

Special Provisions for Disabled in Dr. Shakuntala Mishra Rehabilitation University, Lucknow (U. P.)

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Abstract

Disabled students suffer from exclusion, isolation, and discrimination in the education system. Disability in higher education has different implications from that of school education. Higher education increases the chance of employability, thus, assuring dignified life for the persons with disabilities. Infrastructural facilities within institution, attitudes towards persons with disabilities and lack of support services are a few areas, which are the barrier for the entry of students with disabilities into higher education. Keeping this in view, the U. P. Govt. has established a state university with additional facilities for students with disabilities. The present paper discusses the disability in the context of higher education and vision, infrastructure, distinctive features, etc. of Dr. Shakuntala Mishra Rehabilitation University, Lucknow.

Keywords: Disability; Higher education; Rehabilitation university.

Introduction

Concept of Disability

Various definitions of disability have been given by different persons and organisations but there is lack of unanimity in defining disability. Like the definition of disability there is hardly any unanimity in stating types of disability, so, numerous types of disabilities hinder the ability of an individual to function normally.

Disability can cover a range of impairments including physical, sensory and cognitive, all of which can have an impact on a person's ability to interact with computer technology.[1]

The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (1991) describes disabled as anything, or want that prevents one's doing something especially legal disqualification, physical incapacity caused by injury or disease. According to section 504 of

1973 American Rehabilitation Act, refers to a person who has a physical or mental disability impairment that "substantially limits" one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment. Section 504 states that "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability.... Shall solely by reason of her or his disability be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any programme or activity receiving Federal financial assistance".

India is not left far behind in empowering its disabled citizens. It has provided all possible support to the persons with disabilities either by enacting a special Act, or by executing a 'National Policy for Persons with Disabilities', or by way of providing reservations in education, employment, government schemes and programmes or establishing institutes and organisations and many more.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 has come into force since 7th Feb. 1996. This law is an important landmark and is a significant step in the direction of ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their full participation in the nation building. The Act

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has both preventive and promotional measures of rehabilitation like formal/technical education, job reservation, research and development, creation of barrier-free environment, unemployment allowance for the disabled, etc.

Disability in the Context of Higher Education

Higher education has its own importance in terms of employability, political power and national development. "Higher Education being at the apex of the educational system is an essential input for meeting the manpower requirements of the highest caliber in the crucial areas of national development. It is also an important contributory factor for ensuring social justice by providing vertical mobility to deprived sections of society by making higher levels of knowledge accessible to them and, in the process, improving quality of life of the nation as a whole".[2]

University Grants Commission is supporting selected university departments and colleges of education to offer special education with financial assistance available under the programme of 'Integrated Education for Disabled Children' by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. The UGC had started the scheme of assistance to universities/colleges to facilitate Teachers Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN).

The schemes like TEPSE and HEPSN (1999-2000) have been implemented with an objective to develop courses for special teachers and counselors and also to provide facilities in various forms for the persons with disability. These schemes have not been fully implemented in all the higher educational institutions.[3]

The report of manpower development published by the Rehabilitation Council of India reveals that more than one lakh teachers will be needed in the next ten to fifteen years to cater the educational needs of disabled children in schools. Bachelor's and Master's level teacher programmes are needed for

preparing teachers to help disabled children realize the objective of education for all.[4]

Profile of Dr. Shakuntala Mishra Rehabilitation University, Lucknow

Around two percent of the population of Uttar Pradesh i. e. 35 lakhs (approximately) is suffering from disability. Keeping in view their special needs and to make them educated and self-dependent, Dr. Shakuntala Mishra Rehabilitation University was established by Viklang Kalyaan Vibhag, Uttar Pradesh Sarkaar by an Ordinance dated 29th Aug. 2008, later replaced by U. P. Act No. 1 of 2009, dated 19th Feb. 2009 and U. P. Act No. 24 of 2011, dated 28th Nov. 2011. ⁵This is the first state university of its kind, which provides accessible and quality higher education to challenged students, in a completely barrier-free environment. The campus area is nearly one hundred thirty acres which is located on Mohaan Road, Lucknow.

Objectives of the University

The main objectives[6] of the university are as under:

- i) To facilitate and promote studies, research and extension work in the emerging areas including rehabilitation courses with focus on visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, rehabilitation through engineering/technology, community based rehabilitation, rehabilitation psychology, speech and hearing, locomotors and cerebral palsy, autism, spectrum disorder, rehabilitation therapy, social work etc. through conventional teaching and distance education system;
- ii) To develop a sense of responsibility in the students and research scholars to serve society in the field of disability by developing skills in regard to special education, vocational and general education;
- iii) To empower physically challenged students and provide them higher

- education in an accessible environment along with other students;
- iv) To prepare professionals especially disabled to succeed as leaders, professionals, informed consumers, responsible citizens and life-long learners through residential and distance education, utilizing a variety of learning media and technologies, promote human and intellectual diversity by providing equal access and opportunity to the challenged population;
 - v) To improve the delivery system through service initiatives, institutional and human resource and build partnership to provide high quality, affordable, accountable, responsive and integrated services to the students, alumni, placement partners and all other stakeholders as one of the best centre for higher learning especially for differently abled ones.

courses and out of this fifty percent, half of such seats are reserved for visually impaired students. The education to students with special needs is being provided in an accessible and barrier-free environment, along with other non-disabled students.

- iii) Wi-Fi campus, Technology friendly smart classrooms with huge infrastructure and multimedia educational approach, Placement Cell, Modern banking facilities, State Government/ UGC/ RCI/ AICTE standard norms, etc. are some basic features.
- iv) Well equipped Computer lab with JAWS (Job Access with Speech) software, low-vision aids, magnifiers, mobility devices, hostels, medical facilities, sports enriches the educational experiences of the students. Differently-abled persons require special aids and appliances for their daily functioning which are available through various schemes of the Govt. as per their prescribed norms.
- v) The University facilitates students with special disabilities in guidance and counseling, gaining successful employment, awareness with respect to rights, fee concession, examination procedure, scholarship scheme, etc.
- vi) The University addresses accessibility related issues as per the stipulations of the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995, and ensures that all existing structures as

Salient Features of the University

The salient features[7] of university are as under:

- i) The uniqueness of the university is evident from its basic philosophy, policies and programs, which are spelt-out and enshrined in the University Act and Statute.
- ii) The University reserves fifty percent seats for students with disabilities in all the

Sl. No.	Name of the Course	Duration	No. of Seats
1.	B. A. (Hindi/English/Economics/Political Science/History/Sociology/Music)	3 years (6 semesters)	80 (each subject)
2.	M. A. (Hindi/English/Economics/Political Science/Ancient History/Medieval History/Modern History/Sociology/)	2 years (4 semesters)	40 (each subject)
3.	B. Com. /B. Com. (Hons.)	3 years (6 semesters)	120
4.	M. Com.	2 years (4 semesters)	40
5.	M. S. W.	2 years (4 semesters)	40
6.	B. Ed. (Special Education) Hearing Impairment/Mental Retardation/Visual Impairment	1 year (2 semesters)	25 (each subject)
7.	M. B. A. (Human Resource Management/Financial Management/Marketing Management)	2 years (4 semesters)	40 (each specialization)

well as future construction projects in the campus is made disabled friendly.

Courses Offered in the University

The courses[8] available for the students in the university campus are as under:-

Admission process (for first semester in each course) is commenced in June/July every year. The applicants may be applying for desired course in online/offline mode.

Central Library of the University

Central Library has nearly five thousands collection (reference/test) on Economics, English, Hindi, Sociology, History, Political Science, Special Education, Music, Commerce and Management. More than hundred journals (national/international) are being subscribed for the users. The library is equipped with 64 KBPS RF link and connected to 2 MBPS leased line from BSNL internet proxy server, internet web domain, CD-NET server and library automation server. Library is connected to campus-wide network which has fiber optic back bone with multiple nodes. There are reasonable terminals for users to have internet, e-mail and database access. The majority of the journals and books are easily accessible by the challenged students of the university. The full text of the journals and books are integrated to single interface and bibliographic database for easy access to the users on any topic of interest for academic, research and rehabilitation. Access to international database is available through MEDLINE. The library has GUI based management software with unique collection of books, compact discs and audio-visual material related to speech, hearing and allied fields. Free browsing facility is available for all staff and students.

In future, the library will be more accessible on installation of various disabled-friendly software like Optacon, Kurzweil, Duxberry Translator, Magic, JAWS-11, Strip Magnifier,

and CAI packages like mathematics for educable mentally retarded, Fun with Numbers, Make Communication Easy, Trace & Play.

Summing up

Provisions for students with disabilities in the institutions are the name of change. 'Change' itself is a continuous process. It is accepted reality and need of hour that students with special needs deserve a change in the overall spectrum from its very beginning to extreme end. Similarly, there is no difference of opinion that students with special needs ought to have a set up where they could survive easily. Beyond the views of persons with disabilities, administration always has a bulk of issues to resolve in routine while disability issue is one of them. No doubt, priorities are set on demand. It does not mean that timely low demand should put disability provision and supports far behind on things to do chart of administration. Administration should take provisions in libraries and educational setting for students with special needs like organizational resource. So, disability issues should be taken as resource rather than a priority.

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