

RAJENDRA S. PAWAR
Chairman & founder,
NIIT University

Interview

VISION

Surfing one of the greenest university campuses, and gazing at the amazing art work and research posters, it was indeed arduous to fathom those to be creations of Engineers! On enquiring, Mr. Rajendra Singh Pawar verbalized the 'research, innovation and entrepreneurship' foundation of the university.

Rajendra S Pawar is the Chairman and co-founder of the NIIT Group and the founder of NIIT University, a green university. Through the NIIT's innovative franchising model, he unleashed a wave of entrepreneurship around the world. Pawar has been a member of Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development, Planning Commission's Task Force on Skill Development and International Business Council of the World Economic Forum. He was a founder member of NASSCOM and has been actively involved in Indian Chambers of Commerce. He is popular for industry-academia alliance and is closely associated with India's well known educational institutions

such as IIT Delhi, Indian School of Business and the Scindia School, Gwalior.

On the four core principles of the University.

Our four core principles stands to be Industry Linked, Technology Driven, Research Driven and Seamlessness. In fact, seamlessness is deeply rooted to our motto and is termed as 'Anadi Anant' on

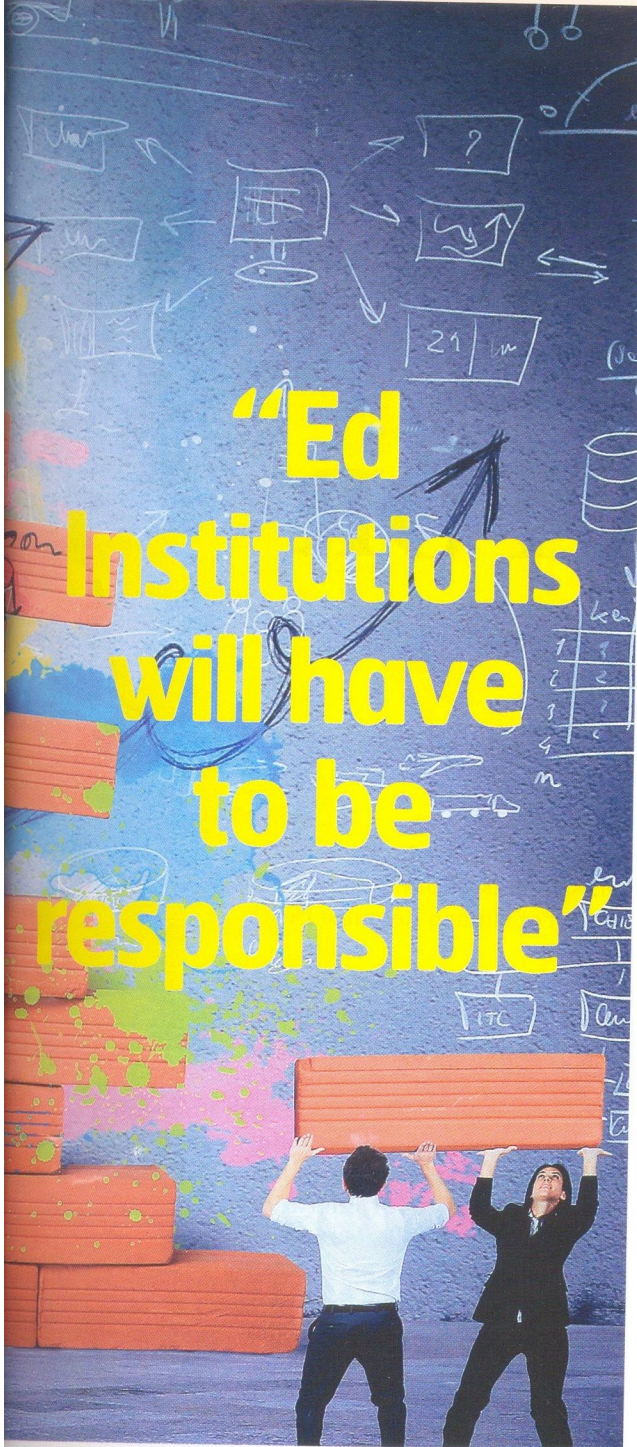
our emblem of a mobius ring.

On the need of 'research and innovation'

There is a reason why research did not flourish in a closed economy. The times and circumstances generate the need. Before 1990, during the license raj, research was limited to PhD students which

went up to the stage of publishing a book. In order to convert research to a commercial activity, you needed to have that part of the system functional. Enterprise seeking new ideas was not a part of the license raj, which was rather appropriate at that point in time. Meanwhile the world started moving towards an open economy





but we remained closed till 1990. After we decided to open our economy in 1990, we didn't need a permission to manufacture. People could make anything. The situation thereafter arose where capacity was more than demand leading to more choices. Now days, when to go for shopping, we are finicky about what we buy because we have a lot

of choices which we didn't have in the earlier days. So, this opportunity of making choices by the consumer forces competition which in turn forces innovation. With enterprises valuing the superior or quality products leading to comparison, more and more application of mind was required and the logical flow therefore was research.

We are working very hard to change the character from great teaching institutions to institutions who also have to research. Now more than need, there's a compulsion for research. Companies of today are looking for innovative researchers and educational institutions will have to be responsible for it.

On entrepreneurship
We inspire our students to become job creators than job seekers. However, this also depends on the inclination of the student. If the student is completely tilted to the technical side and not comfortable with taking risks, we completely support them. On the other

to them, they're job creators.

On choosing the apt student during admission

Well, this is a huge point of departure from other institutions. Although there were lots of debate around 'how', we all agreed that the social capability of the students must be assessed. While written exams, school records are quite easy to test the technical skills, how would we test social sensitivity, innovativeness in a student? Personal interview was a ready choice for us but it has its flip side too. After lots of debate and discussion, a very senior professor suggested to tape record every interview. If needed at any time, we can justify the reason behind

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hand, we make sure to provide all opportunities to evoke and hone all the necessary skills for students with slightest inclination towards entrepreneurship. Students are offered crash courses in finance, banking and other entrepreneurial skills along with their core technical course. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the educational institutions to identify the skills and give every opportunity to nurture them. If it comes

admitting a student. We are happy to give one-third of the total weightage to social capability, however, we do plan to give it half the weightage. We will be pressing for closer economic ties with America benefitting from each other's economy. Again, Irish people have worked in America. We don't think there will be any change and we will be really able to deal economically. ■

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