

Report on Disability Equality Training July 27, 2022

Introduction:

Faculty Development Academy organized 1-day training on “Disability Equality” for the faculty members of CUI, Islamabad campus in collaboration with Kamyab Jawan Markaz on July 27, 2022. The purpose of this training was to sensitize and create awareness in the participants towards best practices of interaction with Students with Disabilities (SWDs) in particular and People with Disabilities (PWDs) in general. The workshop had two sessions of 90 minutes each. There were 15 faculty members from different departments of CUI, Islamabad.

Session – 1

The first session was delivered by Mr. Asim Zafar. Mr. Asim who himself is a wheelchair user and is a motivational speaker. He hails from Lahore and has gained his qualifications from the same city. After introducing himself and sharing his life’s journey about how he suffered from polio till the time of becoming a motivational speaker, he posted a question to the participants. He asked them what they think about disability. There were various replies. Some said that it is about doing things differently, some said that it is about being dependant on others and others were of the view that disabled person are not able to work like others. The speaker here quoted an example that a person without disability will reach the 4th floor in a building via stairs. Whereas, a person with disability will use the lift to reach the same floor because he cannot climb up the stairs. If the staircase is removed then not even the normal person can reach the upper floors. The purpose of stating this example was to make participants realize that there is a problem in system i.e. the infrastructure is not correct.



The resource person further elaborated that there are many people who do not know how to cook, stitch, fix broken things, or speak in front of others. Does this mean that they are disabled? There is always a lack of something in every person. No one is perfect in all ways of life. This must not be the criteria to judge people or their skills. Therefore, it won’t be wrong to say that every one of us is disabled in one way or another.

The speaker further wanted to sensitize the participants by telling them about five kinds of barriers in our society. These barriers are attitudinal, organizational, architectural,

communicational and technological. These hurdles are mostly found in our society and culture. People and systems do not seem to accept a person with any disability. The speaker tried to make it a point that using the term 'disabled' is not correct. A person lacking something in his/her body may be called as 'different' and must not be labeled as 'disabled' or 'special'. It would rather be better to call them as 'Differently able'. The speaker sitting on his wheelchair highlighted that if a person with healthy body uses stairs, we use a ramp, if he uses a four wheel car and drives with his feet, and we use a three wheel car and drive with our hands. So the work is done smoothly, but the methods are different.

The resource person requested the faculty members to play an active role in changing the mindsets of people. He quoted that Fatima Jinnah Women University is working actively for the betterment of disabled people. They have even launched a resource centre for such people. In 1981, for the first time ever, an ordinance was passed by Pakistan's government under the rule of General Zia-UI-Haq. More legislative work has also been done by Pakistan's government. The speaker pleaded that COMSATS University must also revise their policies and make user friendly policies for differently – abled people.



In the end Mr. Asim conducted a question & answer session. Participants had various queries and he replied to all of them. It was a very interactive session.

Session – 2

The second session was taken by Ms. Saba Bahareen. She is an Assistant Professor in CUI and is serving the Department of Humanities. She started the session by sharing her own experience of life when she had to use a wheelchair for a few months. Then she asked the participants if they had ever dealt with a person with some disability? A few of the participants had experienced dealing with disabled persons. She elaborated the session delivered by Mr. Asim Zafar.

Types & Forms of Disabilities:

The resource person threw light on the types and forms of disabilities.

- Physical disability
- Mental disability
- Hearing disability

- Visual disability

She further talked about learning disabilities or disorders. A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities, for example household tasks, socializing or managing money. This affects them for their whole life.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

The concept of Universal Design Learning (UDL) was shared by her. This is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. It guides the creation of learning outcomes, resources and assessments that work for everyone. It is underpinned by research in the field of neuroscience and is designed to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students, including:

- Students with disabilities,
- Students from diverse cultures
- Socio-economic backgrounds,
- Mature students
- International students.

UDL guides the design of learning experiences to proactively meet the needs of all learners. When you use UDL, you assume that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not the student. The speaker discussed different studies that were carried out all over the world regarding people who are differently able.

The resource person enlightened the participants with knowledge, and hands – on experience. She kept the talk open and fully involved the participants with her. It was over all a new and well informed session for all the participants. A group photo was taken with the resource persons and participants.

