

Record of Discussion of orientation session held on 22.08.2024 at 10:00 AM with Head of Institutions / representatives of identified 45 HEIs including Central Universities, IITs, IIITs, IISER, IIM to commence the Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) Cycle 2

An online orientation session for **Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities (CBSLD)** was organised by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education under the chairmanship of Secretary (Higher Education) in collaboration with NIEPA and ChangeInkk Foundation. As a part of the program, the orientation session for the second cycle of the program was for the Head of the Institutions of 45 Higher Education Institutions identified to orient them about the program along with the implementation plan for the second cycle of the program. The status of the participants / HEIs is attached at **Annexure**. The session emphasised the need for support and prioritisation of addressing inclusion in higher education.

2. Joint Secretary, D/o Higher Education shared the agenda of the orientation session and made a brief presentation on the Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities to understand the necessity for the same. She highlighted the stipulation of National Education Policy 2020 and its complete consonance with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD), 2016. She emphasised that special educators are needed because the majority of classrooms have students with SLDs who require support. In addition, key stakeholders need to possess the necessary skills to recognize the needs of these students. In her presentation, the Joint Secretary shared statistics on the number of SLD students registered and qualified for various national-level examinations as well as offered courses in premier institutions to focus upon the presence of SLD students. She reaffirmed how important it is for HEIs to undergo regular capacity building in order to address the needs of students with SLDs and become inclusive in all respects. Accordingly, a program- Capacity Building for Special Learning Disabilities has been conceptualised to begin with the capacity building of key stakeholders with reference to specific learning disabilities among students, under Malaviya Mission

Teacher Training Programme. JS shared an overview of implementation of the First Cycle of the Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities which was held between January to July 2024. In the first cycle, 27 HEIs from Central Universities, IITs, CFTIs, NITs, IIITs, IISER, SPAs, and IIMs participated and the successful participation of 400 beneficiaries from different departments of these institutions. The key takeaways of the first cycle were to devise practices, strategies and to strengthen key departments for creating inclusive and higher educational institutions towards inclusion of students with SLDs.

3. The Secretary D/o Higher Education welcomed the Directors, Vice-Chancellors, and dignitaries from the HEIs along with the resource persons for the orientation program. He emphasised that to support students with disabilities to reach to the best of their abilities, it is critical to comprehend how we can create an enabling environment that is more inclusive. The Secretary (Higher Education) highlighted that the program's objectives develop from the fact that while learning disabilities are evident but it can be challenging to understand them. As a result, most institutions' initiatives and actions have focused solely on addressing physical disabilities. He mentioned that 'Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities' is an important step as envisioned in the NEP 2020 as it brings focused attention of the institutions on the issues of the SLDs to rise as exemplary institutions for other HEIs to follow. Additionally, students with SLDs should receive support throughout their educational journey as soon as they apply for admission. In his remarks, he reaffirmed that in order to implement the program meaningfully, the member of the identified institute who is assigned as the program's point of contact must demonstrate a certain level of commitment in addition to knowledge and compassion for the matter. In addition to that, the members from each institute who are nominated for the program ensure that they attend all the sessions of the program.

4. Ms. Noopur Jhunjunwala (Trustee, ChangeInkk Foundation) gave a detailed presentation on various aspects of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs). The presentation emphasised the need to clarify common misconceptions about the

condition before taking the necessary action to create a more inclusive society. She emphasised the need to change the perception of people with SLDs and that it is simply a lifelong condition characterised by differences in some people's capacities to take information and acquire knowledge in ways that differ from those of the general population. She brought attention to a number of global companies that were started or run by individuals with special learning disabilities. Some conditions which include SLDs are Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia. The presentation stated that dyslexia accounts for about 80% of all SLD cases. During the presentation, a triad representing academics, life skills, and emotional well-being was presented to illustrate how SLDs' lives are impacted and how difficult it is for them to overcome these obstacles. The impact on SLDs' self-esteem, ability to memorise, sensitivity to excessive stimulation, delayed information processing, planning challenges, and inconsistency between their written and spoken communication were highlighted as factors that continue to cause them daily struggles. It was highlighted that people with dyslexic thinking have achieved amazing things in their lives and made a name for themselves globally thanks to their innovation and potential to make an impression. The efforts of numerous academic institutions, both national and international, were acknowledged, and their initiatives to establish systems and structures to assist students with disabilities have proven crucial in enhancing the institution's ability to accommodate and respond to their needs. She highlighted the need for a framework to support SLDs while asserting that enabling policies are in place to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in educational institutions.

5. A video recap of the first cycle of CBSLD Program and testimonials from the stakeholders, who shared their key takeaways through the program, was presented.

6. Post detailed presentation on conceptual understanding of the SLDs, Q&A followed as floor was open for Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Academicians of the participating HEIs and other dignitaries were asked to raise queries pertaining to the issue of SLDs and about the implementation of the Capacity Building on Specific Learning Disabilities in their institution.

7. The orientation session concluded with the closing remarks by the Additional Secretary D/o Higher Education. In his closing remarks, he expressed his gratitude towards all the participating institutions and requested them to identify their coordinators to carry forward the program with subsequent sessions for successful implementation. Additional Secretary also directed for regular review and follow up of the learning of the First cycle during January-June 20204.
