

The Role of Government in the Implementation of Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

The National Universities Commission saddled with the responsibilities of external supervision of the Universities in 2019 started the process of developing a new curriculum for the Nigerian universities which led to the development of Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS forthwith). The implementation of the CCMAS is designed to commence in the 2022/2023 academic session in all Nigerian universities. The implementation of the CCMAS is designed to involve critical stakeholders like the students, non-academic staff, academic staff, international institutions and the government. This paper examines the roles of government in the implementation of CCMAS in all Nigerian universities. The paper used secondary sources of data. The secondary sources of data were collected from both print and online publications. Content analysis was used to analyze the selection of literature for the study. Adequate funding of CCMAS, provision of modern infrastructure facilities, training and retraining of academic staff, and supervision and motivation of academic staff are identified as the roles of the government in the implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities. Based on the findings of this study, the paper recommends among other things that the Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure effective supervision of human and material resources of all Nigerian universities to aid the effective implementation of CCMAS.

Keywords: Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), Government, Universities.

Introduction:

University education is an advanced education in teaching, research and community service (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2023; Ogunode et al., 2024a). The role of university education is germane in enhancing the socio-economic development of society. Consequent upon the noble role of university education to national development, the National Universities Commission is a

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commission of the Federal Government of Nigeria empowered to regulate and formulate policies for the universities in Nigeria. To strengthen the curriculum of Nigerian universities, the commission has introduced different forms of curriculum for the past three decades. Minimum Academic Standards (MAS forthwith), Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS forthwith) and CCMAS are some of the curricula developed so far.

Section 10 (1) of the Education Act, Cap E3, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004,² empowers the National Universities Commission to lay down minimum standards for all universities and other degree-awarding institutions of higher learning in the Federation and the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards. The earliest efforts at giving effect to this legal framework in the Nigeria University System (NUS) started in 1989 following the collaboration between the Commission and Nigerian Universities, which led to the development of the MAS for all programmes in Nigerian universities. The MAS documents were subsequently approved by the Federal Government for use as a major instrument for quality assurance in the Nigerian University System (NUS). The documents were employed in the accreditation of programmes in the NUS for over a decade (NUC, 2022). In 2001, the Commission initiated a process to revise the documents because the said MAS documents were essentially content-based and merely prescriptive. In 2004, the Commission developed outcome-based benchmark statements for all the programmes through a workshop that allowed for exhaustive deliberations by relevant stakeholders.

Following comments and feedback from the universities to the effect that the Benchmark-style Statements were too sketchy to meaningfully guide the development of curriculum and inadequate for accreditation, the Commission, in 2007 put in place a mechanism for the merger of the Benchmark-style Statements and the revised MAS, which birthed the BMAS. The resultant BMAS, an amalgam of the outcome-based Benchmark statements and the content-based MAS clearly articulated the Learning Outcomes and competencies expected of graduates of each academic programme in Nigerian Universities without being overly prescriptive while at the same time providing the requisite flexibility and innovativeness consistent with institutional autonomy. In all, the BMAS documents were developed for the thirteen existing disciplines namely, Administration and Management, Agriculture, Arts, Basic Medical Sciences, Education, Engineering and Technology, Environmental Sciences, Law, Medicine and Dentistry, Pharmaceutical Science, Sciences, Social Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. The Commission, in 2016, in its sustained commitment to make the NUS adaptable to global trends in higher education, constituted a group of relevant academic experts to develop a BMAS in Computing, thus increasing the number of disciplines in Nigerian Universities to fourteen (NUC, 2022).

In keeping with its mandate of making university education in Nigeria more responsive to the needs of society, the National Universities Commission commenced the journey to restructure the BMAS in 2018, introducing in its place, the CCMAS, to reflect the 21st-century realities, in the existing and new disciplines and programmes in the Nigerian University System. The new CCMAS is a product of sustained stakeholder interactions over two years. The composition of each panel took into consideration, the triple helix model, as a unique feature. This involved a blend of academic experts, academics, government,³ professional bodies and of course, the private sector represented by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG). To enrich the draft documents, copies of each discipline were forwarded to all critical stakeholders including the relevant academic units in Nigerian Universities, the private sector, professional bodies and the

² National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions

³ represented by NUC

academies for their comments and input. These inputs along with the curriculum of programmes obtained from some foreign and renowned universities served as major working materials for the various panels constituted for that purpose (NUC, 2022).

The National Universities Commission directed that the implementation of the CCMAS should start in the 2023/2024 academic session in all Nigerian universities. It is important to examine the roles of the government in the implementation of the CCMAS in all the universities in Nigeria. The frequent urge to change university education curricula in line with the global best practices and the current level of tertiary education informs the current study.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the role of government in the implementation of the CCMAS in Nigerian Universities.

Theoretical Framework:

This study employed social role theory. Role theory was propounded by Ralf Dahrendorf, Robert K Merton and Gorge Herbert Mead in 1956. Role theory proposes that human behaviour is guided by expectations held by both the individual and other people (Osadebe, 2014). A social role refers to the behaviours and responsibilities expected of individuals in society. In terms of gender, social roles prescribe certain behaviours to men and women. These roles are known as gender roles. Women's gender roles, or social roles for women, include mother, caretaker, and helper. Men's gender roles or social roles for men include breadwinner, protector, and leader. Role theory is the theory that an individual's behaviour is the performance of roles that are organized into categories defined by society. Individuals aim to meet these roles, which encompass certain expectations, responsibilities, and behaviours. People perform gender roles daily, meaning that their behaviours are shaped by societal expectations for them depending on their gender (S. M., 2022).

The implication of this theory in this paper is that the government has a specific role to play in ensuring the full implementation of the new CCMAS in all the universities as planned. The government has a specific role of providing adequate funding, infrastructure facilities, supervision and training for the implementer of the curriculum in the universities. Scholars have argued that the inability of the governance system or structure to perform its roles is also hurting the educational system (Ogunode et al., 2024b; Ayeni & Nwaorgu, 2018). Actors of governance are public officeholders who carry out government functions.

The theory is relevant to this study because a government that plays a prominent role in the implementation of CCMAS are people in the society that are expected to perform certain roles for the socio-economic development of the society.

Characteristics of the CCMAS:

The CCMAS is the newly introduced curriculum in Nigerian universities to promote specialization from the undergraduate. CCMAS is a curriculum that is community service inclined based on the 30% provided for the various universities to include from their peculiar areas of focus. The CCMAS is an organized curriculum designed for Nigerian universities with the objectives of improving the standard of the Nigerian universities, making grandaunts from Nigerian universities more employable and to equip with grandaunts local, national and international skills, knowledge and character that are globally acceptable (Ogunode et al., 2023b).

CCMAS documents are uniquely structured to provide for 70% of core courses for each programme while allowing universities to utilise the remaining 30% for other innovative courses

in their peculiar areas of focus. The CCMAS documents have been placed for overall Learning Outcomes for each discipline, there are also Learning Outcomes for each programme and course. In general, programmes are typically structured such that a student does not carry less than 30 credit units or more than 48 credit units per session (Punch, 2022).

For Sunday Oluruntola, a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, the new curriculum is a good development because it is tailored towards specialisation from the undergraduate level. The unbundling of courses, for instance, in the Mass Communication Department will enable expertise even at the undergraduate cadre. The undergraduate level is what matters most, and this is where specialisation begins, which is what the new curriculum is out to achieve. There is no more room for blanket mass communication, each student chooses what he or she wants to study right from day one as reported (Businessdays, 2022).

CCMAS is an improved curriculum designed to be implemented through blended learning and developed for the training and development of graduates who are fit to solve the problems confronting the nation and contribute to national and international development. CCMAS can also be defined as a curriculum development for implementation in Nigerian universities that is anchored on virtual and blended learning and involvement of teaching, research and provision of community services (Ogunode et al., 2024d).

CCMAS is a planned curriculum for Nigerian universities to address both national and international problems via pragmatic teaching and learning, research and provision of community service (Ogunode et al., 2024c).

From the above, the CCMAS is an organized and planned curriculum meant to be implemented in all universities via a blended learning or hybrid model. CCMAS is an upgraded and modern curriculum developed for Nigerian universities for the production of graduates that are relevant to the socio-economic needs of the nation through blended learning.

Features of CCMAS:

The major highlights of the new curriculum according to NUC (2022) are:

- i. Change of nomenclature from BMAS to CCMAS;
- ii. The curriculum provides for 70% minimum core course requirements for graduation. Nigerian universities are expected to provide the remaining 30%;
- iii. In consonance with global best practice, the curriculum is to stimulate blended learning in its delivery;
- iv. Mass Communication has been unbundled to create a distinct discipline of Communications comprising degree programmes in Advertising, Broadcasting, Development Communication Studies, Film and Multimedia, Information and Media Studies, Journalism and Media Studies, Mass Communication, Public Relations and Strategic Communication;
- v. Agriculture has been unbundled into programmes in its contributing components of B.Sc Agricultural Economics, B.Sc. Animal Science, B.Sc. Crop Science and B.Sc. Soil Science;
- vi. The unbundling of Architecture and introduction of Architecture as a new discipline with programmes like Architecture, Architectural Technology, Furniture Design, Interior Architecture Design, Landscape Architecture and Naval architecture;
- vii. The split of the Basic Medical Sciences discipline into two – Basic Medical Sciences and Allied Health Sciences;

- viii. Reduction of the General Studies (GST) course from 36 credit units to 12 credit units of 6 courses as follows:
 - a. Communication in English;
 - b. Nigerian People and Culture;
 - c. Philosophy, Logic and Human Existence;
 - d. Entrepreneurship and Innovation;
 - e. Venture creation; and
 - f. Peace and Conflict resolution.
- ix. Entrepreneurship has been repackaged with the introduction of programme-specific entrepreneurship.

The number of academic disciplines has been increased from 14 to 17 as follows:

- i. Administration and Management,
- ii. Agriculture,
- iii. Allied Health Sciences,
- iv. Architecture,
- v. Arts,
- vi. Basic Medical Sciences,
- vii. Communications and Media Studies,
- viii. Computing,
- ix. Education,
- x. Engineering and Technology,
- xi. Environmental Sciences,
- xii. Law,
- xiii. Medicine and Dentistry,
- xiv. Pharmaceutical Science,
- xv. Sciences,
- xvi. Social Sciences and
- xvii. Veterinary Medicine (NUC, 2022).

Implementation:

Implementation is the systematic way of carrying out planned documents or projects. It is the act of executing policies, programmes and projects. Implementation is a process of coordinating activities or carrying out drafted planned, policies and projects. Ogunode et al. (2024d) define implementation can be seen as the act of carrying out planned programme and projects to achieve a specific purpose. Implementation is the process that involves execution of a designed programme and projects. Ogunode, & Ahaotu (2020) viewed implementation as the systematic way of executing programme, policies and project. Implementation is the act of carrying out a planned actions and programme. Implementation is the stage by stage of carrying out a defined and planned programmes. Implementation means carrying out an assigned task.

From the above, implementation implies to execution of programmes or projects in institutions. Implementation refers to the act of practically carrying out a project or programme in a designed place for an institution.

Curriculum Implementation:

Ejike and Ejike (2018), curriculum implementation fosters curriculum evaluation and this guides the learning outcomes. The major implementers of the curriculum are the teachers. They set up learning opportunities aimed at enabling learners to acquire the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values through the adoption of appropriate teaching methods and materials to guide students' learning. The curriculum planned and developed is implemented through the medium of instruction. This is why curriculum implementation is seen as the daily activities of school management and classroom teachers in the pursuit of the achievement of the objectives of the school curriculum, all in a bid to realize the national philosophy of education. Okebukola (2004), viewed curriculum implementation as the transition of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. That is, only effective curriculum implementation ensures the achievement of the objectives for which the curriculum was designed to attain.

Tertiary institutions are a micro section of the larger society (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024). Curriculum implementation exists in tertiary institutions. Curriculum implementation is therefore viewed as the process of the planned prescribed courses of study being translated into syllabuses, schemes of work and lessons by professional teachers to be delivered to students in the classroom online or physically. Curriculum implementation in Nigerian tertiary institutions is faced with challenges (Akin-Ibidiran et al., 2022).

From the above, curriculum implementation refers to the execution of planned and organized syllabuses, schemes of work and lessons in the classroom for the realization of education objectives. It is the practical way of carrying out the programme of learning such as syllabuses, schemes and lesson notes in the school for the realization of the education objectives.

Methodology:

The role of the Nigerian government in the implementation of CCMAS in all Nigerian universities is a position paper. Secondary data were adopted for the paper. The systematic review method was used to select literature online and on print materials.⁴ The paper used content analysis to select literature for the final study.

Roles of Government in CCMAS Implementation in the Nigerian Universities:

There are many roles of the government in the implementation of the CCMAS in Nigerian universities. Some of these roles include the following:

- i. **Adequate funding of CCMAS:** One of the roles of the federal and state governments in the implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities is to provide adequate funds. The reason is that money is the lifeblood of every organization or society (Ayeni, 2017). Ogunode et al. (2023c) maintained that adequate funding is critical for the development of any public institution. Adequate funding is the key to the achievement of the institution's goals. Adequate funding is the life wire of any organization. No meaningful impact institutions can attain without adequate funding. Studies have shown that public institutions exceed their mandate when they are adequately funded by the government (Ayeni et al., 2018).

⁴ abstracts, books, journals, newspapers, case study reports and archival records

Implementing CCMAS effectively in all universities requires a lot of financial commitment. So, the government have a critical role in providing funds for the procurement of both human and material resources that have been outlined in the policy guidelines for the implementation of the CCMAS. Ogunode et al. (2023b) observed that the government must improve the funding of the universities for smooth implementation of the CCMAS to realize its objectives. Musa (2023) noted that the only way to implement the CCMAS as planned is for the government should implement the UNESCO 15% - 20% recommendation for developing countries like Nigeria.

- ii. **Provision of modern infrastructure facilities:** Massive infrastructural development provides a suitable environment and support for the development of entrepreneurship skills and industrialisation (Ayeni et al., 2021b). The above is being validated by the fact that infrastructural development enhances human security (Ayeni et al., 2022). Therefore, the government must also provide adequate modern infrastructure facilities in all the universities if the CCMAS are to be fully and well implemented as planned and designed in all the universities. Ogunode and Agwor (2021) viewed infrastructure facilities refer to social capital within the school environment. They include school buildings/complexes such as classrooms, tables, exam halls, chairs, auditoria, desks, staff offices, seminar/conference/board rooms, laboratories, workshops, studios, farms, gymnasia, central libraries, specialized/professional libraries, faculty libraries, departmental libraries, etc., Institute/centres' specialized facilities e.g. ICT infrastructure, special laboratories, conference facilities, etc., and Boards e.g. interactive, magnetic, screen and chalk, etc., ICT that is computer laboratories and services, network connectivity, multi-media system, public address system, slide, and video projectors, and Ergonomics furnishing in laboratories, libraries, and lecture rooms/theatres, moot courts, and studios, et cetera. Ogunode et al. (2023a) opined that curriculum implementation needs adequate infrastructure facilities for smooth implementation. Femi (2024) acknowledged that students, non-academic staff and academic staff need infrastructure facilities to be able to deliver their academic services and work. The foregoing is on the premise that infrastructural development has intended and unintended benefits to the youth (Ayeni et al., 2021a). The government must ensure all facilities needed for the implementation of the CCMAS in all Nigerian universities are provided for effective implementation. Femi (2024) noted that the government and other stakeholders in the universities should support the various universities by providing facilities for them. Musa (2023) observed that CCMAS is a blended curriculum model, so, the government should ensure the provision of ICT, digital facilities and infrastructure facilities in all the universities across the country. Abubakar (2023) maintained that the government must also ensure the provision of quality internet services because the implementation of CCMAS requires hybrid learning. Even though the role of infrastructure in the implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities is inevitable, there is doubt if the federal government of Nigeria can provide the needed infrastructural facilities for the implementation of CCMAS. The above doubt is sustained by scholars who argue that the various levels of government in Nigeria are corrupt they can no longer provide basic social amenities for the citizens to enjoy (Ayeni et al., 2018,

p. 100). The foregoing observation informed the view of scholars who submitted that there might be negative consequences when a structure like the government fails to perform its expected role - the provision of infrastructure (Joseph et al., 2017).

- iii. **Training and retraining of academic staff:** Training and retraining programmes are very important in the implementation of new curricula in higher institutions like universities. Ogunode et al. (2023e) defined staff training as a program that is designed to equip employees with the knowledge and skills that they need to perform their jobs and improve their performance. It often occurs when new staff join an organization (also known as the onboarding process) but can also be part of a commitment to ongoing training and development that many organizations offer their employees. The objectives of training according to Ogunode et al. (2023d) include; to erupt teachers, non-teaching staff and school administrators with intellectual knowledge, manual skills and problem-solving skills. Generally, training is meant to improve staff professional skills and knowledge. Training enables staff to gain the knowledge required to perform their duties while contributing to organizational development. These can be achieved through access to education that is expected to empower people to enable them to provide for their basic needs (Ayeni et al., 2019). These training programs are designed to help staff learn different skill sets to perform their daily tasks efficiently, improve overall performance, develop efficiency in their job, and avoid violations of laws and regulations. By providing comprehensive training and support, schools can ensure that teachers are productive and engaged, which leads to greater retention and job satisfaction over time. The government through the National Universities Commission should ensure the various training planned for all academic staff in the universities are executed as planned because without adequate training the new CCMAS cannot be effectively been implemented. The government through the NUC should ensure that academic staff are well-trained for the implementation of the new CCMAS in all Nigerian universities. Monday (2022) stated that the government should ensure an effective capacity development programme for the implementer of the new CCMAS.
- iv. **Supervision:** Supervision is dependent on leadership. Thus, scholars have posited that the extent of success or failure of any human society or organization has its roots in leadership at all levels (Muhammed & Ayeni, 2018). The government also has the role of ensuring effective supervision of the implementation of the new CCMAS in all the universities. Supervision is an organized programme meant to give direction, guidance and control to an individual, organization, or institution to improve their performance and ensure they are doing the right things. Supervision is carried out in all forms of educational institutions including higher institutions. Higher institution supervision is more advanced and complex because the institutions are advanced institutions that deal with teaching, researching and provision of community services (Ogunode & Adanna, 2022). University supervision according to Ogunode and Ahaotu (2021) is the process of improving the performance of the universities through the provision of professional guidance to school administrators and academics. University supervision is the process of helping universities realize their objectives through the formulation of policies and

ensuring the implementation of such policies. Universities supervision deals with ensuring that universities comply with the various policies and directives for the development of the universities. The objectives of university supervision include: realizing the objectives of the universities, ensuring the delivery of quality education, guiding the university administrators and managers, helping improve the university system ranking and ensuring quality assurance in the system. The supervision of the Universities in Nigeria takes two forms. The external and the internal supervision. The external is through the National Universities Commission while the internal is through the school administrators. For effective implementation of the CCMAS in the universities, the government must take the issue of supervision seriously. The government should ensure NUCs are adequately funded to supervise the implementation of the CCMAS in all universities. Supervision is very important for the implementation of the new curriculum like the CCMAS. The NUC should ensure all universities adhere to the policies and guidelines for the implementation of the CCMAS in all universities. The Vice-Chancellor, Deans and head of department also have a critical role in ensuring proper supervision of the CCMAS in all the universities, faculties and departments.

- v. **Motivation of academic staff:** Another role the government has to play in the successful implementation of CCMAS in the universities across Nigeria is to motivate the academic staff to implement the new CCMAS. The academic staff are the implementers of the curriculum in the universities. According to Ogunode et al. (2021), the functions of the academic staff include; commitment to academic research, commitment to high-quality teaching and fostering a positive learning environment for students, commitment to continuous professional development and commitment to public communication. The professional skills of academic staff also include; excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skills; the ability to conduct high-quality research which is reflected in the authorship of high quality; publications, or other research outputs, in the areas of computer science; ability to manage time and work to strict deadlines and ability to teach and to supervise academic work by undergraduates, masters and doctoral students. Monday (2022) observed motivation of staff is very important in the implementation of new curricula like CCMAS. Abubakar (2023) ascertained that motivated staff will be willing to do everything legally to ensure programmes committed into their hands are well executed. Ogunode et al. (2023) opined that motivated staff can sacrifice a lot to ensure the implementation of the institutional programme. So, the government should ensure academic staff are properly motivated by increasing their salaries, prompt payment of their salaries and earned allowances and promotion allowances. The government need to motivate all staff in the university system to aid effective implementation of the new CCMAS.

Findings:

The paper indicated that adequate funding of CCMAS, provision of modern infrastructure facilities, training and retraining of academic staff, supervision and motivation of academic staff are identified are the roles of the government in the implementation of CCMAS in the Nigerian universities.

Conclusion:

The study has been able to examine the role of the government in the implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities. The National Universities Commission saddled with the responsibilities of external supervision of the Universities in 2019 started the process of developing a new curriculum for the Nigerian universities which led to the development of CCMAS. The implementation of the CCMAS is designed to commence in the 2022/2023 academic session in all Nigerian universities. The implementation of the CCMAS is designed to involve critical stakeholders like the students, non-academic staff, academic staff, international institutions and the government.

The study identified adequate funding of the CCMAS, provision of modern infrastructure facilities, training and retraining of academic staff, and supervision and motivation of academic staff as the roles of the government in the implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the paper hereby recommends that:

- i. The federal government through NUC should ensure effective supervision of the implementation of CCMAS in all Nigerian universities
- ii. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure the execution of the planned capacity building designed for the implementation of the CCMAS.
- iii. The federal and state governments should provide adequate funds to all universities owned by them, and ensure that private individuals or companies meet establishment requirements before giving them approval to establish and run private universities. The suggested recommendations will enable university administrators to provide all needed resources⁵ that will aid the smooth implementation of the CCMAS in all Nigerian universities.

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⁵ human and material

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