



A Status Study of Cancellation of Distance Education Admission Cases in India

Shyni DUGGAL

Indira Gandhi National Open University Regional Centre NCT New Delhi, India
shyniduggal@ignou.ac.in | ORCID 0000-0001-9488-9397

ABSTRACT:

IGNOU being one of the largest universities of the world in terms of students' enrollment, not only contributing to the increasing Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of Higher Education of India in a big way by admitting lakh of students every year, but it is also democratizing the higher education; and promoting life-long education in India. IGNOU is offering relatively flexible entry to aspirants of the higher education, without putting much emphasis on rigidity of subjects/courses studied or percentage obtained as compared to the face-to-face mode universities. Further, there is no restriction in terms of intake capacity for most of its Programmes vis-à-vis maximum number of students to be admitted. Consequently, cumulative strength of students admitted in IGNOU is more than three million. However, there are number of students who are quitting IGNOU due to certain reasons by applying cancellation of their admission. Though the number of such students is not very large, still it has become a persisting trend. To minimize the persisting withdrawal trend, researcher felt that there was a need to analyse the phenomenon of cancellation of admission, which would help in suggesting strategies for containing the same.

KEYWORDS: Cancellation of Admission, Drop-out, Regional Centre, Level of Programmes.

1. INTRODUCTION:

IGNOU being one of the largest universities of the world in terms of students' enrollment, not only contributing to the increasing Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of Higher Education of India in a big way, but it is also democratizing the higher education; and promoting life-long education in India by offering high quality need-based Programmes for different levels of higher education, with extremely relaxed eligibility criteria for admission, using a variety of media and technology, along with the facility of faculty interface, that too, at a very affordable cost. It has been

providing the opportunity to pursue higher education to all, including the aspirants belonging to various socio-economically disadvantaged groups like women, SC, ST, OBC, differently-abled, transgender, and also to the ones who are living in geographically difficult terrains.

Undoubtedly, IGNOU is offering relatively flexible entry to the aspirants of higher education, without putting much emphasis on rigidity of subjects/courses studied or percentage obtained as compared to the face-to-face mode universities.

Further, there is no restriction in terms of intake capacity for most of its Programmes vis-à-vis maximum number of

students to be admitted. Consequently, cumulative strength of students admitted in IGNOU is more than three million.

For last few years, it has been admitting more than five lakh students, annually. During the last two admission cycles only – July 2018 and January 2019, IGNOU admitted 11,47,056 lakh students (IGNOU, 2019). However, there are number of students who are quitting IGNOU due to certain reasons by applying cancellation of their admission. Though the number of such students is not very large, still it has become a persisting trend.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

In most of the Programmes, being offered by IGNOU, the only criterion for getting admission in tertiary level onwards Programmes i.e. from certificate/diploma level to undergraduate degree and post graduate degree level, is pass certificate in preceding level. For example, if a person wants to take admission in Bachelors’ of Commerce (B.Com), s/he just needs to have passed certificate of senior secondary i.e. XII Class/Standard, without even having studied the subject/course commerce. Another example would be, if a person

wants to take admission in Master’s in Psychology, s/he just needs to have graduation degree, irrespective of fact that whether s/h has studied Psychology in graduation or not. Similarly, percentage of marks obtained also does not matter, which is not the case in face-to-face mode universities. In the face-to-face mode universities, not only *subject/course studied* is one of the important criteria for admission, but *percentage of marks obtained* also limits the opportunities of various aspirants of the higher education. Further, there is restriction on intake capacity for most of the Programmes vis-à-vis maximum number of students to be admitted in the face-to-face universities. In contrast, IGNOU has been offering welcoming and enabling environment to all the aspirants of the higher education through its 67 regional centers across the country. . As far as IGNOU’s Regional Centre (RC) Delhi-1 is concerned, which is situated at South Delhi area of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi; and primarily catering to South Delhi, and Faridabad and Palwal districts of Haryana, it had admitted about 30,000 to 40,000 new students annually. Table No.1 shows the enrollment trends of RC Delhi-1 in two admission cycles:

Table 1: Students’ Enrollment at RC Delhi-1

July Cycle	No. of Fresh Students Enrolled	January Cycle	No. of Fresh Students Enrolled
July, 2015	21320	January, 2016	10598
July, 2016	26095	January, 2017	12069
July, 2017	27076	January, 2018	11231
July, 2018	27209	January, 2019	12985

However, comparative analysis of enrollment data and completion data of IGNOU shows quite a gloomy picture. Students who do not complete their Programmes with IGNOU may be categorized, basically, into two types. Type-I comprises the students who dropped-out without any intimation to the university or the Regional Centre. They were, mainly, those students who just left one or more components of their

Programmes incomplete, or had not appeared/passed in examination. It also includes those students who had not taken admission in their next semester/year, which is called Re-registration in IGNOU’s terminology. 67 per cent BA, 73 per cent B.com and 80 per cent B.Sc. students of IGNOU could not complete their Programme (Duggal, 2016).

Type-II students are those who formally apply for cancellation of their

admission at RC. These students mention various reasons for cancellation of their admission. On an average, RC Delhi-1 receives about 15 cases of cancellation of admission, in a month. This persisting withdrawal trend, led the researcher to analyze the situation vis-à-vis cancellation of admission cases being applied at RC Delhi-1. Therefore, the researcher undertook the following study entitled, “A Status Study of Cancellation of Admission Cases in IGNOU”.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of the study were:

- i. to ascertain the duration of time spent with IGNOU by the students before applying for cancellation of their admission;
- ii. to analyse the cancellation of admission cases programme-wise; and
- iii. to examine the reasons of cancellation of admission.

4. METHODOLOGY:

Method: Phenomenon of admission cancellation without refund of fee, being different from students' drop-out, it is quite peculiar to IGNOU. Therefore, researcher adopted the data mining and analysis method for the present study, which is in full consonance with the nature of research problem.

5. OPERATION DEFINITION

Operation Definition of Cancellation of Admission: In IGNOU, Cancellation of Admission cases may be divided into two broad categories:

(1) *First Category - Cancellation of Online Admission Cases with Refund of Fee:* It comprises students, who apply for cancellation of their online admission within one month of last date of admission cycle, and s/he will get refund of fee paid by her/him. IGNOU has clear-cut policy for 'Refund of Programme Fee' in such cancellation cases of Online Admission System (OAS). If student does not want to continue her/his programme,

and seeks refund of Programme Fee, s/he will get refund as per the following norms:

“The refund request will be considered as under:

- (a) Before last date of submission of Admission Form – Programme Fee will be refunded after deduction of Rs.100/-;
- (b) Within 15 days from the last date of submission of Admission Form – Programme Fee will be refunded after deduction of Rs.500/-; and
- (c) Within 30 days from the last date of submission of Admission Form – Programme Fee will be refunded after deduction of Rs.1000/-” (IGNOU, 2016).

Second Category - Cancellation of Admission without Refund of Fee: Students who apply for cancellation of their admission after the expiry of 30 days from the last date of submission of Admission Form, upto the maximum duration of the Programme. University has clear-cut policy for that as well, which states that “Fee once paid will not be refunded under any circumstances except the provision of refund of admission fee as notified by the University vide notification”.

Population: Population for the present study comprised all the cases belonging to *Second Category of Cancellation of Admission*, which were received at all the RCs of IGNOU across the country.

Sample: For determining the sample for the present study, preliminary screening of applications of cancellation of admission received at RC was done. Accordingly, it was decided that the applications which were received in last three year, moving backward from April 2019 to April 2016 was considered. During the said period, 548 cancellations of admission cases were received and processed at RC Delhi-1. These 548 cases were forwarded to IGNOU HQs. for the further necessary action in 43 lots during the said period. Date-wise distribution of

these 43 lots is given in Figure 1.

Tools used: Since the main objective of the study was to analyse the existing phenomenon of cancellation of admission, records vis-à-vis applications of students received for cancellation were used as a main tool for data collection. The content of applications was analysed for the purpose. Besides, personal interaction of the researcher with about 15 per cent of these students also provided the requisite information for analysis.

Analysis of Data: In accordance with the nature of the study, the data was analyzed qualitatively.

Delimitation: The study was delimited to the cases of cancellation of admission without refund of fee, received at IGNOU Regional Centre Delhi-1 during April 2016 to April 2019 only.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Mostly, cancellation of admission cases received from students at the RC Delhi-1 are being processed once a month, and forwarded to IGNOU HQs.

for cancelling their admission, and deleting their records from the Master Database of the University. Sometimes, due to urgency of students' matter or some other important event/activity of the regional center, deviation in this frequency was also observed.

During the period under research study/investigation, between April, 2016 to April, 2019 (moving backwards for analyzing data of last three years) 548 cancellation of admission cases were received and processed at Regional Centre Delhi-1, which were forwarded to IGNOU HQs. in 43 lots (please refer Figure-1 for date-wise distribution of these 43 lots). . Sometimes, as few as five cases a month, and sometimes, as many as 33 cases a month, were processed at RC Delhi-1, and forwarded to IGNOU HQs. for further necessary action in terms of deleting their records from the master database, etc. Over and above these 548 cases, 227 cases of *First Category of Cancellation of Online Admission System* were also received, wherein students were eligible to get refund of their Programme fee, as per university rules.

Table 2: Level-wise Distribution of Cancellation of Admission Cases submitted by Students

Level	No. of Students	% age of Students
Certificate	6	1.09
Diploma	18	3.28
Bachelor	295	53.83
Master	229	41.78
Total	548	100

Table 3: Distribution of Students on the basis of Duration of Time Spent with IGNOU by them between Admission and Cancellation of their Admission

Duration Between Admission and its Cancellation	No. of Students	% age of Students
Within 1 Year	284	51.82
Between 1-2 Years	121	22.08
Between 2-3 Years	76	13.86
More than 3 Years	67	12.22
Total	548	100

Table 4: Reasons for Cancellation of Admission mentioned by Students

Reasons for Cancellation of Admission	No. of Students	% age of Students
Wants to take Admission in Some Other Programme of IGNOU	205	37.41
Wants to take Admission in Some Other University	78	14.23
Reason not mentioned	126	22.99
Due to Personal Reason	110	20.07
Inadvertently Taken Admission	23	4.19
Simultaneously Pursuing Some Other Programme	6	1.09
Total	548	100

To present the holistic view of the phenomenon of cancellation of admission, the data given in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 have been analyzed and interpreted collectively. Table 2 reveals that 54 per cent students were of bachelor level, and 42 per cent students were of master level, who applied for cancellation of their admission. This is accounting for total 96 per cent cancellation cases of students, having spent varied categories of duration with IGNOU, from less than one year to more than three years. Though they had applied for cancellation of their admission due to various reasons mentioned in Table 4, however the main reason was that they wanted to take admission in some other Programme in IGNOU. As many as about 23 per cent students did not mention any reasons for cancellation, whereas about 20 per cent students applied for cancellation of admission due to some personal reasons. Implying thereby, that the time spent by students with IGNOU was quite significant vis-à-vis reasons for cancellation of their admission, and level of their Programme as well, in this context.

Table 3 and Figure 1 show that about 50 per cent students applied for cancellation of their admission within one year of their admissions. They were, mostly, those students who wanted to quit because they wanted to change their Programme (37 per cent) or they have taken admission, inadvertently

(4 per cent), in the wrong Programme. For example a student wanted to do Master in Political Science (MPS) but inadvertently, he had taken admission in Master in Public Administration (MPA). It also comprised those students who took admission under the Scholarship Scheme of Govt. of India, wherein students of SC and ST categories were exempted to pay the fee for most of the Programmes upto bachelor level. In certain cases, under fee exemption policy, initially, students of SC and ST categories took admission in Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA) but later on decided to switch over to Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Commerce (BCOM). Whereas, there were about 14 per cent students, who took admission in IGNOU as a 'stop-gap arrangement' to secure their admission however, as soon as they got admission in some other university of their choice, they wanted to move to that university. Most of them also applied for cancellation of their admission within a year. It also includes those students who were pursuing some integrated Programmes (e.g. Integrated BCA-MCA Programme) with IGNOU, but decided to take admission in some other university for Master's Degree, they applied for cancellation of their admission for getting the Migration Certificate from IGNOU.

Analysis of data reveals that number of students who applied for cancellation of their admission was very few in case of Certificate level cases since maximum

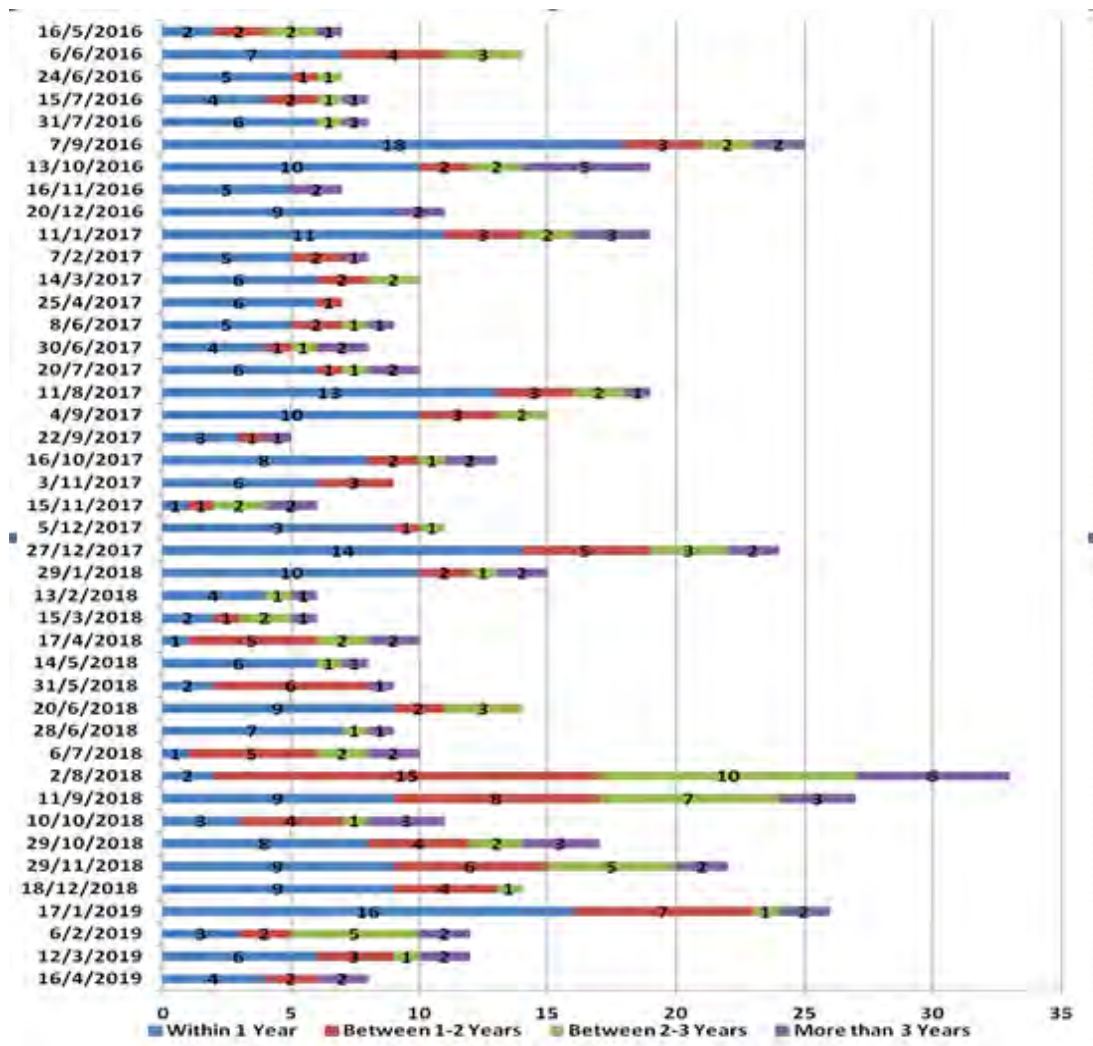


Fig.1: Date-wise Distribution of Number of Cancellation of Admission Cases Processed vis-à-vis Duration between Admission and Cancellation

duration of Certificate level Programmes expires within two years itself; and more importantly, students may pursue any Diploma/Degree level Programme, with Certificate level Programme, simultaneously, as per UGC Guideline. Hence they did not need to cancel their Certificate Level Programme for changing their Programme or even their university. Evidently, certificate level cancellation cases were of inadvertent admission, where student took admission in both modes – offline and online in the same Programme. Besides, a few students took admission in CFN/CNCC as a stand-alone

Programme, along with simultaneous Programme, along with simultaneous admission in these certificate level Programme with MSC (DFSM) Programme which was mandatory in certain cases. While, diploma level students who applied for cancellation of their admission were mostly pursuing some other diploma or degree level Programme simultaneously. In all, six such wanted to cancel their admission because they were pursuing some other Diploma and Degree from IGNOU. Sometimes, to save the time/year/semester, or sometimes to get more career opportunities, they took

simultaneous admission in more than one Diploma/Degree level Programmes in IGNOU; or a few of them were pursuing one Diploma/Degree level Programme from IGNOU and some other Diploma/Degree level Programme from some other university. As soon as they got to know that simultaneously pursuing two Programmes of Diploma/Degree level was not permissible as per UGC guidelines, they applied for cancellation of their admission, within one year itself.

About another 50 per cent students applied for cancellation of their admission after one year and upto their maximum duration. Most of these students may further be divided into two broad categories. Firstly, students (20 per cent) who were getting their admission cancelled due to personal reasons. Secondly, as many as 23 per cent students who did not want to continue, without stating any reasons. Students belonging to these two categories were, majorly, those students who might not be aware of the flexibility being extended to IGNOU students, and the support services being offered to students by IGNOU. While interacting with about 40 such students on personal level, it was found that they were finding it difficult to complete their Programme due to their personal or professional commitments, hence decided to get their admission cancelled.

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

IGNOU provides a flexible entry to its Programmes to the students with heterogeneous background and aspirations. However, students were not able to complete their Programmes that easily, consequently, dropping out in large number (Duggal, 2016), without any intimation to the university. Moreover, a significant number of students were formally applying for cancellation of admission, which researcher herself has observed over a period of about six years at Regional Centre Delhi-1, which was also the main reason for undertaking the present study. The present study

attempted to analyze these cancellation cases. Analysis of reasons for cancellation of admission clearly indicated towards one main issue, that is, students were not able to make the correct decision. Be it a case of change of Programme, change of university, inadvertent admission, personal reason or even admission cancelled without mentioning any reasons, they all were majorly linked with ignorance of students about the openness and flexibility of IGNOU system. Though, technological hitch also contributed to the phenomenon of cancellation of admission, but to a very limited extent, as for this kind of cancellation cases, the policy of cancellation of admission (*First category*) is very much in place, with the provision of refund of fee. Thus, there was a deep felt need for faculty of IGNOU working at various levels, from IGNOU HQs. to regional centres and study centres, to work in close coordination with each other, for providing pre-admission counseling and continuous effective support services, to the students, so that the cases of cancellation of admission may be minimized, if not completely eliminated. Further, there was also a need for adopting latest technological interventions for various phases of student's life cycle in IGNOU – from pre-admission phase to programme delivery and programme completion. This will strengthen the association of students with the university, which will in turn, contribute in retaining them till they complete their respective Programmes.

Since the deductions made in this study are based only on information available at Regional Centre Delhi-1, the same research problem may be up-scaled, covering all the regional centers of IGNOU's for obtaining a more generalized view about the phenomenon of cancellation of admission.

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Shyni DUGGAL has done Graduation in History Honours and Post-Graduation in History from University of Delhi. Then she did her B.Ed., M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Education from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She has also done Post Graduate Diploma and Master's Degree in Distance Education from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and PG Diploma in Linguistics. Presently she is working as Assistant Regional Director with IGNOU's Regional Centre Delhi-1, New Delhi. Before joining IGNOU she has worked with DEE, NCERT, New Delhi; Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi and District Institute of Education and Training, Keshav Puram, Delhi. Her areas of specialization are Teacher Education, Distance Education and Educational Administration. She may be contacted at shyniduggal@ignou.a.in