



NATIONAL POLICY

FOR

THE NIGERIA EDUCATION REPOSITORY AND DATABANK



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
2023

Approved by the Federal Executive Council (2023)

New Notations and Addendum

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WITH ADDITIONAL NOTATIONS AND ADDENDUM
APPROVED BY THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (FEBRUARY 2025)

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DECLARATION OF EFFECTIVENESS

DECLARATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION REPOSITORY AND DATABANK (NERD) BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE PROCLAMATION OF A 36- MONTH PRE-DIGITIZATION PERIOD AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION REPOSITORY AND DATABANK SYSTEM OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Sequel to the approval of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in 2023 for the establishment of the National Education Repository and Databank (NERD) and the National Policy for its implementation and operation, and after the fulfilment of due process requirements in the formation of the Joint Venture for its operation, the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Olatunji Alausa, on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, hereby issues this formal declaration of effectiveness as an official proclamation to herald the commencement of the National Education Repository and Databank system as approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) on the 4th of February 2025 and as earlier presented to stakeholders by the Ministry on the 21st of November 2023.

2. The Nigeria Education Databank is an electronic platform and a one-stop-shop for the national management, administration, and preservation of education data, records, documents and audio-visual assets. It shall operate as a set of new services to address specific challenges in the education sector. These include the provision of a central reference point for data consistency covering every aspect of post-secondary education for national planning; perpetual preservation of academic reports and publications; enhancement of the quality of academic reports nationwide through outright elimination of plagiarism and the promotion of attribution; fostering of inter-institution collaboration and positive competition; mitigation of capital flight from previous dependence upon foreign products and services in education data management; the establishment of the Nigerian index of academic publications as a national flagship; a central national repository for equitable access to lecture notes and materials; and, the decisive launch of a systemic quality assurance check nationwide to curtail academic fraud which threatens the integrity of the education sector due to the activities of merchants of fake degrees, 'arrangee' qualifications, phoney certificates, bogus unearned honours from unaccredited institutions and diploma mills.

3. There shall henceforth be a National Repository of Knowledge for Nigeria. By virtue of Section 2.3 of the NERD Policy, upon the completion of necessary training and workshops,

every student in Nigeria shall hereafter deposit a copy of his or her academic outputs in a national repository after a mandatory similarity and anti-plagiarism check. Academic outputs include thesis, dissertation, project reports, term papers, seminar papers, etc. In the event of sponsorship, the author shall have the option to restrict the entire report or parts of the report. The NERD system will also maintain a national log of project reports, yearly term papers and seminar reports, among others while each deposit shall have a national document number for its perpetual identification. Similarly, with the support of the private sector, each post-secondary school in Nigeria is expected to scan all available previous academic outputs dating back to its foundation and have them electronically deposited in the national depository as part of the long-term objective of the NERD project.

4. In the past two decades following advancements in computer technology, the country has relied more on foreign countries and overseas business corporations for the organization and preservation of her academic records and body of knowledge. This undermined national security, eroded national pride, and promoted capital flight. The Nigeria Education Databank is the flagship central Databank for the education sector for the collection, organization, coordination, distribution, preservation, validation, and verification of Nigeria's education records, intellectual or academic outputs, and credentials. This National Education Databank is the nation's official one-stop-shop for data consistency as well as being the first private-sector-led big data project in the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

5. To deliver on its mandates, especially on third-party verification of credentials such as certificates, diplomas, results, transcripts, etc, the Federal Executive Council has approved the establishment of the National Credential Management and Verification Centre as part of the NERD system which is to serve as the joint multi-institutional national students' clearing house to effect credential validation and verification through the centralized administration of the national credential number and codes which mark will now be affixed unobtrusively as micro FrameQR codes by each institution on all certificates issued by Nigeria schools to aid the validation process. The verification service and national logs of term papers are designed as further proof of continuous academic enrolment indicative of actual attendance, affiliation, and scholarship. NERD shall thus have the authority to collaborate with and maintain mutually agreeable Application Programming Interface (API) calls to the servers of all Nigerian post-secondary schools/tertiary institutions, and existing national flagships such as West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO), Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), etc as part of its record and credential vetting protocols. The NERD Programme is a quality assurance check. It will be biometric-enabled for positive identity profiling leveraging both the National Identification Number (NIN) and the Bank Verification Number (BVN) as every Nigerian student shall be known by their yearly academic status, progress through classes, unique identifier integral to their NINs and ancillary to their institution-assigned matriculation numbers and be reachable anywhere in the world as scholars.

6. The NERD system is owned by all post-secondary schools in Nigeria and their corresponding regulatory authorities and library services through the Federal Ministry of Education and are all entitled to revenues derivable therefrom on a pro-rated basis. Similarly, NERD has been intentionally designed to establish a no-conflict framework aimed at striking a patriotic delicate balance between tertiary institutions' legitimate autonomy and the overriding strategic national interest of Nigeria. Ownership of deposited items shall remain vested in the original authors for which the Federal Executive Council has approved an

Offtaker's Monetization Reward guidelines. Also, well-equipped sectorial Coordinating Centres for the NERD project are to be set up in the headquarters of the regulating authorities such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), as well as the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) while each institution is expected to maintain a NERD Support Desk, among others, in order for NERD to serve as a tool to positively further the objectives of the various education stakeholders.

7. The implication of this is that following this declaration, the approved stipulations for mandatory submission of academic outputs as provided in Sections 2.3, 4.3(1), and 7.6.11(c), among others, of the approved National Policy for the NERD Programme shall become obligatory requirements in Nigeria as from the end of the early pre-digitization period. In the next 5 years and beyond, the Federal Ministry of Education, with the support of the National Universities Commission, the National Board for Technical Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, and other key stakeholders will be leading this unprecedented digitalization and the digitization of every single past and present academic record, report and publications ever generated in any of our institutions whether public or private, whether military or civilian. This remains the most audacious attempt ever to aggregate all records and knowledge, past and present, ever produced or generated in our tertiary institutions and post-secondary schools. Through the NERD project, Nigeria will have organic control of its data and its stacks of knowledge in its strategic national interest and for the purpose of economic development, national security, national prestige, and for the benefit of today and future generations of Nigerians.

8. Furthermore, having observed the increasing financial challenges of publications in High Impact journals with the attendant capital flights, the Federal Executive Council, as a deliberate mitigation strategy, has approved that the NERD system will, in addition, create, host, and administer official special databases of NERD-indexed-journals. The indexes shall employ experienced reviewers locally and internationally in order to serve as a credible national equivalent to journal indexes like SCOPUS, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Indonesia Garuda Indexing, SCImago, etc, while NERD-indexed-journals are now designated by the Federal Government of Nigeria as Special Nigeria (National) Indexes of Academic Publications (SNIAP) available to willing Nigerian academics and promoters of institutional journals and shall be acceptable for promotion and research/academic career advancement purposes and peerage privileges presently associated with their foreign equivalents such as SCOPUS, SCImago, etc across all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Details of this special intervention shall be separately communicated to all Governing Councils and tertiary institutions' managements by their respective accrediting and regulatory bodies shortly.

9. The Federal Executive Council has approved a Governing Council for the National Education Repository and Databank with the Honourable Minister of Education as Chairman and the following as members:

- i. Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education
- ii. Executive Secretaries of the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE
- iii. The National Librarian and Chief Executive of the National Library of Nigeria.
- iv. The Chairmen/Chairpersons of the Association or Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Association or Committee of Rectors of Nigerian Polytechnics, and Association or Committee of Provosts of Nigerian Colleges of Education.
- v. The Chief Executive of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission;
- vi. The Chief Executive of the National Education Repository and Databank Limited, and;

vii. The Secretary of the National Education Repository and Databank Limited as Secretary.

10. It is to be noted that by virtue of FEC's approval, the NERD Policy applies in equal measures to all education delivery institutions regardless of ownership type (public, private, military or civilian) whether within or outside the direct supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education such as Colleges or Schools of Nursing, Agriculture, specialized research centres and institutes, etc. Similarly, in line with FEC approval in the exercise of Mr. President's power in Council as provided in Sections 2(4)(4) and 16(1)(C) of the NYSC Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, the National Youth Service Corps (likewise the Industrial Training Fund) shall, following this declaration, mobilize, exempt, or refund only students who have fully complied with the NERD standard as defined in the approved regulations enshrined in the NERD Policy regardless of whether they had their education experience within or outside Nigeria.

11. Effective from the twelfth month of this proclamation, the following regulating authorities in the education sector, the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education, as well as agencies such as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and others with roles in tertiary education are required to include the level of compliance with the NERD Policy as a critical condition precedent to every type of service, support, evaluation, and accreditation exercise involving universities, polytechnics, Monotechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria. The approved NERD Policy is hereby attached to this Declaration and will be sent to each tertiary institution and post-secondary school in Nigeria. Electronic copies will also be made available on the website of the Ministry, those of its parastatals, and the Project. Each agency of government and accredited post-secondary school or tertiary institution is required to upload an electronic copy of the Policy on its website with a conspicuous promotional link on the landing page to facilitate wider distribution and ease of access.

12. In this journey, we acknowledge the challenges ahead. With a new system or technology comes a learning curve and an extensive need for change management, but rest assured, we are committed to providing comprehensive training and support to our educators. The NERD project will make substantial impacts on the ways we do things. It shall be transformative and promote a quality education ecosystem. The public is enjoined to embrace this transformation with an open heart and a sense of adventure, for it is our collective dedication and adaptability that will lead us to success. By this proclamation, the National Education Repository and Databank (NERD) system is now effective throughout Nigeria from the 4th of February 2025 being the date of approval by the Federal Executive Council.

All post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria are to await further information and directives.

.....
DR. OLATUNJI M. ALAUSA
Hon. Minister
Federal Ministry of Education.

15 March, 2025.

PREFACE

It is with great enthusiasm and a commitment to the advancement of education that I introduce this National Policy for the implementation and operation of the Nigerian Education Repository and Databank (“NERD”) system. The National Education Databank is a digital platform for the historical digitization of all academic records and education outputs ever generated in the history of Nigeria starting from 1932 when the first polytechnic was established and 1948 when the first university was established. Under the NERD scheme, the nation is to go back in time to preserve her historical knowledge, mainstream live digitization for extant education records and documents as well as set up a credential verification system for the validation of all education-related credentials.

This comprehensive Policy is the result of collaborative efforts from diverse stakeholders, including government entities, educators, industry experts, and technology innovators. With a focus on accessibility, inclusivity, and cutting-edge technology, this framework seeks to harness the transformative power of digital technologies to enhance the quality and reach of education across our nation.

By embarking on this holistic digitization journey, we aspire to bridge educational divides, cultivate digital literacy, and promote extensive access to knowledge that prepares our youth and the generality of the citizenry for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. We acknowledge that education is the cornerstone of societal progress, and through strategic integration of digital tools, we aim to create a more resilient, adaptive, and globally competitive education ecosystem. Not only are we embarking on this transformative journey because we intend to preserve our nation’s aggregate knowledge from our institutions and library services, end plagiarism, frustrate Diploma mills, and entrench inter-institution collaboration and positive competition, but it is our strategic thrust for Nigeria to become a major producer of economic means along the repository/document validation/archiving system value chain to the advantage of our local economy.

On behalf of the Federal Government, I extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed to shaping this policy. In particular, I extend my appreciation to my predecessors in office. Henceforth, our nation will proudly warehouse its knowledge and properly preserve same for the benefit of future generations.



Prof. Tahir Mamman, OON, SAN
Honourable Minister of Education
21st November, 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Federal Ministry of Education is grateful to numerous individuals and government departments for their contributions to the development of this Policy on the National Education Repository and Databank (NERD).

The immense support of the Honourable Minister, Prof. Tahir Mamman, OON, SAN, is acknowledged. Also acknowledged is the important role of the immediate past Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu as well as his predecessors such as Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau for their parts at the very onset. Worthy of appreciation is the support from Prof. Tunde Adeniran, former Minister for Education, who offered his immense experience to provide leadership to other senior members of the academics across the nation in the development of the draft policy. Worthy of mention are the legal insights provided by eminent lawyers such as Goke Fakunle, SAN, and Kabiru Tanimu Turaki, SAN (former Minister of Special Duties).

Also acknowledged are Mr. Andrew David Adejoh, former Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, Prof. Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, former Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), and his predecessor Prof. Julius Amioba Okojie, the National Universities Commission, the National Board for Technical Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the National Library of Nigeria as well Dr. Vincent Olatunji, the pioneer National Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) in the Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy.

Equally worthy of commendation are staff of the Ministry, those of the Department of Special Duties in the Federal Ministry of Education, and subject matter experts from outside the Ministry who played significant roles in drafting this policy.

Your labour of selfless service to the nation is greatly appreciated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For decades, Nigeria did not possess the organised technical framework and virtual infrastructure to collect, collate, and centrally preserve academic records, research, and academic outputs from the nation's tertiary institutions. Crucial research works, dating back to the time the first tertiary institution was established, were lost due to a lack of a reliable central repository or academic databank. In the past two decades following advancements in computer technology, the country has relied more on foreign countries and overseas business corporations for the organization and preservation of her body of knowledge. This undermines national security and erodes national pride. The Nigeria Education Databank or the National Education Repository and Databank (hereinafter referred to as "NERD") system is envisioned as the flagship central Databank or Digital Bank for the education sector for the collection, organization, coordination, distribution, preservation, validation, and verification of Nigeria's education records, intellectual or academic outputs, and credentials from the nation's post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions, in the first instance, with potential for future scalability to warehouse critical records of other tiers of education.

The Nigeria Education Repository and Databank programme shall be the national flagship recognized as the National Education Repository and Databank system. The NERD Programme shall be considered a national resource for the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it shall also act as the flagship electronic platform or digital bank to warehouse centralised historical academic records of all post-secondary schools and the digitized copies of the historical knowledge (post-secondary schools, tertiary institutions, and library services) of the nation in perpetuity in a manner that is responsive to changing technology and global best practices as well as commercialise the process to ensure sustainability and enhance revenue.

With a combination of secured and reliable software applications under this policy framework, the NERD shall offer commercial content warehousing technology with the capacity to hold students' detailed records, batch/back scan and upload students' historical records as well as works generated in the nation's tertiary institutions dating back to 1932 when the first polytechnic, Yaba Higher College, Lagos, was established and 1948 when the first university, University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan), was established. The policy shall also support current or extant digitization activities applicable to present educational records and academic outputs in the nation's tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the policy framework makes provisions for the operation of a national and centralized credential management and verification Centre, aimed at providing internationally acclaimed instant credential verification and validation services for all credentials obtained from government-approved institutions in Nigeria.

Some of the academic outputs targeted in this policy are comprehensive students' records, students' results (including final year academic results), final year project reports, theses and dissertations (including outcomes of funded research works from local and international organizations), and author's copies of published research articles, seminar papers, term papers, teaching practice reports, and other ancillary education manuscripts generated for Bachelor, Post-Graduate Diploma, Master and Ph.D. degrees or equivalent (in the case of a university), National Diploma, Intermediate Diploma, Higher National Diploma, Post-

Graduate Diploma or equivalent (in the case of a polytechnic, a monotechnic and equivalent institutions) and National Certificate of Education and equivalent qualifications (in the case of Colleges of Education and equivalent institutions) as well as peer certificates in all government-approved post-secondary institutions and or research Centres with structured learning programmes.

Beyond data or record management for better education planning, the NERD Programme will create a well-catalogued and well-preserved Critical Research Footprint and visibility for Nigeria and promote originality in publications by developing and administering a National Similarity and Plagiarism Checker system and providing consistent national guidelines on originality checks and plagiarism elimination. The project will also introduce a centralized and commercialized official national credential management and verification scheme for academic credential verification by individuals, organizations, and local and international institutions and provide an instant transcript transfer and processing system to any part of the world for willing institutions. The purpose is to provide educational credential verification and validation services for degrees, diplomas, certificates, transcripts, results, etc earned in Nigeria (and Nigeria-affiliated schools) for use in Nigeria and the outside world at incredible speed and exactitude. The NERD System will thus ensure that each student is known, genuine, and can be identified and tied to national development activities and opportunities and that all education-related activities of the student and the progression through classes have a verifiable national footprint whilst also keeping ancillary records of faculty members' roles and peculiar student-impact activities during the student experience.

As a long-term objective, the NERD Programme will promote a culture of education data integrity and accuracy and provide reliable data to drive the implementation of competitive education delivery, as well as the application of such data in national growth and economic development. Similarly, the System will ultimately help reform students' thesis/project supervision by enabling automated triggers and alert mechanisms to aid internal and external administrators' roles and the examination of such reports, the deposit of author's copies of journal articles by lecturers with automatic impact factor grading, etc as well as develop a critical statistical tool for establishing with accuracy overall institution by institution performance in terms of research potential, functional output, and actual productivity relative to peers. Additionally, NERD will create, host, curate, maintain, and administer the Nigeria Indexes of Academic Publications (NIAP) which shall be available to willing Nigerian academics. NIAP will be equivalent to China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Indonesia Garuda Indexing, SCOPUS, etc providing access to peer-reviewed content from around the world, as a strategic national flagship with incentives that include acceptability for promotion and career advancement for lecturers.

The benefits of the NERD Programme include its potential to eliminate the menace of fake degrees, diplomas, and certificates, ensure legitimate student and scholarship experience by eliminating loopholes in the national students' experience, enhance the quality of academic reports and presentations, grant greater visibilities to Nigerian academic publications and reports, make research output available to a larger number of innovation entrepreneurs within the industry thus bridging the gap between academia and industry and serve as a critical factor in fostering national development planning and tracking.

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ACRONYMS

1. NERD – National (or Nigerian/Nigeria) Education Repository and Databank
2. NED – National (or Nigerian/Nigeria) Education Databank
3. MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
4. NUC – National Universities Commission
5. NBTE – National Board for Technical Education
6. NCCE – National Commission for Colleges of Education
7. NCN – National Credential Number
8. NACVN – National Academic Credential Verification Number
9. NECO – National Examination Council
10. NIAP – Nigeria Indexes of Academic Publications
11. NIMC – National Identity Management Commission
12. NIN – National Identity Number
13. NISLT – Nigerian Institute of Science and Laboratory Technology
14. NLN – National Library of Nigeria
15. NCMVS - National Credential Management and Verification System
16. OER – Open Educational Resources
17. BVN – Bank Verification Number
18. CDC – Central Data Centre
19. KE – Knowledge-Economy
20. EVIS – Education Virtual Infrastructure Services
21. ITF – Industrial Training Fund
22. KBE – Knowledge-Based Economy
23. ISBN – International Standard Book Number
24. JAMB – Joint Admission and Matriculation Board
25. JV – Joint Venture
26. JVP – Joint Venture Partner
27. NYSC – National Youth Services Corps
28. 2NR – Nigerian National Research Repository
29. eSMAT – Electronic System for the Management and Administration of Thesis
30. NiLAD - Nationwide Integrated Library and Archival Data
31. NSVC - NERD Submission Virtual Certificate (an instrument that contains a special transaction ID or primary key for the deposited item) or NERD Receipt.
32. SIWES – Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme
33. SNIAP – Special National Indexes of Academic Publications
34. WAEC – West African Examination Council.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

National development is correlated to aggregate national productivity. Productivity is however a function of access to knowledge and its efficient conversion into enterprises. Adequate records are crucial to national productivity. Suitable education and academic records are crucial to national development as they provide vital data for informed decision-making in education policy, enabling effective planning, resource allocation, monitoring student progress, identifying educational gaps, and ultimately contributing to a skilled workforce that drives economic growth and societal advancement. The industrial revolution indeed resulted from research outputs and reliable record-keeping. There is no doubt that countries are naturally in competition among themselves and against one another. Nations continue to outperform one another based on their varying access to knowledge and the domestication of knowledge into technical know-how to support enterprises and ventures as well as the quality of that nation's aggregate or overall contribution to knowledge. The World Bank (2020) acknowledges that the increased importance of knowledge provides great potential for countries to strengthen their economic and social development by providing more efficient ways of producing goods and services and delivering them more effectively and at lower costs to a greater number of people. The application of knowledge is therefore one of the key sources of growth in the global economy. The World Bank recognizes that the term Knowledge Economy (KE) has been coined to reflect this increased importance of knowledge whereby organizations and people acquire, create, disseminate, and use knowledge more effectively for greater economic and social development. Yet, knowledge would remain inconsequential to productivity in the average nation in the absence of its deliberate organization and preservation for effective utilization.

1.1 Nigeria's tertiary institutions at a glance

Nigeria had a population of 216.7 million in 2022 according to UN estimates projected from the 2006 national census. As of mid-2022, based on data from the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE, there were 219 universities (49 federal, 59 state-owned, and 111 private), 159 Polytechnics (37 federal, 51 state-owned, and 71 private), and 200 Colleges of Education (27 federal, 51 state and 122 private) in Nigeria. The NBTE in addition has accredited 40 specialized institutions, 33 Colleges of Agriculture, 76 Colleges of Health Sciences and Technology (62 public and 14 private) while the NCCE has accredited 10 other NCE awarding institutions and 9 NCE awarding polytechnics. Overall, Nigeria had a total of 746 accredited post-secondary education institutions capable of generating a minimum of term paper per student as of 2022.

1.2 Status of Record Keeping and Historical Documentation

Record keeping in Nigerian post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions is generally poor, with many schools lacking proper policies and guidelines. This has led to a high rate of missing documents, and a lack of access or prolonged time to access records that are available. Regarding critical documents and publications, EVIS (2021) says Nigeria's research global visibility is poor viz-a-viz published works of faculty members as well as theses, dissertations, and academic reports of students, etc. Most research emanating from Nigeria remains unorganized as a properly coordinated body of knowledge. Many are lost forever. Nigeria's academic contents are mostly currently inaccessible in properly structured and easily accessible formats except in silos as provided by individual institutions. Each Nigerian institution operates as an island or a silo as there is no automated national framework to promote cooperation and coordinate inter and intra-institution linkages. There remains a huge gap between research from tertiary institutions and the industry or entrepreneurs. There is often insufficient local knowledge based on research to support investors and products as well as critical policy developments. Valuable research works in Nigeria rarely get into the hands of those who need them. Often there is a duplicity of effort and limited collaboration among Nigerian researchers, lecturers, etc. The menace of plagiarism and originality impairs the quality of research outputs and inhibits positive competition and its attendant benefits on innovation and growth. There is no nationally centralized credential management and verification system and Nigerian students experience pain and agony whilst seeking to get their credentials verified or obtain their academic transcripts for transmission to local or overseas institutions.

1.2.1 Problems

Lack of policies: Past policies were academic with no guidelines for sustainably managing records and lacked actionable funding sources.

Poor storage: Records are often stored improperly, and there is a lack of disaster prevention plans.

Inadequate facilities and staff: There are not enough infrastructure assets and manpower to manage a large volume of records.

Central reference: There is a lack of a central reference point for data consistency.

Poor understanding: There is a lack of appreciation for the importance of data and well-managed and properly preserved records.

1.2.2 Consequences

Lost documents: There are many cases of lost or misplaced documents.

Inaccurate records: Records are often incomplete, inaccurate, or dishonest.

Poor decision-making: The lack of accurate records makes it difficult to make effective decisions.

Vulnerable records: Records are vulnerable to loss, wilful sabotage, or inaccessibility.

There is, therefore, the crucial need to establish a comprehensive Nigeria Education Databank and education data-driven learning ecosystem to enhance data collation across all tiers of tertiary education and post-secondary schools, and research institutions, to serve as a decision-support system for planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the nation's education sector.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this Policy:

- 2.1 **An accredited institution** is one formally recognized to carry out academic activities by an accrediting agency.
- 2.2 **An accrediting agency** or a **regulating agency** refers to an organ or agency of government such as the NUC, NBTE, NCCE, etc, empowered by law to carry out accreditation of tertiary institutions.
- 2.3 **An academic output** refers to (i) an academic manuscript or report generated by a student in the course of undergoing academic programmes in an accredited institution in Nigeria either in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a certificate, a diploma, or a degree during undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, (ii) an academic result, diploma, certificate, or degree or other academic credentials of students in any accredited post-secondary school and tertiary institution in Nigeria, and (iii) a journal article or academic publication by a lecturer with the potential to contribute to the lecturer's appraisal and promotion as well as academic publications by other cadres of scholars and students – whilst examples of Academic Outputs include theses, dissertations, project reports, teaching practice reports, term papers, seminar papers, SIWES or I.T. reports, internship reports, journal articles, case studies, credentials, results, and digital or electronic copies of transcripts.
- 2.4 **Concession agreement** means a legally binding agreement generated from the general understanding reached in the Memorandum of Understanding.
- 2.5 **Council** means the Governing Council for NERD.
- 2.6 **Credential(s)** means results, diplomas, degrees, certificates, etc.
- 2.7 **The JV Partner** means the private company approved by the Federal Government as the preferred JV Partner and with the mandate to commercially operate the JV.
- 2.8 **Tertiary institutions** refer to universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotronics, research institutes, specialized post-graduate schools or colleges, and all government-approved post-secondary institutions that offer structured learning whether public or privately owned which shall include colleges of agriculture, colleges of health, school of nursing, school of midwifery, and other specialized education delivery institutions.
- 2.9 **Investment** means the historical assets or capital put into the development and operation of the NERD project by the JV Partner which can be in the form of time, money, effort, innovation, sweat, etc., in hopes of a greater payoff in the future than what was originally put in.
- 2.10 **Manuscript** refers to an academic output except if the context dictates otherwise.
- 2.11 **MemArt** means Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- 2.12 **Minister** means the Minister of Education.
- 2.13 **Ministry** means the Federal Ministry of Education.

- 2.14 **Nigeria Education Databank or National Education Digital Bank** means the National Education Repository and Databank (NERD) as a system that refers to the Nigeria Education Repository and Databank programme.
- 2.15 **National Credential Number** means **the National Academic Credential Verification Number**, a unique verifier for each academic credential that plays a similar role as the National Document Verification Number both being unique to each student, lecturer, or author.
- 2.16 **NERD** depending on context means National (or Nigeria) Education Repository and Databank or the National Education Repository and Databank Limited.
- 2.17 **NERD Policy** means this Policy and refers to the Nigerian Government's plan of action, orders, regulations, directives, and set of overarching rules, instructions, and guidelines approved by the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria to provide direction for the implementation and operation of the NERD Programme.
- 2.18 **NERD Programme or NERD Project's Components or Components and/or Modules of the NERD System** means the set of projects under the NERD System or programme such as the Electronic System for the Management and Administration of Thesis (eSMAT), the Nigeria National Research Repository (2NR), the Nigeria (National) Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) with the establishment of the National Credential Management and Verification Centre, the Nigeria (National) Similarity Detector and Plagiarism Checker (nSDPC) to drive the Mandatory Originality Check (MOC), the Giant Shoulder Project (GSP), the National Centralized Content Registry (CCR), the Special Nigeria (National) Indexes of Academic Publications (SNIAP), the automated National Students Clearing House, ISBN automated repository in collaboration with the National Library and other library services, the integrated cross-institutions Dissertation, Thesis Examination, Review, and Evaluation (DiTERE) process, a Nigeria (National) Log or Register of Term Papers and Seminar Reports, as well as the Nationwide Integrated Library and Archival Data (NiLAD) system in collaboration with library services nationwide, economic Nigeria (National) Equitable Access to Teaching (NEAT) scheme covering lecture notes, non-copyrighted textbooks, special textbook arrangements, and other academic materials for the minimum academic requirements for all undergraduates and post-graduate courses, with the Project also serving as the National Academic Registry and Databank (NARD) for texts and audiovisuals assets, and the National Repository of Academic Texts (NRAT).
- 2.19 **NED** refers to and is a synonym for NERD.
- 2.20 **National** means **Nigeria** and is authorized for use interchangeably except where a specific context dictates a variation.
- 2.21 **Deposit of an Item in NERD** means the successful electronic input or entry of the textual, image, and or audio-visual content, where applicable, of academic output and records into any of the modules of the Nigeria Education Databank, and each instance of this is considered an Offtake.
- 2.22 **The Operator or Operator** means the JV which is a government-owned private entity limited by guarantee, with the mandate to build, develop, deploy, and manage the National Education Databank while the term (operator) also refers to the JV Partner in certain contexts.
- 2.23 **Operator of the JV** means the Concessionaire/JV Partner.

- 2.24 **Regulators** are accrediting agencies such as the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE.
- 2.25 **SIWES report** means a report submitted by a student at the end of an industrial or SIWES attachment and also refers to the Industrial Training or Industrial Attachment report.
- 2.26 **Offtakers** refer to students, lecturers, institutions with subscriptions, and organizations that pay or make paid submissions or contributions of academic outputs to the NERD system.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 NEED FOR POLICY

- 3.1 A national policy on tertiary education's academic records and documents is justified because it ensures consistent, reliable, and accessible student data across all institutions, enabling effective student tracking, informed decision-making, accountability, quality assurance, data privacy, data security, and legal compliance, ultimately contributing to the overall improvement of higher education standards and national workforce development. The Times Higher Education (2022) and Webometric (2022) rankings showed that the highest-ranking Nigerian tertiary institution was not on the list of the top 700 universities in the world. The highest-ranked Nigerian university was not on the list of Top 40 universities in Africa. Many Nigerian students and lecturers still indulge in the wilful copy of works without proper attribution thereby undermining quality and originality and promoting theft of the intellectual properties of others. Typically, Research Quality i.e., Research (by volume, income, and reputation - worth 30%) and Citations (research influence - worth 30%) are important yardsticks that jointly account for 60% of Times Higher Education's tested indicators for measuring a tertiary institution's performance. Equally recognized is that Webometric's thematic focus has been primarily web publications, support for Open Access initiatives, and electronic access to scientific publications from those institutions.
- 3.2 The menace of fake degrees, certificates, and diplomas is on the rise with unscrupulous individuals offering 'for sale' academic certificates and titles from diploma mills, non-accredited, unrecognized, and sometimes, non-existent institutions. Nigerians in the Diaspora also continue to face endemic challenges with credential validations and the tedious processes of verifying their certificates or obtaining records of their transcripts from their parent institutions in Nigeria. It has also been a serious challenge for many foreign institutions, as well as private and public organizations, to verify or validate the credentials of Nigerian candidates.
- 3.3 An option is to continue to do nothing or rely on individual institutions and encourage them to develop their respective data management system and repositories. However, this option denies the country a coordinated unified response that can ensure a single and consistent source of national education data on tertiary institutions. On academic document digitization, it will indeed deny the federation of a unified response such as has been done in the United Kingdom with EThOS, All Gov.UK, and the defunct Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and in the United States with ProQuest and Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. While each institution shall be encouraged to develop and retain individual repositories, NERD is envisaged as a unifier and a one-stop shop for post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The unified platform will not only provide an opportunity for an economy of scale, or

engender ease of academic data sharing, introduce mechanisms to prevent abuse, and provide equitable access to the same academic resources, but it will also directly impact the capacity of each institution to upgrade the standard of their local repositories knowing full well that there is competition and that each institution now has the opportunity to feed and be fed from a bigger central historical database.

- 3.4 Furthermore, rather than relying on foreign databases for the preservation of its academic records and research outputs, it is a matter of national security and national pride for the Federal Republic of Nigeria to have its one-stop single-point national education databank platform.
- 3.5 The policy framework is aimed at providing the overarching guidelines and regulations for the successful operation of the databank. The Policy will promote usage compliance and compliance enforcement, set out standards, standardize inter and intra-institutional collaboration, delineate roles for stakeholders and regulatory agencies, and mainstream the NERD programme nationwide. The Policy will provide guidance and empower the relevant authorities to invoke sanctions sequel to existing legal frameworks as well as promote the enactment of relevant statutes to eliminate ambiguities.

3.6 Need to set up National Education Repository and Databank Council

There is a need to set up a Council that will serve as the coordinating body to review performance, activate institutions of state to compel compliance, carry out periodic evaluations, and resolve issues that may threaten or militate against the objectives and the success of the NERD system. The Council shall be headed by the Honourable Minister of Education as Chairman. Members of the Council shall include the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, the Executive Secretaries of the Accrediting Agencies (NUC, NBTE, NCCE, etc), the Chief Executive of the National Library of Nigeria (NLN), the Chief Executive of NERD and its Secretary, the Chief Executive of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau, and the Chairmen of the Association or Committee of Vice Chancellors, the Association or Committee of Rectors of Polytechnics and the Association or Committee of Provosts of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The Secretary of NERD shall provide secretariat services. The Council shall be expected to meet at least twice a year or as may be directed by the Chairman. The Minister shall have the authority to co-opt into the Council the heads of other agencies with roles that are relevant or tangential to the success of the objectives of the policy.

3.7 Need to Encourage and Define the Role of the Private Sector in the NERD System

The primary purpose of the NERD system is the preservation of knowledge in a databank, creating a unified and consistent central education data resource for post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In the process, it will create global top-notch visibility for Nigerian works, and the promotion of collaboration among scholars across the nation and ultimately engender and mainstream the

commercialization of knowledge and the processes of its preservation for improved national productivity. The private sector is critical to accomplishing these objectives. The private sector also has the potential to better operate, manage, and maintain the system as a viable commercial enterprise. The Nigerian Bureau of Public Enterprises highlighted the following as parts of benefits derivable from a private sector-led or managed public enterprise:

- a) Reduced corruption and parasitic mentality,
- b) Infusion of capital and modernization of technology in industries,
- c) Strengthening capital markets,
- d) Promote efficiency, transparency, and better management, and;
- e) Generate funds that the government could further invest in social sectors.

3.7.1 The Federal Republic of Nigeria is adopting a three-pronged approach to make the Nigeria Education Databank programme a success regarding academic record keeping, content preservation, and validation, namely:

- a) Strengthen the nation's library services both at the federal and state levels to be better able to preserve knowledge;
- b) Support all government-recognized post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions regardless of type to be able to set up individual databases for the preservation of their academic records and outputs in line with their autonomy; and
- c) The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry and its ancillary agencies, will collaborate with the Private Sector to set up the first ever private-sector-led automated National Education Databank in the history of Africa as a commercial enterprise and a bold statement as a principal contributor to the nation's digital economy initiative.

3.7.2 The Private Sector will invest the required funds and expertise while the public sector will provide institutional protection for the NERD Programme and drive compliance and enforcement.

3.7.3 The Private Sector Partner will also exclusively administer the various novel services such as the National Academic Credential Verification Number (i.e., NCN), the National Document Verification Number, and other unique identifiers for the validation of academic credentials and educational documents nationwide.

3.8 Need to Create a JV between the Federal Government and a Private Sector

To strengthen the commercial viability of the project, it shall be financed, executed, and managed wholly by the private sector without any financial contribution from the government. The role of the government shall be limited to policy enactment and enforcement, project/business tenure protection and exclusivity for the investor, and the leveraging of institutions of state to enforce usage compliance and guaranteed offtake (offtake assurance) through a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation. A long-term joint venture (JV) company between the private sector and

the Federal Government named Nigeria (or National) Education Repository and Databank Limited or simply the Nigeria Education Databank Limited shall be incorporated as a Private Company Limited by Guarantee with the government having not more than 20% of the shares as its sweat equity (ditto any subsidiary). This will allow the private sector participant or the preferred JV Partner to finance the project with debt, equity, grants, and other suitable financing models at no cost to the government and with the government properly insulated from liabilities whilst enabling the company to independently manage its affairs as a strict commercial vehicle leveraging international best practices despite being a government flagship or entity.

3.9 Need for a System Operator

The National Education Repository and Databank (NERD) Limited (the JV) shall serve as the operator of the NERD system while the JV Partner in turn shall commercially operate the JV on behalf of the partners (i.e., operator of the JV).

3.10 Need to set up a policy on charges, cost recovery, subsidies, etc

Who sets charges payable for accessing the services of the National Digital Bank? How should the charges be determined? Since NERD will operate as a commercial entity, how should a greater number of users be brought on board without compromising quality? What costs should be recovered and how should they be recovered? For users who cannot be billed in order to avoid negative publicity for the system, how would they be subsidized? The Operator and the JV Partner shall be able to make recommendations to the Minister for the resolution of issues.

3.11 Nigeria Education Databank

The NERD system shall have the status of a national academic and education automated data controller and serve or act as a national resource for all educational institutions, the national library, state libraries, archives, and all private or public research Centres or institutes and collaborate with each institution if or when required to enhance their institutional repositories.

3.12 Need for a Centralised National Credential Verification Unit

The NERD system shall maintain a unit or Centre for the verification of credentials originating from anywhere and any part of Nigeria, including institutions in Nigeria, and delivering outcomes to any part of the world and shall aim to deliver this as a service instantly or not for more than 24 hours after the request. The unit shall administer the National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) and will offer a third-party instant transcript delivery service with an agreed portion of the service charge going directly to each participating tertiary institution.

3.13 Need for the Policy to Unambiguously Define the Scope of the Project

The NERD system shall include all projects or sub-projects, modules, and components described as the NERD Programme in Section 2.18 of this policy as its deliverables and also comprise all mandate areas listed below:

- (a) Provision and operation of a unified national electronic platform for current or live digitization and archiving of all postsecondary schools and tertiary institutions' education records, students' records, documents, and manuscripts (thesis, dissertations, project reports, term papers, seminar papers, journal articles, etc), index of journals – Special National Indexes of Academic Publications, library materials, etc going forward with originality check and antiplagiarism tools to generate the obligatory National Repository of Academic Texts and Audio-visual assets as well as maintain a National Log or Register of yearly term papers and seminar reports of students as part of the Academic Outputs listed in Section 2.3 of this Policy to ensure the country possesses the independent technological capacity to transparently match each student to academic sessions as an inviolable yearly proof of continuous enrolment thereby institutionalizing a technology check to arrest the menace of fake degrees and diploma mills;
- (b) Provision and operation of a unified national electronic platform for historical digitization and archiving of available past manuscripts (thesis, dissertations, project reports, term papers, seminar papers, etc) in all tertiary institutions dating back to 1932 (when the first polytechnic was established) and 1948 (when the first university was established) as provided in the approved National Policy to create the obligatory national education historical document bank; and
- (c) Provision and operation of a unified National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) for timely international and local credential verification and the instant delivery of transcript of any individual from any Nigerian institution to any part of the world – in the first instance subject to the non-obligatory collaboration of each institution as provided in the approved Policy with two of its objectives being to serve as the joint multi-institutional national students' clearing house and credentials verification Centre, and further proof of continuous academic enrolment indicative of actual attendance, affiliation, and scholarship whilst collaborating with and maintaining mutually agreeable Application Programming Interface (API) calls to the servers of schools, and existing national flagships such as WAEC, NECO, JAMB, NIMC, NYSC, ITF, etc as part of its record and credential vetting protocols.

3.14 Need to set out the roles of all other stakeholders

The NUC, NBTE, NCCE, and other agencies as may be identified by the Honourable Minister of Education shall have the primary duty to encourage and compel obligatory compliance by tertiary institutions within their respective purviews by including unimpeachable evidence of compliance as prerequisites to specific evaluation programmes like accreditation, ranking, grants, etc.

3.15 Need to complement the Library Services

NERD shall on mutual terms offer its assets and resources to library services when due and when required. The NLN shall collaborate with NERD for greater efficiency.

3.16 Need for institutional support by the NYSC and the ITF

Upon the effectiveness of this Policy, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) shall be required to include verified evidence of deposit of the final academic report as a mandatory prerequisite to participation in or exemption from the NYSC scheme. The NYSC shall collaborate with NERD for a code-level handshake and electronic transfer of a list of deposit-compliant graduating students in a given NYSC batch,

stream, etc. Similarly, upon the effectiveness of this Policy, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) shall include evidence of deposit or submission of SIWES or Industrial Training report by a student as a mandatory prerequisite for the processing of SIWES fund or refund and associated privileges.

3.17 Need to define the owner of the content of the NERD system

Ownership of each item deposited in the NERD system shall remain vested in the original author of the work and the sponsoring institution as per their local policy. The role of NERD is akin to that of a bank or a reserve bank where the digital print of each asset is warehoused in the larger national interest. The licensing of works by institutions on the Digital Bank will remain in line with the Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy for Higher Education in Nigeria. The National Education Databank thus exists for the preservation of that item as an organized academic or education asset of the author accessible to future generations to review, critique, or improve upon in the larger strategic interest of the nation.

3.18 Need for equity

Need for Policy to apply equitably to all tertiary institutions regardless of ownership type (public or private, state or federal, etc), nature (civilian, military except classified or security-related outputs, religious, etc), size or structure.

3.19 Need for flagship Nigerian branding

NERD shall project the Nigerian brand identity. Global web presence shall be on country code top-level domain (ccTLD) for education in Nigeria e.g., nerd.edu.ng, educationbank.edu.ng, or similar aliases as the operator may request (for the digital bank content). For the government, it shall be nerd.gov.ng or similar aliases as the operator may advise – (i.e., for the governance, council, and administrative activities). The management of NERD shall however be able to employ their discretion to remain current and globally competitive due to constant changes and evolution in the digital world.

3.20 Need for NERD credential and access

Need for an institutional guideline to enable every *bona fide* student and member of faculty in any of Nigeria's accredited tertiary institutions to have login credentials to the NERD system upon their admission (in the case of students) or employment (in the case of faculty members and other cadres of researchers and users).

3.21 Need to build a National Central Data Centre

The Operator will build a befitting national data centre. In addition, the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and other units shall be leveraged to provide backup network alliance services. The operator will also leverage Galaxy Backbone Limited and the NgREN as contingency hosts of the disaster recovery centres with an additional triple-layer cloud-based automated principal recovery system located on a need-to-know basis in collaboration with the Central Bank of

Nigeria. The operator will also deliver dedicated cloud hosting of appropriate branches of the service for the NLN when required, upon mutually agreeable terms.

3.22 Need for Technology Mobility

Technology in the context of the NERD Programme shall mean processes, systems, machinery, and equipment developed from the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes including hardware, software, relational database management systems, artificial intelligence, distributed ledger systems, blockchains, special codes (including barcodes, QR codes, FrameQR Codes, etc) and emerging or new process innovation employed in the development, deployment, operation, management, and administration of any of the projects or components of the NERD programme. The operator of the system shall be able to upgrade and adapt as new technological standards emerge.

3.23 Need for Local Content and Indigenous Technology Capability

Knowing that the most popular enterprise products in schools' records management systems, identity and document validation systems, anti-plagiarism systems, large-scale repositories and data storage systems are mostly foreign products with foreign exchange and national security implications, the Project shall be designed and implemented in manners that promote, prioritise, and utilize technologies built by Nigerian scientists developers, technologists, and engineers as a deliberate strategy to promote the growth of local technological capacity. The operator of the NERD system shall prioritise solutions offered by local businesses that are at par with international standards over solutions offered by foreign companies.

3.24 Need for High-End System Security

High-end software security is crucial for the NERD Programme because it will protect sensitive data, prevent major disruptions to operations, and mitigate the risks of cyberattacks and wilful sabotage by providing robust defences against sophisticated threats, particularly for the purpose of national security and information safeguards in the handling of highly confidential information or critical components of the National Education Databank systems, where even minor vulnerabilities can have severe consequences. Essentially, it is necessary to maintain data integrity, confidentiality, and system availability in the nation's complex digital landscape. The administration of unique identifiers such as the National Document Number, and the National Credential Verification Number (or National Academic Credential Verification Number) among others by the operator of the system shall be guided by the strictest adherence to security and data protection concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES, GOALS, TARGETS, AND STANDARDS

4.1 The vision

The vision of the National Education Repository and Databank system is to act as the **official electronic records and documents bank for the education sector in Nigeria** where all participants and stakeholders can deposit their data and works for the purpose of preserving them for future generations. NERD will be the electronic platform for the economic protection, preservation, and digitization of education records and academic data, documents, and assets across tiers of educational structures and library services. The Project will feature modules such as the Electronic System for the Management and Administration of Thesis (eSMAT), the Nigeria National Research Repository (2NR), the National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) with the establishment of the National Credential Management and Verification Centre, the National Similarity Detector and Plagiarism Checker (nSDPC) to drive the Mandatory Originality Check (MOC), the Giant Shoulder Project (GSP), the National Centralized Content Registry (CCR), the Nigeria Indexes of Academic Publications (SNIAP), the automated National Students Clearing House, ISBN automated repository in collaboration with the National Library and other library services, the integrated cross-institutions Dissertation, Thesis Examination, Review, and Evaluation (DiTERE) process, a National Log or Register of Term Papers and Seminar Reports, as well as the Nationwide Integrated Library and Archival Data (NiLAD) system in collaboration with library services nationwide, economic National Equitable Access to Teaching (NEAT) covering lecture notes, non-copyrighted textbooks, special textbook arrangements, and other academic materials for the minimum academic requirements for all undergraduates and post-graduate courses, with the Project also serving as the National Academic Registry and Databank (NARD) for texts and audio-visuals assets, and the National Repository of Academic Texts (NRAT).

It will transform the nation's capability to preserve and protect its critical education data, eradicate the evil of record manipulation and forgery, expand national education data and documents' value chain, create a referenceable audit trail for academic records, and open a new national revenue stream for the Federal Government (concession/performance fees, and taxes) and the education sector.

4.2 Policy Objectives

The objectives of the Policy are as follows:

- i. To set out clear regulations for the National Education Databank.
- ii. To set out guidelines for the participation of all stakeholders (accrediting agencies, tertiary institutions, students, lecturers, the private sector, and the government) in the NERD programme.

- iii. To establish a no-conflict framework aimed at striking a patriotic delicate balance between institutions' legitimate autonomy and the overriding strategic national interest.
- iv. To create a one-stop central national database of academic records, research, and knowledge for Nigeria and all her tertiary or higher institutions and promote coordinated and organized knowledge exchange and collaboration thereby serving as a single-point data validation and document verification system and an access hub for abstracts and full-text of all project reports, dissertations, thesis, term papers, other academic manuscripts and technical papers ever produced in Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and other research or academic centres as well as preserve authors' copies of published research articles by faculty members in the nation's tertiary institutions.
- v. To host and administer the national academic publication flagship.
- vi. To mainstream and enhance indigenous technology capability in originality checks through anti-plagiarism modules.
- vii. To provide real-time back-end access for regulatory authorities (NUC, NBTE, NCCE, etc) in the education sector to have a detailed record of an institution's performances whilst having access to critical information on each student's project reports and research theses, dissertations, etc as well as each lecturer's inputs within seconds - with clinical accuracy and high-level integrity.
- viii. When desired, to empower Nigerian tertiary institutions to be better able to access and preserve critical information on each student's academic footprints, manage supervisors, manage examiners (external and internal), mitigate willful or malicious programme abuse, and watch performance trends.
- ix. To provide a platform for the protection of intellectual properties by ensuring that the system can allow only designated portions of publications or parts of documents to be viewable thereby protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and if necessary secrecy, of certain research or academic outputs and publications. Researchers and others hunting for data will be able to glean the abstracts of those categories of works but would require approvals from the owner before having full access to such works. The system will also ultimately create evidence-based first-to-archive and first-to-publish net footprint for each work to protect the intellectual properties of subscribers against idea thefts.
- x. To drive innovation through the promotion of the institutionalization of research and development by making content available to a wider industry audience or entrepreneurs - thereby enhancing the commercialization of innovation.
- xi. To create a massive positive digital research footprint for Nigerian higher institutions and enhance their global visibility and Webometric ranking.
- xii. To virtually link students, lecturers, and internal and external examiners and the manuscript examination processes to eliminate any individual's malicious grip on supervisory processes with the system being capable of generating and issuing alerts in difference to willful delays of students' submissions by lecturers and or internal supervisors and external examiners.

- xiii. To promote positive competition among tertiary institutions with precise information through regular and yearly publication of statistics on academic reports or academic outputs' turnover (of students) and publications (of faculty members) from all institutions for peer comparison.
- xiv. To eliminate current difficulties with international credential verification and provide alternatives aimed at removing delays associated with accessing, processing, and forwarding academic transcripts to schools within and outside the country as well as ensure that foreign institutions and organizations have a government-recognized and credible one-stop shop for third-party credential verifications.
- xv. To set out the initial 3 clear mandates of the NERD system, namely the establishment of a National Education Digital Bank for the - (i) historical digitization (past) and archiving of available manuscripts (thesis, dissertations, project reports, term papers, seminar papers, etc) in all tertiary institutions dating back to 1932 (when the first polytechnic was established) and 1948 (when the first university was established), (ii) Current or live digitization and archiving of library materials, manuscripts (thesis, dissertations, project reports, term papers, seminar papers, journal articles, etc), deploy and administer the National Publication Indexes, the National Plagiarism Checker, the National Log of Publications and other standards under the NERD Programme, and (iii) National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) for credential verification and the instant delivery of validated certificates and transcripts.

4.3 Goals

The goal of the Policy is to mainstream NERD as a national standard for the benefit of students, lecturers, researchers, and other stakeholders. The specific goals of this policy are to:

1. Create a centralised education and academic databank for Nigeria covering past and present education records and academic outputs.
2. Improve the capacities of stakeholders to effectively utilize the platform as a tool.
3. Eliminate extant opportunities for academic record abuse and protect data integrity.
4. Introduce central checks, frustrate the issuance of fake certificates and make credential verification seamless.
5. Promote the culture of attribution and eliminate the menace of plagiarism
6. Evolve Nigeria's referencing standard, support libraries, and encourage schools to set up their local digital repositories.
7. Improve access to quality research by industry and entrepreneurs.
8. Increase the visibility of Nigerian works to the rest of the world.
9. Reduce the time required for credential verification and transcript processing.
10. Promote adequate awareness of NERD to members of the public.

4.4 Policy Thrust

4.4.1 The Federal Government is determined to address the challenge of the uncoordinated students' records and body of knowledge, end plagiarism, and engender improved repository

service delivery, host national publication indexes, and national logs of publications as well as provision an instant electronic platform for credential verification and validation.

4.4.2 The main focus of the policy is to enhance the government's capacity to improve historical record and knowledge warehousing through an appropriate institutional framework that will allow the Stakeholders, Students, Lecturers, Researchers, and Regulators to articulate their interests and exercise their obligations, and rights concerning the Digital Bank.

4.4.3. The policy of the government includes allowing private sector players to invest directly in the sector and source finance through debt, equity, grants, etc. Furthermore, the government will:

- i. Provide the right policy and a conducive environment for the Private Sector to invest in the deployment, management, operation, and maintenance of the National Digital Bank.
- ii. Entrench rules to guarantee continuous use by off-takers thus ensuring off-take and tenure/tenor assurance to aid investment recovery.
- iii. Provide regulations tangential to the attainment of the objectives of this Policy.

4.4.4 Overall Policy Thrust

The NERD scheme entrenches education data preservation and inter-institution collaboration, eliminates opacity in education content management, and protects proprietary works whilst not undermining the autonomy of each institution. The primary thrust of the project is the evolution of the capacity of the nation to preserve, validate, and commercialize its knowledge and mainstream the culture of a perpetual document and record preservation in electronic formats as a definitive craft with positive implications for national security and prestige. The Federal Government will thus be collaborating with the private sector to set up the first ever private-sector-led automated National Education Document Bank in the history of Africa as a commercial enterprise and a bold statement as a principal contributor to the nation's digital economy initiative. The global electronic document management system market size is forecast to reach USD 9.85 billion by 2027. If Nigeria focuses on attaining commercial dominance in Africa and targets just 5% of that market, it would translate into an annual net revenue and GDP impact of USD 492 million for Nigeria. It is instructive to note that the strategy of the Federal Government is not to herd Nigerians into becoming greater participants in that market as consumers. Rather, the objective is to support the private sector to secure global advantage for Nigeria as producers of economic means along the repository/document validation/archiving system value chain to the advantage of our local economy.

4.5 Targets:

- i. To enrol 84 tertiary institutions on the NERD system in the first 3 months.
- ii. To enrol 697 tertiary institutions on the NERD system in the first 24 months.

- iii. To provide training and capacity building for a minimum of 2 officials per institution to serve as the key anchor persons for the deployment of the NERD project nationwide.
- iv. Construct and equip at least one national Central Data Centre and maintain multiple layers of physical and virtual disaster recovery centres.
- v. To build and equip one national credential management and verification centre
- vi. To set up and administer other modules or components of the NERD Programme such as the Special National Indexes of Academic Publications for Nigerian academics, the National Plagiarism Detector for mandatory plagiarism checks which will eliminate capital flight occasioned by the reliance on foreign products, and the National Logs of Term Papers and Seminar Reports aimed as a proof of presence and a proof of continuous academic enrolment indicative of actual attendance, affiliation, and scholarship – among others.
- vii. Once the project scales, to provide hardware facilities for the historical digitization of past academic manuscripts
- viii. Provision of the enabling environment for the private sector to thrive and promptly resolve issues that may militate against the private sector and the success of the project.
- ix. Provision of cloud-based disaster recovery systems.
- x. During the period of effectiveness, establish seamless biometric-enabled identity verification linkage between the NERD system (Student's National Number, National Document Number, National Credential Number, etc) and national positive identity service providers such as NIMC, banks, telecommunication services, etc leveraging the National Identification Number (NIN) and the Bank Verification Number (BVN), in achieving the objective of this Policy.
- xi. Provide regular reports, and infographics, covering all aspects of generated data.
- xii. Overall, to establish a comprehensive Nigeria Education Databank and education data-driven learning ecosystem to enhance live data collection across all tiers of tertiary education and post-secondary schools, and research institutions, to serve as a decision-support system for planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the nation's education sector.

4.6 Policy's Projected Strategic Impact on National Development:

The implementation of the NERD Policy is expected to transform the nation's capability to preserve and protect its critical education data, eradicate the evil of record manipulation and forgery, end the menace of fake degrees, fake diplomas and unaccredited schools, stop the abuse of degree honours from diploma mills, expand national education data and documents' value chain, create a referenceable audit trail for academic records, improve the quality of academic reports through mandatory originality checks, make academic and research outputs accessible to the industry and innovative entrepreneurs, create reward mechanisms for academics and authors from commercialisation as an incentive to improving the standard of their works, make Nigeria the regional market leader in education data management and open a new national revenue stream for the Federal Government (concession/performance fees, and taxes), schools, and the entire education sector.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 POLICY PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

5.1 Principles of Policy

The underlying principles of the Policy are:

- a. To promote electronic access to a central single-point national education databank as a commercial enterprise.
- b. Knowledge is a crucial resource that must be harnessed and preserved, thus requiring an integrated approach to its management.
- c. To promote the processes of batch-scanning and preservation of as many as possible or available historical manuscripts from 1932 to date
- d. Promote the single-point hub for the verification of credentials.

5.2 Components of the Policy Objective

The major components of the NERD Policy for Nigeria include:

- a. Provide a framework for the electronic storage, sharing, and preservation of educational records and knowledge in Nigeria.
- b. Ensure that the NERD system and services are accessible, sustainable, and affordable, to the entire populace.
- c. Ensure that NERD Standard is maintained by all institutions and stakeholders.
- d. Build capacity for stakeholders in management, operations, and maintenance.
- e. Adopt a private-sector-led programme delivery strategy.
- f. Empower the private sector to operate the system commercially for sustainability, viability, efficiency, and cost recovery.
- g. Monitor and evaluate the performance of the system for necessary policy reviews and improvements in service delivery by NERD.
- h. Ensure that legislation and standards are accepted and adhered to.
- i. Provide adequate regulations for repository and digital bank matters.
- j. Enact the policy into laws to ensure sustainable service to the stakeholders.
- k. Institution of cost-reflective profit-sharing arrangements to ensure full participation of stakeholders, guarantee investment recovery, and the deposit of government shares as revenues to designated authorities as may be decided.
- l. Involve responsible Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Institutions, and organizations in the execution of plans.

5.3 Policy Strategies

To achieve the policy objectives, the strategies concerning each of the components of the objectives are as follows:

- (a) NERD system to meet the increasing number of students in all tertiary institutions.
- (b) Ensure that quality standards are maintained by the operator and other stakeholders.
- (c) Ensure that NERD services are affordable to users in the country.
- (d) Adopt a private sector-led partnership initiative for NERD.
- (e) Monitor and evaluate the performance of the programme.
- (f) Ensure that legislation and standards are adhered to.
- (g) Promote manpower development and capacity building in all participating tertiary institutions and post-secondary schools.
- (h) Promote awareness, education, and training.
- (i) Institution of strategies to aid acceptability and compliance.
- (j) NERD is a programme comprising several interrelated projects that require careful planning and precision implementation to attain success.

5.3.1 Sustainability, improvement, and upgrade

- I. Improvement and upgrade of NERD services to proactively expand coverage nationwide to meet the level of demand in the sector for effective socioeconomic activities.
- II. Develop a plan incorporating a feasibility survey, demand projection, and investment or financial plan for the first five (5) years and expand to cover the entire project lifecycle.
- III. Develop a comprehensive Responsibility Matrix with the national historical education databank as a goal.
- IV. Ensure regular power supply at the CDC through Independent Power schemes.

5.3.2 Ensure that NERD standards are maintained by institutions

- a. The NERD standards shall be the baseline for academic records, the repository, digitization, and centralized credential management and verification system.
- b. Each institution is to be equipped with a digitization unit of appropriate capacity.
- c. Empower the NERD Council to monitor and protect the quality of efforts towards compliance and direct appropriately when gaps are observed.
- d. Monitor the output of NERD for conformity with the objectives defined in the policy.
- e. Promote individual use of the system for individuals not affiliated with any institution.

5.3.3 Ensure that NERD services are affordable to the entire populace in the country

- a. Conduct affordability surveys to determine the income levels of various segments of users and sponsors or guardians.
- b. Ensure billing is targeted at the cadre of users that can justifiably afford it.
- c. NERD service cost reduction options shall be pursued without compromising the quality of service.
- d. Improved management practices (financial management, operations, and maintenance) shall be institutionalized to keep the costs to a minimum.
- e. Institutionalize efficiency improvement techniques.
- f. NERD activities shall be subjected to a performance monitoring and evaluation program.
- g. All final-year or graduating students shall be billed.
- h. Provisions shall be made to extend service to poor students and the vulnerable class.
- i. The fee policy shall guarantee and accommodate subsidies for indigent students.
- j. The fee policy shall ensure that the time for the return on investment provides adequate comfort for the investor.

5.3.4 Avoid denial of less privileged and indigent students' access to the NERD services

- (a) The government shall ensure that the NERD system continues to operate as the national flagship thus guaranteeing project longevity and exclusivity for the investor to aid investment recovery by the private sector (JV Partner) and promote sustainability.
- (b) Sequel to the above, the operator shall evolve modalities for subsidies to enable validly indigent students to access NERD unfettered whilst the government shall evolve modalities for the settlement of those subsidies.

5.3.5 Adopt Public-Private Partnership Initiative in NERD

- (a) The federal government shall create the enabling environment for a private operator to deploy, maintain, manage, and operate NERD.
- (b) The federal government shall establish a company limited by guarantee in partnership with the private sector and charged with the mandate to serve as the operator of NERD.
- (c) The federal government shall establish a Council with the mandate to address any issue that might threaten or undermine the goals and objectives of NERD.
- (d) The federal government shall invoke current laws to aid the success of the programme and formulate additional laws where necessary to remove any ambiguity, promote the success of the project, and mainstream the objectives

of this Policy for sustainability as well as to guarantee investment recovery by the operator.

5.3.6 Ensure that Regulations and Standards for NERD are Adhered to

- (a) To develop standards and procedures for NERD.
- (b) When required by the operator, review stipulates, guidelines, and regulations relevant to meeting the requirements for NERD's efficiency.
- (c) Ensure the implementation of the provisions of the NERD policy.
- (d) Upon approval, the policy stipulates shall constitute the NERD Regulations.

5.3.7 Technical Support, Manpower Development and Training

- (a) The private sector shall provide year-round and daily technical support for the NERD Programme.
- (b) The operator shall take steps to increase the capacity of stakeholders and the capability of all institution-based NERD officials.
- (c) When required, regulating agencies and other stakeholders shall provide support to ensure this objective is attained.
- (d) Key NERD focal persons per institution shall be trained in a train-the-trainer scheme.

5.3.8 Awareness, Education, and Publicity

- (a) The government and the private sector partner will be encouraged to develop programmes seeking the collaboration of the media, especially the internet, newspapers, social media, TV, and radio channels, higher institutions' notice boards, magazines, bulletins, etc to promote NERD.
- (b) Employ various means to promote awareness, education, and publicity for the various activities of NERD.

5.4 A 3-Pronged Approach

The Federal Republic of Nigeria will adopt a three-pronged approach to content validation and preservation, namely; first, strengthen the nation's library services both at the federal and state levels to be better able to preserve knowledge. Two, support or encourage all tertiary institutions to be able to set up individual databases for the preservation of their academic outputs in line with their autonomy. Lastly, the Federal Government of Nigeria will collaborate with the private sector to set up the first ever private-sector-led automated National Education Databank in the history of Africa as a commercial enterprise and a bold statement as a principal contributor to the nation's digital economy initiative.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 POLICY STATEMENTS

6.1 Statements, Directives and Regulations

The following policy statements represent the directives, directive stipulates, central principles, and regulations for the National Education Repository and Databank system:

6.1.1 The Nigeria Education Databank shall serve as the centralized and enterprise electronic academic record management system and education documents bank of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the education sector. NERD shall be the nation's one-stop shop functioning as the official bank for education data and a repository of historical knowledge. The system shall be accessible to all Nigerians and its resources and assets shall be commercially made available to all tiers of institutions, the nation's library services and people as a digital platform for the preservation of knowledge for the benefit of the nation and the use of present and future generations. The system shall be built upon the best and most reliable technology with layers of contingencies or disaster recovery systems. The NERD Programme shall be designed, financed, developed, managed, maintained, and operated by the private sector in collaboration with the government. Its benefits shall include data integrity, national data consistency, record validation, knowledge preservation, originality check, positive competition, a reliable and timely credential verification scheme, enhanced speed of service delivery, elimination of the menace of fake certificates and diploma mills, ending capital flights resulting from continuous reliance upon foreign applications, job creation, local content participation, intellectual property monetization by authors through the Offtaker's Monetization Reward scheme, revenue generation, and intensive capacity building.

6.1.2 The Federal Ministry of Education shall provide leadership in ensuring the attainment of the objectives of this policy. The Ministry shall promote collaboration among all stakeholders for the success of the programme and coordinate the various tiers of education, the various regulating agencies, and the leadership of various institutions towards providing adequate support for the NERD system and the operator of the system to aid the attainment of the objectives of the system. The Ministry shall coordinate the implementation process and shall represent the government and its agencies.

6.1.3 The National Education Repository and Databank Council shall serve as the coordinating body to review performance, activate institutions of state to compel compliance, carry out periodic evaluations, and resolve issues that may threaten or militate against the success of the NERD Programme. The Council shall be headed by the Honourable Minister of Education as Chairman. Other members of the Council are:

- i. The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education,
- ii. The Executive Secretaries of the regulating or Accrediting Agencies (NUC, NBTE, NCCE, etc),
- iii. The Chief Executive of the National Library of Nigeria (NLN),
- iv. The Chief Executive of NERD,
- v. the Chief Executive of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission, and;
- vi. The Chairmen of the Association or Committee of Vice Chancellors, the Association or Committee of Rectors of Polytechnics, the Association or Committee of Provosts of Colleges of Education in Nigeria, and;
- vii. The Secretary of NERD who shall also serve as Secretary.

6.1.4 The National Universities Commission shall provide university-specific leadership, and enforce usage compliance in all government-accredited universities and other cadres or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight through a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation. The NUC shall regularly issue compliance directives to each university and enforce these as well as include the extent of compliance and ancillary metrics as crucial indices in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.

6.1.5 The National Board for Technical Education shall provide polytechnic-specific leadership to enforce usage compliance in all government-accredited polytechnics and Monotechnics and other cadres or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight through a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation. The NBTE shall regularly issue compliance directives to each polytechnic and equivalent institution and enforce these as well as include the extent of compliance and ancillary metrics as crucial indices in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.

6.1.6 The National Commission for Colleges of Education shall provide college-specific leadership to enforce usage compliance in all government-accredited colleges of education and other cadre or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight through a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation. The NCCE shall regularly issue compliance directives to each college of education and equivalent institution and enforce these as well as include the extent of compliance and ancillary metrics as crucial indices in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.

6.1.7 The National Youth Service Corps shall include evidence of submission of final academic output by each graduating student as a condition precedent to participation in and mobilization for the NYSC scheme or exemption. Each submission shall be validated by a NERD Submission Virtual Certificate (NSVC) for each graduate. The NSVC shall serve as the NERD receipt. The NYSC shall obtain and synchronize an authentic list of graduates that have fully complied with this requirement from NERD and employ this in deciding its yearly list of genuine NYSC candidates in batches, streams, etc.

6.1.8 The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) shall include evidence of deposit or submission of SIWES or Industrial Training reports by a student as a mandatory prerequisite for the processing of SIWES funds or refund.

6.1.9 It shall be the responsibility of the leadership of each Tertiary Institution to facilitate and ensure full compliance with the objectives of this policy by the students of each institution and their lecturers.

6.1.10 Every agency of government handling matters relating to students, students' funding or faculty members' sponsorship, or dealing with applicants or issues relevant to applications for activities such as post-graduate scholarships, tuition, fees, research funding, fellowships, higher diplomas, etc, shall mandatorily include verified evidence of compliance with NERD and the successful deposit of applicant's academic outputs (including previous final academic output) into NERD as an obligatory prerequisite for accessing the new or desired privilege or service by the applicant.

6.1.11 The NERD system shall mainstream an integrated cross-institution Dissertation and Thesis Examination, Review, and Evaluation (DiTERE) process with the capacity to link the academic report management and examination processes to enable supervisors, internal and external examiners to securely access, review, comment, and advise students and candidates on their thesis, dissertation, reports progress, link academics with other academics within and outside their institutions and with the industry. It shall be the responsibility of the Chief Executive of each tertiary institution to decide if or whether the institution would join the DiTERE standard.

6.1.12 It shall be the responsibility of the private sector to fund or finance the NERD Programme using a combination of debt, equity, grant, and other financing models from local and foreign partners whilst it shall be the responsibility of the government through its organs, like the Ministry, to protect the investment and provide the required instrument for business tenure assurance, exclusivity, and offtake guarantee in favour of the investor.

6.1.13 It shall be the responsibility of the Minister of Education to determine the modalities for the participation or inclusion of other tiers of education in a separate and extended instance of the NERD system.

6.1.14 Towards meeting the maintenance, support, and manpower requirements of NERD as well as the associated financial obligations, the operator of the JV shall be allowed to charge each submission of a final Academic Output by a graduating student user a one-off payment equivalent to 12.5% of the gross monthly allowance of an NYSC corp member in that year. Each institution shall however be allowed to make local arrangements to enhance the process. In the case of a student's I.T report, the operator shall be allowed to charge each student an amount equivalent to 7.5% of the gross SIWES fund or refund to a student in that year. Diaspora and similar fees shall be set by the operator. Where increasing operational costs or prevailing economic situations necessitated an upward review outside this guideline, this shall be effected subject to the approval of the Minister or the management of each institution as the case may be.

6.1.15 Other agencies of government that are not listed in this policy, shall when required, provide needed support for the attainment of the goals and objectives of this policy. The

Minister for Education shall have the authority to direct any agency of government under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education to carry out specific tasks in support of attaining the objectives of this policy. Where an agency outside his purview is involved, the Education Minister shall seek presidential approval or the concurrence of the relevant Minister or authority overseeing that agency.

6.1.16 It shall be the responsibility of the head of each tertiary institution such as a Vice Chancellor, Rector, Provost, etc to ensure that the verified electronic copy of results and the digital transcripts of each student, especially a successfully graduated student, is warehoused in a special server-side database in the institution with read-only access granted to NERD's secured web service in specific formats as shall be published from time to time by the latter, to aid the delivery of the instant National Credential Management and Verification module of the NERD system whilst each institution shall engage NERD to determine the acceptable profit sharing modalities and related considerations.

6.1.17 It shall be the responsibility of the head of each tertiary institution (Vice Chancellor, Rector, Provost, etc) to ensure that each institution maintains a functional NERD support unit to act as the first-level technical support unit for the NERD system in the institution.

6.1.18 It shall be the responsibility of the operator of the JV to ensure that each institution is paid its share of the pro-rated commercial value of transactions emanating from the National Credential Management and Verification module and other modules based on predetermined profit-sharing terms or formulas.

6.1.19 It shall be the responsibility of the Minister to ensure that the Operator is provided requisite institutional support to accomplish the objectives of NERD through the Electronic System for the Management and Administration of Thesis (eSMAT), the Nigeria National Research Repository (2NR), the National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) with the establishment of the National Credential Management and Verification Centre, the National Similarity Detector and Plagiarism Checker (nSDPC) to drive the Mandatory Originality Check (MOC), the Giant Shoulder Project (GSP), the National Centralized Content Registry (CCR), the Special Nigeria (National) Indexes of Academic Publications (SNIAP), the automated National Students Clearing House, ISBN automated repository in collaboration with the National Library and other library services, the integrated cross-institutions Dissertation, Thesis Examination, Review, and Evaluation (DiTERE) process, a National Log or Register of Term Papers and Seminar Reports, as well as the Nationwide Integrated Library and Archival Data (NiLAD) system in collaboration with library services nationwide, economic National Equitable Access to Teaching (NEAT) covering lecture notes, non-copyrighted textbooks, special textbook arrangements, and other academic materials for the minimum academic requirements for all undergraduates and post-graduate courses, with the project also serving as the National Academic Registry and Databank (NARD) for texts and audio-visual assets, and the National Repository of Academic Texts (NRAT).

6.1.20 It shall be the responsibility of the head of each institution (Vice Chancellor, Rector, Provost, Principals, etc), Registrars, Directors, and their Librarians to ensure that all available past manuscripts and publications, since the establishment of that institution, are sourced, collated, digitized, indexed, and included in the NERD system by the operator while they shall also ensure seamless integration of credentials into the NCMVS to end qualification fraud and certificate fakery as well as ease credential (certificate, diploma, etc) validation whilst it shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government and employers to lead compliance within and outside the education sector, including among employers of labour (public, private, military, or civilian) in leveraging the credential verification service to proactively prevent employment-related certificate or qualification fraud as well as end the parade of fake unearned honours that threaten academic integrity and the honour processes.

6.1.21 Lecturers in all tertiary institutions shall have the option of an opt-in alternative of monetized deposits of their publications to commercialize those publications. A monetized publication by a lecturer, a faculty member, or student, etc shall qualify the author and the institution for a lifetime defined percentages of revenue incidental to a paid download or use of that specific publication as shall be agreed by NERD with the management of that institution subject to paid patronage.

6.1.22 It shall be the responsibility of all stakeholders led by the Minister to ensure that the Private Sector Partner develops, hosts, and operates the NERD special modules and special databases of NERD-indexed-journals to mitigate capital flight by serving as a credible national alternative to journal indexes like SCOPUS, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Indonesia Garuda Indexing, SCImago, etc, while NERD-indexed-journals shall upon the approval of this Policy by the Federal Executive Council stand designated by the Federal Government as acceptable Special (and Superior) National Indexes of Academic Publications (SNIAP) for the purpose of ranking, funding, career growth, and promotion and available to willing Nigerian academics whereby the Federal Government shall ensure this is communicated to all Governing Councils and tertiary institutions' managements by the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE as a strategic national incentive to academics.

6.1.23 It shall be the responsibility of all stakeholders led by the Minister to ensure the NERD Programme, through its official Registers, Logs, students' unique identifiers, and National Credential Numbers, functions as a quality assurance check and as a yearly independent proof of continuous academic enrolment and affiliation against the menace of diploma mills and fake degrees regardless of location. The system will be biometric-enabled for positive identity enrolment leveraging both the National Identification Number (NIN) and the Bank Verification Number (BVN) and strengthen quality education delivery and administration, mandate similarity checks through the National Similarity Checker and Plagiarism Detector, eliminate opacity and entrench positive competition in an atmosphere of absolute transparency as every Nigerian student shall be known by their yearly academic status, unique identifier integral to their NINs but ancillary to their institution-assigned matriculation numbers and be reachable anywhere in the world as scholars.

6.1.24 It shall be the responsibility of all stakeholders led by the Minister to ensure and drive all-round compliance with the Declaration of Effectiveness of NERD, especially by agencies outside the direct purview of the Federal Ministry of Education such as the NYSC sequel to the President's power to make regulations for the service corps as provided in Sections 2(4)(4) and 16(1)(C) of the NYSC Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 which the Minister shall formally seek its exercise by the President (in Council) through the approval of this Policy by the Federal Executive Council which with the combined effect of Article 144(5) of the Constitution shall thereby mandate an adjustment to the NYSC's criteria for mobilization or exemption whereby only students who have fully complied with NERD standards on credential validation, contribution to knowledge, etc as enshrined in the NERD Policy shall be mobilized or exempted regardless of whether they had their education experience within or outside Nigeria.

6.1.25 It shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government of Nigeria to grant to the Private Sector Partner the right to access critical information required in the discharge of its responsibilities and ensure that credentials, namely results, diplomas, degrees, and certificates in Nigeria, from all recognized or government-accredited post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria regardless of ownership type bear or carry inconspicuous and an unobtrusive unique primary key, the NCN, a credential-specific identifier and code integral to the owner's NIN (and BVN) records as part of measures to end the menace of fake results, degrees, certificate, and diploma while collaborating with and maintaining mutually agreeable Application Programming Interface (API) calls to the servers of schools, and existing national flagships such as WAEC, NECO, JAMB, NIMC, NYSC, ITF, etc as part of its record and credential vetting protocols with strict adherence to the privacy protection regulations of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission.

6.1.26 It shall be the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the NERD system and the success of the activities of the operator.

6.1.27 Notwithstanding the general nature of 6.1.12, it shall be the responsibility of the private sector to fund the totality of the project. It shall be the responsibility of the government to enforce the Policy, and guarantee business tenure, exclusivity, and offtake (offtake assurance) to the JV Partner and its financial partners.

6.2 Policy key highlights and focus

The key highlights of the Policy are listed below:

- a) obligatory deposit in the NERD system or National Databank, effective from the date of the approval of the NERD Policy by the Federal Government of Nigeria, of the electronic copy of all students' records in all post-secondary schools and tertiary institutions in a format prescribed by the operator as well as the deposit of final project reports by each student (thesis, dissertation, project report, etc) upon completion of degree programmes (Bachelors, Masters, and PhDs), or Diploma (National Diploma, Higher National Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, and related qualifications) or Certificate (National Certificate of Education, etc) or other specialised qualifications accredited by authorized agencies of the Federal Government of Nigeria, as well as the reports of SIWES, Industrial Attachment programmes, etc during the course of any programme in any government-approved tertiary institution in Nigeria,
- b) inclusion of evidence of successful deposit of final academic report, etc in the National Databank by each graduating student as an additional pre-requisite for participation in or exemption from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the inclusion of evidence of deposit of SIWES and I.T reports etc in the National Databank as an additional prerequisite for the fund or refund to students by the Industrial Training Fund effective from the date of the approval of the NERD Policy by the Federal Government of Nigeria,
- c) incentive-based compliance mechanism by agencies of government such as the NUC, NBTE, NCCE, the Nigerian Institute of Science Laboratory Technology (NISLT), the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, and other ancillary organs of government requiring a volume count of annual deposits per institution or school on NERD as a prerequisite index in the estimation of the performance of each institution in annual academic ranking, quality assurance, and performance evaluation or as a condition-precedent to certain privileges,
- d) incentive-based compliance mechanism to encourage institutions to utilize the NERD system for the review and or management of the entire life cycle of each student's project or dissertation/thesis development, internal appraisal, external appraisal by external examiners, and anti-plagiarism moderation (originality checks),
- e) enrolment of each bonafide student in the national education databank upon admission with the issuance of the national student number and the fixed part of the NCN, as well as the regular release of academic data infographics and or academic output deposit statistics by NERD to education stakeholders and the public,
- f) encouragement of institutions towards the deposit of verified and approved electronic copies of results and the digital transcripts of each successful graduate in a special server-side database in the institution with read-only permission granted to NERD's secured web service in specific formats as shall be published

from time to time by the latter, to aid the delivery of the instant National Credential Management and Verification module of the NERD system,

- g) individual authors of works and the respective tertiary institution shall continue to own their works. Deposit of works on NERD, though obligatory, does not cede the ownership of that work to NERD, EVIS, or the JV partner. The role of NERD is that of a Giant Shoulder national platform, a Public Virtual Warehouse, or a National Digital Bank for the pervasive and perpetual preservation of knowledge for the next generation, and;
- h) Development and operation of all the projects, components or modules of the NERD Programme by the Private Sector as distinct services with a set of related measures or activities with particular long-term aims or goals that help to fulfil the overall objective of NERD and make those services available within and outside the education sector to stimulate excellence; and with the Federal Government leading compliance within and outside the education sector, including among employers of labour (public, private, military, or civilian) in leveraging the credential verification service for validation and evaluation processes to proactively prevent employment-related certificate fraud as well as end the parade of fake unearned honours that threaten academic integrity and the honour processes.

6.3 Policy's Regulations and Directives' Strategic Thrust

In the overriding national interest, the NERD scheme will entrench live precision data collection, processing, and management, education data preservation, and inter-institution data exchange and collaboration. It will eliminate opacity in education content management, leverage economy of scale to equitably make academic materials available to all, and protect proprietary works while not undermining the autonomy of each institution.

The global big data analytics in education market was valued at \$13.58 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach \$57.14 billion by 2030. The global School Management System market size was valued at USD 21.3 billion in 2023. Similarly, the global Education and Learning Analytics Market size was valued at USD 35.5 billion in 2023 and is poised to grow from USD 43.77 billion by 2024 while the global repository market is forecast to reach USD 9.85 billion by 2027. A strategic objective of the NERD Programme is to secure economic advantages for Nigeria from these markets as a participant and regional leader in Africa. Significantly, the strategy of the Federal Government is not to herd Nigerians into becoming greater participants in that market as consumers. Rather, the NERD Programme will trigger the private sector to secure a global advantage for Nigeria in that market as valued producers of economic means along the enterprise electronic school management system, repository document/credential validation/archiving system value chain to the advantage of the country's economy. The regulations and directives in this Policy have thus been intentionally crafted toward securing this strategic regional edge for Nigeria.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The institutional structures for the National Education Repository and Databank are listed below:

7.1 **Policy formation and Coordination Bodies**

1. Federal Ministry of Education
2. National Education Repository and Databank Council

7.2. **Service Providers**

1. National Education Repository and Databank Limited
2. Private Sector Joint venture partner (the preferred JV Partner)

7.3. **Regulatory Bodies**

1. National Universities Commission
2. National Board for Technical Education
3. National Commission for Colleges of Education
4. National Youth Service Corps
5. Industrial Training Fund
6. Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria

7.4 **Offtakers**

1. Each tertiary institution
2. Each library service
3. Students
4. Lecturers
5. Institutional oftakers

6. Commercial offtakers
7. Industrial offtakers
8. Research institutes.

7.5. Support Services

1. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
2. Development partners
3. The Private Sector

7.6.0 The roles and responsibilities of the bodies are outlined below:

7.6.1 The **Federal Government of Nigeria** shall perform its roles through the **Federal Ministry of Education (FME)** or other appropriate agencies and shall be responsible for:

- (a) Policy enactment and awareness campaigns
- (b) Enforcement of compliance
- (c) Encouragement of other agencies of government to enforce compliance.
- (a) Collaborate with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and the operator of the JV on emerging issues relating to the success of the system.
- (b) Developing educational materials on NERD to enlighten the public.
- (c) Supporting the inclusion of the NERD Literacy module in the early year school curriculum of tertiary institutions to entrench the knowledge of mandatory contribution to knowledge via the national databank in students and faculty members.
- (d) Project coordination, contracting obligations (project's tenure assurance, performance/offtake guarantee, and comfort instrument on behalf of the government), and serving as the gatekeeper for the protection of the project.

7.6.2 National Education Repository and Databank Governing Council shall:

- (a) Serve as the coordinating body to review performance
- (b) Activate authority and institutions of state to compel compliance
- (c) Carry out periodic evaluations, and resolve issues that may threaten or militate against the success of the NERD system
- (d) Formulate and approve new policies and programmes to strengthen the system, enhance investment recovery, and improve revenue generation by the NERD system.
- (e) Lead processes and ensure the enactment of relevant NERD laws to implement guidelines and policies.
- (f) Facilitate the issuance and delivery of necessary correspondences as may be identified by the operator.

- (g) Have the authority to approve an upward review of charges when necessary.
- (h) Have the authority to approve the Nigerian Referencing Standards and Styles.

7.6.3 Operator

The operator shall be responsible for:

- a) The finance, design, development, deployment, management, maintenance, and operation of the National Education Repository and Databank system through the JV Partner.
- b) The design, construction, building, and equipping of required physical and virtual infrastructure.
- c) The provision of training and capacity building.
- d) Provision of NERD Access Credentials (login, NCN, etc) to all students, lecturers, and other faculty members through each institution's chief executive or designated officials and the administration of the documents/credentials validation codes.
- e) Regular review and publishing of NERD-approved forms, standards, and specifications for the submission of academic outputs, administration of special numbers and codes, etc.
- f) The collection of charges payable to NERD.
- g) The provision of expert advice leading to policy formulation, data collection, resources and demand surveys, monitoring, evaluation, and coordinating of technical and commercial activities, studies, research, and development for the success of the following, among others:
 - i. The historical computerization, automation, digitization, and digitalization of past academic records and documents from the start of tertiary education in Nigeria.
 - ii. The present/continuous digitization of academic outputs and journal indexes.
 - iii. The National Credential Management and Verification module of NERD.
 - iv. The development and deployment of other emerging modules of the system (as may be shaped by emerging technologies and expanding innovation space).
 - v. National indexes of academic publications, centralized lecture notes, and non-copyrighted books, etc.

7.6.4 National Universities Commission shall be responsible for;

- (a) Enforcing usage compliance in all government-accredited universities (accredited institutions) and other cadres or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight
- (b) Leveraging a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation to achieve usage compliance by the institutions, students, and lecturers.
- (c) Regularly issue compliance directives to each university and enforce these as well as include them as crucial metrics in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.
- (d) Preparation of annual report on universities' compliance.

7.6.5 National Board for Technical Education shall be responsible for;

- (e) Enforcing usage compliance in all government-accredited polytechnics (accredited institutions) and other cadres or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight for project reports, term papers, etc.
- (f) Leveraging a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation to achieve usage compliance by the institutions, students, and lecturers.
- (g) Regularly issue compliance directives to each polytechnic or equivalent institution and enforce these as well as include them as crucial metrics in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.
- (h) Preparation of annual report on polytechnic compliance.

7.6.6 The National Commission for Colleges of Education shall be responsible for;

- (i) Enforcing usage compliance in all government-accredited colleges of education (accredited institution) and other cadres or types of institutions within its regulatory oversight for teaching practice reports, term papers, etc.
- (j) Leveraging a combination of persuasion, rewards, and obligation to achieve usage compliance by the institutions, students, and lecturers.
- (k) Regularly issue compliance directives to each college or equivalent institution and enforce these as well as include them as crucial metrics in institution ranking, accreditation exercises, and other privileges.
- (l) Preparation of annual report on colleges of education's compliance.

7.6.7 The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) shall be responsible for;

- (a) Supporting the NERD system for the digitization and indexing of archival materials, when required.
- (b) Maintaining a code-level digital handshake with the NERD system on the electronic preservation of contents, when required.
- (c) Promote content interoperability between its digital database and NERD, when required.

7.6.8 The National Youth Service Corps shall be responsible for;

- a) Ensuring that evidence of submission of final academic output by each graduating student is a condition precedent to participation in or exemption from the NYSC scheme.
- b) Ensuring that each graduate's claim of submission is validated by a NERD Submission Virtual Certificate obtained from the NERD system as a prerequisite for mobilization or exemption.
- c) Obtaining and synchronizing an authentic list of graduates that have fully complied with the NERD submission requirement and employing this in deciding its yearly list of genuine NYSC candidates in all batches, streams, etc.

7.6.9 The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) shall be responsible for;

- a) Ensuring that verified evidence of successful deposit of students' institution-approved report of Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) or Industrial Training (IT) or Industrial Attachment etc into NERD by an Industrial Training student or SIWES participant is an obligatory prerequisite for accessing IT or SIWES fund or refund by all participants.
- b) Ensuring that each claim of submission is validated by a NERD Submission Virtual Certificate obtained from the NERD system.
- c) Obtaining and synchronizing an authentic list of SIWES or I.T students that have fully complied with the NERD submission requirement and employing this in deciding payments.

7.6.10 The Federal Ministry of Information shall:

- (a) Collaborate with line agencies on public enlightenment campaigns on the NERD system.
- (b) Develop strategies for improved public awareness of the NERD system.

7.6.11 Other organs or agencies of the federal government

- (a) The Minister for Education shall have the authority to assign specific responsibilities or issue general or specific directives to agencies of government that are not listed or allocated specific roles in this policy provided such an agency is under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education.
- (b) When there exists a functional need for an agency outside the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education to execute a specific task, the Minister for Education shall be at liberty to seek presidential approval or seek the concurrence of other Ministers or officials with the oversight of that agency, as the case may be.
- (c) From the date of effectiveness of this Policy, every agency of government handling matters relating to students, students' funding, or faculty members' funding or dealing with applicants or issues relevant to applications for activities such as post-graduate scholarships, research funding, fellowships, higher diplomas, etc, shall mandatorily include verified evidence of successful deposit of applicant's previous final academic outputs into NERD as an obligatory prerequisite for accessing the new or desired privilege or service by the applicant.

7.6.12 States and Local Governments shall be responsible for:

- (a) Creation of awareness in the respective state and local government area.

- (b) Liaising with the federal government and line agencies to seek clarification when required.
- (c) Support and encourage state-owned institutions to participate in NERD.
- (d) Monitoring of the use of the revenues received by state-owned institutions from the NERD system.

7.6.13 Offtakers shall be responsible for:

- (a) Prompt compliance with usage and associated rules.
- (b) Escalation of technical issues to the operator.
- (c) Payment of charges
- (d) Collection of NERD Submission Virtual Certificate consequent to a successful submission or deposit of an item.

7.6.14 The roles of tertiary institutions shall among others include;

- (a) Promoting the NERD system for the use of the institution community.
- (b) Creating local rules and incentives within the institution to encourage usage compliance by students, lecturers, and other faculty members.
- (c) Provision of office space for the institution-based NERD Support unit.
- (d) Facilitate read-only electronic transmission of validated virtual copies of each graduate's final year results and digitized transcripts through the web service of NERD for the National Credential Management and Verification module in NERD-approved formats.
- (e) Supporting and collaborating with NERD for the successful allocation of NERD Access Credentials to all students, lecturers, and other faculty members.
- (f) Submitting yearly statistics on academic outputs on NERD to the respective regulating agency.
- (g) Setting local rules to promote mandatory originality checks by students before the final production or submission of academic outputs.
- (h) Enforce mandatory submission of academic outputs to NERD by students.
- (i) Setting up a local repository for the individual institution and encouraging the local repository to be capable of executing a two-way data exchange with NERD via automated web services.
- (j) Collection of the institution's share of the revenue from NERD.

7.6.15 NGOs

- (a) NGOs will be encouraged to assist in the mobilization of offtake communities to utilize the system as a national flagship.
- (b) Provide support to all line agencies and stakeholders in the successful delivery of their mandates.

7.6.16 Development Partners

The role of development partners shall include:

- (a) Supporting the operator on funding issues.
- (b) Capacity building

- (c) Assist with resource mobilization for the operator
- (d) Advocacy
- (e) Support for research and development and, where appropriate, facilitation of learning alliances.
- (f) Support for guidance and planning and strategy implementation and review of policy targets.

7.6.17 Private Sector

The role of the private sector shall include:

- (a) Financing the project's entire life cycle.
- (b) Being on the joint venture as the principal partner to the government (i.e., serving as the *de facto* operator).
- (c) Ensuring the government's agreed portion of revenue is delivered, remitted, and distributed as approved and as when due.
- (d) Ensuring that each tertiary institution's portion of pro-rated revenue is delivered, remitted, and distributed as agreed and as when due.
- (e) Promptly escalate any potential challenge to the Minister of Education and or the Council.
- (f) Discharge corporate social responsibilities by undertaking initiatives for a safe and improved education sector.
- (g) The Operator shall be a long-run Joint Venture (JV) between the Federal Government and the preferred JV Partner and shall be incorporated as a distinct purpose-specific investment vehicle and operated exclusively by the JV Partner.
- (h) The structure and terms of the JV shall be properly defined in a Memorandum and Articles of Association (MemArt) and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement subscribed to and duly executed by authorized representatives of the Federal Government and authorized representatives of the JV partner.
- (i) The JV Partner shall have management control and the authority to execute all the mandates of the Operator on behalf of the JV and shall indemnify the government from liabilities subject to the latter's fidelity to operating and enforcing the NERD Policy for the protection of the investment.
- (j) The JV partner shall be appointed by the Federal Executive Council subject to the recommendation of the Minister.

7.6.18 Role of the Media

The government will encourage both Print and Electronic media to:

- (a) Propagate built-in messages in its entertainment programmes and develops educational programmes on NERD-related issues.
- (b) Publish news and articles to make people aware of NERD-related issues and motivate them to participate and comply.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY AND FINANCING ISSUES

8.1. Sources of Funding

Funding for developing the NERD system shall generally come from the following sources:

- (a) The principal private sector JV partner shall remain the primary and sole financier of the NERD system and its activities, particularly to manage its development, deployment, maintenance, daily technical support, operation, hosting services, construction, and equipping of the national data centre, provision of special national journal indexes, construction and equipping the national credential management and verification unit, and the coordination of the digitization of past academic outputs towards achieving the objectives and goals of this policy using a combination of debt, equity, grants, etc undertaken wholly by the private sector with the government providing an assurance of obligatory usage by target offtakers as an incentive to financiers.
- (b) Personal viability gap funding by the principal or preferred JV partner to ensure immediate and adequate availability or provision of funds.
- (c) Subscription collections from certain categories of users, and businesses.
- (f) Non-governmental organizations raising funds for the operator or JV Partner from voluntary private contributions or grants from international agencies.
- (i) Local banks, bonds, special intervention funds from local and foreign development partners, and other financial institutions offering short-term, medium-term, or long-term loans to the operator of the JV or the JV Partner at special rates.
- (k) International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank etc.
- (l) International aid from multilateral, bilateral sources, or external support agencies available as grants or as loans on concessional terms to the operator or JV Partner.

8.2. Funding of Capital projects

Capital projects such as the national data centre shall be wholly financed by the private sector partner.

8.2.1. Equity ownership in the operator for NERD

Shareholding in the JV between the Private Sector and Government			
Entity	Equity	Risk (Liability)	Remarks
Federal Government	20%	0%	Shareholding as Sweat Equity from policy environment.
JV Partner	80%	100%	To mitigate investment recovery and assure financiers

8.2.2. Profit sharing for NCMVS component

Sharing formula for the revenues derived from the NCMVS Centre			
Entity	Share of profit	Risk (Liability)	Remarks
Federal Govt	10%	0%	Profit derives from Sweat Equity vide policy ecosystem.
JV Partner	50%	100%	To mitigate investment recovery and assure financiers
Institutions (pro-rated)	40%	0%	Profit derives from ‘Sweat Equity’ vide organic resource ownership.

8.3 Sustainable Cost and Investment Recovery

The Federal Government on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall ensure the sustainability of the system and its continuous utilization by shielding it from the vagaries of political interference, witch-hunt, and policy changes in order to strategically guarantee continuous offtake, continuous revenues, and enduring long-term opportunities for cost, investment recovery, and profit for the operator of the JV and the government. This will provide comfort for the recovery of the capital expenditure and operational expenditure (i.e., operating and maintenance costs) incurred by the investor in financing the project. Both capital and operational costs shall be the sole responsibility of the JV Partner.

8.4 NERD usage charges

- a. All students, lecturers, and representatives of the regulating agencies shall have unfettered access to the NERD system.
- b. All submissions to the NERD system shall be considered a billed instance.
- c. Each submission of final academic output shall be billed by the operator at the rate of a one-off payment equivalent to 12.5% of the gross monthly allowance of an NYSC corp member. This payment shall be paid only once to validate or as evidence of the submission of a final Academic Output by each graduating student. In the case of a student's I.T report, the operator shall be allowed to charge each student an amount equivalent to 7.5% of the gross SIWES fund or refund to a student in that year.
- d. The Council shall have the authority to decide and approve fees payable by other cadres of users with the operator coming up with an acceptable model or strategy for payment.
- e. Upward review of charges when required shall be subject to the approval of the Council.
- f. Diaspora charges and related fees shall be fixed by the operator cost-reflectively.

8.5 Subsidies and Free Usage in Certain Instances

- (a) The charging or payment policy shall accommodate nominal subsidies with the Operator of the JV being empowered to submit formal suggestions on investment recovery strategies and requests for payment that can mitigate the impact of subsidised users thereby ensuring that no individual is denied access to the system on the basis of lack of payment.
- (b) Communication on this special intervention shall be properly documented by the Operator of the JV while each payment request shall be subject to the approval of the government.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

This National Education Repository and Databank (NERD) system policy document aligns with the global trend and the current thinking of the various stakeholder groups to whom its development is targeted. The policy is relevant, timely, and very participatory. It has also borrowed extensively from peer examples from developed countries and how they have warehoused their historical knowledge. The policy fundamentally addresses a major gap in sustainable development. Overall, the policy belongs to the government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The achievement of the goals set out in this policy is not solely the job of the government. It is the job of all segments of the society, particularly millions of students, lecturers, and hundreds of various cadres of tertiary institutions and their regulatory agencies for whom the elements of the policy represent the hope of a better organic capacity by Nigeria to preserve her body of knowledge for future generations so that they can stand effectively on the shoulders of past giants.

On its part, the Federal Government restates its commitment to providing all necessary support towards the effectiveness of this policy upon its approval by the Executive Council of the Federation. This will thereafter be translated into programmes of action to be heralded by a formal Declaration of Effectiveness of NERD by the Federal Government.

As the NERD project is being executed, there is no doubt that the implementation of some of the statements contained in this National Policy may require some legislative backing to erase any potential for conflicts and to promote sustainability. A new law, therefore, may be required to be enacted to create the Nigerian Education Repository and Databank (NERD) system which shall serve as the flagship central Digital Bank for the education sector for the collection, organization, coordination, distribution, preservation, and verification of Nigeria's intellectual or academic outputs and credentials from the nation's tertiary institutions, in the first instance, with potential for future scale up to warehouse critical records of other tiers of education. The new enactment will ensure that institutions of state can enforce compliance without equivocation. The law will also ensure that NERD is protected as a national resource for the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it shall act as the flagship electronic platform or digital bank to warehouse the digitized copies of the historical education knowledge of the nation in perpetuity in a manner that is complimentary to the nation's educational institutions, library services, archives, etc and responsive to changing technology and global best practices.

POLICY ADDENDUM

ADDENDUM TO THE NERD POLICY

Copyright, Data Protection, and Commercialization Reward Schedule
for the National Education Repository and Databank (NERD)¹

S/N	Legal Issue	Mitigation
1	Ownership (copyright)	<p>The NERD system shall remain the property and asset of the Federal Republic of Nigeria held in trust by the Federal Government. Author retains copyright ownership of his/her content as provided in Sections 3.17 and 6.18(g) of the National Policy on NERD as approved by the Federal Executive Council on the 23rd of May 2023</p> <p>Section 3.17 “Ownership of each item deposited in the NERD system shall remain vested in the original author of the work and the sponsoring institution as per their local policy...The National Education Databank thus exists for the preservation of that item as an organized academic or education asset of the author accessible to future generations to review, critique, or improve upon in the larger strategic interest of the nation”.</p>
2	Data protection	<p>Data protection is addressed in Section 6.3(v) of the policy as FEC approved the inclusion of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) in the Governing Council for the NERD project.</p> <p>The NERD Project however falls under data controller’s exemption in respect of publications in the public interest for educational purposes. See Section 3(2)(d) of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission Act (2023).</p> <p>More significantly, FEC in recognition of this legal provision and in anticipation of NERD’s pioneering role during operations approved that “the NERD system shall have the status of a national academic and education automated data controller and serve or act as a national resource for all educational institutions” (Section 3.11 of the NERD Policy).</p>
3	Credential Management	<p>Credentials, i.e., results, diplomas, degrees, certificates, transcripts, etc processed on the National Credential Management and Verification System (NCMVS) or at the National Credential Management and Verification Center (NCMVC) of NERD shall be governed under the privacy protection regulations for private records in the Nigeria Data Protection Commission Act (2023) and the National Policy for NERD (2023). In the implementation of read-only access to school servers and mutually agreeable Application Programming Interface (API) calls to the servers of schools, and the servers of existing national flagships such as WAEC, NECO, JAMB, NIMC, NYSC, ITF, etc as part of its record and credential vetting protocols, the operator of the JV shall adopt the security</p>

¹ All Schedules upon approval by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) on 4th of February 2025 are now part of the schedules for the project and an addenda incorporated into the approved NERD Policy.

		measure principles for the protection of personal data as provided in the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (2019) in respect of any Personal Data obtained or received pursuant to the NERD Project. Credential refers to all types of qualifications whether academic or occupational.
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Sharing of Commercialization Rewards

The sharing of NERD commercialization rewards shall be as provided below:

Sharing formula for monetized access and impression			
Entity	Share of Reward	Risk (Liability)	Remarks
Federal Govt	10%	0%	
JV Partner	40%	100%	JVP to ensure deductions for Platform OpEx cost, hosting fees, etc before reward sharing.
Owner (author)	40%	0%	To be weighted and auto-graded in descending order (1 st author to the last) in the event of more than one author.
Owner Institution	10%	0%	Where there is no sponsoring institution, this fee goes to the Owner.

Guidelines for the Administration of Offtaker's Monetization Reward

- i. Each successful submission or upload of an Academic Output on NERD shall qualify the user for the Offtaker's Monetization Reward (OMR) programme of NERD provided that the user successfully selected or adopted the option of Submission Commercialization during upload.
- ii. Users who failed or opted not to submit their work for monetization shall however have the opportunity in perpetuity to edit and adopt the option at any time while monetization shall only be effective from the date of opt-in.
- iii. Each payment reward to the user shall be a product of the successful commercialization of the particular Academic Output on NERD through paid advert footprint, data mining rewards, impressions, and direct paid downloads or subscriptions.
- iv. OMR shall apply and be available to students, lecturers, independent researchers, individual users, unaffiliated users, organizational users, organization accounts, and others making submissions to the NERD system provided they selected the commercialization option before the submission of an Academic Output.
- v. In the case of a student owner, 30% of the accruable payment to the student will be paid to the primary and secondary supervisors in the institution on a ratio of 60:40 respectively.
- vi. In the case of an academic or faculty member-owner (lecturer, independent researcher, etc) where authors are more than one, the payment shall be weighted and auto-graded in descending order (1st author to the last).

- vii. Each user shall be assigned a unique primary key and will be required to submit a lifetime email address, identifying credentials, and next of kin's contact, at sign-up while NERD shall maintain a formal Register of Authors on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with associated Publication Numbers incorporating relevant primary and unique keys.
- viii. The operator of the JV shall submit a yearly report of successful commercialization to the Grantor (Federal Government of Nigeria through the Ministry) for transparency and record purposes.
- ix. The Company shall remit payment rewards to beneficiaries on an annual basis, subject to the approved fee structure, after the deduction of costs that may include academic reviewer fees, in the case of publications through NERD's special national indexes of academic publications.
- x. In any service or submission scenario not envisaged in the approved policy, the JV Partner to the Federal Government shall be at liberty to employ the principles of fair discretion in determining the fees and the sharing formula.
- xi. Revenues from credentials (results, diplomas, degrees, certificates, transcripts, etc) management, verification, evaluation, and or validation on NERD as well as enrolment in NERD are exempted from OMR.
- xii. The national credential management and verification system shall be operated strictly in line with the corresponding provisions in the National Policy on NERD as the National Credential Verification Service with proceeds shared with the participating post-secondary school or tertiary institution in accordance with the ratio approved by the Federal Executive Council in Section 8.2.2 of the NERD Policy under 'Profit sharing for NCMVS component' and remitted as provided in Section 6.18.
- xiii. Anti-plagiarism and similarity checks (NERD plagiarism checker) revenues are exempted from OMR.
- xiv. Anti-plagiarism checks revenues (i.e., revenues from NERD plagiarism checker) shall be shared with the participating post-secondary school or tertiary institution in accordance with the ratio approved by the Federal Executive Council for NCMVS in Section 8.2.2 of the NERD Policy and remitted as provided in Section 6.18.

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