

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT OF JAIL INMATES

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ABSTRACT

The objective of jail inmates' education should be the socialization of the jail inmates through education. Jail Inmates are a special group who has rights to equitable access to all basic benefits of the society. The ultimate object of education is the return of these jail inmates to society with skills & knowledge. Distance education has traditionally been viewed as ready way for prisoners to access education in correctional centres, delivering course content and resources to prisoners who are unable to undertake traditional face-to-face education (Salane, 2008). This is because conventional institutions do not have special education facilities to reach out to people behind bars. IGNOU and NIOS is offering education to jail inmates through its Study Centres for reaching out to jail inmates. IGNOU announced its initiative 'Free Education for Jail Inmates' in 2010 session and waived off fees for all the Jail Inmates. This move has now been a significant milestone in encouraging and rehabilitating Jail Inmates in order to improve their quality of life. IGNOU has established 163 Special Study Centres in Jails at the national level.

KEYWORDS: *Open and Distance Learning, Jail Inmates, Special Study Centres, Empowerment.*

Introduction

When planning for a year –Sow corn
When planning for a decade –Plants trees
When planning for life –Train and educate people.

By Kwan-Tzu

The role of education is more vital and widely recognized in the modern concept of prisoners' education. Prisoners are integral part of our society and it is our duty to enable them to improve their health, skills, knowledge and capability for productive work. Therefore, it is necessary to make them eligible to command respect in the society after release from the jails. Education can play a great role to upgrade their knowledge and enhance their competencies. Confucious (551 -479 BC), the famous Chinese Philosopher, also believed that everyone should benefit from learning. He said, "Without learning, the wise become foolish, by learning the foolish become wise."

"Jail inmates Education" is gaining importance across the globe. Higher education to Jail inmates has proved to be reducing the **recidivism** (the re-arrest, reconviction or return to jail) which reduces the government expenditure. It is a sort of sending them to home, better than they come into prisons, so that, they can get a gainful employment. Rather than going the earlier circle. So, Jail Inmates Education is a socially relevant and cost effective practice.

The Article 15, 17 and 46 of Indian Constitution safeguard the educational interests of the weaker sections of the Indian society like socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. IGNOU with the support of the Central Government Ministry of Home Affairs and Governments of various States and Union Territories offers its educational programmes to prison inmates through SSCs throughout the country. IGNOU has extensive programmes of education and training for Jail inmates. IGNOU started its Centres in Jails way back in 1994 with one

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Centre in Tihar Jail with a nominal enrolment. Therefore, IGNOU announced its initiative 'Free Education for Jail Inmates' in 2010 session and waived off fees for all the Jail Inmates through its Special Study Centres across the country with following vision and objectives of IGNOU:

- To provide an opportunity for jail inmates to returns to main stream life with quality education and future development both morally and vocationally.
- To create the interest of jail inmates towards higher education.
- To access high quality education to all Jail inmates, who could not get the education due to their socio-economic conditions.
- To provide study materials and library facilities through IGNOU to all jails under the supervision of an IGNOU Coordinator and supporting staffs.
- To make provisions of teaching-learning transactions, including holding of examination for all learners within the jail premises.
- To offer need-based academic programmes to jail inmates so that they may get job opportunities to live peaceful life.
- To uplift their socio-economic conditions through the professional and vocational programmes.
- To provide an opportunity for jail inmates to get Jobs to returns to main stream life

Status of Jail Inmates' Education

It is the need of the democratic world to provide educational opportunities to the jail inmates for improvement in quality of life. Many studies advocated that Jail Inmates' education for reducing the offending, rehabilitating the jail inmates after release from the jails and decreasing cost of governments to bring them in to the main stream of the society. Socio-economic conditions of the Jail Inmates and jail environment not more supports conventional educational system. ODL can contribute effectively to develop their knowledge and skills for proving themselves as good human resource. It also helps to maintain and enhance the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education with present rate.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) states that total number of 1401 Jails having capacity with 419623 Jail Inmates in the country, in which 4,01,789 (95.7%) are male inmates and only 17,834 (4.3%) female inmates. The condition of literacy of prisoners in India is far from satisfactory which isobvious from the fact that 27.1 percent inmates were illiterate and 42.9 percent wereeducated below X standard in 2015. These two categories, when taken together, constituted 70 percent of total jail inmates' population. On the basis of analysis of educational standard, only 8.4 percent of the total inmates were holding graduate, post-graduate or some technical degrees.

Table 1: Educational Standard of Prisoners in India in 2006 & 2015

Educational Standard	Number 2006	Percentage	Number 2015	Percentage
Illiterate	134069	35.9	36,406	27.1
Below class X	162015	43.4	57,610	42.9
Above X and below graduate	55746	14.9	28,941	21.6
Graduate	15523	4.2	7,167	5.4
Post-graduate	4148	1.1	2,460	1.8
Technical Degree/Diploma	1770	0.5	1,584	1.2
Total	373271	100	134168	100

Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, Prison Statistics, 2006 & 2015

Therefore, various guidelines of United Nations, Supreme Court of India and National Human Rights Commission of India improve education has been treated as a right of prisoners which has been incorporated in the

Objectives of the Study

- To study educational opportunities to jail inmates through ODL
- To study their admission enrollment trends in academic programme of IGNOU
- To study student support services provided to jail inmates

Review of Related Literature

The following studies conducted earlier related to the present study have been presented and analyzed critically in this section:

Bazos and Hausman (2004) reported that prison education is more cost-effective tool to literate and skill development of the prisoners. It is also found that prisoners who participated in the educational programmes, they are about 10 to 20 percent less likely to re-offend than the average released prisoner and reduced the government investment of the rehabilitation of the prisoners.

Sharma (2009) found that Special Study Centres of IGNOU provides opportunity of higher education to jail inmate's reformation/rehabilitation of the jail inmates to bring them back to the mainstream of the society.

Esperian (2010) found that education for current and former prisoners is a cost-effective solution to reducing, reoffending and improving public safety. The effect of education on recidivism has been well demonstrated, and even small reductions in reoffending can have a significant impact when spread across large numbers of participants.

Ojo (2012) found that *distance* education is the most appropriate tool to fill a vacuum created by non-provision of education for prison inmates. Distance learning institutions should offer a variety of educational programmes to prisoners who want to change their lives around, integrate themselves into mainstream society, and greatly increase their livelihoods of never returning to a life behind bars.

Singh (2014) reported IGNOU's intervention to provide education to the unreached, particularly to the jail inmates of Tihar Jail is more suitable for their education, emotional support, transformation and rehabilitation after serving their jail term.

Chaudhary, Kharey, Gupta and Garg (2016) found that ODL provides access of education and training to the socially, economically and geographically disadvantaged groups, in addition to women, minorities and Jail Inmates for inclusive development.

Dimri and Singh (2018) found that more attention is required to meet various requirements of Jail inmates enrolled in different programmes of the IGNOU due to their socio-economic background, educational qualification, marital status and geographical location. Majority of the Jail inmates appraised the initiatives of the University.

Jain and Tripathi (2018) found that prisoners' engagement in education reduces re-offending by developing knowledge and skills of critical thinking and more useful to use of their time and manage their stress level. Consequently, it enables them to contribute something positive and constructive to the society inside and outside the jail. It is also helpful in the overall human resource development of the nation.

IGNOU's Interventions in Education of Jail Inmates

IGNOU established 163 Special Study Centres in jails across the country to cater to the educational requirements of the jail inmates leading to their socio-economic rehabilitation. Presently 78549 Jail Inmates are on roll in various academic programmes of IGNOU. Mostly Jail Inmates got admission in BPP, six month bridge programme, due to their non-completion of 10+2 educational qualification. More than 70% Jail Inmates having qualification of below X standard. Therefore, IGNOU's BPP programme is proved a milestone to take higher education through it. Recently on Jail Inmate in Central Jail, Varanasi got Gold Medal in MA History.

Table 2: IGNOU Enrollment and Pass out percentage of Jail Inmates across the Country

Year	Total Admission	Jail Inmates admission	% Jail Inmates Admission	Jail Inmates Awarded Degree	% Jail Inmates Awarded Degree
2007-12	2187214	7772	0.33	199	2.56
2013	379348	11251	2.97	324	2.88
2014	407820	11224	2.75	317	2.82
2015	476405	10822	2.27	113	1.04
Total/Average	1263573	33297	2.66	754	2.25

Source: Chaudhary et al. (2016).

Table 4: Enrollment Status of Jail Inmates in Last Three Years

S.No.	Year	Enrol
1	2016	15063
2	2017	16122
3	2018	14067

IGNOU's Student Support Services for Jail Inmates

Regular academic counselling sessions are provided either by the RC staff in some jails or nearby Study Centre counsellors are deputed to counselling sessions in some courses. Study material and library facilities are provided through IGNOU to all jails under the supervision of an IGNOU Coordinator and supporting staff. Assignments and exams are attempted by all students within the jail premises.

Academic Programmes on offer in Jail Centres

According to the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, "Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances." The Govt. of India keeping this fact in consideration established IGNOU in 1985 by an Act of Parliament to achieve the objectives of democratizing higher education with need-based academic programmes—Professional and Vocational in jails. The programmes are activated in different jail as per need of their local need from the following list of programme.

Bachelor Programme

- Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP)
- Bachelor's in Social Work (BSW)
- Bachelor's in Tourism Studies (BTS)
- Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)

Certificate Programme

- Certificate in Tourism Studies (CTS)
- Certificate in Information Technology (CIT)
- Certificate in HIV and Family Education (CAFE)
- Certificate in Food and Nutrition (CFN)
- Certificate in Nutrition and Childcare (CNCC)
- Certificate in Human Rights (CHR)

Diploma Programme

- Diploma in HIV and Family Education (DAFE)

Master Programme

- Master of Commerce (M.Com)
- Master's in Public Administration (MPA)
- Master's in English (MEG)
- Master's in Sociology (MSO)
- Master's in Business Administration (MBA)

Educational Implications

This article may be proved as one of the substantial contribution for realizing the educational need and aspirations of the Jail Inmates and accordingly to provide the support for molding their life for better living and make them self-sufficient in the mainstream society. This study may also be provided inputs/suggestions to the IGNOU and Jail functionaries to understand the difficulties faced by the Jail Inmates and suggest measures to provide them better education.

Conclusion

Access of higher education to jail inmates is one of the most remarkable steps through Open and Distance Learning. Prisons are highly security zones where entry to the outsiders is restricted to the large extent. Security is the primary concern of the prison officials." Jail inmates Education" even through is practiced widely, but is within these parameters of security.

The Government of India has made various policies to upgrade the life standard of the jail inmates, through IGNOU, it is being achieved. Presently 144 Special Study Centres are offering various programmes to the jail inmates across the country on free of cost. This move has been a significant milestone in encouraging and rehabilitating prisoners in order to improve their quality of life post release. IGNOU is offering "Free Education" to the Jail Inmates (Prisoners) by waiving off the programme fee,

exam fee and prospectus cost. Jail inmates' education is a socially relevant and cost effective. This is an opportunity for jail inmates to returns to main stream life with quality education & future development both morally and vocationally. Need-based academic programmes for jail inmates are helpful to get job opportunities to live peaceful life and uplifting their socio-economic conditions through the professional and vocational programmes. This an opportunity for jail inmates to get Jobs to returns to main stream life through Campus Placement Cell IGNOU, New Delhi.

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