

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS**

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

FROM: Professor I. P. Farai
Physics Department

TO: The Vice Chancellor and Chairman of
Senate, University of Ibadan

DATE : 5 June, 2023

**OBSERVATIONS, RESERVATIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS ON CCMAS**

I write on behalf of concerned members of *UI Acada Affairs Platform*, who are also members of the University Senate, to request that you kindly include the attached document for discussion in the agenda of the next Senate meeting. The document summarises our observations, reservations and recommendations on the recently circulated document on Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standard for the Nigerian University System (CCMAS) developed by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Thank you, Sir.

Professor Idowu Farai
Physics Department

cc: Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration
Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academics
Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation
The Registrar, University of Ibadan

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

OBSERVATIONS, RESERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE CORE CURRICULUM AND MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDARD FOR THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (CCMAS)

1. Preamble

Recently, the Academic Planning Unit of the University of Ibadan circulated the document on Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standard for the Nigerian University System (CCMAS), which has been developed by the National University Commission (NUC). Seventy percent (70 %) of the curriculum is decreed as untouchable while the remaining thirty percent (30 %) is flexible and expected to be worked out to accommodate all input by the university. Each course added in the flexible segment must however, be justified with well written learning objectives for the University Senate approval but NUC and the drivers of the CCMAS are not answerable to anybody for the chunk 70% courses they stipulate.

Following this directive about four months ago, there has been a flurry of activities in the University in order to ensure compliance. Although submissions have been made in keeping with the directives, the final product of the exercise spells doom for the university system if implemented. Critical observations and reservations have been raised by concerned members of the community against the principles and process adopted for the CCMAS project, the prime issue needing clarification being the role of the University Senate, the statutory body to awards degrees, in curriculum development as a whole.

2. Curriculum Development in the University of Ibadan

Ever since its inception 75 years ago, the curriculum for every degree programme run by the University of Ibadan has evolved through continuous reviews, which are targeted at keeping pace with societal needs and trends in the global scene and specifically in tune with the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) of the NUC. The latest curriculum review was carried out in 2016 by a senate appointed committee made up of distinguished academics who know and believe in the mission and vision of the university rather than those with remote connection with the university being handpicked for the job, as apparently the case with the CCMAS project. In tune with the University tradition, the reviewed curriculum went through different approval stages

before final approval by the University Senate and it has been operational for about four years now. Neither NUC nor any of the major stakeholders has pointed out any deficiency in the curriculum. According to Benjamin Disraeli (1873), a university should be a place of light, of liberty and of learning. We are presently having a curriculum with 70% of its contents being forced on the University. It appears that the CCMAS project is an unwarranted infringement on the cherished twin principles of university autonomy and academic freedom.

3. The Specific Defects of the CCMAS

Apart from the attempt to appropriate the statutory role of the university senate, the compilation of CCMAS is grossly flawed generally, as evident from the content of the 70% segment that has been cast in iron. Below are some of the serious questions raised about the project that would constitute major obstacles to its success:

- 3.1 Generally, fewer courses have been prescribed for programmes which may make our products globally uncompetitive. In virtually all programmes, the 70% segment is made up of only departmental and GES courses. Courses such as mathematics and statistics for science and engineering students, Philosophy of Education and Sociology of Education courses for education students, and similar courses in other faculties, which are crucial to the emergence of quality graduates of the various disciplines, are expected to be handled in the residual 30% segment. Unfortunately this segment cannot accommodate more than four or five courses, at most, at each level. For example, as inseparable as physics and mathematics are, only one (1) two-unit Mathematics course (MAT 103) can be accommodated for physics students at 100 level. What then happens to the other crucial mathematics courses at this level? This situation, which is common to all faculties, is most unacceptable.
- 3.2 Many important departmental courses are missing in the iron cast 70% segment and topics traditionally taught in them have been scattered, rather haphazardly, in other courses. There are many omissions and duplications of topics in the process.
- 3.3 Many courses that have long ago been reviewed, modified or replaced entirely in the existing curriculum of the University of Ibadan still feature in the untouchable 70% segment of the CCMAS.

- 3.4 A tradition which has become entrenched in the University of Ibadan curriculum development is to designate some courses as prerequisite to some courses at the same or higher levels. This tradition, which is to avoid gaps in learning, is conspicuously missing in CCMAS. The result is that, nothing stops a student from registering for say GTE 305 at 300 level even if he/she has not done GTE 205 which should lay the foundation to GTE 305. ,
- 3.5 Generally, the units attached to the courses and hence the expected hours of teaching them do not reflect the contents of the courses, which gives the impression that CCMAS is encouraging a mention-and-go method of teaching.

The above problems, although not exhaustive, illustrate the serious defects of the CCMAS created largely by the rigid 70% segment, which cannot be resolved by the flexible 30%.

4. Unification of Curriculum for Nigerian Universities

From all indications, NUC and the drivers of CCMAS are aiming at unifying academic curriculum in all the over 270 universities in Nigeria. Obviously, it will be disastrous to go ahead with the unification agenda as it is capable of destroying whatever is left of the Nigerian university system. The drawbacks of a unified curriculum are quite many but the following will summarise them:

- 4.1 As long as NUC continues to dish out a unified curriculum like the CCMAS to the Nigerian university system, the Senates of the Universities will be rendered redundant as they will only need to wait for anything developed in the name of curriculum by NUC and its contractors from time to time. This is guaranteed to kill competitiveness and innovativeness, and nail the coffin of the university system.
- 4.2 Much as the younger universities are encouraged to leverage on the experience and the achievements of the older universities, unification of academic curriculum will only slow down the progress of the leading universities. There is for instance, absolutely no justification to lock up 75-year old UI in the same curriculum jacket as a 2-year old University.
- 4.3 Universities of Agriculture, Technology and Medical Sciences have the right and indeed are expected to pursue their goals and aspirations in the best way their Senates deem possible. Also, contrary to the unification plan of CCMAS, the Senates of a university in Bayelsa and of another one in Sokoto, for instance, should be able to design the respective curricula of programmes like Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Civil Engineering,

Sociology, etc to match the vastly different climatic and ecological problems in the two zones. This is not possible under CCMAS and it is bound to isolate the universities from their host communities to the peril of the university system in Nigeria. There is no rationale to force a unified curriculum on any university.

- 4.4 If and when CCMAS becomes operational, graduates of all the over 270 universities in Nigeria will have at least 70% of the courses listed in their transcripts having the same course codes and course descriptions as prescribed by CCMAS. The transcript will then stop to be a measure of the quality of education received in a university but a national document common to Nigerian graduates. This looks like a scam and it is indeed strange that the drivers of CCMAS do not want to see the absurdity in this scenario in the global arena.
- 4.5 A big question arises; what is the next item on the unification agenda?

5. Conclusion

A sustainable process of curriculum development must carry along and seek collaboration and input from all major stakeholders in a mutually respectable way rather than in an autocratic manner as it is the case with CCMAS. The authority over curriculum development and review rests with the Senate of each University, with input from NUC through BMAS and the major stakeholders like the professional bodies and the immediate communities. Any autocratic imposition as observed in the development of CCMAS is an affront on the mission and vision of each University, the defence of which is the mandate of each University Senate.

6. Recommendation

It is hereby recommended that the CCMAS be discarded forthwith and replaced with a new NUC project to review the current BMAS in a manner to address identified lapses in the curriculum of individual universities.

Thank you.

Professor Idowu Farai

Department of Physics,

For and on behalf of members of *UI Acada Affairs*

University of Ibadan