

Prisoners Education in India: A Case Study of IGNOU with special reference to Haryana

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ABSTRACT

The prison system is expected to reduce crime rates not only by reforming criminals but also by discouraging the general public from behavior which is punishable by imprisonment. The prison system is also expected to make life unpleasant for people who, by their crimes, have made others' lives unpleasant. Finally, society wants to reduce crime rates. The prison system in our country has now been improved much. In general, effects of imprisonment are the nature of the progressive weakening of mental powers and of a deterioration of the character in a way which renders the prisoners' life fit for useful social life and in consequence they are no more liable to reconviction. Our enormous investment of time, energy and money for reformatory or rehabilitative prison model has been demonstratively successful in preventing and controlling recidivism among prisoners. But in previous time the prison condition was not so good. Now, in Indian prison the caring of the prisoners are better and even improved as we compare with the ancient time. Many steps are being taken in India for prison reformation and one of the big steps is introducing education for prisoners. For this, the education system and its all facilities have been combined with the prison system so that the prisoners may get the education and engage themselves in a productive work for their livelihood and finally live their life respectfully when they come out from the prison. Through education the prisoners can also learn the socialism and learn how to behave with the people living in society. This approach expressed a definite attitude towards human beings that they are modifiable for the better if given the proper opportunity. But many Criminologist, psychologist and sociologist believe that the ways in which inmates adopt to prison life have simplifications not only for the institution and society but also for the future of the prisoners. Thus, through education the reformation in India may be possible and also by the proper management and caring of the prison and prisoners in Indian prison system. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has taken initiative to educate the Jail Inmates in Jails (Sudhar Grah) free of Cost across the country in the year of 2010. It aimed at fulfilling the learning needs of both literate and semi-literate prisoners. Data of IGNOU Regional Centre Karnal Haryana reveals that total 4131 Jail Inmates for Fresh admission (3435) and Re-registration (696) were admitted in various Jails from the year 2011 to 2017 having Fresh 83.15% and Re-registered 16.84%, in which ratio for male and female was 3388 (98.63%) and 47 (1.36%) for fresh admission. Maximum fresh enrolment (693) was in 2015 whereas minimum (280) in 2012. However, maximum Re-registration (161) was in 2017 and minimum (69) was in the year of 2012 under Regional Centre Karnal.

Keywords: Jail Inmates, IGNOU, Education

The world is full of crime and criminals, tragedy and violence. No society primitive or modern, no country whether under developed or developing or developed is free from its controls. Prisons are a State subject under List-II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. Although prison systems everywhere are marked by inertia, few can match

India's in immutability of practice. A well-organized system of prisons is known to have existed in India from the earliest time. It has been kept in record that Brahaspati laid great stress on imprisonment of convicts in closed prisons. Manu was against this system yet. The British prison authorities made emphatic efforts to improve the conditions of Indian

prisons and prisoners as well. Various Committees, Commissions and Groups have been constituted by the State Governments as well as the Government of India (GoI), from time to time, such as the All India Prison Reforms Committee (1980) under the Chairmanship of Justice A.N. Mulla (Retd.), R.K. Kapoor Committee (1986) and Justice Krishna Iyer Committee (1987) to study and make suggestions for improving the prison conditions and administration, inter alia, with a view to making them more conducive to the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners. They introduced most radical changes in the existing prison system keeping in view the sentiments of the home-grown people. The prison administrators, who were mostly British officers, had classified the prisoners into two heads namely violent and non-violent prisoners (Nagda, 2014).

The Prisons are an all-important wing of Criminal Justice Administration under the Indian Constitutional setup. Prisons are constituted under the constitution of India to restrain man’s liberty on having committed a social or civil wrong which is a punishable offence under the provisions of Indian law. The prisoner is a person who has been convicted by the Court of Law for committing an offence against a person or the State, after having availed all his legal remedies to prove his innocence before the Court of Law. The person thus held guilty for committing an offence punishable under the purview of law is sent to the prisons for his characteristics corrections and this is why prisons are often called “Sudhaar Ghars”. According to renowned thinker Oscar Wilde depriving liberty, family, friends and home surrounding from a prisoner in imprisonment is a dreadful experience for him.

Hence, it can be said that the purpose of imprisonment of a wrong achiever is to detain him/her in a facility which is cut off from the society and prevent him and hold him back in an environment where he may refrain from indulging, supporting and spearheading further severe crimes against a person or society. Prisons are deemed to be the places where the offenders are kept to get their ways and behaviour corrected so that they may become law abiding citizens and live a normal life after they are released. On the other side, it is a place where the offenders or the criminals are kept separated from the society and hence protecting the

society from such dangerous anti-social elements (Randhawa and Singh, 2015).

Status of Prisons in the Country

Prison institutions are known by different names in different countries like correctional Facilities, Detention Centre, Jails, Remand Centre etc.. Earlier notion of prison as a facility in which inmates are forcibly confined and deprived a variety of freedom as a form of punishment has changed with a change in social perception towards prison and prisoners. It is now treated as correction or improvement facility which itself indicates that there is more emphasis on reformation of prisoners than to punish them. To achieve this goal, a congenial atmosphere is required to be created in jails for reformation of the inmates. Apart from emphasis on social and ethical values for amalgamation in mainstream society after release they also require education, recreational and vocational training facilities so that they not only correct their hostile attitude towards society which will help them to integrate with the mainstream of society but also provide alternate source of livelihood. There are total number of 1401 various types of Jail having 3,66,781 capacity with 4,19,623 Jail Inmates in the country, in which 4,01,789 (95.7%) are male inmates and only 17,834 (4.3%) female inmates.

Table 1: Total Number and Capacity of the Jails in the country as on 31.12.2015

| Type of Jails | Total Number of the Jails in the country | Total capacity of the Jails in the country |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Central Jails | 134 | 1,59,158 (43.4%) |
| District Jails | 379 | 1,37,972 (37.6%) |
| Sub Jails | 741 | 46,368 (12.6%) |
| Women Jails | 18 | 4,748 (1.3%) |
| Open Jails | 63 | 5,370 (1.5%) |
| Borstal Schools | 20 | 1,830 (0.5%) |
| Special Jails | 43 | 10,915 (3.0%) |
| Other Jails | 3 | 420 (0.1%) |
| | 1401 | 3,66,781 |

Source: Prison Statistics India 2015 National Crime Records Bureau Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi.

Haryana is one of the 29 states having 22 Districts in India, situated in North India. The city of Chandigarh is its capital while the National Capital

Region city of Guru Gram is the most populous city of the state. It is bordered by Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to the north and by Rajasthan to the west and south. The river Yamuna defines its eastern border with Uttar Pradesh. Haryana surrounds the country's capital Delhi on three sides, forming the northern, western and southern borders of Delhi. Consequently, a large area of south Haryana is included in the National Capital Region for purposes of planning and development. Total 19 Jails (3 Central and 16 District Jails) have been established in 18 Districts of Haryana. There are 02 Jails in Hissar. Having capacity of 18196 Jail Inmates and there are total 20,100 inmates under Confirmed (Life convict and convict), Condemned, Civil others, Foreign convicts, and under trial prisoners, in which 7491 are total convicts.

Table 2: Total Inmates and Capacity of the Jails in the State of Haryana

| Sl. No. | Jails | Capacity | Total Inmates | Grand Total |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | Ambala | 1228 | 418 | 1676 |
| 2 | C.J. Hissar | 1499 | 768 | 1582 |
| 3 | C.J. Hissar | 571 | 138 | 593 |
| 4 | Rohtak | 1300 | 624 | 1249 |
| 5 | Karnal | 2434 | 955 | 2413 |
| 6 | Gurugram | 2412 | 815 | 2224 |
| 7 | Bhiwani | 561 | 274 | 841 |
| 8 | Sirsa | 567 | 300 | 857 |
| 9 | Sonepat | 745 | 293 | 1257 |
| 10 | Jind | 669 | 279 | 866 |
| 11 | Kurukshetra | 446 | 267 | 833 |
| 12 | Narnaul | 350 | 236 | 506 |
| 13 | Rewari | 30 | 12 | 129 |
| 14 | Kaithal | 515 | 251 | 537 |
| 15 | Faridabad | 2500 | 1045 | 2324 |
| 16 | Yamunanagar | 1200 | 431 | 1107 |
| 17 | Plawal | 60 | 4 | 49 |
| 18 | Panipat | 35 | 1 | 42 |
| 19 | Jhajjar | 1074 | 380 | 1015 |
| Total | | 18196 | 7491 | 20100 |

Source: <http://haryanaprison.gov.in/Jails.asp>. As on 01.10.2017)

Prisoners Education

Prison education is widely appreciated because it adds to their reformation. Education makes them better people. Most crimes are committed because of a lack of education and not having a good job.

So if they can get educated and get a job as they go out of prison, it's a good thing for the government. So the government encourages convicts to pursue a degree of their choice or school exams when they are in prison. Sometimes, they are even allowed to attend convocations etc. Sentence of the prisoners is also reduced and they can leave jail early if they show good results in their education and behaviour. Engaging prisoners in education is one of a range of measures that could alleviate security risk in prisons. For prisoners, one of the main challenges with incarceration is flatness, often leading to frustration, raising the risk of injury for staff and other prisoners. Aimed at reformation of under trial prisoners as well as convicted inmates, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has taken initiative to educate the Jail Inmates in Jails (Sudhar Grah) free of Cost across the country in the year of 2010. It would cater to the learning needs of both literate and semi-literate prisoners.

"Prison education is a means of rehabilitating and re-directing. If you release someone with the same skills with which she came in, she's going to get involved in the same activities as she did before."

— Marymount Bedford Hills

The total number of the prison inmates who benefitted by the facilities of Higher Education was 8311 in year 2013 across India. Top 20 State/UTs were Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Punjab, Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh. Among the top 5 State/UTs in terms of the prison inmates who benefitted by the facilities of Higher Education in the year 2013, Uttar Pradesh was on the top having 1353 prison inmates, which was 16.28%, of the total 8311 prison inmates in India. Haryana was 13.38% (1112 prison inmates), Delhi was 10.93% (908 prison inmates), Maharashtra was 10.61% (882 prison inmates) Gujarat was 10.53% (875 prison inmates), out of the total 8311 prison inmates who benefitted by the facilities of Higher Education in India (Anonymous 2015).

Review of Literature

Earlier studies have revealed the potential for prison education programs to create positive institutional

cultures. These changes were thought to be brought about by prisoner exposure to positive civilian role models (educators), because prisoners are kept occupied (Adams *et al.* 1994), and through improved decision-making abilities and pro-social values (Brazzell *et al.* 2009). The literature suggests that prison education is almost twice as cost-effective as confinement alone as a crime control policy (Bazos and Hausman, 2004). Theorists suggest that improvements in cognitive processing, communication abilities and enhancement of long term prospects afforded by education and training may result in prosocial behaviours, emotional maturity, empathy and control (Bandura, 1977). For prisoners, these qualities have been linked to desistance from crime (Farrall and Maruna, 2004) and they may result in a reduction in the frequency and severity of assaults within the prison. Using education may therefore improve security outcomes in a prison and contribute to a 'dynamic security' mediated by human factors (Wynne, 2001).

Prison management often encourage prisoner enrolment in education because it can provide an incentive for good behaviour, and is thought to produce more responsible, mature individuals who have a calming influence on other prisoners and on prison officers (Ross, 2009). The provision of education could assist prison management to address issues of prisonization, the process whereby prisoners become acculturated to the negative values of the prison sub-culture (Brazzell *et al.* 2009). Investing public funds in education and training in prisons will achieve more sustainable community outcomes as compared to building prisons. A reduction in prisoner misconduct correlates strongly to a reduction in recidivism rates (Lahm, 2009). Previously education has been considered as a separate requirement, insufficiently linked to the RNR model of rehabilitation and reduced security risks.

However, improved engagement with education and training and an associated reduction in the number of assaults in custody could potentially have many positive effects. It could decrease the number of workplace injury claims, absenteeism and turnover in prison officers. Physical and verbal abuse from prisoners is a significant component of the workplace stress experienced by prison officers, contributing to a high burden of stress-related

chronic disease (Gould, Watson, Price, and Valliant, 2013).

Certainly, effective delivery of and prisoner engagement with education and training might moderate the tensions and discontinuous violence typically experienced with prison overcrowding (United Voice, 2015). All across the country citizens are heatedly against funding a criminal's education when they themselves go into deep debt to fund their own. "Education is a privilege, and if you commit a crime, that entitlement is revoked" (Aalai, 2014). Educational and library environments often represent some of the few positive settings for a prisoner in which they can experience a constructive forward looking character and the prospect of continuing in educational settings on release has the potential for drawing individuals into positive and away from negative settings associated with criminal activity (Rod Clark, 2016).

Engaging prisoners in education is one of a range of measures that could alleviate security risk in prisons. For prisoners, one of the main challenges with incarceration is monotony (Farley, 2016). Many feel that criminals should do the time for the crime, not for a degree. There is a fear that by educating criminals they will become better criminals, and the political system responds to these emotions. There is a tremendous amount of research that proves that these fears are unfounded. Inmates who receive an education behind bars are 43% less likely to return to a life of crime following their release (Keller, 2014). There's a strong connection between illiteracy and incarceration. A recent national study found that 85% of all juveniles who come into contact with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate. So are 60% of all prison inmates in US (Christopher Zoukis, 2017).

IGNOU and Prisoner Education

IGNOU was established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 to provide access to quality higher education to all segments of the society. The objective of the University was to offer high-quality, innovative and need-based programmes at different levels, to all those who require them; and reach out to the disadvantaged segments by offering programmes in all parts of the country and overseas at affordable cost. IGNOU has been steadily expanding opportunities for life-long

Table 3: IGNOU Total Enrollment Pattern Vs. Jail Inmates (Enrollment Pattern and Pass out percentage) 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).

higher education and democratising education by making it inclusive. The University has adopted a flexible and innovative approach which encourages learners to move from education to work and vice versa. Its academic programmes are well suited to the diverse requirements of the country, and also help to harness the human resource with its full potential and leverage the demographic dividend. The University has an estimated cumulative student strength of about 2.98 million of these a significant number of 7,96,127 students were added through fresh admission and re-registration during 2015-16 admission cycles. An analysis of data of fresh enrolment for 2015-16 reveals that 45.5% of them are women, 8.8% are ST, 10.0% are SC and 20.8% are OBC, thereby providing a significant social spread towards inclusive education. IGNOU serves nearly 3 million learners which include overseas enrolments and learners from all parts of the country. The learners are supported by a network of 67 Regional Centres and over 3000 active Learner Support Centres. As a special initiative to bring marginalized and disadvantaged within the fold of education, the University has activated Special Learner Support Centres for the disabled and for jail inmates.

IGNOU announced its 'Free Education for Prisoners' initiative in the 2010 academic session and waived off fees (all type of fee viz. admission fee, exam fee, convocation fee etc.) for all jail inmates across the country who wish to pursue the University's programmes. This move has now been a significant milestone in encouraging and rehabilitating prisoners in order to improve their quality of post release life. Study materials and library facilities are provided through IGNOU to all jails under the supervision of an IGNOU Coordinator and supporting staff. Provisions have been made to operationalize every aspect of teaching-learning

transaction, including conduct of examination for all enrolled inmates within the jail premises. IGNOU is committed to further strengthen its endeavour to turn Jail inmates into meaningful assets for the society.

A very innovative initiative was taken by IGNOU when it began to enrol jail inmates all over the country in its liberal education programmes. The guiding principle was to provide them an opportunity to reform through education rather than by bringing them to justice. The Enrollment pattern and awarded degree is shown in Table 3.

IGNOU Regional Centre Karnal and Prisoner Education

IGNOU RC Karnal is running the Special Study Centres (SSCs) in Jail Premises to provide education to Jail Inmates free of cost. Only 2 SSCs were established in the year of 2011 in Distt Jail Karnal and Sirsa. In 2008, it was 8 and till the year 2017 total 12 District/Central Jails i.e Bhiwani, Hisar, Jind, Kaithal, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Rewari, Rohtak, Sirsa, Sonapat and Yamunanagar (except districts of Panchkula, Fatehabad, Nuh Mewat and Charki Dardri) have been covered by IGNOU RC Karnal to cater the learning or education needs of both literate and semi-literate prisoners (Fig. 1).

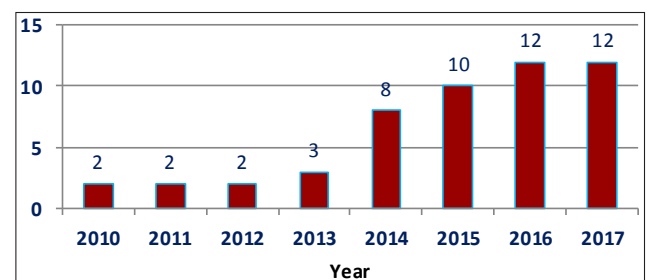


Fig. 1: Establishment of IGNOU Special Study Centres (SSCs) under RC Karnal in Haryana State

Data shows that 407 Jail Inmates were admitted in two Jails under IGNOU RC Karnal in the year of 2011, and after four years (in 2014) the enrolment of Jail inmates has been increased as 585 in Eight Jails. In 2017, it shows that 583 Jail Inmates were admitted in 12 Jails for various IGNOU Programmes. For Re-registration, increase in ratio was also recorded. However, total 785 Students were admitted for IGNOU Programmes in 2015 in 12 Jails, while there was a slight decrease in the admission/enrolment in 2016 (741) and 2017 (744) (Fig. 2).

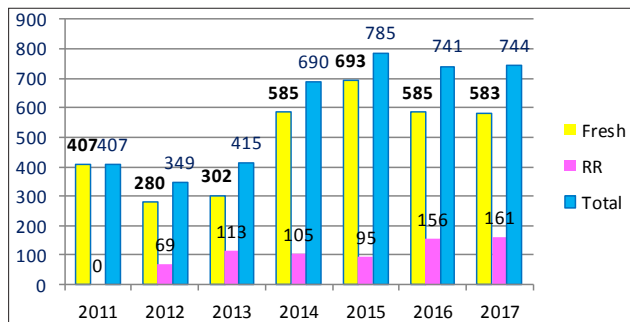


Fig. 2: Enrolment Status at IGNOU Special Study Centres (SSCs) (Year-wise)

Data shows that there was major contribution of male jail inmates as compared to female jail inmates. Only less than 2% females were admitted for IGNOU programmes in comparison to Male Jail inmates (Fig. 3).

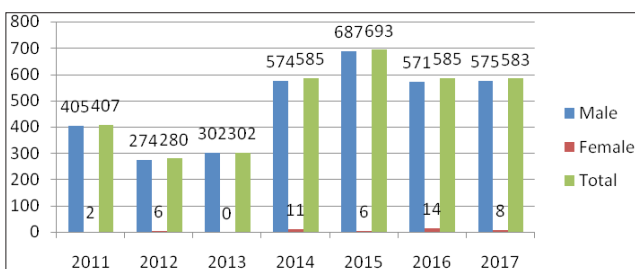


Fig. 3: Gender ratio at IGNOU Special Study Centres (SSCs) (Year-wise)

Data reveals that total 4131 Jail Inmates for Fresh admission (3435) and Re-registration (696) were admitted in various Jail from the year of 2011 to 2017 having Fresh 83.15% and RR 16.84%, in which ratio for male and female was 3388 (98.63%) and 47 (1.36%) for fresh admission. Maximum fresh enrolment (693) was in 2015 whereas minimum (280) in 2012. However, maximum Re-registration (161) was in 2017 and minimum (69) was in the year of 2012.

Success Stories

There are quite a few success stories and achievements from different jails of the country. These inmates are gaining confidence by getting sustainable means of livelihood, becoming an indispensable support to their families and remarkably contributing to the society and their respective professions. Few examples are given here.

- ❑ *Bhanu Bhai Patel* completed more than 54 Degree, Diploma and Certificate Programmes from different universities/educational institutions out of which 23 were from IGNOU. Patel has got certificates from Unique World Records and Asia Book of Records, while Limca Book of Records has confirmed his entry for its 2013 edition. Later he joined Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad as a consultant.
- ❑ *Perarivalan* (From the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case) did his BCA and MCA from prison and he also scored the highest marks out of all Prisoners in his 12th standard exams scoring a massive 91.33%
- ❑ *Suresh Ram and Ajeet Kumar Saroj* (Prisoners in Varanasi Jail) were awarded Gold Medal for securing first position in One Year Diploma in Tourism Studies (DTS) Programme during 29th Convocation and 30th Convocation respectively by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

CONCLUSION

The most effective way to keep people out of prison once they leave is to provide them job skills that make them marketable employees. This article suggests that prisoner engagement in education may help to alleviate security risk in prisons through relieving monotony and reducing re-offending by promoting critical thinking skills. The objective behind this article was to highlight how prisoners can make best utilization of their time and to develop positive and constructive thoughts in them with an endeavour to insert creativity in their mind in place of criminality. These activities are not only helpful in imparting education to the prisoners but have proved as an important tool of stress management. Educational activities keep them occupied and so help in releasing and reducing stress

levels. 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. Prison education is widely appreciated because it adds to their reformation. Education makes them better people. Most crimes are committed because of a lack of education and not having a good job. So if they can get educated and get a job as they go out of prison, it's a good thing for the government. Government is encouraging prisoners to pursue a degree of their choice or school exams when they are in prison. Sentence of the prisoners are also reduced if they show good results in their education and good behaviour during their stay in prison.

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