



School of Pedagogical Sciences
MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Report of the National Seminar on *Voice of Inclusion* dated 26th March 2024 organised by Maulana Azad Chair, SPS, MGU

Date: 26th March 2024

Time: 09:30 AM

Venue: Seminar Hall, School of Pedagogical Sciences (SPS),
Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU)

Introduction: The National Seminar on “Voice of Inclusion: Bridging the Gaps in Needs and Rights of Divyangjan” was organized by the Maulana Azad Chair for Studies on National Integration, in collaboration with the School of Pedagogical Sciences (SPS), Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala. The seminar aimed to promote awareness and foster discussion on the critical needs and rights of Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) in India. This event was part of an ongoing awareness campaign targeting stakeholders of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to raise awareness about inclusivity and to bridge the gaps in the rights and opportunities available to persons with disabilities.

Inaugural Session: The seminar commenced at 09:30 AM with a formal welcome address by Prof. Asha J.V, Professor, Head of the Department, School of Pedagogical Sciences, MGU. In her speech, Prof. Asha highlighted the importance of inclusion and the role of educational institutions in ensuring that persons with disabilities are given equal opportunities to participate in academic and social activities. She emphasized the need for a holistic approach to addressing the challenges faced by Divyangjan, including digital empowerment, accessible healthcare, and inclusive pedagogical practices.

Sessions and Resource Talks: The seminar featured resource talks by distinguished experts, as well as a series of presentations addressing key issues related to the needs and rights of Divyangjan.

- 1. Disparity and Diversity Consideration:** Dr. Jayakumar R, Assistant Professor at the Government KNM Arts & Science College, Kanjiramkulam, conducted a session on “Disparity and Diversity Consideration”. His presentation focused on the disparities that exist between different categories of disabilities and the need for differentiated approaches in addressing their specific requirements. Dr. Jayakumar stressed the importance of policies that cater to the diversity within the disabled community and the necessity for inclusive practices in all spheres of society.
- 2. Keynote Address: Care and Rehabilitation of People with Intellectual Challenges:** Prof. Sukumaran in the keynote address on the topic: “*Care and Rehabilitation of People with Intellectual Challenges.*” outlined the critical aspects of care and rehabilitation services available for persons with intellectual disabilities, highlighting both the progress made and the significant gaps that still exist in the healthcare and educational systems. Prof. Sukumaran emphasized the importance of integrated care

and rehabilitation for individuals with intellectual disabilities. He also discussed various models of care and how they can be adapted in Indian settings, stressing the need for community-based rehabilitation programs that offer long-term support to Divyangjan.

- 3. Role of IUCDS in Awareness Building on Divyangjan:** Another session was dedicated to discussing the role of the Inclusive and Universal Care for Disabled Students (IUCDS) in raising awareness about the needs of Divyangjan. Prof. Baburaj P.T. also shared insights into the initiatives of IUCDS in spreading awareness and building inclusive environments for disabled students in universities and colleges.

Call for Papers and Sub-themes: As part of the seminar, a Call for Papers was issued, inviting submissions under several important sub-themes to encourage further research and discussion on the topic. These included:

- **Policy and Legislation for Disability Rights:** Discussions in this area centred on the legislative frameworks that govern the rights of persons with disabilities, including the implementation and effectiveness of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and other relevant national policies. Scholars presented papers on the gaps in existing legislation and proposed changes to make them more inclusive.
- **Digital Empowerment and Stakeholders:** The importance of digital inclusion for persons with disabilities was explored, focusing on accessibility to digital platforms, assistive technologies, and the role of digital empowerment in enhancing the lives of Divyangjan. Papers presented on this theme highlighted both the challenges and opportunities for digital inclusion.
- **Healthcare and Quality of Life of Divyangjan:** This sub-theme addressed the physical and mental health needs of Divyangjan, including access to healthcare services, rehabilitation, and the overall quality of life. Presentations explored various health initiatives and interventions aimed at improving the lives of persons with disabilities.
- **Improvised, Innovative, and Inclusive Pedagogy:** Several papers discussed inclusive pedagogical practices in higher education. Presenters explored innovative teaching methods and strategies that could be employed to make education accessible and meaningful for students with disabilities. The session emphasized the importance of universal design for learning (UDL) and the use of assistive technologies in classrooms.
- **Employment Opportunities and Market Survey for Divyangjan:** The final session addressed the employment challenges faced by Divyangjan and discussed market surveys on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Speakers provided insights into the barriers that exist in the workforce and proposed solutions to improve employment rates and workplace inclusion.

Conclusion: The seminar concluded with a Valedictory Session, where participants reflected on the key takeaways from the discussions. It was unanimously agreed that significant progress has been made in terms of legislation and public awareness, but there is still much work to be done in bridging the gaps in the needs and rights of Divyangjan. The event successfully brought together experts, scholars, and stakeholders from diverse fields, fostering an environment of dialogue and exchange of ideas. It underscored the need for sustained efforts in ensuring that persons with disabilities are integrated into all aspects of society, particularly in education, healthcare, employment, and digital spaces.