

Expansion, equity, excellence and employment main pillars of education: Shashi Tharoor

NEW DELHI, July 15, 2013. “There are 4 Es in the Indian education system — Expansion, Equity, Excellence and Employment. Expansion is the key. When we got independence, our literacy rate was 17 per cent, we had barely 30 universities in the country. Today we have a literacy rate of 74 per cent and boast of 700 universities. We have around 33,000 colleges across the country,” said **Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State, Ministry of HRD**, while addressing an interactive session on ‘**Great Expectations**’ organized by **Young FICCI Ladies Organization** here today.

He emphasized that education was the backbone for inclusive growth and development. India enjoys a demographic dividend which could take the country to great heights if the quality of education was improved and right skills were imparted to the country’s employable youth.

The second ‘E’ stood for easy equity. Out of the 74 per cent of the literate population, 82 of them are men and 65 women. This gender gap needs to be closed by an active equity policy that support students, Dr. Tharoor added.

The third ‘E’ stood for excellence. There are many outstanding and renowned Indian education institutes such as the IITs and IIMs. But the foremost challenge is to improve all-round excellence and raise the standards of students, teaching and infrastructure, he stated.

Employability was the last ‘E’. “Many companies conduct classroom sessions to train the employers. Due to the lack of quality employment skills amongst freshers, it has become very difficult to generate candidates fit for the job. Using the PPP model, the crises of unemployability can be overcome. We just need to ensure a right mix of curriculum and vocational skills,” remarked Dr. Tharoor.

However, he pointed out that “If we do not get our education priorities right, violent incidents like the Maoist violence would recur. We will be faced with frustrated unemployed young men with no stake in the system and with no hope in the economy, these men will prefer picking up the gun, as an alternative to finding the right job. That is the danger that we need to avert. To my mind, education is not just about the social and economic future of India, it is no less than a national security challenge.”

Speaking on safety of women, **Mr. Naveen Jindal, Member of Parliament and Chairman & Managing Director, Jindal Steel and Power Limited**, stated that violence against women was rampant in the country and was not restricted only to his state, Haryana. He said that the government was putting in a lot of efforts and also pumping funds in schemes such as scholarships for the girl child to encourage them to study and help combat practices such as female foeticide.

Ms. Vani Tripathi, National Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party, said that for education to be inclusive, the focus must be on imparting education to the girl child and women. It was necessary to leverage the power of women and policies need to be formulated to facilitate in this endeavor.

Namanji, Principal Guide & Adviser, Oneness Movement, remarked that we demand respect from others when we do not respect ourselves. Women must learn to love and respect themselves and break the shackles imposed on them by society.

Ms. Fatima Karan, Senior Anchor, CNN-IBN, moderated the session. **Ms. Garima Jain, Chairperson, YFLO** and **Ms. Pooja Jain, Senior Vice Chairperson, YFLO** also addressed the session.

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