



Developing entrepreneurial skills through real life experiences

Last Updated: Monday, January 5, 2015 - 09:40 | Source: zeenews.india.com

Flavia Agnes

Panelists at an event organised by the SP Jain Institute of Management Studies and Research (SPJIMR) advised students to grab entrepreneurial opportunities and find solutions to social and economic problems

As a result of the current crescendo surrounding incidences of violence against women, a considerable focus is on empowering them in different walks of life including home, office or even on the street. Keeping this in mind, SPJIMR's Centre for Development of Corporate Citizenship (DOCC), organised 'Heroes Speak', an event with women empowerment as its theme. Five panelists who have helped empower women through their skills interacted with students and provided tips to help them become successful venture owners in the near future.

Flavia Agnes, lawyer and women's rights activist spoke to students about how she overcame an ordeal and went on to study law and specialise in women's rights. "In my own dark time, I realised that though laws are framed, people don't have either the knowledge or accessibility to use and enforce them appropriately," she explained, further adding that this is the main reason why the rate of crime against women is going up while the conviction rate is spiralling down.

In order to bridge this discrepancy, Agnes set up Majlis, a legal and cultural resource centre that campaigns for and provides legal representation to women on issues of matrimonial rights, child custody etc. Speaking on law as a career, Agnes pointed out that it is a lucrative profession with new dimensions like corporate and finance law making it more appealing to youngsters.

Arunachalam Muruganantham, credited as the inventor of a low-cost sanitary pad making machine and also instrumental in creating awareness against traditional unhygienic practices of menstruation in rural India, advised students to explore problems rather than opportunity. "A management degree trains you to look for opportunities to set up a business and make money, however, one needs to focus on finding a problem that needs a solution and create a win-win situation," says the Tamil Nadu-based rural entrepreneur, who is a class VIII dropout and currently in talks to expand his business to 106 nations.

"Through my venture of manufacturing low-cost sanitary pads, I am running a silent Pink revolution that aims to make India a 100 per cent sanitary napkin using country," said Muruganantham, who was ostracised by his family and village while running the campaign. "I wanted volunteers to test the prototype I designed with my own hands. No one was willing to try it out, my wife tried once, but was embarrassed, so I decided to use it myself," he explained to his awestruck young audience.

Jockin Arputham, president of the National Slum Dwellers Federation asked the question, "Who's empowering whom?". According to him, it is not the women, but men who need to be energised to understand the power of women. Taking a lesson from women in Mumbai slums, Arputham says, "Women know how to manage money, gather information and communicate efficiently. This helps them to be better than men."

Chetna Gala Sinha, who set up the Mann Deshi Mahila Sahkari Bank, a micro finance bank which lends loans to women in rural areas, spoke about her experience too. "Mann Deshi was denied a licence by the Reserve Bank of India because the women banking with us were illiterate village folk. Though I almost gave up the idea of setting up the bank, these women took up the challenge of learning to read and write and six months later accompanied me to the RBI office," said an emotional Sinha.

In the end theatre and TV actor Mita Vashisht shared her experience of working with trafficked children who were rescued. "Since these children were assaulted physically and mentally, I worked on making them stronger through theatre, classical dance and martial arts," says the actor who made it a point not to sympathise but empathise with their situation and help them find their calling. "Today some of them are settled with a job and even married, their cruel past not affecting their present or future. However, many are still left behind and need to be rescued," he added.