Designing and Developing a Jail-Based Higher Education Extension Program for Incarcerated Learners in Makilala, Cotabato, Philippines

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Abstract

This study outlines the systematic design and development of a context-responsive, jail-based higher-education extension program for incarcerated learners at the Makilala District Jail in Cotabato, Philippines, which directly addresses the critical shortage of tertiary education options in provincial correctional facilities. Anchored in public governance, human capital frameworks, transformative learning theory, and inclusive education principles, the study employs a developmental research design and an integrated mixed-methods approach to synthesize empirical data. The quantitative phase employed a structured needs-assessment survey among incarcerated male learners to map baseline academic, cognitive, and skill-based development priorities. Simultaneously, the qualitative phase engaged learners and institutional stakeholders through in-depth interviews, which were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method to isolate localized operational constraints and humanize educational themes. Quantitative analytics revealed a high grand mean for academic needs, emphasizing an urgent demand for instructional materials and foundational preparatory reviews, with strong specific program preferences for agriculture and criminology. Cognitive and employability profiles highlighted acute needs for enhancing self-confidence, communication proficiency, and post-release job skills. Qualitative themes exposed structural barriers, including overcrowding, mental stress, strict security regulations, and operational disruptions from court hearings. Consequently, this research develops a context-sensitive Jail-Based Higher Education Extension Program Model featuring localized modular curricula, face-to-face delivery, and structured collaborative governance among the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, local government units, and partner academic institutions. Ultimately, this study provides an evidence-based framework for correctional policy, positioning higher education as an essential mechanism for institutional reform, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.

Keywords: Jail-based education-Makilala District Jail, Developmental research, Incarcerated learners, Higher education extension program, SDG 4 & 16.