

Enhancing Quality Education through Outcome-Based Practices: Insights from Elementary Teachers in Mindanao, Philippines

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Abstract

Introduction: Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is an educational framework focused on curriculum design that emphasizes clearly defined student learning outcomes. The implementation of OBE has introduced various demands within higher education, particularly in basic education settings.

Objectives: This study aims to investigate the understanding of OBE among teachers at Bukidnon State University in Malaybalay City for the academic year 2023-2024.

Methods: It employed a qualitative design. The research explores how faculty members of the College of Education-Elementary Laboratory School (COE-ELS) perceive OBE in their instructional and assessment practices. Seventeen faculty members were purposively selected as participants, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews to provide rich qualitative insights.

Results: The findings reveal four key themes: the importance of practical application and skill development, differentiated activities and integration, the contrast between learner-centered and teacher-centered approaches, and the practical challenges and strategies associated with OBE implementation.

Conclusions: The results highlight the multifaceted nature of educational practices, emphasizing the importance of practical application and skill development in effective learning. The need for tailored approaches is underscored by the emphasis on differentiated activities and integration, which cater to diverse learner needs. Additionally, the contrast between learner-centered and teacher-centered methodologies calls for a critical examination of pedagogical strategies, advocating for a shift towards more student-focused learning environments while addressing the practical challenges of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) implementation.

Keywords: assessment practices, instructional practices, Outcome-based education, teachers, and understanding, quality education, Sustainable Development Goals, Philippines

1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UN SDG 4) emphasizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). This goal is not merely a global aspiration but a critical framework that influences educational practices worldwide, particularly in regions like Mindanao, Philippines, where diverse socio-economic challenges persist. Quality education is recognized as a fundamental human right and a catalyst for sustainable development, as it empowers individuals and communities, fosters economic growth, and

promotes social cohesion (UNESCO, 2016). In this context, the implementation of outcome-based education (OBE) practices has emerged as a significant approach to enhance educational quality, aligning teaching methodologies with desired learning outcomes. Insights from elementary teachers in Mindanao reveal how these practices can effectively address local educational challenges and prioritize the objectives set forth by SDG 4, ultimately contributing to a more robust educational framework that meets the needs of all learners. By examining the experiences and perspectives of educators in this region, we can better understand the practical implications of OBE and its potential

to transform educational landscapes in alignment with global standards.

The transition to Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within the educational framework at Bukidnon State University (BukSU) aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). OBE emphasizes clearly defined student learning outcomes, necessitating a shift from traditional teaching methods to a more student-centered approach. This transition can be particularly daunting for educators, especially those who are newly hired, as it requires a comprehensive understanding of OBE principles to effectively implement this instructional strategy (Killen, 2000).

At BukSU, many teachers have expressed varying levels of understanding of OBE, leading to inconsistencies in its application in the classroom. This disparity underscores the importance of thorough training and ongoing professional development, as effective implementation relies heavily on teachers' expertise and commitment (Ramoroka, 2007). The need for educators to proactively seek knowledge and engage in professional development is critical, as they are responsible for distinguishing competencies and redesigning curricula that incorporate learning activities and assessments tailored to their areas of specialization (Olivier, 2002). The successful implementation of OBE at BukSU hinges on a comprehensive understanding of its principles by educators. As Davis (2003) noted, the OBE approach necessitates a change in the school's system and requires exhaustive planning activities. Despite the positive initial reception of OBE, challenges persist, particularly regarding teachers' understanding of its operational intricacies (Malcolm, 2000). The current emphasis on OBE research in the Philippines stems from its formal adoption in higher education, as indicated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in 2014. However, there remains a significant gap in qualitative research focused on the teaching and assessment practices of elementary educators (Laguador & Dotong, 2014).

2. Objectives

This study aims to investigate the understanding of OBE among teachers at BukSU's Elementary Laboratory School, seeking to identify gaps in knowledge and inform future training initiatives to enhance educational outcomes for students. Therefore, this investigation will contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding OBE and its application in the classroom, ultimately supporting the overarching goal of SDG 4 to provide quality education for all.

3. Methods

Research Design, Population, Setting

The study employed a qualitative research design as outlined by Creswell (2013), which is particularly effective for uncovering and documenting the perceptions of educators regarding Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in their teaching and assessment strategies. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of individual viewpoints, making it well-suited to address the research question at hand. The research was conducted at the Elementary Laboratory School of Bukidnon State University, situated in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. By focusing on qualitative methods, the study aimed to capture the nuanced experiences and insights of educators as they navigate the complexities of OBE implementation in their classrooms.

The participant population for this study consisted of 17 faculty members from the College of Education Elementary Laboratory School (CoE-ELS) at Bukidnon State University. This diverse group of educators brings a wide range of academic teaching experiences, which enriches the data collected and provides valuable perspectives on the challenges associated with OBE. Among the 17 teachers, three hold Ph.D. degrees, while the remaining 14 are in the process of obtaining theirs. Participants were selected purposively to ensure that their insights would be relevant and informative regarding the implementation of OBE. This intentional selection process aimed to gather a comprehensive understanding of the educators' experiences and perceptions, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on quality education practices in the region.

Data Collection

The primary method employed for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews, which were designed to elicit rich qualitative insights from participants. This approach was selected for its inherent flexibility, allowing for in-depth exploration of complex topics (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The interview protocol included a series of predetermined questions, supplemented by follow-up inquiries to facilitate deeper discussions and encourage participants to articulate their views comprehensively.

The key variables in this study included teachers' understanding of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), their instructional methodologies, and their assessment practices. These variables were examined to determine how educators' perceptions of OBE influenced their teaching strategies and evaluation methods, thereby providing insights into the practical implications of OBE in the classroom setting.

Data gathering commenced with securing permission from the dean of the College of Education, with assistance from the principal of the Elementary Learning School (ELS). Prior to the data collection process, a consent letter was distributed to all participants to ensure their willingness to engage in the research. An orientation session was conducted to present an overview of the study, establishing a clear context for the participants.

During the interviews, thoughtfully prepared guiding and probing questions were utilized to structure the discussions. These questions were pivotal in allowing educators to express their thoughts on the implementation of OBE while maintaining a focused approach. The researchers aimed to capture the teachers' insights regarding their understanding of OBE and illustrate how this comprehension has shaped their instructional methodologies and assessment practices. This qualitative data collection method provided a platform for educators to share their experiences and perspectives, contributing to a deeper

understanding of the impact of OBE in the educational landscape of Mindanao, Philippines.

Data Analysis

Before conducting the actual analysis, each interview was meticulously transcribed word-for-word. The transcripts underwent a thorough review to ensure accuracy, and any identifying details were anonymized to safeguard the participants' confidentiality. The primary analytical technique used was thematic analysis by Creswell (2013). This approach is particularly effective for uncovering, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves six distinct phases: familiarization with the data, initial code generation, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and the production of the report. The initial step required the research team to engage in comprehensive readings of the interview transcripts to become well-acquainted with the data. Following this, initial open coding was conducted to label segments of the text that captured essential ideas or concepts. This coding process was influenced both by the study's research questions and new insights emerging from the data itself.

Upon completing the initial coding, similar codes were consolidated to form potential themes. Each theme underwent a review and refinement process to ensure it distinctly represented specific aspects of the data while minimizing overlap. The themes were rigorously compared against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately depicted the nuances and complexities of the participants' experiences and viewpoints.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the analysis, several techniques were employed. Firstly, member-checking was performed, in which summaries of the findings were shared with a select group of participants to validate the accuracy and relevance of the identified themes. Secondly, peer debriefing occurred among research team members to critically evaluate the coding and thematic processes, discussing any discrepancies until a consensus was reached.

4. Results and Discussion

Drawing on the insights provided by respondents, several key themes emerged from the analysis. In

this section, we explore the findings from our qualitative investigation into teachers' perspectives on implementing Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within their teaching methodologies. Through comprehensive interviews, participants conveyed their interpretations of OBE, the techniques they used to incorporate its principles in their classrooms, and the obstacles they faced during its execution. Our discussion is centered around four primary themes: the focus on practical applications and skill development, differentiated activities and integrative approaches, learner-centered versus teacher-centered methodologies, and the practical challenges and strategies associated with OBE implementation. By examining these themes, we seek to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in adopting OBE and to identify potential pathways for enhancing its application in educational environments.

Theme 1: Focus on Practical Application and Skills

The results show that teachers generally understood OBE as a teaching approach to transforming knowledge into practical skills applicable in real-life situations. Participant 1 highlighted the importance of students' skills in daily life, not just cognitive understanding.

"So, it's not just about cognitive, but they will exhibit it even in their daily life."

This practical orientation aligns with Spady's (1994) definition of OBE, which emphasizes the demonstration of learning through meaningful and transferable skills. The emphasis on daily life skills suggests a broader educational goal where learning is seen as a tool for life-long application, reflecting Dewey's (1938) philosophy of education that connects learning to real-world experiences. This practical focus shifts the traditional emphasis from rote learning to skill acquisition and application.

Participant 3 mentioned that OBE is learner-centered and focuses on measuring the depth of students' learning through assessments.

"You have to measure how deep or how well they learn the lesson through assessment."

This emphasizes the learner-centered approach of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which emphasizes assessing the depth of understanding. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where the teacher guides learning experiences customized to the learner's current abilities and areas for potential growth. This approach underscores the need for assessments that measure not just what students know but how deeply they understand and can apply that knowledge.

Participant 4 echoed the sentiment by indicating that OBE means activities are based on the outcomes achieved by students.

"Outcome-based means activities are based on the outcome set for the learners."

This perspective aligns with Bloom's et al (1956) taxonomy, which categorizes learning objectives and encourages educators to design activities that lead to higher-order thinking skills. The responses indicate a shared understanding among teachers that OBE is fundamentally about equipping students with practical skills that extend beyond theoretical knowledge.

The emphasis on practical application and skills in OBE is well-supported by educational research. According to Biggs and Tang (2007), OBE shifts the focus from teaching to learning, where the primary concern is what students can do after their learning experiences. This shift necessitates designing curricula and assessments focused on skill acquisition and real-world application. Moreover, Harden (2007) notes that in OBE, outcomes are explicitly defined, and educational strategies are developed to ensure students achieve these outcomes. This approach aligns with the participants' emphasis on measurable outcomes and practical skills.

The teachers' understanding of OBE reflects a significant shift towards practical application and learner-centered education. By focusing on transforming knowledge into skills, teachers aim to prepare students for real-life challenges, ensuring that learning is meaningful and applicable. This understanding aligns with contemporary educational theories and practices advocating a

holistic, skill-based approach to teaching and learning.

Theme 2: Differentiated Activities and Integration

Teachers discussed various strategies for implementing Outcome-Based Education (OBE), focusing on the preparation of differentiated activities and the integration of values into lessons. These strategies highlight the practical approaches educators use to address the diverse needs of students and to make learning more relevant and meaningful.

Participant 2 emphasized the importance of careful planning and preparation of differentiated activities to cater to different learning needs.

"The teacher has to plan out carefully what he or she wants the learners to achieve after each lesson."

This approach aligns with Tomlinson's (2001) framework for differentiated instruction, which advocates tailoring teaching environments and practices to create appropriate learning experiences for varied student abilities. By preparing differentiated activities, teachers can ensure that all students, regardless of their starting point, have access to learning experiences that challenge and support their growth.

Participant 3 provided an example of integrating values and normal environments into science lessons, illustrating how OBE can be woven into subject-specific content.

"In Science subject, I integrated about values and normal environment."

This method is consistent with education theorists like Dewey (1938), who argue for an education that prepares students for active and responsible citizenship by embedding real-life contexts and moral education within the curriculum. Despite these innovative strategies, Participant 4 and Participant 5 admitted that they do not consistently implement OBE due to constraints such as time and workload.

"Activities given to the learners must be an application of the skills they learned."

"But, the preparation of these activities takes so much time."

This inconsistency points to significant practical challenges in the classroom, including the extensive preparation time required for differentiated instruction and the additional workload associated with creating and assessing diverse activities. These challenges are echoed in the literature, with Day et al. (2007) noting that teacher workload and time constraints are major barriers to implementing innovative educational practices like OBE.

The responses reveal a tension between the ideals of OBE and the practical realities. While differentiated activities and value integration are recognized as effective strategies, their implementation is often hampered by external factors. This finding aligns with Biggs and Tang's (2007) argument that the success of educational innovations depends heavily on the contextual support provided to teachers, including adequate time, resources, and professional development.

Hence, teachers employ differentiated activities and integrate values into their lessons as part of their OBE practices. However, the consistent application of these strategies is challenged by practical constraints such as time and workload. Addressing these challenges requires systemic support and resources to enable teachers to effectively implement OBE and realize its potential benefits for student learning.

Theme 3: Learner-Centered vs. Teacher-Centered Approaches

The teachers' understanding of OBE as a learner-centered approach contrasts with traditional, teacher-centered methods. This theme underscores a notable pedagogical shift where the teacher's role evolves from being the main source of knowledge to becoming a facilitator of student learning.

Participant 4 and Participant 6 noted the fundamental difference between OBE and traditional approaches, highlighting that OBE involves less teacher talk and more learner activities.

Participant 4 emphasized, "OBE is learner-centered while traditional is teacher-centered." Participant 6 added, "OBE is more on learners work activities,

less teacher-talk; while in a traditional approach, the teacher mostly does all the talking."

This transition aligns with constructivist educational theories, such as those put forth by Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1964), which highlight the active involvement of learners in constructing their understanding and knowledge through hands-on experiences. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) emphasizes establishing a setting where students are actively involved in their learning processes, fostering the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Participant 7 mentioned that in OBE, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students rather than directly instructing them.

"Teachers are facilitators of learning in OBE."

This role of the teacher as a facilitator aligns with Bruner's (1960) concept of discovery learning, where teachers provide the necessary resources and support for students to explore and discover knowledge independently. This approach encourages autonomy and self-directed learning, key components of OBE.

The understanding of OBE as a learner-centered approach necessitates a pedagogical shift from traditional methods where the teacher is the central figure in the classroom. Traditionally, the teacher delivers content through lectures and direct instruction, with students playing a passive role. In contrast, OBE requires teachers to design and implement activities that involve students actively in the learning process, fostering a more engaging and interactive classroom environment.

This shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching is supported by educational research. According to Biggs and Tang (2007), learner-centered approaches result in deeper learning and greater knowledge retention because they involve students in meaningful and authentic learning experiences. Additionally, Hattie (2009) underscores that the most effective teaching strategies involve active student participation and offer opportunities for students to apply their learning in diverse contexts.

With this, teachers perceive OBE as a transformative approach that shifts the focus from

teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching. This shift involves less direct instruction and more facilitation of learning, where teachers guide and support students in their educational journey. By fostering an environment of active engagement and critical thinking, OBE aims to create more meaningful and impactful learning experiences for students.

However, implementing this shift is not without its challenges. Teachers must adapt their instructional strategies and classroom management techniques to align with OBE principles. This requires professional development and ongoing support to ensure teachers can effectively transition from traditional methods to learner-centered approaches. Moreover, the success of OBE depends on creating a classroom culture that encourages student participation, collaboration, and independence.

Theme 4: Practical Challenges and Need for Process

Participants identified several challenges in implementing Outcome-Based Education (OBE), highlighting the practical obstacles they face in translating OBE principles into classroom practice. These challenges underscore the complexities of adopting innovative pedagogical approaches and the need for strategic planning and support.

Participant 5 and Participant 7 pointed out that while they attempt to apply OBE, it is challenging due to students' varying abilities and the need for continuous process and practice.

Participant 5 candidly admitted, "No, " indicating the difficulty in implementing OBE due to the diverse abilities and needs of students. Similarly, Participant 7 echoed this sentiment, stating, "In English class essay writing activity for example, only few learners can write or express their ideas with ease, while others take so much time to be able to begin a sentence."

These responses emphasize the challenge of accommodating varying student abilities and ensuring meaningful engagement in OBE practices. This variability in student abilities presents a significant challenge for teachers, as they must design instruction and assessments that accommodate diverse learning needs. As noted by

Tomlinson (2001), addressing student variability requires ongoing assessment, differentiation, and adjustment of instructional strategies to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities for success. Moreover, Participant 7 emphasized the importance of continuous process and practice, suggesting that successful OBE implementation requires consistent reinforcement and application over time to yield meaningful outcomes.

Participant 2 and Participant 8 mentioned the limitations in time and resources that make it difficult to implement OBE consistently.

"Participant 2 expressed, "Lack of time," reflecting a common challenge educators faced in managing multiple responsibilities within limited instructional time. Additionally, Participant 8 acknowledged, "OBE is not necessarily daily, - cannot be done in a daily basis,"

Time constraints are a common challenge experienced by teachers, as they juggle various responsibilities and curricular demands within limited instructional time. Additionally, resource constraints, such as access to materials, technology, and professional development opportunities, can hinder effective OBE implementation. These practical challenges underscore the need for systemic support and investment in teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure to enable educators to implement OBE successfully.

In response to these challenges, teachers employ various strategies to navigate the complexities of OBE implementation. Participant 2 highlighted the importance of careful planning and preparation, suggesting that strategic allocation of time and resources is essential for effective OBE implementation. This aligns with Biggs and Tang's (2007) recommendation for proactive curriculum design and instructional planning to ensure alignment with OBE principles and learning outcomes. Moreover, Participant 7 emphasized the need for continuous practice and reinforcement, suggesting that ongoing professional development and collaborative learning communities can provide teachers with the support and resources needed to sustain OBE implementation efforts over time.

Consequently, while OBE offers a promising framework for enhancing student learning outcomes, its successful implementation is contingent upon addressing practical challenges and adopting strategic approaches. By acknowledging the variability in student abilities, leveraging available resources, and investing in ongoing professional development, educators can overcome barriers to OBE implementation and create more equitable and inclusive learning environments.

5. Conclusion

The qualitative investigation into teachers' views on the implementation of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has illuminated the various complexities and hurdles associated with embracing this educational strategy. Through extensive interviews, several prominent themes surfaced, such as the importance of practical skills application, the necessity for differentiated activities and integration, the contrast between learner-centered and teacher-centered methodologies, and the tangible challenges educators encounter. These insights underscore the importance of a comprehensive understanding of OBE and the need to tackle practical limitations to facilitate its successful incorporation. While OBE offers considerable potential for improving student learning outcomes and equipping learners for real-life challenges, its effective integration requires thoughtful planning, continuous support, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders.

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