

# Outcome Based Education: A Conceptual Framework

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**Abstract:** The need for outcome based education has been there for decades. Outcome based education is a practical approach to develop the curriculum with inclusion of learning practices and focus on the students rather than teacher. Outcome-based education has many intrinsic benefits which must make it an attractive model for educationalist involved in curriculum planning, curriculum developers, teachers, employers, students. The paper attempts to describe the concept of outcome based education and also highlights the relationship of OBE and students centric learning which is imperative to achieve the desired outcome.

**Keywords:-** Outcome Based Education, Student Centric Learning, Learning Outcome

## I. INTRODUCTION

Outcome based education has gained popularity due to the changing need of education system where greater emphasis is being laid on learning achieved by the students and not mere degree. The concept of OBE emphasizes on a curriculum which have pre-defined set of learning outcomes. The curriculum should make it clear that what kind of skill set the students will possess after graduating from an institution. Outcome based education is a well-established concept in the west. Outcome-based education, as defined by Spady (1988) is a way of designing, developing, delivering and documenting instruction in terms of its intended goals and outcomes. Further Spady (1994) had defined OBE as "Outcome-Based Education means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences." As contrast to the input based education were the focus was on input processes and happily excepting the outcome whatever it was. The purpose of outcome based education is twofold, firstly designing the developing clear learning outcomes around which entire academic system can be woven and secondly establishing situations and occasions that encourage the students to achieve the pre-determined learning outcomes. The aim of the present study is to mention and highlight the contribution of various authors is the area of OBE and propose a theoretical model for OBE.

## II. DEFINING OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION

Spady (1994) is his book has highlighted that American education system is in dire need for OBE because of the dynamic and changing environment. The study conducted by Davis (2003) highlighted that OBE is not mere a method but

an approach to education in which decisions about the curriculum are driven by the exit learning outcomes that the students should display at the end of the course. As proposed by Harden et. al. (1999) that there is a need that learning outcome of a program should clearly define what sort of students will a program produce? What competencies and skill sets they will possess? Zitterkopf (1994) is his study prompted that the variance between being outcome- based and simply producing outcomes is substantial. Outcome based Education is easy to define but difficult to implement the overall philosophy of this education lies in the curriculum that is driven by the outcome and learning that the student will exhibit after the completion of the course. Harden et. al. (1999). The curriculum based on Outcome Based Education has to align with the pre-set learning outcomes of the course, methods of teaching, student centric learning, pedagogical interventions and evaluation parameter to result in a robust and meaningful exercise. This should enable the students to demonstrate the requisite skills and knowledge of what was delivered during the course. As mentioned by Spady (1994) that outcome is not knowing but doing therefore it is important that a lot more emphasis should be given to the action oriented verbs while defining learning outcome in a given curriculum/course.

## III. STUDENT CENTRIC LEARNING

Student-centred learning has always been a long-standing topic of discussion among educators in higher education. A foundation study conducted by Tyler (1949) highlighted the important of curriculum design and the focus on students learning, the study 69 years back laid emphasis on student centric learning.

In a study conducted by Barr and Tagg (1995) described "learning paradigm" as one in which the goal is for our institutions to operate like learners, continuously learning how to produce more learning. Cannon and Newble (2000) define student-centred learning (SCL) as: ways of thinking and learning that emphasize student responsibility and activity in learning rather than what the teachers are doing. Essentially SCL has student accountability and activity at its heart, in contrast to a robust importance on teacher regulated and coverage of academic content in much conventional, moralistic teaching. With a student-centred approach more is needed from students than learning course content in order to pass an exam. If 'learning for the exam' is the kind of learning that got them into university, then student-centred learning strategies can threaten students' sense of proficiency or

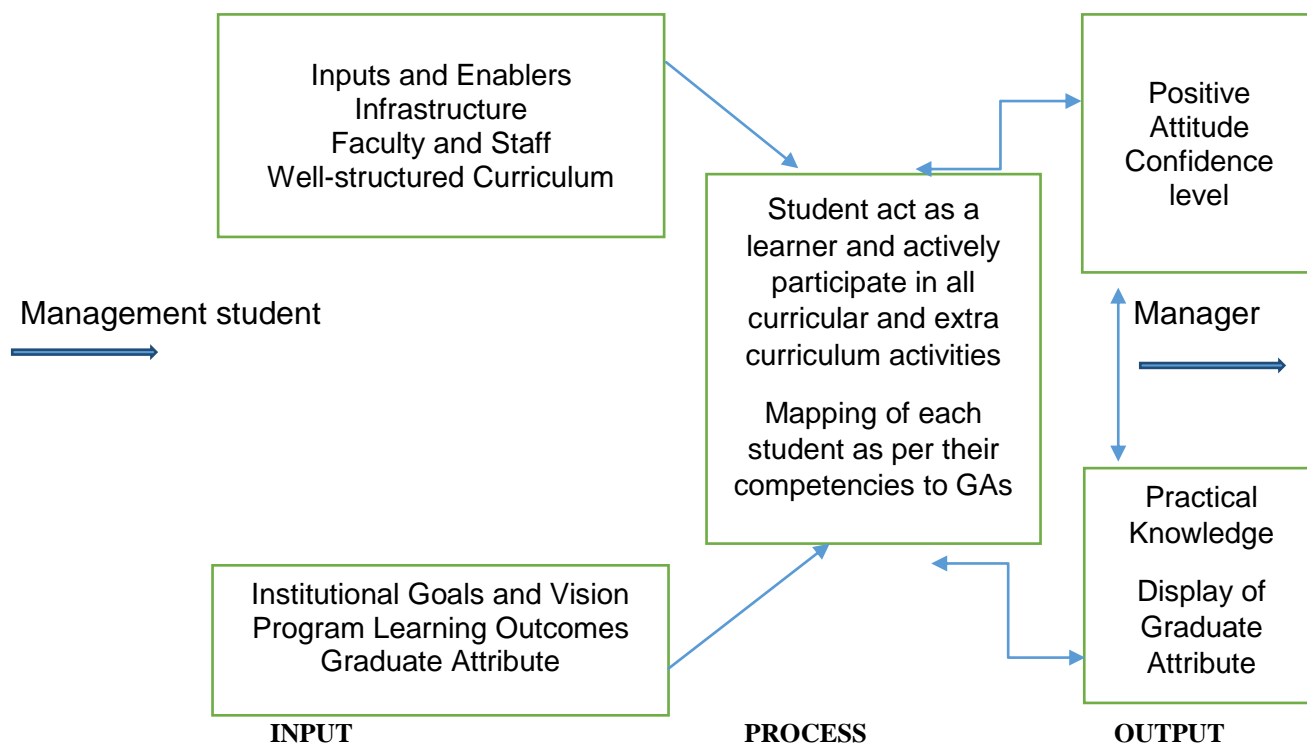
security if they are not sure exactly what learning is required and why. Ingleton et. al. (2000). Student-centred learning represents the following views: dependence upon active rather than passive learning, stress on deep learning and understanding, increased accountability and responsibility on the part of the student, an increased sense of independence in the learner, an interdependence between teacher and learner as divergent to complete learner dependence or independence (Fay, 1988). Wright (2011) in her book explains the various dynamics of SCL (1) the balance of power in the classroom, (2) the function of the course content, (3) the role of the teacher versus the role of the student, (4) the responsibility of learning, (5) the purpose and processes of evaluation. OBE and student learning are interlinked as any Outcome Based system would demand a student to act as a learner and not a mere observer, the student participation in an OBE setting is imperative for its implementation.

#### IV. IS OBE APPLICABLE IN POST GRADUATE CONTEXT

The above management studies highlight the implementation of OBE framework in the under-graduate context, whereas the application of the OBE in post-graduate level becomes a real challenge. All the above mentioned studies are generalised in nature to either school or graduate level education where the student undergo similar curriculum and skillsets. The OBE framework as suggested in the above mentioned studies may not be applicable in post graduate course like MBA, PGDM as students undergoes a series of specialised courses to

determine their career path. Talking about OBE implementation in higher education has limitedly explained in literature (Stinson and Milter, 1996). As further suggested by (Stinson and Milter, 1996) that there is no generalised or standardised answer to a managerial problem unlike law and medicine. Lobst et. al. (2010) conducted a study where they highlighted the importance of competency based education model at post graduate level in medical institutions they emphasized to have such a model due to the dynamic environment in which a learner operates. They also proposed that the competency based education is required both for learner and policy makers though it will take time to implement but it will take shape in due course of time. Similarly, in management education managers must be able to regulate what information is needed and to obtain and interpret the information from the source available to them. By frequently challenging and managing ill-structured problems, students develop the ability to ask the right questions and to determine what information is needed to resolve the situation or problem. It is recall by many alumni when asked that they may have learned lot of theory but while application in real life they may have applied more of common sense than any theoretical framework. As per the above mentioned details a theoretical model for achieving outcome based education is proposed for management institutions which can be tested empirically. The model primarily focuses on the competency building of the students by exposing them to varied real life challenges and managerial problems.

Figure 1: Advancement from management student to a manager through active participation



A learning model of how a management student becomes a manager. The model takes into account the input as enablers, processes as procedures and methods and outcome as results of management workplace education. The central condition for learning is sustained participation by students to a level that is suitable for his development. Through active participation, learners cultivate competence and sound state of mind. Superior aptitude leads to a more positive state of mind and higher learning capabilities. Evolving capabilities and a positive mind makes it easier for learners to participate, but the ability to participate completely depends on the behaviour of people in the organization and the kind of interaction the learner has with various individuals.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that available literature on OBE is more focused towards under-graduate courses, therefore more work needs to be done at the Post graduate level as the issues and challenges at PG level are entirely different. There is a strong need to move from teacher centric education to student centric education. The OBE framework should focus on competency building and skill orientation rather than only theoretical knowledge. Proposed model can be empirically tested to establish a sound framework for successful implementation of outcome based education.

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