

## Special Study Centres of Indira Gandhi National Open University: Means of Higher Education in the Jails

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### ABSTRACT

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 an extensive programme of education and training for Jail inmates. IGNOU started its Centres in Jails way back in 1994 with one Centre in Tihar Jail with a nominal enrolment. 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. IGNOU conducts many activities in the Jails like admission, counselling, assignments evaluation and term end examination. Jail Inmates get the opportunity to enroll in various academic programmes of IGNOU and appear in Term End Examination in the Jails.

This paper explores the extent of interventions being made by IGNOU for the inmates in Jails, for their education, emotional support, transformation and rehabilitation after serving their jail term.

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

### INTRODUCTION

“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.

Conventional education system has very limited access to provide educational opportunities to the Jail Inmates in the jails. Socio-economic conditions of the Jail Inmates and jail environment not more supports conventional educational system. Therefore, ODL system is the major tool for catering educational needs of the Jail Inmates. It 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.

IGNOU establishes Special Study Centre in the Jails in the view of Article 15, 17 and 46 of Indian Constitution which safeguard the educational interests of the weaker sections of the Indian society

### 1.1 Vision and objectives of IGNOU for establishment of SSCs

- 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

### 1.2 Status of Jail Inmates' Education

The condition of literacy of prisoners in India is far from satisfactory which is obvious from the fact that 27.1 percent inmates were illiterate and 42.9 percent were educated below X standard in 2015. These two categories, when taken together, constituted 70 percent of total jail inmates' population.

#### 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>373271</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>134168</b>	<b>100</b>

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

Among the 4,78,600 prisoners as on 31st December, 2019 the highest number of prisoners were having education Below Class X(41.6%, 1,98,872) followed by Prisoners With No Education (27.7%, 1,32,729) and prisoners with education Class X And Above But Below Graduation(21.5%, 1,03,036)

**Educational Standard of Prisoners in India in 2019**

Educational Standard	Number (2019)	Percentage
Illiterate	132729	27.7
Below class X	198872	44.6
Above X and below graduate	103036	21.5
Graduate	30201	6.3
Post-graduate	8085	1.7
Technical Degree/Diploma	5677	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>478600</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clearly indicates that education is improving their educational standards and jail inmates are being motivated for getting education in the Jails.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To study educational opportunities of IGNOU in the SSCs
2. To study admission enrollment in IGNOU’s programme
3. To study student support services provided by IGNOU in the SSCs

**1. 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 inmates forreformation/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 apprised 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.

### **1. IGNOU's intervention 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. BPP programme has been discontinued form

July 2019 session. Therefore, Jail Inmates who are below 12<sup>th</sup> can join NIOS.

## **2. IGNOU offers academic programme in Jails**

IGNOU offers various academic programmes comprising Certificate, Diploma, PG Certificate, PG Diploma, Bachelor and Master Degree in the Jails across the country. Jail Inmates get admission in IGNOU's academic programme as per their qualification and interest.

1. Bachelor's in Social Work (BSW)
2. Bachelor's in Tourism Studies (BTS)
3. Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)
4. Certificate in Tourism Studies (CTS)
5. Certificate in Information Technology (CIT)
6. Certificate in HIV and Family Education (CAFE)
7. Certificate in Food and Nutrition (CFN)
8. Certificate in Nutrition and Childcare (CNCC)
9. Certificate in Human Rights (CHR)
10. Diploma in HIV and Family Education (DAFE)
11. Master of Commerce (M.Com)
12. Master's in Public Administration (MPA)

13. Master's in English (MEG)

14. Master's in Sociology (MSO)

15. Master's in Business Administration (MBA)

Jails Inmates get opportunity enroll in various academic programmes of IGNOU through SSCs in January and July session. IGNOU officials visit to IGNOU SSCs for promotional campaign for enrolling them in IGNOU's programmes as per their needs and educational qualification.

## **3. Admission Procedure in the Jails**

IGNOU conducts promotional meetings followed by admission drive in the Jails for January and July session. Faculty members of IGNOU address to the Jail Inmates and complete the admission formalities in the Jails. Admission forms with educational documents of the Jail Inmates will be forwarded by the Coordinator to the IGNOU Regional Centre for further process.

## **Staffing Pattern in the Jails for running IGNOU SSC**

IGNOU appoints Coordinator who is the Jail Superintendent in the Jails for smoothly running SSC and IGNOU provides honorarium and other financial assistance to the Coordinator for implementation of various activities in the Jails.

## **Admission Trends and Pass out rate**

Inmates lodged in Prisons in the country are exempted from payment of programme fee, including registration fee. The under-trial/short term prisoners are also eligible for the same benefit of FREESHIP as is extended to other prisoners with the condition that when they go out of jail, they will be treated as normal students and shall pay subsequent fees.

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)*

S. No.	Year	Enrollment	Enrollment of Jail Inmates
1	2016	455572	15063
2	2017	549438	16122
3	2018	653054	14067
4	2019	673809	14105

78, 549 Jail Inmates admitted in various programmes of IGNOU through SSCs in Jails. 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.

Recently One Jail Inmate in Central Jail, Varanasi got Gold Medal in MA History. However, their pass out rate is not more encouraging in comparison of their admission.

### **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.

### **4. Suggestions/Feedback**

- a.) Need more comprehensive student support services to the Jail Inmates as their needs are different from the general students
- b.) Study materials should be in Hindi or other regional languages
- c.) Study materials should be reached timely
- d.) Counselling sessions should be organized on a definite interval

- e.) Need based programmes should be designed for skill and vocational knowledge
- f.) Practical facilities should be provided in the Jails
- g.) Jail Inmates alumni data should be maintained
- h.) Placement facilities after release from the Jails should be provided

### **5. 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.

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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