

Centre launches ₹9,000 crore plan to digitize education delivery

The move will make the teaching process interactive and popularize 'flipped learning'

The government on Wednesday launched a ₹9,000 crore initiative to digitize education delivery in state-run schools and colleges. Human resource development (HRD) minister Prakash Javadekar said the initiative by the “digital board” will be implemented over the three years beginning 2019-20 academic year.

Javadekar said the move will make the teaching-learning process interactive and popularize “flipped learning as a pedagogical approach”. Flipped classroom is a concept first used by top B-schools, which did away with the linear syllabus model of education delivery and adopted an interactive model to improve education outcome.

The minister said it will be implemented in over 150,000 schools from Class IX onwards and across thousands of colleges. Covering over 700,000 classrooms—500,000 in schools and 200,000 in colleges—it will initially focus on science, technology, mathematics and engineering.

“It aims at converting classroom into digital classrooms, in addition to availability of e-resources at any time and any place. It will also help in provisioning of personalized adaptive learning...by exploiting emerging technologies like machine learning, artificial intelligence and data analytics,” Javadekar added.

Asked why the HRD ministry is launching this scheme at the fag end of the government’s tenure, and where the money will come from, the minister said government grants, loans and philanthropic money will be tapped to achieve the target.

He added that all expenses incurred to digitize classrooms in schools will be divided between the centre and states at a 60:40 ratio. Expenses incurred at colleges and universities will be drawn from University Grants Commission and through loans from the Higher Education Financing Agency.

Higher education secretary R. Subrahmanyam said given the size of the exercise, the ministry will float a global tender for vendors. He said the ministry is talking to states and working out the details, which will be available over the next few weeks.

Subrahmanyam added that a pre-condition for shortlisted colleges and universities will be high-speed internet connections, and their willingness to shoulder the broadband expenses.

The ministry said UGC has conducted an assessment on the readiness of colleges and universities and has proposed to take up 300 universities and about 10,000 colleges. Subrahmanyam said teams of subject experts and technology experts were guiding the ministry on content, modalities and delivery.

Another HRD ministry official, requesting anonymity, said the Union cabinet may have to approve the expenditure for this project, at least for higher education, as the e-learning budget was not sufficient to fund the programme.