

Implementing Outcomes Based Education in Foundation Program

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Abstract

This paper looks at how Foundation Program at Dhofar University in the Sultanate of Oman aligned its English language program with the principles of outcomes based education. The Ministry of Higher Education, Oman, decided to lay down a policy of higher education that will assess the Higher Education Providers' academic programs on the basis of the standards which are known as Oman Academic Standards. Students are required to have acceptable competencies in the following four areas: English language, Mathematics, Computing and Study Skills. This paper discusses how Foundation Program at Dhofar University aligns its courses with the learning outcomes and that this is a program that delivers its courses much the same as the Outcomes Based Education methodology.

Keywords: GFP, learning outcomes, OAS, OBE

INTRODUCTION

Oman is one of the Gulf Countries that has laid emphasis on educating its human resource. To ensure that the Higher Education Institutions(HEIs) provide quality education, they are required to go through the process of licensing and accreditation by Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA). In order to get accreditation, every institution has to run a General Foundation Program (Ministerial Decision No. 72/2008) to 'prepare students for effective participation in higher education.' This program targets secondary school graduates who fail to attain the prescribed learning outcomes in the areas of English Language, mathematics, computing and general study skills (1.1 and 1.2 Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs document OAC Ministry of Higher Education).

The Foundation Program (FP) of Dhofar University is one of the first to be recognised as a program that has 'aligned its Foundation program with Oman's National General Foundation Program Standards.' In this context, it is important to understand the General Foundation Program (GFP) standards and the related learning outcomes to determine whether the GFP at Dhofar University can be compared to the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) as advocated by William Spady (1994), according to whom, OBE is a process of "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 (p.1).

1.WHAT IS OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION?

Outcomes Based Education aims at designing a curriculum and implementing it focusing on what students can actually do after they are taught. OBE expects the educators to ask what the teachers want the students to learn, why they want to learn it, how best they want the students learn it and how will the teachers know what the students have learnt.

Thus, in OBE the desired outcome is selected first and the curriculum, instructional materials and assessments are created to support the intended outcome (Spady 1988; 1993). Outcomes according to Spady, are ".....clear learning results that we want students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences" (1994, p. 2). These outcomes determine the curriculum design. It is a kind of informed teaching and learning. Learners know beforehand what they are going to learn and how they are going to learn what they learn, and the teachers know what their students are expected to learn and how best they will be able to use the learnt experience in doing what they are expected to do at the end of the learning.

Outcomes Based Assessment In An English Language Program

Margaret B. Puckett, Janet K. Black

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