

Curbing Youth Restiveness in Niger Delta Through Adult Education and Community Development in The 21st Century

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Abstract

Over the years, scholars, practitioners, organizers locally and globally, have held discussions, meetings and debates on the issues relating to the development of the field of Adult Education and Community Development, especially on policies that will transform the practice of the study areas in line with the global practices. The effect of these is in connection with the turbulent and unstable harmonious developments in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, as a result of youth restiveness. This situation has encouraged a state of anarchy, loss of lives and properties in the zones and states concerned. The unrest in question might be caused by neglect, unsatisfiable political will, poor leadership and governance etc by the Federal, State and Local governments. Despite the huge contributions made by the oil producing communities and States in terms of oil exploration and exportations, that generates over 90% of the nation's revenue base on GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Government in the past and recent has been able to set up viable intervention agencies to minimize this menace and return permanent peace to the region, but all to no avail. It is in view of these facts that this paper sees adult education facilitators and community development practitioners as a panacea in curbing this plague in our communities and the nation at large, especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, considering their qualities, task, professional identities and other variables in line with the suggested recommendations of this paper.

Keywords: Youth Restiveness, Adult Education and Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

Obviously, the field of Adult Education and Community Development are age long practice in the traditional setting in the Niger Delta region and beyond. Both fields are complementary and correlational in nature. They are geared towards conscientization and change force to people under oppression of the government, poverty, hunger, disease, war, crime, anarchy and illiteracy. Their

roles seem to be under estimated in nation building and development, especially when considering the non-tangible aspect of adult education (non-formal and informal) and community development practice that has to do with attitudinal, behavioural and social changes of the citizenries. Adekola (cited Oji, 2014), pointed out that community development is a socialization or socializing process for induction of social change for better living in a community, through the development of abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are positive to the values of the communities. This is because it introduces new ideas and abilities for solving problems. It also involves a process of education which helps people to think for themselves, and to effect change that will bring a lasting solution to community problems. The awakening of needs, the removal of impediments to the satisfaction of such needs, as well as improvement of skills required for that purpose are “Education processes” which involves basic changes in attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Summarily, a new definition of community development was adopted in the year 2016 at the Annual General Meeting of International Association of Community Development (IACD). In this light:

Community development is seen as a practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participatory democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.

This definition signifies that the role of the practitioners in relation to these choices is to enable communities to develop their understanding of these context and their implications and to deliberate together to reach their own decisions about their aims and how they seek to achieve them. In this case of restiveness, it requires better strategies and tactics, by using their educational and organizational knowledge expertise to share with the people especially the youths on new ideas and opportunities that will empower them to be independent. In addition, the practitioners need to know when to apply directive and non-directive interventions. <http://www.acdglobal.org/2017/09/18/are-we-now-ready-for-an-international-forum-for-professional-community-development-educators/>.

Fajonyomi (2013), agreed that adult education and community development are loaded with the opportunities of providing knowledge, values and skills needed for the survival of individuals and society. Unfortunately, the non-formal education components are ignored in most developing countries educational system. Therefore, development without adult and non-formal education is more or less like limping on one leg. This is an indication to show that the facilitators and practitioners have a great role to play or task before them in ensuring an achievable community peace and sustainable development.

Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

The region is situated at the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. The states and lands include Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, and Rivers state, with more than forty (40) ethnic groups. Endorsed large deposits of natural resources, especially, crude oil. The geographical area is deltaic in nature, mostly the lower part of the region where the topography is low. The region is prone to seasonal flooding and heavy rainfalls almost throughout the year. The lower Niger is swampy. This geographical area is faced with natural problems, worsened with the activities of exploration and exploitation of its rich oil and gas resources, which have adversely affected or impacted on the environment and compounded the issue of development of the region. Despite the enormous contributions of the region to the sustenance of the national purse or economy, there is the

feeling of socio-political and economic exclusion crisis in the region, which have ignited conflict and violence crises. These issues affecting the region have called for the use of related concepts such as the 'Niger Delta crises or conflict or question' that have defied solution or policy options to remedy the problems for several years (Paki, 2019).

Amuwo (2009), agrees that the 'Niger Delta Question' is emanating from the wrong application of the Nigerian Federal system. Which revolves around issues such as self-determination, autonomy, development, resources control, security, political inclusiveness, corporate social responsibility of the transnational corporations etc. In addition, the World Bank in (cited Paki, 2019), identified eight issues, which include social and political exclusion, economic exclusion, poor governance and corruption, poor infrastructure and public service delivery, environmental degradation, escalating violence and disorder, a vicious cycle of violence and land ownership. These indicators are the sources of conflict and violence in the general sphere of the region, which have resulted to what is today called "youth restiveness" in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Youth Restiveness

The youths are the leaders of tomorrow. Full with energy, quest to agitate and ask questions on issues bordering them or causing discomfort in their lives. The continuous manifestation issues without prompt reaction or response, ignites their anger, especially where it results to gown of poverty and suffering levels. Such issues in the Niger Delta include; high rate of unemployment, neglect from the angle of the oil multi-national companies and the federal government infrastructural decay. Short life span occasioned by gas flaring, oil pollution and devalues for cultural heritages of the people. But in some quarters, these agitations are often suppressed by the forces of the national government. The continuous attitude and influence of suppression build up anger, temperament and upsets, which leads to negative thoughts and hurt feelings in human beings. The youths are easily prone and ignited to such conditions of inconsiderate of opinion by the authorities concerned.

Owede (2005) stated that many of the youths in the Niger Delta region looked up to the prominent agitators in the region like late Ken Saro Wiwa and others who made great sacrifice and dedicated to the course of the Niger Delta region, in course of their radiant faith in the protection of the future of the rural communities. At the long run, they were brutally murdered.

For Torutein (2008) the youths in the Niger Delta region had taken to bush and creeks because the road to justice in Nigeria do not exist or at best leads to now here. Thus, different militia groups sprang up overnight, all claiming to be freedom fighters. This is because their anger was not addressed through constructive means; it became diverted into desperate and anti-human activities. Hence, they are called restive youths (impatient). Generally, to be restive means a lot of concern, as it poses threat to the political, cultural, economic, social wellbeing of the nation. This situation may be likened to a state of intellectual imbalance.

Iwundu (2015) averred that this is typical of low intelligence (IQ) which represents a significant difference between verbal intelligence quotient (VIQ) and performance intelligence quotient (PIQ). Comparatively, criminals are often found to exhibit more significantly lower verbal quotient and not lower performance intelligence quotient than non-criminals. In all, this leads to criminal behaviours and negative interactions, high temperament, discouragement etc. This submission shows that agitations for self-determination, neglect, inclusiveness and empowerment will result to such human actions that will affect the entire economic sphere of the nation.

Effect of Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta

Youth restiveness has serious impact on the economy of the Niger Delta region and the nation at large. The effects include:

- Environmental crisis as a result of breaking or vandalization of crude oil pipelines, which has in several occasions caused oil pollution, spillage and degradations of the environment of the Niger Delta people's river, stream, lakes etc. in turn damaging the terrestrial and aquatic life leading to unhealthy environment.
- Development crises in terms of building of infrastructure is at the state of defection because of fear and insecurity of handlers of projects in the region, which has led to poor infrastructure and public service delivery and abandonment in the region. This has created room for loss of properties and destruction of social amenities at times built by the Government.
- Economic crises, majorly on increasing incidence of poverty status. This has made poverty become a way of life of the people as a result of economic stagnation linked with unemployment and poor quality of life in the midst of shortages of essential goods and facilities.
- Socio-political crisis to agitations and formation of movements that agitates for self-autonomy and determination, link to minority fears. In addition to land ownership i.e right to control resources within the people and their settlements, irrespective of the ownership of land by the government. This has also led to violent communal crisis and conflicts in the host communities of the region, where human and properties are destroyed.
- Increase in crime rate as a result of lawlessness is not left out of this discussion, especially in the areas of cult, thuggery, armed robbery, sea piracy, illegal bunkering, kidnapping etc. Generally, the remote rural communities in the region suffer greatly in this common wickedness of man in the midst of God given resources to mankind.

Programme Facilitators

Hassan and Oyebamiji (2012), see an adult facilitator and practitioner as one who imparts or teaches reading, writing and numeracy to adult learners. This is because they are literate persons in the first language of the area where they work and most times use English language as a second language. They described him as an important element in the curriculum process which involves planning and designing achievable objectives to be implemented. Similarly, Etigbamo (2008), adds that a community development practitioner is a specialist, a facilitator, motivator, organizer or change agent who assist in helping communities to develop through self-help or external assistance from the government, non-governmental organizations and others.

Qualities of Facilitators

The success of achieving effective goals in the field of adult education and community development requires certain qualities and training of the facilitators. This include:

- Patience, tolerance and positive attitudes to adult learners.
- Grounded in the application, manipulation of their wealth of knowledge in the field of adult and community development practice, in terms of the methodologies and techniques to be applied.
- Very empathetic in nature, sees the problem of the people as his problems and tries as much as possible to motivate and inspire them to the direction of social change through good counselling and guidance.

- Able to identify the differences in their life style, pattern, age, sex and background in socio-economic, political and cultural strata, as to create sense of belonging that will ensure group loyalty and common interest in their live endeavour, especially in identifying their needs and aspirations.
- Must be equipped with the psychology of adult education and methodologies, in terms of provision of instructional resources, its management control, supervision and evaluation of the programme.
- Andragogical training is very necessary as to apply humanistic approach in handling issues arising from crime, conflicts etc. This will make for better and effective communications, (Hassan and Oyebamiji, 2012).
- Need to practice adult education and community development at the level of global context. Garuba (cited Obasi, 2013), argued that Nigeria's adult education and practitioners need to be more equipped to practice in the age of globalization, and that the starting point of personal preparation and training in adult and lifelong learning will have to be the restructuring of the curriculum of adult and community development education instructions handed over to the practitioners.

Task for the Facilitators and Practitioners

Based on the linkage between the practitioners and facilitators in achieving genuine sustainable livelihood, the following are very necessary.

- Need to create synergy among social, academic, political and religious institutions with regard to the advancement of values and ethics of the society.
- Need to be active participant in human rights issues that has to do with liberation of individuals from injustice, poverty, ignorance, oppression and consequential backwardness.
- Adoption of appropriate approaches, strategies and methods that are democratic, participatory and interactive in nature to fit the disposition and characteristics of the adults in the society.
- Need to attend conference, seminars, workshops, small working group, individualized instructions, distance learning programmes etc.
- Organise town halls meetings, marketplace discussions, lectures, motor park talks, each-one-teach-one programme, to address societal issues plaguing the people.
- Need to assist the government organs to realize the economic gains or objectives agreed upon by the people, in terms of agreed memoranda of understanding (MOU's), especially to the host communities where prospecting economic activities are carried out. This is also an empowerment strategy to build the capacity of the people in course of holding government accountable for the performance of their obligations to her citizenries.
- Need to educate the public elected officers to be commitment, sincere in rendering selfless serve to the people devoid of corruption and foul play, (Ojo, 2013).
- Need to understanding the political, social and ecological sciences to give the people wide insights into the inter-cultured, economic and environmental contexts within which people live and of how to achieve change that empowers the people in all spheres.
- Need for skills in communication, as to be effective educators and organizers, on how to access resources that will enhance empathetic relationship.

- Need to commit to what we see as universal values of social and environmental justice and democratic participation.
- Need to commit heads, hands and hearts to an organized body of knowledge that is in turn informed by practice and research orient and environs.
- Support groups to plan for their future sustainability, and to develop strategies and business plans to achieve their aims and objectives.
- Nurture and encourage local community leaders to adopt democratic, participatory and inclusive styles of leadership for working with communities and in partnerships that seek to involve communities.
- Support groups to review their own practices, and politics and external opportunities and threats.

Areas of supportive services for the Adult education facilitators and community development practitioners in curbing Youth restiveness in the Niger Delta

Considering the peculiar nature and environmental situation of the Niger Delta Region, which is characterized with violence and crime, in association with other social vices, have melted on the economy of the nation and beyond, there is need for adequate enforcement of stability to be achieved by Adult education practitioners/educators in curbing youth restiveness in the region. There is the need for the following supportive service areas.

- Recruitment of more manpower to reduce the work load of the existing practitioners and avoid the engage of non-professionals in the various units, arms, departments and ministries handling adult education and community development programmes in Nigeria.
- Engagement of government and oil prospecting companies, on the need to focus and develop interest on the activities of adult and community development education.
- Building of functional adult and community development education institutions, through proper funding, provision of infrastructures, organize seminars, workshops, talk shows etc. These will also help in the training of repented militants and drop-out youths from schools. Develop new knowledge and skills that will pull them out of gangsterism.
- Review of curriculum instructions of adult and community development practice. Yongman (2000), stated that curriculum investigation can reveal how conscious and unconscious choices affecting the content and processes of adult education reflect on the structures of inequality in the wider society. This is in view of the fact that the practice of adult education and community development in the Nigerian universities are not reflective of the current needs of the time, communities and society concerned, especially in the areas of globalization of information and communication technology (ICT), security, unemployment challenges that are the core ingredients of youth restiveness and crime in the society of the Niger Delta region.

Building new political will by the authorities concerned. Adult education, educators, facilitators, practitioners are not only relevant in economic, political cultural and social spheres, but they contribute immensely to the strengthening of the democratic process or indices. Seya (2005), denotes that for democracy to be achieved and sustained, adult education practitioners are needed to educate the citizens on the democratic culture of their level of participation, rights and responsibilities, etc. In

view of this fact, facilitators and practitioners should be considered in decision-making round table of the government and oil prospecting firms. Ojo (2013) stated that adult education have impacted on the march towards the evolution of genuine democracy in Nigeria. There is a link between adult learning and democracy, so the role of adult education and community in development is multi-dimensional.

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed adult education facilitators and community development practitioners: a panacea, for curbing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Considering the Niger Delta region as a region prone to a lot of unresolved issues as it concerns marginalization and total neglect by the national government this mandated the call for the youths in form of restiveness to ask for self-determination or autonomy in the areas of; resource control, participatory democracy, security and cooperate responsibilities of the multi-national organization, etc. This agitation has caused a lot of harm to the nation and communities of the region in terms of economic waste, environmental degradation and violence.

Therefore, to resolve these indicators, it becomes necessary to involve the professional practitioners of adult education and community development, who have the need for universal values of social, environmental justice and democratic participation by practice and research through mobilization and conscientization approach to tutor the youths on the aspects of attitudinal change, introduction of new ideas and skills, abilities, which are the non-tangible approach. The education means thereby creates room for acceptance and participation on tangible approach of appreciating dialogue in issues of a good subject matter. However, education process mentioned will also help the youths and stakeholders think for themselves, and effect change that will bring a lasting solution to the region. This will in turn allow sustainable living as recommendations has been made towards a synergy that will overrun the Niger Delta region and the national government.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The application of the rules and principles of peace education can curb youth restiveness/violence by using the multi-track diplomacy and youth-focuses on human development framework to confront the problems at hand. It will help to equip the individual with the needed information for human co-existence and build human security as to accelerate progress towards sustainable development goals.
2. Non-formal aspect of adult of education is also very necessary in terms of providing relevant or useful knowledge that will stimulate attitudinal and behavioural change needed for peaceful living in our communities in the Niger Delta region.
3. The need to develop the skills of the youths through productive entrepreneurial methods of removing or moving them from dependency to independency in terms of improving their level of income for better livelihood is very paramount.
4. The government at the centre should arm themselves with the responsibilities towards a genuine acceptable political will devoid of deceit.
5. Application of integrative theory of peace, which is equivalent to participatory theory. It is more of holistic and all-encompassing condition occurring within and between individuals and groups in the society, like that of the Niger Delta region.

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