

Enabling Accessibility & Inclusion of Students with Disability in Higher Education: With bottom up approach and imagining Universal Accessibility Policy at University Level using following pointers:

1. Access to ICT information communication technology and university website
2. Access to writing and reading
3. Universal design in Curriculum
4. Inclusion & Teaching and Learning
5. Open & Flexibility Pedagogy as per Learner's modality/ style
6. Languages (Braille, Sign Language) and disability
7. Admission policy with disability accessibility
8. Orientation of University facilities
9. In & out campus Navigation & Mobility
10. Access to Classrooms & Hostel
11. Access to Academic resources like books, articles
12. Access to Library
13. Access to Interactive learning and Moodle
14. Access to exams and assignments
15. Access to Food /Dining Hall
16. Access to Scholarships and Aid to study
17. Research accessibility
18. Accessibility in Field work and Internships
19. Equal Salary and Equal access to Job Placement
20. Leisure, Social inclusion.
21. Access to Sports and Play
22. Access to Voting in Student elections
23. Health and Mental health of Student with Disability
24. Markesh treaty for preparing study material in accessible format for student with Blindness
25. Disability Access Audits & Diversity Audits for Inclusion
26. Social Cohesion Initiatives using Art, Theatre, Talent and Design
27. Innovative Expressions facilitating Inclusive Culture



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Background

The emerging issues of students with disabilities in higher education are multifaceted and need human & interactive communication design to bridge the gaps of teaching and learning. Starting point is access to university & higher education institutes from admission, in campus navigation, orientation to academic environment, access to classrooms, class notes, books & academic resources, Library, hostels, food, play, exams, assignments and research etc. Inclusion in higher education is about facilitating bottom up approach. It can further be studied by user centric design to ease accessibility of students with or without disability in higher education. The question is how our university /higher education policy prepared today to enable students with disabilities towards equalization of opportunities & accessibility. Currently under new bill 2014 students with disability can be categorized under 19 categories as per Rights of Persons with Disability Bill 2014 in higher education. The answer lies with the UNCRPD statement “Nothing about us without all of us “with bottom up with preparing a accessibility framework under university with inclusion of capabilities, strengths, vulnerability and needs of students with disability in accessing all resources.

Initiative

The “I-Access rights mission” is Field Action Project, at the Center for Disability Studies & Action, TISS started on 21st August 2013 with support of prof. Parsuraman and Engagement of TISS Students. This is a mission of enabling accessibility & inclusion of student with disability in higher education. It is an initiative of faculty & student’s innovation towards developing higher education framework with bottom up approach with voices of Students with Disabilities. Implementing UN Article 9 “Accessibility” & Article 8 “Awareness building” towards inclusion of students with disability in higher education. It is an action towards creating sensitivity and awareness among all stakeholders in ecology of students with disability & facilitating UNCRPD framework through Affirmative action & Reasonable accommodation. Initiating flexibility in curriculum & pedagogy with capability & strengths based approach for inclusion & access of students with disability. The idea is facilitate their equal access in day to day teaching learning process in classroom. Also reaching out to their needs in teaching learning to peer’s participation and engaging peers in social cohesion initiatives through art and culture to increase interface of students with and without disability towards facilitating inclusive culture. Initiating Markesh Treaty at higher education to work towards converting academic resources into accessible format for students with visual impairment.

Context

Accessibility is one of the rights of the student's with disability as per the UNCRPD framework. The idea is to possibly apply UNCRPD framework at the university level for accessibility to students with disability at the higher education. Also work towards recognizing important articles under UNCRPD (Articles 9: Accessibility, Article 21: **Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**, Article 8: ensures awareness building, Article 20: Personal mobility as a human right) as access to information, communications and services, including the Internet, The new **Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate equal Access to students**. is a human right and applying in higher education to create an inclusion policy for equal access.

Vision

This initiative is towards facilitating dialogue in all academic disciplines on the issue of disability and facilitating inclusion & access of students with disability in higher education. Its aims towards policy initiative regarding inclusion and accessibility of students with disability and disabled friendly university.

Objectives

1. To take steps for accessibility issues at university level regarding Students with Disabilities
2. To understand the emerging issues and challenges of students with disabilities in higher education.
3. To create awareness and sensitization programmes to promote an inclusive culture among all students in campus using various art forms like "media, painting and theater and all forms of art.
4. Developing guidelines for teachers and peers regarding Students with Disabilities and work towards designing academic activities & curriculum on Universal Design and Accessibility for inclusion.

Activities

1. **I Access: Classroom** - Teaching & Learning Process towards inclusion
2. **I Access: Mehfil** - Awareness & Facilitating inclusive culture with Peers.
3. **I Access: Audits** - ICT, Innovative steps & Access Audit and Diversity.
4. **I Access: Buddy** - Peers volunteer programme as buddies for day to day functioning towards independence.

Key Areas

The key areas of the project is to focus on persons with disability, Accessibility, Inclusion at higher Education, inclusion & access audit, diversity audit, Use of ICT Information and Communication Technology, Awareness & Sensitisation, Capacity Building, Training all Stakeholders in higher education on disability issues, Promoting Inclusive Culture among peers & teachers through Art & Creative Expressions.