



**SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESSLLD)**

**TRAINING NOTE (009/2025-26)**

**on**

# **Universal Design for Learning and Role of Educators**

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## **Background:**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework that seeks to make the education system universal in its approach and delivery. What it means is that learning should be accessible and involve all types of students irrespective of their background or learning style. Classically, therefore, UDL (developed by the Centre for Special Technology – CAST) is based on three core principles:

**Multiple Means of Representation:** Presenting information in various formats (visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic) so that all types of learning styles are taken care of.

**Multiple Means of Action and Expression:** Allowing students to highlight or demonstrate their learning in a way that suits them most like in writing or speaking or through projects, etc.

**Multiple Means of Engagement:** Trying to engage the learners' suiting their preferences, interests, and needs.

In brief, the UDL is aimed at bringing in adequate flexibility in the education systems and processes so that all the needs of all types of learners are taken care of.

## **Key Benefits of UDL:**

1. Enhanced accessibility for students with disabilities or socially / economically deprived sections
2. Greater engagement among students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds
3. Higher involvement by students because of greater flexibility of the system in terms of varied pedagogic approaches
4. Improved academic outcomes due to personalized learning thrust.

Because of the underlying philosophy and the drivers thereof, UDL has become the cornerstone of an ideal education system. The learning outcome is to make the educational system as “inclusive” as possible and to create a “homogeneous cluster of learners”. Idea is to migrate from elitist approach to a common goal orientation.

## **Role of Academic Institutions:**

For implementation of UDL at the ground level, the academic institutions have an important role to play; this includes from belief in philosophy to actual execution. Some of the essential commitments on part of the academic institutions include the following:

**Leadership commitment:** The successful implementation of UDL begins with institutional commitment at the leadership level. Educational leaders must integrate UDL and its tools / techniques into strategic goals, policies, and accreditation frameworks. This includes development of “UDL Policy” and how the institute will deal with issues related to diversity, inclusivity and equity including the different pedagogic approaches according to varied learning styles of different groups of learners. For example, there should be policy for “remedial classes” for the slow learners or students from an underprivileged background. Similarly, institutions must have a definite framework for identification of the “differently abled children” and take care of their educational needs.

**Faculty development:** Faculty members play a pivotal role in bringing UDL principles into practice. Institutions should invest in continuous professional development by organizing workshops and training programs focused on UDL principles and techniques. Teachers must be equipped with all UDL toolkits in the entire value chain of education delivery (curriculum design, delivery mechanisms, assessment systems) for making UDL effective at the ground level. Change of mindset of the faculty is crucial and the training programs should look at this aspect as well. The teachers should also be taught as to how to create and nurture inclusive classroom atmosphere.

**Creating right ambience:** Institutions should create the right academic ambience to make the UDL implementations possible and effective. This includes creation of the supportive physical infrastructure, academic set up and most importantly technology integration so that the UDL can be implemented in the right spirit. All types of assistive and AI supported software tools should be installed to take care of special learning needs of students. Simple techniques like “Language Labs” should be set up to help students to change their accent and become better public speakers. Similarly visual organizers should be in place. Creating the right types of ambiances plays a pivotal role as it involves intellectual and financial commitment on part of the management and teachers. Faculty members

play a key role in this perspective through bringing the right ambience within the classroom.

**Student support services:** Beyond classroom instruction, institutions must enhance student support services to align with UDL principles. These include having strong “mentoring support”, provision of “counselling services” and a strong “social and emotional connect” between teachers and students without which UDL can never succeed in an institution.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** To ensure the effectiveness of UDL implementation, institutions should establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and improvement. An appropriate mechanism of feedback from the students (main users) is needed to identify the problem areas and take corrective steps. Adequate data analytics support will help to improve implementation of UDL in an institution in a phased manner.

### **Moving Ahead:**

UDL provides a holistic framework towards an educational philosophy to bring in inclusivity in terms of access and child growth. Holistic development of all children with equal focus and thrust is the key word. It is, however, not always an easy task because of large student intake in a country like India and also the adverse teacher student ratio. NEP 2020 aims to bring in some clarity in the context of holistic development of all children and the recommendations contain several provisions to make the system truly inclusive. For example, reduction of teacher student ratio to 1:30 at school level is right step in this direction. Resistance to change, however, remains a big threat and each institution must devise its own methodology to tackle this issue. The practical difficulties in terms of customized learning approach or assessment do remain and it is an arduous task to overcome. Still UDL provides an ideal framework in the right direction offering solutions to many of the problems the education system of current times are confronted with.

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