



SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SISSLDD)

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on

Transition to Outcome Based Education: Challenges and Coping Strategies

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Backdrop:

Indian education system particularly at higher education level is gradually moving towards outcome-based education (OBE) both in terms of NEP 2020 mandate as well as requirements of international parity. Accreditation agencies also mandate the same. It has been a long, and arduous journey. Many faculty members, however, take the task as mechanist without realizing the underlying rationale. And that makes the task of transition more difficult.

Fundamental Premises of OBE:

Focus on learners: The underlying premise of OBE is that the onus of learning lies on “learners” and “not on teachers”. This means the curriculum should primarily be learner centric, implying thereby it should define what the learners are “expected to learn” at the end of the course. Everything that is designed should keep this in mind.

Hierarchical levels of learning: This is another major step; cognitive learning cannot be of single phase. Classically Bloom’s Taxonomy defines six levels of learning from L1 to L6: “remembering”, “understanding”, “applying”, “analyzing”, “evaluating” and finally “creating”. What it means is that each course should be designed in such a way that the learners learn sequentially in the defined hierarchy; this is true for all three areas of competencies, namely, knowledge, skills and attitude. What it essentially means is that the curriculum should be so structured that it allows the learners to traverse the journey from the minimum level of learning (L1: remembering) to any of the higher levels say, L3 or L4 or L5 or even L6 depending on the subject, course and type of learners.

Teaching pedagogy: As the focus of learning is primarily on learners and different learners may have unique “learning styles”, teaching pedagogy will vary across the students. Further, since the learners learn from experience they undergo (Constructivism Theory) through understanding and knowledge of the world, the pedagogy must be customized and involve active participation by the learners. The concept of mere transition of knowledge through traditional classroom mode is virtually ruled out and replaced by “experiential learning” and / or “project-based learning”.

Role of teachers: And finally, the role of teachers will be more as “mentors”, “guides” and “facilitators” rather than traditional knowledge providers. The teachers must see their students learn and grow rather than forcing textbook knowledge on them. The teachers thus need to

assume role of “passive catalyst” compared to “active machines of knowledge transmission”.

Challenges in Transition:

There are several roadblocks. The transition needs clear understanding of the roles of teachers as well as students. It also means understanding the various levels of learning (L1 to L6) for all subjects taught in the course. It also calls for defining the learning outcomes and mapping them with the overall program outcomes (POs), reshaping the course curriculum and new active engagement pedagogic strategies with which neither the faculty nor the students are well conversant with. Framing of various assessment tools / techniques for judging the learning outcomes is a challenging task. But the most important challenge lies in the change in the mental construct of the faculty: how to assume the role of facilitators giving up the power of knowledge transferers.

Strategies Institutions / Educators Should Follow:

The problem is complex and therefore, there is no easy solution. There are technical aspects as well as matters falling into human domain. Both need to be tackled separately. Some of the strategies institutions and educators should follow to ensure that OBE becomes a success in their institutions are as under:

Workshops for students: One of the major problems has been that the students are not aware of the OBE though they are the main benefactors and the success of the scheme depends on how they use it. The institute should, therefore, run a series of workshops on OBE and its nuances to all students. These should particularly emphasize the differences between the existing “input-based model” and the new “outcome-based approach”.

Training programs for faculty: This is another strategy the institute must follow: exposing all faculty members to the fundamentals of OBE including the curriculum design, setting of learning outcomes and their mapping with the program outcomes, new teaching pedagogies and how / where to use them and new assessment approaches (for assessing the learning outcomes) including development of rubrics. One important point for discussion in such training programs will be the expected new role of faculty and how it is beneficial for them.

Exit feedback from students: This will provide critical information regarding the efficacy of the system in terms of improving some of the crucial parameters say, employability skills, better life skills, among

others. Such exit feedback will throw important light on the utility and success of the new system and enable the institution to take corrective steps, if any. It will also help in the path of continuous improvement.

Academic audit: Another strategy can be to expose the existing OBE mechanism to some of the important subjects by external experts. This will help the institution to understand better the implementation of the scheme and to take remedial steps.

Documentation: For any system to take place and stabilize, there is need for proper documentation. This will help the institute to build on and go on as a “business continuity” measure. All steps followed for implementation of OBE should be documented for posterity.

Moving Ahead:

OBE is a major step forward in the educational journey of an academic institution. The quality of its implementation is of prime importance. OBE should not be implemented as any other measure; it must be in place in true spirit so that the end users, i.e. the learners get maximum benefit out of it. The ultimate objective of OBE is to improve the quality of our future leaders and that must happen.
