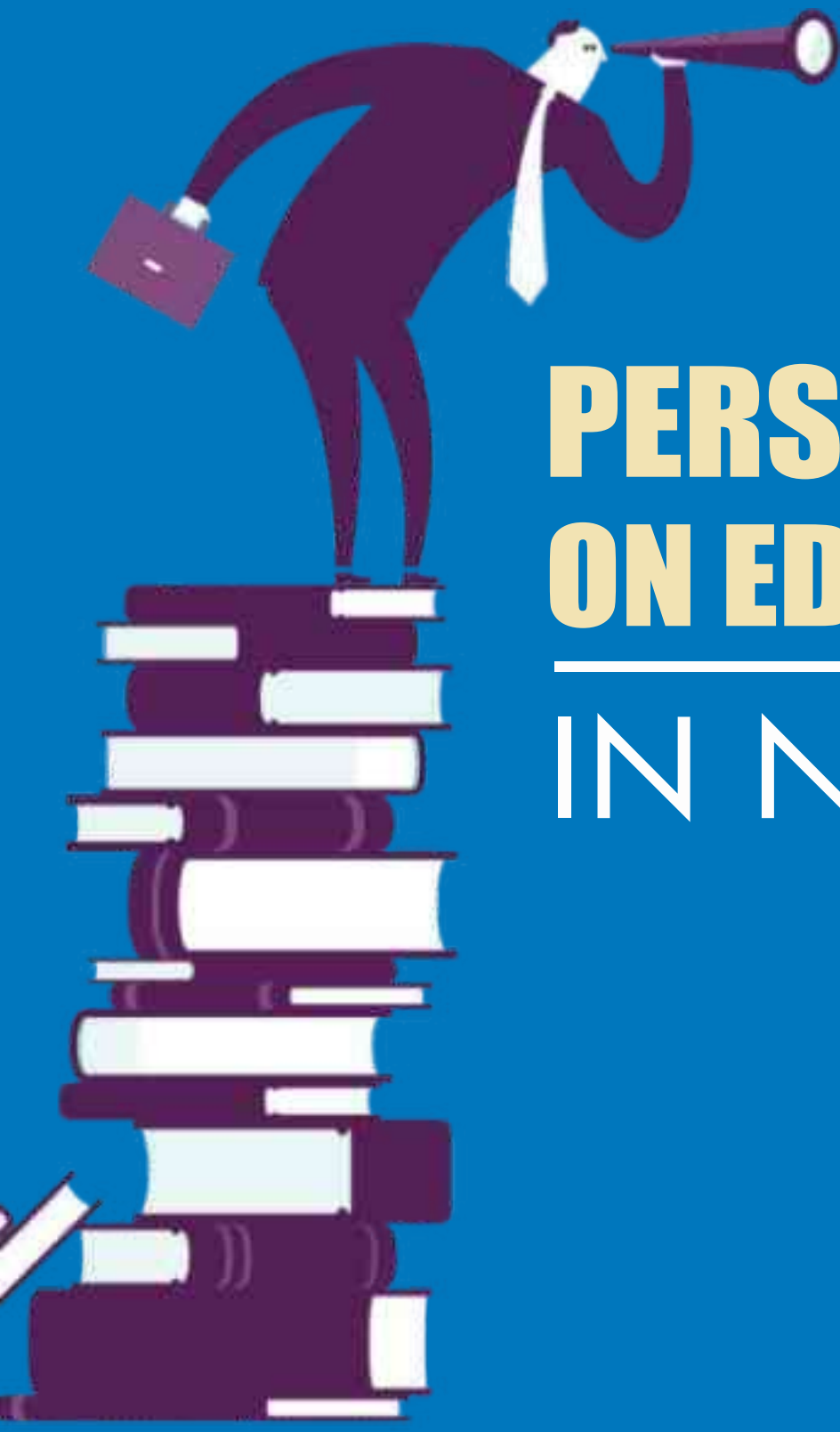


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PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION --- IN NIGERIA



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VOL-3

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Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of our academic institutions and colleagues whose insights and contributions informed the development of this book chapter: Perspective on Education in Nigeria; Volume three. We also extend our appreciation to the editors of this volume for their guidance and for providing a platform to share our collective work.



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CHAPTER NINE

IMPLEMENTATION OF CORE CURRICULUM MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDARD IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

BY

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1.0 Introduction

The implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities is an essential strategy for enhancing the quality, consistency, and relevance of higher education. CCMAS establishes a framework of minimum academic expectations across programs, ensuring that students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to meet both national and global educational standards. By providing clear guidelines for curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and assessment practices, CCMAS seeks to foster academic excellence, accountability, and equity in learning outcomes across Nigerian universities.

Despite its potential benefits, the practical implementation of CCMAS in Nigerian universities faces numerous challenges. These include inadequate funding, limited technological infrastructure, insufficient training of academic staff, and resistance to change from educators accustomed to traditional curricular and assessment practices. Additionally, variations in institutional capacity and a lack of standardized monitoring mechanisms often result in inconsistent adherence to the prescribed academic standards.

Addressing these challenges requires targeted solutions such as investment in faculty development, enhancement of educational infrastructure, effective policy enforcement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of curriculum delivery. By adopting these measures, Nigerian universities can overcome the barriers to CCMAS implementation, thereby improving educational quality, promoting student success, and aligning the nation's higher education system with global best practices. Thus, this chapter is discussed under the following subheadings.

1. Concept of University
2. Concept of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS)
4. Problems facing implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria
5. Sustainable Strategies to enhance implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Concept of University

A university is an institution of higher education and research that awards academic degrees in various subjects and typically provides undergraduate and graduate education. It is a place where students can pursue a higher education, gain knowledge and skills, and prepare for their future careers. Universities also often conduct research and contribute to the advancement of various fields of study. They play a crucial role in shaping the minds and abilities of individuals, as well as the development and progress of society as a whole. A university is an institution of higher education that offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate degrees in various fields of study. It is a place where students can further their knowledge and skills through lectures, research, and practical experiences. Universities also provide a diverse community for students to interact, learn, and grow together. They are often considered the foundation of academic excellence and play a vital role in shaping the future of individuals and society as a whole.

A university is an institution of higher education and research which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects. It typically consists of several colleges or faculties, and offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs. Universities are known for their focus on academic excellence and research, with some of the most prestigious universities producing ground-breaking research that contributes to various fields of study. They also offer various resources and opportunities for students such as student organizations, internships, and study abroad programs. Overall, universities play a crucial role in shaping the intellectual, social, and cultural development

of individuals, as well as making significant contributions to society through their research and innovations.

2.2 Concept of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS)

Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) refers to a set of minimum academic benchmarks and guidelines established to ensure consistency, quality, and excellence across undergraduate programs in Nigerian higher education institutions. These standards are designed to regulate the content, structure, and delivery of the university curriculum, ensuring that all students, regardless of institution, acquire essential knowledge, skills, and competencies in their chosen fields. The core curriculum and minimum academic standards (CCMAS) is the newly introduced curriculum in the Nigeria universities with the aim of promoting specialization from the undergraduate. Core curriculum and minimum academic standards (CCMAS) is a curriculum that is community service inclined based on the 30% provided for the various universities to include from their own peculiar areas of focus. The Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) is an organized curriculum designed for the Nigerian universities with the objectives of improving the standard of the Nigerian universities, makes grandaunts from Nigerian universities more employable and to equip with grandaunts a local, national and international skills, knowledge and character that is globally acceptable (Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, 2023).

Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (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 Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) documents has 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 by (Businessday 2022).

Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) is a policy instrument adopted by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria to harmonize university curricula, reduce disparities in academic quality, and promote excellence in teaching, learning, and assessment. It ensures that graduates from different Nigerian universities meet comparable academic and professional standards (Punch 2022).

Features of Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS)

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

1. Change of nomenclature from Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) to Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS);
2. The curriculum provides for 70% minimum core courses requirements for graduation. Nigerian universities are expected to provide the remaining 30%;
3. In consonance with global best practice, the curriculum is to stimulate blended learning in its delivery;
4. 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;
5. 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;
6. 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;
7. The split of the Basic Medical Sciences discipline into two – Basic Medical Sciences and Allied Health Sciences;
8. Reduction of the General Studies (GST) course from 36 credit units to 12 credit units of 6 courses as follows: i. Communication in English; ii. Nigerian People and Culture; iii. Philosophy, Logic and Human Existence; iv. Entrepreneurship and Innovation; v. Venture creation; and vi. Peace and Conflict resolution.
9. 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).

3.0 Problems facing the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities

Top-down imposition, limited stakeholder involvement

A major concern raised by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and others is that the National Universities Commission (NUC) designed and issued CCMAS documents with minimal input from universities (their Senates, Departments) and other stakeholders. According to ASUU, NUC contributed about **70% of the new CCMAS contents** while universities had only about **30% input**. This raises problems of ownership, buy-in and implementation, since staff may feel the standards were imposed rather than co-designed. ASUU argues that the CCMAS document-design process and content “emasculate” university senates, which are by law supposed to oversee curriculum review and academic programmes (Peter, 2024). When universities feel their autonomy is undermined, the likelihood of passive, reluctant implementation increases, weakening the standards’ effect (Omolola, 2023). Top down imposition and limited stakeholder involvement are two major problems that hinder the successful implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. These issues arise when the implementation process is driven solely by the top management without proper consultation and involvement of all stakeholders (Musa, 2024). This leads to a lack of understanding and acceptance of the new standards, causing resistance and hindering progress. When top-down imposition occurs, the implementation process is dictated by a select few individuals at the top, without considering the opinions and perspectives of those who will be directly affected by the changes. This often results in a disconnect between the intended outcomes and the actual impact on the stakeholders. Without proper stakeholder involvement, the implementation of the new standards may not align with the needs and capabilities of the universities, leading to challenges and delays (Ogunode 2024). Limited stakeholder involvement also means that key players such as faculty members, students, and administrators are not consulted during the planning and implementation stages. This lack of involvement can result in a

lack of ownership and commitment towards the new standards, as stakeholders may feel excluded and undervalued in the process (Peter, 2022).

Inadequate alignment with institutional uniqueness and programme variations

Because the CCMAS sets a rigid 70% core across programmes (with only ~30% left for institutional variation), many departments reported that essential courses were omitted in the new standard. For example, in one report, physics students no longer had chemistry courses; engineering students lost “engineering mathematics”; education students lost philosophy and sociology of education courses (Musa, 2024). The standards may not accommodate the unique mission, strengths or local context of each institution. The lack of alignment between institutional uniqueness and programme variations is a major issue that is hindering the successful implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities (Peter, 2024). This problem occurs when universities do not fully understand or consider the specific needs and strengths of their institution and academic programs when implementing the standards set by the CCMAS. As a result, universities may struggle to adapt the standards to their own unique environment, leading to a misalignment between their institutional culture and the prescribed curriculum. This can create a significant barrier to effective implementation of the CCMAS, as it may not be well-suited to the needs of the students and faculty at a particular university. The variations in academic programs across Nigerian universities can also pose a challenge to the successful implementation of the CCMAS (Ogunode, 2024). Each university may have its own distinct curriculum and teaching methods, making it difficult to ensure uniformity and consistency in the implementation of the CCMAS. Inadequate alignment with institutional uniqueness and programme variations can lead to a lack of buy-in from university stakeholders, as they may see the CCMAS as being imposed upon them rather than tailored to their specific needs. This can result in resistance and a reluctance to fully adopt and implement the standards (Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, 2023).

Inadequate Staff

Inadequate staff is a significant problem facing the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities. The lack of qualified and sufficient faculty members hinders the universities' ability to properly implement and teach the required curriculum. This leads to a lack of depth and quality in education, as well as a gap in knowledge and skills among students. Inadequate staff also affects the research and development aspect of the universities. With limited faculty, there is a lack of capacity and resources to conduct meaningful and impactful research, which is crucial for the advancement of any academic institution (Ogunode, 2025). This not only affects the overall reputation of the university but also

hinders the progress of the country in terms of innovation and knowledge creation. Inadequate staff also leads to a heavy workload for the existing faculty members, causing burnout and exhaustion (Musa, 2024). This can result in a decline in the quality of teaching and mentoring, ultimately affecting the students' learning experience. It also creates a barrier for faculty members to engage in continuous professional development, which is essential for staying updated and providing the best education to students (Peter, 2024). The problem of inadequate staff severely impacts the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards in Nigerian universities. It not only affects the quality of education but also hinders research and development and creates a burden on the existing faculty members. This issue must be addressed and resolved to ensure the successful implementation of the CCMAS and the overall advancement of the education sector in Nigeria (Ogunode, et al 2023).

Under-funding

The issue of under-funding in Nigerian universities is a major obstacle to the successful implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). This is because adequate funding is necessary for universities to meet the standards and requirements set by the CMSAS. Without proper funding, universities are unable to upgrade their facilities, provide necessary resources, and attract qualified faculty members. This leads to a lack of quality education and hindered progress in meeting the standards set by the CMSAS. Additionally, under-funding also limits the ability of universities to conduct research and participate in national and international collaborations, which are vital for academic growth and development (Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, 2023).. Under-funding has been a major issue in the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards in Nigerian universities. This problem has hindered the proper execution of the standards and has resulted in numerous challenges for the universities. Despite the efforts made by the universities to meet the standards, inadequate funding remains a significant obstacle. This is due to the fact that the universities are not receiving enough financial support from the government, which makes it difficult for them to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the standards (Ogunode, 2024a). As a result, there is a lack of proper infrastructure, outdated teaching materials, and insufficient faculty that prevent the universities from fully complying with the required standards. This under-funding also affects the quality of education provided to students, as it limits the universities' ability to offer diverse and up-to-date courses. It also affects the research capabilities of the universities, as they are unable to invest in advanced technology and equipment for their faculty and students to conduct research (Peter, 2024).

Infrastructural constraints

One analysis of CCMAS implementation notes that universities in Nigeria already face funding constraints, and implementing new standards (which may require new teaching materials, staff training, infrastructure upgrades) adds further burden. The Infrastructural constraints of universities pose a significant problem when it comes to the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities (Peter, 2024). This is because the lack of adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, directly affects the quality of education that can be provided to students. Without proper infrastructure, it becomes difficult for universities to offer courses that meet the required standards set by the CCMAS (Ogunod., Ohibime, & Oluwaseun, 2023). This, in turn, impacts students' learning outcomes and the overall quality of education in Nigerian universities. infrastructural constraints can also lead to overcrowding in classrooms and limited access to resources, hindering students' ability to fully engage with the curriculum. This can result in a lack of practical skills and a disconnect between theory and practice in the learning process (Ogunode, 2024).. The lack of infrastructure also affects the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty members. Without adequate facilities, universities may struggle to attract and retain talented educators, who are essential for delivering a quality curriculum. This can create a ripple effect, as the lack of experienced faculty can lead to a decline in the quality of education and hinder the implementation of the CCMAS. Without adequate resources, even well-designed standards may fail at the stage of actual delivery (Ogunode, 2023).

Implementation bottlenecks and capacity issues

Even where curriculum standards exist, universities may lack the **capacity** (qualified staff, pedagogical skills, digital infrastructure) to deliver the new standards effectively. The broader higher-education sector in Nigeria reports issues of outdated curricula, poor teaching and learning environment, etc. These factors hamper successful translation of standards into improved student outcomes. Implementation bottlenecks and capacity issues are common problems facing the implementation of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities (Ogunode, 2024). These issues often hinder the successful implementation of the CCMAS, which serves as a benchmark for academic programs in Nigerian universities. Implementation bottlenecks refer to obstacles and challenges that arise during the implementation process, such as lack of resources, bureaucratic procedures, and resistance from stakeholders. These bottlenecks can delay or disrupt the implementation process, making it difficult to achieve the desired outcomes. Capacity issues, on the other hand, pertain to the readiness and capabilities of universities to effectively implement the CCMAS (Ogunode, & Okani, 2024).. This includes having qualified faculty members, adequate infrastructure, and relevant teaching materials. Many

Nigerian universities face capacity issues due to limited funding and resources, leading to difficulties in meeting the standards set by the CCMAS. These problems pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of the CCMAS in Nigerian universities. They not only affect the quality of education but also hinder the nation's efforts in achieving a globally competitive education system. As such, it is important for universities and government bodies to address these issues and work towards finding solutions to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the CCMAS (John, 2016)..

4.0 Strategies to enhance the implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigerian universities:

Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusive Curriculum Design

Effective implementation of CCMAS requires active involvement of all stakeholders, including university senates, academic staff, students, professional bodies, and industry representatives. Involving them in curriculum review and adaptation ensures ownership, reduces resistance, and makes the standards more relevant to local institutional contexts. *Example:* Establishing joint curriculum committees between NUC and universities to review CCMAS for each discipline before adoption.

Capacity Building and Staff Training

Lecturers and academic administrators need continuous professional development to effectively deliver and assess the CCMAS. Workshops, seminars, and online training programs on modern pedagogical methods, assessment techniques, and curriculum planning can improve teaching quality and ensure compliance with the standards.

Adequate Funding and Resource Provision

Universities require sufficient funding to support infrastructure, laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, and teaching resources necessary to implement CCMAS. Governments and university management should prioritize budget allocations to cover these essentials. *Example:* Provision of digital learning platforms and course materials aligned with CCMAS.

Policy Enforcement and Regulatory Oversight

NUC should monitor adherence to CCMAS through periodic audits, accreditation visits, and reporting mechanisms. Strong regulatory oversight ensures that universities comply with the standards and maintain academic quality. *Reference:* Okebukola (2010) notes that regular accreditation and monitoring are essential for maintaining uniform educational quality in Nigerian universities.

Flexibility for Institutional Autonomy

While CCMAS provides standardization, universities should be allowed a reasonable proportion of the curriculum to innovate and tailor programs to their unique strengths, resources, and local needs. This balance promotes creativity and relevance while adhering to national minimum standards.

Use of Technology and Digital Tools

ICT and learning management systems (LMS) can support CCMAS implementation by enabling online course delivery, assessment tracking, and continuous monitoring. Digital platforms can also facilitate collaboration among lecturers, students, and regulators.

Example: Using Moodle or Canvas to manage course content, assessments, and feedback in line with CCMAS.

Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

Establishing mechanisms to regularly assess the implementation process, collect feedback from lecturers and students, and adjust curricula accordingly is critical. This ensures that CCMAS remains effective and responsive to changes in educational and labor market needs.

Collaboration with Industry and Professional Bodies

Involving employers and professional associations ensures that CCMAS-aligned programs produce graduates with relevant skills and competencies for the job market. This enhances employability and relevance of university education.

5.0 Conclusion

In short, while CCMAS represents a well-intentioned push toward standardisation and quality assurance in Nigerian universities, its implementation faces multiple interconnected problems: stakeholder exclusion & imposition, autonomy concerns, rigid standardisation, under-resourcing, capacity deficits, and potential misalignment with local institutional context and graduate needs. Addressing these will be vital if the standards are to meet their promise.

Enhancing CCMAS implementation in Nigerian universities requires a multi-pronged strategy involving stakeholder engagement, capacity building, funding, regulatory enforcement, technological adoption, flexible curriculum design, continuous monitoring, and industry collaboration. These strategies collectively ensure that CCMAS not only standardizes education but also improves the quality and relevance of graduates.

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Revise Question

1. Define university

2. Explain Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS)
4. Highlight five Problems facing implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria
5. Discuss five sustainable Strategies to enhance implementation of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in Nigeria