

Moral Education and Youth Restiveness in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The exploration of oil in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria no doubt has been a blessing to the Nigerian nation, but has also become a curse in disguise to the people of the Niger Delta. This is so because the hen that lays the golden egg has been neglected hence the youths of the region has resulted to self-help. Youth restiveness in Rivers State took an alarming dimension since the 1990's because of the neglect of the area by successive Nigerian governments, though these agitations may be genuine yet at times it is often hijacked by miscreants and hooligans who exploit the situation to unleash mayhem on the people. Hence the need for moral education to redirect the youths on proper and genuine ways of making their demands and agitations. This paper attempted to identify the remote causes and made suggests on how best the situation could be addressed.

Introduction

Youth restiveness in Rivers State and indeed the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has become a prominent issue in recent times. Violence and acts of lawlessness, including kidnapping and hostage-taking has been on the increase. Expatriates especially those in the oil sector and prominent citizens are mainly the target. Arms insurgency, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism and cultism are becoming the order of the day and young people are used to perpetuate these evil acts. We know that young people all over the world are a vital and veritable segment of every society constituting the work force of the society in which they live.

According to Aminigo, a disciplined, focused and law abiding youth can create a bright future for any nation, while conversely a lawless, indulgent and violent youth is a great threat to a nation's peace and security. Different reasons have adduced for youth restiveness in Rivers State and indeed the Niger Delta region of Nigeria some are attributed to economic, political and sometimes religious reasons.

Definition of Concepts

It could be fair to begin this expose by examining some of the concepts that would be used in this paper, such as: moral, education, youth, and restiveness.

Moral

The word moral derives from the Latin "mores" which corresponds to the Greek "ethos". It refers to precept or law or that which is acceptable by members of a particular community or society. According to Okere (1983) the adjective "morality" has come to mean either the theory of what is right or wrong in human conduct or objectively, the body or system of what is regarded right or wrong in human action and especially of what is wrong (p.46). Moral therefore has to do with the rightness or wrongness of an action or actions in relation to conduct either in the society, or at an interpersonal relationship level. Morals are those values which serve as test that directs human conduct in a variety of ways.

This way have informed Nduka and Ihuoma, (1983) to define morality as “in accordance with certain standards of what is good and what is evil, striving for the good and rejecting the evil” (p.13).

This implies that there are elements of voluntariness and motivation, pursuant to producing a decorous society and a purposeful knowledge willed and informed individual.

Education

The concept of education is multifaceted hence its definition varies from culture to culture. To a great extent, it could be described as analogous since no single, particular or precise meaning can be attached to it. Etymologically, it derives from two Latin words “educere” and “educare”. The former means to lead or draw out, to bring up, which is taking a person from one stage to another, usually to a better and advantaged one.

The later refers to bringing up, to rear, form or train. Education serves to better man’s disposition since he is the recipient. It is in line with this idea that Socrates described education as midwifery; helping the student to bring forth what he is pregnant of already. Man from cradle is said to be full of potentialities and possibilities. It is these that education seeks to explore for maximum benefit.

Education is not a mere transmission of knowledge from one person to another but raising (energizing) of one’s composition (personality) to bringing about the application of wisdom, skill and other virtues necessary for his well being and that of others.

Mc Gill is quoted in Obilo (1995) as having stated that “education is the effort of the society to help the individual achieve certain of his development tasks” (p.4). Education is therefore a tool for growth and development. John Dewey (1858-1952), an American philosopher and educator, said that education has two sides: the psychological and the societal, neither of which must be subordinated to the other or neglected outright because man from inception has always desired, sought for and purposed to survive through engagement in certain activities, and knowledge of skills within the society, education is therefore sacrosanct.

Farrant (1975) sees education as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community where he or she finds himself or herself. The implication of this is that because they occur concurrently, there exists only a thin line between life itself and society. The understanding of what education is may then depend on one’s level of literacy, personal values, generational emphasis and perception of its functions. Education is a process, discipline and product, which benefits to the individual and society at large are numerous and unquantifiable.

Moral Education

From the above, moral education may mean the preparation, leading out, bringing out, exploiting, exhibiting or displaying the moral qualities or context in man for the purpose of survival. It exposes man to the rejection, suppression and ultimately deciding to do away with the animal instincts in him. Moral education refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities.

In this view, moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion of a community. The word moral coming from a Latin root (mos, moris) and meaning the code or customs of people, is the social glue that defines how individuals should live together in a society for good of all.

Youth

The National Youth Development Policy (2001) defines youth as people aged between 18-35 years. They constitute about 40 percent of the more than 150 million people of Nigeria. According to NYDP (2001) the total population of youth between years 10 and 24 in Nigeria was 45.4 million in 2006, which is 34 percent of the total population.

Youth therefore is the period of life when one is young. It is a state of being young. It also refers to young people, both male and female, considered as a group. Youth occupy a prominent place in any society and ought to be handled with care. Apart from being the owners and leaders of tomorrow, they outnumber the middle age. Besides numerical superiority, youth have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials (Onyekpe: 2007).

According to National Youth Development Policy (2001) "Youth are the foundation of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation finds her motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured. (p.1).

Ozohu-Sulaiman (2006) agreed with the statement above as she acknowledges the role of the youth in the peace and security of a nation. She maintained that as the most active segment of any society, youth are the major determinants of peace and stability of a nation conversely, the degree of disorderliness and instability in any society is also determined to a great extent by the youth of such society.

The National Youth Policy (2001) affirms that the extent of the youth's "responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country", (p.1). Peace is a precursor of development. The absence of peace means that no meaningful development can take place.

Restiveness

Restiveness as a noun means the same thing as being restless, which is an adjective which describes being unwilling or unable to stay still or to be quit and calm, because you are worried or bored. Youth restiveness therefore as the name implies, a combination of actions, conduct or acts that constitute unwholesome socially unacceptable activities engaged by youth in any community (Chiepaka: 2012). Youth restiveness is a despicable act being perpetrated by a significant proportion of our youths in our communities.

Elegbeleye (2005) posits that youth restiveness is a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths. Often these protests are marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities since most times it is hijacked by miscreants and hooligans. Youth restiveness no doubt is a phenomenon which in practice leads to break down of law and order, economic misfortune due to disruption of economic activities, increased crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities, harassment of prospective developers and other sundry criminal tendencies. (Chiepaka: 2012)

Rivers State, Nigeria

Rivers State is one of the six states that make up the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which is also referred to as South-South Zone of Nigeria. During the colonial period what is today known as Rivers State was a part of Eastern Region of Nigeria which came into being in 1951 (one of the three regions of Nigeria and later one of the four regions).

In 1953, the old eastern region had a major crisis due to the expulsion of Professor Eyo Ita from office by the majority igbo tribe of the old eastern region. Eyo Ita was an Efik man and one of the pioneer nationalists for Nigerian independence. This led to a demand for the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State by the minorities in the eastern region (the Ibibio, Annang,

Efik, Ijaw and Ogoja). The struggle for the creation of COR State was a major issue on the state of minorities in Nigeria during debates in Europe for Nigerian independence.

In 1961, shortly after Nigeria independence, another major crisis occurred in the eastern region of Nigeria, when the leadership of the region allowed the present South Western Cameroon to separate from Nigeria, through a plebiscite, while the leadership of the then Northern region did what they had to do to keep North Western Cameroon in Nigeria which is today Adamawa and parts of Taraba States.

Another phase of the struggle was the declaration of an independent Niger Delta Republic by Isaac Adaka Boro during General Aguiyi Ironsi's administration, just before the Nigerian civil war also known as Nigeria-Biafra war. During the war, South eastern State of Nigeria was created (also known as Coastal South eastern Nigeria) which was made up of Calabar and Ogoja divisions. Rivers State was also created.

Rivers State falls within the central Niger Delta consisting of the central section of the coastal south-south. The central Niger Delta region has the Ijaw (including the Nembe-Brass, Ogbia, Kalabari, Ibani of Opolo and Bonny, Okrika and Andoni clans) and the Ogoni, Etche, Ogba, Ikwerre, Ndoni, Ekpeye and Ndoki people. On 1st October, 1996, the Nembe-Brass, and Ogbia clans were carved out of Rivers State to become Bayelsa State by General Sanni Abacha.

It is important to note that Rivers State is the hub of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is evidenced with the citing of the headquarters of almost all multi-national oil companies operating in Nigeria in Rivers State such as Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron, Agip, Total, Elf, etc. There are also two Nigerian Petroleum Refineries, Petro-chemical Company, Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company and many others.

However in the midst of these multi-national companies, which the abundant natural oil and gas deposited in the area has attracted, the people live in abject poverty and below acceptable United Nations set standards. The State by all standards is unacceptably underdeveloped being marginalized and robbed blind by successive administrations. The request for justice and the end of marginalization of the area by the Nigerian Government and the multi-national companies with Ken Saro Wiwa as the lead figure in the 1990's marked the beginning of the struggle for fair treatment, resulting to youth restiveness in Rivers States.

The indigenes cried out for lack of developments but were not listened to even though the Nigerian oil money is from the area. They also complained about environmental pollution and destruction of their land and rivers by oil companies to no avail, with the power that be not willing to do anything to salvage the situation or even listen to the people. To compound the situation and provoke the people the more in their frustration, Ken Saro Wiwa and other leaders were killed by the Nigerian Federal Government under General Sani Abacha, on Nov. 4, 1994.

Unfortunately, the struggle got out of control as a result of this action of the Nigerian Federal Government resulting to the various dimensions of youth restiveness experienced in Rivers State in particular and the Niger Delta region in general.

At this juncture it is important to note that youth restiveness in Rivers State cannot be discussed devoid of mention of the other parts of the Niger Delta region, because what obtains in Rivers State also obtains in the other States that make up the Niger Delta Region.

Background to Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta

- i. The Niger Delta people sustained heavy suffering and deaths during the Nigerian civil war. Over one million Niger Deltans died during the war and Rivers State like many other Niger Delta States was severely affected. The loss of lives began when Biafran soldiers invaded the Niger Delta at the start of the war; many Niger Delta community leaders were eliminated as the region was mainly on the side of the Federal

Government. Yet at the end of the war, the same Federal Government neglected the people in spite of the fact that 75% of Nigeria's export earnings come from here.

- ii. Nigeria has become West Africa's biggest producer of petroleum. Some 2 million barrels (320,000 M3) a day are extracted in the Niger Delta. Since 1975, the region has accounted for more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings. Together oil and natural gas extraction comprise "97% of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenues" (Amnesty international Publications: 2009:10). In 2003, about 99% of excess gas was flared in the Niger Delta (PDF) UNFAC: Nov. 2003). The biggest gas flaring company is Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd, a joint venture that is majorly owned by the Nigerian government. In Nigeria "...despite regulations introduced 20 years ago to outlaw the practice, most associated gas is flared, causing local pollution and contributing to climate change (PDF) friends of the Earth, 2004). The environmental devastation associated with the industry and the lack of distribution of oil wealth have been the source and /or key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including recent gorilla activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) among others.

Causes of Youth Restiveness in Rivers State

A number of studies have identified factors responsible for youth restiveness. Elegbeleye (2005) identified three major factors: the peer motivated; the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas, and perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation. Another study carried out in Niger Delta region by Ofem and Ajayi (2008) identified lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programs, unemployment, inadequate recreational facilities, and lack of quality education among others as reasons for incessant youth restiveness.

Good governance is required for the growth and development of any nation. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, bad governance is the order of the day; resulting in disjointed development. The World Bank (1992) identifies the main characteristics of bad governance to include:

- Failure to properly distinguish between what is public and what is private, leading to private appropriation of otherwise public resources.
- Inability to establish a predictable frame work for law and government behavior in a manner conducive for development, or arbitrariness in the application of laws and rules.
- Excessive rules, regulation, licensing requirement and so forth which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking.
- Priorities that is inconsistent with development, thereby resulting in misallocation of natural resources.
- Exceedingly narrow base for, or non-transparent, decision making.

Onyekpe (2007) observes that successive administrations in Nigeria have not allocated much to the needs of the youth, thus youth are restive and agitated when they perceive that resources meant for them are being wasted by those in authority on themselves, and stacked away by the so-called leaders for their generation unborn.

Another serious cause of restiveness is unemployment. Unemployment is a hydra-headed monster which exists among the youths in Nigeria. Experts believe that the number of jobless youth in Nigeria is twice as high as official estimate.

Ozohu-Suleiman (2006) noted that Nigerian youths are trapped by unemployment. Zakaria (2006) says that the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among

the youth in African countries have made them vulnerable to the manipulation of agent's provocateurs. These include aggrieved politicians, religious demagogues, and greedy multinationals that employ these youths to achieve their selfish ambitions.

Furthermore, Zakaria (2006) strongly believes that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences.

On his part, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, Former Governor of Bayelsa State identified the root causes of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta as age old neglect of the Niger Delta by successive governments at all levels (Federal, State and Local government), the unwholesome activities of the Oil and Gas companies who have employed a range of options particularly divide and conquer to deny the communities growth and development.

These companies identify key opinion leaders in their host communities and use them against the rest of the communities thereby encouraging the emergence of rival groups to cause frequent and sometimes violent change of leadership among the youth groups. Lack of political will on the part of the government at the centre to effectively monitor the environmental standards of the Oil and Gas companies is another factor since knowing full well that these companies operate differently in their home countries. Compromise with oil companies by a few indigenes in the communities against their own interest, excessive use of force by armed and security agencies in the course of peace keeping sometimes leading to avoidable deaths and deliberate refusal of oil companies to honor their obligations to communities as contained in the various Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) which they voluntarily signed with their host communities, can not also be neglected. The phenomenon of stand by labor whereby oil companies regularly pay some youths who are not their staff and have no jobs to do, creates serious social problems for all as some of these youth are pushed to a level where they become unemployable because of the distorted payments they get from the oil and gas companies.

Absence of basic necessities of life like electricity, portable water, housing, health and leisure facilities in the oil communities in sharp contrast to life in the flow stations and platforms of the oil companies where all the good things of life abound and continued existence of unjust natural resource laws which have been roundly rejected by the youths and elders of the Niger Delta such as the land use act and the petroleum act, have not helped matters.

Skewed structure of the National Youth Service Scheme in which eminently qualified sons and daughters if the Niger Delta return to the region unemployed thereby exposing them to poverty is another cause of youth restiveness. There is so much poverty, inequality and social injustice in Nigeria. Poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor.

As one drives through the street of Port Harcourt and indeed major cities of Niger Delta, one finds many youths hawking on the streets just to eke out a living. The sales they make per day and the profit margin on their goods are so small that they can hardly live above poverty line. More than 70 percent of people in Nigeria are in abject poverty living below poverty line and one third survive on less than one dollar a day (Zakaria: 2006).

Frustrated and dejected, they seek an opportunity to express their anger against the state. Aworawo (2000) and Zakaria (2006) agree to the fact that there is link among poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality and youth restiveness as evidenced by the numerous violent protests against the oppressors.

Another cause of restiveness among youths in Rivers State as in many other parts of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is lack of quality education. Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness and cohesion. The knowledge and skill that young people acquire, help to determine their degree of patriotism and contribute to national integration and progress. It is said that between year 2000 and 2004, about 30 percent of

Nigerian youth aged between 10 and 24 years, were not enrolled in secondary school (Population Reference Bureau: 2006). This is due largely to prohibitive cost of acquiring education. The effect of this situation is that thousands of young people roam the streets for lack of something reasonable to do with themselves.

Onyekpe (2007) observes that having being denied the chance to reach their potential, they (the youth) are disoriented and readily available for anti-social actions. Behind every social unrest and youth restiveness in any country like Nigeria, is the agitation for equitable distribution of resources in a fair share of what is naturally due them, the youths are bound to react since the youth are always a willing tool.

Solution to Youth Restiveness in Rivers State

Dieprieve Solomon Peter Alamiyeseigha former governor of Bayelsa State while delivering a lecture on 8th April, 2005, at the Ikeja Country Club hinged the solution to the recurring youth restiveness in the Niger Delta on the creation of a level playing field where the communities and state would have real stake in oil matters beyond being mere recipients of derivation proceeds. Alamiyeseigha said “a situation where laws governing the oil industry give no room for the affected communities to partake in the primary activity of protecting the environment guarantees disquiet in the region. To solve the problem, he called for the abrogation of the onshore/offshore oil dichotomy and the use of derivation principle as the major basis for revenue allocation as was practiced before oil was discovered.

One sure way of addressing this social vice is by giving the youth a sense of belonging. This can be achieved through creation of more jobs for the teeming population of youths, provision of basic infrastructures needed to encourage small scale businesses. There is the need for the youth to be liberated psychologically and economically from the control of self seeking business and political elite who often use them to cause social disorderliness in the society.

Above all, more awareness needs to be created for the youths to change their orientation towards positive contribution to the development of the society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper has identified the causes of youth restiveness and its effect on the people of Rivers State. The futures belong to youth. One sure way of addressing this social vice is by giving the youth a sense of belonging. This can be achieved through creation of more jobs for the teeming population of youth, provision of social basic infrastructures needed to encourage small scale businesses. There is the need for the youth to be liberated psychologically and economically from the control of self-seeking business and political elite who often use them to cause social disorderliness in the society.

Above all, more awareness needs to be created for the youths to change their orientation towards positive contribution to the development of the society. As future of any nation the youths should lay a good foundation for tomorrow.

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