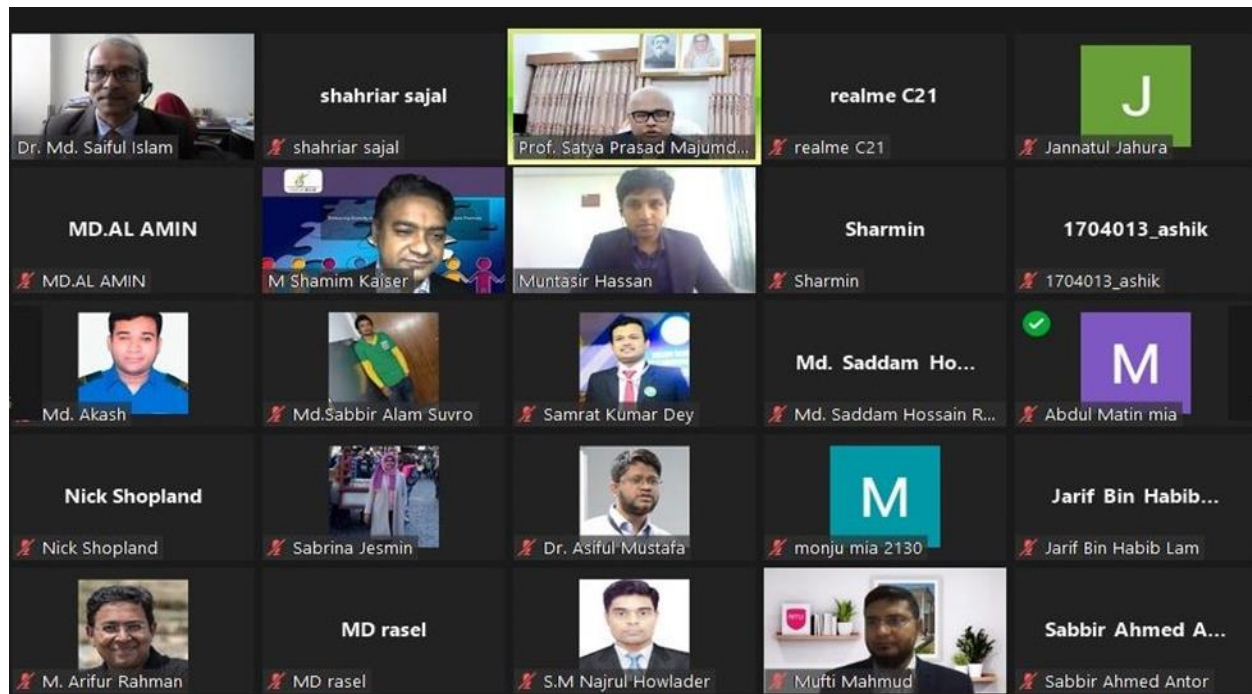# 2 days International Virtual Workshop on Personalized and Inclusive Education in Bangladesh

On February 6-7, 2022, the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) of BUET and the Institute of Information Technology (IIT), Jahangirnagar University jointly hosted a two-day virtual international workshop on "Personalized and Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Challenges and Prospects." This workshop is an event of the DiversAsia Project which is funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ program. The project aims to build capacity among Indian and Bangladeshi universities by providing a compendium of inclusive and personalized education guidelines as well as a validation toolkit that will evaluate and provide guidelines for further improvement of the existing open educational practices. The workshop aimed to discuss the major challenges and potential that students with special needs experience in higher education, as well as the active role of policymakers in Bangladesh. Almost 200 participants joined the virtual workshop, which included students, faculty members and policymakers from different higher education institutions across the country.

The event was inaugurated on February 6, 2022, with Prof. Dr. Satya Prasad Majumder, the Vice Chancellor of BUET, as the Chief Guest. Guests of honor included Director of IICT Dr. Rubaiyat Hossain Mondal of BUET and Dr. Mufti Mahmud of Nottingham Trent University (UK). Also in attendance were Prof. Md. Saiful Islam of the IICT of BUET, Prof. M. Shamim Kaiser & Shamim Al Mamun, IIT, JU; Dr. Hossen Asiful Mustafa and Mohammad Muntasir Hassan of IICT, BUET, as well as other special personnel.

After welcoming the guests, Prof. Dr. Md. Saiful Islam gave a brief introduction to the workshop's goals and objectives. The Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Satya Prasad Majumder, welcomed the guests and participants and noted that although our country has many students with disabilities, we have not focused enough on how to bring them into mainstream higher education. DIVERASIA's results will have a significant impact on the current higher education landscape for students with disabilities, according to him. In order to achieve this goal, this virtual workshop will focus on inclusive education and Bangladesh's current challenges. Prof M Shamim Kaiser thanked all the guests and participants for attending the workshop.

David Brown
NTU, UK

Andy Burton
NTU, UK

Nick Shopland
NTU, UK

T. R. Gadekallu
VIT, India

M. S. Manikandan
IIT Palakkad, India

Andy Burton of NTU, UK gave a talk on "Assistive Technologies and Tools for Enhancing Learning and Social Inclusion" and NICK Shopland of NTU, UK gave a talk on "Embracing Diversity in Asia Through the Adoption of Inclusive Open Practices" in the second session of the first day of the event. Artificial Intelligence and its role in inclusive education were discussed by David J Brown, NTU, UK. During their presentations, Thippa R Gadekallu of VIT, India, spoke about "Artificial Intelligence in Education," and M S Manikandan of IIT Palakkad, India, spoke about "Assistive Technologies and Tools— Inclusive Education and Learning Enhancement."

On the second day, two survey questionnaires were provided- one for the students with disabilities and other one is for administrators and academic staff, to get proper feedback. After analyzing the gathered data, outcomes will be provided to policymakers to overcome the existing challenges.

A panel discussion was also held for the attendees and academic staff after the Q & A session. The respective panelists were Dr. Md. Fakhrul Islam, Director of Strategic Planning at the University Grant Commission, Dr. Mufti Mahmud of Nottingham Trent University (UK, Prof. Dr. Muzharul Mannan, Consultant Neurologist at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Sumaiya Tasneem Haque, Lecturer at North South University. The panel discussion was moderated by Prof. Dr. Shamim Al Mamun of JU. The discussants provided a brief discussion about the inclusive policies and practices that currently exist in educational institutions and the support needed to provide inclusive education and personalized learning in a higher educational institution. The outcomes of the panel discussions helped the participants to understand the challenges to overcome and the potential to contribute in a better way towards inclusive higher education in Bangladesh.

At the closing ceremony of the workshop, the honorable Vice Chancellor of JU Prof. Dr. Farzana Islam and member of the UGC Prof. Dr. Bishwajit Chanda were present at the closing ceremony. Prof. Dr. Farzana Islam mentioned that JU has already taken some necessary steps for the accessibility of disabled students on its university campus and established a

center named "*Anandashala*" for the development of autistic children. She also encouraged everyone to work together to help the disabled students and not separate them from the rest of the students. Prof. Dr. Bishwajit Chanda pointed out that those who need special education should pay more attention to equality than equality in their education and lauded all DiversAsia team members and partners for their benevolent approaches and initiatives to supporting impaired students in higher education institutions.

Following the special guests' speeches, the moderator concluded the workshop by thanking everyone who had attended, including the guests, organizers, facilitators, and participants. A number of additional workshops for visually impaired students in Bangladesh are planned by BUET and JU for the near future.

Workshop Presentations:

David J. Brown--AI in Inclusive Education: Current and Emerging Practices

Dr. Thippa Reddy Gadekallu--Artificial Intelligence in Education

Andy Burton--ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR ENHANCING LEARNING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Nick Shopland--Bangladesh - DiversAsia, the promotion of inclusive open practices in HE

Dr. M. Sabarimalai Manikandan--Assistive Technologies and Tools –Inclusive Education and Enhancing Learning