

REFORMATION OF PRISON INMATES THROUGH ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN ANAMBRA STATE OF NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT.

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Abstract

The main focus of this study was reformation of prison inmates through Adult Education Programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies for improvement. To guide this study, two research questions were formulated. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the prison staff and inmates in Anambra State. The sample consisted of 300 persons i.e. 200 inmates and 100 prison staff selected through simple random sampling. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection which was dully validated by experts in Adult Education and Measurement and Evaluation. Data collected was analyzed using Mean. The reliability of the instrument was 0.86. Among the major findings of the study were that overcrowding, poor funding, poor sanitation, poor facilities militate against reformation of prison inmates while provision of adequate facilities, recruitment of professional educators and administrators, adequate counseling services, adequate funding of prisons among others were the strategies for improvement in reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State. Some of the recommendations include that government should be encouraged through advocacy to fund the entire prison services, recruit professional prison administrators and educators, provide functional medical facilities, among others.

Key Words: Reformation, Adult Education Programmes.

I. Introduction

Reformation of Prison inmates is one of the most important functions of the Nigerian Prisons service. Reformation of Prison inmate means correcting, educating, re-orientating and rehabilitating the inmates so that they could become better citizens when released from the prison. Wikipedia (2015) defines prison reform as the attempt to improve conditions inside prisons, establish a more effective penal system or implement alternatives to incarceration. The Nigerian prisons service, just like other agencies inherited from the British colonial government has been viewed as an agent created by the government and its policies.

Prison service of Nigeria derives its powers from Cap. 366 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (1990) to perform the following functions amongst which include: take into custody all those legally intended and set in motion mechanisms for their training and reformation, preparatory to returning them back to the society as normal law abiding citizens. The implication is that reformed prisoners do no longer be security threats to national peace which is so vital for socio-economic and political development. In other words, the purpose of reform is to train through appropriate conditions convicted prisoners to be better citizens on discharge.

Reformation of prisons and prisoners in Nigeria still conjures punishment (Kalu, 2002). Kalu went further to say that the new ideology behind our penal practice in Nigeria was further predicted upon the belief that imprisonment and subsequent loss of freedom was punishment enough, punitive imprisonment had deformative effect on the minds and outlook of the prisoners. A prisoner or an inmate is a person who is deprived of liberty against his or her will. This can be by confinement, captivity, or forcible restraint. The term applies particular to those on trial or servicing prison sentence in a prison (Wikipedia, 2015).

According to Opara (2008), it does appear that the very institution whose purpose is ostensibly to correct the deviant seem more likely to confine him in his deviant behaviour. The argument against punitive imprisonment is that it is incompatible with reformation of offenders. This situation is in contrast with the new ideology behind the penal system. Braggins and Talbot (2007) argued that a prisoner should leave prison in a better state than he or she came in. They noted that this notion is enshrined in the prison service statement of purpose.

Reformation of Prison Inmates can only be achieved through education and training. Adult education through its programmes becomes a panacea for effecting positive changes in the prison inmates before they are released. Adult education programmes are programmes aims at providing education that will enable young as well as mature adults to improve or supplement their knowledge and skills within general subject. The programmes enhance adults' ability to improve their future job and educational possibilities.

According to Ogundipe (2008), the Nigerian Prison Service has developed pragmatic educational programmes for reforming the prison inmates. These programmes according to him include: Vocational skills development Programme (SVDP) which aims at empowering the prisoners with the needed skills for self-sustenance and actualization, Adult Remedial Education Programme (AREP) designed to help prisoners who before they came to the prison, were pursuing one academic programme or the other. The programmes enable prison inmates to learn skills in such vocation as tailoring, plumbing, carpentry, woodwork, barbing, shoe making, and a host of others. The author went further to state that through remedial programmes in the Nigeria prisons, 1,306 candidates sat for the WAEC and GCE examinations as well as NECO in 2006 while in 2007, 1,198 candidates took the same examinations. For this success, the West African Examination Council made Ikoyi Prisons, Lagos one of its examinations centres.

Despite these achievements and the efforts of successive Nigerian governments towards reformation of prison inmates in Nigeria, the condition faced by prison inmates in Anambra State of Nigeria is unsavory. There is no evidence to show that prison inmates in Anambra State are properly reformed because most to inmates who are released become more hardened and they commit more serious crime. A lot of people were caught in Anambra State ranging from car snatching, kidnapping, murder and the rest of other crimes and were imprisoned after trial. It is not surprising that the same people when released from the prison commit more crimes. This explains why there is high rate of recidivism because they were not properly reformed or rehabilitated (Salaudean, 2004). The expectations are that the Anambra Prison has not impacted positively on the lives and vocations of inmates which has raised questions that have not yet been completely addressed on the systems functions and existence, hence a gap is created. This is because the population that goes in and out of the prison shows that there are some problems in the system.

In fact, it is not clear, if at all any reformatory programmes targeted at the prison inmates in Anambra State have been contributory in reforming them. Since the prison inmates in Anambra State are not properly reformed when released, there is the need to identify the challenges facing the prison institution and proffer strategies for improvement, hence the need for this study.

II. Method

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised of all the prisons staff and inmates in Anambra State. The sample consisted of 300 persons i.e. 200 inmates and 100 prisons staff selected through simple random sampling. The supposition was that the respondents were knowledgeable about their conditions as staff and as inmates. A self structured questionnaire titled “Reformation of Prison Inmates in Anambra State: Challenges and Strategies for improvement” (ROPIASCASFI) was used. The instrument was subjected for validity by two experts in Adult Education and other two experts in Measurement and Evaluation all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. Comments and recommendations of the experts were incorporated in the final construction of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and 0.86 was obtained and was adjudged high enough. The data collected was analyzed with Mean. Decision rule was based on 4-points numerical values assigned: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4-points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. Items which had mean rating of 2.50 and above were agree on.

III. Results/Findings

The findings of the study were presented according the research questions in tables 1 and 2. Out of the 300 copies of the questionnaire distributed and returned, 8 were badly filled and discarded while the remaining 292 copies were presented and analyzed in tables using Mean.

Research Question 1

What are the challenges militating against reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Scores of the respondents on the challenges militating against reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State.

S/N	Challenges	\bar{x}	Decision
1.	Lack of professional educators and Administrators	2.92	Agreed
2.	Overcrowding	3.58	Agreed
3.	Poor funding	3.79	Agreed
4.	Poor feeding/welfare	3.90	Agreed
5.	Poor management/Administration	2.84	Agreed
6.	Inadequate counseling services	3.57	Agreed
7.	Poor sanitation	3.75	Agreed
8.	Poor facilities	3.83	Agreed
9.	Corruption among prison staff	3.00	Agreed
10.	Lack of political will	3.82	Agreed

11.	Delay in total of prisoners	3.88	Agreed
12.	Problem of recidivism	2.75	Agreed
13.	Lack of staff training	2.78	Agreed

Table 1 shows that all the items 1-13 were agreed by the respondents. This is because the mean scores in all the items are above 2.50. This implies that all the items are the challenges militating against reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State.

Research Question 2

What are the strategies for improvement in reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State?

S/N	Strategies	\bar{X}	Decision
1.	Training and re-training of prison staff through in-service, seminars and workshops.	3.26	Agreed
2.	Provision of adequate facilities by government.	3.78	Agreed
3.	Recruitment of professional educators and administrators.	3.54	Agreed
4.	Adequate funding of prisons.	3.89	Agreed
5.	Adequate counseling services.	3.35	Agreed
6.	Construction of more structures.	3.77	Agreed
7.	Improving on welfare of staff and prisoners.	3.80	Agreed
8.	Partnering with NGOs for assistance.	2.84	Agreed
9.	Occasional moral instructions for prisoners by men of God.	3.46	Agreed
10.	Encouraging visitation policy.	2.96	Agreed
11.	Encouraging advocacy on prisons conditions.	3.27	Agreed
12.	Teaching more of Vocational training skills	3.76	Agreed
13.	Timely trial of the offenders.	3.58	Agreed
14.	Computerization of prisons system	3.51	Agreed

Table 2 also shows that all the items 1-14 were agreed by the respondents because the mean scores are greater than 2.50. This implies that all the items are the prospective strategies for improvement in reformation of prison inmates in Anambra State.

IV. Discussion

The analysis of the data in research question one, showed that the respondents agreed that all the challenges in table 1 militate against them ranging from lack of professional educators and administrators to lack of staff training. This is in agreement with The Nation (2010) that Nigeria prisons are "living hells" twenty to thirty inmates arrive at the prison every day, thus over-crowding the reformatory structure which do not even exist in the true sense, often times tripling the original carrying capacity. For example, Ikoyi Prison in Lagos State was 800 but now in excess of 1,200. This scene is reflected in all prisons structures in the country. This also corroborates with Ostreicher (2003) that prisoner's

rehabilitation is a politically unpopular cause. Ex-prisoners have the strong incentive to commit crimes to survive and are threats to the peace of the society. This also confirms the view of Osefo (1990) who asserts that industrial plan in the prison was always unrealistic and that the supposed rehabilitation was nothing less than debilitation. He further explains that prison facilities were not suitable for rehabilitation. Rabbi (2008) equally identified poor funding, shortage of qualified staff among others as major challenges facing effective utilization of prison farm centres for prisoners' reformation.

Corroborating with the challenges, the Amnesty international (2008:1) noted that the living conditions in the prisons are appalling. They are demanding to the physical and mental well-being of inmates and in many cases constitute clear threats to health. Conditions such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of food and medicine and denial of contact with families and friends fall short of UN standards for the treatment of prisoners. In many Nigerian prisons, inmates sleep two to a bed or on the floor in filthy cells. Toilets are blocked and overflowing or simply non existence and there is no running water. As a result, the disease is widespread. Some prisons have small clinics which lack medicine, some have hospitals. Guards often demand that inmates pay bribes for such privileges as visiting the hospitals, receiving visitors, contacting their families and in some cases, being allowed outside their cells at all. Prisoners with money may be allowed mobile phones whereas those without funds can be left languishing in their cells. She went further to report that people are convicted without fair trial and in some cases were not offered the services of a lawyer throughout the proceedings.

The findings from research question two revealed that the prospective strategies to the challenges facing reformation of prison inmates were agreed by the respondents. It is assumed that if the strategies are employed, the conditions of inmates would be reversed. This agrees with Osefo (1990) that correctional educators are needed to help identify, clarify and resolve the issues confronting the inmates. He further explains that there was need to build and restore the individual's capacities including his or her vocational ability. Incarcerating criminals is a costly endeavour, without effective treatment programmes to help reform prisoners, such an exercise would just be a mere colossal waste. Reformation programmes cost far less. In corroboration with this, Kalu (2002) stated that teaching of basic skills that would help prison inmates be gainfully employed on their release is directly in line with the need to address offender behaviour and rate of conviction.

The strategies also confirm the view of Charl (2006) that the principle of classification of prisons and the effective separation of prisoners according to their levels of security risk is embedded in the present correctional service act, 1998 which is generally accepted that a good security classification system forms the backbone of good prison administration. The current author adds that adequate funding of the prisons will boost the welfare of both prisons staff and inmates, provides for more structures and facilities, pays staff salaries and helps in training and retraining of staff through seminars, workshops and in-service training. This will go a long way in readdressing the reformation policy set at the initial stage by the government.

V. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that the prison is a component of the criminal justice system charged with the responsibility of confirming, reforming and rehabilitating prison inmates so that they would become better citizens when released from the prison. Regrettably, the inmates in Anambra State prisons of Nigerian become more hardened when they are released from prisons instead of being reformed and rehabilitated to the detriment of the society. This syndrome explains why the rate of recidivism in Nigeria is at increase. Besides, poor funding, overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of political will, among others are some of the challenges confronting prison services in Nigeria. For this reason, prospective strategies were preferred which will go a long way in engendering positive prisons systems development in the country.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The Federal government should be encouraged through advocacy to fund the entire prison services, especially in the areas of vocational training to enable the prisoners be equipped with employable skills when they are released.
2. Professional administrators and educators should be recruited in the Nigeria prisons. This is to give the prisons services professional touch that will beget desired development among the prisons staff and the inmates.
3. Adequate and functional medical facilities should be provided by the government to stop the spread of diseases and death among the inmates.
4. Qualified counselors should be employed to counsel the inmates on the dangers of engaging in societal vices.
5. There is need for training and re-training of prison administrators and educators through seminars, workshop[s] and in-service training. This will equip them with the managerial skills and innovative methods and practices in prison management and administration.
6. Men of God, families and well wishers should be allowed to visit the prisoners as their words of advice can effect positive changes in their mode of rethinking.

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