



Higher Education Roundtable, Malaysia

Importance of Learning Outcomes for Student Performance



As educators, academicians, and thought leaders in the pedagogical space, one of **our foremost priorities is to ensure that our students achieve the best possible learning outcomes.**

Learning outcomes: also referred to as learning goals or learning objectives – are measurable skills, abilities, knowledge or values that students demonstrate as a result of completing a given course or program.

Effective learning outcomes can be put into place, at several different levels, e.g., at the lesson level, course level, program level, or even, degree level.

This type of outcome-oriented, student-focused approach to learning is popularly known as Outcome Based Education (OBE).



Camu OBE drives a Higher Education Institution's (HEI) effort towards outcome attainment, focusing on student development and growth at every phase of the lifecycle.

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Our team recently sat down with a panel of esteemed academicians, from eminent Institutions across Malaysia, for an informative and engaging roundtable discussion on OBE and its impact on student success.



Moderated by Prof. Dr. Vinitha Guptan, Vice Chancellor of Saito University College, this action-packed discussion sought to draw attention towards key topics and trends:

1. The educational ecosystem and the deconstruction of education
2. The importance of curriculum design and implementation
3. The relevance of disciplines such as OBE
4. The competency and skill of educators
5. The diverse teaching and learning approaches that students are exposed to
6. The disconnect between expectation and outcomes for different student profiles
7. The ability to design outcomes that are right for open and distance learning
8. The ability to measure skills in a short period of time (3-year programs)
9. The imminent shift towards competency-based learning
10. The role of technology as an enabler of diverse educational models

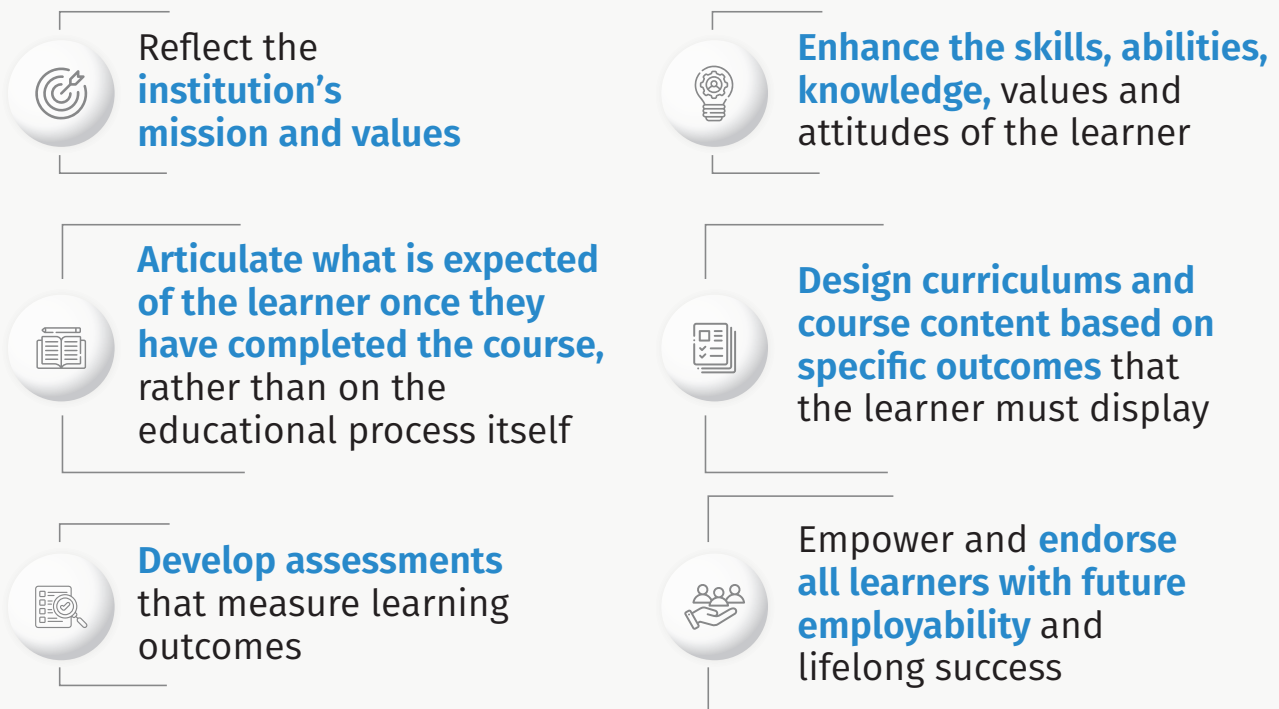
15 speakers put forth their thoughts and ideas over the course of 3 hours, leading to the emergence of valuable insights and themes that we have aimed to summarise in this article.

Enabling Clarity of Purpose

What do Institutions hope to achieve by implementing and complying with a fully flexible OBE model?

Well, it's important to ascertain what must be demonstrated throughout the course in order to help learners advance towards their outcomes.

OBE, as an emerging discipline, seeks to:



The outcome-based approach requires a shift in mindset, a practical and flexible outlook, as well as a system in which a learner is guided towards the achievement of their goals.

According to **Ms.Hemalatha Murugiah, Chief Executive, INTI International College**, *"In order to accomplish the full potential of learning outcomes, HEIs must address the various challenges it poses. For instance, how do Institutions connect the dots to ensure integrated, holistic, multidisciplinary education? That is the real question."*



Relevance, Change and Visualisation of The Future

For OBE to be successful, **every educational stakeholder must play their specific part, like pieces of a puzzle coming together to build the big picture.**

It is important to look at the institutional context, the role of teachers and administrators, the influence of regulatory agencies, and the need for learners to take greater responsibility in self-regulated learning and active participation.

Assoc Prof. Dr. Arkendu Sen, Monash University, suggests, *“In most instances, we see that university professors are not trained to be educators. This must change. OBE can be a real challenge without the presence of a multidisciplinary approach to teaching. For e.g., Instead of studying Mathematics and Physical Sciences separately, you would require professors from each department to draw on their specialty to provide a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter.”*

Awareness and Understanding of The Educational Ecosystem

An outcome-based approach must start right from the foundational or grassroots level itself.

By adopting a localised, contextualised, community-based outlook, HEIs will be able to make education holistic, accessible and more inclusive to a wider demographic of students.



Do we know enough about our students and their backgrounds to design appropriate curriculums? Moreover, are the curricula inclusive of their actual needs?

Prof. Dr. Vinitha Gupta,
Vice Chancellor,
Saito University College



Paradigm Shift, Training and Maintenance of Quality

The success of OBE lies in the ability of educators to transition from a traditional mode of instruction to an outcome-based one.

Thorough training, stimulation, and continuous monitoring of the implementation procedures are required, which can be strenuous and costly. Furthermore, curriculum designers must be able to create a conducive learning environment and consistent evaluation and assessment procedures. By doing so, the quality of education does not suffer and students are well-prepared for life after graduation.

Assoc Prof. Elajsolan Mohan, President of NAPEI, states, *“Before OBE was introduced, we produced a lot of successful graduates in the engineering field, most of whom hold senior positions today. So, do we stick to the traditional model of teaching and learning or do we adapt to new trends?”*

Dr. Teh Choon Jin, Senior Director & Registrar, Asia Pacific University, takes this conversation further. He says, *“The challenge lies in being able to shift from an outcome-based to a competency-based system, so that as a nation, we can produce employable graduates. If our goal is to raise the national income, we must produce students with in-demand skills.”*



Restructuring Outcomes and Assessment Techniques

A real challenge that the implementers of OBE are facing today is how to bridge the gap between conventional assessments that examine cognitive skills versus those that examine the true, intricate nature of student personalities such as the affective and psychometric domains.

There are some things that are beyond an HEI's scope of control. For instance, regulating bodies and enforcement agencies will mandate that certain criteria be met. But from an assessment perspective, we have to ask ourselves whether we are assessing students in the most authentic way.

Prof. Ts. Dr. Murali Raman, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Asia Pacific University, poses a valid question, *“How do we contribute to shifting the mindset from being Artificial Intelligence (AI) focused to Heart Intelligence (HI) driven?”*



Do learning outcomes take into consideration interpersonal skills and social skills?

Ms. Stella Lau Ka Wai,
Managing Director of University &
Colleges, SEGi University



Asst. Prof. Dr. Rana Altounjy, Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Committee, Manipal University, posed a valid question, *“Are we really able to measure non-cognitive outcomes?”*

Designing Curriculums That are Technology Enabled

From designing learning outcomes, to mapping them to the specific programs, to tracking their progress, and making appropriate changes, technology plays a vital role in the functioning of OBE. But are Institutions able to leverage the right technologies, so that they may align with the vision and not detract from it?

Dr. HC Aslam Khan, Vice Chairman, ERICAN Education Group, raises a crucial point. *“Embracing the change in the landscape is paramount. While technology will not replace teachers, teachers who leverage technology will replace those who don’t.”*

Ms. Vicky Chua Chek Yea, Principal and CEO, NKL International College adds to the above point. *“We must understand technology’s role in facilitating OBE, as we are moving towards a hybrid mode of education. How do we improve our standard operating procedures and ensure better quality administration?”*

Prof. Ts. Dr. Murali Raman steers the discussion ahead towards the perils. *“Machine learning is getting smarter and more sophisticated. Programs such as Open AI’s ChatGPT can help students achieve their examination outcomes. At the same time, it poses a threat to the security and integrity of tests. HEIs will have to learn how to circumvent issues such as plagiarism and malpractice. Assessments need to be redesigned in order to take the influence of chatbots into consideration.”*

Influence and Support of Regulating Agencies

While the rigidity of the administration can be seen as stifling, it is important to understand that the government takes into consideration a variety of student demographics, as well as various learning styles and paces. Thus, having guidelines is important as it creates parameters and benchmarks for all HEIs.

That being said, **Dr. Srikumar Chakravarthi, Deputy Vice Chancellor, SEGi University**, sheds light on the importance of having practical and hands-on parameters as well. *“Importance is given to competencies, standards and benchmarks, but what about the application-based component?”*

Similarly, **Ts.Dr. Wan Hamiza ,PhD, P.Tech. Asst Director (Curriculum Design, Executive Education), Asia School of Business**, suggests, *“Skill is one of the main learning outcomes, and the best way to assess it is to have a hands-on approach, with practical training.”*

Teacher’s Role and Responsibility in Successful Learning

The needs of the learners come first in OBE. Therefore, Institutions will not design the curriculum around the expertise of their faculty, rather, they will hire faculty that is best able to deliver an outcome-based curriculum. Additionally, instructors must have a clear direction while making assessment decisions.

Dr. Ngeow Yeok Meng, Head (Centre for Curriculum Development and Innovation), University Tunku Abdul Rahman, brings up an interesting point. *“Faculty is always looking for instant gratification, but why not allow students a few years to realise their outcomes? In reality, certain skills and attributes will manifest at different stages of a post-graduate’s life. It is important to design assessments that are more realistic.”*



Are faculty ready to look at outcomes in a meaningful way through constructive alignment?

AP Dr. Irene Tan,
Vice Chancellor,
Veritas University College



As you can tell, the above themes have triggered a number of epiphanies and learnings, as well as some hard truths.

The Camu team has put together the key takeaways, which can be used as a foundation for your own institutional seminars.

- 1. The importance of conceptualising** the educational ecosystem
- 2. The need for collaboration, knowledge sharing,** training and upskilling
- 3. The need to design student-friendly, future-proof** and industry-specific curriculums
- 4. Exploring expanded opportunities** through mobility
- 5. The importance of assessments** and assessments of evidence
- 6. Embracing technological development** and innovation
- 7. Relying on the Ministry and Agencies** to help HEIs cope with the changes
- 8. The impending move from OBE to Competency-Based Education**

We hope that, as a stakeholder in education,
you found this article to be useful.

Our aim, at **Camu**, is to encourage such
open-ended discussions in order to push our
boundaries of thinking and arrive
at the best possible solutions.

**Write to us if you would like to know more
about this roundtable seminar.**



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