnaraja, 27.01.2019)



Theoretical Framework

The defining principle of this paper is its practitioner orientation. This informs both the content examined as well as the choice of research method. As Dubin puts it: "It is exceedingly difficult to say something meaningful about the real world without starting in the real world" (1976, p. 18). Lack of practitioner orientation is a general weakness that has dogged CSR scholarship. In their 2010 article, Lindgreen & Swaen comment: "The current state of affairs may be a result of how CSR has developed; this development reflects the influence of various theories..., which results in various conceptualizations of CSR... The best conceptualizations remain in their (to use a strong word) embryonic stages, and prescribed approaches to CSR seem perplexing to theorists and completely elude practitioners" (p. 1). This paper seeks to overcome this deficiency in two ways: one, by keeping the focus entirely on the real life challenges of implementation in the formative stages; and, two, by drawing data from archival and personal (interviews) data sources.

Grounded theory was chosen as the research method as it offers the best handle for the large volumes of non-standard data that qualitative analysis generates so as to systematically develop theories about observed phenomena and "discover theory from data" (Turner, 1983, p. 333). "Grounded theory is not concerned with the production of schemes of cosmic proportions, which predict world-epochal movements: it is concerned with producing theoretical accounts of small fragments of the world in which we live" (Turner, 1983, pp. 334-5)

Background

Gurukula is an ancient institution of the Indian sub-continent, enshrining values of learning, and the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Central to the traditional education system of ancient India, a Gurukula envisages a traditional structure where the principles and the practice of 'living' and 'working' are seamlessly integrated. In a Gurukula, learning took place in close proximity between preceptor and pupil, and not just the craft skills but also life skills.

The Sandalwood Heritage

The centuries-old tradition of sandalwood craft is nurtured by the *Gudigar* families of Karnataka. The clan migrated from Goa to the Malnad region of Karnataka, where sandalwood was in abundance. These talented artisans were patronized by the erstwhile Mysore Wodeyar royalty to build temples and palaces. In time, they also made *mantapas*, *basingas* (headgear) during the wedding season, clay *Ganesha* idols at the time of *Ganesha Chaturthi* festival and other utility and decorative artefacts. At present, there are about 600 registered and 300 unregistered artisans in the Malnad region. For the most part, they craft idols of gods, besides *mantapas*, jewellery boxes, *padukas*, pens, prayer beads, garlands and other items. More recently, to cater to changing public taste, contemporary articles such as bookmarks, pen holders, paper cutters, paperweights, keychains, mobile stands, light-weight wall panels and the like are also being designed. Some of their sandalwood products include distinct combs like the oil comb and lice comb that were shaped by cutting out wood with a saw. The government registered the artisans through the Cauvery Handicrafts, or Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation. Concentrated clusters of crafts-persons led to the establishment of craft complexes with common facility centres in Sagar, Sirsi, Soraba, Kumta, Mysuru and Channapatna. The artisans are provided with wood at subsidized prices. Finished products are procured from them and marketed across the globe.

The idea for a modern day Gurukula for stone and wood carving originated in an unlikely place. The Public Accounts Committee is a legislative committee of the Karnataka Legislature which examines the finances and accounts of government corporations. As part of the discussion in 2008-09, several Members of the Legislative Assembly expressed concern at the slow demise of the traditional crafts of stone and wood carving. It was felt that targeted initiatives had to be taken if the crafts were not to die out altogether. This was the genesis of the Gurukula which took shape in the years that followed. Paradoxically, a committee which usually performs an accounting and financial regulatory function (derisively dubbed a "fault finding committee") performed a constructive function in this instance (Officer of Cauvery Handicrafts, 30.04.2013).



The Project

At this juncture, Cauvery Handicrafts, a government of Karnataka undertaking, stepped in to fill the gap. Cauvery Handicrafts is the popular sobriquet for the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation. It has a history and a niche in the world of handicrafts since 1964. It has earned a reputation in the realm of cottage industries and provided a platform for artisans to market their products in Karnataka and other Indian states. Yet it is primarily a commercial organization, and its identity is market rather than service based. Structurally too, Cauvery Handicrafts is incorporated as a company. Therefore, the sphere of developmental work was uncharted territory.

Shilpa Gurukula was set up as a training centre for traditional wood and stone carving in Sagar, Shimoga district to preserve and promote the authenticity of the craft. The project commenced in 2009 and became operational in 2011. With a training centre, hostel, administration block, exhibition and seminar halls, staff quarters and a guest house within the campus, the Gurukula aspires to abide by the ancient *guru-shishya parampara*. It offers a two-year certificate course for unemployed youth interested in art. The selected candidates are granted free boarding and lodging and equipped with toolkits and raw materials. About 30 candidates are enrolled each year.

The steps that the incumbent management of the corporation took to establish the Gurukula can be categorized under the following heads:

Funding: The first step was to moot a project proposal for state approval and funding. A preliminary internal note of the corporation titled *"Details of Budget Proposals for the year 2010-11 sent by Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited to the Government"* mentions as follows: "Establishment of Gurukul in Kumta/Sagar: The Corporation has requested for a grant of Rs.200.00 lakhs from the Government for establishing a Gurukul in Kumta/Sagar which will benefit around 3000 artisans" (Cauvery Handicrafts, 2010, p. 1). Another detailed proposal gives a more complete picture: "Establishment of Gurukula at Sagar: Currently there are no schools for teaching and awarding certificates and diploma to traditional artisans to undergo training in the various sectors of handicrafts. The youth are not inclined to take up the profession of handicrafts sector because of its low brand equity and attendant low income. Therefore, it has become necessary to formalize the traditional skill sets of the artisans in the sector by way of establishing a school or Gurukula. The corporation intends to open a school/Gurukula at Sagar (Shimoga district) for the benefit of artisans. The training will be provided in the areas of wood crafts which includes (sic) sandalwood, rosewood and other woods, stone sculpture and metal art. ... The programme would be highly beneficial to artisans. In order to implement the scheme and for establishment of Gurukula, a sum of Rs.400.00 lakhs is initially required including nearly Rs.200.00 lakhs for infrastructure. It is proposed to start a Gurukula in Sagar in the current year in a small way with a grant of Rs.50.00 lakhs in the first phase" (Cauvery Handicrafts, 04.02.2010, p. 1). Then began the arduous task of launching the project. Beginning with the Board of Directors, the process took about two years. When the project was finally included in the Annual Budget of the Government of Karnataka in FY 2010-11 with seed money, a major milestone had been crossed: "With a view to providing training to the youth in traditional crafts, such as carpentry and sculpture, and to adopt modern technology, it is decided to establish Gurukula Training Centres at a cost of Rs. 5 crore (sic)" (Government of Karnataka, 03.2010, p. 36).

Personnel: Early efforts by the management focused on the induction of personnel appropriate to the task on hand. As there was a general freeze in recruitment in government, certain experienced personnel from the parent department of Commerce & Industries were obtained on deputation. However, the need for a skilled professional qualified in fine arts as faculty was recognized. Though the initial discussion contemplated two to three faculty; eventually only one instructor was recruited through a process of calling for candidates by a newspaper advertisement and personal interview.

Planning: A professional approach demanded that a detailed project report be prepared. Once again, the fall-back option was a government organization, the Technical Consultancy Services Organization of Karnataka. (Cauvery Handicrafts, 18.03.2010, p. 2). The Directorate of Kannada & Culture was also consulted and a meeting proceeding reads as follows: "Chairman pointed out that schools started to teach Traditional Sculpture and

Temple Architecture by Government as well as private bodies have failed utterly in Karnataka. Hence it is very essential to be highly cautious (sic). All care should be taken to build a successful school, by avoiding the wrong steps" (Karnataka Shilpa Kala Academy, 26.03.2010, p. 3).

The organization also sought external expertise. M/s Canara Bank were successfully running Artisan Training Institutions and a request from the Managing Director, Cauvery Handicrafts to the Secretary, Canara Bank Centenary a Rural Development Trust reads "Since you have already established such institutions at Jogaradoddi near Bidadi, and at Miyyar, Karkala and near Karaikudi, Tamilnadu, we would like to avail your expertise to start the Gurukula on the right track. Hence I write to request you to be our Technical Support group, in establishing the Gurukula at Sagar" (Cauvery Handicrafts, 18.03.2010, p. 1).



Source: (Krishnaraja, 27.01.2019).

Structure: Two administering agencies were created to execute and carry forward the programme, the State Level Advisory Committee with the Managing Director, Cauvery Handicrafts as Chairman, and a District Level Committee with the District Collector, Shimoga as Chairman. In the initial stages, it was the state level committee which was the prime mover behind the project.

Land and Infrastructure: A request was made to the Deputy Commissioner, Shimoga for 8-10 acres of land. Since this was a long time coming, construction of the facilities required was commenced in the existing craft complex premises. As even this would take time, the first-year certification course was started in the existing building of the complex straightaway. In fact, the request for land was still pending three years after the programme was launched. An office note recorded at the time states as follows: "To implement the proposed project with (sic) full swing, necessary infrastructural facilities are required at Sagar. As assured, 8 acres of land will be provided by local authorities for the purpose. In the meantime, M/s Nirmiti Kendra has (sic) entrusted to renovate the existing quarters for hostel facility to start functioning of the Gurukula at Sagar. In the interest of the artisans, we have to start the certificate course in wood carving for one year period at the existing buildings during the current year and subsequently, a full-fledged diploma course for 3 years may be implemented after constructing the required buildings with necessary infrastructure facilities (Cauvery Handicrafts, 06.07.2010, p. 1). Today, the Gurukula continues on the craft complex situated in 10 acres of land. New buildings, including three hostels, have come up, constructed by the district Nirmiti Kendra and the Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Corporation.

Curriculum: Parallely, an Academic and Curriculum Committee was formed "to decide on what faculty is required with regard to practical and theory, local or from outside, permanent or guest, number of faculty, eligibility for faculty, facilities to be given for faculty, etc"(Cauvery Handicrafts, 18.03.2010, p. 2). Besides the curriculum envisaged in the TECSOK report, the Directorate also recommended a tentative syllabus for the school. Today, the students undergo a two-year program, with six months devoted exclusively to traditional art work and drawing, which is common to both stone and wood scholars. They then branch out to their respective specializations for 18 months of practical training in stone and wood separately. They receive free boarding and lodging in the entire period.



The curriculum comprises drawing skills for the first six months, and carving and practical tasks later on. Students are taught to draw creepers. Gradually, they learn to make animal drawings, god faces, full figures and symmetry. Simultaneously, they refer to and examine the figures in temples, which enhance their observational and artistic skills furthermore. On Saturdays, they have projector classes where rough strokes, ideas of figures and other techniques needed to assimilate the art form are presented. "Apart from practical classes, students are well-versed with selected portions of Shilpa Shastra in theory. Once in three months, exams are conducted. We also enlighten them on Chola, Chalukya and Hoysala styles of depiction," mentions the instructor, Mahesh Jogi. (Krishnaraja, 27.01.2019).

Approvals: Once the budget was sanctioned, the corporation appears to have gone ahead without waiting for or seeking specific approval for the project. This seems to have engendered some differences: "Prof.... was insisting that MD had to secure necessary approval for this 'special school' from Government of Karnataka" (Karnataka Shilpa Kala Academy, 26.03.2010, p. 1) but that did not have an appreciable impact on the launching.

Challenges & Opportunities

Today the Gurukula is fully operational. Located in Sagar taluka in Shimoga, it houses budding artists in verdant surroundings. Merging the conveniences of homestay (free boarding & lodging) with the advantages of a modern education, the institution offers certificate courses in stone and wood carving. Breaking barriers, the "shishyas" learn spoken English even as they hone their skills. Study tours add to their exposure and experience. Operating since 2009, the Gurukula trains about 30 students a year. In the current year, despite Covid-19 restrictions and the consequent six-month delay in admissions, the school has 28 students on its rolls.

However, the Gurukula has faced several challenges in the course of its short history. Goal oriented behavior is a desired objective in management literature. But in public management, it is often "the tail that wags the dog", the constraints are frequently as important, if not more important, than objectives. Hence the appreciation of constraints becomes important in public governance. In the Gurukula too, the constraints shaped the course of its implementation.

Gender Imbalance: Even a casual visitor to the Gurukula today will notice the skewed gender balance. There has not been a single girl student among the 30 odd budding carvers and sculptors enrolled each year. In the year 2021, the Gurukula has enrolled 28 students, yet not one of them is a woman. (Telephonic Interview: Project Officer Sagar Craft Complex, 2021) This is explained away by the local officials as a manifestation of cultural and social restrictions that discourage girls from joining a fully residential school (Intw: Project Officer & Assistant, 11.03.2013). But on closer look, this explanation is both superficial and inaccurate. In nearby Soraba, hardly 30 kilometres away, women play an active part in trade, particularly in weaving and stringing the highly popular sandal garlands and *japmalas*. As in Soraba, in Sagar too the *Gudigars* (traditional artisans) and their families, both men and women, live and work in the *Craft Complex* of living-cum-work sheds provided by the corporation. The Gurukula is located within the premises of the craft complex, hardly a few feet away from their homes. Therefore, there is no real barrier to girl students attending the Gurukula, developing their craft, and returning back to their homes in the evening. On interviewing the programme implementers at the state and provincial level, there appears to be hardly any interest at all, except at the higher level, to make the programme more inclusive in gender terms (Intw: Project Officer & Assistant, 11.03.2013) (Telephonic Interview: Project Officer Sagar Craft Complex, 2021).

Economic Circumstances: Poverty is another issue. Students come from very poor families. This hampers the students' ability to continue the craft and skills learned, in the absence of additional support. Absenteeism does not appear to be a major problem in the Gurukula. But continuing education is likely to be. While Cauvery Handicrafts had ambitious plans to upgrade the certificate programme into a Fine Arts degree programme in collaboration with the neighbouring Kuvempu University, it is uncertain how many students would be able to avail this facility. The programme continues as a certificate programme for over a decade despite the initial enthusiasm to upgrade it into a Diploma or Degree programme. In an informal focus group discussion with the students, several of them expressed their keen interest to earn a degree but also their inability to pursue it given their financial circumstances (Students, 03.04.2013).



Source: (Krishnaraja, 27.01.2019).

Marketing Linkages: Closely related to the economic circumstances of the students are the forward linkages consequent to the program. The marketing of the finished goods not only of the Gurukula but after the completion of the course, in the form of standing production orders was envisaged at the inception of the institution. However, Cauvery Handicrafts, being a commercial organization, is unable to place standing production orders with the Gurukula because it conflicts with the 'saleability' requirement which governs all purchase decisions. Besides, there is direct competition to the Gurukula in the form of the production by the artisans of the craft complex. Being more experienced in terms of skill and also association with the corporation, they are in a better position to negotiate and even pressurize the Corporation, which the Gurukula students are in no position to do. For these reasons, the prospects of the Gurukula's students are curtailed. Even today, a decade after its launching, fresh pass-outs are unable to launch their own enterprise. Those who belong to hereditary artisan families return to the family fold, others join established sculptors as assistants or apprentices. However, opportunities have grown. In recent years, the political climate in India and Karnataka has encouraged the construction of temples, which in turn has opened up more opportunities for sculptors, particularly stone sculptors. Many manage to earn an income of Rs.1000-2000 a day (Telephonic Interview: Project Officer Sagar Craft Complex, 2021).

Upgradation Constraints: The initial conception of the course left the option open for awarding certificates/diplomas. When the programme was launched, it was restricted to being a certificate course. This compulsion was imposed on the programme because the students were mostly SSLC pass/fail and lacked the pre-matriculate or +2 qualification required to enroll for a degree course. Though one of the initial discussions envisaged as follows: "The prescribed minimum qualification for the one-year Diploma in Fine Arts is SSLC. For students who have studied upto 7th standard, there would be link-up with the State Open School, so that they can finish SSLC and the Diploma simultaneously" (Cauvery Handicrafts, 18.03.2010, p. 1), this was not implemented. The programme continues as a certificate programme for over a decade despite the initial enthusiasm to upgrade it into a Diploma or Degree programme, and despite the students' interest in earning a degree. This will act as a limitation on the programme even after its upgradation to a degree course.

The academic level seems to have been driven more by a desire to launch the programme speedily rather than creating a sustainable syllabus and evaluation: Prof. was insisting that MD had to secure necessary approval for this 'special school' from Government of Karnataka. As MD was very particular to start the school in June 2010. "personally I feel to revive the Diploma at this stage, is not easy.... By following this plan (certificate syllabus with local tutor) MD could inaugurate Gurukula School at Sagar as per his schedule without waiting for getting approval from any Government Body"(Karnataka Shilpa Kala Academy, 26.03.2010). That this short cut method was not universally acceptable is clear from an email from one of the Advisory body members: "Due to procedural requirements, it was decided that initially the course could be started as a certificate course ... and later we can create a diploma Course. In my opinion this will not help us achieve our objectives.... My suggestion is to start only a Diploma Institute, in the next academic year" (Centre Head, NID R & D campus, 24.07.2010)



Certification Constraints: Another nagging issue is regarding the certification itself. The initial discussions centred around the market acceptance of such a certificate programme: "We can create suitable opportunities for the students of the Schools (sic) run by Canara Bank and other institutions to join the proposed Diploma Education. The members expressed their desire to understand the 'VALUE' of the certificate issued by Canara Bank School, or similar schools in terms of *recognition in Society* (emphasis mine), Banking sector, preferential treatment in terms of Corporations and external trade, etc. It was felt that the society will see a formal recognized education differently than any certificate course offered by independent authorities. It was strongly felt that this is an attempt to bring in formal education as a means to create and sustain the Sector and this experiment must be formulated to succeed" (Cauvery Handicrafts, 25.03.2010).

Analysis

When set against the backdrop of CSR literature, the unfolding story of the Gurukula reveals some surprises, and some confirmations.

Corporate Social Responsibility is conventionally associated with the private sector. Even Friedman's famous essay sets his discussion on CSR in the context of "a free-enterprise, private-property system" (Friedman, 13.09.1970). But there is increasing recognition of its role in public enterprises as well. A World Bank policy paper acknowledges the role of public agencies in public good, while appreciating the fact that the terminological shift has not yet been made: "Although the contemporary CSR agenda is maturing, the term 'CSR' has not yet taken hold within many public sector agencies, either in industrial or developing countries. Few government initiatives have been undertaken explicitly as 'pro-CSR initiatives' but nonetheless many have contributed effectively to the promotion of greater social responsibility. Public sector agencies that do not use the expression 'corporate social responsibility' are not necessarily doing any less than those that do. There is a significant opportunity for public sector bodies in developing countries to harness current enthusiasm for 'CSR' alongside key public policy goals and priorities to encourage delivery of results in both respects" (Petkoski, Djordjija; Twose, Nigel, 7-25.07. 2003) (Ruth McNeil & Associates, undated). Other than in the Technical Consultancy Services Organisation of Karnataka (TECSOK) report, the term CSR finds no place in the Gurukula discourse (TECSOK, 02.2011). But the social intent and impact of the project is unmistakable.

The nature of the CSR effort takes a distinct form in a public corporation as against a private sector initiative. Here the CSR initiative was not a simple distribution of benefits as in the case of so many corporate initiatives. A successful CSR strategy, according to Van Marrewijk (2003), has to be context specific for each individual business, i.e., what are the specific CSR issues to be addressed and how to engage with the stakeholders (Dahlsrud, 2008). The challenge is for public sector bodies to identify priorities and incentives that are meaningful in the local and national context and to build on existing initiatives and capacities. In this case, this has been successfully done. Cauvery Handicrafts stayed within its own domain and close to its core competency of handicrafts. While the intended objective was the broad one to preserve the craft, the related benefits of creating a pool of craftsmen with the potential of future suppliers to the corporation and ensuring a steady stream of artefacts for sale cannot be gainsaid. In terms of the intelligent positioning of the project, this CSR effort can be deemed successful.

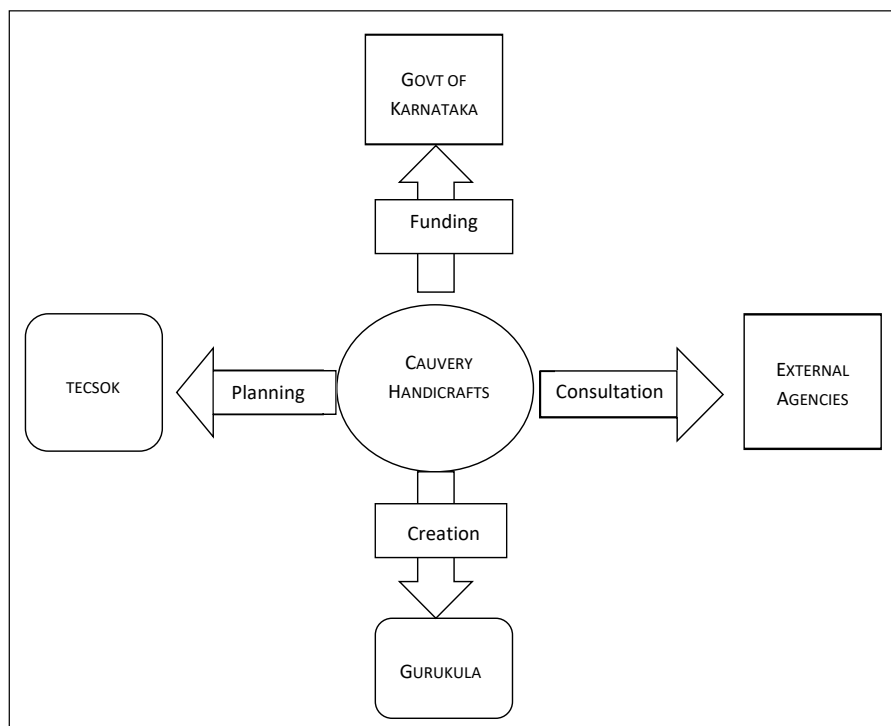
Moving away from the nature of the CSR initiative to the implementation issues, there are interesting revelations. Unlike the general organizational perspective of the government and governmental agencies as a 'closed loop', Cauvery Handicrafts exhibited a substantial 'reaching out'; to Canara Bank, Karnataka Shilpa Kala Academy, various individual experts and so on, in a consultative mode. But this consultativeness was selective and limited to the formative stage; once the programme got going, the corporation took charge and the presence of external experts and agencies faded away, not gradually but abruptly. This may pose problems when the Gurukula enters upon its phase II or expansion phase, for outsiders would be more wary of such a 'use and throw' approach.

A lot of thought appears to have gone into the project, with numerous meetings, advisory committees, discussions and so on. But whenever a tricky issue was confronted, the tendency was to skirt rather than

solve the problem. The debate regarding the level of the course, diploma or certificate, is a typical example. Ultimately, the programme architects apparently settled for a lower level (and presumably less useful) certificate course, despite the objections of their advisor, merely on the grounds that the then Managing Director, who was to retire shortly, desired to launch the programme during his tenure.

The node of decision making was the higher management and specifically the Managing Director. This is understandable in a small organization like Cauvery Handicrafts, but it was not conducive to institutionalization. Unlike most governmental activity, documentation was extensive. The decision making itself seems to have been a 'spot decision making', only the implementation process involved time. This is very different from public decision making in large infrastructure projects, for instance, where the phenomenon of extended decision making is seen, suggesting a greater degree of independence and discretion vested in decision makers in the case of developmental effort.

FIGURE 1: Diagrammatic Representation of Agencies Involved & Nature of Interaction in Gurukula Process



Source: Authors

There was no specific strategic thinking observed during the entire course of decision making, except in fund seeking. Instead, a pattern is seen, wherein first a decision is reached, then available resources are marshaled; problems are 'solved' on an *ad hoc* basis as and when they arise rather than anticipated and prepared for; disputes or differing opinions are circumvented rather than resolved; implementation steps are not planned in advance but dealt with in a step-by-step piecemeal fashion as the process proceeds. While a certain amount of planning is demonstrated in the commissioning of the Technical Consultancy Services Organisation of Karnataka (TECSOK) report, it is not visible how much the report actually informed the decision of the leadership or the recommendations of the advisory committees, or even whether the latter were even aware of the report. In fact, it could well be that the report was influenced by the decision making than vice versa.

The implementation challenges faced by the Gurukula are engrossing. But the central issue is a much larger one. In the present market system, the craft industry is vulnerable. With the development of the modern market economy, the old patron-client business network is fast declining. The artisans become dependent on middle men and trader entrepreneurs to sell their products. In the Indian constitution, handicrafts are a state subject and the responsibility of development and promotion of crafts lies with the state governments. Corporations such as Cauvery Handicrafts were created to fill this gap. But they face their own challenges. In any market, emphasis is laid on the consumption pattern. When the demand for any product is high, it should be made available even if the social costs are high. But such quick shifts are difficult in handicrafts as artisans need time to adapt their skills. But the commercial compulsions of making a profit constrain their efforts because their performance continues to be rated by profit creation than their developmental efforts. These two objectives of profitability and social responsibility are seen in direct opposition to each other in this case. This will eternally dog the Cauvery Handicrafts Corporation's development efforts unless parameters other than profit are factored into their performance evaluation.



Areas for Future Research

This paper places a CSR effort of a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) against the scholarship on CSR and finds areas of convergence and divergence. The theoretical integration is modest, it restricts itself to pointing out the distinct interpretation and form that CSR takes when initiated by a public undertaking. Its complexity and alignment goes beyond simple benefit distribution to touch skill development, craft preservation, learning and livelihood issues. However, this paper does not delve into the by-lanes of CSR literature to say, for instance, measure the impact of the Gurukula on firm performance (Wood, 10.1991) or consumer preferences (Sen & Bhattacharya, 05.2001). To isolate such defining data from one case is not feasible. Yet the case points to a conflict between the commercial and social objectives. Going by the World Bank report, it is likely that many socially responsible initiatives by public undertakings may be under implementation without an explicit label of CSR. It would be an interesting study to measure the impact of such efforts through a longitudinal macro study.

Epilogue: The way forward

The sandalwood heritage is at the crossroads. Scarcity of sandalwood has affected sandalwood artisans as they can no longer rely entirely on their dexterity for livelihood. The *Gudigars*, who have been committed to this occupation since ages, are gradually venturing into other pursuits. "There is less work at present. Many artisans go for door carving. The younger generation is stepping into other spheres," says an artisan who hails from Gudigar family and has been in this field for the past 25 years and is ailing with poor eyesight due to persistent concentration on minute features. "Nowadays, artisans function on a part-time basis and follow this more as a hobby. Shivani woodcraft is yet another option for artisans which is well in demand too," says an officer of Cauvery Handicrafts. Due to the scarcity of the raw material, variations have been made in conventional designs wherever permissible. "Like for instance, for segments of the idol that are not seen (base and inner parts) different woods are used. Earlier, the idols were made entirely with sandalwood." (Krishnaraja, 27.01.2019).

Meanwhile, the Shilpa Gurukula marches bravely on. The institute has won the SKOCH award (Instituted in 2003, SKOCH Award salutes people, projects and institutions that go the extra mile to make India a better nation. SKOCH Award winners include the mighty and the ordinary alike. They receive this Award for their extraordinary achievements in contributing to the society) in 2018. Plans are afoot to provide infrastructure and additional facilities, but more ambitious are the plans to launch a full-scale undergraduate course in fine arts in collaboration with the Kuvempu University. A few years ago, the leadership was interested in expanding student strength, taking in students regardless of caste and creed, with particular emphasis on the recruitment of girls, but these efforts have not been taken forward. The Gurukula is an evolving institution. Modest in its publicity but aspirational in its vision, the Shilpa Gurukula is truly an inspirational CSR story. ■

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