

IGNOU Special Study Centres in Jails for Empowerment of Jail Inmates

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ABSTRACT

“Jail inmates Education” is gaining importance across the globe. IGNOU is offering “Free Education” to the Jail Inmates (Prisoners) by waiving off the programme fee, exam fee and prospectus cost through its Special Study Centres is offering free education to the jail inmates across the country. This sort of higher education to Jail inmates has proved to be reducing the *recidivism (the re-arrest, reconviction or return to Jail of former Jail inmates)*, which reduces the government expenditure. It is a sort of sending them to home, better than they come into prisons.

IGNOU started its Centres in Jails way back in 1994 with one Centre in Tihar Jail with a nominal enrolment. Further, 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 through 183 Special Study Centres established in jail across the country. IGNOU conducts many activities in the Jails like admission, counselling, assignments evaluation and term end examination.

This paper focuses on the operationalization aspects and status of this initiative of IGNOU. The paper tries to identify the driving forces behind this noble initiative of the University while discussing on the impact of educational intervention of the jail inmates.

Keywords:

IGNOU, Special Study Centre, Empowerment, Jail Inmates, Open and Distance Learning

1. Introduction

Educating jail inmates is widely recognized in the modern concept of jail inmates' education. It has been treated as a right of prisoners and incorporated in the various guidelines given by the United Nations, Supreme Court of India and National Human Rights Commission of India.

Open and Distance Learning 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).

IGNOU, its inception, providing higher education to the all the segments of the society in view of its vision “Reaching to Unreached” .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. Prior 2010, most of the SSCs were established in Central Jails and expenditure towards the fee was met by the Government.

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 183 Special Study Centres in Jails at the national level.

Jail Inmates 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. Education has a great role to upgrade their knowledge and enhance their competencies. Therefore, it is necessary to make them eligible to command respect in the society after release from the jails.

Educational Standards of the Jail Inmates in India

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.

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 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. 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 Jail Inmates in India

Educational Standard	Number (2006)	%	Number (2015)	%	Number (2019)	%
Illiterate	134069	35.9	36,406	27.1	132729	27.7
Below class X	162015	43.4	57,610	42.9	198872	44.6
Above X and below Graduate	55746	14.9	28,941	21.6	103036	21.5
Graduate	15523	4.2	7,167	5.4	30201	6.3
Post-graduate	4148	1.1	2,460	1.8	8085	1.7
Technical Degree/Diploma	1770	0.5	1,584	1.2	5677	1.2
Total	373271	100	134168	100	478600	100

(Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India, Prison Statistics, 2006, 2015 & 2019)

The table indicates educational standard of the jail inmates as on 31st December, 2019

- 1, 98, 872 (41.06%) jail inmates which is the highest number were having education below Class X.
- 1, 32, 729 (27.7%) jail inmates were illiterate
- 1, 03, 036 (21.5%) Jail inmates who were with education Class X and above but below Graduation.

It is clearly shows that education to the jail inmates can improve their educational standards for maintaining the quality of life. In this direction, the educational interventions of IGNOU is bridging the gap of education by providing education in the jail premises where they get all support services required for completion of their programme.

Objectives of the Study

1. Procedure of Establishment of IGNOU SSC in jails
2. Enrollment status of the jail inmates in academic programmes of IGNOU.
3. Student Support Services provided by IGNOU to jail inmates.
4. Experiences of the jail inmates during the study of IGNOU programme.
5. Expenditure status to run the IGNOU SSCs in the Jails.

2. Review of literature

1. Sharma (2009) found that Special Study Centres of IGNOU provides opportunity of higher education to jail inmates for reformation/rehabilitation of the jail inmates to bring them back to the mainstream of the society.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.

3. Procedure of establishment of IGNOU Special Study Centres in the Jails

IGNOU establishes the Special Study Centres in the jails on the recommendation of Regional Director of IGNOU Regional Centre in the respective region. Regional Services Division, IGNOU examine the proposal received from the respective Regional Centres and notify the Special Study Centres.

- i. The Regional Centre can approach any of the institution depending upon the necessity for creating access to IGNOU and its academic programmes;
- ii. Alternatively, the willing institution can also approach RC for opening up LSC;
- iii. Prospective LSC is required to submit an Expression of Interest to associate with IGNOU as its LSC and provide information in the prescribed Basic Information Format; (**Annexure 1**).
- iv. The RC assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the prospective institution. If satisfied, a visit to the institution is made by RD/ARDs (Academics) for on-the spot inspection to assess the suitability, verify the submission and submit an Inspection/Assessment/Visit Report;

- v. The RC then forwards the complete proposal (if satisfied in terms of infrastructure, academic Counsellors and staff), to the RSD, with recommendations of the Regional Director, enclosing the duly signed MOU (**Annexure 2**) and a panel of three names for engaging as Coordinator in the prescribed **format (Annexure 3)**;
- vi. The RSD processes the bio-data of Academic Counsellors (AC) discipline wise and forwards to respective School of Studies for their observation/ recommendation and approval on suitability and qualification of ACs; (Annexure 4A & 4B)
- vii. For the establishment of LSCs for practical oriented programmes of a particular school the entire proposal along with the bio-data of AC and details of physical infrastructure is sent to the respective School for observation and recommendation. On receipt of recommendations of the Faculty, RSD shall place all such recommendations before the Student Services Committee (SSC), a Standing Committee of the Board of Management, for Consideration;
- viii. Once the proposals are cleared by the SSC and minutes of the SSC are approved by the Vice Chancellor, a notification is issued by RSD regarding establishment of the approved LSCs; and
- ix. Appointment letters for Coordinator and bio-data of the approved ACs are sent to the RC immediately after the notification of the LSCs.

183 Special Study Centres in jails across the country are established in the jails to cater the educational requirements of the jail inmates under 46 Regional Centres for all the Jail Inmates i.e. convicted and under trial with following objectives of IGNOU:

- i) To provide an opportunity for jail inmates to return to main stream life with quality education and future development both morally and vocationally.
- ii) To create the interest of jail inmates towards higher education.
- iii) To access high quality education to all Jail inmates, who could not get the education due to their socio-economic conditions.
- iv) To provide study materials and library facilities through IGNOU to all jails under the supervision of an IGNOU Coordinator and supporting staffs.
- v) To make provisions of teaching-learning transactions, including holding of examination for all learners within the jail premises.
- vi) To provide an opportunity for jail inmates to get Jobs to return to main stream life

4. Academic Programmes on offer in Jail Centres

IGNOU drives admission camps in the jails under the supervision of the jail superintendent who acts as an IGNOU Coordinator. IGNOU officials motivate the jail inmate to avail the educational opportunities through IGNOU SSC running the in jail. Jail Inmates apply in the various programmes of the University like Certificate, Diploma and Degree Programmes in January and July cycle as per their qualification and interest. The programmes are activated in different jails as per requirement of the jail inmates.

IGNOU's Bachelor Preparation Programme was proved a milestone to take higher education through it. Mostly Jail Inmates got admission in BPP, six month bridge programme, as they have not 10+2 qualification. More than 70% Jail Inmates having qualification of below X standard, so this programme was very useful to them to continue their higher education after completion of BPP programme. Presently, this programme is not in offer by the University.

5. Admission Process of the Jail Inmates

IGNOU adopts offline admission process in the jails. IGNOU officials provide the offline admission forms to the jails. The admission forms received from the SSCs are processed by IGNOU. List of admitted jail inmates are forwarded to the SSCs for further support services.

5. IGNOU SSCs with enrollment status

At present, 78549 Jail Inmates are on roll in various academic programmes of IGNOU in various SSCs under the jurisdiction of 46 Regional Centres.

Table 1(a): Enrollment Status Special Study Centres-wise in the Jails

Place	Regional Centres	No. of SSCs for Jail Inmates	No. of academic programmes activates	No. of Jail Inmates Enrolled			Total
				2016	2017	2018	
North							
1	ALIGARH	2	10	856	1442	2144	4442
2	CHANDIGARH	3	26	423	527	249	1199
3	DEHRADUN	2	20	67	51	49	167
4	DELHI1	1	5	52	69	14	135
5	DELHI2	2	6	184	129	289	602
6	DELHI3	10	6	552	1242	1449	3243
7	JAMMU	4	11	111	102	44	257
8	KARNAL	13	8	585	583	305	1473
9	KHANNA	4	13	18	11	123	152
10	LUCKNOW	14	16	687	1788	1111	3586
11	NOIDA	4	5	3343	2156	1267	6766
12	SHIMLA	3	8	94	153	54	301
13	SRINAGAR	1	14	32	20	19	71
14	VARANASI	3	21	906	831	491	2228
SOUTH							
1	BIJAPUR	1	2	92	63	83	238
2	CHENNAI	3	10	86	202	134	422
3	COCHIN	1	2	20	20	12	52
4	HYDERABAD	1	6	0	0	0	0
5	MADURAI	3	19	167	164	107	438
6	PORT BLAIR	1	2	0	0	4	4
7	TRIVENDRUM	3	9	0	0	28	28
8	VATAKARA	1	2	44	71	63	178
WEST							
1	AHMEDABAD	10	16	968	661	630	2259
2	BHOPAL	5	16	937	1275	1147	3359
3	JABALPUR	9	14	728	738	803	2269
4	JAIPUR	13	23	1195	1108	563	2866
5	JODHPUR	4	18	322	481	495	1298
6	MUMBAI	1	3	170	131	91	392
7	NAGPUR	2	1	114	181	321	616
8	PANAJI	1	10	36	14	8	58
9	PUNE	4	3	78	103	54	235
10	RAJKOT	9	3	392	340	447	1179
EAST							
1	BHAGALPUR	3	6	473	56	37	566
2	BHUBANESHWAR	8	8	311	464	509	1284
3	DARBHANGA	5	14	85	107	123	315
4	DEOGARH	2	5	205	188	187	580
5	KOLKATA	1	0	19	3	7	29
6	KORAPUT	1	4	17	14	3	34
7	PATNA	8	13	0	0	45	45
8	RAGHUNATHGANJ	1	2	0	0	0	0
9	RAIPUR	9	5	565	587	604	1756
10	RANCHI	2	4	141	114	41	296
11	SAHARSA	2	5	0	0	0	0
NORTH-EAST							
1	AIZWAL	1	1	37	19	13	69
2	GUWAHATI	1	1	0	0	8	8
3	IMPHAL	1	1	36	21	15	72
4	SHILONG	1	1	0	0	0	0

It shows that 183 SSCs in jails across the country have been involved in this enormous educational intervention. This figure includes 53 Jail Study Centres in the North, 11 in the South, 24 in the East, 4 in the North East and 54 in the Western Region of the country. The maximum number of Jail Study Centres have been activated in the state of Gujarat (17) followed by Uttar Pradesh (15), Madhya Pradesh (14), Rajasthan (13) and Haryana (12). The number of programmes activated at these Jail Study Centres functioning from various Regional Centres is as high as 26 under RC Chandigarh closely followed by RC Jaipur (23) and RC Varanasi (21) as shown in the table. The table also shows huge enrolment of jail inmates at several centres indicating that the efforts made by the University in this direction were indeed need based and not futile. There are several encouraging case studies and success stories from different jail study centres across the country. Continuous and consistent efforts are made by the Regional Centres to reach out to more and more jails across the length and breadth of the country to facilitate this section of the population with education.

Table 1 (b) Enrollment Status of Jail Inmates in last three years

YEAR	Total Admission	Jail Inmates admission
2016-17	549438	15063
2017-18	653054	16122
2018-19	673809	14067

5. Student Support Services to the Jail Inmates through SSCs

Jail inmates need a comprehensive support services in the jails. IGNOU provides admission facilities in the jails, so they can easily apply in various programmes of the University on free of cost. IGNOU also provide following support services to the Jail Inmates for pursuing their study in the jails:

- Admission Drive
- Counselling sessions
- Providing of the Study Materials
- Conduction of Term End Examination
- Practical

Study materials are delivered to the jail inmates for pursuing their programmes. IGNOU set up the library in the jails. Counselling sessions are taken by the Academic Counsellors of the IGNOU Study Centres. IGNOU empanels Academic Counsellors in the Jails also among the staff of the jails so they can provide the support services to the jail inmates. IGNOU conducts the Term End Examination in the jail premises, jail inmates who applied for the examination, they appear in the examination. IGNOU issues the mark sheet and degree to the jail inmates and also organizes the campus placements in the jails.

8. Pass out percentage of Jail Inmates

The enrollment number of the jail inmates increases in every year due to comprehensive efforts of IGNOU in the jails.

Table 2: Comparison between enrollment and pass out status of the Jail inmates

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

1. Expenditure incurred to run SSCs for Jail Inmates

IGNOU appoints the Coordinators to run the SSCs in the jails and pays honorarium to conduct various activities under their supervision. Prior 2010, most of the SSCs were established in Central Jails and expenditure towards the fee was met by the Government. The expenditure incurred to run the SSCs in the jails for two years i.e. 2017 and 2018, reflects the followings:

Table 3: Status of expenditure in the SSCs

Jail Inmates Admitted (Year)	No. of Jail Inmates	Fee Exemption (Rs.)	Expenditure on remuneration, counselling, postage and others	Overall expenditure incurred
2017	15322	20965300	16073534	70313234
2018	185280	33274400		

1. Sustainable Development of the Jail Inmates

The main driving forces and reasons behind this noble initiative of the University are as follows:

- a) Ethical development
- b) Social development
- i) Correctional education
- ii) Reduction in recidivism
- c) Personal development
- d) Resonance with the vision and mission of IGNOU
- e) Consonance with the concept of ODL

a) Ethical development

The act of wrong doing in any way violates the moral code of behavior but it is important to consider the possibility that the concerned person must have been in a disturbed mental state to have done the act. If the person was indeed in a disturbed state of mind, then he/she needs help, more than punishment. In such a case, the society has an ethical and moral duty to ensure the same.

b) Social development

i) Correctional education

IGNOU drives many activities in the jail through Special Study Centres which empower them, bring them into the mainstream and help them lead a normal life when they come out of the prison with a degree. Many of the prisoners are determined to use the opportunity created by IGNOU to make better lives for themselves and their families. Similar experiments of education behind bars, carried out in different parts of the world have yielded successful results.

ii) Reduction in recidivism

Experience of educational intervention by IGNOU over the years has shown that prison education has successfully reduced the recidivism rate for released prisoners. Esperian (2010) found that education for current and former prisoners is a cost-effective solution to reducing, reoffending and improving public safety. 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.

c) Personal development

To the under-privileged prisoners, who are in a way privileged to get the opportunity to further their education, this noble initiative of IGNOU is indeed a glimmer of hope. 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.

This personal development helps the ex-prisoners get out of prison and stay out. Interaction with few female prisoners who are IGNOU students have revealed that before enrolling with IGNOU, they used to spend time gossiping and sleeping after finishing their assigned tasks, but now they had something to look forward to- knowledge, skill, a certificate and dreams- for a livelihood once released.

d) Resonance with the vision and mission of IGNOU

IGNOU's approach, of imparting education to the imprisoned, falls in line with its vision and mission and with the objectives of democratizing higher education; which is the need of time. Ojo (2012) found that *distance* education is the most appropriate tool to fill a vacuum created by non-provision of education for prison inmates.

e) Consonance with the concept of ODL

The vision statement of the Indira Gandhi National Open University describes it as the National Resource Centre for ODL. Besides providing an overview of the University's SSC in jails, this paper also highlights the suitability of the idea of openness and distance learning for education of the imprisoned.

10. Experiences of the Jail Inmates

52-year-old Bhanubhai Patel, MBBS received a certificate for successfully completing his postgraduate diploma in Environment and Sustainable Development. Patel's count of degrees and diplomas that he has pursued from inside jail will touch 29. While Patel is pursuing another five courses, jail authorities are in the process of applying for a place for Patel's achievements in the Guinness Book of World Records. Superintendent, Sabarmati Central Jail, R J Pargi said, "Patel's achievement is remarkable and we are in the process of applying for place for him in the world records." Talking about his constant pursuance of various courses, Patel said, "For me, studying at IGNOU and other correspondence courses has come as an opportunity for utilizing the time in the jail in a creative way. The activity adds value to my life as well as keeps my mind occupied. It is also a message to fellow prisoners to make the best use of their time."

Narendra Thakore who was convicted under section 302 granted degree in Master of Arts in History degree at the convocation. Thakore "I have to just apply my mind, the materials are provided by the jail authorities. So it has been a good opportunity to pursue education at the Sabarmati central Jail." His stint at Sabarmati Central Jail has become an opportunity to study for 32-year-old Dharmendra Jain completed a course in Spoken English.

11. 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.

12. 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 return 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 return to main stream life through Campus Placement Cell IGNOU, New Delhi.

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