



Lecturers' perception on the core curriculum minimum academic standard (CCMAS) at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education

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Abstract

The Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) is a framework introduced by the Nigerian National Universities Commission in which 30% of the curriculum content can be defined by universities. The framework has attracted the attention of lecturers on whether a 30% flexibility can be really practicable within universities. This study examined the perception of lecturers on the CCMAS at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education using a descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised all lecturers at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education (NUC) with a sample of 61 lecturers. The data were collected using Lecturers' Perception of CCMAS Questionnaire (LP-CQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.75. The results indicated that the level of lecturers' awareness and understanding was high ($\bar{x} = 3.12$), perceptions of academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility was moderate ($\bar{x} = 2.78$), perceived benefits of implementing CCMAS was moderate ($\bar{x} = 2.80$), and perceived challenges of implementing CCMAS was moderate ($\bar{x} = 2.89$). The study concluded that the effective implementation of CCMAS is not the sole issue related to the policy design, but also to sustain professional growth, sufficient institutional commitment, and real flexibility of the curriculum that enables the universities to innovate within their unique environments. It was recommended, among others, that NUC should increase institutional contribution beyond 30 percent whereas universities must make use of its contribution to the maximum to demonstrate local realities, industry demands and new global tendencies.

Keywords: CCMAS, curriculum standard, lecturers' perception, quality assurance, university autonomy

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INTRODUCTION

Education has been identified as the main instrument of national development, as an instrument of economic growth and development of human capital. Education is also seen as the instrument of transformation of the society. In this wise, relevant and dynamic curriculum is at the core of any education system that functions effectively as it directs teaching, learning, and knowledge production. The Nigerian university education system has National Universities Commission (NUC) as an organ with a mandate to design and control the standards of the curriculum and to provide quality control in the various disciplines. Over the years, Nigerian universities have been under the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS), a centralized model of curriculum

which was introduced in 2007 and prescribed content, structure and learning outcomes of academic programs. Nevertheless, BMAS has been endured with the significant amount of criticism due to being archaic, prescriptive, and oppressive, constraining academic freedom of institutions and professional initiative of professors (Okebukola, 2022).

In order to respond to such deficiencies and ensure that university curricula in Nigeria are closely aligned with best practices internationally, the NUC published a more flexible and modern model the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in 2022. Under the CCMAS, a national minimum of 70% of the content is established, with universities able to create 30% of the curriculum content based on institutional objectives, the needs of the area and the new trends in disciplinarily oriented areas (National Universities Commission, 2022). The given reform is an indication of a paradigm shift in curriculum governance in Nigeria where a centrally controlled model will be replaced with a hybrid and semi-decentralized one that give institutions more freedom and will be more contextually relevant. The CCMAS also aims to incorporate the employability skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, innovation and inter-disciplinarity, setting education in line with the 21st century workplace requirements (Yakubu, 2023).

Although CCMAS has noble goals, it has attracted the critical attention of academic personnel. The issues raised by lecturers have been whether a 30% flexibility can be really practicable within the institutional constraints, the extent of consultation during the development process and whether the implementation is even feasible. Other scholars fear that the reform will cause more workload, loss of disciplinary identity, or more of bureaucratic control. Such issues are particularly relevant in professional universities such as Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), whereby curriculum design is the major point of focus in teacher education. The design of the successful implementation of CCMAS is only achievable through the perception, understanding and participation of the lecturers directly involved in its delivery. This study thus examined the perception of lecturers on CCMAS at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education. In details, this study aims to examine the level of awareness and understanding of the CCMAS among lecturers, the perceptions of lecturers on academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility on CCMAS, the perceived benefits of implementation of CCMAS among lecturers, and the perceived challenges of implementation of CCMAS.

Curriculum reformation in Nigerian university system

Under Section 10(1) of the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, Cap E3, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, the National Universities Commission has the right to set minimum standards of all universities and other institutions of higher learning awarding degrees in the Federation and accrediting their degrees and other awards (National University Commission, 2022). The initial framework of the Nigerian University System (NUS) was established in 1989 due to the cooperation between the Commission and Universities in Nigeria, which resulted in the creation of the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) of all programmes in Nigerian universities. The Commission started revising the documents in 2001 since the MAS documents were basically content based and only prescriptive. The commission was able to come up with outcome-based benchmark statements of all the programmes through a workshop held in 2004 that enabled exhaustive deliberations by the relevant stakeholders.

In 2007 the commission introduced a mechanism where the Benchmark-style Statements and the revised Minimum Academic Standards were merged to give rise to the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) which clearly demonstrated the learning outcomes and competencies that graduates of each academic programme were expected to achieve in the Nigerian Universities but nevertheless left sufficient flexibility and innovativeness in line with institutional autonomy. In the year 1999, the BMAS documents were created to accommodate the thirteen existing disciplines and in 2016 BMAS in computing was introduced as a result of

the global trends in higher education which added it to fourteen disciplines. In 2018, the commission embarked on the quest to reform the BMAS to become the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in response to the 21st Century realities, in the existing and new disciplines and programmes of the Nigerian University System.

CCMAS documents were launched in 2022 and became operational in 2023 in a uniquely designed format to offer 70% of core courses in each programme, with universities able to use the rest 30% in other innovative courses in areas of specific interest to them. Nevertheless, programmes are usually designed in a way that a student does not complete less than 30 credit units or an excess of 48 credit units in one session. Okebukola (2023) notes that the CCMAS was dedicated to outcome-based education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinarity, thereby making the Nigerian universities focus on delivering graduates at global competitiveness. Adediran and Olayemi (2023) however claimed that its success will mainly be based on institutional capacity, lecturer training, and inclusive policy practices.

Chimezie and Ogbu (2025) examined the workability of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) of business education programs in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. The survey design was a descriptive one. The sample size of the study was 75 business education lecturers in three institutions, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State University, and Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku. Study sample used the whole population in the study. A structured questionnaire that had a reliability coefficient of .85 was used to collect data. The results showed that CCMAS was aligned to the requirements of business education programs especially in the reflection of global trends, serving the purpose of employability, as well as entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, profound implementation issues were also found, such as insufficient funding, lack of infrastructure, untrained personnel, etc. Moreover, there is a major difference in the perception of respondents of CCMAS to relevance and challenges of the implementation. The research suggested better funding, modern infrastructure, and better training of lecturers so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively.

Comparison overview between BMAS dan CCMAS

To better understand the motivation behind CCMAS and how it differs from the BMAS, a comparative summary is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between BMAS and CCMAS

Feature	Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS)	Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS)
Year introduced	2007	2022
Curriculum control	100% centrally designed by NUC	70% national content by NUC; 30% institutional flexibility
Philosophy	Prescriptive and uniform	Outcome-based and flexible
Institutional autonomy	Very low	Increased autonomy (for curriculum innovation and customization)
Interdisciplinary content	Not emphasized	Strong focus on interdisciplinary and practical knowledge
Digital & employability skills	Minimal integration	Strong integration of digital literacy, innovation, and entrepreneurship
Lecturers' involvement	Minimal consultation	Somewhat improved consultation, but still criticized as inadequate
Curriculum update cycle	Infrequent (average of 10+ years)	Intended to be regularly reviewed every 5 years
Assessment model	Content-based	Outcome-based and skills-focused
Relevance to 21 st century needs	Weak alignment	Stronger alignment with global and local workforce demands
Academic disciplines	13	17

Lecturers' perception on the core curriculum minimum academic standard
E. S. Osiyemi, S. I. Imoh, K. J. Olusanya, O. R. Adebayo, & R. O. Agbajeola

The BMAS consists of 13 academic disciplines, including: 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. Meanwhile, the CCMAS consists of 17 academic disciplines, including: administration and management, agriculture, allied health sciences, architecture, arts, basic medical sciences, computing, communication and media studies, education, engineering and technology, environmental sciences, law, medicine and dentistry, pharmaceutical science, sciences, social sciences, and veterinary medicine.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study population was all academic staff of Tai Solarin Federal University of Education. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 61 lecturers. Data were collected with the use of a structured questionnaire tagged Lecturers Perception of CCMAS Questionnaire (LP-CQ) which we created ourselves. The reliability coefficient of Cronbach alpha derived by the instrument was 0.75, which showed that it had a good internal consistency. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics which included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of awareness and understanding on the CCMAS

The awareness and understanding level of the lecturers in Tai Solarin University of Education on the CCMAS is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Level of awareness and understanding of CCMAS among lecturers

Items	Response (%)				$\bar{X}$	Std.	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
I am aware that CCMAS has replaced the former BMAS in Nigerian universities.	8.2	1.6	16.4	73.8	3.56	0.886	High
I understand the main objectives of the CCMAS (to ensure a baseline level of quality and consistency in undergraduate education across Nigerian universities).	8.2	3.3	44.3	44.3	3.25	0.869	High
I have read or accessed the CCMAS document relevant to my discipline.	4.9	4.9	47.5	42.6	3.28	0.777	High
I have attended a workshop, seminar, or training on CCMAS.	18.0	31.1	31.1	19.7	2.52	1.010	Moderate
I am confident in implementing the CCMAS in my courses.	11.5	4.9	55.7	27.9	3.00	0.894	High
Grand Mean = 3.12							

The result on lecturers' awareness and understanding of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) yielded a grand mean of 3.12 which implies that awareness and level of understanding is generally high. This means that the change in policy of BMAS to CCMAS has been well communicated with; however, gaps in training may affect uniform adoption. Specifically, the majority of lecturers knew that BMAS had changed to CCMAS ($\bar{x} = 3.56$), which indicates that the dissemination of policies was effective. Similarly, they possessed strong knowledge on CCMAS objectives ($\bar{x} = 3.25$), and this may imply that they were aligned to national quality assurance aspirations.

Moreover, a significant percentage of lecturers had read or accessed the CCMAS document ($\bar{x} = 3.28$), which is a positive change towards proper delivery of the curriculum. However, attendance at workshops or seminars on CCMAS was only moderate ($\bar{x} = 2.52$), and there was a lack of exposure to a systematic professional development activity. Nevertheless, lecturers showed confidence in their skills to use CCMAS in their courses ($\bar{x} = 3.00$). Although this is a positive sign, it might not be applied consistently without systematic training. In practice, this implies that although there is awareness, capacity-building by universities and the NUC needs to be reinforced so that lecturers can transfer awareness into proper and consistent application of CCMAS.

Perception on academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility

The perception of the lecturers in Tai Solarin University of Education on the academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Perception on academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility

Items	Response (%)				$\bar{X}$	Std.	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
CCMAS promotes innovation through the 30% institutional curriculum component.	4.9	19.7	57.4	18.0	2.89	0.755	Moderate
The 70% NUC-prescribed content restricts academic freedom.	6.6	24.6	39.3	29.5	2.92	0.900	Moderate
I have sufficient autonomy to design and adapt course content under CCMAS.	13.1	34.4	41.0	11.5	2.51	0.868	Moderate
CCMAS allows better contextualization of curriculum to local needs.	11.5	19.7	55.7	13.1	2.70	0.843	Moderate
The structure of CCMAS increases my workload.	4.9	31.1	36.1	27.9	2.87	0.885	Moderate
Grand Mean = 2.78							

The result on lecturers' perceptions of academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) yielded a grand mean of 2.78, which represents a moderate perception. It means that, on the one hand, CCMAS opens certain innovation opportunities, on the other hand, lecturers feel limited with regards to academic freedom and flexibility. In particular, lecturers concurred that CCMAS enhances innovation by using the 30% institutional curriculum factor ($\bar{x} = 2.89$), indicating that a certain degree of innovativeness is not prohibited in the system. In the same way, they also reported that the 70% NUC-stipulated content limits academic freedom ($\bar{x} = 2.92$), which is a sign of worry over centralized control of the curriculum. Also, the perception of their autonomy to design and adjust the course material was moderate only ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) indicating the lack of flexibility in teaching and course delivery.

Another moderately supported agreement between respondents is that CCMAS enables a more contextualizing approach to curriculum to the local needs ($\bar{x} = 2.70$), which is significant to the matching of the content and the institutional and regional realities. In addition, lecturers felt that the CCMAS structure moderately adds workload ($\bar{x} = 2.87$), citing extra workload related to balancing between prescribed and flexible curriculum elements. This means in practice that, despite the fact that CCMAS has established certain room in which institutional input can be achieved, more flexibility and support systems are required to promote academic autonomy and lessen the workload pressure on lecturers.

Perceived benefits of implementing CCMAS among lecturers

The perceived benefits of implementing CCMAS among lecturers in Tai Solarin University of Education is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Perceived benefits of implementing CCMAS among lecturers

Items	Response (%)				$\bar{X}$	Std.	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
CCMAS provides a clear and standardized framework for teaching and learning across institutions.	6.6	14.8	57.4	21.3	2.93	0.793	Moderate
The implementation of CCMAS enhances the quality and relevance of academic programmes.	11.5	16.4	59.0	13.1	2.74	0.835	Moderate
CCMAS promotes uniformity in course content without compromising institutional autonomy.	13.1	23.0	50.8	13.1	2.64	0.876	Moderate
CCMAS supports the development of graduates with skills relevant to national needs.	8.2	18.0	57.4	16.4	2.82	0.806	Moderate
The guidelines in CCMAS improve curriculum monitoring and evaluation processes.	1.6	23.0	62.3	13.1	2.87	0.645	Moderate
Grand Mean =	2.80						

The result on lecturers' perceived benefits of implementing the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) at Tai Solarin University of Education yielded a grand mean of 2.80, which implies the moderate perception of advantages. It means that although lecturers acknowledge the potential value of CCMAS, the benefits of it are not felt in the practice yet. Particularly, lecturers concurred that CCMAS offers a standardized and clear way of teaching and learning in institutions ($\bar{x}$ = 2.93), and they value its contribution to the harmonization of the teaching and learning practice. Equally, they reported that, the use of CCMAS promotes the quality and relevance of academic programmes ($\bar{x}$ = 2.74), although, not at an extremely high level, indicating that, more can be done in terms of adapting curriculum content to fit international and local requirements.

The views of lecturers appear moderate regarding the fact that CCMAS fosters homogeneity in the course contents without endangering institutional autonomy ($\bar{x}$ = 2.64), indicating a reserved perception of the balance between standardization and flexibility control. Moreover, the respondents felt that CCMAS facilitates the production of graduates possessing skills that are meaningful to the national demands ($\bar{x}$ = 2.82), a crucial attribute in managing employability issues. Moreover, they concurred that the guidelines in CCMAS enhance curriculum monitoring and evaluation activities ($\bar{x}$ = 2.87), and are useful in the provision of accountability and consistency. In practice, this implies that lecturers are confident of the effectiveness of CCMAS, but that it has to be continuously refined and its implementation strategies reinforced so that it can have the maximum effect on teaching, learning, and graduate outcomes.

Perceived challenges of implementing CCMAS among lecturers

The perceived challenges of implementing CCMAS among lecturers in Tai Solarin University of Education is presented in Table 5.

The result on lecturers' perceived challenges of implementing the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) at Tai Solarin University of Education yielded a grand mean of 2.89, which implies that the perception of the difficulties is more or less moderate. It means that though CCMAS is considered to be an advantageous idea, the lecturers face multiple obstacles

that can hinder the efficient introduction of CCMAS. In particular, lecturers concurred that CCMAS decreases the ability of institutions to be creative in curriculum design ($\bar{x}$ = 2.85), which implies that centralization prevents creativeness in curriculum development. They further stated that the implementation of CCMAS is resource consuming and the resources might not be easily accessed ($\bar{x}$ = 2.89), and that there is the issue of resource funding and infrastructure support.

Table 5. Perceived challenges of implementing CCMAS among lecturers

Items	Response (%)				$\bar{X}$	Std.	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
The CCMAS reduces flexibility for institutions to innovate in curriculum design.	6.6	21.3	52.5	19.7	2.85	0.813	Moderate
Implementing CCMAS requires significant resources that may not be readily available.	6.6	18.0	55.7	19.7	2.89	0.798	Moderate
Some CCMAS prescriptions may not fully align with specific regional or institutional needs.	4.9	21.3	54.1	19.7	2.89	0.777	Moderate
The transition to CCMAS poses difficulties for lecturers in adapting existing course materials.	9.8	24.6	49.2	16.4	2.72	0.859	Moderate
Lack of adequate training and sensitization affects the effective use of CCMAS.	-	23.0	44.3	32.8	3.10	0.746	High
Grand Mean = 2.89							

Moreover, a few lecturers felt that certain CCMAS prescriptions do not necessarily conform to particular regional or institutional requirements ($\bar{x}$ = 2.89) indicating a gap in the area of uniformity of the curriculum. Moreover, respondents asserted that a switch to CCMAS presents challenges of accommodating existing course resources ($\bar{x}$ = 2.72), which shows that curriculum redesign requires more time and effort. Remarkably, the most significant challenge was the absence of proper training and sensitization ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10), which was also rated high, which underlines the paramount importance of professional development in the context of ensuring successful implementation. In practice, it means that the successful implementation of CCMAS will require the reinforcement of training, sufficient resources, and enough flexibility in terms of contextual adaptation.

Discussion on findings

The finding of this study revealed that lecturers at TASUED possess a generally high level of awareness and understanding of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) even though not all of them attend a structured training programme. This is in line with Chimezie and Ogbu (2025) who found that although business education lecturers in Rivers State were aware of the objectives of CCMAS, lack of proper training was a critical inhibitor to successful implementation of curriculum. In relation to academic autonomy, TASUED lecturers had moderate perceptions as they said that the 30% institutional part of the autonomy encourages a certain degree of innovation, but the prevalence of the 70% NUC-prescribed material inhibits flexibility and adds more workload. Adediran and Olayemi (2023) expressed same worries by arguing that institutional capacity and lecturer participation are important in the optimization of standardization and academic freedom in Nigerian universities.

The finding revealed that lecturers acknowledged CCMAS as a framework to enhance the use of academic programmes in terms of standardization, employability and relevance. This

supports Okebukola (2023) who highlighted that the CCMAS will be aimed at aligning better with the demands of global workforce through outcome-based education and digital literacy of Nigerian graduates. Nevertheless, the obstacles noted include especially, poor training, lack of resources, and contextual misalignment-echo previous studies. Both Yakubu (2023) and Chimezie and Ogbu (2025) have noted that the objectives of CCMAS can be compromised unless they are adequate in terms of funding, infrastructure, and staff training. All these findings together imply that although lecturers recognize the importance of CCMAS, its effective implementation in Nigeria needs strong institutional support, the provision of resources, and life-long learning to close the gaps between policy intent and classroom realities.

CONCLUSION

The study examined lecturers' perceptions on the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) at Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) revealing a generally positive awareness and understanding of the reform. Lecturers recognize the possibilities of CCMAS to improve curriculum quality, standardization and graduate employability. However, the concept of academic autonomy and curriculum flexibility are rated as moderate, with 70% content dictated by NUC being perceived to be limiting and the extra workload is pressurizing lecturers. Although some advantages are acknowledged, they are still yet to be brought into practice in actuality and some of challenges such as insufficient training, scarcity of resources, and the challenges of adjusting the existing materials are still present, thus acting as great hindrances to the seamless implementation. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of CCMAS is not the sole issue related to the policy design, but also to sustain professional growth, sufficient institutional commitment, and real flexibility of the curriculum that enables the universities to innovate within their unique environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, we strongly recommend that:

- NUC and universities must place emphasis on routine workshops, seminars, and capacity-building programs to bridge the gap between awareness and practice.
- NUC should increase institutional contribution beyond 30 percent whereas universities must make use of its contribution to the maximum to demonstrate local realities, industry demands and new global tendencies.
- The management should invest in funding, infrastructure, and teaching resources at the government and university level so as to ease the burden of implementing it and to have a smooth transfer of the curriculum.
- Institutions should implement collaborative curriculum design models, and offer incentives or workload compensations so as to alleviate academic personnel pressure.
- Continuous assessment and open feedback mechanisms should be developed to monitor challenges, gauge progress as well as improving the implementation of the CCMAS to have more impact.

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DECLARATION

Author contribution

All authors contribute in the research and/or writing the paper, and approved the final manuscript.

<i>Emmanuel</i>	Conceptualizing the research idea, leading the investigation, setting up the
<i>Sunday Osiyemi</i>	methodology, and writing the original draft.

<i>Simon Iruoghene Imoh</i>	Assisting the investigation, reviewing the validity of the methodology, and analyzing the data.
<i>Kayode John Olusanya</i>	Assisting the investigation, reviewing the validity of the methodology, and analyzing the data.
<i>Olalekan Rahman Adebayo</i>	Assisting the investigation, reviewing the validity of the methodology, and analyzing the data.
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All authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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The use of artificial intelligence

We do not use any generative AI tools to write any part of this paper.

Additional information

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