



In conversation with Prof (Dr.) Bimal N Patel, Director, Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar.

**Prof (Dr.) Bimal N. Patel is a Professor of Public International Law and the current Director of the Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar. He was appointed by a High-Level Committee headed by the then Chief Justice of India, K G Balakrishnan in 2008. He is also a member of the 21st Law Commission of India and the National Security Advisory Board.**

**You had a very long stint with various international organisations and you also took up many assignments related to International Law. Tell us about your role and how you got into GNLU Gandhinagar.**

In past I had the privilege to work as International civil servant, scholar and academician of international law and diplomacy and I continue to study, research, comment and publish works on the administrative, procedural and substantive jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY), International Labour Organisation Administrative Tribunal (Geneva) among others. I have delivered and took upon visiting faculty assignments at various universities in Asia, Europe and Australia. I served at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Hague, Netherlands, since its inception in 1995, till I joined GNLU. So, academics and building up new institutions always excites me and when I was invited to head GNLU in 2008, I gladly accepted it. A vision to bring legal education to altogether a next level has propelled me to guide GNLU reach excellence in legal studies.

Personally setting up a state of the art library at GNLU was the first direct contribution that is so close to my heart. I and my wife personally did everything to bring the shipment of books from The Peace Palace, Hague to Ahmedabad. With the aid of capital grant received from the Gujarat Government, we have built a world-class campus spread across 50 acres of land. Since 2011, GNLU has started receiving regular grants from the UGC under its five-year plan for overall development. We have been instrumental in starting many new courses and also organising prestigious global level conferences in India, like hosting the 40th Session of Prestigious External Program in collaboration with The Hague Academy of International Law, and organising regular rounds of one of the most prominent

international law academies, GNLU International Maritime Academy, in collaboration with US Naval War College, the Official Staff College of US Navy.

**When you took over, GNLU was not really at its' best. What finer details did you work upon to refurbish this institution to its present state?**

I think for any educational institution to reach its pinnacle it must build along three pillars: It must stay relevant in context of the contemporary ecosystem both national and global; it has to deliver in academic research which draws international recognition; and it should create professionally and academically sound individuals who could contribute to the wellbeing of society. Ever since I took over I have paid attention to these three elements and the results are for all to see.

There has been a conscious attempt to develop research in legal studies. With a strong research cadre and 12 Research Centres and 9 Endowment fellowships, faculty members are constantly encouraged to take up research in niche areas. As a result, their research is now published by reputed international publishing houses like Oxford and Cambridge. Academic research has brought international recognition to GNLU in recent years.

Industry interface has also grown by leaps and bounds. We associate in a big way with international organizations like UN, Navy of countries, Law firms, Government departments, judiciary and corporate sector. GNLU interacts to offer professional legal services in the form of executive programmes which enrich our knowledge and makes our teaching contextual in response to contemporary demands of the society and business.

To breed quality law advocacy, we encourage and support our students under innovative GLASS program to go for courtroom practice and excel in it. Here, a monthly stipend of Rs15000 is given to students who wish to pursue advocacy as a

profession. The university has been delivering quality students and there is an impressive placement record even before students enter their final year. We have also started Legal Incubation Centre to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment amongst law students as an attractive and viable career option.

**What is your advice to parents and students who would like to pursue legal education.**

The legal profession is a dynamic profession with a tremendous growth potential. Today, India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. This high growth rate is expected to continue in the next few years. With the consistent growth of the economy, there will be an ever-increasing need for legal professionals. This is, therefore, the right time to prepare for a career in the legal profession. GNLU is the only National Law University in the country to offer five different integrated law courses: BA+LLB, BCom+LLB, BSc+LLB, BBA+LLB and BSW+LLB. These dual degrees horn industry-specific skills along with a legal perspective. We encourage students to take up these courses and create a niche for themselves. We see a great future for them in the legal profession.



Gujarat National Law University