
CHALLENGES OF REFORMS IN THE NIGERIAN PRISON SYSTEM: LESSONS FROM U.S.A AND SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of establishing the prison institution in all parts of the world including Nigeria is to provide a rehabilitation and correctional facility for people who have violated the rules and regulations of their society. The extent to which this is true in practice has been a subject of discussion. An observation of the population that goes in and out of the prisons in Nigeria shows that there are some problems in the system, hence the prison system has not been able to live up to its expected role in Nigeria. Base on this, the paper stresses on why reform is necessary in the Nigerian prisons. Some of the reasons include reforming the prisoners to be better than what they were before they were imprisoned, rehabilitating the prisoners in order to equip them with new skills or improve on their old ones, and seclude criminals from the rest of the society, pending when they have changed. Theories of the prison as a social system, are used in this paper, such as the structural-functionalist approach of the system theory for the study of human society and culture as proposed by Radcliff-Brown of the British school of social anthropology and later developed by Meyer Fortes and Max Gluckman is used in explaining prison environment etc. The researcher looked at the problems of Nigerian prison system, challenges and Rationale for reform of the Nigerian prison, various reform attempted, then lessons Nigerian prison should learn from other countries that have a successful running of prisons system in their countries and how to realize a sustainable prisons system in Nigerian. The conclusion is drawn based on the findings.

Key word: *Prisons, reforms, congestion, overcrowding, policy.*

INTRODUCTION

Imprisonment is viewed as an aspect of punishment. The deferent philosophers and retributivists stress that a deviant should be punished in order to pay him back for his actions and to defer him or others from committing crime. The issue of imprisonment is most appropriately conceived as a formal perspective of inflicting pain on the offenders. These have been an aspect of the traditional criminal justice system in various parts of the country, Nigeria, (Obioha 1995; Obioha 2002). While imprisonment is a prescription, prisonization is the process of living with in a confinement known as a prison. A prison according to McCorkle and Korn (1954) is a physical structure in a geographical location where a number of people live under highly specialized conditions. Utilized the resources and adjust to the alternatives presented to them by a unique kind of social environment that is different from the larger society in so many ways. Truly, there are basic social and cultural characteristics that are present in the prison community and other total institution alike, which do not exist in the larger society. The prison community with its district culture and way of life shows a complete design capable of changing the attitudes of offenders for good or bad depending on the personal experience and the social network action. The way of life in the prison

provides the means and ways for the adjustment processes of inmates. Its culture is a dynamic one, which consists of all sorts of value reorientation and internalizations (Obioha 1995). The Nigerian prison system was established in accordance with three forms of penal legislation which operate along side each other in the country, the penal code and the accompanying criminal procedure code cap 81 laws of the federation 1990 (CPC); the criminal code and the accompanying criminal procedure Act Cap 80 laws of the federation (CPA) and the sharia penal legislation in 12 Northern States of Nigeria which is applied to only Muslims. Philosophically, the Nigerian prison service is an institution meant to administer penal treatment to adult offenders. Its significance is to reduce crime in the society. On the basis of imprisonment policy, the prison service was established to manage criminals in the prison yards. This constitutional function empowers the Nigerian prison operatives to be able to keep convicted offenders for safety custody, to keep awaiting trials inmates in custody, to punish offenders as instructed by the law courts, to reform the convicted prisoners, and to rehabilitate and to re-integrate prisoners who have completed the sentences in the prison.

However the main aim of establishing the prison institution in all parts of the world including Nigeria is to provide a rehabilitation and correctional facilities for those who violated the rules and regulations of their society. How practically this will work out becomes a problem. Instances are bound where the prisons have become a training ground for criminals instead of rehabilitation home in Nigeria (Obioha 1995). In observation the population that goes in and out shows that there are same problems in the system, hence the prisons system has not been able to live up to expectation. The expectations are that the Nigerian prisons has not impact positively on the lives and vocations of inmates which has raised questioned that have not yet been completely addressed on the systems functions and existence. Against this background of the existing gap arising from the questions of functionality of the Nigerian prisons, this paper looks at the concepts and theoretical views of prisons, the problems of prisons in Nigeria, challenges and rationale for reform of the Nigerian prisons, various reforms attempts made, lessons from other countries like South Africa and United States of America precisely, realizing a sustainable prisons system in Nigeria and conclusively a way forward.

Conceptual Issues

The concept of prison has been treated from various perspectives which include structural and functional dimensions. McCorkle and Korn (1954) described a prison as a physical structure in a geographical location where a number of people living under highly specialized condition adjust to the alternatives presented to them by the unique kind of social environment. Samely, Sykes (1958), Goffman (1961) and Okunola (1986) conceived prison as where people are highly secluded from the rest of the world with entirely new order of control. This conceptualizations advanced by scholars are limited toward understanding that, prison is a physical environment and could be described geographically or spatially. Different from the physical conception, there are other schools of thought that are based on function, framework, and label. From the functional perspective, a prison is perceived as a place to punish offenders, where criminals that are removed from the society are dumped to protect

the society from further criminal activities of the offenders, a place to rehabilitate, and teach offenders to be law abiding and productive after their release. Prisons are also perceived as a total institution, from the perspective of framework. Okunola (1986) and Goffman (1961) variously defined the concept in this manner. While Okunola sees a total institution as a palace unlike free environment or community that house those who are socially rejected, in some or mentally, retarded, Goffman, on the other hand conceptualized total institution as where there is a basic split between a large class of individuals who are restricted contact with outside world and stereotypical behaviour pattern where social mobility is restricted. The labeling point of view stressed prison as a place for vagrants, who may, pose actual danger to social life in the larger society which pre-supposes that every person in the prison is a vagrant and irresponsible person. This was the position of Howard (1960) who demonstrated his view with what obtained during the ancient Greek times. With the recent developments, the general conception about the prisons is changing in the mind of some people with reference to the erroneous idea that people in the prisons are dregs of the society. The new conception, which was credited to Yongo (2000) perceived the prison as "home for all". The main thrust of this idea is rooted in the pragmatic and positivist point of view, regardless of what the traditional views are. His argument is that it is not only the guilty are found in prison some prisoners actually committed offences they are alleged to have committed.

Theoretical Issues

Some sociological theories propounded by famous scholars are adopted as models for understanding the prisons as both structural and functional entity in the society. The structural-functionalist approval of system theory for the study of human society and culture was proposed by Radcliff-Brown (1952) of the British School of social anthropology. The crux in this theory is that social structure is an abstraction based on social relationship with which the society can be analyzed into three main levels of individuals, institutions and sub-system. Like the society, in applying this assumption to the prisons, the prison system is seen as a functional, structural whole with different parts. This means that the aspect of prison life ways such as the norms, values and folkways from integral parts of the institutional systems of social control, and other behavioural patterns. Merton (1949) identified and distinguished the manifest and latent functions of institutions and cultural traits. This perspective is an appropriate model towards understanding the intended and unintended functions of the prisons system. Prisonization, social control regimented culture and seclusion are design need to produce position results in the life of the individual prisoners upon release. The whole re-socialization processes in the prison system are actually intended to mould the cultural behaviour of individual inmates. The prison culture is perceived from Merton's social structure perspective as capable of producing both well adjusted and maladjusted individuals in the society. In Nigeria the importance of sending offenders to the prison are not met because offenders are likely to be more hardened than they were, before imprisonment. The functional parts of the prisons are all broken down, thereby contributing negatively in maintaining the whole structure of the prisons system. Due to the nature of Nigeria prisons, the end result of the whole process is ironically intended to the contrary. In order to prepare

the prisoners for eventual meaningful contribution to the development of a nation, it is ideal to treat them with human dignity. A theoretical background of best practice to treat prisoners in Atlanta constitutions read "demeaning and demoralizing prisons is the worst way to prepare them for the world outside the walls". Based on this theoretical background, it is informative that the prison system should be made to be more responsive and productive in the society.

The Problems of Prison Reform in Nigeria

The Nigeria prisons are characterized by so many problems which have been indicated by several studies, and this has been reasons for inadequacies of the system as a corrective institution. 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 this aspect the prisons system in Nigeria is faced with the problem of destroying the individual members of the community which negates the importance of imprisonment, amounting to human development wastage in the nation. It is observed that various prisons in Nigeria are saddled with the problem of turning out maladjusted releases. Studies like Obioha (1995), Adetula et al. (2010) have shown that contact with the prison institution in Nigeria makes the less hardened individuals to the more hardened in criminal activities upon release. According to Adetula et al. (2010), the penal institutions subsystem, the justice, the police, prison yard and the operative 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. It has been observed that the longer an offender stays in the prisons the more the probability of recidivism and vice-versa. The fundamental cause of 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 younger and older inmates are not systematically sorted out in different cells according to the Standard Minimum Rules (SMR) for imprisonment which demands that prisoners should be locked up according to their various categories.

Reforms are needed in the areas of problem of over-crowding, poor staff moral, inadequate funding, need for new rights for prisoners, rights to food right to clean environment, right to human dignity, need for other alternatives to imprisonment.

Less than 4 percent of all the total prison admissions are females, more than 55 percent of the convicted prisoners, are first offenders that is "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. About 50 percent of the convicted prisoners are between the ages of 28 and 50 years and about 33 percent of all convicted prisoners are sentenced for stealing with violence Nnamdi (2005). 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). Some areas that have existing trade and

skills acquisition centres within the prison yards are either functioning or unsuitable for some inmates who may prefer other trades and educational learning processes that are not existence in the prisons rehabilitation curriculum. In relation to social infrastructure, there are no good recreational facilities and other amenities in most prisons in Nigeria, as reported by Soyinka (1972) Kangiwa (1986) and Obioha (1995) in Sokoto and Ibadan prison yards respectively. The environmental, condition with regard to amenities have been characterized as "uncheerful (Awolowo 1985)", "dehumanizing (Soyinka 1972)" and a hell by Abubakar Rimi after his life experience as a political prisoner in Nigeria at the termination of the second republic. Moreover, most prison yards 5 in Nigeria are overcrowded beyond the designed population (Ifioma et al, 1987; Obioha 1995) the manifestation of this is that most of the prisons are holding more population of inmates than they were originally planned to accommodate, which in turn over-stretches available infrastructure beyond their limits of function due to human pressure. As far back as 1990 percentage overcrowding in Nigerian prison was 74, 19 percent. Since then, not much has happened to indicate a downward trend. Current efforts seem cosmetic in the absence of a total over haul of the criminal justice system and are orientation of judicial mentality which relies on imprisonment as a disposal method for many offences. The problem of congestion in the Nigerian prison is discovered to be the major cause of some killer diseases such as air born infection.

Poor funding of the prison service has not helped matters. The services needs a strong public relations unit that will bring to the fore importance and utility of their activities. The current practice of secrecy and timidity is not innovative rather there should be constant searchlight on the activities of Nigerian prisons. It would appear that the civil society and human rights, non-governmental organization are doing all the publicity. This is not enough, it should be constant, regular and persistent like most organs of government, the fear, or rightsizing, retrenchment, poor salaries and working conditions has not boosted staff morale. As a result, despondency seems to be the order of the day. From the numerous identified problems, it may be difficult for Nigerian society to have prisoners rehabilitated for better lives. This could be connected also if they learn from other countries like America and South Africa and endeavour to adapt their system where necessary.

Challenges and Rationale for Reform of Nigerian Prisons System

From numerous illustrations above, Nigerian prisons are decaying in most aspects of their operations. As summarized in Amnesty International (2008:1) the "Living conditions in the prisons are appalling. They are demanding to the physical and mental well-being of inmates and in many cases constitute clear threats to health. Conditions such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of food and medicines and denial of contact with families and friends fall short of UN standards for the treatment of prisoners. In many Nigerian prisons, inmates sleep two to a bed or on the floor in filthy cells. Toilets are blocked and over flowing or simply non existence and there is no running water. As a result, the diseased is no running water. As a result, the disease is wild spread. Some prisons have small clinics which lack medicine, some have hospitals. Guards often demand that inmates pay tribes for such privileges as visiting the hospital, receiving visitors, contacting their families and in some

cases, being allowed outside their cells at all. Prisoners with money may be allowed mobile phones whereas those with funds can be left languishing in their cells. A prisoner said "if you don't have money, and you came to prison you will suffer, they will collect money from you, it is not right. The unpleasant situation do not need to over emphasized, rather should perceive as the signal posts the need to overhaul the entire system. One of the important rationales for a total overhaul of the prison system in Nigeria is to reposition the system in order to perform its constitutional and expected roles in the society, which are not yet met. These roles are as follow: Reforming the prisoners to be better than what they were before Rehabilitating the prisoners in order to equip them with new skills or improve on their old ones etc. A lot have been said and done on paper about the restructuring and repositioning the prisons, still it appears that little or nothing has been achieved in practical terms. The problems in the prison system in Nigeria require urgent attention if only they can imbibe other developed countries prison systems ideas and implement on them. A significant observation which should be taken seriously in any reform process of the prisons is that Nigerian prison system still remains with in the traditional perception of prison system as a perceive actor in the chain of criminal justices administration, which need to be changed (Agomoh 1996). She stressed that "traditionally, the prisons are made to play a passive role in the chain of criminal justice administration. It is understatement to allude that the Nigerian prison system is more punitive and dehumanizing than the supposed corrective assignment that it should be focused on in the present global dispensation and demands for actualization of human rights in the prisons of member countries that are signatory to this convention on human rights. Nigeria is signatory to this convention and many other human right perspective rules, such as UN Standard Minimum Rules for treatment of prisoners which Nigeria should conform to etc.

Various Reform Attempts in Nigerian Prison System

Nigerian prisons system has gone through some reform processes. This is to say that reformation and rehabilitation are the modern objectives in the treatment of offenders. Therefore the programme of action towards the realization of these virtues should be well-articulated and implemented. In this paper an examination is made on the various reform attempts in Nigerian prison system. The focus, is on the functionality of the prisons as a community where inmates live and interact, with district social organization and structure independent of the society macro system, instead of the entire service. The reform process of the prisons system is supposed to be instituted as an ongoing and self-sustaining exercise, rather than a once off palliative approach Obiaha (1995). The intention to reform Nigerian prison system in recent time can be traced to June 2001, when the government proposed to review prison laws and prison reform, train personnel, rehabilitate inmates and revitalize the prison system with the prison reforms programme. Effort has been made since 2000 to actualize the mission to reform the prisons. The preliminary steps has been taken, this include the establishment of several working groups and commit on prison reforms with different mandates and terms of reference up to 2007, the National Working Group on prison Reform and Decongestion 2005, the interministerial summit on the state of Remand Inmates in Nigeria's prisons 2005, Presidential Committee on Prison Reform and rehabilitation 2006,

the Presidential Commission on the Reform of the Administration of Justice (PCRAJ) established 2006, the committee on the Harmonization of Reports of Presidential Committees Working on Justice Sector Reform 2007.

The agenda set for most of the committees and groups that were involved in the task of the Nigeria prisons reforms focused on all or at least one of the following pressing areas of decadence are congestion and overcrowding, physical infrastructure facilities treatment of inmates, logistics and transportation system and skills development etc. A lot of money has been invested on these things, yet reformation has not taken place in Nigerian prisons system.

Lessons from South Africa

It is known that South Africa really suffered apartheid, both as an official policy and in the form of the less formal segregationist practice. This preceded and had a negative influence on the development of the society. Apartheid distorted the criminal justice system. At a time people of colour were largely excluded from positions of authority in the judicial system, in the police and in the prisons. The criminal justice system was influenced because it was used by the state as an instrument in the fight against the opponents of apartheid. Much of the energy of the policy was drawn away from the fight against ordinary crime. The states of emergency declared in the 1970s and 1980s led to the goals being filled with unsentenced detainees incurved for their opposition to the government of the day. The use of the criminal justice system in this way also led to its legitimacy being undermined amongst broad sections of the population. The president Nelson Mandela, at the OAU meeting then in Tunisia in June 1994 expressed that, they all prayed and made sacrifices to bring about a South Africa that they could hold out as a true example of the democracy, equality and justice for all which the apartheid system was constituted and intended to deny. He continued that they will use their resources to create a society in which all their people would be emancipated from the scourges of poverty, disease, ignorance and backwardness.

Having seen this, South Africa began to recover their lost glory. They started this by telling themselves the truth about the state of their country and began implementation on their policies. The researcher is interested in their workable implementation in their prison system which Nigeria should imbibe. This brought reformation of their prison system to an extent. Formally, South Africa prisons system was nothing to write home about until there was a present trend among international penological experts, academics and corrections/prison administration is to follow a systems approach when dealing with the issues that confront the correctional system. The political changes which began in 1990 had a direct impact on the prison system. In 1991 the prisons services was separated from the department of justice and renamed the Department of Correctional Service (DCS). The new Department was responsible for the supervision of offenders in the community as well as operating the prison system. The down of the Government of National Unity in 1994 meant that the DCS could look forward to a future where it will never again be misused to further policies that are in conflict with the standards of the international community. The legacy of the past is, however, still present and the authorities face a very daunting task to reform the prison

system to meet international standards. The constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for a National Department of Correctional Services. The accountability for the Department is rested in the commissioner who is responsible to the Minister of Correctional Service. In the administration of headquarters as a policy-making body, the commissioner is assisted by Chief Deputy Commissioners who in turn have specific Chief Directorates to them headed by Deputy Commissioner. The implementation and execution of policy is the responsibility of nine provincial commissioners in each of the provinces. Every province is divided into Areas of Command with a Commander at the head of each Area of Command. There are recently 133 Areas of Command through out the country. Within an Area of Command there are a number of prisons – 240 country wide. In all these prisons, a Head of prison is responsible for the administration of the prison. The DCS has its primary function the responsibility keep those detained in prison in safe custody until they are legally released. While adhering strictly to its function, the Department acknowledges the fundamental rights of offenders which are embodied in the constitution. The Department is furthermore committed in maintaining universally acceptable standards and norms with regard to the treatment of offenders and in particular those norms, standards and guidelines laid down by the United Nations on the treatment offenders. The DCS is as in other countries, in service of the community and forms an inseparable part of the criminal justice system. Bearing this in mind, the Department Strives to ensure close liaison and cooperation with the criminal justice system and with society on a continuous basis in order to ensure and maintain an effective correctional system and a more just humans and safe society, based on the following correctional practices. In the area of physical care The DCS of South African prison system respects and endorses the legitimate expectations of every prisoner to be detained under conditions consistent with human dignity. This is regarded as a prerequisite to the building of the prisoners self-respect as well as positive participation in rehabilitation and training programmes. The Department strives to provide adequate accommodation which complies with accepted standards.

The principle of classification of prisons and the effective separation of prisoners according to their levels of security risk is embodied in the present correctional service acts, 1998. It is generally accepted that a good security classification system forms the backbone of good prison administration. Charl (2007). In the area of health services, the DCS respects and endorses the prisoners right to quality health care. All inmates thus have access to medical care. The main objective is to provide for an ethical and clinically independent health care service, accentuating the primary health care strategy of preventive and primitive health care which includes health education. All prisoners have health care facilities. Every province possesses a regional prison hospital which provides for the rendering of a 24 – hours nursing service. At larger prisons there are inferable, well-equipped pharmacies, theatre facilities where local anesthetics can be administered and provision is even made for the rendering of specialist services within these hospitals. In keeping with the emphasis of primary health care the Department strives to cater, in cooperation with the health authorities for the different nutritional needs of persons entrusted to its care and to comply with the recommended daily allowance prescribed by the American Nutritional Council and the World Health Organization.

The basic thing to an effective corrections and justice system is a firm commitment to the belief that offenders are responsible for their non behaviour and behavioural change and have the potential to live as law-abiding citizens. In relation to this, the treatment, development and training of offenders are approached as follows:

- Involvement of the various professionals is determined according to the individual needs, circumstances and risk factors of the offender.
- Opportunities are provided and offenders are encourage to participate in appropriate programme.
- Offender are informed of the various programmes and should participate in decision affecting them.
- The offender is consistently monitored to know whether change has occurred.
- The various programmes are continually evaluated and the needs of offenders are addressed to determine and ensure effective approaches and programmes.

In all these Department of correctional services has applied policies which are; Youth Policy Development and Care Policy, Psychological Services Policy, Social Work Services Policy, Formal Education Policy, Security Management Services Policy, Risk Profile Management Policy, Poverty Alleviation Policy, Correctional Programmes Policy, Correctional Centre-based Care Policy, HIV/AIDs Policy, Sports, Recreation, arts and culture policy, privileges policy, marriage policy, infants and mothers policy, health care policy. If the Nigerian prisons system can be so committed in prison reformation just like prisons system in South Africa, there will be a better change in reformation.

Lessons from the American Prison System

United State is seen as states that lead the world in producing prisoners. This is as a result of their approach to crime and punishment. Americans are locked up for crimes – from writing bad checks to using drugs that would rarely produce prison sentences in other countries. They are kept incarcerated for longer than prisons in other nations. Americans established prison policy which embraces the private sector in imprisonment. The demand for prison in U.S.A has been growing as a result of tougher sentencing laws and the war on drugs. Given the major costs of prison expansion approach in U.S.A as the community debt for prisons and jails increased, the public began to reject initiatives for increased funding. Faced with conflicting demands caused by these phenomena, many public administrators welcomed the solution offered by private entrepreneurs for profit. Private firms gained a fat hold in this industry by arguing that they can build the needed facilities using their own capital and then charge the government a fee which is cheaper than that of state-run institutions. Governments could pay for these services using funds appropriated for their operating budgets, thereby avoiding the need to gain the voters' approval for increasing allows a state to sign up for the voters to approve a bond initiative. The private company uses its own capital or financial leverage to build the prison. In turn, the state promises the company a certain number of inmates per day with the consequent per the cost set by contract and paid to the company. There is also a provision in the contract allowing the state to purchase the prison at the end of the contract for a predetermined sum of money. This privatization of jails

and prisons in the United State started in 1980. This is not only for steady growth of private, for-profit making of federal, state and country correctional facilities, but private firms have also become more involved in other aspects of the prison industry, such as financing and construction of new prisons and the renovation of existing ones. What compels state policy makers to privatize their prisons is that they wish to save costs though the truth may be otherwise. Security offered is according to the level of offenders and offences committed. They are well fed accommodated though the prisons experience overcrowding because of constant sentencing and punishment on any negative behaviour. Information technology helps reduce the amount of human error that occurs when processing a new inmates. Their jails and prisons use electronic imagery, swift finger print identification, as well as computer systems that can sort names and other personal data or characteristics. There is compliance with the constitution made to guide the staff and the inmates. Visitation policies made improve the prison environment where family and friends, are allowed to visit the inmates, but should strictly observed. Prison work and industry enable the inmates assignment to report to each day. This work programme help reduce the debilitating effects of idleness and boredom and improve the safe management of prisons, teach chances of success upon release.

Realizing a Sustainable Prison System in Nigeria

In evaluating the success and failures of prisons reform process in Nigeria and from other countries like South Africa and America, it is discovered that some necessary steps and actions should be taken by imbibing the truth, ideas and commitment of other countries as rightly mentioned. In order to improve Nigeria prisons to the greater heights and reposition it to perform the task, it ought to do and produce a correspondent result as expected, the issues of congestion should be treated, more prison yards need to be built, there should be regular distributives exercise, non governmental organizations should be encourage and allowed to visit the prison, there should be adequate provision of bedding and other infrastructure and designing of skills training should be made to satisfy the aspiration of most inmates etc. To make the desired decongestion of the prisons realistic, the government should be thinking of taking the following measures viz – (a) The prison based courts should be established in order to ease the problem of transporting the inmates or accused to the courts, (b) There is an urgent need to institute alternative measures to imprisonment. (c) The government through the prison reform committee should revisit the act establishing the prisons to know whether the issue of awaiting trails population will be settled amicably. (d) Nigerian prisons system should learn from other countries like South Africa and U.S.A and imbibe their pattern of running their prison system. More so a computerization of the total prisons system for administrative records to inmate finger prints and identity is much desired at this present time in Nigerian development.

CONCLUSION

The problem of prison reform in Nigeria from the study appears to be a herculeine task considering the relative difficulties in the exercise. As an avenue to punish culprits, the Nigerian prison is bedeviled with problems of congestion, overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack

of food materials for inmates, etc. This paper stressed the absent of meaningful prison reforms in Nigeria, the fallout of which manifests itself in the aforementioned. It may not be out of place to state that the Nigerian prison system does not have the requisite capacity to rehabilitate culprits, therefore it contributes little or nothing to the process of reforming the affected persons in the society. It follows logically that if there is an enabling environment created within the context of the Nigerian prison process, inmates would eventually contribute meaningfully to the nation-building project in the 21st century and beyond.

The Way Forward

The following steps should be taken to ensure effective prison reforms in Nigeria. First, there should be the political will to genuinely carry out reforms with human face free from party inclinations and sentiments, favouritism and nepotism. Second, viable prison reforms should be such that inmates coming out of incarceration will be useful to themselves, their families and the Nigerian nation at large. This can be achieved through the impartation of useful skill acquisition including carpentry, shoe making, fashion designing, painting, building, etc. It then means that the persons involved would have to be actively involved in the learning of basic skills while in prison. Again, the issue of human right violation is very important since the fundamentals of the rights and privileges of inmates have been supposedly violated with reckless abandon. Thus, prison inmates should be allowed adequate rights to proper basic education, adequate health care, good nutrition and skill acquisition. These strategies if properly implemented will no doubt propel viable prison system in Nigeria in the fourth Republic and beyond.

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