

Viability of Outcome-Based Education Approach in Social Science Education: A Review

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Abstract:

Social science education is a field of study that focuses on the teaching and learning of social science subjects. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including curriculum development, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. With its deep roots in history, social science education presents a unique set of challenges due to its inherent complexity and multifaceted nature. There are many research studies in the field of social sciences, and also in the field of the OBE approach. However, there are limited studies on the OBE approach in social science education. Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap of the viability of the OBE approach in social science education. This research entirely depends on declarative knowledge. Existing literature has highlighted significant advantages of OBE. Similarly, there are notable differences between traditional teacher-centered content-based education and student-centered OBE approach. Social science education plays a vital role in preparing students to become informed and engaged citizens in a complex and ever-changing world. By addressing the challenges and embracing new approaches, educators can continue to enhance the quality and effectiveness of social science education for all students by selecting a proper mix of traditional teaching approaches and student-centered OBE approaches.

Keywords: Outcome-Based Education, Social Science Education, Centered Content-Based Education

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Introduction

Education is essential for people to succeed, and its quality is important for sustainable development (United Nations, 2022). However, in recent years, there have been concerns about the quality of education (Wickramasinghe, 2018). According to Killen (2000), the quality of an education system can be judged by looking at three things: the resources it has (inputs), what happens within the system (processes), and the results it achieves (outputs). All three are important, but there has been a shift in focus to results in recent years, as this is what ultimately shows how good an education is. To address the challenges of today's world, education needs to be relevant and responsive to the needs of society (Oreta, 2014). As a result, many higher education systems are changing to strengthen the links between educational institutions, businesses, and society (Wickramasinghe, 2018). The main focus of these changes is on improving the results of the education system. Traditional content-based education was the most common approach to education for many years. It focused on teachers passing on knowledge to students, often through lectures and textbooks (Kaliannan & Chandran, 2012). The emphasis was on delivering content, and students were assessed on their ability to memorize and recall information.

However, traditional content-based education has been criticized for a number of reasons. First, it does not accurately reflect what students really learn (Fu-Lai Tony Yu, 2016). Second, students often do not perform well during lectures (Kaliannan & Chandran, 2012). Third, it encourages students to be passive learners who rely on their teachers and transcripts for information, rather than actively building their knowledge (Kaliannan & Chandran, 2012). Due to these shortcomings, most educational institutions have now switched to OBE. OBE is a student-centered approach that focuses on what students should be able to do as a result of their education (Spady, 1994). Educators and administrators design curricula, facilitate student learning, and assess student success with a focus on desired educational outcomes (Killen, 2000). OBE also places more emphasis on the educational process than on the subject matter (Tam, 2014).

In OBE, the teacher's role changes from being the subject matter expert to being a facilitator (Tam, 2014). This can be a challenging change for both teachers and students, but it is essential for successful OBE implementation. Tam (2014) warns that it is important to avoid making OBE too rigid and inflexible when implementing it. Otherwise, it could put more stress on educators, administrators, and learners. Senaratne (2019) agrees, noting that educational reforms must be carefully planned to avoid making mistakes. Overall, the shift away from traditional teacher-centered content-based education to student-centered OBE is a positive one. However, it is important to be aware of the key differences between these two approaches.

There were many studies that have been conducted relating to OBE by using different methodologies and in different contexts, but very limited research in the field of social sciences. Therefore, this study aims to explore the concept of OBE with the differences between the Traditional Teacher-Centered Content-Based Education Approach and the Student-Centered OBE Approach and Review the viability of the OBE Approach in social science education.

Objectives of the Study

- Explore the concept of 'Outcome-Based Education'.
- Examine the Differences between the Traditional Teacher-Centered Content-Based Education Approach and the Student-Centered Outcome-Based Education Approach.
- Review the viability of the Outcome-Based Education Approach in Social Science Education.

Research Method

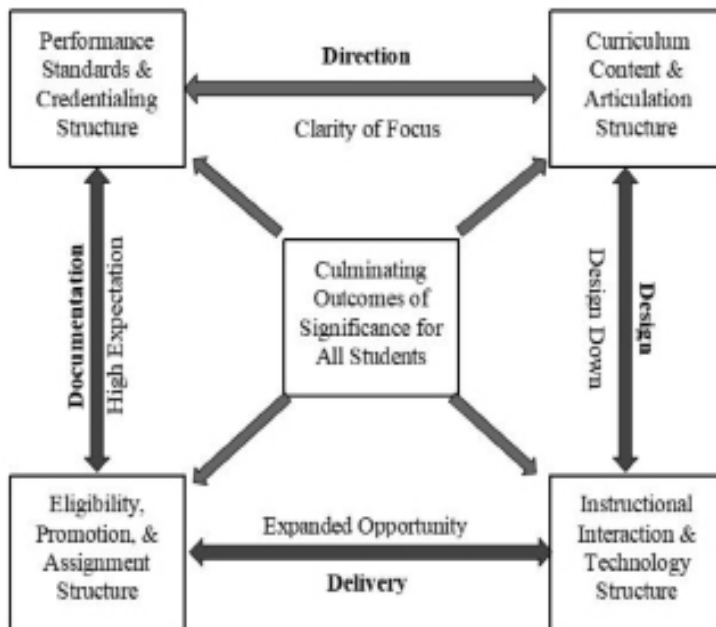
Qualitative descriptive research design was employed to achieve the research objectives. This research entirely depends on declarative knowledge. In this research, a conceptual content analysis was conducted to achieve the research objectives. This approach is well suited, when prior research exists about a phenomenon and further description is needed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), and to analyze the multifaceted data (Kim et al., 2017). NVivo-11, a qualitative data analysis computer software package was used to conduct the data analysis.

Findings and Discussion

What is Outcome-Based Education?

Defining educational objectives and outcomes has been around since the 1960s and 1970s (Wraga, 2007). Back then, people started to care more about what students should learn and be able to do after finishing their education. Ralph Tyler's book "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction" was very important in showing the need for clear educational objectives and outcomes. Tyler's work laid the foundation for OBE (Wraga, 2007). However, William G. Spady, an educational psychologist and sociologist, is credited with starting the OBE approach. Spady (1994) said, "Everything in an educational system is organized and focused on what is necessary for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences" (p. 12). The main idea of Spady's definition is that OBE is a complete way to manage education. It basically guides the planning and organization of the teaching process, with a focus on student learning outcomes. Everyone involved in the process, including educators, students, and administrators, needs to focus their attention and efforts on the learning outcomes.

Figure 01: Outcome-Based Education Framework



Source: Spady, 1994, (p.23)

The OBE framework (see figure 01) consists of four main structures:

- **Performance Standards & Credentialing Structure:** This structure defines the standards that students must meet to earn a credential, such as a diploma or degree.
- **Curriculum Content & Articulation Structure:** This structure defines the curriculum content, which is the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn.
- **Instructional Interaction & Technology Structure:** This structure defines the teaching and learning activities that will be used to help students achieve the learning outcomes.
- **Eligibility, Promotion, & Assignment Structure:** This structure defines the rules and procedures for student progress, such as promotion and graduation.

Four operating principles also guide the OBE framework:

- **Clarity of focus:** The learning outcomes should be clearly defined and measurable.
- **Design down:** The curriculum and instruction should be designed to help students achieve the learning outcomes.
- **Expanded opportunity:** All students should have the opportunity to learn and achieve the learning outcomes.
- **High expectations:** Students should be held to high expectations and standards.

Numerous scholarly inquiries have been dedicated to exploring OBE across diverse educational landscapes on our planet. However, there is no single, universally accepted definition of OBE (Syeed et al., 2022). Spady highlights that there has been a noticeable absence of a well-defined and considerate explanation regarding the true nature of OBE, its underlying necessity, and the mechanics of its functioning (Brandt, 1993).

OBE approach requires all stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and students, to work together to ensure that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned with the desired outcomes (Damit et al., 2021). However, for the successful implementation of OBE, it is crucial to establish a seamless connection between intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning activities, student assessment techniques, and the ultimate measurement of its achievement (Ram et al., 2020). Also, Ram et al., (2020) highlighted that the OBE prioritizes the structured utilization of learning taxonomies, while it does not prescribe specific educational methodologies to be employed.

Benefits of the Outcome-Based Education Approach

The conventional teacher-centered education approach, which relies on content-based education, has faced criticism for its limitations. As a result, the student-centered OBE approach has emerged as a replacement. Existing literature has highlighted significant advantages of OBE. Kaliannan and Chandran (2012) delve into the empowering facets of OBE in their discussion. OBE, characterized by its student-centric approach to education, places a strong emphasis on defining the anticipated learning outcomes for students. By imparting a clear understanding of what students are expected to accomplish and involving them in the learning process, OBE enables students to assume control of their educational journey. Kaliannan and Chandran (2012) underscore several notable benefits of OBE for students, which encompass the following key points:

- **Clearly Defined Learning Objectives:** OBE establishes explicit learning goals, nurturing student focus and motivation.
- **Active Participation:** By encouraging active engagement, OBE fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students.
- **Tailored Learning:** OBE accommodates individual learning paces and styles, promoting greater student success.
- **Heightened Engagement:** OBE cultivates increased student engagement, which has a positive impact on overall learning outcomes.

In conclusion, Kaliannan and Chandran (2012) advocate for the effectiveness of OBE in empowering students and helping them unleash their full potential. Their study underscores OBE's student-centered nature, its ability to clarify learning objectives, and its role in promoting active participation in the learning process. Furthermore, OBE's numerous advantages, including personalized learning, increased engagement, and enhanced learning outcomes, solidify its value as a potent educational tool.

Similarly, Rao (2020) outlines the benefits of OBE in the article "Outcome-based education: An outline." The article underscores the following advantages of OBE:

- **Enhanced Student Learning:** "OBE can enhance student learning by ensuring that students have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and by offering various ways for them to demonstrate their learning" (Rao, 2020, p. 2).
- **Elevated Student Engagement:** "OBE can increase student engagement by affording students more control over their learning and by providing opportunities for active participation in assessments" (Rao, 2020, p. 2).
- **Improved Curriculum Design:** "OBE can enhance curriculum design by aligning the curriculum with the desired learning outcomes" (Rao, 2020, p. 2).
- **Enhanced Transparency and Accountability:** "OBE can boost transparency and accountability by clearly specifying what students are expected to learn and how their learning will be evaluated" (Rao, 2020, p. 2).
- **Enhanced Communication Among Students, Faculty, and Administrators:** "OBE can enhance communication among students, faculty, and administrators by ensuring that everyone has a clear understanding of the learning outcomes and how they will be assessed" (Rao, 2020, p. 2).

Tan, Chan & Subramaniam, (2018) noted that OBE strategies improves competency in information acquisition in phrases of better very last path grades and cognitive abilities, enhance medical abilities and nursing center abilities and

better behavioural abilities rating whilst acting medical abilities. Learners' delight turned into additionally encouraging as suggested in researching more on OBE. Kaliannan and Chandran (2012) performed a survey with the aim to identify the extent to fulfillment of students' expectation from the degree program and efficiency of the university via implementing OBE. According to findings of the survey, the implementation of OBE education turned to powerful. Students can know their very own stage of learning and functionality for the topics that they registered. From that, they can determine their very own fulfillment throughout the program. Further, educators can determine their overall performance and take corrective.

Differences between Traditional Teacher-Centered Content-Based Education Approach and Student-Centered Outcome-Based Education Approach

Traditional teacher-centered content-based education is a long-standing approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student (Garrett, 2008). Teacher-centered education and student-centered education are two different approaches to teaching and learning that have been widely debated in the field of education (Altun, 2023). Traditional, teacher-centered content-based education is characterized by the following features:

- Teacher-led instruction: The teacher is the primary source of information, and students are expected to passively receive knowledge (Altun, 2023; Garrett, 2008).
- Content-focused curriculum: The focus is on teaching students a specific body of knowledge, often through lectures, textbooks, and worksheets (Garrett, 2008).
- Standardized assessment: Students are assessed based on their ability to recall and reproduce information (Garrett, 2008).

Student-centered OBE is characterized by the following features:

- Learner-centered instruction: Students are actively involved in their own learning, and the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide (Rao, 2020).
- Outcome-focused curriculum: The focus is on helping students develop

specific skills and competencies (Rao, 2020).

- Authentic assessment: Students are assessed based on their ability to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations (Rao, 2020).

Strengths of traditional, teacher-centered content-based education:

- Provides a strong foundation of knowledge
- Can be effective for teaching basic skills and concepts
- Efficient for large classes

Weaknesses of traditional, teacher-centered content-based education:

- Can be passive and unengaging for students
- May not adequately prepare students for the real world
- Does not allow for much student choice or differentiation

Strengths of student-centered OBE:

- Promotes active learning and engagement
- Prepares students for real-world applications
- Allows for student choice and differentiation

Weaknesses of student-centered OBE:

- Can be more demanding for teachers
- May require more time and resources
- May be challenging to assess student learning

OBE prioritizes the structured utilization of learning taxonomies, while it does not prescribe specific educational methodologies to be employed (Ram et al., 2020). Ultimately, the best approach to education is likely to be a combination of traditional and student-centered methods. The specific mix of strategies will vary depending on the individual teacher, the students' needs, and the subject matter.

Viability of the Outcome-Based Education Approach in Social Science Education

Numerous studies have grappled with the daunting task of formulating unambiguous and quantifiable learning outcomes within the framework of OBE. As highlighted by Gunarathne et al. (2019), this issue stands as a significant challenge when implementing OBE within the context of Sri Lankan accounting education. Similarly, akin to the experiences detailed by Kaliannan and Chandran (2012), we encountered difficulties in precisely delineating the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) while integrating OBE into the Malaysian educational system. Collins et al. (2015), in their research on the introduction of OBE in first-year social work education, noted the initial struggle in defining quantifiable learning outcomes. This challenge becomes particularly pronounced in fields characterized by the intricacy and diverse demands of occupations, as exemplified in the realm of social work. As underscored by Ram et al. (2020), similar findings underline the precise labeling of outcomes in diverse domains, such as geoscience.

Ganesh delved into the clarity of learning outcomes for electronic and communication engineering at Indian universities, where the broad spectrum of skills required adds complexity to isolating specific knowledge students must acquire. In a 2012 study led by Akir et al., a comparable challenge emerged, perturbing the integration of OBE and technology-mediated learning in a Malaysian academic institution. It is evident that precisely defining and assessing learning outcomes poses a substantial impediment to OBE implementation. In the context of Afghanistan, Maleki (2021) uncovered similar challenges within the educational system. Concretely delineating assessable learning outcomes becomes particularly intricate in unique circumstances such as this. Notably, Kennedy and Haydon (2020) emphasized the interrelated competencies and expertise required in human service programs, thus emphasizing the paramount importance of establishing achievable learning outcomes for the success of OBE.

For engineering education, as unveiled by Syeed et al. (2022), the challenge lies in defining concrete and quantifiable learning goals. The multifaceted competencies demanded by engineering programs necessitate precisely articulated learning outcomes to excel, corroborating the findings of Ranjee et al. (2013) regarding the significance of clear learning objectives in engineering instruction in Malaysia, despite the associated challenges. It is apparent that clearly defining

learning outcomes constitutes a substantial challenge during OBE implementation, a point reinforced by these eleven studies, collectively presenting robust evidence of this challenge. Intriguingly, the study conducted by Damith et al. (2021) did not delve into this challenge. Their research primarily focused on the perspectives of vocational school instructors in Malaysia regarding OBE, offering a distinct viewpoint within the broader landscape of OBE challenges.

As Kaliannan and Chandran (2012) have pointed out, the process of designing teaching and learning strategies that align with the requirements of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Malaysia presents a formidable challenge. Once the learning objectives are well-defined, the subsequent challenge lies in determining how to instruct in a manner that precisely corresponds to these objectives. A meticulous approach to lesson planning is deemed indispensable for ensuring student success, as emphasized by Collins (2015). Ganesh's findings underscore the necessity of tailoring both learning and teaching approaches to enable students to acquire the essential skills and knowledge within an OBE framework. Furthermore, as Akir et al. (2012) highlight, integrating technology can enhance the teaching methods in the context of OBE. It is worth noting that the task of aligning teaching and learning techniques with the specified learning outcomes during the implementation of OBE is undeniably substantial in its complexity. Maleki (2021) similarly underscores the significant challenge of harmonizing teaching methods with learning outcomes in the OBE context.

Gunarathne et al. (2019) highlighted the critical importance of aligning what students learn with how they are assessed for the success of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Sri Lankan college accounting classes. They emphasized that assessing whether students have truly grasped the content may not always be achieved through specific tests or methods alone. Collins (2015) emphasized that assessments should align seamlessly with the intended learning outcomes to accurately measure student progress toward those objectives. However, it is acknowledged that achieving this alignment can be a formidable challenge.

In the context of Indian universities, Ram and their coauthors (2020) explored the application of learning taxonomies and OBE in creating a geology curriculum. Their research underscored the complexity of ensuring that

assessments accurately mirror student learning. Premalatha (2019) stressed that assessments must be in harmony with the learning outcomes to effectively gauge student progress accurately. Adjusting assessment methods to precisely measure students' achievement of these learning outcomes is vital for successful OBE implementation, as also noted by Ganesh (2016). Similarly, Akir et al. (2012) and Maleiki (2021) pointed out the challenges of aligning examination procedures with learning outcomes. Kennedy and Haydon (2020) echoed the significance of aligning assessment techniques with learning outcomes for a precise evaluation of academic performance. Syeed et al. (2022) addressed the complexity of aligning student assessment techniques with learning outcomes under the OBE approach. Ranjee and colleagues (2013) revealed the intricacies involved in assessing various strategies to evaluate student mastery of learning outcomes. Furthermore, Premalatha (2019) delved into the use of outcomes assessment methods in OBE to evaluate student learning, emphasizing the difficulty of ensuring fair and accurate evaluations. The ultimate goal for assessments should be to provide equitable opportunities for all students to demonstrate their skills.

Ram et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of seeking stakeholder approval before implementing Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Involving key stakeholders in the creation of learning outcomes and assessment design is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of OBE (Gunarathne et al., 2019). However, challenges arise as different individuals may interpret the role of education and OBE differently (Kaliannan and Chandran, 2012). Collins (2015) stressed the significance of garnering support from various parties, including students, educators, and employers, prior to OBE implementation. Engaging stakeholders is vital for creating meaningful learning outcomes (Collins, 2015). Premalatha (2019) highlighted that without belief in the assessment strategies, their effectiveness may be compromised. Ganesh (2016) underscored the critical need for stakeholder buy-in for successful OBE implementation (Akir et al., 2012). Challengingly, convincing key individuals to support OBE can be difficult, as highlighted by Maleiki (2021). Kennedy and Haydon (2020) identified educators, students, and employers as key stakeholders in OBE. However, our research reveals that this challenge persists due to varied perspectives on the significance of education and the role of OBE. Syeed's findings also indicate that these issues extend to

engineering courses in Malaysia (Ranjee et al., 2013).

Gunarathne et al. (2019) found that implementing OBE can be resource-intensive, requiring time and effort to develop clear and measurable learning outcomes, align assessment methods, and involve stakeholders. Effective planning and resource allocation are key to successful OBE implementation (Ram et al., 2020). Managing limited resources within an OBE context is a challenging task (Akir et al., 2012). Resource allocation challenges were also highlighted by Maleki (2021) and Kennedy and Haydon (2020). Syeed et al. (2022) extended these findings to engineering education, emphasizing the resource-intensive nature of OBE.

Maleki (2021) discussed challenges specific to Afghanistan, where the education system has been disrupted by decades of war. The lack of a supportive environment hampers OBE implementation, impacting effective teaching and learning. Similarly, Damith et al. (2021) found resistance among administrators in Malaysian vocational colleges, hindering OBE implementation. Some administrators may not perceive the benefits of OBE or are concerned about the additional workload for educators. In the context of engineering education in Malaysia, Ranjee et al. (2013) noted a lack of a supportive environment for OBE implementation. These challenges are exacerbated by unstable conditions within OBE systems.

Damith et al. (2021) highlighted that OBE adoption in Malaysian vocational colleges added to educators' workload. Developing new teaching materials, assessments, and tracking student progress posed challenges. The curriculum for OBE in Malaysian vocational colleges is still in early development stages, leading to confusion among educators about what and how to teach (Damith et al., 2021). Furthermore, the OBE system lacks stability in its implementation (Damith et al., 2021), causing difficulties in student progression and educator support. Kennedy and Haydon (2020) pointed out that OBE necessitates a cultural shift away from teaching-centric to learning-centric approaches. However, this cultural change is challenging, as it requires educators and staff to change their mindset and teaching methods. In summary, OBE implementation faces multifaceted challenges, including stakeholder involvement, resource allocation, a lack of a supportive

environment, curriculum development, and cultural shifts. Understanding and addressing these challenges is vital to successful OBE implementation in social science education.

Conclusion

Social science education is a field of study that focuses on the teaching and learning of social science subjects, such as history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, and psychology. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including curriculum development, instructional methods, assessment strategies, and teacher education. OBE is a complete way to manage education. It basically guides the planning and organization of the teaching process, with a focus on student learning outcomes. Existing literature has highlighted significant advantages of OBE. Similarly, there are notable differences between traditional teacher-centered content-based education and student-centered OBE approach. Social science education plays a vital role in preparing students to become informed and engaged citizens in a complex and ever-changing world. By addressing the challenges and embracing new approaches, educators can continue to enhance the quality and effectiveness of social science education for all students by selecting a proper mix of traditional teaching approaches and student-centered OBE approaches.

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