

Isaac Nnam Ohia

**The Crises of Youths and Adolescents in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria:
Implications for their Education**

Abstract

The oil-rich Niger Delta region has been very volatile in recent times leading to waste of record-setting oil revenues. The region has been so pervasively marked by violence arising from youth restiveness. The youths who were initially recruited and armed by politicians to unleash terror upon their political opponents and ordinary members of the public, were used to secure political victory. As a reaction of their abandonment and disbandment by these politicians after using them to secure electoral victories, these youth groups metamorphosed into militant groups. Taking advantage of the long neglect by successive administrations who failed to address the problems of the region especially the education of the youths, they unleashed mayhem on the region. This paper therefore examines the educational and developmental opportunities available to the youths in a typical Niger Delta oil-producing community, identifying and discussing the crises in their educations. Such crises, in the opinion of the paper, are responsible for the violence in the region. The paper concludes by suggesting ways of addressing this problem.

Key words: Crude oil, Conflict, Niger Delta, Youth, Identity.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is regarded as an instrument “par excellence”, (at least in principle), for affecting national development (NPE, revised 2004). In pursuance of this, the government has at various times put in place policies and has tried to implement them so as to ensure, it would seem, active participation of non-governmental agencies, communities, and individuals. However there has been a big gap between policy making and implementation of such policies, aimed at enhancing national development as well as national growth as both should necessarily go together. The latter resulting from the former, as in the opinion of Ubahakwe (2000), there can be national development without national growth. This happens where governments are pre-occupied with mere physical development and material development and paying lip service to human development, which should focus on the youths because it is the youths that need to be developed. Unfortunately there have been inequalities and imbalance in the implementation of these policies, resulting in the neglect of certain parts of the country, particularly the Niger Delta Area (NDA). This neglect has had tremendous negative impact on the youths in the area that are supposed to be the recipients of education and who cannot be isolated from their counterparts in other parts of the federation..

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Given this long neglect of the area by successive Nigerian governments, this paper takes a look at the activities of the youth in the area and draws attention to the fact that the youth are in crises. In doing this, the paper examines the educational and developmental opportunities available to the youths in a typical NDA community, highlighting the existing problems. The paper concludes by suggesting ways of addressing the problem.

Who Are the Youth?

The terms 'adolescence' and 'young adults' cannot, strictly speaking, be tied to specific age groups. This is because they are essentially social constructs. Unlike a biological fact such as puberty, conceptions of the period of adolescence and young adulthood vary from one society to the other, and indeed within societies themselves, as changes occur in social relations and family and economic circumstances (Centre for Populations Options, 1990). However, for ease of reference, we could simply say that adolescents and young adults are boys and girls, and young male and female adults aged between 12 and 25 years. We could then refer to this category of persons as the youths or young persons.

A very fundamental issue for young people within this category is that the period of youth is a transitory period. During this period, the young person not only undergoes biological changes (such as those which occur at puberty), but also faces tremendous challenges of learning how to behave like an adult and how to prepare for the responsibility of carrying out important tasks in society. In many traditional African societies, the end of this period is usually marked by certain *rites de passage* which formally usher the young person into adulthood. Many of these young people even undergo transition within transition. For example, it is within this period that some young people transit from the secondary school to tertiary institutions. For these ones, it is often the case that their academic development overshadows their emotional growth as well as their ability to cope in other spheres of life. In such circumstances, undue pressure is brought on the young person.

This period is of particular importance because, as Mansaray (1992) puts it, it is from this cohort of its population that a nation recruits its immediate future productive citizens. The material and physical well-being of the young ones, particularly their education and development opportunities, have, therefore, come to be viewed as absolutely crucial for national development in all developing countries of the world.

Nigerian Education and Development Policy for the Youth

In Nigeria, the issue of education and development opportunities for young people has always been somewhat addressed by successive governments with increasing concern and in differing degrees. The NPE clearly sets out the goals and objectives of education in Nigeria, based on its educational philosophy "integration of the individual **into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens** of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal

school system” (NPE:7) (author’s emphasis). By the NPE arrangement, children who might have gone through a pre-primary educational institution at ages three to five would be admitted to a six-year primary school programme. At the end of the primary education, the children then move into a six-year secondary school system offered in two years of junior and senior secondary. The junior secondary is both prevocational and academic while the senior secondary is comprehensive. Those who drop out of the system at the end of the junior secondary, which actually marks the end of the 9 years of free and compulsory education, could go into some apprenticeship. Senior secondary education on the other hand could lead either straight to the university or tortuously through teacher and technical institutions. The over-all educational objectives of the NPE are therefore stated as the inclusion of national consciousness and unity, appropriate values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and society, training the mind to understand the world around and the acquisition of appropriate skills to enable individuals live effectively in the society.

Thus, at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, universalisation of access has been the prime target of educational endeavours, at least in principle. From the middle of the seventies when the University Primary Education (UPE) scheme was launched, formal education received tremendous boost with rapid increase in the number of school buildings and teachers.

Predictably, pupil enrolment also burgeoned. For instance, the primary school population rose from 6.2 million in the 1975/76 session to 14.8 million in 1992. Recent reports show that this figure has since doubled. But as it often happens, this burst of educational activities brought in its wake changes, some positive, others less so. The rapid increase in enrolment figures and clamor for places by educationally conscious parents began to impose pressure on available resources. There were loud grumblings about deterioration in the quality of education offered to pupils. Financing education became such a nightmare for some state governments that it became necessary to re-impose various kinds of levies on parents. Teachers’ morale, too, suffered some battering. Concentrated efforts were made both nationally and internationally to remedy the situation. One of such efforts was the Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education (SAPA) project. This was an empirical study, focused on the socio-economic conditions of families and communities, as well as the teaching-learning conditions in schools in selected parts of Nigeria representative of the entire nation. The report of the project, which was jointly sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF came out in 1993. The then Minister of Education, Dr. Iyochia Ayu, described the result of the project as a “Compendium of revealing data which provides a solid basis for planning and development efforts. In addition, it provided considerable opportunity for capacity building.

Expectedly, the efforts at the secondary and tertiary levels were also matched with those at the primary level. In the early seventies, there were only five federal government colleges – Kings College and Queens College (both in Lagos) and three others located at

Enugu, Sokoto and Warri. At the moment there are at least two federal government colleges in each of the thirty six states of the federation. There are numerous state secondary schools and private schools. Altogether there are over 12,000 secondary schools in the country (NECO). Universities have increased to over ninety(90) comprising federal, states and private institutions, from just one, the University of Ibadan, established in 1948 as University College, Ibadan, and five in 1960. In addition to these, there are numerous polytechnics and colleges of education established by both the Federal and state governments, as well as by private entrepreneurs.

It would, therefore, appear that young people in Nigeria have tremendous education and development opportunities that could take care of the realities of the time. Indeed the concern to provide education and development opportunities for young people was borne out of the awareness of the consequences of the rapid, and often traumatic changes the society is currently going through. The opportunities, unfortunately, have not been able to meet the needs of young people. These opportunities have either been misdirected or have been grossly inadequate. In some cases, it was out of genuine ignorance of the needs; in others, out of either sheer ineptitude or insincerity. Thus, rapid urbanization, mass migration from rural to urban area, the weakening of traditional extended family ties and corresponding changes in behavior and social norms and values have all combined to engender social psychological problems for young people (Mansaray, 1992). There are also environmental changes which have reflected in changes in the perception of young people. These have rendered both educational and development opportunities available to young people grossly inadequate.

Consequently, more and more young people are manifesting deviant behaviors and are engaging in activities that are inimical, even to their own very existence. Many of the violent killings and kidnapping in the society have their underlying causes in the expression of discontent of young people. They get together at the slightest provocation to stage demonstrations, often violent ones, either in support or against the government, depending on the gain they hope to derive. The two-million-man march in support of Abacha era, the movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijaw Youths under the umbrella of Egbesu, the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Survival of Sovereign state of Biafra and various militant groups in the Niger Delta, before the amnesty program of President Yar'adua, are expressions of this general discontent of young people in Nigeria.

Although there are indications of government's efforts at the providing educational and development opportunities for the youth, they appear very inadequate. Besides, there is a great deal of inequality and imbalance between the rest of the country and the NDA. This has resulted in the magnitude of crises of the youth in the NDA. Plates I, II, III, IV, V and VI are typical of youth activities in the NDA in reaction to this crises situation. It is with this background that we would examine the education and development opportunities

in a typical NDA community, using the young people in Ogba oil-producing communities of Rivers State as a case study.

The Ogba Traditional Socio-Cultural Environment

As a starting point, we consider it necessary to locate Ogba in the map of Rivers State in addition to examining the traditional socio-cultural environment of young people in Ogba and its implication for their education and development. We then look at the education and development opportunities available for young people in Ogba. Finally, we suggest interventions which may be able to influence changes in the behaviour of these young people.

Ali-Ogba or Ogbaland is located in the northern part of the Rivers State of Nigeria, within the Ogba Egbema Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA). In geographical terms Ali-Ogba occupies an area roughly thirty kilometres by twenty kilometers in the Niger flood plain with Ekpeye, Engeni and Ijaw areas to the South and Southwest, Egbema, Oguta and Awara to the North and Northwest and Ndoni, Kwale and Onitsha to West and Northwest (Ellah, 1995). Historically, the Ogba fall into three major clans. These are Usomini, Igburu and Egi. The three groups derived their names from the nature of the land they occupy. Usomini, meaning water-side, refers to a group, who live along the banks of the Urasi River. Igburu (marshy land) and Egi (dry land) are also descriptive of the terrain which the people occupy.

The Usomini group (excluding Omoku the present headquarters of ONELGA) is made up of 10 communities with a total population of 10,989 people (1963 census). The Igburu which comprises 12 communities has a total population of 5,270 (1963 census). And the Egi group consists of 18 communities with a total population of 14,990 (1963 census). Although most of the census that have been conducted since after the 1963 one, have been controversial and so lack credibility, a recent estimate put the population of Ogba has put at between 500,000 and 1 million people (2007 census). About 40% of those who make up this population are young people. These three groups, though different in customs, traditions and speech, claim the same ancestral decent and also have the universal territorial spread of "Onobodo" or quarters, in common. They are extended families which are a total of 14 in Ogba. Each of these groups contains some representatives of practically every 'Onuobodo' identified as a very strong binding force in Ogba to the extent that no one member of an 'Onuobodo' can marry another member from any of the groups no matter how distantly related they may appear. The 'Onuobodo' identity is also a source of authority in Ogbaland as each 'Onuobodo' has an eldest man on whom is vested all authority. Extended family links are therefore very strong the area.

Traditionally, the three groups are engaged in occupations dictated by the terrain they occupy. The Usomini group, for instance, had three main occupations – farming, fishing and hunting. The two other groups also engaged in these occupations in differing degrees as their environments could permit. Education of young people was essentially tied to the

occupation of the people and was by apprenticeship and non-formal in nature. All that the young person needed was within the environment and so there was never a period of unemployment. And even with the introduction of formal education, the society provided security and opportunity for young people.

Authority and maintenance of law and order were vested in the ruling families and the age grades. In Ogbaland royalty was revered, the authority of the 'Eze-Ogba'(King of Ogba) was never in doubt or questioned. The age grades system among the different groups was a very strong binding force both among the adults and the young people. In the traditional set up one could never think of anybody not belonging to an age grade. It was through their age grades that young people were groomed for challenges in adult life. There were very healthy competitions among the different age grades like wrestling.

Ogba people were essentially traditionalist. Even with the advent of the colonialists, Ogba people were tied to one ancestral worship or the other and justice was maintained through 'Erisi' or shrine worship. Each 'Erisi' had a priest who administered it and this was feared by everybody. The efficacy of the 'Erisi' to administer justice was never in doubt. Young people were never heard, they were only to be seen. It was a taboo to think about stealing, rape or any other kind of vice for that matter. Although, the society was essentially rural, it nevertheless met the needs of the young people. Within the traditional setup, the safety and freedom of young people was guaranteed and young people also had opportunities for whatever they wanted to do. Young people, therefore, had self-esteem. With the discovery of oil, this traditional society has undergone tremendous changes.

Oil exploration started in Ogba over four decades ago. Initially, crude oil was explored in a very small scale but increased in magnitude over the years. Indeed, the largest quantity of oil produced in Rivers State comes from ONELGA. Several oil wells adorn the environment. In Obrikom alone, there are over 42 oil wells. Ogba as a whole hosts 4 oil producing companies - Elf, Agip, Shell (SPDC) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Ogbaland is the primary source of feedstock for the Bonny liquefied natural gas plant, hosting two major oil and gas facilities - the Obite gas plant of Elf and the Obrikom gas plants of Agip (erroneously referred to as Obiafu gas plant). There are also many oil service companies in the area.

These oil companies have built up areas for their workers. Apart from the plants which also house workers within their environment, there is a large concentration of workers in the Ebocha, Obagi and Obite bases. The impact of the oil companies and workers is tremendous on the Ogba environment. Road networks are constructed to link all the oil installations, making access to all the communities very easy within the areas of operation of the oil companies. With oil exploration and production, the frequent oil spillages and gas flaring have polluted the waters - destroying marine life, the land and the entire environment. It has therefore become increasingly difficult for the rural populace to earn a living in the traditional ways. The impact all this has had on young people forms part of our discussion in the next section.

The Changing Environment of Young People in Ogba: Implications for their Education and Development

The dominant characteristics of young people in any given period have their roots in the environment in which they live. The nature of the environment in turn is determined by the prevailing internal and external factors. Young people's education and development are necessarily influenced by their environment and so cannot be examined in isolation from the social, cultural, political, and economic context within which they live and grow. A number of factors in these broad categorizations combine to influence their life and, to a considerable extent, shape their behaviours. Understanding these factors should therefore, be a necessary step to a better understanding of the educational and developmental problems of young people in the area. The changes in the Ogba environment that have had tremendous impact on the lives of young people, therefore, could be better appreciated when we consider the changes that have been taking place in the wider sub-Saharan Africa. There is no doubt that there are some peculiarities of the Ogba environment. In general, these changes present a better picture seen globally from the sub-regional context.

Young people growing up in Africa today face a radically different world from their parents. The past four decades or so have been marked by far-reaching changes that have shaken African societies to their very roots. Rapid urbanization and mass rural-to-urban migration have been the most significant catalyst of change in the region. Sub-Saharan Africa is reputed to be urbanizing at a higher rate than any other region in the world. It was estimated that by 1990 nearly 30% of the region's population would have become urban as against 13% in 1965 and 25% in 1984 (World Bank, 1988). The number of cities in the region with population of 500,000 or more increased from 3 in 1960 to about 27 in 1980 (Mansaray, 1982). Since then urbanization and rural migration have continually been on the increase, indeed, to an alarming rate.

This rapid growth in cities is largely a function of mass migration from the rural areas to urban centres. Youth and young families in search of better economic opportunities constitute a significant portion of this migration. The United Nations estimated that by the year 2000, 47% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 would live in urban centres, compared to 42% of the total African Population of all ages (United Nations, 1986 and 1988).

The phenomenon of rapid urbanization has had a profound impact on young people both in Ogba and elsewhere, exposing them to "different values and new possibilities for self-realization". Many traditional, extended family links have been severed or considerably weakened. As it has frequently happened, many young people declare themselves independent to get greater freedom than hitherto experienced. Strange values and patterns of behaviour are adopted as expressions of this freedom. All too often without family support and guidance, such freedom ends in disaster for the individual. It is now common place within these communities to talk about HIV/AIDS among young people. Drug and

substance abuse, and unwanted pregnancies are now prevalent among young people in Ogba. It would appear, then, that modernization arising essentially from oil exploration/exploitation and the disappearance of African traditions of orienting young people, have together made the youth more vulnerable.

The disappearance of these traditions means that young people coming of age today are not being adequately prepared for the challenges they would face, traditional means of orienting young people – no matter what harmful side effects they may have are yet to be replaced by systems which would better prepare today's youth for tomorrow's world (Centre for Population Options, 1990).

The alternative for the disappearing traditions could have been the church. Unfortunately, in Ogba, like in many other places, Christianity among many young people means church-going. For those who go to church it is because they do not want to be identified with Juju worship. Church has become a mark of socialization especially among the females. Most of those who go to church still identify with evils in the society. In some cases, young people claim that they are Christians to abdicate their traditional responsibilities.

Perhaps the single most significant impact arising from rapid urbanization in Ogbaland is the oil industry. Oil exploration and production brought with it development with its attendant negative influences. Road networks to link oil and gas installations have opened up easy access to a number of Ogba Communities. It is a common to see oil workers move around the communities with their expensive cars. The presence of these individuals who are usually very well paid has, paradoxically, also brought untold hardship to these communities. The people's cost of living is getting higher and higher while their standard of living is going lower and lower. The problem of environment degradation mentioned earlier has also had a negative impact on the lives of young people. It is common to see a camp or base where oil workers live with electricity and water for 24 hours daily while the host community is in darkness with their only source of water polluted with oil. Young girls living within the communities intimidated by this poverty stricken environment are lured to these oil workers for money, food and drinks. This also has had negative influences on the boys who feel inferior and intimidated seeing little good that could come out of their schooling. Most young people therefore lose interest in school. This has led to high level of dropout of young people who are not only unemployed but unemployable. This has led to several other problems among boys and girls who have to resort to many other ways, in most cases anti-social practices, to cope with the hardship they are facing.

The phenomenal increase in school dropout in Ogba is evidently one of devastating effects on the communities. For girls, dropout rate is about 30% with variation in classes. Report shows that 40% dropout because of lack of interest, 20% because of academic failure, 20% because of early marriage, 10% each because of early pregnancy and lack of finance. The dropout rate for boys is even higher, as high as 40% (Local Education

Office, Omoku). This appears to be the major problem created by the presence of the oil industry, in conjunction with urbanization.

A closer look at the reasons for the dropout of young people from school clearly shows that, they drop out of school because their needs are not being met. And in many cases they do not even think that their needs would be met on completing their education. It is therefore, clear that the direct and immediate implication of the changing environment of young people in Ogba is loss of interest and confidence that education can ever meet their needs. A large number of the boys who drop out from school go about doing all kinds of menial jobs where they do not engage in any anti-social practices. For the girls, some just remain idle at home. Let us then go on to examine the educational and developmental opportunities for young people in Ogba.

Educational and Developmental Opportunities for Young People in Ogba

Whatever education that is available for a young person must be able to meet his/her needs. Since young people are particularly at a very precarious stage, they have to be convinced that the education they are having, if not meeting their immediate needs, would be something useful to them in the very near future. Even then, whatever education they go through has to be pursued with minimal stress.

Generally speaking, many young people who go to school in Ogba do so under very stressful situation. At the primary school level, except for some relatively large communities like Omoku, Erema, Akabuka, Obrikom, Kreigani, that have two or more primary schools, the smaller communities share schools. In Usomini, made up of 11 communities, including Omoku, there are 14 primary schools with 4 of these located in Omoku. The conditions of these schools, in both facilities and teachers, are very poor. Most of the schools do not have furniture for both the teachers and the students. Most of the teachers in the very rural communities live and come to school from the more developed communities. This imposes on both the teachers and students long distance walk to get to school as the only means for inter- and intra-community transportation is the 'Okada' (or commercial motorcycle). As a result of the non-payment of salaries, children remain for several months without learning. Until recently, teachers' pay was extremely poor and even with some increase, the problem of non-payment of arrears has kept teachers out of school.

The whole of Usomini, until recently, had 6 secondary schools with 2 of these located in Omoku. Young people who are not lucky enough to have a school in their communities either have to walk long distance or go to school on bicycles and some on "okada," as there are no other means of transport, and even where there are, the costs are very prohibitive. The schools are short-staffed. Even the available teachers are not appropriately placed. It is not uncommon to find a graduate of Economics teaching Physics or English language or even Mathematics. Laboratories are non-existent. Where they are exist, they are merely

empty rooms decorated with a few test tubes and conical flasks or some obsolete equipment to caricature laboratory for Chemistry or Biology or even Physics. In the classrooms, pupils are kept in very small rooms as some of these secondary schools cannot even serve as poultry houses. The presence of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has not really made too much difference. Teachers are never around as they stay in most of these areas without electricity and water. The situation in the two other Ogba groups both at the primary and secondary is even worse than what exists in Usomini.

At the tertiary level, there is only one college of education located at Omoku. The Federal College of Education (Technical) is about the only government presence, both federal and state. Apart from a High court and a Magistrate Court both located at Omoku, a general hospital also at Omoku and an uncompleted Federal Prison started by the Shagari Government and located between Obrikom and Omoku are the only other government establishments. The Federal College of Education is a very recent development and is still at its temporary site.

These are the only education and development opportunities that are available for young people in Ogba. The oil companies have no programme whatsoever for young people. The only programme of the Agip Oil company for the communities is the Green River Project, which is even a programme to assist farmers.

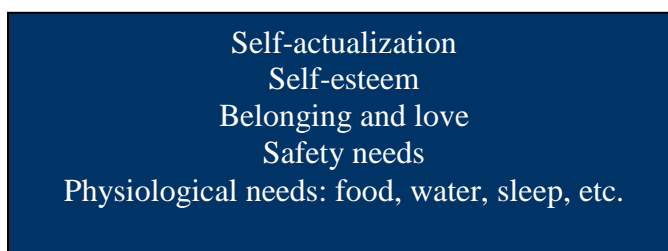
With the picture we have seen so far what then can we say about the education and development opportunities for young people in Ogba? To enable us pass some sort of judgment, we shall look at Maslow's theory of human needs, conscious of the fact that education can only take place when there is motivation.

Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1954) advanced a theory of human needs referred to as a hierarchy of needs. In his theory, he pointed out that some needs particularly physiological needs, are basic to others. It then follows that such needs must be satisfied before higher needs can be felt and fulfilled, hence he used the term 'hierarchy'.

According to this view of motivation, physiological needs are the strongest, the most demanding of satisfaction. We should expect that drive reduction would be aimed primarily at these lowest of needs.

Figure 1: Motivation based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs



If the needs at the physiological level have been fulfilled, the person concerned would be faced with the next level of needs.

- The safety needs such as the need to avoid or escape danger and the need to be secure and protected.
- This is followed by the need to love and be loved and to belong to have friends and family and to be part of a group.
- There is also the need for self-esteem – the need to have the respect, confidence and admiration of others and gain self-confidence and self respect.
- Once all these needs have been fulfilled, the person would be motivated towards self-actualization – towards knowing and understanding, towards finding (deriving) satisfaction from being sensitive to the beauty of human beings, their accomplishments, and the natural environment.

The first four needs are called *deficiency needs* and their fulfilment is greatly dependent on other people. The rest are referred to as *being needs* and their satisfaction is dependent on the individuals themselves.

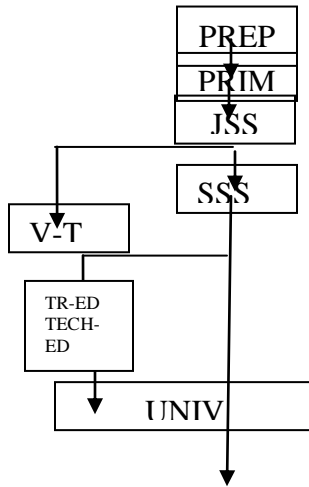
The second group of needs echoes Rousseau's (1762) theory. He said that the individual is naturally good and happy. In view of this, people ought to learn through their experience with nature, learn to depend on things existing within their environment, and learn to depend on themselves and to be independent of other people.

National Educational Aims and Objectives

- integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
- equal educational opportunities
- at the primary, secondary and tertiary and this is linked with
- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

To achieve all these, a profile of the Nigerian educational system has been put in place. The success or otherwise of the learner in this educational system, therefore, depends on the environment. This would in turn lead to the acquisition of the desired traits.

Figure II: Profile of Nigerian Educational System



**Table 1: Environment
Characteristics of the Environment**

- Stable
- Friendly
- Adequate
- Motivating
- Stimulating

Traits

- Improvement of knowledge, skills and abilities
- Inculcation of desirable attitudes and value for personnel improvement
- Social skills
 - critical thinking
 - lateral thinking
 - pride in dignity of labour
 - self-reliance
 - problem-solving skills
 - positive attitudes
 - tolerance
 - creative
 - cooperative/capable of team work
 - democratic in style
 - high self esteem
 - commitment
 - motivated

If we now reflect on the profile of the Ogba education environment for young people and link it with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, what do we get? We can then ask

- To what extent has the environment met the needs of the young people?
- What kind of intervention strategies could be suggested for the education of young people in Ogba?

The picture we get of the Ogba environment is one of a community that has been neglected, degraded and impoverished. This is reflected in every facet of the environment. Young people in this kind of environment cannot possibly develop any positive attitudes instead they have developed all kinds of negative traits – militancy, confrontational, violent, disobedient, abusive etc. Indeed the youths in Ogba are in crises and the implication for their education is tremendous if not overwhelming. Their values are completely changed and they no longer see any value in being educated. The situation in Ogba is no doubt a reflection of what exists in the rest of the Niger Delta Oil producing communities. What is the solution to this problem? The situation in Ogba is no doubt a reflection of what exists in the rest of the Niger Delta/Oil producing communities and indeed in the nation at large. What is required is a re-orientation of the young people to give them education of restoration. Happily, many of these young people have embraced the amnesty offer of the Yar'adua/Jonathan administration and the post amnesty programme of the present administration. Like many other such programmes in the past, greater part of the money ends up in people's pockets, making the programme of no consequence. This seems to be the opportunity to tackle the problems of the Niger Delta for the better if only the present administration can be sincere with the post amnesty programme.

Conclusion

No doubt the challenges are enormous. Nevertheless, where there is a will there must be a way. The government and all its agencies should deliberately conscientiously plan and implement a functional education for the youth not just in NDA but in the entire country. A functional education that would involve skills acquisition to keep the youths busy should be put in place. This would make them think less about all the vices they are pre-occupied with - kidnapping, militancy, etc. There must be a proper definition of all stakeholders - the government and its agencies, oil companies and the communities.

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