The Role of Formal Education in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prisoners in Nigeria: A Case Study of Jos Prison, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the role of education in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates of Jos prison. The rehabilitation of prisoners through formal education is necessary. The study adopted the descriptive research design. Therefore, a 23-item questionnaire was developed and administered to 250 respondents comprising of 150 inmates and 100 staff of Jos Prison who were chosen through stratified random sampling. The result showed that the respondents agreed that education for prisoners is very important in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates. Also, some challenges militating against the smooth operation of formal education in Jos prison were highlighted. Based on the finding, some useful recommendations were made on how to better the education of inmates for effective rehabilitation and reformation.

Key words: Rehabilitation, reintegration, education, prison, prisoner.

1.0 Introduction
A prison can be sociologically defined as a confinement where socially and legally interned people who have wronged the society are kept for reformation, rehabilitation and possible reintegration into the society where they would contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Ideally and as obtained in other developed climes, the prison is the last place for the transfiguration of those who the society dim unfit to cohabit with it owing to the fact that their stay in the society is inimical to the continued co-existence of the members of the society. Prisons are very important to the survival and continued existence of every society. Infact, the importance of prisons cannot be over-emphasised.

Prisons are designed to keep custody of the legally interned, and by doing so, it helps to keep the society safe from misdemeanants
and lawbreakers who disturbs the peace of the society. Many are oblivious of this fact. When criminals and other dangerous elements are locked up in the prison, the society is insulated from their nefarious activities, thereby making the society safe for habitation and cohabitation. Hence, the prison is a vital part of the security set up of every society. Imagine what the society would look like if the content of the prisons in Nigeria are poured out.

According to Gumi (2014), people are sent to prison in order to protect the society from harm. Investing in the physical structures of prisons such as in buildings, protective bars, guards and guns alone may help to reduce crime in the short-term; ultimately it does nothing to make society safer. This is because almost everyone in prison will eventually return to society at the end of their term. If they remain idle during their time in prison, they are likely to become bitter and resentful (Gumi, 2014). If however prisoners are given meaningful things to do and are equipped with the skills and self-belief they need to support themselves upon release, society becomes safer because the rate of re-offending would decrease (African Prison Project, 2014).

Reformation of Prison Inmates can only be achieved through education and skill acquisition training. Formal education becomes a panacea for effecting positive changes in the prison inmates before they are released. Formal education in prison aims at providing the awareness that will enable young as well as mature adults to improve or supplement their knowledge and skills in general subjects. The education of prisoners enhances their abilities to improve their future job and educational possibilities and potentials (Ewulum, Omeriyang and Mbara, 2015).

Education is thus one key aspect of the rehabilitative role in which prisoners can engage while in prison. It is not just a means of keeping the prisoner occupied, but has the capacity to form a stepping stone towards prisoner’s inclusion and reintegration into society. By providing positive learning environments, prisons can support the inmates to make good use of their sentence; to address gaps in their learning skills; to improve their employability; and to change their personal attitudes and perceptions. This in a long run helps them to understand the reasons for and consequences of their
actions. All of these factors can reduce their chances of re-offending (Hawley, 2013).

Moreover, access to education is a fundamental human right and prisoners should not be denied the chance to exercise this right (Hawley, 2013). It can therefore be argued that imprisonment, even if it is viewed as justified punishment, should not bring with it the additional deprivation of civil rights, which include education (UNESCO, 1995).

Ogundipe (2008) posits that the Nigerian Prison Service has established practical programmes for reformation and rehabilitation of prison inmates. These programmes include: Vocational skills development Programme (SVDP) which aims at empowering the prisoners who have no formal education background with the practical skills in handworks like carpentry, metal-work, shoe-making, tailoring and others. This would help them to be self-reliant when they are released from prison. The second programme is the Adult Remedial Education Programme (AREP) which is designed to help prisoners who were pursuing one academic programme or the other before imprisonment. These programmes enable prison inmates to learn skills in such vocations as tailoring, plumbing, carpentry, woodwork, barbing, shoe making, and a host of others; and also to be grounded academically to become professionals like Doctors, Lawyers and graduates after discharge. Ogundipe (2008) also stated that through remedial programmes in the various 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.

Globally, education has had a consistent presence in correctional facilities over the past 200 years, though the form it has taken and the rationale behind its provision have changed over time. In 1798, education was introduced in the Americas first correctional facility—the Walnut Street Jail—in the context of religious instruction intended to help individuals repent for their crimes and develop spiritually and morally. The late 1800s marked the rise of the reformatory era, and educational offerings expanded beyond religious instruction to emphasize
literacy and communication skills, as well as the inclusion of secular courses such as astronomy, geography, and history. Education was further entrenched within correctional institutions with the introduction of indeterminate sentences, which required evidence of self-improvement as a condition of release. Through the 1970s, often considered the “golden age” for rehabilitative programs, educational instruction proliferated, eventually including high school courses and general equivalency diploma (GED) preparation, vocational training in specific trades, life skills programs, academic higher education program, and study release (Gumi, 2014).

Prisoners can be indifferent to education in prison. Research from the United States of America, Ireland and the United Kingdom shows that prisoners are more likely to have literacy difficulties than the general population (Batchelder and Pippert, 2002; Cropsey, Wexler, Melnick, Taxman and Young, 2007; Hurry, Brazier, Snapes, and Wilson, 2005) and tend to have lower than average attainment and poor experiences of compulsory education (Morgan and Kett, 2003; Muth, 2006; Winn and Behizadeh, 2011). In prisons, particularly in the United Kingdom, the curriculum is often restricted so that prisoners are expected to engage in education that is focused on improving narrow literacy skills rather than broader, and potentially more attractive, educational areas (Hurry, Brazier and Wilson, 2009).

Many prisoners, and adults who have similar unhappy experiences of compulsory education, tend to have negative attitudes to learning and can be very resistant to education that is like school (Barton, Ivanic, Appleby, Hodge and Tusting, 2007; Belzer, 2004; Kilgore, 2001; Maclachlan, Hall, Tett, Crowther and Edwards, 2008). This is especially true of provision focused only on narrow literacy skills such as spelling and thus such courses tend to promote little learning and a great deal of resentment amongst prisoners. On the other hand, Hurry, Brazier and Wilson (2009) found in their study of English prisoners that prisoners became engaged and participated in more effective learning when the programme was more contextualized and active. Research from across the UK also shows that creating an environment where learning operates from an individual’s ‘strengths’, rather than their ‘deficits’ is the most effective
(Crowther, Maclachlan and Tett, 2010; Entwistle and Smith, 2002). This involves building on and extending the knowledge and skills that individual’s already have, an approach that has been found to be very uncommon in prisons in studies in the US and the UK (Batchelder and Pippert, 2002; Kilgore, 2001).

This research, therefore, seeks to assess the role of education in inmates’ reformation and rehabilitation in Jos Maximum prison; and to determine the extent to which prison inmates have been exposed to formal education with a view to improving their rehabilitation and reformation. The research also exposed the challenges faced by the prison adult school in Jos prison.

2.0 Methodology
The study employed the use of a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design was chosen because it enables the researcher to generalize the findings to other prisons across the country. The population of the study is made up of all the prisons staff and inmates in Jos prison. Jos prison as at 1st July, 2015 has 243 staff and 721 inmates. Therefore, the total population for the study was 964. The sample used for this study consisted of 250 respondents: 150 inmates and 100 prisons staff who were selected through the purposive sampling method. The sample is made up of 204 males and 43 females. The age of the respondents ranged from 18-59 years, with a mean age of 34.5 years. Eighty-seven (87) of the inmates were Muslims, while one hundred and sixty three (163) inmates are Christians. Only convicted inmates serving short and long term sentences were used for the study. Those awaiting trails were left out of the study because they are not qualified for rehabilitation and reformation programmes.

The research made use of a self structured questionnaire which was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was subjected for validity by two experts in criminology from the University of Uyo; and other two senior prison officers working in the Plateau state headquarters of the Nigerian Prisons Service. Comments and recommendations of the experts were incorporated in the final construction of the instrument which ended up with 23 items. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using the test-retest reliability method and was considered high enough. The data collected was analyzed
using descriptive statistics and percentages. While simple percentages was used to analyze research question one, mean score was used in Research question two. Decision rule for Research question two was based on 4-points numerical values assigned to the responses: 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 agreed on. Conversely, items which had less than 2.5 were considered to be disagreed on.

### 3.0 Results and findings

The results of the study were presented according to the research questions. Out of the 250 copies of the questionnaire distributed and returned, 3 were badly filled and discarded while the remaining 247 copies were presented and analyzed in tables using descriptive statistics and percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to their Demographic Characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sub-Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29-38</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49-58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58-above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>Prison staff</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inmates</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table one show that 204 males (82.6%) and 43 females (17.3%) participated in the research. Also, 33 respondents (13.4%) were in the age range of 18-28, 108 respondents (43.7%) were in the 29-38 age range, 78 respondents (31.6%) were in the age range of 47-58, while 12 (4.9%) were 58 year and above. Again, 163 (66%) were Christians, while 87 (34%) were Muslims. The table also show that 100 (40.5) respondents were prison staff, while 147 (59.5) were convicted inmates.

3.1 Research Question One: What is the role of education in inmates’ reformation and rehabilitation in Jos prison?

Table 2: Response of Respondents on the Role of Education in Inmates’ Reformation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>247</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the response of respondents on the role of education in Inmates’ reformation and rehabilitation. 178 respondents (72.1%) strongly agreed that education has an important role in inmates’ reformation and rehabilitation. 44 respondents (17.8%) agreed, 22 respondents (8.9%) disagreed, while only 3 respondents (1.2%) strongly disagreed. This shows that education is very important in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates’ of Jos prison.

3.2 Research Question Two: What are the challenges associated with the smooth operation of formal education in Jos prison?

Table 3: Frequency and Mean scores of Respondents on the challenges associated with the smooth operation of formal education in Jos prison
Table 3 shows that all the items 1-7 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 associated with the smooth operation of formal education in Jos prison.

3.3 Discussion of Results

Result of research question one show that education is very important in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates’ of Jos prison. This is in tandem with Gumi (2014) who posits that formal education is cardinal to the rehabilitation of prison inmates. The result also agrees with Omoni and Ijeh (2009) that the issue of vocational and formal education cannot be overemphasized in the rehabilitation process of prisoners. The aim of imprisonment is not only for punishment, but to prevent offending and reoffending. In the society today, the leading cause of crime and criminal behaviours is lack of empowerment. Education in prison can
reduce recidivism as inmates will be empowered with the academic knowledge that can make them stay off crime and lead law-abiding lives. Table 2 shows that 72.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that education in prison play a cardinal role in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates. Also, 17.8 percent of respondents agree with the assertion. This shows that about 89.9 percent of the respondents supports that education is paramount in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates.

Table three showed that the respondents agreed that all the challenges listed therein militate against the smooth running of the prison adult school in Jos prison. These problems ranging from lack of enough teachers to time constraints are the major challenges bugging down education in the prison. This is in agreement with Ewelum, Omeriyang and Mbara (2015) who found out that the major challenges militating against the reformation of prison inmates in Anambra state include: lack of professional educators, lack of staff training, poor funding, among others. Nigeria prisons according to The Nation (2010) are “living hells.” Most prisons are bedeviled by poor facilities like classrooms, stationery and books, lack of qualified educators to teach in the prison schools, among others. This scene is reflected in all prisons structures in the country. This has led to the non-performance of the schools in our prisons. From table three, it is obvious that some of the maladies affecting the administration of formal education in Jos prison include; lack of enough teachers, frequent transfer of prisoners and teaching staff, lack of stationery and books, and poor funding. Other challenges as agreed by the respondents are lack of external assessment by examination bodies like WAEC/NECO/JAMB, poor library and time constraints.
4.0 Conclusion

It is obvious from the result of this study that the prison is a very important agent of rehabilitation and reformation of the social misfits. It is also 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. This study reveals that education in prison is very cardinal in the rehabilitation of inmates. However, it was discovered that several challenges ranging from lack of enough teachers to time constraints hinder the smooth running of the prison adult school in Jos prison. These maladies have led to the non-performance of the school and explain why the rate of recidivism in Nigeria is at increase. For this reason, recommendations were proffered on how to resuscitate education as a tool of rehabilitation in Nigerian prison thereby improving the service delivery of our prisons system.

5.0 Recommendation

After a careful analysis of the role of education in the rehabilitation and reformation of prison inmates, this study came up with the following recommendations:

1. The federal government of Nigeria should float a Prison Development Trust Fund (PDTF) to fund the prisons in the area of vocational and formal education. In other words, the education of prison inmates should receive closer government attention financially and otherwise.

2. The Nigerian Prisons Service should create public awareness programmes through the mass media on the role of prison and its rehabilitative roles. This in the long run will improve the image of our prisons and also provide a platform for more sensitization on prison education.

3. The Nigerian Prisons Service should collaborate with the various state ministries of education in order to benefit from the various plans by these ministries.

4. National and regional examination bodies like the WAEC, NECO, JAMB and NABTEB should be lobbied to establish examination centres in our prisons.
5. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) should be made to open a centre in at least one prison in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

6. The Nigerian Prisons Service should recruit more educators and teachers. Also, schools should be floated in prisons where such does not exist.

References


The Nation (2010, August 21). *Prison a hell fire*.
