

THE POLICY ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICE AND THE REFORMATIVE AGENDA IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTION

YAHUZA DANJUMA IZOM Ph.D
08036697229, Email- yahuzaijom@yahoo.com

FATIMA ALKALI
08032241188, Email-fatimaalkali1@gmail.com

Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai.

Abstract

The paper aims to explore policy on correctional service and the reformative Agenda in Nigeria with focus on the impact felt by Nigerians in the new wave of the policy introduction. This paper used documentary methodology to arrived at it analysis. The article found that the new name came into being under an act of 2019. Secondary sources of data collection were used. From the work it was realized that the policy act, 2019 has four major objectives which the Nigerian Correctional Service want to achieve in line with the world standard in the ways of handling inmates. The theory of rehabilitation was used. The tool of analysis was purely content analysis and logical inference. From the findings is that the institution is still facing various degree of challenges. However, this paper came out with a number of recommendations among which are Government should properly fund the prison system in the country, government should provide adequate welfare for staff of the Nigerian Prison Service, and the skill acquisition programmes in Nigerian prisons should be reorganized and developed to ensure that all prisoners acquire one or more skill among others.

Introduction

Nigerian prison service was generally perceived as an institution charged with the responsibilities of keeping inmates and possibly those who are awaiting trial. It was also seen that anyone who passes through prison as an inmate is labelled with the stigma of social disintegration in the society; hence, no one will like to associate himself with such inmate. More so, as the population of Nigeria is increasing so the rates of criminal acts are also increasing with no corresponding expansion of the institution. There is a consensus among scholars that Nigerian prisons system has failed in its task of reforming and rehabilitating criminals. Eze and Okafor (2007) rightly observed that the pathetic condition of Nigeria's prisons has sent signal to the fact that the prisons are incapable of yielding the purpose of its creation, that is, to reform the inmates in order to become a good citizens of the state. In addition to the aforementioned, the numbers of inmates in a particular prison has no doubt overstretched the facilities making the place a hell for the inmates resulting to the jail breaks that are being witnessed from time to time in Nigeria. In most of the prisons, there is shortage of bed spaces such that, most of the inmates sleep on bare floor, besides, the prison environment are unhygienic; with poor ventilation and poor sanitary condition hence, prison conditions remain harsh and life threatening. In the same vein, the plight of youthful offenders and female prisoners is much worse than already described. Most of these prison facilities were not built with females in mind; however, they do host female inmates. Cases of rape, pregnancies and extra-judicial killings abound in Nigerian Prisons. A further breakdown of the inmates in Lagos prisons by the Nigerian Tribune shows that 4,440 of all the total inmates are awaiting trial and are, therefore, not part of the plans of prison officials. The only thing that they get from the prison officials is food. They are not trained or allowed to undergo any vocational work. Just 936 inmates had been convicted and are facing jail terms, with about 70

of them condemned to death.

However, hope grew in 1999 when the country was returned to civilian rule with a promise to uphold fundamental human rights, the rule of law, pursue a nationwide decongestion of the prisons and the reformation of the prisons institution but since 1999, nothing have been done (Oduyela, 2003). Consequently, recidivism in Nigeria is high. Based on the aforementioned problems that Nigerian correctional service was established with additional responsibilities to carter for the need of inmate and clearing some level of stigmatization that inmates cannot be responsible citizens of the country. In addition, the institution is expected to provide very vital penal practice in an effort to change offender's attitude, behaviour, values and to promote successful reintegration into the society and also to promote public protection by providing aids for offenders in their respective societies.

Nigeria Correctional Service performs the following functions more elaborate than the previous act:

- a) Social isolation and confinement
- b) Enforcement of repentance
- c) Punishes to service as deterrence
- d) Protects citizens from criminals
- e) Enforces reformation
- f) Produces suspects in court
- g) Keep convicted in lawful custody(NCS, 2019)
- a. Reformative Agenda is carried out based on moral and skill acquisitions in the prisons by providing necessary working tools and personnel to manage them. The aim of reformative agenda was focused on the prisoners to be better than what they were before prisonization. Rehabilitate the prisoners in order to equip them with new skills or improve on their old ones. Seclude criminals from the rest of the society, pending when they have atoned for their sins. This reformation came as a result of advocacy by many Nigerians that the prisons overcrowd health problem, racism, gang activity, privatization, and assaults among many problems.

Literature Review

History of Rehabilitative and Educational Programmes in Nigerian Prisons;

To critically examine the rehabilitative nature of Nigeria prison, available records on what impact rehabilitation until have made in other prisons were reviewed so as to relate them to Nigeria prison. Abu (1973) show that educational classes began in prisons as one of the post-war developments over forty years ago. A small beginning was made at the broad street in Lagos, in conjunction with the local education authorities. Selected prisoners with more than six month left to serve were allocated to classes, and basic literacy teaching was given for upwards to twelve hours a week. Standardized examinations were to keep a check on their progress. By the mid-1950s some of the early anticipated fears had been overcome and between 1955 and 1956, two qualified teachers were appointed to the prison service for the first time in Nigeria. At the same time, teaching hours were reduced so as not to interfere with the working day and with assistance of prison officers and selected prisoners, teaching was regularized to one hour a day. By the end of the decade, facilities had expanded, further, seven teachers had been appointed, prison officers and prisoners continued to

act as aides and evening classes were given in all the large prisons. The Ilesha prison recorded, from 1959 to 1960, a sixty percent success sequel to graduation of students. It was in 1960, with the opening and development of the Kakuri open centre, that higher educational facilities began to grow. Commercial education was given up to Royal society of Arts examination level and individual pupils were prepared by voluntary teachers and senior officers for the ordinary level G.C.E. Examination. By 1964, the open prison was reporting its highest number of passes in the R.S.A and G.C.E, Ordinary and Advanced level. Some prisoners are qualified to enter university and the Kakuri open prison, now permanently staffed, had been approved by the then Northern Nigeria Ministry of education for the awarding of standard six certificates. Notwithstanding, recidivism is one of the yardsticks for judging the effectiveness of the prison system and its reformatory capability is the number of inmates who remain outside the prison wall after completing their terms of imprisonment.

Challenges in Nigerian Correctional Service System

Prisons, as correctional institutions in Nigeria, are faced with myriad of problems and this explains why correctional system is not effective in Nigeria. In fact, studies like Obioha (1995), Adetula et al. (2010) have shown that passing through the prison system in Nigeria makes the less hardened individuals to be more hardened in criminal activities upon release. In his study, Adetula et al. (2010) posit that ironically, the penal institutions subsystem, the justice, the police, prison yard and the operatives ways of administering justice is believed to bring about breeding and enhancing criminal behaviour and recidivists than serving, deterrence, repentance, reformatory and reconciliatory attitudes between ex-convicts and people in the society. It has been observed that the longer an offender stays in the prisons the more the probability of recidivism and vice-versa. Chukwudi (2012) provides a succinct explanation by rightly observing that life in Nigerian prisons in general is overly regimented to the extent that there is strict control in virtually all activities of the inmates. This often leaves the prisoners in a mentally brutalized manner with broken body and spirits which destroys the individual. In a study of the prisons as a correctional institution in Nigeria, Ogundipe (2006) asserts that the prisons were in terrible shambles, the congestion rate among the inmates especially those awaiting trial was so high that a prison with a population capacity of 30,000 inmates is hosting over 58,000 inmates. Prison infrastructures and logistics have experienced centuries of neglect that have made the Prisons at this time a moral of hell. Corroborating this view, Olajide (2014) observed that most of the nation's prisons are older than the nation. The facilities are not upgraded yet, the inmates sent there are far more in population than the facilities were designed to accommodate. Inmates are crammed; sanitary facilities are simply inhuman, diseases are freely shared, yet, more inmates are daily brought in to compound the already bad situation. In his own contribution, Ali (2018) adds that this state of the Nigerian Prison Service (NPS) was equally exacerbated by the dominant military leadership that Nigeria has experienced since independence. The military in its 29 years of political leadership saw the prisons as a punitive institution and thus did not give it any attention as to develop its infrastructures and conditions. Ogundipe (2006) noted that the military did not periodically visit the prisons but only made sure that those they had detained were not allowed any measure of comfort.

The modern prisons are expected to house, among other correctional facilities, a main entrance, a religious facility, educational facility, a gym, a health care centre or hospital, a segregation unit, safe cells for people under constant visual observation, a visiting section, a death row for those awaiting execution, staff accommodation area, and services such as kitchens, industrial or agricultural plant and recreational area. Unfortunately, Ajah and Nweke (2017) observed that Nigeria is yet to implement the United Nations minimum standard because all these functional correction-based prerequisites are grossly lacking in Nigeria prisons. Prisons in Nigeria have a few things in common: congestion, dirty and

inadequate medical rehabilitation facilities. As a result, some inmates relapse into crime and criminality few months after their release while many of them fall sick and die before they are tried or as they serve time (Alabi, 2011; Amnesty International, 2008). The terrible conditions in Nigerian prisons made Usman (2014) to lament that prison inmates get back into the society hardened after serving their sentences, thereby frustrating security operatives' efforts to curb criminal acts in the society. The common ailments among inmates were malaria, high blood pressure and skin infections, which is rampant among inmates, particularly those at the Medium Prisons.

Another devastating challenge is the congestion of these prisons owing to the increasing number of awaiting trial persons. According to Nnamdi (2005), Less than 4 percent of all the total prison admissions are females, more than 55 percent of the convicted prisoners, are first offenders that are star prisoners. About 80 percent of the convicted prisoners serve short-term imprisonment of less than two years, more than 50 percent of the total prison admission are awaiting trial or being remanded in custody. Apparently, Oduyela(2003) observed that rather than focus on new reformative and rehabilitative ideas, Nigeria's penal system is essentially punitive, degrading and dehumanizing; and leaves the prisoners with the least opportunity of re-entry into the society. Oduyela (2003) argued further that those who are lucky to come out alive find it exceedingly difficult to re-adjust to normal lives and eventually end up in crime. Prison sources disclose that prison life has become somewhat cyclic for several ex-prisoners, the number of recidivists, remain in the increase. A survey study carried by Onyekachi (2016) revealed that there is an ever-increasing problem of prison correction, like poor funding, prison congestion and the failure of the extant prison laws to address the major objective for establishing prison and rehabilitation of the prison inmates. This has continued to constitute a cog in the wheel of success in the Nigeria prisons. The funding of the system has been on the decline, coupled with continued increase of prison inmates, leading to prison congestion. The prison administration has equally been confronted with cases of corruption among few high ranking officers, not minding the small resources made available for the management of the prison by the federal government. Staff, especially the rank and file, (non-commissioned officers) is becoming disgruntled in the discharge of their duties as a result of lack of incentive to boost their morale. The prison system, which ideally should have been solely for correction of prison inmates through counselling, rehabilitations and reform of inmates, has today, become a breeding ground for hardened criminals who become worse than they were when they got into prison. This could be attributed to the over emphasis on punishment and not correction by the act that established prison system (Onyekachi, 2016). The above assertion was supported by another study conducted by Eze and Okafor (2007), when it revealed that most of the respondents considered the prison as a place of punishment rather than reformation and rehabilitation centres and inmates not learning any skill because the equipment and tools used in the rehabilitation programmes were in a state of despair. Apparently, a study by Bashir (2010) revealed that either in terms of its facilities, personnel, or programmes, the prison was not predisposed to reforming or rehabilitating convicted criminal offenders. This was associated with the perceived inconsistencies in equipments, trainers, and attitude of programme instructors. The study also observed that as long as one continues to stay in the prison, he is bound to continue to develop negative views towards the prison and its reformatory programmes and this is associated with high rate of recidivism among prisoners as a result of improper programmes implementation, inexistence or inadequate modalities for programmes implementation and negative attitudes of the programme instructors towards prison inmates.

Another study by Achu, Owan and Ekok (2013), found Nigerian prisons to be a dungeon

and represents inhumanity to man. Furthermore, the study revealed that recidivism amongst ex-convict is high; because inmates were not trained in any particular trade hence on discharge they become frustrated and despondent. This argument is attributed to the work of Osefo (1990) who asserted that: planned reforms in Nigeria prison was always unrealistic and that the supposed correction was nothing less than deformation and a travesty. Consequently, statistics from 19 prisons across Nigeria shows that over 60% of inmates are recidivists, i.e. inmates who have been convicted more than once. This is an indication that the prison and the best interests of Nigerians are not satisfactorily served by the Nigerian Prison System. It could therefore be deduced that, the rehabilitative aspect of the Nigeria prison system is grossly neglected. This has resulted to lack of well equipped rehabilitation centre in all the Nigeria Prison (Chukwumerije, 2014). With these challenges facing the prison system in Nigeria, it will be impossible to achieve the objectives of rehabilitation and reformation of criminals.

The Problems of Nigerian Prison System

The Nigerian prisons have been enormously characterized by some problems, which several studies have indicated to be the reasons for the inadequacies of the system as a corrective institution. In various respects, life in Nigerian prisons in general is overly regimented to the extent that there is strict control in virtually all activities of the inmates. This often leaves the prisoners in a mentally brutalized manner with broken body and spirit, which destroys the individuals. In this regard, it is apparent that the prisons system in Nigeria is faced with the problem of destroying the individual members of the community, which negates the essence of imprisonment, amounting to human development wastage in the national calculus. It is evident that various prisons in Nigeria are saddled with the problem of turning out maladjusted releases. Studies like Obioha (1995), Adetula (2010) have shown that contact with the prison institution in Nigeria makes the less hardened individuals to be more hardened in criminal activities upon release, with more tendencies than not, to relapse to criminal activities, which generates high frequency of recidivism. According to Adetula (2010), the penal institutions subsystems; the justice, the police, prison yard and the operatives ways of administering justice is believed to bring about breeding and enhancing criminal behaviour and recidivists than serving; deterrence, repentance, reformatory and reconciliatory attitudes between ex-convicts and people in free society to enhance confidence in physical and conceptual security. This position has also been validated in other countries. For example, the study of Gendreau (1999) in Canada found a positive correlation between length of stay in the prisons and the offenders' rate of recidivism, especially for the high risk group. In other words, the longer an offender stays in the prisons the more the possibility of recidivism and vice-versa. However, the fundamental cause of this post-release problem of maladjustment and recidivism could be traced to the lock up pattern and content of the prisons. In most prisons in Nigeria, the remand and convict populations; the minor and serious offenders, the younger and older inmates are not systematically sorted out in different cells according to the Standard Minimum Rules (SMR) for imprisonment, which prescribes that prisoners should be locked up according to their various categories. The Nigerian prisons have been identified as a veritable avenue for human resources wastage in the society. There is idleness and wastage among the inmates, while old time trade ideas and occupations vanish (Obioha 1995). Where there are existing trade and skills acquisition centres within the prison yards, they are either not functioning or unsuitable for some of the inmates who may prefer other trades and educational learning processes that are non existence in the prisons reformation curriculum. For instance, some inmates have demonstrated ability and the desire to acquire higher academic qualifications while in the prison in order to improve on both their social status and meet up with their life educational ambition which may not necessarily be related to the vocational trades in the prison yard. It is not an exaggeration to adduce that Nigerian Prisons System is a home for idle minds due to lack of what to do, lack of workshop facilities (Aiyedogbon 1988; Obioha 1995) In relation to social

infrastructure, there are no good recreational facilities and other amenities in Greg (2001) *Nigerian Prisons: A Sociological Study of Sokoto Prison* and the study revealed that the relationship between inmates and the prison workers as well as within and among the inmates makes it hard for the inmates to learn or share knowledge. The study states that apart from cohabitation, there is no better ways of inculcating reformative messages into the heads and hearts of the inmates. Drente (2005) *The English Prisons: Their Past and their Future* and the findings show that the English prisons are as reformatory as schools. The study shows that some children who fail to learn in schools go into the reformatories and acquire skills that latter took them to a greater height in the lives.

Amnesty International (2008) *Nigeria: Prisoners Rights Systematically Flouted*. This study whose report was published in London found that the rights of the Nigerian prisons inmates are violated, especially those that are awaiting trials. It advised the government of Nigeria to embark on reforms that could turn these ugly situations around.

Gendreau, Goggin, and Cullen (2009) studied *The Effects of Prison Sentences on Recidivism* and revealed prison sentences have great effects on people's recidivism. The study, according to many other researchers has been one of the best studies of Nigerian prisons in the last decade.

Onyekachi (2010) studied *The Nigerian Prisons: What they look like From the Inside* and found out that the inmates suffer inhuman situations in the respective Nigerian prisons. The study accused the government of overlooking the rights of the inmates.

Achu and Owan (2013) investigated the impact of prison reforms on the welfare of inmates in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria by employing the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The result of the analysis shows that poor remuneration and absence of reformatory facilities militate against reforms workability. Furthermore, it revealed that recidivism amongst ex-convict is high; because inmates were not trained in any particular trade hence on discharge they become frustrated and despondent. The researchers concluded that inmates should be realistically introduced to useful trades that are geared toward occupational reality of the world outside prison, so that they could better their lives on discharge from prison.

Okala, Ezumah, & Ebue (2015) examined the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in the Nigerian prisons. The result showed that rehabilitation programmes in the prisons have not achieved much. It was also discovered that the duration of service for the inmates does not make the inmates to be actively involved in rehabilitation programmes. The researchers recommended that the prison authorities should provide earning schemes to inmates to enhance their effective reintegration and rehabilitation into the society.

Ugwuoke and Ameh (2014) empirically examined the rehabilitative and reformative roles of Federal prisons in Kogi state. The findings of the study reveal that despite the official claims that these prisons are operating on the principles of rehabilitation and reformation, abundant evidence indicate that these institutions are still largely retributive in nature. The researchers recommended that reforms should be backed with the needed political will to be implemented, because making it without implementation are as good as not making the reforms.

Obioha (2011) carried out a research on the challenges and reforms in the Nigerian prison systems. The researcher recommends that in order to deal finally with prison congestion, the committee needs to be strengthened in its work by changing their periodic visit to the prisons to be more regular and frequent, more prison yards need to be built, more non- governmental organizations should be encouraged and allowed to visit the prisons to monitor the activities there, from which they can make an input in form of suggestions to the various reform committees on what to do.

Asokhia (2011) investigated rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons in Edo state of Nigeria. The study found that: Provision for rehabilitation services is still neglected and not international best practices compliance. Prison inmates of these prisons prefer one rehabilitation service to the other. The most preferred rehabilitation service is recreational activity — football.

Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that deliberate efforts should be made by the Federal Government and prison service providers to reform the Nigerian prisons and make it international best practice compliant. There is also the need to introduce more rehabilitation services, facilities and reformative programmes such as training inmates on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and giving adequate awareness programmes so as to rehabilitate prison inmates and stop recidivism. Mwangi (2011) examines correctional attitudes towards the new responsibilities of transforming inmates through correctional counselling detailing the demographic, positional and occupational characteristics that predict the correctional attitudes. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the raw data into frequencies and percentages, while Spearman's correlation was used to conduct a bivariate relationship between correctional attitudes and the demographic, positional and occupational characteristics. The study found out that correctional officers held affirmative attitudes towards correctional counselling and that age and rank were good predictors of correctional attitudes.

Osayi (2015) carried out a research on socio-cultural factors affecting reintegration of discharged prisoners in Anambra state, Southeast, Nigeria. The study employed qualitative research method with the population comprising adult members of the public, discharged prisoners, opinion leaders and staff of Nigeria prisons who were selected across randomly selected communities within two purposively chosen locations of Onitsha and Awka. Findings indicated that discharged prisoners are stigmatized both by societal members and existing laws. This study recommends that the government and other non-governmental agencies must step up their efforts to recondition the debasing conditions of Nigeria prison as well as review relevant laws to ensure systematic post incarceration rehabilitation and reintegration of discharged prisoners into the society, so that they can contribute to growth and sustainable development of the society. Shahobi (2014) investigated the challenges of imprisonment in Nigerian penal system. The research finds that the prisons are overcrowded; conditions are deplorable with inadequate rehabilitation and aftercare provisions. He recommends greater use of fines by courts; restitution, mediation, probation and community service as non-custodial measures for minor and non-violent offenders. Several measures are recommended for rehabilitation and aftercare of convicts.

Olufunke and Dosumu (2011) investigated the effect of alcohol abuse on the recidivism risk levels, number of times convicted/imprisoned and nature of offence of prison inmates in Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that alcohol/substance abuse has significant effect on the recidivism risk levels and the number of times convicted among inmates. However alcohol has no significant effect on the nature of inmates' offence. The study recommends the need for the Nigerian Prisons Service to commence programmes targeted towards treatment of alcohol /substance abuse.

Oluyemi and Amajuoyi (2012) examined the effects of creativity training in improving the creativity motivation of some male prison inmates. Twenty male prison inmates of the Maximum Security Prisons, Kiri-kiri, Lagos, Nigeria who were randomly selected

This lack of social amenities accounts for the culture of fragility and explosive social violence that is recurrent and descriptive of Nigerian prison community over the years. Physical infrastructure and housing facility could better be described as uncivilized. The rooms and cells are not good for human habitation, while the beddings are in most cases absent as many prison inmates in Nigeria sleep on bare floor. This manifests in most of the prisons holding more population of inmates than they were originally planned to accommodate, which in turn overstretches available infrastructure

beyond their limits of function due to human pressure. It is a recurring administrative problem that had been identified in notable Nigerian prisons prior to colonial rule, even when there is a need to take a sick inmate out of the prison yard for treatment in a hospital; there are no motor vehicles to do that. The apparent out- come of this situation without standard health facilities in the prisons can be imagined from the point of view of what happens to a sick inmate in coma or critical emergency condition that requires urgent medical attention which is neither readily available nor accessible. With the above problems in Nigeria prisons, it may be difficult for Nigerian society to have prisoners reformed for better lives. The government has to make it clear, through financial and other necessary supports that the prison system has a responsibility to work on the inmates, so that they can be useful to themselves and the society in general upon their release. Except the right tools and right working atmosphere are provided, mere sloganeering will serve no useful purpose as all the goals for prisons reforms will continue to remain a mirage.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Rehabilitation

This is a theory which states that criminals, offender who are eventually locked up in the prison could be rehabilitated and returned to society as productive citizens. The theory first emerged in the early 1900s (Ojo, 2007). It is an idea that has since been debated for almost a century, as recidivism rates are often disappointing in the face of optimism. It is estimated that over 65 percent of prisoners return into the criminal justice system over time.

Different approaches have been adopted on the search for the best ways to reform a prisoner even while serving punishment for his/her sins. In the early 19th century during the Jacksonian era, rehabilitation through punishment was first embodied in the prisons meant for criminals otherwise called penitentiaries. Those who proposed the reforms hoped that these criminals would be kept in solitude, which will enable them, reflect penitently on their sins with the hope that they might cleanse and transform themselves.

Under the Pennsylvania system, policy makers believed that solitary confinement, accompanied by silent contemplation and deep reflection on the words of God, was a means to redeeming the criminal from his/her sinful ways. The failure of this approach resulted in the transformation during the Auburn system into a system that incorporated both discipline and labour, which are also performed in silence.

The reformatory approach in prisons was introduced in the latter part of the 19th century when the penitentiary gave way to the reformatory in an attempt to rehabilitate offenders through educational and vocational training, in conjunction with quasi-military regimes. The new system of reformation introduced the idea of classification of prisoners that allowed for their individualized treatment. Under this system, Prisoners progressed through graded stages based on their conduct and performance in programs. They even had the opportunity of working towards their early release.

Detractors of rehabilitation programs believe that prison is too easy, and that criminals want to come back for a free place to eat, sleep and live. However, if well rehabilitated, could make a worthy living after serving their prison sentences (Davids, 2011).

Ojo (2007) recalls that there is also a school of thought that says the only things criminals learn in prison is how to commit bigger crimes when they get out of jail, having built a network of nefarious allies. Meanwhile, proponents of prison rehabilitation programs continue to advocate for greater funding of better opportunities for the incarcerated, to help change their behaviour and learn important social and workplace skills. The rehabilitation theory as a theory states that criminals, offender who is eventually locked up in the prison could be rehabilitated or reformed

and returned to society as productive citizens.

Methodology

This paper adopted the documentary method of research. Data was gotten from secondary sources such as journal articles, newspapers, government publications and internet sources, among others. The data collected were analysed using content analysis and logical inference.

The new policy of Nigeria Correctional Service

The new policy was just to change the name from the conventional prison to Nigerian Correctional Service which was perceived as been stigmatized by the societies that no one want to be associated with someone who has been in the prison in the past. It is part of our constitution in Nigeria that one's an individual is convicted cannot not be a civil servant or public servant, however, the status quo have changed in such a way that they can still be relevant to the society. It is on this note that various skills acquisition programmes are been introduced in various prisons across the country. It is on this premise that various educational institutions including National Open University of Nigeria went to education programmes agreement with the Nigeria Correctional Service to encourage inmates to acquire knowledge. President Muhammadu Buhari on the 31st July, 2019 signed the Nigerian Correctional Service act 2019 hereinafter referred to as the Act into law by. The act repeals the prison act cap. 29 LFN 2004 and establishes the Nigerian Correctional service to address novel issues not covered under the repealed act. The objectives of the new act are as follows:

1. To ensure compliance with international human rights standards and good correctional practices. The federal government have decided to join the Global world in the way and manner to handle inmates while serving their jail terms. This is probably so by changing the name into Nigerian Correctional Service and enshrining it with more acceptable responsibilities.
2. To provide enabling platform for implementation of non-custodial measure. This has to with flexibility in the way the inmates are been handled thereby making the jail term friendly.
3. To enhance the focus on corrections and promotion of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. This is carried out by the use of professionals and skilled manpower in handling the inmates. Various skills acquisition programmes are to be introduced and educational programme to give opportunities to inmates who want to further their educational career and
4. To established institutional, systemic and sustainable mechanisms to address the high number of persons awaiting trial. (NCS, 2019). This objective is aimed at decongesting the prison institutions the federal government have n the country which invariably could lead to spread of diseases in the prisons.

The institution has gone into collaborative agreement with National Open University of Nigeria to establish special centres for the Inmates across the country to enable the qualified ones join the programme. Twelve (12) special centres are now established across the country. Eighteen inmates have graduated from NOUN this year as announced by the Controller of Correction Mr Francis Enohore (NOUN, 2018). It was further announced that a total of thirty six (36) have so far graduated from NOUN since the inception of the collaboration in various fields of discipline which includes; Sociology, Guidance and Counselling, Political Science and Conflict and Peace Resolution among others. Presently, 3,000 inmates are currently pursuing various degrees in NOUN and 50 inmates are currently at Yewa College of Education in Ogun State for their National Certificate in

Education (NCS, 2019).

Constraints to Reformation in Nigerian Prisons

The constraints of the Nigerian Correctional Service were summarized from the works of Obioha, E.E. (2011). Challenges and Reforms in the Nigerian Prison system. Pretoria: Jeks Publishers and Shahobi, D. (2014). Challenges of Imprisonment in Nigeria Penal System: The way forward. American Journal of Humanities and social science 2 (2).

Lack of sufficient funding: This is a major obstacle to the realization of these laudable objectives. The prisons system in Nigeria is grossly neglected and under-funded by the Federal government. The necessary facilities and logistics required for effective reformation and rehabilitation are not provided (source). A survey study carried by Onyekachi (2016) revealed that there is an ever-increasing problem of prison correction, like poor funding, prison congestion and the failure of the extant prison laws to address the major objective for establishing prison and rehabilitation of the prison inmates. This has continued to constitute a cog in the wheel of success in the Nigeria prisons. The funding of the system has been on the decline, coupled with continued increase of prison inmates, leading to prison congestion.

Lack of Tools and Machineries in the Prison Workshop: The workshop which is a place or building set aside for inmates to go and learn different types of trades for a better life after discharge, has no working tools and machineries that could be used to train inmates on different trades (source). It could therefore be deduced that, the rehabilitative aspect of the Nigeria prison system is grossly neglected. This has resulted to lack of well equipped rehabilitation centre in all the Nigeria Prisons (Chukwumerije, 2014).

Lack of Modern Technological Equipments: Prisons systems lack modern equipments such as computers, surveillance cameras etc. The prisons still uses the old system of documentation through the use of files and metal cabinets; imagine the stress, if they are to documents five hundred to one thousand people using the old system in this modern era of populated prison camps in Nigeria. Surveillance cameras also refers to as (CCTV) Close Circuit Television which are used to capture and keeps the visual records of activities taking place in an environment are lacking in the Nigerian prison camps, especially at this kind time that is full of security challenges in the country. Asokhia (2011) also noted that the prisons should be equipped with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to train the inmates and that will keep them away from recidivism.

Lack of funds for renovation and Building New Structures In The Prison: A survey study carried by Onyekachi (2016) revealed that there is an ever-increasing problem of prison correction, like poor funding, prison congestion and the failure of the extant prison laws to address the major objective for establishing prison and rehabilitation of the prison inmates. This has continued to constitute a cog in the wheel of success in the Nigeria prisons. The funding of the system has been on the decline, coupled with continued increase of prison inmates, leading to prison congestion. The structures and space which has been in existence ever since its establishment in 1915 with the initial aim to house only 547 approximately but today these same structure house over 1549 as at the time and last day I finished my research inquiry at the prison. Just but a few new structures eg. The NOUN building, the church and mosque, while the other vocational building are sited outside the prison compound which according to my instructor there has been an issue for them because of the fear that the inmate may escape due the location and lack of adequate man-power.

Gross Neglect of the Welfare of Prison Staffs: Apparently, a study by Bashir (2010) revealed that either in terms of its facilities, personnel, or programmes, the prison was not predisposed to reforming or rehabilitating convicted criminal offenders. This was associated with the

perceived inconsistencies in equipments, trainers, and attitude of programme instructors. The study also observed that as long as one continues to stay in the prison, he is bound to continue to develop negative views towards the prison and its reformatory programmes and this is associated with high rate of recidivism among prisoners as a result of improper programmes implementation, inexistence or inadequate modalities for programmes implementation and negative attitudes of the programme instructors towards prison inmates.

Over-Congestion of Inmate: One of the major problem in Nigerian prison is over Population of inmate due to so many factors found in our systems generally, the cells were design for just few numbers of about four (4) inmate but today over ten to fifteen inmate per cell because there has never been any serious expansion in a very long time now Ogundipe (2006) asserts that the prisons were in terrible shambles, the congestion rate among the inmates especially those awaiting trial was so high that a prison with a population capacity of 30,000 inmates is hosting over 58,000 inmates. Prison infrastructures and logistics have experienced centuries of neglect that have made the Prisons at this time a moral of hell. Corroborating this view, Olajide (2014) observed that most of the nation's prisons are older than the nation. The facilities are not upgraded yet, the inmates sent there are far more in population than the facilities were designed to accommodate. Inmates are crammed; sanitary facilities are simply inhuman, diseases are freely shared, yet, more inmates are daily brought in to compound the already bad situation. The modern prisons are expected to house, among other correctional facilities, a main entrance, a religious facility, educational facility, a gym, a health care centre or hospital, a segregation unit, safe cells for people under constant visual observation, a visiting section, a death row for those awaiting execution, staff accommodation area, and services such as kitchens, industrial or agricultural plant and recreational area.

From the above submissions is that Nigerian government is yet to assume it full responsibilities of handling inmates according to desirable world standard. This invariably mean that enough resources must be directed towards improving the living conditions of the inmate so that the correction service will be seen as taking adequate responsibilities than the conventional prison in which stigmatization is major factor attached to inmate after the jail term. This is in line with the study carried by

Conclusion

Prisons are crucial to the achievement of the reformatory agenda in Nigeria. Considering their statutory role of ensuring the reformation and rehabilitation of criminals, prisons, as correctional institutions, play important roles in nation building. However, the aim of establishing prisons and saddling the institution with the responsibility to reform and rehabilitate criminals will never be achieved as long as the prison system is left to drown in the enormous challenges confronting it. There is a strong correlation between the state of Nigerian prisons and the high rate of recidivism in the country. The inability of the prisons to perform its reformatory role has led to increase in crime which has inflicted both material and human costs to the Nigerian society. There is a need for a pragmatic and holistic reform of the prison system in Nigeria. To achieve the reformatory agenda, the reformer needs to be reformed and repositioned to perform its functions again.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- Government should properly fund the prison system in the country. New prisons should be built; old ones should be rejuvenated and upgraded with the right infrastructure to meet the standards of modern prisons in the 21st century.

- To address the problem of paucity, low quality and poorly motivated prison staff, government should provide adequate welfare for staff of the Nigerian Prison Service, recruit more workers and prioritise the training and retraining of prison staff in order to equip them to perform their jobs effectively.
- The skill acquisition programmes in Nigerian prisons should be reorganized and developed to ensure that all prisoners acquire one or more skill. The negative stereotype prisoners' face in society could hinder them from getting jobs even after serving their jail terms. In addition, government should ensure that it helps secure job placements for ex-convicts.
- There is a need to develop a workable payroll system for prisoners. Prisoners who are used as workers should be paid and the money they earned while working in prison summed up and given to them. This will help them resettle in society after their prison term.
- Special centres should be built for people who are awaiting trials. This will not only help in decongesting the prisons, it will save a lot of innocent persons from the emotional trauma that comes with being lumped up with other criminals who have been found guilty of the charges against them. Mobile courts should be introduced to avoid the problem of waiting donkey years for trial.
- The reformation of the police and judiciary system in Nigeria is another irreplaceable and essential factor towards having a formidable prison system. This is because the prison relies on the job of the police and judiciary. Poor policing and wrong courts judgement are capable of damaging the psyche of convicted persons beyond repair by any prison. There are some innocent persons who are wrongly arrested and convicted that come out and resort to being the criminals they never were.
- As in other sectors of the country, Government should explore the idea of private sector involvement in the correctional service system in the country. Countries like U.S have shown that private sector can participate in the prison system and run prisons effectively at costs lower than running public prisons. This should be done in the presence of comprehensive regulations.
- Most importantly, there is a need for political will in implementing the policies contained in the correctional service act of 2019.

References

- Adelola, U. (1982). *Prisons and penal reforms in Nigeria in reforming for justice: A review justice sector reforms in Nigeria (1999-2007)*. Lagos: Access to Justice. Pp.108.
- Adetula, G. A., Adetula, A., & Fatusin, A. F. (2010). The prison subsystem culture: Is there attitudinal effects on operatives, convicts and the free society. *Ife Psychologia*. 18(1), 232-251
- Akeredulo, A. (1979:1), Adeyem, A. and Ogbemor, V. (2001). The Prison Service and Penal Reform in Nigeria: A Synthesis Study FOR Safety, Security and Access to Justice Programme of the international Development (DFID), PRAWA17.
- Amnesty International, (2008). *Nigeria: Prisoners Rights Systematically Flouted*. London: Macmillan
- Asokhia, A. (2011). *Investigated rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons in Edo state of Nigeria*. Retrieved from www.academia.com
- Awake, C. (2005). *There are four reasons why law breakers are put in prison to punish the offender?* Retrieved from www.pacsdnigeria.com

- Carten, K. & Cook, E. (1989). *Reformation Penology: Developed at the Beginning of the 16th Century in England*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Davids, J. (2011, June 17). Hell on earth: Our prisons and dreaded chambers. *African Concord*, Pp. 3
- Drente, H. (2005). *The English prisons: Their past and their future*. London: Butler and Tarmer Ltd.
- Gendreau, P. G., Cullen, C. F. T. (2009). *The Effects of Prison Sentences on Recidivism*. Department of the Solicitor General Canada. Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- Goffman, E. (1961). Garden City. New York: Anchor Books.
- Greg, A. (2001). *Nigerian Prisons: A Sociological Study of Sokoto Prison as a case study*. B.Sc Project, Unpublished. Sokoto: Department of Sociology, University of Sokoto.
- Mwangi, G. A. (2011). Correctional attitudes: An impetus for a paradigm shift in inmate rehabilitation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 1(4),
- Obioha, E. E. (2011). *Challenges and reforms in the Nigerian prisons system*: Pretoria: Jeks Publishers.
- Ojo, E. (2007, December 14). In Prison with prisoners: .*The Tell Magazine*, P.12
- Okala, A., Ezumah, N. & Ebue, O. (2015). The effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in the Nigerian prisons: A case study of perception of inmates in Enugu prison. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol.6(4)
- Olufunke, C., & Dosumu, S. (2011). A survey of alcohol vulnerability of male prison inmates in Nigeria .*Academic journal of gender and behaviour*. Vol. 9, Pp. 298
- Oluyemi, A., & Amajuoyi, F. (2012). Effects of creativity training in improving the creativity motivation of some male prison inmates. *European Journal of Educational Studies* 4(2),
- Onyekachi, P. O. (2010). *The Nigerian Prisons: What they look like from the inside*. Ibadan: Hurron Publishers.
- Osayi, K. (2015). Socio-cultural factors affecting reintegration of discharged prisoners in Anambra State, South East, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 5(1)
- Shahobi, D. (2014). Challenges of imprisonment in the Nigerian penal system: The way forward. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(2),
- Ugwoke, U. C. & Ameh, S. O. (2014). Rehabilitation of convicts in Nigerian prisons: A study of federal prisons in Kogi State. *Research Journal on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 4(26),