

# IONEDUCATION NEWS-LETTER

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## **Autonomy in no way a step towards privatization; will enhance global standing of our institutions: Prakash Javadekar**

The autonomy being granted to several leading varsities, including Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and others, is in "no way a step towards privatisation of education" or fee-hikes, and the Centre will continue to support these educational institutions like before, HRD minister Prakash Javadekar asserted today.



The Union government would continue to fund the salaries of the faculty as well as provide other grants, Javadekar told PTI adding that greater autonomy essentially meant an enhanced global stature and a greater freedom to undertake fresh academic initiatives.

"The autonomy being granted to JNU and others is in no way a step towards privatisation of education as is being suggested by some quarters," the HRD minister said.

Higher education sector regulator University Grants Commission (UGC) recently granted full autonomy to 60 institutions, including five central and 21 state universities, which maintained high standards.

There were reports of apprehensions and even protests in some educational institutions that the move was a step towards privatisation of public-funded institutions. Even though the Delhi University (DU) did not figure in the list of institutions being given autonomy, there were reports of teachers protesting what they termed the changed funding policies of the government.

Seeking to lay apprehensions to rest, the Union HRD minister emphasized that autonomy did not mean a fee hike or reduction of government grants.

This autonomy granted will enhance the reputation of our Universities throughout the world, he said.

The Union government will continue to fund central universities as we are doing today and we have no intention to increase fees because universities have become autonomous, he said seeking to lay doubts at rest.

"So all the apprehensions are misplaced; the autonomy will mean freedom to do more research, expansion and take up many other academic initiatives," Javadekar said.

Referring specifically to DU, Javadekar said his ministry was in-fact pushing for filling up of vacancies in faculty positions and the government was prepared to pay salaries of the now joiners as well.

"As far as the Delhi University is concerned, we are following up with the university and the colleges, to recruit all faculty positions on regular basis with proper due diligence. We will be funding 100 per cent of salaries of all faculty as we are doing now," he said.

Source:<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/autonomy-in-no-way-a-step-towards-privatisation-will-enhance-global-standing-of-our-institutions-prakash-javadekar/articleshow/63454113.cms>

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## **Need to Focus on Developing Employability Skills in our Engineering Graduates**

According to the survey, carried out by a number of agencies, more than 70 percent of our engineering graduates are not employable. Dr Kalam has rightly said that India does not have problem of unemployment but unemployability. The graduates lack other skills beside the academic or technical skills. The top three most important general skills identified were integrity, reliability and teamwork, while the top three most important specific skills are entrepreneurship, communication in English and use of modern tools and technologies.

If colleges want to improve the employability of their graduates, they have to focus on reducing these important skill gaps through improvements in curriculum and teaching methods. The Universities are required to play a significant role for the same so that graduates have to be able to formulate, analyse, and solve a real life problem using standard engineering techniques.

Each institution should define the set of skills that a graduate is supposed to have after each semester. Further, colleges need to change pedagogical style from teacher-centric to student-centric, and include more assignments for students to independently analyse and apply tools on real life problems. Only through such changes in the teaching-learning process will the future engineers become more employable.

Swami Vivekananda always used to say that “Education is the manifestation of perfection already in men”, “We are all powerful, and we can do everything”. This quote inspires us to upgrade ourselves continuously through solving real life problems by applying the knowledge gained in the classroom lectures.

Employers, universities and professional bodies agree that we need to develop professionals who are highly skilled and ready to face the challenges of increased competition. More than ever we need professionals who are responsive to economic, social, cultural, technical and environmental change and can work flexibly and intelligently across

business contexts. The industry requires new graduates who understand the part they play in building their organisations, and have the practical skills to work effectively in their roles. However, really contributing in the workplace means more than having the necessary technical skills. It means engaging with the organisation and its goals, understanding the dynamics of the workplace, and taking up a job role with an informed knowledge of all of its requirements. It also means applying a broad range of employability skills learned in many contexts and through a range of experiences. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound, critical decisions. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior-most position.

Educational curriculum needs to be examined from time to time in order to ensure that the education received by students is relevant and up to date. Industrial training received by students need to be looked into and revised in term of its effectiveness to assured that students are clear with their job scopes later on. Besides that, instructors should practice employability skill during teaching and learning session so that it could assist students to understand ways of applying the skills by themselves.

Motivators and counselors have to cooperate with institutions in the process of giving guidance and inspirations to students regarding the ways to increase employability skill from time to time in order to be excellent workers. Apart from that, apprentice programs are suggested to be carried out so that students will be able to understand employability skill better. This program will also serve the purpose to make students realized that employability skill is as important as technical skills.

The higher education sector is characterized by diversity; course and student profiles are different and universities aim to develop students with distinct characteristics or attributes. Universities are required to work in developing employability skills in their students by providing academic staff with relevant support and resources, integrating these skills into curriculum and course design, providing students with work placements and exposure to professional settings and providing advice and guidance

through career services.

The following are few suggestions:

1. An Employability Strategy Fund should be created;
2. The employability skills in all university curriculum are to be explicitly identified;
3. The teaching and assessment of employability skills are to be enhanced;
4. Provide funding for universities to systematically review their work on developing employability skills.

If the strategies related to the programmes for the development of employability skills are formulated and monitored religiously then Dr Kalam's vision of India being a developed country will be achieved in a true sense.

Source : <http://indiaeducationreview.com/need-focus-developing-employability-skills-our-engineering-graduates/>

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**AICTE has transformed itself as a mentor of institutions with multiple supporting tools and initiatives: Prof Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, AICTE**



(Interview conducted by Dr Deepak Garg of Bennett University)

**Q: You are just completing around 3 years at AICTE. What are the things you were able to achieve and what are others that you will put into the category of 'work under progress'?**

Thank you Deepak for this conversation. Now it's almost 3 years that I have joined at AICTE as chairman. Some of the challenges when I joined AICTE were large number of institutions with large number of vacant seats, quality of teaching & learning processes was poor, curriculum was not revised for a long time and related issues such as employability of graduates; essentially

these were quality issues. We have expanded exponentially in terms of number of colleges and seats during last 2 decades but quality was not given much attention. The target for me was how do we improve quality. In the last 2 to 3 years, several initiatives have been taken to improve the situation. In one of the council meetings, we deliberated on this issue at length and drawn a 10-point agenda for improving quality. The progress on these points has been quite good and I am happy that most of them are now achieved. Let me narrate a few important ones.

1. Curriculum revision was a top priority because many universities did not revise their curriculum for a long time and outdated knowledge was being provided to students, creating problems of employability and related issues. We now have curricula for all the courses which are upgraded through a committee of experts drawn from IITs and industry, the number of credits has been reduced from about 200 credits for undergraduate program in engineering to about 160 credits; thereby students have lot of opportunity to work outside the class. Learning in class room is one part. But the learning which takes place outside the class room amongst peers, going to industry, internship, taking up small projects, working by hand, experiential learning is gaining more and more importance and we are attempting at that.

2. The second point is, lot of students who join engineering schools or for that matter any higher educational institute are found to have varied type of experiences before joining the engineering school. So, we have designed a 3 weeks long students' induction program, whereby a level playing field is created for every student, whether he is from rural or urban background, English medium student or Hindi/regional languages medium student, whether he comes from rich family background/poor family background. I think there will be lot of interaction which can take place between faculty and a set of 20-25 students during this period, playing, exercises, doing Yoga together, group discussions, watching inspirational movies, motivational lectures by eminent achievers, all of which will create lot of enthusiasm among students and also develop bonhomie and ownership with the institution. Teacher-Student relationship shall also improve in the classroom and outside classroom during the next 4 years.

3. Teacher Training Program. Teachers were never trained when they joined

the Institution. They may have the Masters & Ph.D. degrees, but as far as pedagogy is concerned, they were never trained in that. Therefore, we have designed 8 modules of one semester long program. Unless a teacher goes through the certification in these 8 modules of one semester long program, he/she will not become a regular teacher in any technical institution. So, this is a new venture we are doing.

Every institution should have an Industry-Institute cell for variety of activities. Internship is made mandatory either during summer vacations or one full semester as the case may be depending on institute or university curriculum. Then we have question papers, these are also very important to think about in outcome-based education (Washington accord accreditation is based on outcomes and India is a signatory). But how to test these outcomes is never known to our faculty members and therefore nature of question papers, standardization of question papers, how they are to be designed needs training. I think there is a lot to learn about this process which is missing, otherwise our normal question papers contain explain terms, define something, derive something, but whereas understanding, application of principles, innovation and creativity of the students are not tested at all. I think that is another area which we have also addressed.

We wanted to have single entrance exam which has not happened as on date because of certain compulsions. But otherwise all the quality initiatives which we are thinking about, they are rolled out. AICTE has become pro-active more as a facilitator than merely a regulator.

**Q. Great to hear about your achievements. Apart from this also AICTE has initiated some programs having far reaching benefits. Can you elaborate on that?**

Two-Three other important initiatives should be mentioned here, one of them is creation of MOOCs portal called SWAYAM, where the courses from the best possible faculty in the country are made available for students free of cost including transfer of credits to the extent of 20% of the curriculum and grades in such courses are transferred to their respective university transcripts.

We have another very interesting area of hackathons. We have started a

smart India hackathon, second edition of which concluded on 31st March. The problems given by central govt. departments, ministries and state governments being solved by our young students. This was never heard of. This is a very innovative idea, development of a national open innovation model. The successful completion of second edition and many solutions of first edition being actually used by ministries shows the power of innovation of students.

As many as 340 odd different central and state govt. problems being given as challenge to our students. Our students in turn giving their innovative ideas for solving them. Shortlisting ideas from 1 lakh plus students to ten thousand students, conducting hackathon in 28 different centres simultaneously, 36 hours non-stop. I think the level of energy and level of challenge that the students are accepting, the kind of enthusiasm amongst students, their mentors, jury, and organisers is simply mindboggling and showing good results are coming out of that.

We also have other than these two great initiatives, tying of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan with Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana. We have linked these two programmes, one by the colleges adopting villages and MPs adopting villages, so that students can get exposure about the problems in the rural area and how their technical knowledge can be utilized for solving the problems of our fellow villagers. This is another area which has taken off, more than 800 institutions are participating, adopting about 3-5 villages each. I think this way we had wonderful experiences.

We have our own start-up policy which was initiated year-and-half ago. It is also picking speed. Lots of incubators are coming up in different institutions. And there are courses being provided on entrepreneurship while students are still studying in engineering, thereby at the end of 4 years rather than seeking jobs they can give opportunity to others to get jobs. This way, there are a variety of ways in which transformation is happening.

However, whatever good has happened is not fully satisfactory because there are still 40% vacant seats in technical courses. We need to attract may be not only students from within India into engineering but also from abroad, if we succeed in this initiative of study-in-India, those remaining

40% seats can also get filled from students coming from Middle East, South African and Asian countries because our education is affordable compared to any other country and if it also becomes highly qualitative, there is just no looking back.

**Q: Indian education system is considered isolated, what initiative has been taken to integrate it with the rest of the world.**

Accreditation is one important thing because of which we can get integrated with the rest of the world. We are signatory to Washington accord. Our degrees are equivalent to degrees secured in many other signatory countries. Thus scope of our degrees has already expanded. That is number one.

Number 2, because our system was not known to many other countries, we are still lacking in attracting students from abroad. We must visit different countries, organise road shows, attend conferences, seminars where different universities attend and create branding about India as an educational hub. People can come here and start studying.

**Q. What do you think about the next level of education coming with MOOCs? How the landscape is changing?**

Landscape is gradually changing, still we need to have one to one interaction, lectures and classes are required. But never the less lot of dependence only on class room teaching learning is going to be eliminated because many courses, where not much of laboratory content or hands-on experience is required and only theoretical knowledge is required, such courses can easily be offered through MOOCs by one of the best professors available in the country. So, I think we are moving in that direction. We will have to see how it is accepted by students and faculty. Presently a maximum of 20% credits are allowed to be earned through MOOCs, may be the percentage may either reduce or increase depending on our experiences.

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