



भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान भुवनेश्वर Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar

Press Release

IIT Bhubaneswar organizes DiversAsia Conference to promote inclusivity in Higher Education

DiversAsia Toolkit launched with Accessible and Interactive Learning Materials for Students with disabilities

Bhubaneswar, 5th January 2024: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar, in association with the Nottingham Trent University, UK has organised an international conference and workshop on “Embracing diversity in ASIA through the adoption of Inclusive Open Practices (DiversAsia)” from 3rd to 6th January 2024 at Bhubaneswar. This international conference-cum-workshop focused on inclusive higher education, DiversAsia Toolkit, accessibility checker, and best practices. The programme began with the two-day international conference on 3rd January 2024.

Funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European union, this programme aimed at addressing the key challenges and present the best practices to be adopted for inclusive education and enhanced learning with major context of students with physical and learning disabilities by addressing key challenges at individual level, community level, institutional level and government level and presenting role of advanced assistive technologies and development of Toolkit. This conference meeting and workshop events were jointly hosted by the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, Nottingham Trent University, UK, Vellore Institute of Technology-VIT University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, Gazi University, Turkey, University of Latvia, Latvia, SoftQNR, Serbia, Plovdiv University, Bulgaria, National Association of Professionals Working with Disabled People, Bulgaria, PhoenixKM BVBA, Belgium and funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European union.

The two-day international conference was inaugurated by Shri Bishnupada Sethi, IAS, Principal Secretary in the Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department, Government of Odisha. Prof. David Brown, Coordinator, Nottingham Trent University (NTU), UK; Prof. Dinakar Pasla, Dean-Sponsored Research & Industrial Consultancy (SRIC), IIT Bhubaneswar; Prof. Subhransu Ranjan Samantaray, Head, School of Electrical Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar and Dr. M. Sabarimalai Manikandan, Project Investigator of the DiversAsia project also graced the inaugural session.

At the outset, Prof. Dinakar Pasla, Dean-SRIC welcomed all international partners and participants and introduced the major objectives of the DiversAsia conference. Prof. Dinakar delivered the welcome address and summarized the collaborative research activities.

In his address, Shri Bishnupada Sethi emphasized the Government policies and best practices adopted for ensuring the social security and empowerment of persons with disabilities in Odisha. He appreciated IIT Bhubaneswar and the team of DiversAsia for taking up this initiative towards making higher education inclusive through the utilization of advanced assistive technology and artificial intelligence. He emphasized that Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department and IIT Bhubaneswar to collaborate

on developing technologies and implementing them for the benefit of the differently abled people of the State.

Prof. David Brown introduced the DiversAsia Project and the Toolkit, which aim at making higher education accessible to the students with disabilities through interactive learning materials and technology.

Prof. Subhransu Ranjan Samantaray stressed the development of technology for making higher education inclusive for the students having disabilities. He affirmed that IIT Bhubaneswar is inclined to work in collaboration with different institutions and the state government to come up with solutions to address the real problems of these students.

The two-day conference witnessed several sessions with the deliberations on Inclusive Education and Assistive Technologies, DiversAsia Toolkit and Inclusive Education, Best Practices and Policies for Higher Education in India and Outcomes of DiversAsia Toolkit Piloting. The research team from IIT Bhubaneswar demonstrated NLP technologies for development of assistive technologies for students with physical and learning disabilities. During this conference, national and international speakers delivered key challenges, assistive devices and best practices that need to be adopted with focus of creating sustainable inclusive education ecosystem.

In the closing ceremony, Prof. Sujit Roy, Dean-Continuing Education, IIT Bhubaneswar graced the occasion and appreciated the initiative. Prof. David, Project Coordinator, Nottingham Trent University (NTU), UK acknowledged Prof. Sujit Roy, IIT Bhubaneswar for his continuous support from the start of the DiversAsia project. Dr. Srinivas Boppu delivered the vote of thanks.

DiversAsia partners appreciated the research members, Brahannayaki Sekkar, Asit Kumar Panda and Devimoonchand Rowthu who played major role in development of NLP technologies under guidance of Dr. M. Sabarimalai Manikandan. The DiversAsia team of IIT Bhubaneswar, Dr. Srinivas Boppu, Dr. Tarakanta Nayak, Dr. Barathram Ramkumar and Dr. Satish D. Dhandole coordinated the event.
