About Us, Our Vision and Mission

Azim Premji University was established by the Azim Premji Foundation, in 2010.

Azim Premji Foundation

The Foundation’s vision is to contribute to the realization of a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society. To realize this vision the Foundation has been working since 2001 towards making deep, large scale and institutionalised impact on the quality and equity of education in India, along with related development areas.

Currently the Foundation works in eight states across India, and has a dedicated team of over 1000 members. The work of the Foundation is organized through State and District level institutions. The institutionalized nature of the work is informed by the reality that long term and consistent engagement with multiple stakeholders is necessary for educational change.

This deep, on-the-ground, engagement includes capacity development of teachers, head teachers and other education functionaries, and it also involves work on (e.g.) curriculum, assessment, policy issues at the State and National level.

The roots of the University lie in the learning and experience of the Foundation. The Foundation established the University for an explicit and clear social purpose, as part of a larger strategy to contribute to the Education and Development sectors in the country.

Mission of the University

Arising from the vision of education for social change, to realize a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society, the University aims to create outstanding and effective programmes that:

- Prepare graduates with great competence, integrity and social commitment
- Expand the frontiers of knowledge in education, development and allied fields through research
- Support and enhance the work of the education and development sectors in the country through continuing education
- Contribute to change in policy and practice in the Indian education and development sectors through advocacy and public communication

University: The journey so far...

The University started in 2011, offering two postgraduate programmes; M.A. Education and M.A. Development and currently has eight specializations on offer within these programmes. The Undergraduate programme and a new M.A. Programme in Public Policy and Governance were started in June 2015. This expansion is guided by a clear framework that addresses the need, quality and relevance of the programmes to our core social purpose.

In these five years, we have enrolled 1250 students and built a dedicated team of 220 faculty and staff. We currently have 690 postgraduate and 105 undergraduate students on campus, in the academic year 2015.

To enable academic and operational focus, the University is organized into 5 schools - School of Education, School of Development, School of Policy & Governance, School of Liberal Studies, School of Continuing Education and University Resource Centre. These schools have ownership for the programmes and key initiatives in their respective domains, and an overarching coherence and alignment with our core social purpose.
A brief overview of the Degree Programmes

Programme Structure
The degree programmes follow a credits-based system. The Postgraduate programmes are “72 credit, full time, 2 years-4 semester” and the Undergraduate programme is “84 credit, full time, residential, 3-year-6-semester”. The UD programme has an Honours option requiring 12 additional credits through thesis work and additional courses.

**Programmes**
- **Master of Arts in Education**
  - Specializations
    - School Organization, Leadership and Management
    - Curriculum and Pedagogy
    - Early Childhood Education
- **Master of Arts in Development**
  - Livelihood
  - Public Policy
  - Health and Nutrition
  - Law and Governance
  - Sustainability
- **Master of Arts in Public Policy & Governance**
- **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) with the option of an Honours degree**

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**Undergraduate Programme**
The undergraduate programme has a liberal educational vision and a curriculum that aims to prepare students for personal accomplishment in their areas of interest as well as develop critical sensibilities for citizenship and social engagement. All students study courses in a Common Curriculum that nurtures general capacities of critical reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning. The “Understanding India” component is a unique feature of the Common Curriculum in which courses aim to develop a deep appreciation of the historical, cultural, ecological, and social context of India and the associated challenges. “Creative Expressions” courses promote engagement with Arts, Music, and Sports etc. The discipline-specific courses provide breadth and depth in their disciplinary fields (Majors). Students have the option of choosing “Minors” providing them the flexibility to learn other disciplines or even distributing and doing courses from many disciplines. Illustratively a student could choose “a Physics Major” and “Development Studies Minor”.

**Teaching and Learning: Key Considerations**
Our programmes aim to (i) promote excellence in learning appropriate to the diverse contexts that students come from (ii) ensure that they reflect the university’s social purpose and (iii) nurture students who are capable of making sensitive ethical choices, and are socially engaged and capable of thoughtful and skilful action. We expect the education at the University to be an important beginning or continuation, not the final stage, of a process of learning. To enable these in practice:

- The curriculum and courses are designed to elicit interest and curiosity. Faculty act as facilitators of learning and hence have significant autonomy in structuring the courses, teaching methods and learning experiences. The course content is presented in ways that invite questioning and reflection.
- The pedagogic practices, inside and outside the classroom, are designed to ensure that students engage each other in dialogue and also address issues of inclusion and diversity.
- Assessments: The objective is to provide meaningful, and constructive feedback to the students while at the same time providing valuable insights to the instructor about the teaching-learning process. The assessment systems are comprehensive; term papers, reflection notes, group projects, book reviews, presentations etc. are part of the overall assessment scheme.

- A letter grading system is followed; it is non-competitive and does not compare students. The focus is on the student’s own accomplishments in learning.
- University-wide processes and review mechanisms ensure that the courses and teaching practices stay connected to the larger programme objectives.

Admissions and Student Support

**Admissions**
Integral to our vision and core purpose, is the commitment to inclusion and diversity. We strive hard to ensure that students from disadvantaged economic, social, regional backgrounds can access quality higher education. Equally critical is our commitment to ensure that they are supported to overcome disadvantages and realise their potential.

- **Reach:** We reach out across the country (30 test centres and 15 interview locations) during admissions to ensure that access is not a constraint. In addition, school and college contacts, youth engagement programmes and open houses are conducted.
- **Inclusion:** We understand and appreciate the gaps in opportunity that disadvantaged backgrounds cause. To address this, we provide specific weightage in admissions, covering a range of disadvantages; economic, caste, gender etc, enabling such disadvantaged students to offset entry-level difficulties.
- **Financial Support:** Extensive support is provided to help deserving students deal with financial constraints. Based on the extent of economic disadvantages and constraints, they are awarded scholarships ranging from 50% to 100% covering tuition fees, accommodation charges and expenses for field engagements etc. In exceptional cases we also provide monthly living support and student assistantships that help deserving students cover their day-to-day expenses / support their families. We also facilitate concessional educational loans for students, using which they can fund full or part of the expenses.
- **Process:** The admission process is designed to provide applicants individual attention and guidance throughout the admission cycle.

**Our Student Profile, reflects this commitment to equity, inclusion and diversity**
- 50% are from rural areas or small towns, from 25 states
- 55% are women
- 55% study on financial support
- 30% of students in our Postgraduate programmes come with work experience

Faculty
Over the past five years we have built a very committed faculty team of 130 members, many of whom have chosen to join the University because they resonate with the overarching social purpose and the opportunity to prepare students to contribute to social change. Most of the faculty have doctoral degrees in relevant domains. The blend of academics and field experience among the faculty creates a very vibrant, rich and collegial environment.

Added to this, the wealth of experience and practice-related expertise of Azim Premji Foundation’s field institution members have immensely benefited students. Our attempt to integrate theory, practice and research is perhaps unique among institutions of higher learning in the country.
**Student Support and Well-being**

Student well-being is central to the University’s functioning and we are keen on building a caring community. We recognize that many students need intensive support and sensitive care to:

- Adjust and benefit from an academically rigorous and challenging programme
- Learn to live together, amidst their diversity
- Deal with stress owing to academics, personal or family circumstances

In line with this, various student support initiatives have been designed and delivered since inception. They have evolved in their nature and form over the years, in response to student and faculty feedback on their effectiveness.

- **Orientation:** All students go through a detailed orientation (of 2 to 3 weeks) prior to starting the programme. These are compulsory and the objective is to prepare students to (i) appreciate the diversity among them and learn to work together (ii) impart some essential academic skills in reading, writing, literature review, basic research etc. (iii) develop a bonding with the fellow students and faculty and (iv) sensitizing them to the processes and culture of the University.
- **Mentoring:** Every student is assigned an individual faculty mentor to provide them guidance right from the start of their studies through completion.
- **Academic Support:** Dedicated faculty-hours for each course to provide for individual faculty consultations, course-specific tutorials, academic reading and writing courses, writing labs, workshops on a range of skills development topics etc. are academic support facilities available for all students.
- **Counselling:** Full-time professional counsellors on campus to address emotional issues relating to various factors and support student well-being
- **Student Insurance:** All students are covered under insurance schemes for health, accident and life at no additional cost.
- **Student Initiatives:** Active encouragement and support to student clubs, social and cultural initiatives, publications and formal/informal mechanisms to enable them flourish.

**Placements**

Central to realizing our vision is to see our students engaged with the social sector after they graduate. The placement cell at the University comprising students and faculty mentors works on this aspect. For the third year running, the University has had very healthy placements. 420 students have successfully graduated, in 2013, 14 and 15.

It is heartening that over 70% of these students chose to work in the social sector (with NGO’s, Schools, and other organisations) and among them more than 60% opted for work at the grassroots in rural areas and small towns, where their competency is most needed. Reflective of the purpose of the University, students have consciously chosen work that they believe fulfills their aspirations of contributing meaningfully to social change on the ground.

**Continuing Education**

In addition to creating talent through full-time degree programmes, the mission of the University is also to

- Support and enhance the work of the education and development sectors in the country through continuing education
- Expand the frontiers of knowledge in education, development and allied fields through research
- Contribute to change in policy and practice in the Indian education and development sectors through advocacy and public communication

**Continuing Education**

In-service programmes have a direct impact on enhancing the capacity of practicing professionals. Given that their work deals with very complex issues, the need for high quality and effective programmes is evident. This need cuts across perspective building, specific areas within their domains and also in general areas like communication, project management etc. We are in a unique position to deliver these:

- The deep experience of our state and district institutes in working with these functionaries gives us insight into their context (daily work, challenges, constraints and priorities) that helps us structure our programmes for effectiveness.
- The collaborative working of the University faculty and the Field Institutes brings together both academic expertise and field realities; this helps us integrate theory and practice in meaningful ways and adds significantly to the effectiveness.

We have designed and conducted more than 100 capacity enhancement programmes, largely for district/state level government functionaries from Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh etc. where the Foundation is engaged deeply. The programmes address a wide range of areas within the education domain, livelihoods, public policy etc. Some key programmes delivered include:

- Induction programme for District Education Officers from Rajasthan
- Programmes for DIET (District Institute for Higher Education and Training) Principals from Karnataka, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh
- Capacity enhancement programmes for the Karnataka State Livelihood Mission
- Programmes in Public Policy for senior officers of the Government of Karnataka

The University (in collaboration with our Field Institutes) is actively engaged with many state governments, contributing to critical areas such as curriculum design, textbook development, pre and in-service teacher education and education policy related work.

In Karnataka, the University is engaged in initiatives relating to Livelihoods, Public Policy, Urban Governance, Sustainability, Health etc. Faculty members of the University are individually contributing to the public sphere in their area of expertise.

**Resource Creation**

Availability of high-quality learning resources for practicing teachers and functionaries, particularly in Indian languages, are a serious concern. We realize the importance of contributing to this effort and have taken several measures in this direction. Currently, all of our resources are available in the public domain, free of cost.

**Teacher Portal:** The teachersofindia.org portal is an online resource created for teachers. The portal is available in multiple languages and contains more than 8000 high-quality resources (lesson plans, articles, videos etc.) across a range of subjects. Over 25,000 people access these on a monthly basis, most of whom are practicing teachers.

**Publications:** Our publications “At Right Angles (Mathematics), “Learning Curve (Theme-based issues on Education)” and “Language and Language Teaching” reach over 2000 teachers, teacher educators, students and others. Importantly, these materials are translated into Kannada, Hindi and other regional languages.

**Translations:** We started the “Translations Initiative” this year. The focus is on translating degree programme level material (academic papers, books, course readings etc.) into Hindi and Kannada and making them available widely. Students in our University and other Universities could benefit greatly from such resources.

Apart from our own publications, we also support the efforts of many high-quality publications, brought out by other institutions.
University Events and Student Initiatives

Research
The complexities in the education and development domains, call for serious investments in research that can significantly enhance our understanding and contribute to informed policy-making and implementation. We also have the unique opportunity of collaboration with our Field Institutes across the country.

The University has a dedicated Research Centre that coordinates and facilitates research projects of faculty and members from our field institutions. Currently the University is engaged in several research projects. In areas such as Early Childhood Education, Health and Nutrition, Livelihoods, Policy and Governance, Sustainability etc. Some of the significant studies initiated / completed recently include:

- "Hub for Education Law and Policy (HELP)" initiated studies on various aspects of RTE, and reports on the new NCTE Act, contributions to the New Education Policy being formulated by the Government
- A series of projects on “Land Governance in Karnataka” and “Comparative Subnational Projects” in Education, Maternal Health etc.
- Livelihoods, Work, and Lives in a Globalizing City – A study on Bengaluru

Recently we announced the “Research Grant Programme”. This grant programme is designed to promote inquiry into areas of particular interest to the University; Education and allied areas; Law and Governance; Development and Sustainability. Aimed at strengthening and supplementing existing efforts in these areas, the research projects will be able to inform practice and policy. The grant is open to individuals and institutions and ranges from Rs.3 to 20 Lakhs.

In the past year our faculty have published books, contributed chapters to edited volumes, academic papers and also contributed significant opinion pieces in the popular press in the domains of education, legal reform, governance, public education and sustainability.

Events
We have made significant resource commitments in creating platforms for learning, networking and knowledge sharing, giving their criticality to nurturing a vibrant academic environment. These events are of varying nature, both in their design, participant profile and reach. Key among them are:

- **a. International Seminars**: The “Philosophy of Education” and “Law and Governance” international seminars started in 2012 and are in their fifth year now, providing a platform for national and international scholars to present their work and have enriching discussions. Each of these has focused on specific themes ranging from the broad areas: Rationality and its Discontents, Social Justice and Education, Policy Issues in Education, Legal System Reform, Right to Welfare, Public Policy. Understanding Governance in India etc.

- **b. University Colloquiums and Public Lectures**: The colloquium series is a weekly event where academics and practitioners from a variety of fields are on campus, sharing their research / field experiences with the students and faculty body. We have hosted more than 200 such talks. The Public Lecture series has been very successful in creating and sustaining an ongoing dialogue around key social issues. We have been able to reach thousands of people through these lectures.

- **c. MANTHAN**, the annual research conference, brings together researchers from the University and field locations. In its fourth year now, panel discussions with experts, research presentations and capacity building workshops were part of MANTHAN. It has established a unique place for itself by bringing field practitioners and academics to a common research platform.

- **d. KATHAVANA** is the annual children’s literature festival that brings together hundreds of young children and teachers, instilling in them the love for literature. Plays, workshops on drawing, puppet making, other performances, and book exhibitions are all part of this grand event.

- **e. Summer Schools / Workshops**: These are typically 5-10 day workshops on specific domain areas / themes and participants are usually people already working in these areas. Recent ones include summer schools on “Philosophy of Education”, “Changing Nature of Public and Private in Education” in collaboration with IITSS and Kings College, London, and “Advanced Graduate Workshop in Indian Development” for doctoral students, in collaboration with Institute of New Economic Thinking, New York.

Student Initiatives
The immense diversity in the student cohort has ensured that campus life is vibrant and enjoyable. Several student-led activities have become part of the daily life on campus:

- “Pahal” is the umbrella under which a large number of students are actively engaged with social causes ranging from education of disadvantaged children to working with the community around the campus, environmental concerns and blood donation camps etc.

- The “Kapi Aur Charcha” series invites practitioners from various fields to engage in informal talks with the students.

- Publications: Student publications “Karvan” and “Student Journal of Education and Development” are into their third edition now.

- **UNMUKT**, the annual cultural festival, occupies a special place in the hearts of every member of the University community.

- A variety of clubs have been formed, catering to different interests: Cinema, Theatre, Literature, Quiz, Photography and Sports.

- The “Debating Development” series started last semester and is a forum for interested students to come together and debate contemporary social issues.

The Road Map Ahead

- In line with our framework for new programmes, we will continue to identify key areas of specializations within the Masters programmes as well as offer new Master’s programmes. LLM in Development / M.A. in Sustainability / Specialization in Teacher Professional Development are areas under consideration and development. Postgraduate diplomas in specific areas within the domains are also under evaluation.

- The Undergraduate programme will explore opportunities to expand the range of Majors/ Minors on offer.

- Continuing Education programmes will also be a very key area of focus and within this, Teacher Education, Pedagogy (Language, Science etc.), Livelihoods and Health will be priority.

- The research grant programme launched recently has been very well received. We expect 4-5 key research programmes being initiated in the current year.

- The University will also shortly launch a science magazine that is aimed at contributing to science teaching and learning in schools.

- Construction of our own campus will begin next year. The 80 acre campus to be developed in phases, will house academic and residential facilities for 10,000 students and 500 faculty and staff.