

## The Efficiency of Higher Education in Prisons: Deanship of Community Service and continuing education Programs (Possibilities, Benefits, Hurdles and Suggestions)

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### *Abstract*

*The importance of this research comes from the issue of human rights in education wherever they are, whatever their circumstances. This study aimed to uncover the actual position of Saudi prisons regarding to Higher Education programs implementation which was clarified that there just (4) universities from (42) interested in this matter which means that there is a shortage, and that is incompatible with Saudi vision (2030) which states that education is the right for all citizens. The community of study consists of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) and Prisons General Directorate (PGD). The sample was limited to community service & continuing education deanship council members and the managers of prison in Wadi Aldawaser, who were responders for interview open-ended questions as a study tool to collect information in order to analyze them for achieving study's aims. The main answered question in this study about extension the possibility to exist as a cooperation to provide higher education programs between (PGD) and Universities in Saudi Arabia, the results uncovered that there is consensus by all members of the study sample on the possibility of this. However, there are divisions over the obstacles to the implementation of the programs of the Deanship of Community Service & Continuing Education in Prisons, the members of the Deanship Council mentioned the danger of prisoners, the budget of the university, the readiness of the halls in prisons, the official permits and the reluctance of the professors as real hurdles, while the prison directors minimized all this and considered these obstacles just excuses and repudiation. Despite of, all responders agreed with all benefits for implementation higher education in prisons, but the majority mentioned that the absolute winners are the inmates than universities so there is need to measure the outcomes of higher education in prisons continuously to avoid wastage. In the end, researcher suggested that there is necessary for conducting more studies about the outcomes of higher education programs in prisons for ensure the efficiency.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education- Prisons- Community service & Continuing Education.

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### **Introduction**

The question that comes to minds is "Why is higher is education in prison?" The answer could be simply that the higher the degree of education, the lower the rate of recidivism, especially when such a degree helps prisoners to have a job easily through the educational and training programs that are provided by deanship of community service and continuing education.

The research addresses the issue of prisoners' right to have educational certificates which qualify them after release, that perhaps reduce the sharp shortage of higher education opportunities in Saudi prisons; prison-

university educational partnerships; and the potential of online "e-Learning and Distance Education" programs toward realization of education rights for Saudi prisoners. As practical address to these issues, the research discusses a deanship of community service and continuing Education cooperatively with English department and Educational sciences at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz university initiative to provide a partnership with Prisons General Directorate. As a creative example of how to reach to all prisoners in Wadi Aldawaser, this research illustrates a sample of actualization and virtualization of a teaching and learning experiment of developing an internship between PSAU undergraduates' courses and primarily maximum-security prisoners at the correctional facility of Wadi Aldawaser. By using educational recent technology common at university campuses, the project that will discuss in this study should be dedicated to create a prison-university bridge, and educational service that can be replicated and scaled upward. Fortunately, digital transformation in education spurs new social activism within university communities.

The significant challenge is that prisons and correctional facilities are, first and foremost, institutions of control and of security, they are not classrooms. Despite having these hurdles, education can flourish within the prison walls with the support of Saudi Prisons General Directorate and a willingness on the part of academic professors to teach within and around the constraints. (Hartney, 2006)

### **The Study Importance**

The significance of this research comes from that its subject is genuine and Authentic. There are no previous studies in Saudi community or Arabic culture about this issue - according to the best knowledge of the researcher- until the end of 2019. Moreover, the importance of this research comes from the issue of human rights in education wherever they are, whatever their circumstances, and whatever the teaching methods or learning approaches which are depending on the proper manner for each prison's case.

### **The Study Problem**

The research problem is that there are no higher education programs in Saudi prisons except a prison in the Qassim region, where there is a class belongs to the Department of Islamic Studies only. KAU was determined to provide enrollment to prisoners "External Students Program or Part-Time Students Program" in Jeddah correctional facility, but its project failed.

There is a need to concentrate on the necessity of prisoners' rights in education, and supporting them by universities through providing opportunities of reentry into society as qualified, and to eliminate the recidivism, and that exactly is the main aim for this research to know the Possibilities, Benefits, Hurdles and Suggestions, in order to be available widely in all Saudi prisons and correction facilities.

### **The Study purposes**

This research aims to:

- Disclose the extension of possibility to exist an effective cooperation to provide higher education programs between Prisons General Directorate (PGD) and Universities which is represented by Deanships of Community Service and continuing education Programs?
- Uncover the benefits of providing higher education programs in prisons particular in Saudi Arabia.
- Reveal the expected hurdles may hinder higher education programs execution in Saudis' Prisons, and provide the proper suggestions to overcome these hurdles.

### **The Study Questions**

The researcher is going to answer these questions through scientific analytical methods:

- How extension is possible to exist a cooperation to provide higher education programs between Prisons General Directorate (PGD) and Universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What are the benefits of providing higher education programs in prisons?
- What are the expected hurdles may hinder higher education programs execution?
- What are the suggestions to overcome these hurdles in order to implement efficiency higher education programs?

### **The Study Terms**

**Efficiency:** The level of educational actions either that regards to quality, development, or professional.

**Higher Education:** The universities either public or private.

**Prisons:** All the correctional facilities which belong to (PGD) in Saudi Arabia.

**Deanship of community service and continuing education programs:** The researcher refers to two kinds of programs:

- 1- Training programs, mostly dedicated for skills and normally accounted with hours and days or 3-6 months but less than one academic year. The trainee obtains an attending certificate by the end of the course.
- 2- Educational programs, they are considered as academic study, the students spend one year (two academic terms) or two years (four academic terms) depending on the program credit hours. Students obtain a postsecondary diploma certificate or higher diploma for graduates after passing successfully all the academic curriculums.

### **Literature Review**

Despite the current reality towards stronger laws and tougher prison sentences, most prisoners will eventually leave prison and return to society. But the question remains: to what kind of life will the former guest return? Education is the key to improving a person's situation. Higher education in prison: a contradiction in terms! (Williford, 2014, p 16). However, this contradiction considered nothing, if there are intentions and efforts to contribute in achieving the constant strategic directions for Saudi national vision 2030 goals and the initiative of the human capacity development program with the goal of improving equal access to education.

The researcher found several benefits for higher education in prisons through looking on previous studies and experience that exposed in articles either published in books or in conferences such as that academic papers submitted in the conferences which arranged by Alliance for Higher Education in Prison in USA. The main avails of higher education programs implantation in prisons are potentially briefed in reducing the recidivism, investing jail-time, inmates' rehabilitation and giving hopes in future life. As well as, the researcher discovered that the expecting benefits of higher education in prisons boil down to two sentences " education is the most important foundation for the development of the individual, society and the State" and "investing in higher education benefits the individual, society, and the world as a whole".

This study in concentration on higher education in prisons is considered -to the knowledge of the researcher- a genuine in Arabic academic environments. This study is going to assist to expose some experiences in this important issue which vision (2030) concentrated on because of that there is a main goal states that the education is a right for all and the government must provide education opportunities at all levels to all citizens everywhere.

Through finding out the higher education in PGD around Saudi's regions, the researcher found that there are four cases that deserve to be highlighted in this study as previous experiences:

First; Qassim University in 22 Oct 2019 opened University facility at the prison headquarters which had been specialized for higher education, that exacted place has many classrooms where university programs are provided with full-time system, including several majors of BA, and two kinds of diplomas; general diploma after secondary school, and higher diploma after university degree. There are (54) students are studying now in diploma programs. As well as, there are numbers of diploma and BA alumni had been graduated in a past stage before opening this equipped place. (QU, 2019)

Second; King Abdulaziz university in 24 Oct 2018, the rector had a consulting meeting with Mecca prison's director and his accompany delegation to discuss establishing joint education projects that serve the inmates through allowing them to join the educational, training and qualifying programs available at King Abdulaziz University in different disciplines and fields through various educational styles. Testimonies in different degrees enable them to start a new life after their release, and to their families while serving their sentences. (KAU, 2019)

Third, Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University in Dammam, the Convention on Distance Education for prison inmates has been signed between the university represented by the rector and the director general of the Prison Administration in the Eastern Region in KSA, and the draft agreement aims to provide the opportunity for prison inmates in the Eastern region who are nominated by the prison administration to join the programs. The University has ensured that educational services are provided to those wishing to continue their university education to invest their time, to get a good chance for a best life after releasing, and to be more confident with strong affiliation to the community. (IAU, 2019)

Forth, King Faisal University in Al-Ahsaa city (Eastern region) has more than (500) inmates who study through the developed Enrollment study system, and there are many of them became graduates from several higher education programs at the university in 12 Dec 2016 as the first batch. (KFU, 2019).

In Saudi PGD represented by all prisons in the whole of country and higher education establishments represented by all universities should be involved in serious Community partnerships. What happened in the four mentioned attempts are considered successful experiences but still limited especially in a big and wealthy country as Saudi Arabia.

There is an association located in USA, it interests in prisons' inmates is called "Alliance for Higher Education in Prison", its members envision a world in which all people, including those in prison, have access to quality higher education, creating a more just and equitable world. This alliance invites interested academicians to participate in its annual conferences every year. (AHEP, 2019)

In a study conducted by Kim and Clark (2013), the researchers tried to achieve the main purpose of their study which is to examine the true treatment effect of prison-based college education on recidivism. The study results confirmed that prison-based college programs have a positive effect on reducing recidivism comparing with another group has not that program. The important information had been cleared in this study is that prisoners who earned a college degree stay crime-free in the community longer than their matched comparison group.

Alsolihem (2014) wrote his Master thesis "A strategic vision to activate prisoner rehabilitation programs for post-release stage", it aimed to identify the role of rehabilitation programs currently used in the rehabilitation of those released from al-Ha'ir Prison. As well as, identify the relationship between rehabilitation programs and achieve after-care for those released from al-Ha'ir prison. Also, disclose the real results achieved by those programs. The sample of the study consists of the individuals released from Al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh (50) inmates, in addition to the supervisors of rehabilitation programs in Al-Ha'ir prison and Taraham Association (20) persons. The study main results indicated to that there is a strong agreement among the study sample on the role of rehabilitation programs currently used in the rehabilitation of those released from al-Ha'ir Prison, and there are positive trends among the study sample from those released from al-Ha'ir prison towards the rehabilitation programs offered to them.

Davis & others in (2014) conducted a study addressed with “How Effective is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here?” critically analyzes results across 267 empirical studies, performing what is called research “metaanalysis”. The study’s findings include: inmates who participated in correctional education programs had (43%) lower odds of recidivating than inmates who did not.” This represents a reduction of 13 percentage points on the risk of recidivism, also “meta-analytic findings indicate that participation in correctional education programs is associated with a 13 percentage-point reduction in the risk of reincarceration three years following release. The overall analysis suggests that correctional education has a positive and statistically significant effect on three domains that are key for reinsertion into civil society: recidivism, post-release employment, and reading and math scores.

In a study had been done by Almajali (2016) aimed to identify the perceptions of the correctional institutions' inmates for the social obstacles they expect will face after releasing. In order to achieve his study objectives, Almajali developed a questionnaire for the purpose of data collection, and the study sample consisted of (350) prisons' inmates. The study uncovered markable results, most notably: There are hard social obstacles facing the inmates after releasing like not being accepted by the community, and suffering because of the lack of interest from their families, and the presence of negative perception in the community about these individuals.

Ibn Shari (2018) conducted a study which aimed to identify the reality of educational rehabilitation programs, religious, training and rehabilitation, health care, social welfare and sports programs in Malaz prison, and identify the factors that limit the inmate benefit from these programs. Ibn Shari used the method of social survey and applied the questionnaire to a sample of (254) inmates in Malaz prison. Some of the most important results of the study: The approval of the sample of the study to a high degree of effectiveness (religious programs), they also moderately agreed on the effectiveness of (educational, health care, social welfare and sports programs), while They agreed to a low degree on the effectiveness of (training and rehabilitation) programs, as well as they highly agreed on the factors that limit the inmate's benefit from rehabilitation programs in Malaz prison, such as lack of incentives to participate in these programs, and the weak ability of workers to implement the objectives of the rehabilitation programs. Ibn Shari recommended a set of suggestions, the most important of which are: provide training and rehabilitation programs to inmates with more effectively, and provide material and moral incentives for distinguished inmates to encourage them to participate in rehabilitation programs, and urged inmates to be involved in provided education programs to reach university levels.

### **Comment on the Previous Studies**

All mentioned studies' samples consist of prisons' inmates, Even if they are part of their samples not all them, while this study is different than all mentioned previous studies on the sample excepting the study of Alsolihem (2014) which included (20) supervisors some of them from prison such as this current study which included prison and university official representatives. This study is concordant with the studies of Alsolihem (2014), Davis & others in (2014) and Ibn Shari (2018) about the positive trends to the educational programs and rehabilitation agendas. As well as, this current study agreed with the study of Almajali (2016) in concentrating on educational programs as a solution for expected obstacles that will face inmates after releasing, also this study affirmed the results of Davis & others in (2014) in the necessary of ensuring jobs for inmates after releasing to confirm that they will avoid the recidivism danger in future.

### **Method**

In order to know the possibility, benefits, hurdles and suggestions which regards to the implementation of higher education programs in PGD, the researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology, and prepared interviews with opened-end questions and ideas for discussions as a tool to collect the opinions of responsible and specialists from their perspective either in PSAU or PGD.

### The Study's Community

The community of this study consisted of PGD officers who are the leaders and responsible about the cooperation with PSAU representatives who are providing convicts with the training and scientific courses, and the employees of deanship of community service and continuing education who are supervising on these programs in PGD in Wadi Aldawaser city.

### The Study's Simple

The research's sample consists of (4) officers who manage the prison in Wadi Aldawaser (as the single branch for PGD) and (6) professors who are the council's members of community service and continuing education deanship in PSAU.

### The Study Limitations

- **Place**; this study had been transacted in Wadi Aldawaser (a town belongs to Riyadh region in the middle of Saudi Arabia).
- **Time**; This study had been done in 2019.
- **Scientific topic**; higher education in prison.

### The Study Results

The researcher interviewed the members of council of Community Service and Continuing Education and prison's managers in Wadi Aldawaser, who together representative (PSAU & PGD). The uncovered results were reasonable as the expectation because of most of governmental sectors keen to pursuit of achieving (2030) vision goals as the researcher previously mentioned, actual findings boil down to following:

In terms of *the first question*, about the possibility of existing a formal cooperation to provide inmates with higher education programs between Prisons General Directorate (PGD) and Universities in Saudi Arabia (PSAU) as a model; through the interviews all respondents agreed that the possibility is certain in case availability of necessary equipment and capabilities are available such as proper classrooms, acceptable numbers and safe situations. However, some of respondents (who are affiliated to PSAU) added that there is one important requirement which is avoiding exposing the academic participants the risk of teaching dangerous inmates such as killers.

The researcher believes that the reason of this mutual opinion from all interviewed participants came because of their keen to achieve the national vision (2030) about the citizens' right to obtain the education benefits wherever they are, and that includes those citizens who are in prisons.

Regarding to the second question, about the benefits of providing higher education programs in prisons; the responders' responses clarify that four from six of council members estimated more benefits for both inmates as correctional rehabilitations and for university as a mission relative to deliver higher education for all citizens wherever they were, side beside with governmental directions in the shadow of achieving vision (2030), the rest of council members sighted that the majority of interests of higher education in prisons will headed to inmates not to universities directly but to the country's community, so university is going to have the benefits as a part on society.

In the other hand, prison's managers deemed that the university is the highest educational institute in the society and considered a role model for other in the same field, as well as, the university has duties to community service and social partnership, and the inmates are still community members who deserve the educational services and academic programs that provided by university.

The main benefits which the all study sample affirmed may be briefed in that giving inmates a hope to face his future "post-release" life, Investing the time of the prison sentence, relieve the pain of confinement that inmates suffer, qualifying them for jobs, providing them with hard and soft skills to be involved and engaged in society easily, assisting them to restore their self-confidence and self-esteem, and earning buy-in from their families, friends, colleagues, and community again.

The researcher attributes this response by the participants of the Deanship of Community Service Council members and prison's managers to their deep knowledge about this issue more than others and because of their long experiences in the fields of community service and prison's inmate's needs.

Relating to the third question, the interviewed sample from (PSAU) through responding to the third question in this study which regards to the expected hurdles that may hinder higher education programs execution in prison, they did consensus on six barriers, four of them relative to university which are policies, systems, regulations and ministry official permissions, in addition strategic-plan that is set already before for five years and there is need to hard team work to modify it which costs time, effort and money, as well as, the budget of university which has been reduced and almost stopped recently supporting scientific researches so may that will incarnate a true financial hurdle, and faculty's readiness to teach in prison because of the task's risk or maybe they are unconvict. The rest two barriers relative to (PGD), one of them is the lacking of equipped classes suitable in prisons for the academic and educational process, and the second is potentially unavailability of Saudi faculty to teach in prison because of the (PGD) regulations states that the teachers or professors have to be Saudis.

However, the all interviewed prison's managers have another opinion which is that the prison which is located in Wadi Aldawaser as same as small cities jails in Saudi Arabia has not dangerous cases such as murders because these cases immediately had been transferring to nearby big city either Riyadh or Jeddah or others. As well as, they mentioned that in prison there is availability for finding places to be classrooms fit to implement university academic programs, whether through governmental financial supporting or businessmen donations in the community.

The researcher attributes this response by the participants of the Deanship of Community Service Council members to their attempting avoid their selves any unexpected things may annoy them Whether because of the risk of prisoners or restrictions of strict regulations to enter the prison which may cause them embarrassment during their entering to implement the higher education programs in prisons.

Finally, in terms of answering on the fourth question about the suggestions to overcome these hurdles in order to implement efficiency higher education programs; the deanship council members sighted that university has to consider the issue of higher education in prison with real steps and actual actions in its outlines particular strategic plans, to reduce costs on university there is necessary need to make involving with public or private sectors to be engaged together in community service issues for all people including those who behind the prisons' bars.

### **The Study Suggestions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the results of the interviews conducted by the researcher with members of the Deanship of Community Service and Continuing Education as well as with the directors of Wadi Al-Dawasir prison, in addition to what the researcher examined of the case literature in previous studies, conferences and local events on the topic of the study, he recommends the following:

First: The Ministry of Education should adopt the initiative presented by the researcher based on this study. The initiative that was submitted to the Ministry through Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in the name of the researcher. This initiative includes cooperation with the General Administration of Prisons in Saudi Arabia to prepare higher education headquarters in the reforms and preparing them for the

implementation of higher education programs there. This cooperation also includes a mechanism to eliminate barriers to the implementation of higher education programs in prisons, including: addressing the security of professors implementing these programs within prisons, preserving their status and assessing their attendance, and granting them privileges to ensure that they are not embarrassed or exposed to any harm. As well as the universities should take serious care to study the great benefits of higher education in prisons, including:

- 1- Reducing the relapse of prisoners after leaving as a result of the shock of society's confrontation and its inferior view of them.
- 2- Take advantage of the time of the prison sentence to benefit the prisoners and the homeland.
- 3- Contributing to the fact that higher education is a Saudi citizen's rights wherever he is.
- 4- Reinforcing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's tendency to care and restore human rights.

Second: The General Administration of Prisons should replace the existing rented buildings for corrections with decent government buildings designed according to the advanced international standards for prisons that include direct and remote educational equipment to implement the rights of prisoners to obtain their right to education.

Third: The Deanship of Community Service should make a cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, that will adopt decisions to hold courses and educational programs ending in employment and to use the domain colors (known system to give companies more facilities, permissions and reductions depending on three colors green, blue and red ) and Saudization system to implement these institutions and companies this agreement.

Finally, The researcher recommends the researchers who interest in higher education in prisons to do more studies about this important issue especially which regards to distance learning that provided by specialized deanships in Saudi universities, and to uncover the possibility of enhancing the prisons with necessary equipment, also search in possible means and methods to create suitable environments in prisons to implement higher education programs in Saudi prisons.

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