PRISON ADMINISTRATION IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA- A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

PRESENTED
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Simply, a prison is an institution saddle with the responsibility of keeping persons who have been legally convicted of committing a crime, and/or remanded on suspicion of offending against the law of a state.

The basic functions of prisons today are as follows:
i. Social isolation and confinement
ii. Repentance

iii. Punishment and deterrence
iv. Protection
v. Reformation

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The administrative structure of the Nigeria Prisons Service have the Controller-General of the Nigerian Prisons Service at the apex of the NPS. He is the Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for the formulations and implementation of penal policies in Nigeria.

He is responsible to the President through the Minister of Interior and the Civil Defence, Fire, Immigration and Prisons Services Board, which the Minister heads. However, in matters of prison policy he takes direct responsibility for policy implementation.

He is assisted by six (6) Deputy Controllers-General (DCGs) who head the six broad administrative divisions called Directorates into which the Service is broken for efficient management.

The Directorates are specialized divisions charged with the responsibility of coordinating specific areas of prison administration. They are:

➢**Operations**-responsible for the operational, security, data, and statistical management of all prisons in conformity to international standards.

➢**Administration and Supplies-** responsibility of properly articulating and implementing policy on personnel matters such as appointment, promotion, staff distribution, posting, discipline and training.

➢ **Health and Social Welfare-** charged with the physical, psychological and developmental well-being of the inmates and staff and the reform and rehabilitation of convicts

➢**Finance and Budget-** The Finance and Budget Directorate is charged with the responsibility of formulating, preparing, monitoring, evaluating, appraising, disbursing and supervising approved budgetary allocations for each year.

➢ **Inmates' Training and Productivity-** responsibility of training inmates specifically in Prison Farms and Industries for the purpose of not only imparting self-sustaining skills on them but also in the process inculcating in them the positive orientation of finding dignity in labour.

➢**Works and Logistics-** responsibility of articulating, planning, implementing, supervising/monitoring the construction of prison projects .

Presently the Nigeria Prison Service have 141 prisons for locking of various categories of prisoners

86 satellite Prisons

14 Agricultural farms Centers

3 Borstal Training or Young offenders institutions, and

6 Training institutions

The total inmate population stands at sixty eight thousand two hundred and fifty nine (68259) the breakdown of which are.

TABLE 1: INMATE DISTRIBUTION TABLE

CATEGORIES	ATM/F	CM/F	CC	LIFE	TOTAL
MALES	45712	18677	1960	584	66933
FEMALES	984	327	7	8	1326
TOTAL	46696	19004	1967	592	68259

[1] ATM/F-awaiting trial male or female; CM/F-convicted male or female; CC-condemned convict; and **LIFE IMPRISONMENT**-life imprisonment

Worldwide, Prison system models provide conceptual clarity regarding the complex workings of the prison system as well as the strains on and dilemmas of each system.

According to Steele and jacobs, scholars developed three models used to describe prison systems: hierarchical, differentiated, and autonomous (Steele and Jacobs 1975). Steele, Eric H. and James B. Jacobs. 1975. A theory of prison systems. Crime and
Delinquency 21: 149-162.

The hierarchical model's underlying goal is based on the premise of ensured physical control. This prison system favours custody and security and distinguishes between security levels. Prison inmates are classified as minimum, medium, or maximum-security categories.

Maximum-security prisons serve as punishment centres, with maximum order, and rehabilitation and treatment are not of top priority. The daily routine of a maximum security or custodial prison is keeping inmates occupied while under intensive scrutiny.

Minimum and medium security prisons house inmates under more pleasant conditions in honour units or work farms attached to the prison. This system serves as a resource to prison administrators to utilize as a reward for inmates who obey prison regulations and cooperate with prison staff. Prison administration may use a system of rewards to maintain order and control within the prison.

Inmates who comply with prison rules and participate in formal programs are moved rapidly through the prison system. The differentiated model proposes that criminals can be diagnosed and treated by identifying the causes of their criminal activity and prescribing treatment for the cause.

Under this model, age, offense, and clinical diagnosis, length of sentence, geography, education, and vocational deficiencies are considered in classifying inmates as this may provide insight into the cause of crime, the inmate's criminal behaviour, and a course of treatment.

Upon a prisoner's entrance into the facility, inmates are administered a psychological evaluation after which officials can assign resources to address an inmate's needs. The length of a prisoner's sentence separates short-term offenders from long-term offenders and helps determine the appropriate treatment.

The educational and vocational background of inmates allows officials to group inmates according to their deficiencies. Based on evaluation, prisoners are assigned to academic schools, vocational centres, and classes in social skills to address their particular deficiencies. This model conforms to humanitarian or positivist school of treating inmates as humans and not as caged animals.

Positivism relies on determinism and they argue there are multiple reasons for an individual's criminal behaviour and seeks to identify the root cause before treating the individual. Once the root cause has been identified then treatment and rehabilitation can be implemented.

The positivist approach does not favour punishment. This approach believes individuals do not choose to commit crime and medical intervention must be used to prevent further criminal activity.

The differentiated system has advantages and disadvantages. Since this model identifies and treats the causes of crime, the advantages are lower recidivism rates, humane treatment, and the rational use of resources.

The disadvantages of utilizing this system are the high cost, the possibility of escapes, the questionable effectiveness of treatment, and the lack of focus on retribution and deterrence. However, because the autonomous model is a variation of the hierarchical model, with minor differences

In Nigeria, the prisons are categorised into **MAXIMUM PRISONS**- holds all categories of inmates including life imprisonment and condemned convicts and have provisions for executions and hanging of convicts **MEDIUM PRISONS**- Holds categories of remand inmates but are not to hold inmates having sentences above 15 years **SATELLITE PRISONS**- these are receiving prisons and hold overnight cases in areas where main prisons are far from such locations.

Sociology and Prison

Very vital to the various definitions of sociology is that of understanding the intricate fundamental laws of social relations and how human action, behaviour and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures in the society, organizations, institutions.

Sociologists emphasize the careful gathering and analysis of evidence about social life in order to develop and enrich our understanding of key social processes, which most times are, glanced over by other disciplines.

It looks beyond normal, taken-for-granted views of reality, to provide deeper, more illuminating and challenging understandings of social life through its particular analytical perspective, social theories, and research methods.

The research methods and theories of sociology yield powerful insights into the social processes shaping human lives and social problems and prospects in the contemporary world. By better understanding those social processes, we also come to understand more clearly the forces shaping the personal experiences and outcomes of our own and others' lives.

The ability to see and understand this connection between broad social forces and personal experiences – what C. Wright Mills called "the sociological imagination" – is extremely valuable academic preparation for living effective and rewarding personal and professional lives in a changing and complex society.

Students who have been well trained in sociology know how to think critically about human social life, and how to ask important research questions. They know how to design good social research projects, carefully collect and analyse empirical data, and formulate and present their research findings.

They also know how to help others understand the way the social world works and how it might be changed for the better. Most generally, they have learned how to think, evaluate, and communicate clearly, creatively, and effectively. These are all abilities of tremendous value in a wide variety of vocational callings and professions.

Two of the most dramatic interest of sociologist in the institutions of confinement was in Erving Goffman's "**Total Institution**" and Zimbardo's "**Stanford Experiment**". I said dramatic because of the way these two concepts explained the sudden alterations to learned adaptive methods and coping capabilities of erstwhile-matured adults.

While Goffman merely described the institutions, Zimbardo's attempted Stanford Experiment purposely designed to induce disorientation, depersonalization, and deindividuation in the participants gave it a practical approach.

Goffman defines a "**Total Institution**" "as a place of work and residence where a great number of similarly situated people, cut off from the wider community for a considerable time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life".

Of the five types of these institutions so classified, of relevance to this topic is the third category of institutions-organised to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the people thus sequestered not the immediate issue of concern but the achievement of a specific objective.

Here, the environment has been designed to subtly even forcefully manipulate the behaviour of patrons. (Examples include Concentration camps, P.O.W. camps, Penitentiaries, and jails)

A person entering a total institution is greeted an attempt at socialise\ to remake the self by stripping away the individual's current identity and stamping a new one in its place.

Perhaps more striking is that Total institutions are isolated from the public. The bars, walls, gates, and guards not only keep the inmates in but also keep outsiders out. Staff members supervise the day-to- day lives of the residents.

Inmates learn that their previous statuses mean nothing. The only thing that counts is their current status and surprisingly only when they are within the institution. Conformity occurs when individuals change their behaviour to fit in with the expectations of an authority figure or the expectations of a larger group.

The general assumption is that only bad people go to prisons! It is left to conjecture therefore the manner of relationship of such like-minded constituents. Part of the lyrics of a song by a popular musician- "*They want make I sing about prison, they want to know about prison life*" aptly capture this curiosity. Fela Anikulapo Kuti-Beast of Nation

However, the manners of relationships most times are unclear due to the absence of data owing to the unappealing nature of the subject of study to researchers as well as problems of gaining access.

Perhaps to stir the enthusiasm of sociologists in the correctional field, a writer on similar topic as this (Prison and sociological perspectives) asked, "Is a qualitative sociological study of prisons useful. Isn't it legitimate for sociologists,-committed sociologists, to concentrate on deciphering the social forces and mechanisms at work in the reality of the prison world? An affirmative response to the latter question should not elude the complexity of the problem

See Prison and sociological perspective Vol. I | 2004 : Varia@ http://champpenal.revues.org/84

In trying to answer the poser, the writer argues that we cannot claim that there are no lack of knowledge and discourse about prison nowadays, as they exist in various reports, but of course, some areas pertaining to life (and death) in confinement definitely remain in the dark. Therefore, we have a problem here that merits deeper scrutiny.

See Prison and sociological perspective Vol. I | 2004 : Varia@

http://champpenal.revues.org/238

Bearing in mind that every criticism is not to annihilate but rather, to seize the nature and assess a potential impact. A self-scrutiny he said entails some obvious risks: it may unsettle conceptual routines, making conceptualization, and similarly research work, more laborious. Doing without this self-scrutiny entails another, converse risk, one which is much more prejudicial: that of producing analyses that have a strange resemblance with the systems, practices and perceptions which the researcher seeks, paradoxically, to criticize, or at least are easily accommodated by them.

This is the dilemma of persons like mine torn between established norms guiding an established institutions and my discipline of study. A dilemma between the "urgency of reforms" and the "rejection of the institution". The writer suggests a transversal approach is to broach research on prison as a particular application of a general sociology program, in an attempt to open a new avenue, distinctly different from and complementary to the more classical sociology of prisons.

Michel Foucault criticism of the modern correctional institution typifies the type of situations we may find ourselves. We should not rush into any interpretation and criticism based on these sociological observations. The history of corrections has indeed shown that it is precisely the search for emergency "solutions" to the most crucial "problems" and to the most "intolerable" situations, which has enabled the institution to adjust to contemporary sensitivities.

The danger is better illustrated by the divergence between a behaviourist interested in full inmate reformation and a Structural /Functionalist who believe in the latent aim of imprisonment each being dragged to justifications of their beliefs without adequate considerations for extraneous circumstances.

This is what Cartuyvels called "The "dilemma of Prisons" – explaining on the one hand, the existence of a correctional space that is seriously lacking in legitimacy; based on personal restraint which may be viewed as contrary to human rights, and to accepting the violence of a discriminatory, managerial logic of social exclusion. On the other hand, to refuse any prison reform is to refuse to conceive of the development of a legal system for sentence enforcement which would provide guarantees, protection and true improvement for prisoners day after day with arbitrary decisions and the vacuity of life in prison. As explained in Bailleau, F., Cartuyvels, Y. and de Fraene, D. 2009. La criminalisation des mineurs et le jeu des sanctions [*The criminalisation of young offenders and the sanctions game*]. *Déviance et Societé*, 33(3): 255–269

The 'core-business' of detention facilities is identified as the provision of safety and security to 'customers'. Elements that are not a part of the 'core-business' and, furthermore, are hard to tackle are seen as unworthy of relevant 'investment'

IN CONCLUSION

I conclude this lecture by this statement of C.W.Mills which says-Our conception of the complexity of the problem is based on the conviction that at a time when the dominion of confinement is unprecedented, at a time when discourse of a managerial type aimed at developing the efficiency of the criminal justice system prevails over any other type of discourse, at a time, too, Mills, C. W., 1997 [1967], L'imagination sociologique, Paris, La Découverte.

when the space for imagining other possibilities is shrinking within the intellectual sphere, it is essential that sociologists studying prison intensify not only their sociological imagination but also their critical vigilance with respect to their own assumptions and habits and to the principles of social justice on which their critical posture is predicated.

Thank you for listening