

My welcome remarks at the IMTE yesterday may be of interest to some of you. Please note that the purpose of the Meet is not to supplant the traditional system of education, but to supplement it. We are acutely aware of the problems of power, connectivity and mindset, pointed out by Dr. Shashi Tharoor, but designing a new strategy in the light of global experience is absolutely imperative.

TPS

Welcome remarks by Amb(Rtd) T.P.Sreenivasan, Executive Vice-Chairman of the Kerala State Higher Education Council at the Inaugural Session of the International Meet on Transnational Education (January 3, 2014)

Distinguished Guests,

This International Meet on Transnational Education is an effort to grasp the extent of the education revolution, which is taking place around the world and to design a strategy to catch up with the latest trends.

From the transformation of the black board to the white board to MOOCs, Flip Schools, Studio schools and TED Talks, dramatic changes in the way the world teaches and learns are sweeping the globe.

An eminent educationist Nathan Harden made the dire prediction that “in fifty years, if not much sooner half of the roughly 4,500 colleges and universities now operating in the United States will have ceased to exist. The technology driving this change is already at work, and nothing can stop it”.

Some contrary developments must also be taken into account. If 2012 was the “Year of the MOOC”, as the New York Times famously called it, 2013 might be dubbed as the year that online education fell back to earth.

Faced with the prospect of the extinction of conventional educational institutions, many have begun to rebel against the rapid expansion of online education. In response, MOOCs like Coursera, Udacity, Edex and the Khan Academy are bringing further changes.

The world is bewildered that the education revolution, like the technological revolution, has come without a Users Manual, as stated by Picco Iyer. There is even a demand to slow down the education revolution.

Kerala’s higher education system has remained largely unaffected by the new trends in the methods of teaching and learning. The stark reality of the situation in Kerala was demonstrated this morning when it turned out that only less than ten of the senior educationalists in Kerala had tried out MOOCs. We, therefore, have a blank page to write on. We do not have to reinvent the wheel, but the time has come for us to reshape our education in the light of global experience. In other words, we need to catch up with the rest of the world.

We have brought to this Meet, experts from different parts of the globe with our own educationists to shape our own education for the future. I hope that we can absorb the best practices and find a package that suits our genius and our purse.

We hope that the Meet will produce a Thiruvananthapuram Declaration on “Higher Education 2.0”, which will mark a new beginning in our quest for an education system that is relevant for the 21st century India.

Those who have seen the documents of the Meet may have noticed that it has been fully prepared with a Concept Note, a background paper and even Guidance Notes for the chairs and the speakers. We have done this to guide the debate in the right direction and to provoke discussions. Needless to say, additional thoughts and ideas are very welcome.

I have worked with three distinct teams of excellent colleagues--- a team of IITians, led by Dr.Muralee Thummarukudy from the United Nations, the International Relations Group, including Dr.K.M.Abraham, the Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Kerala, a preparatory committee, led by my colleagues in the Executive Council Dr. R. Jayaprakash, Prof. Lopus Mathew and Prof. C.I. Abdul Rahiman and a logistics team from my office, led by Dr.P.Anvar, the Member secretary. I am grateful to all of them.

A landmark event will take place today when the first issue of the first volume of our academic journal “Higher Education for the Future” will be released by Dr.Shashi Tharoor. I congratulate the Editorial Board on this accomplishment.

Apart from designing a world class Meet, we are also trying to develop a new culture for academic meets by reducing unnecessary rituals and wasteful paraphernalia. I am sure that you will notice the new features, no lamps, no flowers in plastic bags, no flex boards that hurt the environment and no mementos in wood, steel or glass mementos, only books.

One of the new features of the new culture is a short welcome address. The distinguished guests on the dais are too well known and too eminent to require any praise from me. I would, therefore warmly welcome the Hon. Chief Minister, Shri.Oommen Chandy, Hon. Education Minister, Shri. P.K.Abdu Rabb, Hon. Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Dr.Shashi Tharoor and the Hon. Vice Chancellor of the Delhi University, Dr. Dinesh Singh and all the distinguished delegates and the entire audience.

Please join me in welcoming all of them with a thunderous applause.

Thank you.