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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**A TRACER STUDY OF IGNOU GRADUATES**

**Neelam Chaudhary<sup>1\*</sup> and Girija Shankar<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Sr. Analyst, IGNOU, New Delhi, India

<sup>2</sup>IGNOU, New Delhi, India

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**ABSTRACT**

Tracer studies can be used as a tool to address the issues of relevance of curriculum, quality and support services in terms of training to enhance the competencies and employability of the graduates in the job market both nationally and internationally. IGNOU commissioned a tracer study of the graduates of the year 2009 and 2010 encompassing 12 programmes. A standard tracer study is made up of two phases broadly. The first is an impact study that seeks to determine whether graduates are satisfied with the study programmes which they have successfully gone through at University. The second is career development study to determine the extent to which the programme has helped them secure employment of their choice or advancement in their career. The present study focuses on both the aspects.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The future and relevance of higher education is intricately linked with skill development. To make it amply clear as to how higher education has to address the issue of skill development and employability, Planning Commission's Approach paper to the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan says. "There is a need for a clear focus on improving the employability of graduates. Indian higher education is organized into 'General' and 'Professional' streams. General education which is an excellent foundation for successful knowledge based careers, often fails to equip graduates with necessary work skills due to its poor quality." In simple words it means that Indian higher education system can not afford to remain in this intellectual isolation any more. It has to review and reframe educational strategies for the development of the country. India Labour Report by Team Lease Services points out that India is facing an emergency situation in the higher education segment. According to this report, there are two challenges on the issue of employability. First is inaccessibility of education quality standards. The second challenge is about quality of students which results in mismatch between skills and jobs expected.

The above mentioned study explained that despite enrollment growing from 2 lakh in 1947 to 1.6 crore in 2012, India still lags behind its international counterparts. The higher education gross enrollment ratio of India is 11% which is merely half of the world average and way behind developed countries (54%). "The low enrollment is compounded by an uneven spread of higher education; only five states have more than 20 Universities and five only have one. Sixteen states do not have a single central University" the release stated. The

study also informed that India's 30% gross enrollment ratio objective by 2030 plan requires solutions that combine the needs of policy makers, employers and youth.

**Evaluation in ODL**

The demands for training from the labour market are varied and ongoing. The demands from young people seeking employment or wanting to become self employed are critical. Open and distance learning provides a means to accessing the skill needed for development. Over the last three decades, the world has come to appreciate the value of using ODL methods to provide continuous training for workers in a range of fields.

The global market for ODL has grown considerably in the last decade. Market has become very competitive for ODL institutions. In order to become successful in such a scenario evaluation is imperative. Such an evaluation can be done only by those for whom the services were intended i.e. the students. Such an input provides deep insight into the satisfaction level of the stakeholders regarding their satisfaction with the course itself and the providers can implement improvements where dissatisfaction has been expressed. Schomburg (2003, p.29) suggests the use of the tracer study by institutions as a method for knowing the "destiny of their graduates and the relationship between their study and their professional reward".

**Tracer Studies**

Tracer studies constitute one form of empirical study to evaluate the outcome of the tertiary education sector. By bringing together certain basic components concerning, the level of employment, unemployment and underemployment

amongst graduates, the correspondence between educational qualifications and employment and the contemporary undergraduate experience they can indicate possible flaws in a given educational programme and assist in better planning at both the institutional and national levels, so that academic provisions are more closely aligned with the needs of the economy.

Tracer studies have been conducted by many educational institutions in Europe, Asia and Latin America to investigate linkages between higher education and graduate employment. Association of African Universities (AAU) has also conducted similar studies in the Universities in Nigeria, Malawi Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Herald Schomburg and his colleagues at the Centre for Higher Education and work, University of Kessel, Germany have done considerable work in this regard. In order to investigate the link between higher education and graduate employment in Europe some projects like CHEERS (Career after Higher Education a European Research Study) have been conducted by Germany. As said earlier, African countries have also done research in this area.

A tracer study of the graduates of Malawi University was undertaken. The graduates belonged to the batches between 1987 to 1995. It was part of the comprehensive study on higher education in Africa sponsored by AAU (Association of African Universities). Ten other Universities like Nigeria, Ghana, KENYA, Uganda, Tanzania were also part of the same project.

Tracer surveys have been done by International Organizations and lending agencies and the graduates of scholarship programmes. These are not confined to specific institutions. But Tracer Studies in ODL are not much common. STRIDE at IGNOU has conducted some survey of the graduates in specific programmes. In Nigerian Teacher's Institute. The study revealed some lacunas in the programmes offered through ODL. The findings were used to improve the management and monitoring systems of the institute.

The African Studies revealed the importance of interpersonal skills and proficiency in English language. Such type of information can be used by course content and training and findings can be used to correct deficiencies. Boettcher (2006, p.105) suggests that emphasis in technological universities will be on "updating knowledge and skills, building perspectives contextual problem solving, networking" and a shift to "competency based outcomes". He further states that the programme will be designed to enable learner in achieving multiple career goals. Assimilation of such new ideas will need the feed back of graduates who have entered job market and are able to assess the linkages between education and professional competencies.

Tracer studies of ODL graduates can be used to reform educational programmes to establish a link between requirements of the employment world and study. Though such survey do have their limitation. It is sometimes difficulties to locate graduate and have them complete questionnaires. Schomburg warns that the graduates might not always be able to identify the relationship between the knowledge acquired and their profession. This study, however, suggests that the tracer study can be used as a marketing as well as education tool. The ODL providers can

use the information gathered to mould their courses as per the demands to the labour market and modify programmes to attract the ever expanding market of prospective students looking for personal and professional advancement through ODL.

IGNOU produces between 1.5 to 2 lacs (approx) degree graduates annually. The key challenge is not just that these graduates are employed, but that their employment best utilizes their education. A graduate with a degree in MBA, for example, who finds employment as a clerk, is not fully utilizing his education. The major concern is not, therefore, about the employability of the graduates but the type of employment they gain and whether they have productive and well-paying jobs.

### **Objectives of the Tracer Study**

The main objective of the tracer study was to investigate the transition process from higher education to world of work. It was based on considerations of the experiences of the IGNOU graduates. The main objectives of the Tracer Study were to:

- investigate the transition process from higher education to work;
- shed light on the state of employment, unemployment and underemployment;
- analyses the relationships between higher education and work in a broad perspective which includes the fulfillment of personal goals such as job satisfaction and objective measurement like job position, income, job security and the type of work;
- Find out what factors are important for professional success of graduates taking into account personal factors like gender, work motivation, acquired qualification during course of study and job market conditions.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study covered the employment characteristics, their transitions to employment and the usefulness of tracer study by using descriptive survey method.

#### **Research Design**

The Study was designed to provide relevant information, both quantitative and qualitative, to educational planners and policy makers to assist them to make informed decisions and fine-tune their strategies, in view of meeting the country's high level and skilled human resource needs. Based on the analysis, relevant issues were highlighted and recommendations were put-forth for the improvement in the system.

The Study consisted of a web-based mailed questionnaire. In the survey the respondents were requested to rate their responses to several statements based on likert type scale of 1 to 5. The Survey questionnaire comprised 33 questions, grouped into 3 broad themes as follows:

❖ Issues related to the characteristics, socio-economic background and further studies of graduates

- The characteristics and socio-economic background of graduates.
- The factors which induce the pursuit of further studies after graduating.

- The role played by educational and socio-economic background of graduates in their movement up the educational ladder.
- Issues related to the job market experiences of graduates
- The nature and extent of mismatch between graduates' career expectations and achievements.
- The transition from university to the job market.
- The level of employment, unemployment and underemployment among graduates.
- The characteristics and nature of the unemployed and underemployed graduates.
- Nature and conditions of graduate employment.
- The occupational and sectoral distribution of graduate employment.
- Employment and occupational mobility of graduates.
- factors affecting graduates decisions to change jobs including the influence of
- Educational and socio-economic characteristics on the earnings and career success of graduates.
- The extent of job satisfaction among graduates.

❖ Issues related to the quality of tertiary education provision and their contribution to graduates' personal development.

- The delivery system including the quality of instruction dispensed and the teaching and learning environment.
- The contribution of tertiary education to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of graduates.
- The importance of work placement.
- The relevance of programmes to professional requirements and to what extent graduates consider their education and training as wastage or an opportunity.

### **Population and Sample**

The survey was designed to obtain qualitative and quantitative data for the graduates of 12 academic programmes. The respondent included a random sample of the students graduated in 2009 and 2010, with a total of 548 graduates which is 45% of the sample size desired (1200 graduates). The questionnaire was mailed to the targeted graduates. 90% of the responses were from those students who had pursued BCA, MCA & MP programme. The outcome of the tracer study can be broadly attributed to these three programmes.

### **Student Profile of Graduates**

A total of 548 graduates responded to the survey. Out of that, 79% were male and 21% female respondents. Looking at the social category of the respondents, 67% belonged to General category, 7% to SC, 2% to ST, 23% to OBC category. 1 % respondents did not provide this information. Regarding marital status, 56% of the respondents were married while 44% were un-married.

### **Educational Background**

Regarding their educational background, 56% had tertiary level qualifications, whereas, 44% denied having such qualification. 72% respondents were studying through face to face mode before entering IGNOU, whereas 28% studied through distance learning. Since a large chunk of respondents were from conventional system, they might have faced difficulties in getting used to distance learning mode. They

were asked about the difficulties faced by those who had their previous education through conventional mode. Out of 72% respondents who received education through conventional mode, 56% faced some difficulties in getting used to distance mode and 44% respondents did not face any difficulty. Listed below are some of the major difficulties faced by the respondents. Crux of the major problems they faced is:

- Since a large number of students were working, they found it difficult to maintain balance between their study and job.
- Language used in the course material was sometimes very difficult. Such difficult words need to be explained in the unit itself.
- The problem in distance mode was that there were no extra classes on weekdays and the doubts in the subject were not cleared on regular basis.
- The process of getting admission in any programme is too cumbersome and it takes too much time in form filling, posting and receiving. The schedule for project work is not practical.
- Very few students attended classes at the study centre. Hence there was less scope for peer discussion and practical classes specially were not executed properly at the study centre.

**Table No 1** Reasons for pursuing further Studies at IGNOU

Sl. No.	Title	Extremely Important	Quite Slightly	Neither	Useless Important	
1	Vicinity to home of parents, relatives etc.	294	130	59	28	14
2	Attractiveness of town /region.	215	158	90	36	21
3	Reputation of the University	359	114	39	13	3
4	Practice –orientated study programme in my field	282	149	74	16	3
5	Areas of specialization Provided.	317	145	39	16	5
6	Admission standard and my previous grades	285	157	58	15	8
7	Advice by my parents/ relatives	204	156	79	61	21

It can be concluded that while areas of specialisation and reputation of the university were major reason, the graduates were who influenced by other reasons given in the table.

Though a large number of INGOU graduates were already working, they needed to enhance their competencies and skills to stay relevant. Majority of the respondents wanted to upgrade their qualifications upto Masters and Ph.D. level. The study shows that graduates were generally satisfied with the structure and curriculum offered by IGNOU. Many factors contributed to the relevancy of the programmes.

One of the main characteristics of ODL was learner oriented system. Majority of the graduates were able to structure their studies according to their time and need. Appropriate teaching and learning activities need to be developed. In the same way, practical work experiences also need more attention.

**Table No 2** Study provisions and Conditions

Sl. No.	Title	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
1	Assistance/advice for your final examination	158	192	111	37	12
2	Academic advice offered by academic counsellor.	118	164	148	60	21
3	Teaching quality of lectures/counselling sessions.	117	154	163	53	23
4	Structure of degree program.	244	182	73	8	2
5	Testing/grading system in examinations	189	173	95	39	8
6	Possibility of individual structuring of studies.	146	197	122	31	9
7	Provision of supervised practical work experience.	111	160	144	67	14
8	Contact with fellow students.	116	162	112	88	23
9	Comprehension level of study material.	227	167	77	29	4
10	Availability of technical equipment (e.g. computers, instruments, internet, etc.)	54	157	146	103	37
11	Quality of equipment of laboratories/workshops.	72	127	156	98	29
12	Supply of teaching material.	184	164	92	49	12
13	Equipment and stocking of libraries.	81	122	135	118	31
14	Catering facilities on the campus	65	102	126	121	68
15	Quality of the Building	111	164	138	71	15

especially in the professional availability of programmes like BCA, MCA etc. A sizable number of graduates were not fully satisfied with this component of their programmes Majority of the graduates could interact with their peer groups. This helped them to solve many of their problems by sharing with the fellow learners. The methodologies used in ODL include collaborative learning which seek to develop and enhance critical and analytical thinking. Programmes are designed for learning outcomes, appropriate teaching and learning activities.

Though the graduates were satisfied regarding structures and curriculum of the programme but they were not so appreciative of the teaching and learning activities especially practical skill development activities at the study centre. They found that such activities need to be addressed much more rigorously. Assessment procedures to evaluate the learning outcomes were appreciated by a large number of graduates.

The graduates opined that the teaching and learning performance of the tutors/counselors are lacking in quality. In order to ensure that existing learners get the best out of the teaching and learning, the faculty need to review and enhance the contents and assignment questions and the other exercise so that they are more relevant to the current job market demands.

With regard to the comprehension level of the study material, the majority said that they were able to understand the study material very well though few suggested that the skill oriented programmes could also be made available in regional languages especially those related to agriculture, vocational programmes etc. Timely delivery of the study material to the students is of utmost importance in ODL. Almost 79% graduates were happy with IGNOU on this account.

Another important factor that contributes to enriching learning experience is the tangible aspect of the institution, its esthetics as well as functional aspects. The study shows that the facilities as dimension were rated lowest among all others. Equal number of graduates was dissatisfied on this aspect. This is not something which is unexpected because most of study centres are rented premises. Some of the rented premises were found to be non-conducive. Size of the class room, computer and Liberate facilities, laboratories were not the best and most of the centres lacked proper parking space.

IGNOU, need to have its own building for this purpose to make them more conducive for learners.

Another dimension for which the graduates want to draw attention was the career counseling. Since a large number of graduate were also unemployed, career counseling is of high importance to them. Some form of career counseling should be made available to the learners at their respective centres to Help them match their study programmes with their career paths.

**After Graduation**

Graduate employability is an important aspect of the higher education. After completing their course of study the real challenge for graduate comes when they enter the job market and competitive environment.

**Table No 3** started seeking a Job

Sl. No	Title	Answer
1	Before graduation/Masters	196
2	After graduation/Masters	250
3	I did not seek employment	34
4	Other	24

Majority of the graduates got jobs by applying to advertised positions / employment agencies. It shows the success and ability of the institution to produce work ready graduates and also it is an indication of acceptability of the degree through ODL system in the job market. Only a limited number of graduates could get employment through the placement cell of the University. Majority of the graduates got some kind of employment during the 1<sup>st</sup> year after finishing their course at the University.

**Table No 4** Factor facilitating acquiring Jobs.

Sl. No.	Title	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
1	Field of study	196	187	78	16	4
2	Main focus of subject area or Specialisation.	198	173	80	29	5
3	Theme of thesis or projects. If applicable	152	165	79	44	6
4	Grades at the university	168	201	93	17	3
5	Reputation of the University	241	135	60	29	11
6	Previous work experience	180	171	92	26	5
7	Personality.	209	176	69	22	2
8	My own world view religion, etc.	151	176	91	28	21

The study shows that the employers prefer workers who have generic competencies like interpersonal skills, team work, oral

and written skills. A sizable number of graduates found their field of study and specialization also an equally important factor in getting them employed.

Though the graduates were quite satisfied with learning experience and curriculum, but practical and skill based learning needs to get focus. The reputation of the University also matters in the job market. A truly gratifying result of the study was the fact that 51% of the graduates found that IGNOU's reputation was a very important factor in getting them employment.

Employers often prefer to provide on the job training to the employers to train them according to their needs, but sometimes the learners, after completing their studies, get themselves enrolled for some kind of training to acquire additional skills. Majority of the graduates were wither given on the job training or they equipped themselves with additional skills even before jumping into job market. This fact is an indication that self managed learning which the mainstream of ODL is had successfully instilled in them the life long learning culture. A large number of graduates were employed. Some of them were self employed and established their own business while others were employed with companies and NGOs. 60% of the graduates were working with private companies and 18% were working with Banks, Agency and other Govt. Establishment. The graduates of the University were contributing not only in private sector but also in public sector.

**Current Employment and Works**

A sizable chunk of respondents were working in education sector. Manufacturing and banking, finance, insurance, public administrations were the sectors found to be more attractive to the respondents.

**Table No 05 Job Titles**

Sl. No	Job Titles	%
1	Academic field	5
2	Managerial Level	30
3	Software Professionals	15
4	Admin./ Finance/ Audit etc	25
5	PR officers	5
6	Telecom/Prod./Sale Engineers, etc	5
7	Marketing & Sale Dep.	15

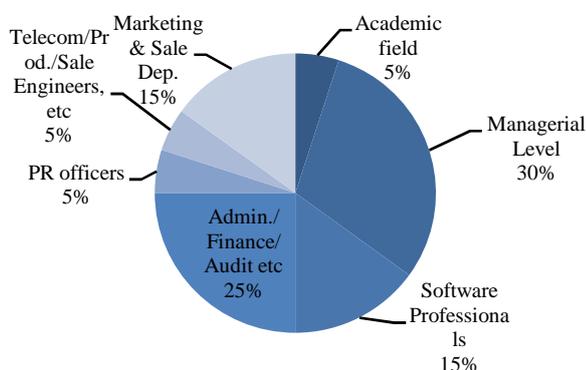


Figure 1

25% of the employed graduates were working with the same employers for more than three years. This is an indication of the fact that their study at the University has not only equipped them with skills to sustain themselves in the competitive job market but also to compete in the ever

challenging environment. Almost 8% of the graduates who were part of this study wanted to further improve their knowledge and go for advance academic study.

A sizable chunk of respondents were working in education sector. Manufacturing and banking, finance, insurance, public administrations were the sectors found to be more attractive to the respondents.

Current occupation Maximum numbers of graduates are employed in education sector and quite a lot of graduates are engaged in manufacturing, Banking & Finance sector.

**Use of Qualification**

Though majority of the graduates were happy with the content and curriculum. Many factors have contributed to the relevancy of the curriculum. Specialization, Research and practical component of the courses offered equipped the graduates with skills to execute their current jobs successfully.

But they would have been more ready for the competitive world, had there been more emphasis on the work experience/ internships during their course of study. A large number of graduates remained dissatisfied on this account.

**Table No 06 Current occupation areas**

Sl. No.	Title	No.	%
1.	Energy, water supply, gas.	35	6%
2.	Manufacturing.	63	12%
3.	Wholesale and Retail trade, repair of motor vehicles.	10	2%
4.	Hotels, restaurants, tourism.	18	3%
5.	Transportation, Storage and Communication.	18	3%
6.	Banking, Finance, Insurances.	53	10%
7.	Real Estate, Renting.	12	2%
8.	Other commercial services.	29	5%
9.	Public Administration, Social Security, Police, Deference.	36	7%
10.	Health and Social Work.	32	6%
11.	Education.	86	16%
12.	Other Community, Social and Personal Services.	34	6%
13.	Other	121	22%

The graduates, who belonged to Management Programmes and Master in Computer Application, were able to get into the career they had anticipated before joining their course of study. Some of the respondents were already working in the fields like engineering and other public sector.

**Table No 07 Usefulness of components of study programme**

Sl. No.	Title	Very Useful	Useful	Fairly Useful	Undecided	Not at all Useful
1	Course content of major subject (s).	225	147	68	35	5
2	Variety of courses offered.	184	167	87	30	11
3	Opportunity for specialization.	203	128	86	46	11
4	Research emphasis. Practical emphasis	154	125	85	58	21
5	of teaching and learning.	150	131	96	48	19
6	Work experience (in-term-ships etc).	161	129	76	40	17

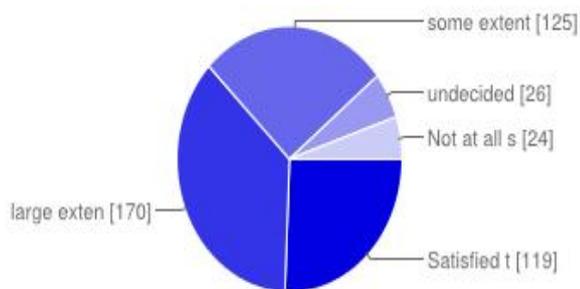


Figure 1

They needed some additional skills to get promotions in the same company or jump to other profitable career. The graduates especially those who were employed appreciated the fact that IGNOU provided them an opportunity to improve their employability.

This is one of the major responsibilities of IGNOU to provide a satisfying and meaningful study experience and also to provide better work place skills to its graduates.

Table No 08 Career Satisfactions

Title	No.	%
Satisfied to a very High extent	119	26%
some extent	125	27%
undecided	26	6%
Not at all satisfied	24	5%
N.R	82	

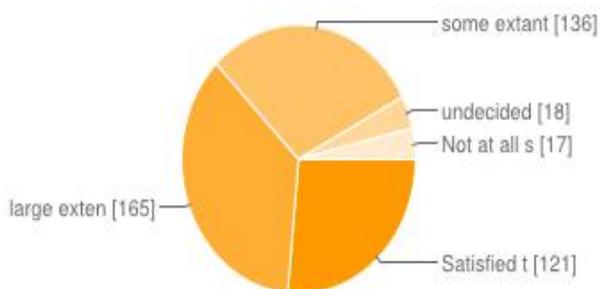


Figure 2

The graphs exhibits that 26% of the respondents have been able to use the knowledge and skills efficiently acquired during the course of their study and in this regard they are highly satisfied and 36% respondents used such knowledge and skills to a large extent while 30% could use them while doing the tasks only to some extent. 3 % of the respondents were not at all satisfied in this regard. They feel that there was no connect between the skills acquired during the course of study and their present job. 4% respondents remained undecided over this issue.

Table No 09 Use of knowledge and skills acquired during the Course of Studies

Title	No.	%
Satisfied to a very High extent	121	26%
large extent	165	36%
some extant	136	30%
undecided	18	4%
Not at all satisfied	17	4%
N.R	89	

Though a large number of respondents / graduates got into the jobs that were linked to their course of study but lot many graduates also took up other jobs that did not have any link with their study.

Job market is so competitive that getting employment immediately becomes difficult. Moreover, the graduates were from various economic backgrounds. Pressing family needs also make them to get into jobs that were easily available. Likewise various other reasons also influenced the graduates to get into jobs not necessarily linked to their studies.

Assessment of employment and work

The graduates were generally satisfied with their professional life. Those who were already employed could get promotions in their own company or looked elsewhere for more benefit. Their reason for joining IGNOU was to enhance their skills further and equip themselves for more demanding jobs.

But a lot of unemployed graduates also get employment in social service sector, hospitality, banking, defense etc. They were also satisfied to a large extent because they felt that besides executing their official responsibilities, they were also working for the betterment of the society. Equal treatment to all employees by their employers whether from conventional system or through ODL, also gave a lot of satisfaction to the graduates.

Table No 10 Linkage between work and knowledge

Sl. No	Title	Answer	%
1	Not applicable (I consider my job linked to my studies).	160	22%
2	At the beginning of the career envisaged I have to accept work hardly linked to my study.	83	11%
3	My current job ensures a higher income.	47	6%
4	In doing this job I have better career prospects.	107	15%
5	I prefer an occupation which is not closely Connected to My studies.	21	3%
6	MY current work is very satisfactory.	68	9%
7	I was promoted to a position less linked to my Studies than my previous positions.	29	4%
8	My current job provides the opportunity for part-time/flexible schedules etc.	33	4%
9	My current job provides the opportunity to work in a locality i prefer..	48	7%
10	My current job allow me to take into account Family needs.	57	8%
11	I could not find any job closely linked To my study.	57	8%
12	Other	27	4%

Majority of the respondents/ graduate felt that they did not face any kind of discrimination by their employers because of their education through ODL system.

Their employees also encouraged them to do further research and upgrade their knowledge. Sometimes the respondent received financial help by their employers to undertake higher studies or projects.

This is an important yard stick to measure the acceptability of ODL in the job market. The study shows that the quality of ODL graduates is comparable with those of traditional education system.

Table No 11 level of satisfaction with professional situation

Sl. No.	Title	Satisfied to a very High extent	Large extent	Some extent	undecided	Not at all satisfied
1	Content of work/the professional tasks	98	159	145	21	48
2	Working atmosphere	133	111	101	35	11
3	Job security	159	101	113	56	39
4	Possibility to use knowledge and skills acquired during my studies	145	150	124	31	17
5	Possibility to work in a demanding job	129	159	115	38	19
6	Position achieved	107	117	147	46	36
7	Income	87	93	163	61	55
8	Promotion prospects	90	104	138	70	52
9	Opportunity to benefit society.	131	117	106	71	28
10	Chance of realizing my own ideas.	111	136	129	47	25
11	Fringe benefits.	90	110	147	59	43
12	Opportunity of pursuing continuous learning.	140	141	103	49	14
13	Equipment of the work place.	126	122	127	40	22
14	Workplace surroundings (noise, space climate etc.)	128	109	140	45	22
15	Equal treatment of all employees.	119	113	135	48	35

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall IGNOU graduates rated their institution above average. This is gratifying for both staff and management who would have to ensure that IGNOU attains a high reputation in the academic world.

This was the first attempt to conduct a tracer study of graduate of IGNOU, India. It was a tentative step, and the resources made available were not large. However, it has been found that such tracer studies are not only feasible and valuable for the improvement of the higher education but also provide much needed feedback to develop well designed and effective learning experiences to meet the requirement of a formidable customer group i.e the students.

Based on the information provided by the graduates, the following recommendations are made:

- ❖ Frequent and in-depth dialogue between the learners, counselors /Programme coordinators.
- ❖ IGNOU should constantly seek to improve the quality of learning experiences for students by improving teaching methods library faculty, evaluation of assignments & Term and Exams availability and quality of equipment (ICT) at the study centres and condition of building Regional and Study centres.
- ❖ Counseling is another dimension which is majorly highlighted by the respondents. Counseling sessions need to be monitored regularly by the faculty of the schools. There should be two way video counseling and orientation by the faculty/ programme co-ordinator on regular basis with the counselors and learners at the study centre. Periodical Interaction of faculty at headquarters with the learners at centres and counselors separately by two way video need to be encouraged. This will not only provide direct feedback from the learners but also faculty will know the exact nature of counseling session taking place at the study centres.
- ❖ Information flow between University and learners regarding exam schedule, assignment and project proposal submission date, approval of the project proposal, exam grades etc. need a lot of improvement. It should not only be transparent but also easily accessible. The learners should be intimated about the

Important dates and deadlines by using latest technologies like mobile alerts.

- ❖ Curriculum planning and developing in higher education needs to be more broad based and trans-disciplinary than hitherto. Greater emphasis should be placed on multiple and practical skills acquisition or practice oriented study and the revision of study curriculum to keep abreast of technological and socio-cultural changes.
- ❖ The faculty particularly those of the engineering and related fields to conduct field surveys with industries for cross fertilization of ideas and practical skills between higher education and industries. It will not only provide a platform for collaboration between the two but also the education planners will be able to understand the requirements of jobs markets.
- ❖ Another dimension that was rated low in the study was career counseling. Though it may not be of high importance for those who were already employed but a large number of graduates/ respondents were unemployed. They required such kind of service. IGNOU needs to have a system at the study centre to cater to their need.

### Acknowledgement

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