



VICE-CHANCELLOR  
SPEAK OUT

# ANSAL UNIVERSITY

## MAKING EDUCATION RESPONSIBLE & DYNAMIC



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*Prof. Raj S. Dhankar, Vice-Chancellor, Ansal University, is a name to reckon with in the field of management, a reputation that stands on a solid foundation of 40 years in teaching, research, training and consultancy in the field of finance. Bestowed with countless honours and awards, including the "Haryana Ratan", he has set the pace for outstanding accomplishments and valuable contributions in making education a responsible tool in the country's socio-economic development. Beneath an unassuming demeanor lies a determined resolve to create an inclusive and holistic environment for a bright destiny for students and the society.*

### How do you perceive the role of private universities different from government educational establishments?

Private universities, unlike government educational institutions, are more daring and experimental in their approach to education. This I can vouch for after four decades of experience, including my stint as Dean, Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University and Vice-Chancellor, Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak. At Ansal University, we keep inviting faculty from abroad for interactions and collaborations. A beginning has been made in the hands-on education pattern as followed in the West and European countries.

### How effective have private universities been in plugging the exodus of students to universities abroad?

I must say, private universities have achieved quite a bit of

success in this context as the number of outbound students have marginally come down. It is incredible to note that within a short span, private universities are today providing close to 40 percent of post secondary education and supporting the government which could not do much because of various reasons and limited capacity. In fact, we have opened the channels to higher education for children who would have otherwise been denied opportunities for further studies. Secondly, private universities have stemmed the breach of brain drain by being more open to experimentations and going for foreign collaborations, which provides for a safe environment closer home with quality and world class education at lesser cost. Out of the 740 universities in India, 125 are privately run but the ratio of contribution by private universities is anytime much higher in proportion to government-run institutions.

### Was the government forthcoming while setting up Ansal University?

I was not preview to the discussion for I took over the reins of the university in 2014 but I believe, it was a smooth transition. The Ansal's have a credible legacy in education beginning with the Sushant School of Architecture, and followed by many more other educational establishments. So when Ansal's thought of up-scaling education to match the industry needs, they approached the Haryana government. Sound credentials, financial backing, a readymade in-house industry backup for employment, all went in favour of Ansal's. Also they had 13 acres of land against the requisite mandate of 10 acres to set up a university. Their proposal was also justified as we are in the neighbourhood of the industrial and leading cyber hub of the country.

### What are the new branches of education in the pipeline?

Besides the 5 schools of Architecture, Design, Technology, Management, and Law, we have decided to set up two more schools. One, is Tourism and Hotel Management in collaboration with a noted French cuisine chain-Vetal. Parents and students have provided their wholehearted support. As a result admissions this year to this course has risen from ten seats to a high 65. The Ansal group is also into hospitality industry which can provide ready employment for fresh graduates in this stream. I thought of grabbing this opportunity as NCR has the largest hotel rooms in the country, and part of service sector, which is growing very rapidly. This has tipped the scales in favour of the need to grow and expand into this area. Also, a new venture is on the anvil to start a post graduate course in Tourism and Hotel Management with a tie-up with ISC, Paris, France to give impetus in this allied growth area. The second important area is skill and entrepreneurial development, and Ansal is strong on this turf. The government too is focusing on this sector. So we have set up a School of Skill and Entrepreneurial Development and I am happy to say that recently we bagged a very major

project of Government of India- NEEM i.e., National Employment Enhancement Mission. Under this initiative, existing employees in the corporate sector are provided training with the perk of some stipend. In this arrangement, the corporate will save on some taxes while the employees will get an opportunity to up-scale their capabilities and skills.

### How do you intend to take the project forward?

I am very enthusiastic about this project and look forward to train thousands of employees this year. Skill development is being set up for Ansal Group's 2500 employees and two other companies have lined up for training. The training will be provided partly by internal faculty and some trainers, who are mostly retired professors or those having longstanding experience in industry. We would hire trainers, according to the industry need and demand of our clients, because there will be need to provide training in diverse streams of knowledge and vocation at different levels. Work is in progress on a war footing as it is a priority area. I am absolutely happy as it is not only about some earnings but the fact that we are contributing to the country's economy. This would change the entire dynamics on the individual front and takes the outcome on to a higher level. We are also close to erecting another vertical besides NEEM, which is a project of the National Skill Development Corporation and once we get these two projects, we shall be in the best of our elements training people.

### What are the other ground breaking initiatives that the Ansal University is poised to take on?

There is a 'Community College' concept in the US, Canada and Europe, where hands-on education experience is given to an aspiring individual wanting to acquire more knowledge in any skill. It is providing education without barriers where anyone can join irrespective of age, having education qualification or not, and at any point of his vocation. We will very soon introduce this flexible knowledge system where large number of diplomas and certificates will be provided to individuals after completing required credits. If he desires to enhance his qualification after another 3-4 years he can come back to us through this lateral entry. We shall also provide masters degree in various disciplines in the evening courses to promote life-long education. This would help to produce industry ready people. Over and above this, we will do certification of skilled people including those with no formal education. My point is experience counts. We shall invite such people mostly having more real skills to come and exhibit their level of expertise and thereafter certify them according to a standard grading. This will open a window of opportunities for the unorganized sector to excel, and am very excited because we believe that we can deliver.

### How does Ansal University envisage to include alternative renewable and eco-friendly means?

In the last 10 months, we have taken on another initiative which is innovation and research. And again, the thought here emanated from the fact that we are close to the industry, and industry always have problems and are constantly in search of solutions. Traditionally, in countries in other parts of the world, it is the universities that provide solution to any problem. We have opened an Innovation Centre which invites problems, work

on them and find a solution and then create patent out of those problems. This is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The first project that we have bagged is related to solar energy. We intend to change the dimension of the university campus into entirely an eco-friendly one. As a university, we are working simultaneously on three verticals-the conventional teaching, training, and research which will be done across all our schools but monitored and managed by the nodal agency, i.e., our Innovation Centre. We are first to start an MBA degree in Real Estate and Infrastructure Management, two new areas in which Ansals have expertise. My thinking is that whatever we do, it must be applied, based on experiential learning and should add value to society. We want to grow, expand and be among the top contenders in global education. We have added 12 new courses and by next year two full-fledged new schools will be operational. In terms of admissions, we are up by 40 percent. Last year we had on roll 640 students, and this year we admitted 906 students. Our School of Architecture is the oldest and still is steady in the ratings being top in the list of private institutions. Our India ranking is 8th after taking into account the government-aided institutions.

### How is Ansal's HR training different from the rest?

Management Development Centre (MDC), is a strong facility area that conducts training in Human Resources. Plans are afoot to expand the centre and prepare an annual training programme calendar. We are seriously looking for addressing this vacuum. Hiring at the five-month-old centre is unconventional. Wide and longstanding industry experience and the ability to deliver are the fundamental attributes that can make the candidate a senior faculty. It is time to break from the rigid pattern of recruitment and teaching. We need to cultivate this off-beat culture. The MDC will also provide short term courses in various streams.

### Are there any prospects to start a school of mass communication?

We have planned a new school for Media and Performing Arts. I have observed that the children are being brought up in a very skewed fashion. The pressure is to perform well in academics and score high on the report card. But I feel without dance, drama and music, the university is incomplete. Evening hobby classes for housewives too will be incorporated so that they can come and pursue their incomplete dreams and talents. As we do not have social sciences, we may as well bring liberal arts into our curriculum. Liberal arts, nurtures and replenishes the creative instincts. So though, we encourage inter-disciplinary and soft skills in our campus, we want to make liberal arts education formal.

### Is there any provision to adopt an entire village for all around development?

We have a club in the university dedicated to Corporate Social Responsibility. Our Architecture and Design Schools work closely with artisans and crafts persons. Under the initiative of "Built Heritage," these two schools are working on a project in a village and are asking other schools to also participate. Under the mandate in our statutes, we have to do something in this direction and Michael Knowles, a British, who heads the School of Design, is very much involved in such social ventures.