NDDC and Tertiary Education in Delta State, Nigeria: A Political-Economic Discourse

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Abstract

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has made significant contributions to the advancement of tertiary education in Delta State, acting as a crucial partner in this sector. Its developmental initiatives have been instrumental in enhancing learning and research among various regional tertiary institutions. This study assesses the NDDC's contributions to tertiary education in Nigeria's Niger Delta, focusing specifically on the infrastructural development of numerous educational institutions. Despite its importance, the NDDC's role in supporting tertiary institutions in Delta State and the broader Niger Delta has received limited scholarly attention. Most researchers tend to focus on the general mandate of the NDDC, often overlooking the specific area of education. This paper aims to fill that gap by thoroughly evaluating the

commission's contributions to the education sector. To achieve this the research employs both primary and secondary data collection methods, utilising descriptive and content analyses for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. The paper concludes that electrification stands out as the NDDC's most significant project for tertiary institutions, while additional initiatives, including roads, hostels, research centres, and capacity lecture halls, were prominently executed at Delta State University in Abraka and the Teaching Hospital. The study recommends that the NDDC initiate further projects aimed at fostering research opportunities for both staff and students.

Keywords: NDDC, Infrastructure, Development, Tertiary Education, Electrification

Introduction

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is a government agency established in 2000 during President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. It was created as an interventionist organisation following the dissolution of the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in the same year. The establishment of the NDDC was driven by concerns regarding the perceived shortcomings of OMPADEC, which were linked to increasing poverty, deteriorating living conditions, and rising conflict and militancy in oil-bearing areas of the Niger Delta (Chovwe, 2006). The NDDC's objective is to provide solutions to the socio-economic challenges faced by the Niger Delta region, with a mission to promote rapid, equitable, and sustainable development. The agency aims to address the specific needs of Niger Delta communities and enhance their overall development and well-being.

Tertiary education plays a crucial role in acquiring specialised skills and knowledge, significantly contributing to societal development and the creation of an economically productive class. The term "tertiary education" encompasses the advancement of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and psycho-productive domains, to facilitate positive changes in human behaviour through educational processes (Amnesty International, 2009). Disparities in educational outcomes within a society can be influenced by the distribution of various abilities among the population and the associated benefits over time (Maxted, 2006). Education

serves individuals, communities, and societies and is fundamental to fostering knowledge and progress.

In Delta State, tertiary institutions include federal, state, and private schools, comprising universities, polytechnics, mono-technics, and colleges of education. These institutions are spread across the three senatorial districts of the state. For example, there are four state-owned universities in total: two in the Delta North Senatorial District, one in the Central District, and one in the South District. Additionally, the state features three polytechnics, each located in the various senatorial districts, along with two Colleges of Education situated in Mosogar and Warri. There are also three federal universities in Delta State, situated in the various senatorial districts, and more than six privately owned universities. The NDDC has provided support to these institutions, particularly in areas such as research, student bursaries, scholarships, and infrastructure development.

The funding efforts of the NDDC have had a notable impact on the higher education landscape in Delta State. Their focus on research, scholarships, and infrastructure development within educational institutions has been acknowledged. The degree of impact may vary among institutions; however, the NDDC has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing the educational framework in the region (DSTSC, 2009).

Challenges of the NDDC in Its Mandate Area

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established with a mandate aimed at transforming the socio-economic landscape of Nigeria's oil-producing regions, which have historically faced numerous challenges. This agency is responsible for executing a variety of projects geared towards meeting the diverse needs of local communities of the Niger Delta. These initiatives encompass critical areas such as educational programs, construction projects, road infrastructure development, electrification efforts, and the provision of essential equipment and furniture for schools and health institutions. Each project is designed with careful consideration, employing thorough consultations with local communities, engaging input from various stakeholders including government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and adhering to rigorous

assessments conducted by industry experts to guarantee both effectiveness and relevance to community needs (Abiodun, 1996).

Despite adopting this comprehensive approach, the NDDC has encountered challenges similar to those experienced by previous intervention agencies, primarily due to a "top-down" development strategy outlined in its founding Act (NDDC Act, 2002). Specifically, Section 14 of the Act mandates that all stakeholders within the oil-producing regions, along with oil companies, contribute financially to the NDDC's initiatives. This includes a directive for the Federal Government to allocate 15% of the total monthly statutory allocations due to Niger Delta states from the federation account directly to the commission. Furthermore, Multi-Operational Companies (MOCs), which include various gas-processing entities operating both onshore and offshore, are obligated to contribute 3% of their total annual budgets to support the NDDC's undertakings (NDDC Act, 2002).

These funding mechanisms are designed to provide the NDDC with a solid financial foundation, signifying the potential for substantial infrastructure development in the region. However, a lack of effective regulatory frameworks and oversight has severely inhibited the successful utilisation of these funds. As a result, instead of spearheading meaningful advancements in infrastructure and enhancing community well-being, the agency has become entangled in instances of crisis, mismanagement, and corruption. Over its more than 15 years of operation, the NDDC has consistently struggled to achieve a significant positive impact on the lives of people within the oil-producing areas. Its performance in realising its foundational objectives has frequently fallen disappointingly short.

A detailed examination over five years reveals a troubling average completion rate of merely 19% for the projects awarded by the NDDC. Out of a total of 1,475 projects initiated during this timeframe, a scant 280 were completed, leaving a substantial backlog of 1,195 projects still unfinished. For example, in 2010, of the 242 projects awarded, only 70 were completed, with the remaining designations remaining in progress. In 2011, 114 projects were awarded, but only 62 were finalized, while 52 languished without resolution. Similar patterns continued in the following years: in 2012, 188 projects were awarded but only 44 were

completed; in 2013, 538 projects were initiated, yet only 60 achieved completion; and in 2014, out of 393 projects put forward, only a mere 44 reached fruition (NEITI, 2017).

These alarming statistics have been corroborated by the Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI), which highlighted significant discrepancies in the NDDC's project management. The NEITI report revealed instances of duplicity, noting that 22 projects appeared twice within the overall project schedule, with a combined contract value of approximately N1.18 billion. Furthermore, the mobilisation payments for these projects exceeded NN370.70 million, raising red flags regarding accountability and transparency (NEOTI, 2017). The report pointed out the glaring absence of identifiable project details and inadequate schedules for monitoring and management oversight. In numerous cases, despite substantial mobilisation payments, notable progress on projects was shockingly non-existent. For instance, projects with a cumulative contract value of NN284.884 billion had received an advance payment of N63.558 billion but failed to meet any recognised milestones for work completed. This situation paints a deeply troubling picture of mismanagement and inefficiency that continues to overshadow any potential the NDDC may have to foster genuine development and progress within the Niger Delta region.

NDDC's Contributions to Tertiary Institutions

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is playing a crucial role in enhancing the educational landscape of tertiary institutions in the Niger Delta region, with a particular emphasis on Delta State. Despite its efforts, the contributions provided by the NDDC can often be viewed as insufficient when weighed against the multitude of challenges plaguing the state's educational sector. The primary focus of the commission's initiatives has centred on infrastructure development, which encompasses the construction and improvement of roads, housing facilities, electrification projects, and the provision of essential learning, teaching, and research equipment for universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education.

The distribution of these infrastructural projects spans a range of educational institutions, including State, Federal, and Private entities. This broad scope of

intervention has significantly boosted the commission's reputation as an effective agency dedicated to advancing infrastructural development within the tertiary education sector in Delta State. However, while these infrastructure projects are undoubtedly beneficial, they represent only a fraction of what is needed to address the overarching issues in the educational system.

It is essential to highlight that the NDDC's focus on infrastructure has come at the expense of other critical areas, such as research initiatives and student welfare programmes, including bursaries and scholarships. The prevailing mindset among commission members appears to prioritise infrastructural investment over human capital development, viewing it as a more advantageous and impactful use of resources. Although the infrastructure undeniably supports human activity and education, the lack of emphasis on research funding and student financial aid exposes a significant gap in the commission's mandate.

Furthermore, the neglect extends beyond the student population to the staff of tertiary institutions, who also do not benefit from the commission's contributions. Areas such as training opportunities, the provision of soft loans, and research sponsorship for faculty members have seen little to no attention from the NDDC. This oversight not only undermines the capacity building of educators but also limits the potential for innovative research that could contribute to the advancement of the educational framework and its outputs in Delta State.

In summary, while the NDDC's infrastructural contributions are commendable and necessary, a more balanced approach that incorporates investment in research, student welfare, and staff development would enhance the overall effectiveness and sustainability of educational improvements in the region.

Table 1, Shows NDDC's Contributions of Buildings to Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, 2000-2023

1.	Tertiary Institutions	Nos. of Buildings	Senatorial Districts	Percent %
1	Delta State University	5	Delta Central	26

2	Federal University of Petroleum Resources	1	Delta Central	6.5
3	Western Delta University	3	Delta Central	17
4	Edwin Clark University	1	Delta South	6.5
5	Delta Polytechnic Ozoro	1	Delta South	6.5
6	Delta State Polytechnic Oghara	2	Delta Central	14
7	College of Education Warri	3	Delta South	17
8	College of Education Agbor	Nil	Delta North	
9	College of Education, Technical, Mosogar	1	Delta Central	6.5
10	Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba	Nil	Delta North	
Total				100%

Source: NDDC Office, Delta State 2024

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has played a pivotal role in advancing tertiary education institutions in Delta State. Across the senatorial districts of the state, the NDDC has undertaken a series of impactful projects, significantly benefiting various tertiary institutions, including state and federal universities, as well as private establishments. These projects have been meticulously distributed, with detailed percentage allocations ensuring equitable development.

In its unwavering commitment to fostering community development in the Niger Delta region, the NDDC has notably constructed hostels for the Delta State University's Abraka campus. These state-of-the-art hostels, strategically located at the Teaching Hospital and Abraka, stand as a testament to the commission's dedication to enhancing the university's infrastructure.

The NDDC's support for Delta State University extends to the provision of a modern 176-room hostel, two expansive lecture halls, a business education centre, and staff offices. These facilities, meticulously constructed by the commission, serve as essential components of the university's academic and administrative landscape.

Dr. Christy Atako, the then-acting Managing Director of the NDDC, underscored the commission's multifaceted involvement in the education sector. Beyond physical infrastructure, the NDDC's contributions encompass post-graduate scholarships and collaborative initiatives with relevant institutions, aimed at elevating the overall quality of education in the Niger Delta (NDDC, 2024).

She emphasized that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) prioritized education due to its significant role in societal development, stressing the importance of providing adequate accommodation to enhance the learning process. Ms Cynthia Akpoviri, the Acting Managing Director of NDDC, highlighted the commission's commitment to supporting educational infrastructure in the region. She expressed gratitude to the commission's staff at the Delta State office in Warri and urged them to prepare for a new era of transformation within the commission by embracing its vision and mission (NDDC, 2023).

Mr. Ejiroghene Udjo, the Registrar of Delta State University (DELSU), expressed gratitude to the NDDC for providing the essential infrastructure for the university, emphasizing that the lack of facilities often resulted in student unrest. He also mentioned that the NDDC hostel provided much-needed relief, as the existing accommodation for students at the Abraka campus was already under strain. He added, "Previously, we could only accommodate 4,500 students on this campus. However, with the new NDDC hostel, our capacity will increase to about 5,200" (NDDC, 2023).

During her address, Ms. Akpoviri reiterated the need for collaboration and collective effort to revitalize NDDC and elevate it to a new level of excellence. She urged the commission's staff to reject the negative portrayal of the commission and

envision a brighter future for NDDC, emphasizing the importance of working together to achieve this transformation (NDDC, 2023).

Table 2, Shows NDDC's Contributions of Road Construction to Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, 2000-2023

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	No. of Roads' Project	Senatorial Districts	Percent %
1	Delta State University, Abraka	Nil	Delta Central	
2	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Abraka	Nil	Delta Central	
3	Western Delta University, Oghara	Nil	Delta Central	
4	Edwin Clark University, Ekiagbodo	Nil	Delta South	
5	Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro	1	Delta South	25
6	Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara	Nil	Delta Central	
7	College of Education, Warri	1	Delta South	25
8	College of Education, Agbor	1	Delta North	25
9	College of Education, Technical, Mosogar	Nil	Delta Central	
10	Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba	1	Delta North	25
Total				100%

Source: NDDC's Office, Warri Delta State, 2024

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has been actively involved in the construction of roads and drainage systems at various tertiary institutions in

Delta State. For example, they have successfully completed the construction of a 1.14km road at the College of Education, Agbor, as well as a road and drainage system at the College of Education, Warri. The current condition of the road and drainage system at the College of Education, Warri, is yet to be observed, as disclosed by the Provost, Dr. Kingsley Oyovwi, during the convocation ceremony of the College of Education, Warri, on May 11, 2023, as reported by J. Onoyume in the Vanguard Newspaper (Onoyume, 2023).

Additionally, the NDDC undertook the construction of 1km of internal access roads at the Federal College of Education Technical in Asaba, Delta State. These roads are essential access routes for students and staff to reach classrooms and offices. Furthermore, the Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro, also benefited from a 1km access road constructed by the NDDC. However, an investigation was initiated by the Federal Government due to the failure of the contractor to fulfil its obligations after receiving over sixty-nine million Naira for the road construction project at the Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. The committee, chaired by the Auditor General of the Federation, recommended that the full amount of N69,822,000.00, paid for work that was not executed, should be recovered from the contractor in the first instance. If recovery from the contractor is not possible, the amount should be recuperated from the Director PMS and his team responsible for presenting inaccurate evaluation documents, as well as from all individuals who endorsed the interim payment certificates for the contractor. Verification of the recovery of this sum should be submitted to the Office of the Auditor General for the Federation for validation (Onoyume, 2023).

In 2017, the school management, led by the Dean of Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro, Dr. James Ojeagbase, and accompanied by the Chairman of the Governing Council, Barrister Rita Oguntoyinbo, visited the Commission. During the visit, The Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Mr Nsima Ekere, reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to supporting Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. He specifically highlighted the provision of essential infrastructure, including the construction of new roads to improve accessibility to the campus and the development of modern hostel accommodation to cater to the increasing student population (Onoyume, 2023).

The Executive Director of Projects, Samuel Adjogbe, warmly welcomed the visiting delegation at the NDDC headquarters in Port Harcourt. In his address to the members of the Governing Council, he conveyed the Commission's assurance of support and emphasized their dedication to completing ongoing projects and initiating new ones. He particularly stressed the significance of the construction of well-equipped hostel accommodation and other essential infrastructure to create a conducive learning environment for students. This commitment aimed to enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to the academic success of the students at Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro (Asewota, 2024).

Table 3, Shows NDDC's Contributions of Equipment/Furniture Supply to Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, 2000-2023

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	Nos. of Equipment/Solar Supplied	Senatorial Districts	Percent %
1	Delta State University, Abraka	3	Delta Central	100
2	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	Nil	Delta Central	
3	Western Delta University, Oghara	Nil	Delta Central	
4	Edwin Clark University, Ekiagbodo	Nil	Delta South	
5	Delta Polytechnic, Ozoro	Nil	Delta South	
6	Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara	Nil	Delta Central	
7	College of Education, Warri	Nil	Delta South	
8	College of Education, Agbor	Nil	Delta North	
9	College of Education Technical, Mosogar	Nil	Delta Central	

10	**Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba**	**Nil**	**Delta North**	
Total				**100%**

Source: NDDC's Office, Warri Delta State, 2024

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has made significant contributions to tertiary education by providing essential support to educational institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the NDDC has played a crucial role in enhancing the learning environment by supplying furniture to the NDDC Hostel at Delta State University, Abraka. This furniture includes desks and chairs for student use, as well as staff furniture, greatly improving the living and studying conditions for the students and staff (Chibuike, 2024).

In addition, the Commission has made substantial investments in educational infrastructure by furnishing and equipping an NDDC-built library at the Delta State University, Oleh Campus. The library is stocked with a wide range of books and learning materials, catering to the academic needs of the students and faculty members. This resource-rich environment encourages and supports research, learning, and academic growth within the university community (Orode, 2024).

Furthermore, the NDDC has demonstrated its commitment to advancing scientific research and education by supplying laboratory equipment for research purposes. This equipment enhances the practical learning experience for students and facilitates innovative research activities within the university. Additionally, the Commission has provided other essential utilities such as computers, further enriching the academic resources available to students and faculty members (Torulolo, 2024).

Overall, the NDDC's contributions have significantly enriched the educational experience at Delta State University, fostering an environment conducive to learning, research, and academic excellence.

Table 4, Shows NDDC's Contributions of Electrification/Solar Lights to Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, 2000-2023

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	No. of Electrification/ Solar	Senatorial Districts	Percent %
1	Delta State University, Abraka	3	Delta Central	32
2	Federal University of Petroleum Resources	Nil	Delta Central	00
3	Western Delta University, Oghara	2	Delta Central	27
4	Edwin Clark University, Ekiagbodo	1	Delta South	7
5	Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro	2	Delta South	27
6	Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara	1	Delta Central	7
7	College of Education, Warri	Nil	Delta South	00
8	College of Education, Agbor	Nil	Delta North	00
9	College of Education, Technical, Mosogar	Nil	Delta Central	00
10	Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba	Nil	Delta North	00
Total				100%

Source: NDDC's Office, Warri Delta State, 2024

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has undertaken extensive electrification efforts in various tertiary educational institutions in Delta State, significantly impacting the academic landscape. For instance, the University Teaching Hospital of Delta State University, Oghara, received valuable assistance from the commission in the form of a 30KW off-grid solar rooftop installation,

effectively electrifying the hospital and ensuring reliable power supply for critical medical services.

Moreover, Delta State University, Abraka, has benefited from the NDDC's lighting up program, which involved the provision of approximately 225 solar street lights across its three campuses, contributing to enhanced safety and security for students, faculty, and staff. The Oleh Campus of the university also received 229 solar-powered street lights, further bolstering the campus infrastructure and creating a conducive environment for learning and activities.

In addition to these initiatives, the NDDC's electrification project has extended to other educational institutions in the state. Western Delta University was provided with a 500KVA, 33/0.415KV transformer, significantly enhancing its power infrastructure and capacity. Similarly, E.K. Clark University, Ekiagbodo, benefited from the installation of solar street lights, promoting sustainable and energy-efficient lighting solutions on campus.

Furthermore, the electrification efforts have also reached Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro, and Oghara, where the installation of solar street lights has facilitated improved visibility and safety within the campus premises. It is noteworthy that Delta State University has emerged as a major beneficiary of these electrification projects, particularly in terms of the widespread distribution of solar lights, underscoring the commitment to sustainable energy solutions and infrastructure development in the educational sector (Onoyume, 2023).

Impact of Projects on Delta State's Tertiary Education

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has implemented infrastructure projects in Delta State as part of a capacity-building initiative aimed at supporting educational institutions. These projects include the construction of new classrooms, hostels, and staff quarters, as well as the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Additionally, the NDDC has supplied furniture and science equipment to enhance the learning environment in these institutions.

Completed projects include the construction of three hostels at Delta State University, Abraka, and the installation of solar-powered street lights and electrification projects at various higher learning institutions within the state. Feedback from stakeholders at these institutions indicates that these developments play a significant role in increasing access to public education, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack access to private institutions in Delta State. This expansion has enabled more individuals to pursue tertiary education, contributing to the educational development of the host communities and surrounding areas.

While some projects have been completed successfully, several ongoing projects are still pending. There is also a documented demand for additional educational infrastructure throughout Delta State, as current efforts are not sufficient to meet this need. Furthermore, the distribution of educational projects across various Local Government Areas in the state is uneven; some areas have multiple projects, while others have none. This situation suggests a need for a more balanced allocation of resources to address the educational infrastructure gaps in Delta State.

Conclusion

A comprehensive investigation revealed that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has completed several electrification projects in Delta State, with additional projects currently underway. Among the completed initiatives is the electrification and solar project at the DelSU Teaching Hospital, which has improved electricity access in the region. The NDDC has also donated and installed transformers in various communities, including Delta State Polytechnics in Ozoro and Oghara, as well as Colleges of Education in Agbor, Mosogar, Asaba, and Warri, enhancing power supply in these areas.

Following the NDDC's intervention in April 2004, which involved the donation and installation of new transformers, there was a measurable revival of economic activities in affected areas. Similar positive effects were noted in various university campuses, polytechnics, and colleges throughout Delta State where electrification projects were completed. These initiatives have facilitated essential access to electricity, contributing to both economic and social activities in the communities.

The outcomes of these electrification efforts highlight the significant role of the NDDC in enhancing the living conditions of residents in the region.

The electrification and solar projects have contributed to improved conditions for students and staff in tertiary institutions. The NDDC's efforts have reinforced the power supply by providing operational transformers. Before these interventions, students at institutions like DelSU, Western Delta University, Delta State Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education experienced significant interruptions in electricity supply from February 2003 to April 2004. This period of darkness negatively impacted learning and research including local businesses, such as hair salons and welding workshops, which depended on private generators.

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