

Agricultural Training of Inmates and Challenges Facing Food Security in Nigeria, A Study of Awka and Abakaliki Prisons

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural training in the prison system does not only produce extra people that grow crops for the society, but most primarily holds a post-prison economic engagement impact that is basic for proper reformation and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. Previous studies on prison systems and crime control have not been able to address the challenges facing agricultural training of inmates and problems of food security. This study examines the agricultural training of inmates and challenges facing food security in Nigeria. While establishing agricultural training as necessary for food security and reformation of criminal offenders, the study finds that agricultural training facilities at the prisons studied are grossly deficient and antithetical to the goals of reformation. The study recommends the integration of farming system improvement programmes in the prisons policies and programmes.

Keywords: *Agricultural training; Convicts; Food security; Prison inmate; Prison system.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Warren Burger, former Chief Justice of the United States as recorded in 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 towards work, physical training, and behavior (Dambazu, 2007). In this regards, Nigerian prison service is established to administer penal treatment to adult offenders with the sole aim of reducing 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 in safe custody, to keep awaiting-trial inmates in custody, to punish offenders as instructed by the law courts, to reform the convicted prisoners, and to rehabilitate and re-integrate prisoners who have completed their sentences in the prison (Ajah & Nweke, 2017).

Indeed, many rehabilitation services for prison inmates are widely available around the world. Each of these rehabilitation services target specific groups of people with specific needs for reform. Rehabilitation services provide trainings which agricultural training is a part, in prisons, in about various aspects of life. This is useful for getting inmates prepared for life outside the prison system. The place of these rehabilitation services in the reformation and transformation of prison inmates has continued to be on the front burner of public discourse in recent times (Tanimu, 2010). Thus, agricultural training is necessary in prisons because it will not only help prison inmates acquire the much needed social, vocational, attitudinal and behavioral changes and skills to be more useful to themselves and the society upon release but restore them to full physical, mental, psychological, social, vocational and economic usefulness. Researchers have shown that food is a cardinal need of man, without which survival is impossible. Prison inmates who are equipped with modern farming skills and have access to land and farming resources are less likely to reoffend.

However, despite Nigeria being blessed with skillful and able bodied prison inmates, abundant fertile land and water resources, Nigeria’s agricultural potential particularly in

the area of food security is not being realized. The family menu of having access to a sufficient quantity of affordable nutritious food is fast disappearing. Juju music icon, Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey, in one of his classic albums released in the late 1980s said Nigerians were using formula to eat. He sang about various eating formula such as 0-0-1, 0-1-0, 1-0-0, 1-0-1 and many others. The 1 in those numerals represents the meals families eat per day out of the three they are supposed to eat. True, in many homes, particularly, among the majority poor Nigerians, hardly will one see those who are having 1-1-1 which represents three square meals per day. Food is a serious matter. It is said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Hunger and starvation had precipitated revolution in many countries. History has it that one of the causes of the French Revolution (1789 – 1790) was as a result of the increase in the price of bread (Ojo, 2016).

Indeed, Nigeria's situation on food security is highly precarious and pernicious as a significant percentage of the Nigerian population is left with only the bilious taste of poverty (Wada, 2012). Relatedly, Braide (2017) noted that in Nigeria, self-sufficiency in food production is not in sight rather evidence of food insecurity and hunger abound virtually at every nook and cranny in the country. Importation of food items that can be sufficiently produced in the country has even become the order of the day. Food production does not satisfy local demands because apart from shortage in production, the technologies for processing and storage are very far from being adequate. Braide (2017) added that government policies and programmes in Nigeria had their principal objectives, which *abi-initio* did not emphasize food crop production and subsequently neglected farming systems. Most of programmes which in most cases were well-intentioned failed because of poor implementation and inadequate supervision.

The failure of Nigeria government to pay adequate attention to agriculture particularly in prisons and fund it adequately would continue to make our nation insecure because it is evidence that as Nigeria is battling the challenge of food insecurity, released inmates may likely reoffend instead of dying with unbearable hunger. 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).

CONCEPTUAL VIEW OF FOOD SECURITY

The issue of food security is often presented as a key concern of most governments around the world, and Nigeria is not an exception. According to FAO (2002), food security is a situation that exists when all people at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Relatedly, food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Mohammed & Onwurah, 2016).

Indeed, there are four dimensions to this: (a) availability of sufficient amount of food which is a function of food production (b) stability of supply over time which depends on the ability to supply over time which depends on the ability to preserve/store produced food and supplement available food through imports if necessary (c) access to the available food which depends on income level and its distribution and (d) food utilization which encompasses procurement, ingestion and digestion all of which are dependent on nutritional quality, education and health (Omale & Omede, 2016:756).

In the same vein, the World Bank (1986) defined food security as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life. They identified two essential elements of the food security equation as the availability of food and the ability to acquire it. Be it as it may, food security' is the capacity of households, communities and the state to mobilize sufficient food, through production, acquisition and distribution, on a sustainable basis. Food security thus depends on the land resources available to the household or community and their ability to mobilize resources for the production and/or distribution of food to achieve an active and healthy life (ECA, 2013:33)

According to Maxwell (1996), food security as a concept originated only in the mid-1970s, in the discussions of international food problems at a time of global food crisis. The initial focus of attention was primarily on food supply problems - of assuring the availability and to some degree the price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level. That supply-side, international and institutional set of concerns reflected the changing organization of the global food economy that had precipitated the crisis. A process of international negotiation followed, leading to the World Food Conference of 1974, and a new set of institutional arrangements covering information, resources for promoting food security and forums for dialogue on policy issues (Dreze, 1996).

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

According to Ojo (2016), agricultural sector which is primarily responsible for putting food on our table has been in the doldrums since the discovery of black gold which is crude oil in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa State about 1956. All the initiatives such as Operation Feed the Nation by the Olusegun Obasanjo military regime; the Green Revolution initiative of President Shehu Shagari, and similar ones by successive administrations have been more of lip service. As things stand, our choices are very limited as the crude oil which has been our mainstay since the 60s is no longer a money spinner as it used to be. This is because of the low price the commodity now commands in the international market. Despite that, the sabotage on oil and gas pipelines by vandals and militants in the Niger Delta has ensured that our 2.2mbpd OPEC quota upon which the 2016 national budget is based can no longer be met. This has gone a long way to threaten the full implementation of the 2016 Appropriation Act.

Relatedly, the neglect of the agricultural sector as a result of the total dependency of the economy on the oil sector, the sustenance of the colonial system of agriculture and the rising population sufficient food production problematic. This has created disillusionment in agricultural activities that has manifested in massive rural-urban migration. The consequence of which is depletion of labor force required for agricultural sector to play its roles of providing food for the teeming population of Nigeria, and providing raw materials to feed the country's dwindling agro-industries among others. As a

result of this, food insecurity emerged and the agro-industries in both the rural and urban centres were unable to sustain production. This has reduced in no small measure the output of food per capita, thus making Nigeria the least in the sub-Saharan Africa. There is therefore the threat of hunger and poverty as 70% of the population lives on less than N100 (US\$0.7) per day and youth unemployment is very high (Oni, 2008). Small holder farmers constitute a significant proportion of all farm holdings in the country but their production system has not been supported through government programmes and policies to produce more farm produce overtime. The capitalist system of production which is not meant for domestic food supply but for exports has always been encouraged. Thus, there has been substantial reduction in national domestic food production which, most of the time, is abridged by massive food import. This massive importation of food continued unabated at the detriment of domestic production since local farmers' contributions did not matter anymore. Thus, the peasant farmers' initiatives were killed.

The food import bills were easily borne through the huge revenue that was accruing from the oil sector. However, the reality met with Nigeria when there was a downturn in the oil revenue following the oil glut in the world market in the 1970s. Governments' response to this reality were introduction of various capitalist agricultural programmes like Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, School to Land, Agricultural Development Projects, among others. The evidence of failure of these programmes is the persistent food crisis being experienced in the recent time (Wada, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The structural functional is the framework for this study. Structural functionalism is theoretical orientation that was developed during the industrial revolution, its 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 and contribute in agricultural production depends on their access to good modern agricultural training and skills which prepares them to readjust easily 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 agricultural 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, increases the problem of food security and affects prisoners in the fulfillment of the goal of rehabilitation and re-integration in the society upon release (Ajah and 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 agricultural training, social norms and values are inculcated into the inmate population, promoting a pro-social orientation.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. Obodoeze (2005) remarked that a cross-sectional survey refers to a method whereby the researcher selects representative samples of individuals within the various specified stages of development, and then studies these samples in order to acquire knowledge. 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 study was carried out in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons. 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).

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

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 a 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

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each element of the population an equal chance of being included in the sampling.

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 food security and prison system. Responses that were generated through interviews, were subjected to content analysis while the quantitative components of data generated were presented using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed.

Table 2. Respondents view on the breakdown of crop farming, animal farming, vegetable and fruit farming facilities existing in Abakaliki and Awka Prisons

FACILITY	EXISTENCE			
	Exists	Does not exist	Do not know	Total
Crop farming				
Rice farming	140 (45.6%)	160 (52.1%)	7 (2.3%)	307 (100%)
Yam farming	34 (11.1%)	244 (79.5%)	29 (9.4%)	307 (100%)
Cassava farming	84 (27.4%)	202 (65.8%)	21 (6.8%)	307 (100%)
Potato farming	16 (5.2%)	258 (84.0%)	33 (10.8%)	307 (100%)
Irish potato farming	6 (2.0%)	280 (91.2%)	21 (6.8%)	307 (100%)
Beans farming	23 (7.5%)	280 (91.2%)	4 (1.3%)	307 (100%)
Maize farming	0 (0.0%)	177 (57.7%)	130 (42.3%)	307 (100%)
Groundnut farming	23 (7.5%)	184 (59.9%)	100 (32.6%)	307 (100%)
Animal farming				
Fish farming	19 (6.2%)	253(82.4%)	35 (11.4%)	307 (100%)
Piggery	15 (4.9%)	199 (64.8%)	93 (30.3%)	307 (100%)
Cow rearing	17 (5.5%)	238 (77.6%)	52 (16.9%)	307 (100%)
Chicken rearing	22 (7.2%)	221 (72.0%)	64 (20.8%)	307 (100%)
Goat rearing	14 (4.6%)	260 (84.7%)	33 (10.7%)	307 (100%)
Vegetable and Fruit Farming				
Carrot farming	10 (3.3%)	294 (95.7%)	3 (1.0%)	307 (100%)
Cucumber farming	4 (1.3%)	287 (93.5%)	16 (5.2%)	307 (100%)
Okro farming	3 (1.0%)	300 (97.7%)	4 (1.3%)	307 (100%)
Watermelon farming	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100%)
Pumpkin leaf farming	16 (5.2%)	256 (83.4%)	35 (11.4%)	307 (100%)
Orange farming	14 (4.6%)	195 (63.5%)	98 (31.9%)	307 (100%)

Field survey 2015

As can be seen from the results in Table 2, the state of the correctional facilities in Awka and Abakaliki prisons leaves little to be desired as critical facilities that could help in proving sufficient food and correctional duties 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”. An inmate narrated this gruesome condition when asked about his

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.

thoughts concerning the status of agricultural facilities and why there were cases of reoffenders thus:

Some of these prisoners here have been released more than once but they still find their way back because they are not trained in any skill especially farming. I’m always shocked with what they right about doing enough to reform some of us. I don’t expect anybody to be talking about changing our habit when they are not doing the needful by providing necessary

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facilities particularly farming facilities (IDI, prison inmate).

This was corroborated by another inmate thus:

Those of us that released must surely come back since they don't even give us proper training and skills, when you are released from prison and you find nothing doing, the easiest option will be crime. (IDI, prison inmate).

Another IDI respondent stated differently:

...Which training will make a born criminal not to indulge in crime, training such persons is waste of time, crime is so enshrined in their blood that they can never quit (oshi din a obara)

stealing is in the blood (laughs). (IDI, prison staff).

The absence of good agricultural training facilities in the Awka and Abakaliki Prisons has led to conditions antithetical to the achievement of the correctional objectives, this grim picture was captured by Oduyela (2003) when he stated that "the Nigeria penal system is punitive, degrading and dehumanizing; and leaves the prisoners with the least opportunity of re-entry into the society. He went further to argue that those who are lucky to come out alive find it exceedingly difficult to re-adjust to normal lives and eventually end up in crime".

Table 3. Respondents view on functionality of agricultural facilities that exist in Abakaliki and Awka Prisons

FACILITY	FUNCTIONALITY			
	Functional	Not Functional	Do not Know	Total
Crop farming	35 (11.4%)	256 (83.4%)	16 (5.2%)	307 (100.0%)
Animal farming	130 (42.3%)	177 (57.7%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)
Vegetable and fruit farming	100 (32.6%)	184 (59.9%)	23 (7.5%)	307 (100.0%)

Field survey 2015

The respondents' view on the functionality of agricultural facilities in their prisons. On crop farming facilities, 11.4% were of the view that they were functional, 83.4% were of the view that they were not functional while 5.2% do not know. On animal farming facilities, 42.3% were of the view that they were functional, 57.7% were of the view that they were not functional. On vegetable and fruit farming facilities, 32.6% were of the view that they were functional, 59.9% were of the view that they were not functional while 7.5% do not know.

These finding have shown that despite the existence of certain facilities, their functionality raises a lot of questions as most facilities remain in a state of disrepair and can no longer be used by the prison inmates.

The poor state of prison facilities in Awka and Abakaliki Prisons is not an isolated problem since same conditions have been reported elsewhere by researchers such as Achu, Owan and Ekok (2013). The negligence paid Nigerian Prisons by successive governments underscores this argument.

Table 4. Respondents view on the policies that would help in the correction of inmates and improves inmate's agricultural productivity

Policy	Necessary	Not necessary	Do not know	Total
Decongestion	299 (97.4%)	1 (0.3%)	7 (2.3%)	307 (100.0%)
Crop farming facilities	188 (61.2%)	119 (38.8%)	0 (0.0%)	307 (100.0%)
More animal farming facilities	300 (97.7%)	1 (0.3%)	6 (2.0%)	307 (100.0%)
More vegetable and fruit farming facilities	300 (97.7%)	6 (2.0%)	1 (0.3%)	307 (100.0%)
Removal of stigma	242 (78.8%)	55 (17.9%)	10 (3.3%)	307 (100.0%)
Improving on prison conditions	174 (56.7%)	103 (33.6%)	30 (9.7%)	307 (100.0%)
Staff with better attitude	193 (62.9%)	8 (2.6%)	106 (34.5%)	307 (100.0%)

Field survey 2015

Table 11 shows respondents views on policies that would help in the correction of inmates. About decongestion, 97.4% believed it was necessary, 0.3% thought it unnecessary while 2.3% do not know. About the provision of more crop farming facilities, 61.2% thought it necessary while 38.8% thought it unnecessary.

On the provision of more vegetable and fruit farming facilities, 97.7% of the respondents thought it necessary, 0.3% thought it unnecessary while 2% do not know. On the provision of more educational facilities, 97.7% of the respondents thought it necessary, 2% thought it unnecessary while 0.3% do not know.

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About the removal of stigma, 78.8% of the respondents thought it necessary, 17.9% thought it unnecessary while 3.3% do not know. On the improvement of prison conditions, 56.7% of the respondents thought it necessary, 33.6% thought it unnecessary while 9.7% do not know. About staff with better attitude, 62.9% of the respondents thought it necessary, 2.6% thought it unnecessary while 34.5% do not know.

An IDI respondent stated that:

Learning how to train and grow fishes will give me employment and keep me busy when I go out of this place (IDI, prison inmate).

Another IDI respondent stated that:

One would be greatly amazed and even deluded to think these inmates professionals by the level of skills they exhibit in different areas, however, to see these skills wither away on grounds of unavailability of some facilities has scourges of its own (IDI, prison staff).

Another IDI respondent stated that:

I stay in this cell and I am 38yrs old, when they say Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, I wholly agree on the grounds of the empirical knowledge driven from this cell. The congestion alone convinces you Nigeria is most populous in the world. I have never lied straight for nap nor have my whole body touch the ground. WE ASK NOT FOR FOOD OR TO BE SET FREE, WE ASK FOR SPACE TO SLEEP AND REST. (IDI, prison inmate).

The view of the respondents was consented to by Asokhia and Agbonluae (2013) when he recommended the provision of adequate rehabilitation facilities, education programmes, and skill acquisition programmes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural training is an essential ingredient to any society that seeks to improve food security and reduce crime in society. It would bring positive change in prison inmates. Findings from this study clearly indicate that government policies and programmes in Nigeria did not emphasize food crop production in prison system and subsequently neglected prison farming system.

Most of programmes in prisons failed in most cases because of poor implementation and inadequate supervision which keep agricultural productivity in prisons low and no contribution to export earnings. While the prospects for

sustainable agricultural development and the provision of adequate food for Nigerians are promising but all it requires is the recognition of the roles of prison inmate farmers and integration of the farming systems improvement programmes in the prisons policies and programmes.

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 in regards to meetings 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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