

## Distance Education and Job Market: A Case Study of IGNOU Graduates

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### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main focus of the present research study was to (1) know the learners' objective of joining with IGNOU and the advantage of obtaining IGNOU degree to (a) get permanent employment, (b) get promotion, (c) continue education, (d) self employment, (e) social and other reasons; (2) know the utilization of graduate degree; 3) find out the reasons if any for non acceptance of IGNOU degrees in the job market and other higher education institution, if any (4) know the employers' views about the preference of candidates with degree from IGNOU and others at the time of recruitment in their institutions.

### Sample-size and Methodology of the Study

The study had been planned to be undertaken in two phases. First, the survey was conducted for non-practical programmes at graduate level i.e. BA./B.Com. For the present study, a sample of 1755 successful graduates who qualified during June'1992 to December'1995 examination in BA/B.Com was selected for our analysis.

A questionnaire containing 28 items was administered on all the 1,755 successful students. Second, for the qualitative study, the technique of depth interview was applied among the employers about their preference of graduates at the time of recruitment from either formal institutions or Open and Distance Learning System.

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

416 (23.70%) questionnaires out of the total 1,755 were received back at the time of writing this report. The findings presented below are based on analysis of responses received from these respondents and secondary sources.

### Demand for Graduates in Indian Job Market

It was found through secondary sources that the job availability in the organized sector was very low compared to the number of job seekers in the labor market. The fresh graduates will have to face very steep competition in order to secure regular job in public and organized private sector.

There is mismatch between demand and supply of manpower in the country. There were a large number of vacancies in many of the establishments in the organized sectors for want of suitable applicants. In the year 1991 the UPSC could not fill up as many as 477 posts, because of non-availability of suitable persons (*Employment News*, Vol. XX No.3, 1995). Most of the employment generation took place in the un-organized sectors, small-scale industries and self-employment sectors. Employment generation in both public and organized private sectors is on the decrease. Fresh graduates and unemployed youth, therefore, will have to concentrate on unorganized sectors, small-scale industries and self-employed activities.

### Supply or Graduates in the Job Market

The statistics in employment exchange of India give sufficient indication of the situation prevailing in the job market. Above 3807 thousand persons were registered in

Employment Exchanges as per the study conducted by Directorate General of Employment and Training (Employment News, 1995).

It was found that:

- **Majority (42.43%)** was from arts background, followed by science (19.73%) and commerce (17.57%) background.
- Some students (12.44%) were from Education background as against 128 (3.36%) students from Engineering background. Only 4.57% students were from other disciplines like Medicine, Veterinary Science, Agriculture, Law, etc. Majority of them might have registered for suitable jobs or for jobs in the organized sector.
- **Socio-economic background of the respondents**
- **Age-wise responses**-Of the total questionnaire received back, the majority (39.86%) belonged to age group between 31 to 40 years followed by 27.40% who belonged to 21 to 30 years age group, 24.91% belonged to 41 to 50 years age group and 4.63% belonged to 51 to 60 years age group. Only 1 student was less than 20 years and 2 students were above 60 years. It indicates that those who were below the age group of 25 years were fresh graduates and were looking for regular job.
- **Geographical background of the respondents** - It was found that most of the respondents belonged to urban (31.65%) and metropolitan areas (19.41%) as against to rural (30.80%) and semi-urban areas (13.92%); 4.22% students had not responded.
- **Community background** - Only a few respondents belonged to scheduled castes (9.25%) and scheduled tribes groups (1.78%), followed by other backward class (11.74%) and backward class (4.27%). Majority of the students (68.33%) belonged to General Category. 11 (4.64%) students had not given any reply to this item. This reflects the character of the source of graduates for IGNOU, but not the gregarious nature of the general population.
- **Gender and marital status of the respondents** - Graduates respondents were predominantly males (73.31%); only 19.57% were females. 7.12% had not given any reply to this item. A large majority of the students were married (71.53%) as compared to only 23.13% unmarried students. 12 (4.98%) students had not mentioned about their marital status. One student responded that he was separated.
- **Educational background of respondents' parents** - Graduates from IGNOU were not a completely homogenous lot. But one thing which is common to all of them is that as per their parents' education/culture, they belonged to the lower rank of society. 47.69% respondents' father was below matriculation and 18.51% were matriculate. Those who were married, most of them (45.55%) did not inform about educational background of their spouse.

### **Activities Before Joining IGNOU**

Majorities of the respondents, (56.62%) were doing regular job and 11.03% were studying in formal schools and colleges. Some students (9.96%) were doing both part time job as well as studying in schools and colleges. 12.82% students were searching for job and doing nothing. 6.76% respondents were self-employed and 2.81% did not express their views about their previous activities.

Performance of students in their respective examination before joining IGNOU and after completion of graduation in IGNOU

An interesting result has emerged from the analysis: majority of those who scored poor before joining IGNOU improved their performance; on the other hand, those who scored better before joining IGNOU gave poor performance in IGNOU. It is understandable that most of the students before joining IGNOU were full time students and after joining IGNOU, they were on the job and devoted less time to their study. The performance in the examination would have a wide spectrum of determinants, some of which are purely educational in nature and many of which are non-educational.

## Utilisation of IGNOU Degree

### Students' objective of joining IGNOU and utilisation of Degree

(a) *To continue education:* 181 (43.42%) who responded that their objective was to continue education, 35.9% of them got admission in different institutions in the country. Most of them had had their post graduation in Sociology, Economics, Public Administration, and M.Com. LLB, Company Secretary, ICWA, CA, Diploma in Management, B.Ed, M.Phil from other institutions . It is also very interesting to note here, one student is doing M.B.B.S from Russia. All the students got admission in almost all the reputed formal institutions and dual mode institutions in the country (Since IGNOU students are allowed to take up another course elsewhere simultaneously) 25.4% of them utilized IGNOU degree for other purpose which they have not specified. 14.4% of them got job and 3.3% are self-employed.

(b) *To get job:* 56(13.52 %) students who informed that their objective was to get job, 23.7% of them got regular job, 34.2% of them joined other higher education institutions in the country for further education and 26.3 per cent utilized IGNOU degree for other purpose which they have not specified. 7.09 % of them are self-employed. Among those who got job 54.2% joined private sector while 45.8% joined the public (government) sector. It is assumed from this exercise that Graduates who had part time job and unemployed were proceeding to further education from IGNOU got permanent job than graduates who were unemployed and doing nothing.

(c) *To get promotion:* Among 43 (10.32%) students, who responded that their objective was to get promotion, 27.61% of them got promotion. 27.61% of them joined other institutions for further study.

### Respondents' Activities Before Joining

#### IGNOU and utilization of IGNOU degree

- Out of 46 (11.05%) respondents of the total 416, who were regular students in formal institutions, *most of them (48.0%) joined other formal as well as dual mode institutions in the country for further education.* 20.0% of them got job and 17.0% were self-employed.
- Of the 41 (9.85%) respondents who were doing part time job, 39.02% joined other higher education institutions for further studies; *24.39% of them got regular job; and rest of the students utilized IGNOU degree for other purpose, which they have not specified.*
- Of the 237 (56.97%) respondents who were on the job, 29.9 % joined further education and 15.61% got promotion. Most of the students (40.9%) utilised IGNOU degree for other purpose, which they have not specified.
- Of the 28 (6.73%) respondents who were self-employed, 25.0% joined further education and 14.2% got job. 14.2% students are self-employed and 28.6% students utilized degree for other purpose.
- 54 (12.9%) respondents who were unemployed, 50.0% of them joined further education and 22.2% got job. 29.6% student's utilized degree for other purpose.
- IGNOU degree not only helped the students for continuing education, getting regular job and promotion but also for self-employment purpose: 8 students responded that IGNOU degree helped for self-employment. Those who got job and promotion opted for Language subjects, Economics, Public Administration, Sociology, and Political Science as a major. *They also informed that foundation and application courses helped them to get job and promotion, which is unique, and are not available in the formal system.*

### Views of Students' Who Got Job After Qualifying From IGNOU

- Of the 41 students, who got regular job, 17.86% informed that they got job less than six months after qualified from IGNOU followed by 15.35 % who took six-month to one-year time. Rest of the students took more than one-year time.
- 48.7% students informed that IGNOU degree helped in getting a job.

- 38.79 % students informed that IGNOU degree was very necessary and one of the prerequisite for the job. 24.20 respondents did not reply.
- Most (63.70%) of the total graduates who got regular job replied the IGNOU degree is more useful than formal system. 6 (26.69%) students responded that degree from formal system was more useful than degree from IGNOU for getting a regular job. 3 (9.61%) students did not express their views.
- Most of the students (67.61%) expressed that they were fully satisfied with the nature of their present job and IGNOU degree helped them in this regard.

### **Problem Faced By The Students Due to IGNOU Degree**

Very few students faced problem due to IGNOU degree-One of the student reported that IGNOU degree was treated with a step motherly attitude by his organization for further promotion.

One of the students' from Tiagarh, Distt. 24 PGs informed that he could not get admission in Postgraduate degree due to non-recognition of IGNOU degree in Calcutta and other universities in West Bengal. These institutions could not understand the meaning of subject code.

### **Institutions Which Did Not Recognise IGNOU Degree**

Very few students have responded that some institutions had not recognised IGNOU degree. These are:

- Employment Exchange, Rohtak rejected IGNOU graduate application for registration by saying the degree was not recognized.
- Kerala University rejected application for the MA (sociology) because IGNOU degree did not have 10+2+3 pattern.
- (3) Department of Hindi, University of Calcutta rejected application of IGNOU graduate for PG in Hindi by saying that University of Calcutta does not recognise the validity of IGNOU. Merrut and Utkal University also rejected IGNOU graduate application for the PG course.

### **Some Success Stories**

After getting degree from IGNOU one student become self-employed and running his magazine called 'Yug Manas'.

Hawaumna from Port Blair writes that he could not have been able to get further education in the particular remote area, if IGNOU would not have opened study centre. He further stated that IGNOU syllabus was better than other formal institutions.

A.K. Chand from Orrisa has given very interesting views about IGNOU degree. He said that he is a ex-serviceman from Naval Military Service. After taking retirement from service he did graduation from IGNOU in English as a major subject. He gained confidence and became sports commentator, including for the Wills World Cup cricket tournament, 1996.

Mr. Ajay Tiwa from Mumbai writes that after completing graduation from IGNOU his economic condition is better than before. He was handicapped and could not earn more because of Undergraduate degree.

### **Employers' Views**

Mr. Naveen Kapoor from Cosmos Ferrites Ltd., New Delhi, informed that they preferred candidates' interview performance rather than institution background where they completed degree. The Pepsi Foods, P.K. Advertising Service, Delhi, BHEL Noida, and M/s Triton Medical Service Private Ltd., Delhi expressed similar views. It may be noted here they have already appointed IGNOU graduates in their respective enterprises.

## **SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

IGNOU has been breaking all barriers for those citizens who could not have access to higher education for various reasons. This short survey has shown that IGNOU degree changed the personal lives of individuals by helping them get jobs, continue education and get promotions. This study was conducted with the intention of finding out how students utilised their degree. In the process, we could see quite a few problems faced by students. These problems are to be addressed with our firm commitment.

### **Recommendation**

- **IGNOU should provide information to all the students regarding the equivalence of its degree with other institutions and employment exchange so that students do not face any problems.**
- **IGNOU should simplify its subject code so that other institutions can understand. It should also be mentioned in the degree Hons, instead of major credit. Mostly, respondents suggested that IGNOU should start post graduation in all the courses, which are presently offering in B.A/B.Com. Programmes.**
- **STRIDE should initiate this type of survey in almost all the IGNOU programmes. The present study on the utilization of graduate degree has been confined to the B.A/B.Com graduates only. It is also appropriate to know how the other programmes of IGNOU performed in the job market especially practical programmes.**
- **We have received very few comments from employers' about IGNOU graduates. It would be better if we conduct survey as macro level to seeks employers' comments on our programmes. Their comments and suggestion on IGNOU programmes with our students shall provide a holistic view on the quality of our effort to impart education through open and distance learning mode. Such views would be very helpful for the planning of our future courses and programmes.**

**Editor's Note:** This article is an executive summary of the research which is titled as the same title and it presented at 19<sup>th</sup> ICDE World Conference, Austria.1999, and also, this article published in India Journal Distance Education, 1999.

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