

# Chapter 13

## Equitable and Inclusive Learning Spaces in Higher Education (India): Exploring the ICT Solutions

**Bharti Kaushik**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0776-5260>

*Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT, India*

**Sharv Datt Anand**

*Manav Rachna University, India*

### **ABSTRACT**

*The education system in India is experiencing a period of innovation and evolution. Achievement gaps and disparate outcomes have shown that efforts to implement educational equality (the attempt to treat every student the same) has failed students from certain backgrounds. This highlights the need to progress towards new approach based on educational equity (addressing each student's individual needs) for the benefit of students, who failed to respond in desired manner to equality-based efforts, and also those who have been neglected, or marginalized. The broad objectives of present study is (1) to study the role and functions of enabling units/cells, (2) to understand the challenges faced by students with special needs in higher education institutes and colleges, and (3) to list the ICT solutions provided and practiced. The opinion of students was gathered on barrier faced due to infrastructure such as laboratories, washrooms, classrooms, library, cafeteria, conference halls, the pedagogy practices and ICT solutions available within the programs offered.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6868-5.ch013

## **INTRODUCTION**

The provisions in policy documents like National Education Policy (NEP) 2022, Samagra Shiksha 2018, Rights of Persons with Disability Act (RPwD) 2016, Persons with Disability Act 1995 and Right to Education (RTE) 2009, reflect the commitment of Government of India towards equitable and inclusive education at all levels of education, starting from nursery to higher education. The stakeholder organizations working in the field of education, especially higher education, have interpreted the provisions mentioned in the policy documents and developed the guidelines for enhancing the participation of persons with special needs in the higher education learning spaces.

The administrative mechanism for creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces at the institutes and universities is generally named as Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) or Enabling Units or Persons with Disabilities Cell or Learner Support Center and so on. In the context of the present paper, the term EOC is used to maintain the cohesivity in the reading. The discussion is primarily focused on the role and functions of EOC as visualized in the various policy documents including the guidelines and their status of implementation. The later part is studied through student surveys and the former is a desk study that includes review of documents.

### **Equitable and Inclusive learning Spaces at Higher Education: Policy Perspective**

In India, University Grants Commission (UGC) is the apex body, established in 1953, for maintaining standards in the institutions of higher education. Under the XII five-year plan, for the years 2012-2017, UGC released guidelines for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) to be implemented in colleges and institutions recognized by UGC. These guidelines had two parts, one focusing on higher education for PwD/Persons with special needs and other focusing on teachers with visual impairments. It is to be noted that prior to these guidelines, as per the provisions of PwD Act 1995, UGC was providing financial assistance to colleges for supporting education of PwD and same was continued in the recent guidelines as well. These guidelines recommend establishments of enabling units for differently abled persons. The functions of such enabling units are to facilitate admissions of PwD, provide guidance and counseling, create awareness about PwD, and to assist in gaining employment.

Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU), proactively prepared an equal opportunity policy for PwD in the year 2021. This policy is in complete resonance with the RPwD Act 2016 and is also a small step towards realizing the NEP 2020, vision of equitable and inclusive education at higher education. Section 3.3, education services, has the provision of 5% reservations in admissions along with tuition fee exemption applicable for all courses offered by TNOU. The purpose of EOC visualized under this policy is to facilitate implementation of admission provisions such as no discrimination, reservations in admissions and provision of reasonable accommodations such as teaching learning material in Braille, large print, tactile form, audio format, sign language and other preferred mode of engagement based on the nature of challenge faced by the PwD. This policy recommends establishing a center, at headquarter of the university, for multimodal material production for differently abled. This center is to be responsible for the dissemination of the material produced, conduct capacity building programs and to generate awareness and sensitivity among the functionaries towards concerns of PwDs.

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), another apex body in India, dealing with the area of technical education, has issued guidelines for inclusive education and shared it with Vice Chancel-

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/equitable-and-inclusive-learning-spaces-in-higher-education-india/328565](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/equitable-and-inclusive-learning-spaces-in-higher-education-india/328565)

## Related Content

---

### Role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in Fostering Workforce Diversity in Information Technology (IT) Organizations After COVID-19

P. Ramshankar and Mary Rani Thomas (2023). *Role of Human Resources for Inclusive Leadership, Workplace Diversity, and Equity in Organizations* (pp. 184-213).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/role-of-employee-resource-groups-ergs-in-fostering-workforce-diversity-in-information-technology-it-organizations-after-covid-19/326171](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/role-of-employee-resource-groups-ergs-in-fostering-workforce-diversity-in-information-technology-it-organizations-after-covid-19/326171)

### Exploring Ways to Design Mathematics Education Promoting Inclusion and Equity for Every Student

Helena Roos (2023). *Building Inclusive Education in K-12 Classrooms and Higher Education: Theories and Principles* (pp. 166-181).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-ways-to-design-mathematics-education-promoting-inclusion-and-equity-for-every-student/324855](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-ways-to-design-mathematics-education-promoting-inclusion-and-equity-for-every-student/324855)

### Describing Undergraduate Students' Intercultural Learning through Study Abroad in Terms of Their 'Cultural Responsiveness'

Susan Oguro and Angela Giovanangeli (2016). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education* (pp. 29-38).

[www.irma-international.org/article/describing-undergraduate-students-intercultural-learning-through-study-abroad-in-terms-of-their-cultural-responsiveness/156496](http://www.irma-international.org/article/describing-undergraduate-students-intercultural-learning-through-study-abroad-in-terms-of-their-cultural-responsiveness/156496)

### Behavior Management in Inclusive Classrooms

(2024). *Discussions of Inclusive Education Within African Contexts* (pp. 86-102).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/behavior-management-in-inclusive-classrooms/343275](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/behavior-management-in-inclusive-classrooms/343275)

### Discourse Analysis for Intercultural Competence Development

Phyllis Bo-yuen Ngai (2021). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education* (pp. 17-30).

[www.irma-international.org/article/discourse-analysis-for-intercultural-competence-development/281659](http://www.irma-international.org/article/discourse-analysis-for-intercultural-competence-development/281659)