

Incarcerated Students' Participation Rates in Open Distance Education: Exploring the Role of South African Universities

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Abstract : Many higher institutions of education that offer Open Distance Learning (ODL) and e-Learning have opened their doors to accommodate prisoners who want to further their studies. The provision of education for prisoners in South Africa emanates from a number of reasons. The alarmingly high numbers of the prison population in South Africa has called for the government to provide desperate measures. It is on these premises that the provision of higher education in prison is recommended. Higher education is recommended because of the belief that it creates employability and thereby reduces recidivism. Using targeted sampling, 5 universities were required to elaborate on their awareness strategies, how they ensure that Distance Education is accessible to the prisoners and also the ways in which they cater to the needs of incarcerated students. The research findings reveal that there is so little that has been done by these particular institutions to cater for prisoners. This raises a concern and indicates a need to raise awareness of the value of higher and distance education among prisoners. It also calls for higher education institutions to make prisons aware of their course offerings.

Keywords : e-Learning, incarcerated students, open distance learning, recidivism

Conference Title : ICEDEIET 2018 : International Conference on Education, Distance Education, Instructional and Educational Technology

Conference Location : Mumbai, India

Conference Dates : February 22-23, 2018