

OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION

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Abstract: Outcomes-based education (OBE), also known as standards-based education, is an educational theory that bases each part of an educational system around goals (outcomes). By the end of the educational experience, each student should have achieved the goal. There is no single specified style of teaching or assessment in OBE; instead, classes, opportunities, and assessments should all help students achieve the specified outcomes.^[1] The role of the faculty adapts into instructor, trainer, facilitator, and/or mentor based on the outcomes targeted. Outcome-based methods have been adopted in education systems around the world, at multiple levels. Australia and South Africa adopted OBE policies in the early 1990s but have since been phased out.^{[2][3]} The United States has had an OBE program in place since 1994 that has been adapted over the years.^{[4][5]} In 2005, Hong Kong adopted an outcome-based approach for its universities.^[6] Malaysia implemented OBE in all of their public schools systems in 2008.^[7] The European Union has proposed an education shift to focus on outcomes, across the EU.^[8] In an international effort to accept OBE, The Washington Accord was created in 1989; it is an agreement to accept undergraduate engineering degrees that were obtained using OBE methods. As of 2017, the full signatories are Australia, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, China and the United States.^[9]

Keywords: Outcomes-based education, standards-based education, etc.

Differences from traditional education methods :

OBE can primarily be distinguished from traditional education method by the way it incorporates three elements: theory of education, a systematic structure for education, and a specific approach to instructional practice.^[10] It organizes the entire educational system towards what are considered essential for the learners to successfully do at the end of their learning experiences.^[11] In this model, the term "outcome" is the core concept and sometimes used interchangeably with the terms "competency", "standards", "benchmarks", and "attainment targets".^[11] OBE also uses the same methodology formally and informally adopted in actual workplace to achieve outcomes.^[12] It focuses on the following skills when developing curricula and outcomes:

- Life skills;
- Basic skills;
- Professional and vocational skills;

- Intellectual skills;
- Interpersonal and personal skills.^[12]

In a regional/local/foundational/electrical education system, students are given grades and rankings compared to each other. Content and performance expectations are based primarily on what was taught in the past to students of a given age of 12-18. The goal of this education was to present the knowledge and skills of an older generation to the new generation of students, and to provide students with an environment in which to learn. The process paid little attention (beyond the classroom teacher) to whether or not students learn any of the material.^[13]

Benefits of OBE :

Clarity :

The focus on outcomes creates a clear expectation of what needs to be accomplished by the end of the course. Students will understand what is expected of them and teachers will know what they need to teach during the course. Clarity is important over years of schooling and when team teaching is involved. Each team member, or year in school, will have a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished in each class, or at each level, allowing students to progress.^[14] Those designing and planning the curriculum are expected to work backwards once an outcome has been decided upon; they must determine what knowledge and skills will be required to reach the outcome.^[15]

Flexibility :

With a clear sense of what needs to be accomplished, instructors will be able to structure their lessons around the student's needs. OBE does not specify a specific method of instruction, leaving instructors free to teach their students using any method. Instructors will also be able to recognize diversity among students by using various teaching and assessment techniques during their class.^[14] OBE is meant to be a student-centered learning model. Teachers are meant to guide and help the students understand the material in any way necessary, study guides, and group work are some of the methods instructors can use to facilitate students learning.^[16]

Comparison :

OBE can be compared across different institutions. On an individual level, institutions can look at what outcomes a student has achieved to decide what level the student would be at within a new institution. On an institutional level, institutions can compare themselves, by checking to see what outcomes they have in common, and find places where they may need improvement, based on the achievement of outcomes at other institutions.^[14] The ability to compare easily across institutions allows students to move between institutions with relative ease. The institutions can compare outcomes to determine what credits to award the student. The clearly articulated outcomes should allow institutions to assess the student's achievements rapidly, leading to increased movement of students. These outcomes also work

for school to work transitions. A potential employer can look at records of the potential employee to determine what outcomes they have achieved. They can then determine if the potential employee has the skills necessary for the job.^[14]

Involvement :

Student involvement in the classroom is a key part of OBE. Students are expected to do their own learning, so that they gain a full understanding of the material. Increased student involvement allows students to feel responsible for their own learning, and they should learn more through this individual learning.^[16] Other aspects of involvement are parental and community, through developing curriculum, or making changes to it. OBE outcomes are meant to be decided upon within a school system, or at a local level. Parents and community members are asked to give input in order to uphold the standards of education within a community and to ensure that students will be prepared for life after school.^[16]

Drawbacks of OBE :

Definition:

The definitions of the outcomes decided upon are subject to interpretation by those implementing them. Across different programs or even different instructors outcomes could be interpreted differently, leading to a difference in education, even though the same outcomes were said to be achieved.^[14] By outlining specific outcomes, a holistic approach to learning is lost. Learning can find itself reduced to something that is specific, measurable, and observable. As a result, outcomes are not yet widely recognized as a valid way of conceptualizing what learning is about.^[14]

Assessment problems:

When determining if an outcome has been achieved, assessments may become too mechanical, looking only to see if the student has acquired the knowledge. The ability to use and apply the knowledge in different ways may not be the focus of the assessment. The focus on determining if the outcome has been achieved leads to a loss of understanding and learning for students, who may never be shown how to use the knowledge they have gained.^[14] Instructors are faced with a challenge: they must learn to manage an environment that can become fundamentally different from what they are accustomed to. In regards to giving assessments, they must be willing to put in the time required to create a valid, reliable assessment that ideally would allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the information, while remaining objective.^[16]

Generality :

Education outcomes can lead to a constrained nature of teaching and assessment. Assessing liberal outcomes such as creativity, respect for self and others, responsibility, and self-sufficiency, can become problematic. There is not a measurable, observable, or specific way to determine if a student has achieved these outcomes. Due to the nature of specific

outcomes, OBE may actually work against its ideals of serving and creating individuals that have achieved many outcomes.^[14]

Involvement :

Parental involvement, as discussed in the benefits section can also be a drawback, if parents and community members are not willing to express their opinions on the quality of the education system, the system may not see a need for improvement, and not change to meet student's needs. Parents may also become too involved, requesting too many changes, so that important improvements get lost with other changes that are being suggested.^[16] Instructors will also find that their work is increased; they must work to first understand the outcome, then build a curriculum around each outcome they are required to meet. Instructors have found that implementing multiple outcomes is difficult to do equally, especially in primary school. Instructors will also find their work load increased if they chose to use an assessment method that evaluates students holistically.^[2]

India has become the permanent signatory member of the Washington Accord on 13 June 2014.^[23] India has started implementing OBE in higher technical education like diploma and undergraduate programmes. The National Board of Accreditation, a body for promoting international quality standards for technical education in India has started accrediting only the programmes running with OBE from 2013.^[24]

The National Board of Accreditation mandates establishing a culture of outcomes-based education in institutions that offer Engineering, Pharmacy, Management programs. Outcomes analysis and using the analytical reports to find gaps and carry out continuous improvement is essential cultural shift from how the above programs are run when OBE culture is not embraced. Outcomes analysis requires huge amount of data to be churned and made available at any time, anywhere. Such an access to scalable, accurate, automated and real-time data analysis is possible only if the institute adopts either excel sheet based measurement system or some kind of home-grown or commercial software system. It is observed that excel sheet based measurement and analysis system doesn't scale when the stakeholders want to analyse longitudinal data.

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