

MINISTRY PROBES ALLEGED ILLEGAL DEDUCTIONS FROM STUDENTS' NELFund BY UNIVERSITIES

The Federal Ministry of Education has received with deep concern a report published by The Guardian Newspaper on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, alleging some Nigerian universities to have made unauthorized deductions from funds disbursed under the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFund) scheme.

The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Maruf Olatunji Alausa, described the allegations as "very disturbing and extremely concerning," emphasizing that any unauthorized deductions from student loans not only breach financial ethics but also undermine the very foundation upon which NELFund was established. He stated that if proven true, such actions would constitute a gross violation of public trust and a betrayal of the government's commitment to equitable access to education.

In response, the Ministry is convening an urgent meeting on May 6, 2025, with the Vice Chancellors of the affected universities and the Managing Director of NELFund. The meeting will aim to thoroughly investigate the matter, ensure full accountability, and reaffirm the Ministry's zero-tolerance policy toward financial malpractice in the education sector.

To reinforce this effort, the Ministry, in collaboration with the Athena Centre, will launch a compliance-tracking initiative and a countdown webpage to monitor institutional transparency. They will also offer technical assistance and introduce an Annual University Transparency Index to promote accountability and enhance the global relevance of Nigerian universities.

Additionally, a training program will be organized for Bursars and ICT Heads of universities and polytechnics on the development and maintenance of an open-portal initiative.

"As part of our National Education Sector Reform Initiative (NESRI), governance remains the top pillar of our agenda," Dr. Alausa said. "We are committed to strengthening transparency, promoting responsible financial conduct, and ensuring that every kobo allocated for student welfare is used appropriately. Let

me assure Nigerians that this matter will not be swept under the carpet. Anyone found culpable will face appropriate sanctions.”

Dr. Alausa further emphasized that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who established NELFund as a flagship initiative, made adequate budgetary provisions to support both students and institutions in a fair and transparent manner. “NELFund was created to expand students’ access to high quality education and to support universities financially in a legal and sustainable way. Any attempt to exploit this fund is unacceptable and contradicts the President’s vision for inclusive human capital development.”

The Honourable Minister reaffirmed the administration’s commitment to protecting public funds and ensuring that students receive the full benefits of all government education support schemes.

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