

A NOTE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PTU

Dr. Rajneesh Arora

Dear Reader,

I am happy to share this document with you. In it you will find the highlights of our journey of including Human Values in our academic curriculum starting in the 2011-12 academic year. I hope that our students, teachers, parents, members of our extended family and the community at large will find this document a source of joy, hope and encouragement. I am confident that Universities having interest in understanding and implementing universal human values will find this document a handy and motivating reference.

This process has fostered several positive changes, and enabled the vision of the university to broaden. The university is now making effort to facilitate the development of responsible and competent citizens for society while employability is given due importance. We aim for the graduates to have the right understanding for a meaningful life, right skills, hands-on practice and entrepreneurial ability to be employed or self-employed.

Of course a foundation course in Human Values is just a first step, though a very significant first step, in enabling us to move toward this holistic vision. We understand that including a one-semester course on this subject is certainly not a complete effort – it is a good start. We have done that quite effectively.

On 16th July 2013 I invited about 50 students, teachers and directors for sharing their experiences with the senior team and me first-hand. In addition to the impact on students and teachers, they describe impact on their families and also some members of society. Of the many indicators of success for the foundation course, I was looking for clarity of “what to do next” in teachers and students. This has been adequately articulated by teachers and students at this sharing session, which has further strengthened my conviction.

Many more things are coming out of this effort. At PTU we are working together more comprehensively and becoming aligned to a wholesome vision. There is more direct connect to society through social projects and social internship.

Some of these experiences, as well as the sharing of many others have been documented in this report, in the companion DVD and are being updated periodically on our web-site.

As I look back, I recall that it started with learning about this effort at a board of governors meeting at IIT Delhi. I was happy to see that concrete work had been done in developing content and methodology – a comprehensive course curriculum, a teacher’s manual and a text book had been meticulously prepared. I also learnt about the ongoing intensive experiments at IIIT Hyderabad since 2005 and about the extensive experiments that had started at UPTU in 2009.

I made up my mind to explore this further along with my colleagues. On the way back from the board meeting to Jalandhar, I read the text book. It reinforced my resolve. I decided to get the feedback of the directors of our affiliated colleges as they are the real custodians of education.

I spent some time with Prof. Rajeev Sangal, the then director of IIT Hyderabad. He shared his own journey and encouraged me to invest some of my time to understand the content in some detail myself. I attended an 8-day Teachers' Orientation Program on Human Values & Professional Ethics along with my senior colleagues in October 2010. That turned out to be a most worthwhile investment for me.

We decided to render an exposure to the senior decision makers on successful experiments in Human Values running across the country. In this direction, the university, in collaboration with IIT Delhi, IIT Kanpur, SSUN, Delhi and IIT Hyderabad, organized a 2-day National Seminar on "Integrating Human Values in Technical Education" on 11th-12th December, 2010 at NIT, Jalandhar. The seminar was inaugurated by the worthy Chancellor of PTU, His Excellency Sh. Shivraj Patil. In this seminar, selected experts who have been engaged for long periods in experimenting with various models to inculcate Human Values in education, including Jeevan Vidya, presented their respective models.

During the seminar, it was observed that the content for an appropriate course on Human Values must be applicable universally - meaning it must be equally valuable for all human beings regardless of caste, creed, time and place etc. It must be natural and verifiable. It should be rational also. It just cannot be based on any dogmas or blind beliefs. The students should be able to internalize it through a process of self-exploration. This effort should encompass understanding at all levels be it oneself, family or society. Not only this, it should also resurface and establish our relationship with nature – all this was discussed and debated in the seminar. Towards the end, it clearly emerged that this course should lead to harmony within oneself, one's family, society and nature.

The recommendations came out very clearly and PTU decided to introduce the recommended foundation course in all affiliated professional colleges from the academic year 2011-2012. In January 2010 our academic council, under the leadership of Dr. Buta Singh, took the decision to include this foundation course in the curriculum. We formed an Advisory Committee of prominent stalwarts to guide us with Dr. S. P. Singh as the chairperson. It gave us many good suggestions. For instance, we offered the course in Punjabi, Hindi or English and it was under their guidance that we started the effort to translate the course material into Punjabi. Under the stewardship of Dr. Sarabjit Singh, the Teachers Manual as well as the Text Book have been translated into Punjabi. Once the course was stabilised, this charge was passed on to the Board of Studies in 2012 with Dr. Surinder Bir Singh as its first chairperson. He has been instrumental in spreading the message to the directors and helping in conducting the teacher training programs.

The operational aspects were being handled by our Value Education Cell formed in late 2010 with Sh. Jitender Narula and Sh. Balmukund Meena under the able leadership of Dr. R. P. Bhardwaj. The VE Cell played a key role in enabling the preparation of an environment that is conducive for the teaching-learning process. I am particularly happy that over 1000 teachers & directors and most of our PTU officers & staff have done the workshop; that almost all the colleges have started teaching this course in the spirit it was intended to be shared; and that the VE Cell initiated an internship program in Human Values. In 2012, under the guidance of Dr. Nachattar Singh and Dr. A. P. Singh, we converted the VE Cell into a full-fledged Department of Human Values with Dr. Jagmeet Bawa as HoD. Since then, a PhD program in Human Values was added. There are bold plans going forward. Right from the beginning itself, there has been extremely strong

support from Dr. H. S. Bains, Sh. S. K. Mishra, Dr. Balkar Singh and the entire PTU staff for the work on universal human values.

This effort has not been without some opposition from some quarters of society. In every case we have been able to respond with transparency. We have shared the curriculum, the material being used, and the experience of the teachers and students. When they realize that this effort is genuine; and inherently with the good of all at the core, the voices of opposition have become supportive.

There is increasing support for this work. On 18th September 2013, a 1-day workshop on Human Values in Higher Education was organized jointly by IIT (BHU), Varanasi, IIT Delhi & MHRD. At the valedictory, the recommendation was that a foundation course on Human Values is desirable as part of the academic curriculum in higher education; It would develop reflective thinking and help connect students with their own self and family and society. All IITs, NITs and other institutions should explore introducing a foundation course on Human Values at their respective institutions. The foundation course must satisfy the four point guidelines (logical, verifiable, universal, and leading to harmony). MHRD may visit institutions where Human Values are included in the curriculum and take stock.

We have been able to see that this human values teaching has a profound impact on individuals, on families and on the institutions. We can also see that soon we will be able to see the impact more widely on society. A foundation course is but a first step. I am fully convinced that Human Values has to be the basis of education, i.e. all education has to become value based, sooner than later. I feel that every educational institution should take this responsibility – of incorporating universal human values in its curriculum.

We look forward to strengthening this values program at PTU. Our key thrust is to develop internal resource persons – teachers from Punjab who can take this work forward in and around Punjab.

In this context, we are happy to share our experience with fellow academicians and concerned members of society. We started this effort in 2011 with an International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education (ICHVHE). The 1st ICHVHE was jointly organized by IIIT Hyderabad, IIT Kanpur and PTU. In 2012, the 2nd ICHVHE was jointly organized by IIIT Hyderabad, PTU and Royal University of Bhutan. Next year, we are hosting the 3rd International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education. It will be jointly organized by PTU, IIIT Hyderabad, IIT (BHU) Varanasi & Royal University of Bhutan from 28th February to 2nd March 2014 at PTU Jalandhar. We are making effort to include academicians from SAARC countries.

In closing, I want to reiterate that it has been a most rewarding experience for me, my family and my colleagues at PTU. The most significant event was my own whole-hearted participation in the October 2010 workshop at IIT Kanpur.

I urge you, the reader, to invest the time to explore this possibility for yourself and to participate in enriching our education system. I hope that reading through this document will encourage you to share your ideas to make these efforts even more effective.

Best wishes!