



**The Kumbotso Teacher Educator (KUTEJ):  
A Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies  
Vol 6.1 January 2015 ISSN: 1597-8796**

---

**BEST PRACTICES IN WRITING CURRICULUM  
GUIDES FOR THE QUALITY TEACHING OF  
RESEARCH METHODS IN ECONOMICS IN  
NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION**

*Sa'idu Sulaiman*

Department of Economics,  
Sa'adatu Rimi College of Education Kumbotso, P.M.B.  
3218, Kano, Nigeria

**Abstract**

*In Nigeria, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is responsible for regulating the establishment of colleges of education, the accreditation of their courses and providing them with curriculum guides, known as the Minimum Standards. The bone of contention of this paper is that there are best practices in writing curriculum guides in a manner that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in the target institutions. The paper, therefore, examines what the Minimum Standard prescribes for ECO 214 (Research Methods), which is taught to NCE II students of Economics in Nigerian colleges of education and provides an improved curriculum guide for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning this important course. The improvement takes the form of additional topics to*

*make the curriculum more comprehensive and translating its contents into specific measurable objectives. A well —written curriculum guide is, therefore, one of the tools for ensuring quality in tertiary education. The paper then recommends similar improvement to the NCCE Minimum Standards of all the academic programmes offered by colleges of education through curriculum review workshops on related commissioned papers.*

**Key words:** Best Practices, Curriculum Guides, Research Methods In Economics, Quality Assurance

## **Introduction**

In all the spheres of human endeavour, quality, which is frequently associated with efficiency, effectiveness, sincerity and endurance, is superior to quantity. Quality cannot exist without deliberate plans and efforts to facilitate it. In all nations, there are bodies responsible for ensuring the quality of education at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels. They do this through regulating the establishment of institutions of learning, accreditation, inspection and provision of curriculum guides. In Nigeria, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is responsible for regulating the establishment of colleges of education, the accreditation of their courses and providing them curriculum guides, known as the Minimum Standards. The premise upon which this paper is based is that there are best practices in writing curriculum guides in a manner that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in the target institutions. The paper, therefore,

examines what the Minimum Standard prescribes for ECO. 214 (Research Methods) offered to Level II students of Economics in Nigerian colleges of education and provides an improved curriculum guide for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning this important course. The improved guide is being provided to the affected students and shared with other lecturers of the course at the Department of Economics, Sa'adatu Rimi College of Education, Kano, from the 2014/2015 academic session to date.

### **The Nature and Purpose of a Curriculum Guide**

A curriculum guide is a structured document that clearly states the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources and assessments that comprise a specific educational program. Moreover, it supports teachers in knowing how to achieve these goals and objectives and states what students should know and be able to accomplish (Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, 2006).

The goals of an academic programme are accomplished through clear, well-defined course goals, which should be clearly linked to program goals. There should also be course objectives that describe, in precise and measurable terms, what the student should be able to do on completing the course. Course objectives are specific items written with action verbs as found in Bloom's other taxonomies to guide the learner. Thus, the syllabus for a course should have enough detail to acquaint students with what is expected of them and how the

course proceeds and assist lecturers as they teach (Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, 2006).

From the statements above, it could be seen that a curriculum is structurally made up of programme goals or philosophy, course objectives given in specific measurable terms, learning experiences and instructional resources. So, the best practices in writing curriculum guides include the statement of these important aspects to guide teachers and learners. On the purpose of the curriculum guide, the statements indicate that well-written guides lead both the teacher and the learner to know what is expected of them and helps teachers to identify relevant instructional resources and assess learning that has taken place. In addition to these, a national curriculum sets common, shared expectations among the citizenry and facilitates national collaboration and sharing high-quality practice and resources (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014).

Quality assurance is a set of preventive activities focused on the production processes; it is, therefore, a planned and proactive activity (Ijaiye, n.d.). When it is related to the production of quality graduates by colleges of education and other tertiary institutions, quality assurance should entail preventive and proactive activities, such as the regulation of the establishment of academic institutions, the provisions of comprehensive and clear curriculum guides, the accreditation of courses and controlling admissions to tally with the carrying capacities of institutions, among others. A well-written

curriculum guide is, therefore, one of the tools for ensuring quality in tertiary education.

### **Previous Studies on Curriculum of Tertiary Institutions**

With the ever-changing economic realities all over the world, concerns for improvements in curriculum and in teaching methods particularly at the tertiary level of education, which provides the manpower needed to face these realities, should not be ignored. Such concerns are often expressed by lecturers and students of economics in tertiary institutions of learning. On the part of the lecturers, Becker (2004), for instance, expresses the need to bring innovations in the science of economics into the teaching of the subject by adopting active learning techniques and going beyond the chalk and talk methods. The modern-day computer, he further explains, has turned economics into a more empirical subject but the undergraduate curriculum still gives insignificant attention to the importance of quantitative research. This concern by Becker certainly shows the need to review the curriculum of economics. From the side of the students of economics, the same call is made by a students' organization, Post-Crash Economics Society, in the report of its study, which assessed the curriculum of economics at the Manchester University, UK. The report says, unlike what obtained fifteen years ago, the Department of Economics at Manchester University is not pluralist and does not give much room for alternative perspectives and other schools of thought. In addition,

economic history and the ethics of being an economist are almost completely absent while the history of economic thought is optional in the third year of study (the Post-Crash Economics Society, 2014). While the above concerns focus on curriculum contents and teaching methods, the main concern of this paper is the way a curriculum guide is written to avoid ambiguity and ensure quality lesson delivery in higher institutions of learning.

As the Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction (2006) rightly observes, no curriculum guide will be perfect and no guide will be free from criticisms. Studies which appraise curriculum guides or review their provisions and implementation are endeavours aimed at improving the quality of education and of graduates of schools, colleges and universities. Esene (2015) appraises the adequacy of the contents of the Entrepreneurship Development Education (EDE) curriculum of polytechnic education provided by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) towards meeting entrepreneurial skills of Office Technology and Management graduates, who attended the Delta State Polytechnic, Delta State, Nigeria. He found the contents of the curriculum to be adequate in scope and coverage in terms of meeting entrepreneurial skills of the graduates for self-employment or being employers of other people but his study does not cover the way of writing the curriculum to ensure its effective implementation.

Tom-Lawyer (2015) conducted a study on the perceptions of English language lecturers from three

colleges of education on the factors that hinder the implementation process of the revised English language Nigeria Certificate in Education curriculum. The sample for the study comprised twenty lecturers from three colleges of education in the country. The findings showed that the lecturers viewed unavailability of in—service training for lecturers and lack of orientation on the new curriculum as factors that hinder the implementation of the revised curriculum. Other factors are that audio-visual resources are not available in classes, online materials are not fully integrated into teaching and the Directorate for Internal Quality Assurance fails to monitor teaching regularly. This study, too, does not include the way of writing the curriculum as a factor that could hinder its implementation.

In his appraisal of the revised Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards (English language curriculum), Tom-Lawyer (2014) describes the curriculum as a bold stride to ensure quality education at the lower levels of education and at the teacher training stages. In addition, he regards the new emphasis on the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge as a laudable feat. He, however, observes that the revised curriculum fails to address the issue of quality entrants into colleges of education to get the best brains and the time provided for teaching practice was not adequate. He recommends a review of the admission policy and the decongestion of classrooms, among others. His recommendations fell short of considering the writing of curriculum guides in with specific objectives and

learning tasks as measure for ensuring the quality of the English language curriculum for colleges of education in Nigeria.

Ovute and Ovute (2015) assess the extent to which the NCE Igbo Language Education programme adheres to the admission requirements in colleges of education in South Eastern Nigeria. Their finding shows that the colleges adhere to the admission requirements into the programme, but a significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers in Federal, State and Private Colleges of Education on the extent of adherence to the admission requirements exists.

Abdulwahab and Sa'i (2014) expose the major lapses in the planning and organization of technical teachers' education programmes. One of the lapses they have discussed is that technical teachers' education curriculum at all levels leaves the extent of the depth of the coverage of contents at the discretion of teachers' expertise and commitment instead of spelling out in clear terms the teachers' and students' activities for specified course contents, as is the practice in the NBTE curriculum modules.

Okenyi (2015, p.4) calls for the enhancement of the NCCE Minimum Standards for biology education to enable biology students to acquire skills for self employment and self reliance. This is to be done though teaching the following topics:

- a) Bee keeping or Apiculture: This is the act of preparing artificial hive to attract honey bee to colonies.
- b) Aquaculture: This includes fish farming, prawn farming, crab culture and so on.
- c) Floriculture: growing flowers for ornamental values.
- d) Horticulture: growing fruits and vegetables for domestic consumption and local markets.
- e) Poultry: rearing birds for consumption and commercial purposes.
- f) Snailery or snail farming: this is the act of farming snails for home consumption and commercial purposes.

The reviewed literature shows the divergent themes relating to the curriculum of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which received the attention of different people. These include the concern for the adequacy of the contents of the EDE curriculum for polytechnic education; perceptions of English language lecturers on the factors that hinder the implementation process of the revised English Language curriculum; and finding the extent to which the NCE Igbo Language Education programme adheres to the admission requirements in colleges of education in South Eastern Nigeria. The rest are the major lapses in the planning and organization of technical teachers' education programmes and the enhancement of the NCCE Minimum Standards for biology education to reflect skills for self employment and self reliance. None of the studies addressed the need for best practices in writing curriculum guides as

measures for ensuring the proper implementation of curriculum and subsequently ensuring the quality of education in tertiary institutions of learning. This paper attempts to fill this gap.

### **Best Practice in Writing Curriculum Guides: a Glimpse at the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) Curriculum Modules**

An example of best practices in writing curriculum guides can be obtained from a quick look at the NBTE Curriculum Modules. The Principles of Economics I for the ND 1 accountancy programme from one of the modules illustrates this. There are general objectives for the course; they are to enable students to understand Economics as a social science course concerned with human behaviour in the context of business management; know the price theory and understand production theory and market situations. The rest are that the students should be able to understand the distribution theory and factor pricing; know industrial organisations and, lastly, know population and trade Unionism (UNESCO -Nigeria TVE Project, 2009).

The curriculum is given in tables with columns for a week, followed by three columns for the *theoretical contents*: one for specific learning outcomes, another for teachers' activities and the last one for resources, all on the left. On the right, there is another set of columns for *practical contents*: one for specific learning outcomes, another for teachers' activities and the last one for resources. There is an assessment criteria attached,

showing percentages allocated to course work, course test, practical, examination, projects, etc.

Table 1 Extracts of Columns from the Tabular Curriculum of the NBTE

	<b>Specific Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Teacher's Activities</b>
2.1	Define demand in Economics.	Explain the meaning of demand.
2.2	Identify the levels of demand - individual and market.	Explain individual demand curve and market demand curve.
2/3	Explain the determinants of demand	Explain factors influencing demand
2.4	Distinguish between a change in demand and a change in the quality demanded	Explain the difference between change in demand and change in quantity demanded
2.5	Calculate and interpret the Coefficients of elasticity of demand in terms of price of the commodity, income and cross elasticity.	Generate figure to explain the calculation of price, income and cross elasticities and interpret
2.6	Define supply and identify the levels of supply.	Explain the meaning of supply and difference between individual and market supply
2.7	Discuss the determinants of supply	Explain factors influencing supply
2.8	Explains the movements associated	Explain movement along the same supply

---

	with supply.	curve and shifts in supply curves
2.9	Compute and interpret the coefficients of elasticity of supply	Explain the interception of demand and supply curves to determine equilibrium price in the market
2.10	Define the equilibrium in the market	
2.11	Analyze the effects of shifts in supply and demand.	

---

(Source: extracted from the UNESCO -Nigeria TVE Project, 2009, pp. 30-31)

The Table reveals the specific learning outcomes and specific teachers' activities stated in form of objectives, which would go a long way in ensuring the quality of polytechnic education in Nigeria because both the teacher and the learner have clear guides on what is expected from them.

### **Improved Curriculum Guide for ECO 214 (Research Methods)**

The philosophy of teaching Economics as given in the 2012 edition of the NCCE Minimum Standards for Arts and Social Sciences Education is to enable the recipients as either producers or consumers of goods and services to acquire knowledge of the economic system, free their minds from the shackles of destiny and chance events, equip them with solutions to the problems Nigeria is facing and develop their critical thinking, which is

necessary for making logical contributions to the economic growth and development of the country (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012).

The objectives for the Economics programme are to:

- a) Train teachers who have acquired in-depth knowledge of economic theory and applied economics to be able to appreciate economic problems;
- b) Produce teachers who have acquired adequate professional skill to be able to organize and teach economics at the secondary school level in Nigeria;
- c) Prepare teachers who would be able to undertake further education in economics or related areas of study; and
- d) Produce teachers who have acquired economic skills and abilities and are able to apply them to their daily lives. (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012, p. 76).

The Minimum Standards also stipulates the use of lectures, tutorials, field trips, games, simulations and discussion as the modes of teaching economics. The course outline for ECO 214 Research Methods, a two-credit compulsory programme for Level II students is stated as follows (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012, p. 82).

The nature and scope of research projects in economics. Planning and design of research. Types of research. Basic sampling techniques.

Methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Report writing.

There could be several ways of improving the above curriculum guide or course outline to ensure quality of education in this regard. To enable students to have a coherent mastery of the research process, lecturers of this course need to make some additions to the minimum contents stipulated in the Minimum Standards. That's why the improved curriculum for the course given in Appendix I includes additional objectives. "To define the term research, explain 4 points on the importance of research" are added to first topic while "to list and explain activities that constitute the research process in economics" is added to second. Additions to the third topic include "to explain the concepts of quantitative research and qualitative research; explain the difference between quantitative research and qualitative research; and list and explain the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative researches". "To explain the terms population and sample" has been added to the fourth topic because one cannot talk about a sample without making reference to the population from where it is drawn. Lastly, the objective "to list and explain types of data" is added to the fifth topic. With these explicit additions to the Minimum Standard, an inexperienced or lazy lecturer would simply teach the course contents as they are or in a limited way, thus short changing the students. Without improving the curriculum, someone may teach descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation, etc.) and statistics of inference (correlation, regression, Chi-square, etc) under the

methods of data analysis instead of just enabling the students to identify and explain the relevant statistics to be used in data analysis for different research designs and contexts. This is because students of economics are taught Statistics I and Statistics II, which cover descriptive statistics and statistics of inference, during the first year of their studies.

Improving the course contents of ECO 214 by translating the topics into specific measurable objectives will guide teachers to implement the curriculum with minimum deviation from what is expected of them. This will ensure the quality of economics education in colleges of education, as the lapse of leaving the depth of coverage of course contents at the discretion of teachers' expertise and commitment, which Abdulwahab and Sa'i (2014) mentioned in relation to technical teachers' education programmes, will not apply to this course. Students taking the course will also find it easy to meet the expectation of examiners assessing learning outcomes. Finally, discrepancies in the depth of coverage of the course contents by lecturers in different colleges of education will be reduced to the barest minimum.

## **Conclusion**

The improvement of curriculum guides in the form of providing additional topics to make them more comprehensive and also translating their contents into specific measurable objectives can ensure the quality of education in colleges of education and other tertiary

institutions of learning in Nigeria. There is, therefore, the need for improvements to the NCCE Minimum Standards for Economics and other academic programmes offered by colleges of education in Nigeria through curriculum review workshops that will deliberate on commissioned papers containing curriculum drafts by relevant experts.

## References

- Abdulwahab, S and Sa'i, H.R. (2014). Refocusing technical teachers' education programmes towards youth empowerment. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19 (10) 69-73. Retrieved from <http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue10/Version-6/K0191066973.pdf> doi
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014) *Review of the Australian curriculum: A statement by the Australian curriculum, assessment and reporting authority*. Retrieved from [www.acara.edu.au/verve/-resources/SATATEMENT-Review-of-the-Australian-Curriculum-20140324pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/-resources/SATATEMENT-Review-of-the-Australian-Curriculum-20140324pdf)
- Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction (2006) *Guide to curriculum development: purposes, practices, procedures*. Connecticut State Department of Education Hartford. Retrieved from <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321162>
- Becker, W.E. (2004) Economics for higher education. *International Review of Economics Education*. 3, (1). 52-62. DOI: 10.106/S1477-3880(15)30145-6. Retrieved from <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/iree/i3/becker.htm>
- Esene, R. A. (2015) A critical appraisal of adequacy of contents of EDE curriculum of polytechnic education towards meeting entrepreneurial skills of OTM graduates. *British Journal of Education*, 3, (1).14-22, European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK. Retrieved from [www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Critical-Appraisal-Of-Adequacy-Of-Contents-Of-Ede-Curriculum-Of-Polytechnic-](http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Critical-Appraisal-Of-Adequacy-Of-Contents-Of-Ede-Curriculum-Of-Polytechnic-)

Education-Towards-Meeting-Entrepreneurial-Skills-Of-OTM-Graduates.pdf

- Ijaiye, Y. (n.d) From quality control to quality assurance: A panacea for quality education in Nigerian schools. In N.A. Nwagwu, E.T. Ehiamentalor, M.A. Ogunu and Mon Nwadiani (Eds.), *Current issues in educational management in Nigeria* (Pp 295-302). Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning.
- Johnson, C. (2006) 'Best practices in syllabus writing: contents of a learner-centered syllabus. *Journal of Chiropractic Education*, Association of Chiropractic Colleges, 20 (2), 139-144. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2384173/>
- National Commission for Colleges of Education (2012). *Nigeria Certificate in Education minimum standards for arts and social sciences*. Abuja: National Commission for Colleges of Education
- Okenyi, C.I. (2015). Enhancing the biology syllabus in Nigerian colleges of education using applicable skills for self-reliance. *Journal of Research Development*, 24 (2) 1-5. Retrieved from <http://globalacademicgroup.com/journals/nard/ENHANCING%20THE%20BIOLOGY%20SYLLABUS%20IN%20NIGERIA%20COLLEGES%20OF%20EDUCATION%20USING%20APPLICABLE%20SKILLS%20FOR%20SELF-RELIANCE.pdf>
- Ovute, A.O. and Ovute, L.E.. (2015). Assessment of the extent of adherence to stipulated NCE Igbo language education programme admission requirement in colleges of education. *International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review*, 3 (2) 255-260. Retrieved from <http://www.ijcrar.com/vol-3-2/A.O.%20Ovute%20and%20L.E.%20Ovute2.pdf>
- Tom-Lawyer, O.O (2014). An appraisal of the revised Nigeria Certificate in Education minimum standards (English language curriculum). *European Scientific Journal* August 2014 /SPECIAL/ edition, 165-171. Retrieved from <http://ejournal.org/index.php/esj/article/download/4019/3830>

- Tom-Lawyer, O.O (2015). Lecturers' perceptions of the implementation of the revised English language Nigeria Certificate in Education curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (12) 181-193 . Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1080695.pdf>
- The Post-Crash Economics Society (2014) *Economics, education and unlearning: economics education at the University of Manchester*. Manchester: Post-Crash Economics Society. Retrieved from <http://www.post-crasheconomics.com/download/778>
- UNESCO -Nigeria TVE Project (2009). *First semester ND 1 accountancy programme*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco-nigeriatve.org/download/curriculum/ND/ND%20Accountancy/s6351e.3.pdf>

**Appendix I: The Improved Curriculum for ECO 214**  
**Research Methods**  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
SA'ADATU RIMI COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,  
KUMBOTSO, KANO  
**Course Outline and Objectives for Eco 214: Research**  
**Methods**

1. DEFINITION, TYPES AND IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- Define the term *research*.
- Explain the difference between research methods and research methodology.
- State and explain three types of research.
- Explain 4 points on the importance of research.

2. THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- List and explain activities that constitute the research process in Economics (i.e. from selection of a research problem to interpretation of results and drawing conclusion).
- Explain the scope of research in Economics with the aid examples of research problems/topics within the scope of economics.

3. PLANNING AND DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- Define the term *research design*.
- Explain the need for planning of research
- Explain the concepts *quantitative research* and *qualitative research*.

- Explain the difference between quantitative research and qualitative research.
- List and explain the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative researches.
- State and explain the different types of quantitative research designs.
- State and explain the different types of qualitative research designs.

#### 4. BASIC SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- Explain the terms *population* and *sample*
- State and explain probability sampling techniques.
- State and explain non-probability sampling techniques.

#### 5. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- List and explain types of data
- Mention and explain the methods of data collection (i.e. questionnaire, interview and observation).
- Explain the descriptive statistics used in analyzing data (e.g. mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance, percentage and frequency distribution).
- Explain the inferential statistics used in analyzing data (e.g. correlation, regression, chi-square and t-test).
- Explain how data is interpreted (e.g. what is the meaning of a low percentage, a high frequency, a low standard deviation, correlation of 0,1, -1, etc.)

#### 7. WRITING THE RESEARCH REPORT

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- Give an outline of the research report for chapters 1-5.

- Explain terms used in the research format e.g. Problem statement, significance of the study, scope of coverage, etc.
- Explain terms used in preliminary pages (e.g. Abstract, dedication, acknowledgement) and those used after the last chapter (e.g. references and appendix).
- Mention at least 3 references styles and state the difference between a reference and a bibliography.

**Recommended textbooks:**

Babbie, Earl (1986), 4<sup>th</sup> ed. *The Practice of Social Research*, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company).

Bailey, Kenneth D. (1994) 4<sup>th</sup> ed. *Method of Social Research*, (New York: The Free Press).

Selltiz, Clair; Wrigtsman, Lawrence S and Cook, Stuart W. (1976) 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. *Research Methods in Social Relations*, (HoltSounders-International Editions).

Sulaiman, Sa'idu (2012), *Researchers' Companion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kano: Samarib Publishers).