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# Educational Training of Inmates in Awka and Abakaliki Prisons, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Educational training is essential for the reformation and rehabilitation of criminal offenders; this is because education holds the capacity to change the lives of these offenders as they would become better citizens while contributing more to society upon release. Educated inmates can also secure jobs upon release leading to a drop in recidivism. Previous studies on prison systems and crime control have not been able to fully address the challenges facing educational training of prison inmates and the problems of corrections in Nigeria. This study examines the educational training of inmates and problems of corrections in Nigeria. While establishing education as necessary for reformation, the study finds that educational facilities at the prisons studied are grossly deficient and an antithesis to the goal of reformation. The study recommends the provision of quality educational training in Nigeria's prison system.*

**Keywords:** Convicts, Educational Training, Prison Inmates, Prison System, Rehabilitation.

## Introduction

The purpose of the prison system in Nigeria is to administer penal treatment to criminal offenders in order to reduce crime. It is on this basis that inmates are educated in prisons. According to Ajah and Nweke (2017), educational training is expected to give inmates a sense of direction and build their capacity to acquire skills that will make them productive when they are released. The prison system is also expected to inculcate basic moral values that will make offenders become law-abiding citizens. Prisons are generally conceived as corrective institutions – this is the prime objective of establishing prisons all over the world. Prisons are usually structured to identify and address the peculiar problems of each inmate (Ajah & Nweke, 2017). Similarly, Ajogwu and Dike (2007) noted that literacy and other educational programs have been found to significantly reduce the rate of recidivism in countries worldwide.

Thus, the main aim of establishing prisons in all parts of the world, including Nigeria, is to provide reformation and rehabilitation programs for those who violate the rules and regulations of their society (Chukwudi, 2012). The provision of these services continues to be on the front burner of public discourse (Tanimu, 2010). Leading this discourse are

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adult educators, counselors, social workers, psychologists and medical doctors. These professionals seem to agree that rehabilitation programs and services in prisons will help inmates acquire the needed social, attitudinal and behavioral changes necessary for social assimilation. To achieve this objective, rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons attempt to restore inmates to their fullest physical, mental, psychological, social, vocational and economic usefulness (Ajah & Nweke, 2017).

However, it is disheartening to see that a crucial aspect of identifying the inmates' needs is being grossly neglected in Nigerian prisons. Despite Nigeria's progress on democratic, economic and political reforms, Nigeria's prisons are yet to make appreciable impact on the educational training of inmates (Ajah & Nweke, 2017). Imprisonment in most areas is seen as an act of punishment. Philosophers and retributivists stress that a deviant should be punished in order to pay him/her back for wrongdoing and to deter future criminality. Surprisingly, this general conception of imprisonment as a formal means of inflicting pain on the offender is not baseless, as this has been an aspect of the traditional criminal justice system in various parts of the country (Obioha, 2002). Relatedly, Achu, Owan and Ekok (2013) noted that Nigeria's prisons are a "living hell" with twenty to thirty inmates arriving at the prison daily thus overcrowding the reformatory structure. Prison and detention conditions remain harsh and threatening. Inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise irregularly. Many inmates provide their own food. Petty corruption among prison officials makes it difficult for money provided for food to reach the prisoners hence poor inmates often rely on "hand-outs" from others to survive. These unwholesome treatments have contributed to the death of numerous inmates (Ajah & Nweke, 2017).

There is more to imprisonment than the opening and closing of prison gates. Modern penal management techniques emphasize reform of the inmate. The current attitude is to see imprisonment from the perspective of reform and rehabilitation rather than from the perspective of punishment. It is assumed that those who have committed crimes need help and should be assisted to live a good life. This view is predicated upon the understanding that those who have fallen afoul of criminal laws should be reformed (Ostreicher, 2003).

There is a need to examine the educational training of inmates in Nigerian Prisons and study the problems of corrections in Nigeria. The present study was carried out in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons of Nigeria to assess the educational training of inmates. Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons were chosen on the premise of convenience. Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons were built in 1946 and 1904 respectively by the British colonial government in Nigeria to house crime suspects and convicted offenders. Abakaliki prison is located in Abakaliki, the capital city of Ebonyi, Nigeria. Abakaliki prison is built to accommodate 387 inmates (Nigerian Prisons Service Annual Report (NPSAR), 2009). Awka prison is located in the capital city of Anambra, Nigeria. Awka prison is built with the capacity to accommodate 238 inmates (NPSAR, 2009).

## **Review of Literature**

According to Warren Burger, former Chief Justice of the United States (Shajobi-Ibikunle, 2014), to put people behind walls and bars, and do little or nothing to change them is to win a battle but lose a war. He asserted that it was not only wrong but also expensive and stupid. Therefore, a penal system that incarcerates offenders without reforming them is self-defeatist. Prisons are Omni-disciplinary in nature in that they

purport to transform the individual criminal into a normal, law abiding citizen by altering the individual's attitude toward work, physical training, and behavior (Dambazu, 2007). In the same vein, Asokhia and Agbonluae (2013) noted that convicted criminals are sentenced to prison for the purpose of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation services are notable for their pivotal role in changing the lives of inmates. However, this change requires efforts on the part of both the inmate and the state.

According to Orakwe (2013), the Nigerian Prisons Service has several programs aimed at rehabilitation. These include the Prisons Adult Remedial Educational Program (AREP) that enables illiterate inmates to access adult education including training in carpentry, metal work, and woodwork. There are also services offered by the Nigerian Prisons Service to equip the inmates with skills in husbandry, and the service and maintenance of agro machines.

However, despite the existence of these programs, their functionality raises questions since some of them are in a state of disrepair and cannot be used by inmates. A study conducted by Achu, Owan and Ekok (2013) found Nigerian prisons to be a little more than dungeons. More appalling perhaps is that most inmates have no beds and mattresses and are forced to sleep on concrete floors, often without blankets. Finally, the findings revealed that the government has not totally abandoned the task of reforming and rehabilitating its inmates. They had been planning to make funds available, though these funds were either misappropriated or swindled out-rightly by court officials for purposes other than their original intensions (Achu, Owan & Ekok, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The strain theory and the structural functionalism theory serve as the framework for this study. Strain theory was propounded by Robert K. Merton (1957); in developing this theory he made reference to Durkheim's notion of anomie, which is a social condition in which people who have weak ties with the community find it difficult to know what to do because social norms are unclear or have broken down. The concept of anomie, according to Durkheim, simply means a state of normlessness or absence of norms. Merton attributed crime to the strain people experience in society as a result of the disjuncture between cultural goals and the socially approved means for achieving these goals.

While structural functionalism is a theoretical orientation that was developed during the industrial revolution, it deals with the interrelatedness of various traits, institutions, and groups within the social system. Coser (1976) as recorded in Ajah and Nweke (2017) defines structural functionalism as a set of relatively stable and patterned relationships of social units. As such, according to Talcott Parsons, every system has four functional imperatives. They are: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. These four functional imperatives are visualized in the following manner:

**Adaptation:** The system must cope with the external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environments and adapt the environment to its needs. By implication, the ability of prisoners to survive in their external environments depends on their access to good-quality education and their ability to readjust to the society when they are released.

**Goal attainment:** The system must define and achieve its primary goals. The political structures and systems established in society have the mandate of setting target goals for

the society. These goals are geared towards the maintenance of decent lifestyles and the dignity of the prisoners. Government has the obligatory responsibility to make provisions for the protection of prisoners' right and interest through the provision of basic educational facilities, good and manageable accommodations. Thus, it is a government's responsibility to protect and provide for the dignity of its prisoners. Government's failure, in this regard, affects prisoners in the fulfillment of the goal of rehabilitation and re-integration in the society upon release (Ajah & Nweke, 2017).

**Integration:** The system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It must also manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (adaptation, goal attainment and latency). Government's failure to do so runs contrary to social order and justice inhibiting an offender's reintegration – thus, resulting is unnecessarily high recidivism rates.

**Latency (pattern maintenance):** A system must furnish, maintain, and renew the motivation of prison staff in order to inhibit systemic corruption. Through education, social norms and values are inculcated into the inmate population, promoting a pro-social orientation.

### Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. This design was chosen for this study because it enabled the researcher to gather a wide range of relevant data on the Nigerian prison system. The target population for this study consisted of all the staff and inmates in both prisons. Records reveal that as at 18 March, 2014, Abakaliki prison had a total of 846 inmates and 178 staff. Awka prison had a total inmate population of 442, and staff strength of 134. This makes a total of 1288 inmates and 312 staff for both prisons under study. From this population, the sample size was drawn using Yemeni (1967) formula. A 95% confidence level and level of maximum variability ( $P = 0.05$ ) were assumed. A stratified sampling technique was utilized. The population was stratified under different categories of inmates and workers. This particular technique was used because it gave each element of the population an equal chance of being included in the sampling.

**Table 1. Inmates and Workers in Abakaliki and Awka Federal Prisons**

Respondents	Quota	Value
Inmates Awaiting Trial	37.5%	120
Convicts	46.9%	150
Lifers	3.1%	10
Staff/Prison Workers	12.5%	40
Total	100%	320

*Field survey 2015*

Data for this study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include questionnaire administration to respondents and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, data were secondarily sourced through the library and other documents

dealing with the prison system. Responses generated through interviews were subjected to content analysis while the quantitative components of data generated were analyzed at two levels: univariate and bivariate levels. At the univariate level, data were presented using frequencies and percentages. Also, at bivariate level, cross-tabulation was used to show associations between selected variables. These associations were tested with chi-square statistics.

## Results and Discussion

A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed. From this number 307 were correctly completed and returned. This formed the basis for this analysis. The mean age of the respondents was 32. From the total sample population, 32.1% of the respondents were Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) holders, 23.1% respondents were Higher National Diploma and Bachelor degree holders, 16.6% were higher degree holders while 14.3% were holders of First School Leaving Certificate. Findings revealed that 75.3% were Christians, 12.7% were Muslims while 1.3% respondents did not indicate their religious affiliations. In their marital status, findings reveal that 53.4% respondents were single, 33.6% were married while 1.6% were widowed. The implication is that a majority of the respondents were single.

**Table 2. Awareness of Expected Correctional Services within the Prisons**

SERVICES	AWARENESS INDEX			
	Necessary	Not necessary	Do not know	Total
Vocational	262 (85.3%)	45 (14.7%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)
Recreational	214 (69.7%)	60 (19.5%)	33 (10.8%)	307 (100.0%)
Educational	283 (92.2%)	17 (5.5%)	7 (2.3%)	307 (100.0%)
Religious	261 (85.0%)	32 (10.4%)	14 (4.6%)	307 (100.0%)
Medical	307 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)

*Field survey 2015*

From Table 2, it can be seen that a majority of the respondents were aware of the correctional services. Two 262 of the 307 respondents, representing 85.3%, were of the view that vocational training was necessary for effective correction while 14.7% did not think vocational training was necessary for correction. 69% percent of the respondents were of the view that recreational services could aid in effective correction, 19.5% did not agree that it was necessary while 10.8% did not know. 283 of the 307 respondents, representing 92.2% viewed educational attainment as necessary for effective correction, 5.5% saw it as unnecessary while 2.3% did not know. On religious facilities, 85% saw them as being necessary, 10.4% saw it as unnecessary while 4.6% did not know. All 307 respondents saw the availability of medical services as being necessary.

As can be seen from the results depicted in Table 3, the state of educational services in Awka and Abakaliki prisons leaves little to be desired as services that could help in the correctional process are either not available or not functional. This position was equally held by Achu, Owan and Ekok (2013) when they found “Nigerian Prisons to be a dungeon which represents man’s inhumanity to man”.

**Table 3. Breakdown of Educational Services in Abakaliki and Awka Prisons**

SERVICES	EXISTENCE			Total
	Exists	Does not exist	Do not know	
Library	10 (3.3%)	294 (95.7%)	3 (1.0%)	307 (100%)
Classrooms	4 (1.3%)	287 (93.5%)	16 (5.2%)	307 (100%)
Teaching aids	3 (1.0%)	300 (97.7%)	4 (1.3%)	307 (100%)
Laptops & Projectors	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100%)

*Field survey 2015*

**Table 4. Prison Services and their Perceived Effects on the Correction of Inmates**

SERVICES	AID IN CORRECTION				Total
	To great extent	To a little extent	To no extent		
Vocational	290 (94.5%)	10 (3.3%)	7 (2.2%)		307 (100.0%)
Recreational	288 (93.8%)	10 (3.3%)	9 (2.9%)		307 (100.0%)
Educational	300 (97.7%)	7 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)		307 (100.0%)
Religious	288 (93.8%)	10 (3.3%)	9 (2.9%)		307 (100.0%)
Medical	254 (82.7%)	50 (16.3%)	3 (1.0%)		307 (100.0%)

*Field survey 2015*

Respondents were mostly of the view that the utilization of educational services could help in the correction of inmates as some 300 respondents, representing 97.7% think that the presence of educational programs would aid the correction of inmates to a great extent even though 2.3% think that it would only aid correction to a lesser extent.

Asked if they have been to prison previously, 53 of the inmates answered in the affirmative, 31 (58.5% of the 53) believe that the absence of adequate prison programs influenced their return to crime.

These findings agree with Asokhia and Agbonhuwa (2013) when they recommended that “deliberate efforts should be made by the Federal Government and prison service providers to reform the Nigerian Prison System and make it international best practice compliant, there is also need to introduce more rehabilitation services, facilities and reformatory programs such as training inmates on information and communication technology (ICT) and giving adequate awareness programs so as to rehabilitate prison inmates and stop recidivism”.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Educational training is an essential ingredient to any prison system that seeks to reduce crime and recidivism rates. It would bring positive change in prison inmates. Findings from this study clearly indicate that the Nigerian prison system has not implemented

therapeutic programming nor does it have the necessary equipment/facilities to deliver it to the inmate population. Since education has been linked to reduced recidivism, proper programming and those facilities necessary for its delivery must be developed, built and adequately funded within the prison system. Furthermore, the government should seek to meet those international standards that are recognized as necessary for the safe and orderly operation of correctional facilities as well as meeting humanitarian standards. Finally, additional study should be conducted on Nigeria's prisons in order to obtain a more comprehensive idea regarding those areas of operation that are in need of improvement.

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