

CRIME, INSECURITY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES IN NIGERIA

ODUNTAN, Seye Olukoya

Nigerian Correctional Service, Lagos State Command

Email: oduntanseye@gmail.com

Abstract

The establishment of impactful correctional education mechanisms is chief to correcting the behaviours of inmates. The language of detention as a correction setup connotes that for there to be a change, there should be reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. The purpose of this paper is to interrogate the interconnectedness of crime, and insecurity and the role of the correctional service in ameliorating these problems. Using the literature review method, this paper brought to the fore that correctional education is part of the prison reform movement all around the world. It is a window through which one can observe and encourage human progress. Additionally, it noted that it is the education offered by the correctional service to the inmates that enable them to leave the prison with more skills and be in a position to find meaningful and long-term employment. Based on that, it is recommended amongst others that stimulating inmates' zeal and enthusiasm in correctional education is key to avoiding recidivism, and also, to make them better people when discharged.

Keywords: Crime, Insecurity, Custodial Centre, Lagos State, Inmates,

INTRODUCTION

In any sane society, there are bound to be rules, regulations and laws to guide and control the behaviour of members in order to attain orderliness in the society and for the achievement of societal goals and objectives. The rules, regulations and laws are, therefore, meant to be followed and obeyed. Moreover, some people are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that members abide by these guidelines and where there are offenders, they are called to order say by way of punishment or other forms of sanctions (Muchenje, 2022). Of particular note, in a larger society such as a country, is that criminal offenders are incarcerated in prisons or what is now known as Custodian Centres where they are kept for a term presumably for them to repent and have a change in behaviour for the better. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Prisons Service was established for this and other purposes to reform and rehabilitate inmates. However, Prisons service in the colonial period was not designed for reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration, rather the prisons were designed for incarceration and source of cheap labour (Ndukwe & Iroko, 2014). Consequently, inmates were used mainly for public works and other jobs for the colonial administrators as a form of punishment. At the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), there was a remarkable shift in penal philosophy, particularly in colonial territories (Feeley, 2017). The emphasis was no longer primarily on the punishment of criminals but there was also concern for their reformation and rehabilitation which informed correctional education. This, most probably, informed the most recent bold step taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria in August, 2019 in changing the nomenclature of Nigerian Prisons Services to Nigerian Correctional Services.

Due to some circumstances that surround the Nigerian Prison system, the President on August 14th, 2019 signed into law the Nigerian Correctional Service Bill. Some of the reasons why the Bill has to be signed into Law was partly due to dilapidated and congested prison facilities. The Port Harcourt prison which was built in 1918 to accommodate 800 inmates accommodated about five thousand, while in Lagos, the Kirikiri Maximum Prison built to house about nine hundred and fifty-six inmates accommodated about two thousand, six hundred inmates. Other challenges adduced for the signing of the Bill into Law included inadequacies of medical care facilities, lack of food for inmates as well as unavailability of recreational and vocational training facilities for inmates.

The Nigerian Correctional Service was prior to the establishment of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 (NCSA) was managed by the Prisons Act of 1972 (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004). One of the major goals of the Prisons Act 1972 was the provision of rules for the administration and management of the correctional facilities of Nigerian prisons. In order to mitigate against the backdrops of the challenges of the defunct Prisons Act of 1972 and in compliance with international Human Rights standards as stipulated in NCSA 2019, section 2(1); the Nigerian Correctional Service Act

2019 was signed into law. Worthy of note is Section 14 of the Act, which tries to resolve some hitherto challenges of the Prison Act of 1972. The Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 in Section 14(1) made provision for education, vocational training, as well as training in vocational, farming techniques and animal husbandry for inmates.

Correctional education for prison inmates is indeed an important function of prison services globally, and the Nigerian Prisons services as it used to be known, is not an exception. Correctional education as evident in the Nigerian Prisons Service Act of 2004 can be seen from three dimensions. The dimensions include; Reformation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (3Rs). Reformation, according to this act, is concerned with the correction, education and re-orientation of inmates, with a view to becoming better citizens when released. Rehabilitation is concerned with the guidance and assistance offered to offenders (inmates) while in custody. In the same vein, reintegration connotes the support given to offenders during their re-entry into the society upon their release from custodian centres.

Consequently, it is expected that recidivism should decrease, if the objectives (3Rs) of imprisonment are achieved. Thus, by planning and providing proper and adequate corrective education for inmates, it will enable them to be law-abiding citizens of society and to engage in productive activities for their daily living on release from prison. In line with Cap. 366, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (1990) and the Nigerian Prisons Service Standing Order (2009), the role of the Nigerian Prison Services is tripartite in nature. Firstly, the service is responsible for the safe custody of persons legally interned. Secondly, it provides treatment to them, and thirdly, it seeks to rehabilitate them through proper and adequate training. The 3Rs is part of the philosophy of the Nigerian Prisons Service, which encompasses proper treatment and rehabilitation of offenders and can be achieved through carefully designed, and well-articulated administrative, reformatory and rehabilitative programmes (correctional education), aimed at inculcating discipline, respect for law, order and regard for the dignity of honest labour. The implication of this is that, reformed inmates are no longer security threats to national peace, which is vital to socio-economic and political development of the country. In other words, the purpose of rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration is to train convicted inmates in appropriate conditions, so as to be better citizens on discharge (Ewelum, Madu & Mbara, 2015). Hence, the need for an organized corrective educational apparatus for prison inmates becomes imperative.

The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2012), for instance, recommends that, inmates should be provided with access to education and vocational training primarily as a way of helping them develop skills and ability to support reduced re-offending upon release from custody. Thus, the establishment of an impactful correctional education mechanisms becomes imperative and important. The idea of correctional education as a new innovation because imprisonment in the past was seen as serving the terms in labour. The language of imprisonment as a correction setup connotes that for there to be a change, there should be reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration. In practice now, prison education, also known as inmate education and correctional education, is a broad term that encompasses all educational activities occurring inside a prison. These educational activities include both vocational training and academic education and even religious education. The goal of such activities is to prepare the inmate for success outside of prison, and to enhance the rehabilitative aspects of prison. Educational programmes offered inside prisons, are typically provided and managed by the prison systems in which they reside. Funding for the programmes are provided through official correctional department budgets, private organizations, religious groups, non-governmental organizations, financially buoyant inmates and their families. Correctional education includes a number of programmes meant to divert offenders from crime to useful pursuits that make crime unattractive or condemnable such as moral or religious instructions, education and vocational training (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders & Miles, 2013).

Correctional education is part of the prison reform movement all-around the world. It is a window through which one can observe and encourage human progress. Simply put, it is the education given to inmates to enable them leave the prison with more skills, and be in a position to find meaningful and long-term employment. Going further, correctional education movement began in 1789 by William Rogers to prevent a riot at the Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail. The correctional educators operate on the principles that attitude, ideas and behaviour can be corrected and that humans are capable of progressing to higher thresholds of awareness. Accordingly, for ex-offenders to redirect their lives away from crimes, they need one to three years of transitional services such as life skills, anger management, basic education, job training and placement. The primary task of prison education is to increase the chances of employment by ex-offenders, and hence, reduce recidivism (Pike, 2015). Inmates who had studied through distance learning had increased cognitive ability and new pro-social thinking patterns, giving them the ability to express themselves more effectively and negotiate agreed outcomes without having to

resort to violence. Moreover, student-tutor relationships are usually characterized by respect, understanding, care and positive expectations which reduce anti-social cognition and help to build anti-criminal identity.

In the Nigerian Custodian Centres, educational opportunities for inmates are divided into two general categories, they are; academic education and vocational training. Academic education for instance, is provided in the form of literacy classes. These classes assist the inmate in learning to read, write, and perform basic mathematical computations. This is especially important in a correctional setting because, most inmates appear to be under-educated group – with less proficiency in reading and writing – who now require a culture of acquiring few skills for handling everyday tasks, in a trade or career after release. Hence, many require significant remedial help before they can attend more advanced educational classes. Academic education in prison is to prepare the inmate to take the official West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination – the official high school certificate and to hopefully further their education with more advanced studies. Custodian Centres in Lagos State, for instance, have a form of educational programme aimed at reforming, rehabilitating and reintegrating the inmates back to the society after passing through the processes, that is primary, secondary and the tertiary education programmes. The programme of National Open University of Nigeria for the inmates in Maximum Security Prison, Kirikiri Apapa in Lagos State attests to the academic programmes being emphasized. On the other hand, vocational training offers more opportunities in the Custodian setting. Much of what is offered will depend upon the local Centre's programming. For example, at the Kirikiri Maximum Custodian Centre in Lagos, inmates have the option to learn Computer Aided Designs (CAD), carpentry, and a number of other vocations via "live work" employments (for example plumbing, tailoring, aluminium works and so on), which are freely available to the centre-participants. An inmate without adequate rehabilitation opportunity through formal education and vocational skills training and capacity building usually returns to the society which has incarcerated him or her as a hardened enemy of that society. Such an ex-convict is often full of desire for vengeance because he or she sees himself or herself as victimized rather than corrected. In addition, such an ex-convict is likely to do more harm than good to a society invariably perceived as an oppressive system. This condition explains to a very great extent why some Nigerian ex-inmates end up as recidivists. The rehabilitation of prison inmates should begin from the very day they are admitted into the prison, to the day they are discharged. This is to ensure that they utilize the skills they acquired in the course of rehabilitation to live a law-abiding life in the society.

Crime and Recidivism

An individual who takes to crime is likely to get into the long arms of the law leading to his/her being sentenced to imprisonment. While in custodial centre, the individual has the option to under-go either technical training or the normal school. When he/she undertakes technical training and completes successfully, the belief is that he or she is more likely not to engage in any activity that will send him or her to prison again or repeatedly. On the other hand, there is also the belief that those individuals who do not receive any vocational training in prison are more likely to go back to prison on similar charges after their release.

Characteristics of the Offender

Most offenders have poor job skills and employment records. A precursor to criminal activity is the lack of stable employment, complicated further where most offenders lacked stable employment prior to incarceration (Herrlander Birgerson & Dwyer, 2022). The commission of crimes by many offenders were in an attempt to earn money for their family. The result of the commission of crime is incarceration. Substance abuse is another characteristic of offender students. Substance abuse is not the primary focus of this study, but is a precursor to criminal activity and incarceration. Substance abuse distracts a person from work, family obligations and following the law.

The Need for Education / Training for Prisoners

Vocational training is training for a specific career or trade, excluding the professions. Vocational training focuses on practical applications of skills learned, and is generally unconcerned with theory or traditional academic skills. Vocational training thus provides a link between education and the working world. It is usually provided either at the high school level or in a post-secondary trade school and can interact with the apprenticeship system. Since vocational training often begins in high school, students can graduate and prepare to take a high-paying, skilled job immediately. Graduates of trade or vocational schools have an advantage over informally trained job-seekers because an independent organisation certifies that they have the skills needed to successfully perform a specific, skilled occupation. Vocational education and training (VET),

also called Career and Technical Education (CTE), prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation, hence the term, in which the learner participates. It is sometimes referred to as technical education, as the learner directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology.

Finding a way of earning a living is the most important part of a prisoner's ability to reintegrate into society after release from prison. For many prisoners their time in prison may be the first opportunity that they have had to develop vocational skills and to do regular work (Coyles, 2002). The main purpose of requiring prisoners to work therefore is to prepare them for a normal working life on their release from prison, not to make money for the prison administration or to run factories for the benefit of other parts of the Government. The 1999/2000 Resolution of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) refers to education and training in prisons in the following terms:

- a. Education and training in prisons should aim at developing the whole person, bearing in mind the prisoners' social, economic and cultural background.
- b. All prisoners should have access to education, including literacy programmes, basic education, vocational training, creative religious and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education, higher education and library facilities.
- c. Every effort should be made to encourage prisoners to participate actively in all aspects of education.
- d. All those involved in prison administration and management should facilitate and support education as much as possible.
- e. Education should be an essential element in the prison regime, disincentives to prisoners who participated in approved formal educational programmes is avoided.
- f. Vocational education should aim at the greater development of the individual and be sensitive to trends in the labour market.
- g. Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role since they have a special potential for enabling prisoners to develop and express themselves.
- h. However possible prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside the prison.
- i. Where education has to take place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible.
- j. The necessary funds, equipment and teaching staff should be made available to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education.

It can be deduced here that, effective Vocational Education and Training programmes in the prisons can significantly reduce the rate at which inmates come out of prison and commit crimes and return to prison again.

Organized Correctional Education for Prisoner in Lagos State Prisons

Basically, organized Correctional Education for prisoners in Lagos State Prisons has been based on two major principles earlier mentioned. These principles are: principle of general education and principle of vocational and technical education. The two principles are inseparable from one another for they are two sides of the same coin, in that one cannot function effectively without the other. Conception of vocational education alone without general education cannot make up effective reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners. This type of conception is educationally, reformative and rehabilitative defective decision based on rationally unsound reasons. The reasons are superficially accepted without proper investigation and application of pragmatic thought to achieve the desired goal. To prescribe vocational education alone for prisoners, perceived to be incapable of benefiting from general education is an error. It is common saying that such prisoners would become better and able to use their hands, subsequently become 'job creators instead of job seekers'. Such argument seems to ignore the following educational dictums:

1. Prisoners' inability to benefit from general education is always due to socio-psychological, factors that can be remedied by quality educational provisions, quality teaching and learner-support services.
2. Using hands requires adequate control by the brain and therefore developing the intellect that facilitate the mastery of using hands.
3. Effective mastery of trade in today's world requires a sound general education and a good amount of creativity.
4. Effective using of the hands should be an integral element of everyone's basic education; therefore, the prisoners excluded from either general or vocational education acquisitions is simply to further handicapped the prisoner.
5. Modern world's knowledge economy does not require mechanical-type, technical skills alone, but technical skills build on a foundation of a sound general education and learning skills.

6. Modern world's knowledge economy cannot survive mere 'mechanical workforce, but a 'creative workforce' whose major asset is versatility.

7. A nation cannot have 'job creator' in a situation in which the intellect is not developed.

Moreover, Organized Correctional Education for prisoners is a correctional education formally put in place in prisons for prisoners in prison custody. It is organized for dropouts and 'victims of circumstances' to continue with their education as a career while in prison custody. It is not only limited to the dropouts and victims of circumstances but includes the whole community of prisoners in prison custody. Each prisoner is enrolled to pursue the programme appropriate to him. The idea of organized correctional education for prisoners was experimented in three Nigeria prisons commands:- Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara, and the results were commendable. A good number of prisoners were graduated under different programmes and linked to other educational institutions and employment outside the walls of prison in the outside world after being released or discharged on finishing their prison terms.

It is formally organized to enable prisoners acquire formal education certificate and qualifications at the end of the programme. It is formal because it is guided by all the criteria and principles that guides formal school education in the outside world, such as; formal curriculum, formal classes, formal examination, formal graduation and certification and so on. The Correctional Education for prisoners is composed generally of; religious education, vocational education, basic literacy, post-literacy, junior secondary school education, senior secondary school education, computer education, University education and guidance and counseling education, all formally organized to make it different from the traditional prison education in the country, which mainly was a means of operating the prisons.

CONCLUSION

Despite the many successes and challenges education has faced in Custodian Centres there is one sure thing about education and that is, it is a way of rehabilitating inmates and their eventual entry back to society as a wholesome person. Therefore, stimulating inmates' zeal and enthusiasm in correctional education is key to avoiding recidivism, and also, to make them a better person when discharged. Academic, vocational and religious education are very significant and imperative to achieving a successful rehabilitation of inmates. If these forms of education are adopted, it might go on to affect their consciousness towards becoming useful for themselves and the society at large.

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