

A Historical Analysis Of State Government Policies And Programs To Promote The Handicrafts Sector In Central Tamilnadu (1950-2012)

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Abstract:

The present study aims to explore state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950-2012. The study is based on primary and secondary sources of data, including government records, reports, policy documents, academic literature, and other relevant sources. The objectives of the study are to identify the state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector, evaluate their effectiveness, examine their impact on artisans' socio-economic conditions, investigate implementation and monitoring challenges faced by the state government, explore the role of other stakeholders and identify best practices and lessons learned. The study uses a qualitative data analysis approach and a comparative analysis approach to evaluate the effectiveness of state government policies and programs over time. The study findings indicate that state government policies and programs have played a crucial role in promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu, but there were implementation and monitoring challenges that limited their effectiveness. The study also identifies best practices and lessons learned from state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector.

Keywords: policies, handicrafts, central Tamilnadu, socio-economic development, monitoring, best practices.

INTRODUCTION

India has a rich tradition of handicrafts, which is a major source of employment for millions of people and contributes significantly to the country's economy. Central Tamilnadu is known for its diverse handicrafts, including basket weaving, pottery, embroidery, and wood carving. The handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu has faced numerous challenges over the years that have threatened the livelihoods of artisans and the preservation of cultural heritage. State governments have played a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the handicrafts sector through various policies and programs.

The study aims to identify the state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950-2012, evaluate their effectiveness, examine their impact on artisans' socio-economic conditions, investigate implementation and monitoring challenges faced by the state government, explore the role of other stakeholders and identify best practices and lessons learned.

The significance of this historical analysis study lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950-2012. The study findings can provide insights into the effectiveness of these policies and programs, identify the challenges faced by the state government, and provide recommendations for future policies and programs to promote and sustain the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu.

The study uses exploratory and historical approach while both primary and secondary sources of data to examine state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950-2012. The primary sources of data include government records, reports, and policy documents related to the handicrafts sector. The secondary sources of data include academic literature, journal articles, and other relevant sources. The study uses a qualitative data analysis approach, which involves reviewing and analyzing the data to identify key themes, patterns, and trends. The study also uses a comparative analysis approach to evaluate the effectiveness of state government policies and programs over time.

During the study period (1950-2012), the state government of Tamilnadu implemented various policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu. These initiatives focused on diverse aspects, including financial support, skill development, marketing assistance, and infrastructure development.

Financial support: The Tamilnadu state government launched financial support schemes, such as the Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation (THDC) and the Tamilnadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC), to provide credit, loans, and other financial assistance to artisans.¹ These schemes aimed to help artisans overcome financial barriers and invest in the growth of their businesses.

Skill development and training programs: The state government established the Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation (THDC) to organize and conduct training programs for artisans, with the goal of enhancing their skills and productivity.² These programs targeted various handicraft techniques and aimed to help artisans adapt to changing market trends and consumer preferences.

Marketing support: The state government initiated marketing support programs through organizations such as the Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation (THDC) and Poompuhar, which facilitated the organization of exhibitions, trade fairs, and buyer-seller meets to showcase and promote handicraft products.³ These events provided artisans with a platform to connect with potential buyers and expand their market reach.

Infrastructure development: The state government implemented infrastructure development projects, such as the Integrated Handicrafts Development Scheme (IHDS), aimed at improving the infrastructure in handicrafts clusters and providing artisans with better access to basic amenities, transportation facilities, and workspaces.⁴ Improved infrastructure was expected to facilitate access to urban markets and raw materials, promoting the growth of the handicrafts sector.

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of state government policies and programs in promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period has been limited due to various challenges, such as bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, inadequate implementation, and a lack of awareness among artisans.⁵ To further promote and sustain the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu, it is essential for future policy interventions to address these shortcomings and adopt a more comprehensive approach.

Evaluating the effectiveness of state government policies and programs in promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period (1952-2012) requires examining the outcomes and impacts of these initiatives across various dimensions, such as financial support, skill development, marketing assistance, and infrastructure development.

Financial support: Although financial support schemes, such as the Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation (THDC) and the Tamilnadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC), aimed to provide credit and other financial assistance to artisans, their effectiveness has been limited due to bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, and a lack of awareness among artisans.⁶ Many artisans have faced difficulties in accessing these schemes, which has limited their overall impact on the sector.

Skill development and training programs: While the state government established the THDC to organize and conduct training programs for artisans, these initiatives have not been as effective as expected in enhancing the skills and productivity of artisans.⁷ The reach of these programs has often been limited, and they have failed to effectively address the changing needs of artisans in terms of design, innovation, and market trends.⁸

Marketing support: Marketing support programs, such as exhibitions, trade fairs, and buyer-seller meets, facilitated by organizations like THDC and Poompuhar, have had some success in promoting handicraft products and connecting artisans with potential buyers.⁹ However, these efforts have often been insufficient to overcome the challenges faced by artisans in accessing urban markets and competing with machine-made products.¹⁰

Infrastructure development: State government projects, such as the Integrated Handicrafts Development Scheme (IHDS), aimed at improving infrastructure in handicrafts clusters, have had mixed success.¹¹ While some clusters have seen improvements in basic amenities, transportation facilities, and workspaces, these projects have often been hindered by delays, insufficient funding, and a lack of coordination among various stakeholders.¹²

The effectiveness of state government policies and programs in promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period (1952-2012) has been limited due to various challenges, such as inadequate implementation, corruption, and a lack of awareness among artisans. To improve the livelihoods of artisans and preserve the cultural heritage of central Tamilnadu's handicrafts, it is

essential for future policy interventions to address these shortcomings and adopt a more comprehensive approach.

The handicrafts sector has played an essential role in the socio-economic development of central Tamilnadu for many years. State government policies and programs have also had a significant impact on this sector. According to Sivakumar (2015), the government of Tamilnadu has implemented various policies and programs to support the growth and development of the handicrafts sector. One such policy is the creation of handicrafts villages, which provide artisans with access to training and marketing facilities. This policy has helped to improve the socio-economic conditions of many artisans by enabling them to sell their products directly to consumers and eliminate middlemen. However, Sundararajan and Selvaraj (2011) argue that many of these policies and programs have not been effectively implemented, leading to a lack of impact on the ground. For example, some of the training programs provided to artisans were not relevant to their specific craft, leading to a waste of resources and time. Similarly, some of the marketing facilities provided were not well-maintained, and artisans were not given sufficient support to access them.

Despite these challenges, there have been some notable successes in the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu. For instance, Vijayakumar (2013) notes that the government's efforts to promote traditional crafts have helped to preserve these crafts and maintain the cultural heritage of the region. In addition, the growth of the handicrafts sector has provided employment opportunities for many people in rural areas, helping to reduce poverty and improve living standards. The state government policies and programs have had a mixed impact on the socio-economic conditions of artisans in the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950 to 2012. While some policies and programs have been successful in supporting the growth and development of the sector, others have been ineffective due to poor implementation. However, the handicrafts sector has continued to provide employment opportunities and maintain the cultural heritage of the region, underscoring the importance of continued support for this sector.

The state government faced various challenges in implementing and monitoring policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period (1950-2012). These challenges can be broadly categorized into administrative, financial, and contextual factors.

Administrative challenges: Bureaucratic hurdles and red tape have often hindered the effective implementation of policies and programs for the handicrafts sector.¹³ Cumbersome procedures, a lack of coordination among various stakeholders, and inefficient monitoring mechanisms have contributed to the limited success of these initiatives.¹⁴

Financial challenges: Insufficient funding has been a significant challenge for the implementation of policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector.¹⁵ Limited budget allocations and the mismanagement of funds have hampered the state government's ability to provide adequate financial support, infrastructure development, and marketing assistance to artisans.¹⁶

Contextual challenges: The complex socio-economic context of the handicrafts sector has also presented challenges for the state government in implementing and monitoring policies and programs.¹⁷ Factors such as a lack of awareness among artisans, resistance to change, and competition from machine-made products have made it difficult for the government to achieve the desired impact through their interventions.¹⁸

The state government faced numerous challenges in implementing and monitoring policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period (1950-2012). Addressing these administrative, financial, and contextual challenges is crucial for future policy interventions to effectively promote and sustain the handicrafts sector and improve the livelihoods of artisans.

During the study period (1950-2012), various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, played a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu. These stakeholders contributed to the development of the sector through capacity building, marketing support, and collaborations with the government. NGOs have been instrumental in providing capacity-building programs to artisans, focusing on skill development, design innovation, and entrepreneurial training.¹⁹ These organizations have helped artisans adapt to changing market demands and improve their competitiveness. For instance, organizations like the Craft Council of India have played a significant role in promoting traditional crafts, creating awareness, and providing training to artisans.²⁰ The private sector has also contributed to the promotion and sustenance of the handicrafts sector by facilitating market access and providing platforms for artisans to showcase their products.²¹ Retail outlets, e-

commerce platforms, and trade fairs have enabled artisans to connect with buyers and expand their customer base. Additionally, collaborations between private firms and artisans have resulted in innovative product development, which has helped in enhancing the appeal of traditional handicrafts.²² Both NGOs and the private sector have played a role in creating awareness about the cultural and social significance of handicrafts, thereby contributing to the overall promotion of the sector.²³ These stakeholders have also collaborated with the government to complement and supplement their efforts in promoting the handicrafts sector. For instance, public-private partnerships have been instrumental in developing handicraft clusters and providing infrastructure support to artisans.²⁴

Analyzing the state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period (1950-2012) allows us to identify best practices and lessons learned, which can be valuable for future policy interventions. One best practice that has emerged is the focus on cluster-based development, as seen in the Integrated Handicrafts Development Scheme (IHDS).²⁵ This approach has proven to be more effective than individual interventions, as it enables better coordination among stakeholders, optimizes resource utilization, and fosters the sharing of knowledge and skills among artisans.²⁶ Another best practice has been the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to address infrastructural and marketing challenges faced by the handicrafts sector.²⁷ PPPs can bring in additional resources, expertise, and innovation, which can enhance the effectiveness of government interventions and help artisans access markets more efficiently.²⁸

From the lessons learned, it is evident that increased collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, is crucial for the successful implementation of policies and programs.²⁹ This would help ensure that efforts are streamlined, avoiding duplication and ensuring that resources are utilized more effectively.³⁰ Another key lesson is the importance of addressing the specific needs of artisans, such as skill development, design innovation, and market trends, in crafting policies and programs.³¹ This would enable artisans to adapt to the evolving market demands and improve their competitiveness, leading to better livelihood outcomes. Lastly, it is crucial to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation and monitoring of policies and programs.³² This would help in addressing issues related to corruption, mismanagement of funds, and bureaucratic hurdles, which have been significant challenges in the past.

Therefore, the best practices and lessons learned from state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu during the study period include cluster-based development, public-private partnerships, increased collaboration among stakeholders, addressing the specific needs of artisans, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides insights into state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu from 1950-2012. The study findings indicate that state government policies and programs have played a crucial role in promoting the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu. However, there were implementation and monitoring challenges that limited their effectiveness. The study also identifies best practices and lessons learned from state government policies and programs aimed at promoting the handicrafts sector. The study recommendations include a need for a more inclusive and participatory approach to policy making and implementation, better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and stronger partnerships with other stakeholders. The study findings and recommendations can provide insights for future policies and programs to promote and sustain the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu. This study contributes to the existing literature on the handicrafts sector in central Tamilnadu and its role in socio-economic development, and highlights the need for continuous and sustainable support for the handicrafts sector in the region.

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