



## Research Paper

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# An appraisal of prison inmates' academic performance in senior secondary school certificate examination in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This study is an appraisal of prison inmates' Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results in Nigeria, over a period of five years, from 2009 to 2013. Three regional prisons in Nigeria that prepare and register inmates for these Examinations were randomly selected for the study. These are Abakaliki prisons in the South-East, Ikoyi prisons in South-West and Kuje prisons in North-Central Nigeria. Using the total enumeration method, five hundred inmates in all were registered for SSSCE in the various prisons sampled and captured for the study, namely: Abakaliki, 160 inmates with a response rate of 142, Ikoyi, 240 inmates with a response rate of 209 and Kuje 100 inmates with a response rate of 87. Thus, the results of 438 inmates /responses (87.6%) were received and used, as some inmates had already been discharged and released within the period. The results revealed that 53 (37.32%) inmates out of 142 from Abakaliki prisons had five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics, 37 (17.70%) inmates out of 209 from Ikoyi prison had five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics while none of the 87 inmates from Kuje prison had five (5) credits including English language and Mathematics, perhaps, for the cancellation of November/December 2012 Mathematics results by WAEC. On the other hand, none of the inmates had five (5) credits with Mathematics, but without English language, while 99 inmates (22.60%) had five (5) credits including English Language, but without Mathematics, an indication that the failure rate in Mathematics is higher. Recommendations were made as appropriate for improvement.

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### INTRODUCTION

The current trends of reformation in prisons in Nigeria are heart-warming and encouraging. Inmates in Nigerian prisons are being prepared for diverse examinations and programmes, all aimed at ensuring that they are well rehabilitated for onward integration into the society after their jail terms. Thus, prison authorities have introduced and exposed inmates to various educational programmes as part of its rehabilitative measures. Sequels to this trend, most inmates now show interest in being educated. Many of them have realized the importance of education and

they now enroll for one type of examination or the other to better their lot. Education in prisons is no doubt, necessary because its provision will make the prisons become places of continuous and informal learning rather than 'schools of crime'. Education in prison remains a veritable reformatory measure as it provides skills for jobs, which is a path to personal employment. Further studies enhanced citizenship and better health.

In Nigerian prisons, the conventional convict prisons are for the remand of both the convicted and awaiting trial

inmates. There are two major types of convict prisons operational in Nigeria, namely: the Maximum and Medium Security Prisons (Ogundipe, 2008). The Maximum Security Prisons take into custody all classes of prisoners including condemned convicts, lifers and long term prisoners etc. The Medium Security Prison, on the other hand, takes into custody both remand inmates and convicts. However, short-term convicts constitute the bulk of the inmates in the Medium Prisons. The Satellite Prisons are like intermediate prison camps set up mainly in areas with courts that are far from the main prisons. They serve as Remand Centres especially for those whose cases are going on in courts within the areas. When convicted, long term prisoners are moved to appropriate convict prisons to service their terms as observed by Ogundipe (2008).

The Nigerian Prisons Service organizes formal education classes designed to take care of the educational needs of those who were in school before they ran into trouble with the law. In the prison yards, fresh opportunities are given to them to reconnect with their truncated studies if so desired. When they have become trained, the Nigerian Prisons Service, in collaboration with the Local Government Authorities, arranges for them to take the First School Leaving Certificate Examination. No fewer than 3,000 of these prisoners are presented for the First School Leaving Certificate Examinations each year (Ogundipe, 2008). Some of them go to the next stage of their education while others, usually the older ones, take the educational attainments back home on discharge.

The other aspect of Adult Remedial Education Programme Initiative is the Remedial Education proper. This programme provides opportunities for prisoners who started post-primary education before they were brought to prison. In prison yards, classes are organized for interested prisoners to pursue their educational career to any level that is legally permissible within the context of the prison infrastructure. Opportunities are offered to pursue their education to the school certificate level, while few of them proceed to the tertiary level through the National Open University programme of the Federal Government.

The impressive number of candidates presented for Senior School Certificate Examinations annually has led to examination bodies making some prisons as centres for these examinations. Ikoyi Prison in Lagos State, for instance, is now a centre for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). The Nigerian Prisons Service, according to Ogundipe (2008), presents between 500 and 1000 candidates for WAEC/SSCE examinations annually.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of education to humans cannot be over emphasized. Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being

human. There are a lot of international human rights instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). Lehmann and Locke (2005) stress the fact that, in accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights societies have shifted their focus from punishment of prisoners to education, rehabilitation and constructive use of time.

Shirley (2006) posits that prisons were regarded at the onset as a place for punishment of those who break an established law, but later on, the pressure mounted by these organizations: The American Library Association, The American Correctional Association and The American Prison Association (APA) also nurtured the idea of a shift from punishment to reformation of prison inmates. Thus, APA advocates the establishment of prison libraries for education and leisure of prison inmates. Ntweo (2012) advances reasons for the education programme of inmates at Enugu prison where he was a Controller of Prisons service. He observed that, it becomes pertinent to incorporate education in the reformation programme of inmates because of the problem of managing the high school leavers and undergraduates who found themselves in prisons by circumstances. He goes on to reel out past achievements of the Prison in the area of education which includes the successes recorded by twelve (12) former inmates in the 2004 SSCE and 2 short-term inmates who scored above 200 in UME examinations.

Adeoye (2010) also reports of some prisoners in Nigeria who wrote varsity entrance examination. According to him, thirty-six (36) inmates from Lagos prisons sat for the 2010 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). These inmates cut across the five prisons in Lagos State namely: Ikoyi, Badagry, Kirikiri Medium, Maximum and Female prisons, which all converged at Ikoyi Prisons, the examination centre. Likewise, eighty-five (85) inmates from Kaduna prisons wrote this same examination, but their performance was not made known. Ogundipe (2008) equally reports that twenty-five (25) candidates took the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) in 2006, while, eighteen (18) took it in 2007, but only six succeeded in 2006, eleven (11) in 2007 and none of them could attempt Post-UME because there was no sponsorship. This is an indication that the prison inmates had quest for knowledge and the education behind bars should not be waived but sustained and fortified.

Prison education according to Demayer (2004) is an attempt to make and remake, to change and re-educate the inmates. It is a fundamental human right, which should not be denied prisoners. One of the principal objectives of the National Policy on Education is "to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively" (The National Policy on Education, 2004). In addition to government investment in education of prison

**Table 1:** Tabular illustration of number of inmates with minimum of 5 credits in Nov/Dec SSCE from the three prisons sampled from 2009 to 2013.

S/N	Prison	Year of SSCE examination / enrollment figure					*Total	Percentage of five credits (%)
1	Abakaliki	2009 (0)	2010 (0)	2011 (36)	2012 (39)	2013 (67)	142	(53)37.32
2	Ikoyi	2009 (64)	2010 (25)	2011 (24)	2012 (40)	2013 (56)	209	(37)17.70
3	Kuje	2009 (0)	2010 (0)	2011 (0)	2012 (44)	2013 (43)	87	(0)0
**	Grand total for the three prisons- Abakaliki, Ikoyi and Kuje						438	(90)20.54

inmates, Adeoye (2010) observed that prison inmates are also supported annually by non-governmental organizations, churches and mosques which assist in funding the costs of registration for their examinations.

It is worthy of note to mention that the West African Examination Council (WAEC) is an examining body that conducts a standardized examination in West Africa annually. Candidates are expected to pass five (5) subjects at credit level with English Language and Mathematics at a sitting, which is the requirement for admission into tertiary institutions. The Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) is taken by students at the end of their secondary school education in Nigeria and some West African countries such as Ghana, Liberia and Gambia. The SSCE certificate is a requirement for gaining admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It can also be used for securing jobs. Candidates sitting for WAECSSCE are allowed to choose nine subjects (out of fifty-eight (58) examinable subjects). The West Africa Examination Council, WAEC organizes two SSCE examinations, the first which is held in May/June is targeted at those still in Secondary schools and is called WAEC/SSCE or WASSCE May/June. The second examination, called WAEC/GCE or WASSCE November/December, is for private students, which inmates take and it takes place around November/December every year.

### Objectives of the study

Prison inmates enroll for and write the SSCE examination as private candidates because they are not in conventional schools. They also have the same motive and aspiration as the candidates in the free world, such as personal development, gainful employment on discharge, as well as, furthering their educational career. The alarming rate of failure of candidates in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results often released annually by WAEC does not exempt prison inmates, yet, not much is known about them, perhaps, because of their confinement. This study therefore intends to:

- 1) Find out the academic performance of prison inmates in SSCE generally;
- 2) Ascertain the number of inmates who passed at credit level in five subjects including English Language and

Mathematics at a sitting;

3) Make recommendations as to how education behind bars can be improved to better the lot of the prison inmates ahead of their release and

6) Make education behind bars a worthwhile rehabilitative measure.

### METHODOLOGY

Prison inmates in Nigerian prisons are being prepared for the private Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations conducted annually between November and December. A measure aimed at rehabilitating the inmates ahead of their release from prison and integration with the society. This study is based on three of the foremost prisons in Nigeria, with regional and geopolitical zones spread across the country namely: Abakaliki Prison, Ebonyi State in the South East, built in 1916 under the colonial administration, Medium Security Prison, Kuje Abuja (North Central) in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, established in 1989 and Ikoyi Prison, Lagos State in the South West, which is the first prison in Nigeria, established in 1872. The choice of these three prisons is based on the participation of their inmates' for private Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE), organized by WAEC.

Thus, the study adopted the total enumeration method to capture the WAEC results of all the prison inmates' who were enrolled and did the private SSCE, held from November/December 2009 to November/December 2013 (five years range) as private candidates. In all, five hundred inmates were registered for SSSCE in the various prisons sampled and captured for the study, namely: Abakaliki prison- 160 inmates with a response rate of 142, Ikoyi prison- 240 inmates with a response rate of 209 and Kuje prison- 100 inmates with a response rate of 87. Thus, the results of 438 inmates, representing a response rate of 87.6% were received and used, as some inmates had already been discharged and released within the period.

### RESULTS

Table 1 shows the tabular illustration of the findings, showing the summary of number of inmates with minimum of 5 credits including English language and

**Table 2:** Number of inmates from the sampled prisons with varying credits.

Prison	3C + Eng	3C + Mathematics	5C + Mathematics	5C + Eng	5C, without English and Mathematics
Abakaliki	13	1	-	36	3
Ikoyi	25	18	-	37	-
Kuje	15	-	-	26	2
Total	53	19	-	99	5

Mathematics in November/December SSCE results from the three prisons sampled from 2009 to 2013.

There is no doubt that education behind bars would help to reshape and reform the youths who found themselves in prison as a result of the crimes they committed. The November/December private SSCE results obtained from the three prisons sampled shows that a total of:

- 1) A hundred and forty-two (142) inmates from Abakaliki prison wrote the November/December private Senior School Certificate Examination during the period covered by the study with 53 inmates (37.32%) passing at credit level with a minimum of five subjects including English language and Mathematics;
- 2) Ikoyi prisons had a total of 209 inmates with 37 (17.70%) of them passing at credit level with a minimum of five subjects including English language and Mathematics;
- 3) Kuje prison had 87 inmates and none of them had a minimum of five credits including English language and Mathematics;
- 4) At Kuje prison, a total of 50 inmates were enrolled for the November/December, 2012 examination, out of which 47 inmates sat for the examination, 3 inmates were discharged before the commencement of the examination and could not sit for the examination. Out of the 47 inmates that sat for the examination, 44 results were released by WAEC and three results completely cancelled;
- 5) The break-down of the Kuje prison results for November/December, 2012 show: 87 distinctions, 127 credits, 104 passes and 97 failures on subject basis, without Mathematics;
- 6) Ironically, all the results released for Kuje prison in November/December, 2012 were without mathematics because it was completely cancelled by WAEC.

Table 2 shows the number of inmates from the sampled prisons with varying credits, with either English Language or Mathematics or neither. The findings show that 53 inmates had three (3) credits including English Language without Mathematics. Likewise, 19 inmates had three (3) credits including Mathematics but without English Language, no inmates had five (5) credits without Mathematics. However, 99 inmates had five (5) credits including English Language, but without Mathematics and five (5) inmates also had five (5) credits with neither English Language nor Mathematics.

## DISCUSSIONS

The three prisons sampled had a total of four hundred and thirty-eight (438) inmates who wrote the private SSCE, with 90 of them (20.54%) having a minimum of five credits including English language and Mathematics which is considered the benchmark for admission and employment purposes in Nigeria.

The results further revealed that 53 (37.32 %) inmates out of 142 from Abakaliki prisons had five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics. 37 (17.70%) inmates out of 209 from Ikoyi prison had five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics. None of the 87 inmates from Kuje prison had five credits including English language and Mathematics, perhaps, for the cancellation of the November/December, 2012 Mathematics results by WAEC. On the other hand, none of the inmates had five credits with Mathematics, but without English language, while 99 inmates (22.60%) had five (5) credits including English Language, but without Mathematics.

One can infer from the aforementioned results that more prison inmates passed at credit level in five (5) subjects including English language, but without Mathematics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are being proffered based on the findings of the study:

- The instructors should ensure that inmates are well taught in mathematics to remove the phobia for mathematics and ensure that inmates pass at credit level in mathematics to guarantee their admission to tertiary institutions which required that inmates pass at credit level in five subjects including English language and Mathematics;
- The prison libraries should improve on their mathematics collections by ensuring that more prescribed (recommended) library media resources are acquired, processed and made accessible for the utilization of the inmates;
- The instructors who teach mathematics should address the failure rate in mathematics which one can infer that inmates dread. Mathematics is needful and it is a requisite for admission;

- There should be negotiation with various state governments and non-governmental organizations to see the prospect of training their citizens in the prison yards in partnership with the Adult Remedial Educational Programmes so that prisoners who are forthcoming can enroll for the SSCE and thereafter, further their education to the University;
- Education behind bars would help to reduce the level of illiteracy in Nigeria, make the inmates fully occupied while in prison, make them employable on discharge and fit for further studies, if so desired.
- Government should make adequate budgetary provision for the Nigerian prisons to cater for the registration of willing inmates for private SSCE examinations on annual basis;
- Qualified instructors should be recruited to teach the inmates in the various subjects and with better remuneration;
- Instructors should encourage inmates to harness the library resources by giving them assignments that would compel them to visit and use the library to enhance their academic performance;
- The instructors should work hand in hand with the librarian to ensure that prescribed (recommended) textbooks by WAEC for SSCE are acquired into the prison library.

## Conclusion

Education behind bars cannot be impactful without the provision of functional library and the use of library resources and services in Nigerian prisons. Hence, for the academic performance of inmates in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination to be enhanced, the prison library must be well stocked with relevant books, journals, newspapers and other important non-book materials. It must also be managed by a qualified professional librarian.

In addition to the aforementioned, committed, competent and qualified teachers must be employed to handle the various subjects offered, particularly, the core subjects (English Language and Mathematics), with better remuneration to effectively teach the inmates to guarantee that education as one of the rehabilitative measures in Nigerian prisons, ahead of the inmates' release and integration with the society is worthwhile.

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