Organizational structure and procedure barriers to obedizing Philippine higher education: Implications to policies and practice

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Abstract

The claim that higher education institutions are outcome-based education-aligned or obedized necessitates evidence in practice. This policy perspectives article discusses the implications of the following prevailing inputs-based structures and procedures to the implementation of outcome-based education in Philippine higher education: (1) segmenting learning time and prescheduling examination; (2) covering curriculum contents over achieving desired outcomes; (3) imposing regular classroom meetings; (4) quantifying inputs targets; (5) quantifying learning performance using a mark; (6) aligning assessments with the licensure examination; (7) and screening and clustering students through a test. The paper offers insights necessary for strengthening policies and practice to obedizing tertiary education in the Philippines and beyond.

Keywords: Outcome-based, obedizing, barriers, higher education, policies, Philippines

Introduction

The thrust of higher education institutions (HEIs) to implement Outcome-based education (OBE) is due to educational, economic and political reasons. OBE has been viewed as a promising education that can offer returns to investment in education through long-term significant learning outcomes (Karim, & Yin, 2013; Maher, 2004) and enhanced employability, benefitting both industry and the community (Maher, 2004; Commission on Higher Education, 2014). OBE is also believed to offer accessible and flexible education, giving credits to professionally recognized learning achievements earned outside the school (Maher, 2004). But most remarkably, OBE is HEIs' gateway for global ranking and standardization by packaging their system with international standards (Gurukkal, 2019; Espiritu & Budhrani, 2015).

　　　In the Philippines, HEIs have been required by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to adopt and implement OBE through CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 46 Series of 2012. The adoption and implementation is thought by the commission to enhance

quality assurance in higher education i. e. to enable them to align their system with global trends and produce competent graduates who are employable and marketable anywhere in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.

After a number of years since the CMO was issued, there have been several claims of successful OBE implementation in particular HEIs or colleges in the country. Some educators and institutions have reported they have a great understanding (Laguador & Dotong, 2014; De Guzman, Edaño, & Umayan, 2017; Pepito, 2019) and implementation of OBE (Laguador & Dotong, 2014). Students also expressed they are aware of advantages and disadvantages of OBE (Villaluz, 2017), OBE is useful and implemented in both practice and environment (Borsoto, Lescano, Maquimot, Santorce, Simbulan, & Pagcaliwagan, 2014), and OBE instruction has a great impact to their behaviour and performance (An, 2014). Both students (Espiritu & Budhrani, 2015) and educators (Pepito, 2019; Dela Cruz & Dela Cruz, 2017) specified their positive view toward OBE.

Qualitative and evaluative studies, on the other hand, assert that schools are faced with challenges in implementing OBE. Our previous studies, for instance, showed that educators are baffled in imbibing the concepts of OBE hence they find it hard to constructively align the curriculum with outcomes (Dagdag & Cardona, 2018; Dagdag, 2019). Similarly, Pepito (2019), in her qualitative investigation, found some educators expressing reservations towards OBE. Alata (2019), on the other hand, found OBE preparation is challenging, tedious, and laborious and educators are not fully equipped and resourced.

Though the degree of OBE implementation is a case to case basis, the variations in the findings suggest the importance of ensuring the alignment of the claims with successful OBE implementation through an evident application of outcome-based approach in education. The lack of research that identifies which prevailing practices are outcome-based and which are not, calls for a study that discusses the nature of OBE and explains how the existing inputs-based education structures and procedures impede the operation of a paradigm that rests on learning outcomes. Hence, the current article intends to discuss the frameworks of the theoretical underpinnings of OBE and the barriers to obedizing higher education in the Philippines. It is hoped that this study will offer insights necessary for strengthening policies and practice toward a better implementation of OBE in the country and beyond.

Outcome-based Education Defined

OBE means aligning the curricula and assessments with outcomes that are significant for all students to attain (Spady, 1994; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Macayan, 2017; Nakkeeran, Babu, Manimaran, & Gnanasivam, 2018). Outcomes refer to what students can do creatively with what they know and understand as a clear reflection of competence in the real world. Curricula include sets of courses, policies, operations, and resources programmed by the school; while assessments are the processes in which the students' achievements are tracked, monitored, and evaluated through measurement. Hence, to obedize simply means to align education with OBE.

Premises of OBE

There are three basic premises of OBE. The first premise, "All students can learn and succeed but not on the same time in the same way" (Spady, 1994: 9), can be linked to theories of learning styles as students learn best in their own ways; theory of opportunity as every person has the capacity to learn and one's learning depends on instruction; and mastery theory which argues that all the students can achieve learning outcome but at varying time interval (Ramoroka, 2007). The premise emphasizes that the students' learning rates and learning

styles are not barriers to successful learning if only they will be accommodated in the instructional processes.

The second premise "Success breeds success" is also linked to mastery theory which highlights the importance of mastering prerequisite learning competencies for "successful learning rests on strong cognitive and psychological foundation of prior learning success" (Spady, 1994, p. 10). In OBE, students master first prerequisite learning before they proceed to a higher level while teachers teach at the level of the students and ensure that successful learning occurs.

The third premise, "Schools control the conditions of students' success", is linked to the theory of opportunity which asserts that students' success relies on instruction (Ramoroka, 2007). The premise acknowledges the capability of schools to change their approach to outcomes-based and make all students successful (Karim & Yin, 2013). Mamary (1991) in Karim, and Yin (2013) stresses the following viewpoints that schools must adopt: a) all students have talent and it is the job of the school to develop it; b) the role of school is to find ways for students to succeed, rather than finding ways for students to fail; c) outcome-based schools are driven by mutual trust; d) excellence is not for some but for all students; e) planning for students' future success reduces the need for correctives; f) learning activities should enable learners to collaborate rather than compete; g) as far as possible, no child should be excluded from any activity in a school; h) a positive attitude is essential to get every student to learn well.

Principles of OBE

Spady (1994) came up with four principles of OBE; namely, clarity of focus, high expectation, expanded opportunity, and design down.

Clarity of focus principle means that educators establish outcomes of significance – a clear picture of significant knowledge and skills they want their students to be able to demonstrate at the end of the course. The principle highlights "no surprises" philosophy, informing students at the very start about where to go and what to do to succeed. The outcome statements are clear to both the educators and the students to facilitate effective communication and productivity. The outcome statements enable students to prepare for future learning challenges, assess their own achievement and take ownership and autonomy of their learning. The clarity of outcomes enables students and the teacher to work as partners in education leading them to the right destination. It allows the students to demand to the educator new learning experiences that ensure outcomes attainment, while permits the educator to enjoy legitimate right to assess to what extent the students have attained the outcomes (Gurrukkal, 2018).

High expectation principle means raising the standards of performance for all students to be called successful but providing learning experiences that will enable them to achieve the desired performance. Research affirms the importance of setting high expectations for all kinds of students regardless of their prior learning experiences and future end goals (Hanover Research, 2012). Students who receive high expectations from educators perform better than those who receive low expectations despite they have equal prior abilities (Hanover Research, 2012). The principle affirms that successful learning strengthens learning retention, enhances self-efficacy, and inspires persistent learning amidst challenging learning tasks (Karim & Yin, 2013).

Expanded opportunities principle entails offering flexible time, varied methods and modalities, performance standards, operational principles, and curriculum access and structuring for student learning. The principle highlights opportunities that facilitate a wide range of learning styles and learning rates. Studies assert that opportunities should enable the

students to master prerequisite skills (Kaput, 2018) and display the culminating performance tasks (Alata, 2019); engage students in high support for their need of relatedness in order to increase their level of motivation, engagement, and effort (Perlman, 2015); address students' needs and problems (Dagdag, Cuizon, & Bete, 2019); and allow them to learn on their own pace (Kaput, 2018). The principle suggests that equitable learning is likely to lead to successful learning when there is a multidimensional expansion of learning opportunities.

Design down principle means stating clearly first the expected results and developing from there the curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Spady, 1994; Karim, & Yin, 2013; Macayan, 2017). It underscores that all planning, teaching and assessment decisions must be matched directly and perfectly to the clarified and predetermined outcomes of significance. In the teaching-learning context, Biggs and Tang (2011) in their constructive alignment framework illustrate that the teaching/learning activities (TLAs) and the assessment tasks (ATs) must be aligned both with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs).

Methodology

This article was written based on the actual experiences of the author and his encounters with literature on OBE. The main source of data was observation, review of documents and records (e. g. written policies), informal interview with 10 teachers (with a permanent position and at least 5 years of teaching experience in college) who were chosen purposefully, and literature review. At the institutional level, the observation included the student activities conducted by the school, students' participation in activities, teachers' support to student learning, how students use the available curriculum resources, and the relationship between and among stakeholders. At the classroom level, the observation focused on teachers' delivery of lessons to students, the instructional materials used, the teaching-learning activities and assessments employed, how students respond to the activities and assessment employed, and the manifested learning behavior after the lesson.

Moreover, the documents reviewed were syllabi, curricula, memorandum orders, outcomes statements, teaching materials, assessments (e. g. test papers, homework, class records), and evaluations (e. g. Individual Performance Commitment Review). The informal interview was conducted for data triangulation. This was to get data directly from the teachers about the learning experiences that they provide for their students, the things that they consider in teaching, the reason why they use tests, and their ideas about OBE and how it is being implemented in their respective institutions. The literature review, on the other hand, aimed to get further insights about OBE and traditional education, which was used in the discussion.

Not all the data gathered, however, were reflected in this paper as this is only a part of a research project. The analysis was limited to the prevailing inputs-based structures and procedures that potentially hinder OBE implementation. Views also were offered in the discussion. By nature, the article is subjective as it is qualitative and the researcher serves as the main instrument in the interpretation of the data and the formulation of arguments and implications of the findings. Also, the researcher's views in this article do not necessarily reflect the views of authors and originators of OBE.

Organizational Structure and Procedures

Inputs-based structures and procedures are perils to successful implementation of OBE. The manner these structures and procedures threaten educational outcomes and OBE implementation is explicitly discussed.

Segmenting Learning Time and Periodic Testing

Prelim, midterm and final examinations are the major periodic assessments used to gauge students' achievement. The examination results account for 65% of the student's single mark for the whole course. As a means to prevent low scores and failures, the students are informed of the schedules ahead of time and teachers provide reviewers and conduct lesson recaps.

Most examinations are in the form of tests (usually, multiple-choice) administered in 1.5 hours. Some teachers in an interview assert that this mode of assessment is effective: 1) to prepare their students for the licensure examination and/or the civil service career examination; 2) to encourage students to think critically; and 3) to easily assess the students and reduce the burden of checking and giving feedback. Others confessed that they have no choice but objective tests since the examination time is limited.

The said assessment system, however, does not agree with OBE. Firstly, the conduct of periodical examinations leads to content segmentation and permanently grading of cumulative achievements. The periodical examinations divide the teaching-learning experiences into a number of segments making it a venue for teachers to grade students in all these segments separately and permanently. If these segments, for instance, are prelim, midterm, and finals, then students who did mistakes and poor performance in the prelim and midterm but did well in the finals may still be judged as low performing students because their current and future performances are still tied up with their historical mistakes. In other words, their mistakes in their previous experiences (prelim and midterm) are permanently recorded and they have no chance to alter and improve it sooner. In this manner, the students' past mistakes are used to put them down rather than facilitate their success.

Additionally, the segmentation of the semester into prelim, midterm, and finals may hinder the continuity of learning and the evolvement of the highest quality of performance among the students. The examination covers only the topics scheduled in each term e. g. the midterm exam covers only the midterm topics. Thus, during midterm exam, the students may now forget about the prelim topics and focus on midterm topics. Similarly, during the final exam, they may already forget both prelim and midterm topics and concentrate on final lessons. This creates possibility that the performance of a student in the previous term may not be consistent with or sustained in the succeeding term/s. Thereby, making it hard to determine whether or not the student is truly improving and transforming toward the desired outcome of education.

Similarly, the number of hours allotted for most examinations reflects a time-based system. On the average, the students are given 1.5 hours to finish the examination. Given this short time to answer a test covering a whole term, this assessment assumes that students have the same learning pace i. e. students can learn at the same time. In the same manner, the single mode of assessment to assess and judge student performance for the whole term (usually pencil-and-paper test) manifests constraint opportunities. The assessment assumes that students have the same learning styles i. e. they learn in the same way. The examination does not consider that outcomes reflect life and job competencies requiring performance demonstration instead of one-seat-testing.

Covering curriculum contents over Achieving Outcomes

The curriculum delivery is syllabus-driven. The syllabus, which is claimed obedized, contains outcomes statements, contents/topics, teaching activities, learning activities, assessment tasks, and assessment tools. It shows how and when teaching and learning should be delivered. There is no time indicated but the course learning plan is partitioned into three learning time

segments: prelim, midterm, and finals. These segments demand the delivery of all the contents for every term because another set of contents is scheduled for the next semester.

However, the mentioned curriculum is not consistent with the underpinning premises and underlying principles of OBE. First, it encourages teachers to use traditional methods of teaching and assessment. A 3-unit course is taught for 54 hours a semester on a 3-hour weekly basis. The course then is divided into 18 hours each of the three terms. In each term, 16.5 hours are intended for lecture-discussion and 1.5 hours for the major examination. Considering this controlled time to deliver the course contents, teachers are forced to lecture and assess using tests to catch up with content schedules. This could limit teachers' creativity to develop and employ a holistic approach to learning.

Additionally, it gives more emphasis to the learning time and the contents to cover than the quality of learning outcomes attained. Since time and contents are fixed, then learning performance varies. In other words, learners could finish their course/degree at the same time with varying levels of performance. This scenario forfeits the purpose of course/program outcomes statement as the minimum learning performance standards. This is usually observed during commencement exercises and graduation where very few students are awarded with honors. The award is associated with giving distinction between those who are competent and those who are not (or less competent perhaps) which reflects a great variability of achievements. The curricular approach matches the instructional paradigm described by Barr and Tagg (1995) and CHED (2014) as "time held constant" and "covering materials/contents".

Imposing Regular Classroom Attendance

The institutions adopt a policy on regular attendance: (1) absence of more than 20% of the 54 contact hours is a ground for failure; (2) tardiness of 15 minutes is equal to one hour period of absence; (3) a minimum of 3 consecutive absences without justifiable reasons requires a promissory note from the guidance counselor; (4) failure to attend regular classes after taking the prelim exam means failed. As investigated, the lack of readiness for non-face-to-face instruction causes teachers to impose regular student attendance for classroom discussions and testing.

Although the classroom plays an important role in students' learning, it is not the sole place where learning takes place. Students learn in their own ways and pace and teachers can never do learning for them. Constructivists argue that students acquire complex learning skills in the natural, authentic environment (not in the classroom). John Tagg (2006), for instance, asserts that "the most important and resilient learning usually happens outside the classroom" p. 8. Despite this fact, however,

> "*At most institutions, neither the transcript nor the GPA reflect anything about student activities outside of classes. The formal reward and information structures of the institution do not assign any value to the learning experiences that, according to many students, are the most valuable*" (Tagg, 2006, p. 8).

Singal and Swann (2011) in their exploratory study among underachieving students regarding how they construct their understanding of themselves as learners inside and outside school, showed the children's richness of learning experiences and capacity for learning outside the school and their conceptualization of the importance of their social domain as learners. The students perceived outside school learning experiences as more challenging, more active and more collaborative while they characterized learning inside the school as learning by depending on the teacher. The study affirms that in outside school learning, students appeared

to foster confidence of possessing knowledge and understanding, while in school learning, they associate that knowledge and understanding belong to the teacher.

Similarly, the Department of Education and Skills of the United Kingdom, in "Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto" (DfES, 2006), asserts that learning outside the school is the most remarkable and unforgettable learning experience, helping learners to produce meaning of the world by creating links between learning and feelings. This learning retains until their adulthood; impacts their behavior, lifestyle and work; influences their values and the decisions they make; and enables them to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.

Learning beyond the classroom or school has also been found valuable not only for learning. Ungar, Dumond, and McDonald (2005) in their research show that outdoor programming enhances coping competence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and decreased delinquency, suicidality, and violence among students. White (2012), in his sociocultural investigation among marginalized high school students with signs of social and emotional difficulties in engaging fully with school life, found that mediated outdoor education program has a positive impact on students' self-concept, building trust, group cohesion, emotional regulation, and facing of daily challenges within the school. The said study further indicated that three in every 4 reported positive gains in their family since beginning participation in the program, and all of them stated that they had developed a deeper level of trust for the other group members.

Additionally, surveys and research have indicated that many students who dropped from schooling were those who had barriers that prohibit them from attending the traditional school day (Kaput, 2018). To recognize these barriers and make school responsive to students' individual needs, the school has to provide options for anytime, anywhere learning and credit also the activities successfully done by the students outside the school building and the school day (Kaput, 2018).

The experiential nature of learning outside the school offers authenticity that creates various learning advantages including exploration and play, freedom, autonomy, creativity and novelty, enjoyment, incidental learning and competency in social contexts (Beard and Wilson, 2002; Chantrell, 2015). Learning outside the school, being anchored on the socio-cultural theories and humanistic psychology (Chantrell, 2015), provides a better approach for social interaction and in meeting learning needs, than confining students inside the classroom.

Therefore, regular classroom classes as an avenue for lecture discussions and testing, have no place in OBE. Barr and Tagg (1995) highlight that the inputs-based education imposes structures such as "50-minute lecture, 3-unit course", "one teacher, one classroom", "classes start/end at the same time" etc. p. 15. These features fit the said "regular classroom attendance policy".

Quantifying Inputs Targets

The teachers set their targets for the semester using a form called Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR). Their performance is measured in terms of the following dimensions: instruction, extension and research, administrative function (if applicable), production, and compliance with office rules and regulations. The largest percentage is allocated to instruction while there is a fixed 15% percentage for compliance with office rules and regulations. Most of the documents reviewed showed no targets for extension and research but allocated 85% to instruction. The descriptors for instruction include number of faculty teaching equivalent, number of syllabi prepared and updated, number of instructional materials, number of major exams prepared and administered, number of quizzes

administered, and number of grade sheets prepared and submitted. Each performance descriptor is to be rated by their superiors in terms of quality, effectiveness, and timeliness.

The system of setting targets focuses on what the faculty inputs to produce student outputs. There is no target intended for the quality of the student outputs. There is quality criterion in rating each descriptor but the evaluation assumes that quantity precedes quality. For instance, teachers need to completely grade at least 6 quizzes per course. To largely exceed the target, some teachers administer frequently quizzes without clear evidence that students are ready for graded assessment. As a result, the quiz scores tend to skew positively and predict significantly low grades or failure. This assessment leads to content segmentation and grading cumulative achievement which invalidate the capacity of grades to measure current achievement. This shows how reliance on quantities may yield to substandard results and lose educators' attention to the end-goal which is quality.

Additionally, the faculty teaching effectiveness, which is used for faculty promotion, is measured through student-evaluation, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and supervisor-evaluation. The criteria for these four types of evaluation include commitment, knowledge of the subject matter, teaching for independent learning, and management learning. Each criterion is allocated a worth of 25%. Not one of these evaluation procedures directly assesses faculty performance against learning outcomes attained. Hence, there is no clear evidence that efforts and resources effect on student learning and achievement.

Quantifying Student Performance using a Single Mark

Teachers give a single mark (grade) that represents the overall attainment of a student in a particular course. The passing grade in percent is at least 75. The following guidelines are used to transmute and describe a computed percent grade:

Grades (%)	Transmutation	Remarks
98 – 100	1.00	Excellent
95 – 97	1.25	Very Satisfactory
92 – 94	1.50	Satisfactory
89 – 91	1.75	Fairly Satisfactory
86 – 88	2.00	Good
83 – 85	2.25	Fairly Good
80 – 82	2.50	Fair
77 – 79	2.75	Below Fair
75 – 76	3.00	Passed
Below 75	5.00	Failed

The grade is claimed to reflect the student's academic performance in the course. This grade is the total cumulative achievement of the students in all stages of the course. But the effectiveness and meaningfulness of this grading system is challenged by the following points:

1. What does a grade of 90 mean? In Statistics, for instance, does having a grade of 90 ascertain that the student can conduct Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and can write quantitative research?
2. Ana's grade in Statistics from sir J is 90. Job's grade in the same subject but from a different teacher is 87. Does this mean that Ana is better than Job?
3. Ana, Job, James, and Jake got a total percent grade of 85, 86, 88, and 89, respectively. So they got a final grade of 2.5, 2.0, 2.0, and 1.75, respectively. How significant is

that difference of 1 point (percent grade) to classify the students' achievements differently?

4. Sir J likes Ana's attitude and behavior so he added 2 points to her final grade.

The first question challenges the meaningfulness of a single quantitative grade in reflecting what a student can do in the event he/she garnered the grade. The grading system cannot explicitly tell the competencies the student has acquired after passing the course. Although there are stated course outcomes in the syllabus, the single grade does not determine the extent to which the student attained the intended learning outcomes, and in which outcome does he/she passed excellently, satisfactorily or fairly, or failed.

The second reveals that no teachers have the same standards in giving grades; hence the grades of students having different teachers or schools cannot serve as a valid and reliable basis in comparing and judging students' achievements. Some schools might give low grades but have quality graduates while other schools, because of literal emphasis on student-centeredness, might give high grades but have less competent graduates. This implies that the system produces grades that are not trustworthy criteria for hiring job applicants. Employers should set outcome-based criteria for hiring instead.

The third illustrates how the current grading system can create categories/levels of students' achievements even the grades are not far from one another. The categories reflect varying levels of achievements i. e. few students are more successful while others are less successful or more failure. Future research is suggested to explore the effects of this categorization.

The last scenario shows how non-academic factors such as behaviour, attitude, and teacher's bias can simply influence the validity of a single quantitative grade. Such kind of grade can easily be manipulated and be adjusted according to the varying standard, bias and attitude of the teacher. This is likely to happen because the system of grading using marks invites faculty to use private assessment (or tests where scores can be kept confidential by the teacher and the student) over public assessment (or performance demonstration where everyone can be a living witness of each student's level of performance).

Aligning Assessments with the Licensure Examination rather than the Desired Outcomes

When I interviewed a group of college teachers of a board degree program on assessment and alignment practices, they all agreed that they are aligning assessment with the licensure examination:

> "Iyong mga test na ginagawa ko talagang ina-align ko sa licensure exam. I believe this is an effective way para mahasa ang kanilang test taking skills sa licensure exam (*I see to it that the test I am preparing is aligned with the licensure examination. I believe this is an effective way to enhance their test taking skills for the licensure examination*)."

They affirmed that aligning with the licensure exam is the reason why they employ a multiple-choice test rather than other types of assessments.

> "… Multiple-choice naman ang LET kaya multiple-choice din ang ina-administer kong exam (*Since the LET is a multiple-choice test, so I choose to administer also a multiple-choice test*)."

While it is so essential to pass the licensure exam to become a licensed professional, this orientation leads to the issue of assessment misalignment. Alignment is the extent to which the "expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system towards students learning what they are supposed to know" (Webb, 1997, p. 3). Biggs and Tang (2011) argue that constructive alignment of the teaching-learning activities and the associated assessments with the desired outcomes is an indication of quality instruction and basic in the teaching-learning process. Accordingly,

> *"Constructive alignment is common sense. Mothers, like driving instructors, use it all the time. What is the intended outcome? That the child can tie her shoes. What is the TLA? Tying her shoes. What is the assessment? How well she ties her shoes." p. 106*

Misalignment, on the other hand, means that the assessment used to measure a learning performance is not appropriate, does not facilitate the acquisition of the learning skill, and does not reveal true achievement. Misalignment is commonly observed with the excessive use of multiple-choice tests to measure all types of students' performance for a whole term (Dagdag, 2019; Dagdag & Cardona, 2018; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Multiple-choice tests can only assess what students "know" (knowledge) and "know how" (application of knowledge) but it cannot assess the ability to "show how" (demonstration of knowledge) and "do" (transferring knowledge to actual performance) (Lee, Ryoo, & Lee, 2014). The strong reliance on multiple-choice testing helps improve cognitive skills but impedes the development of diverse skills (e. g. citizenship, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and collaboration, creativity, and innovation) necessary for the 21st century (Lee, Ryoo, & Lee, 2014).

Biggs and Tang (2011) discuss multiple-choice test as a consequence of marking or grading. Accordingly, it enacts the assumptions that what items are correct does not matter for as long as there are enough items; and half the total scores is accepted as the passing score. They argue that in multiple-choice,

> "*Learning is represented as the total of all items correct. Students quickly see that the score is the important thing, not how it is comprised, and that the ideas contained any one item are of the same value as in any other item. The strategy is to focus on the easy or trivial items; and of the alternatives you don't know, tick the ones that seem vaguely familiar. You'll almost certainly get more than half correct – and by definition you'll pass (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 106).*"

Research highlights how the use of multiple-choice test affects learning and teaching. As to student learning, Scouller (1996), Scouller and Prosser (1994) found that students who prefer short answer exam and multiple-choice have surface level reasons while students who were exposed to assignments (application-related activities) were able to show higher levels of learning (as cited by Tang & Biggs, 1999, p. 2). In terms of teaching, Tang (1991) reported that despite teachers' realization that assignments were more suitable to meet the intended learning outcomes, they still allotted a high proportion of short answer tests and multiple-choice in order to cover all the curriculum contents (as cited by Tang & Biggs, 1999, p. 2).

Moreover, Biggs and Tang (2011, p. 106-107) listed the following reasons why university teaching is not so aligned: (1) traditional practices of teaching and assessment ignore alignment; (2) some teachers believe there's nothing wrong with current practice; (3) resource limitations appear to dictate large classes with mass lecturing and multiple-choice

testing; (4) these issues of alignment may not have occurred to teachers; and (5) other teachers might like to use the principle but they don't know how to.

Screening and Clustering Students through Tests

Colleges offering board examination courses administer screening examinations (e. g. Majorship examination, battery examination) to select the best-entering students. This mechanism is done as a means to get high licensure examination passing rate, which is a major criterion for judging the performance, recognition, and accreditation of an institution in the Philippines. Students who failed the exam are advised to shift to other courses.

Stakeholders should rethink where to invest efforts in education. Is it to impose screening procedures to maintain quality for the benefit and pride of the institution and few best entering students, or lay down an outcome-based approach to education and accept the accountability to transform all types of learners into competent individuals regardless of their prior learning experiences? Investing effort to the former may sacrifice the interests and dreams of many individuals due to the inflexibility and inalterability of the curricular policies. The screening procedures may inaccurately judge the current performance, most especially the future performance of individuals. Investing effort to the latter, on the other hand, makes educational institutions able to fulfill their transformational mission for inclusive education to welcome and educate any kind of students regardless of their prior learning capabilities and commit then to ensure that they are equipped with the qualities needed to be successful in life. The inputs-based education limits the quota of successful learners while the OBE provides abundant opportunities for all learners, especially the late bloomers and slow learners, to become successful.

Selective retention and screening practices among HEIs are challenged in three ways. The first challenge refers to the way they view their purpose of existence as institutions. The screening mechanisms manifest that schools are only for fast learning and consistent performing individuals. Open admission based on the capacity of schools and interests of the students, on the other hand, shows that schools are for all individuals who are willing to learn and succeed.

The second is the extent to which schools put into practice their claimed theoretical bases. Constructivism, as the currently adopted educational philosophy in the Philippines, views all learners unique and capable of constructing their own knowledge through strengthening successful prior learning experiences. For constructivists, a student's failure to pass the battery examination does not mean that he/she student is not capable of getting the degree. Constructivists consider failure as a product of unsuccessful prior learning experiences because abilities are transformational (can be enhanced) rather than a predetermined (permanent) one.

The last, but the most apparent, is their degree of adherence to regulatory policies. The CHED has made OBE the ultimate thrust of HEIs in the country, adopting Barr and Tagg's (1995) student-centered (outcome-based) learning paradigms highlighting that "knowledge exists in each person's mind and is shaped by experience", "knowledge is constructed", and "talents and abilities are abundant" (CHED Handbook, 2014). These ideas are against screening mechanisms in education.

Implications for Policies and Practice

To provide directions for initiatives to implement a learning (outcome-based) paradigm, the following implications are offered.

Revisiting Basic Teaching and Learning Principles

Knowledge and understanding are crucial for effective practice. Teachers should have a deep understanding of how learning best takes place (learning principles) and how to best facilitate learning (teaching principles) so that they would be able to effectively and efficiently teach for the achievement of highly satisfying learning outcomes. The ability of educators to expand students' learning opportunities depends on how well they understand sets of theories and principles of teaching and learning. The frequent use of lectures and pencil-and-paper tests, for example, simply manifests educators' low understanding and acceptance of the learner-centered paradigm. On the other hand, principles support that a) there is greater retention when students do the learning themselves, hence they must be actively engaged in learning; b) learners must be able to perceive the goal, therefore they must be informed of the intended outcomes and their current performances; c) learning is best intellectualized in the real context, thus it should not be confined to classroom activities; d) learning is best when learning opportunities are expanded, so teaching and assessment should not be limited to traditional methods like lecture-discussion and pen-and-paper tests, and e) students' ability to learn depends on how well-founded their prior learning experiences are, and so students' failure in a learning task should be used to improve students' performance rather than mark them underachievers or failures.

Blended Learning

Blended learning refutes the idea of imposing regular classroom meetings. Blended learning strongly advocates that learning is best when learning is done both face-to-face and non-face-to-face (Bryan & Volchenkova, 2018; Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). While face-to-face learning with the teacher must be used to effectively facilitate students' knowledge and understanding, non-face-to-face instruction/learning must open avenues for learning transfer.

In Statistics, for instance, the ultimate outcome is to apply Statistics rigorously in the conduct of a quantitative investigation. The class will meet personally for a number of meetings to discuss statistical concepts and procedures. But due to the limitation of learning time and learning opportunities during classroom meetings and discussions, students' knowledge and understanding of the subject should be reinforced and enhanced more by extending their deliberate learning exposures outside class through reading lectures, watching (youtube) videos in Statistics, working collaboratively on hypothesis testing activities, answering some exercises, conducting further readings in the library, attending seminars, training and conferences in Statistics, among others. Though the use of statistical packages is introduced in the school, the students should work meaningfully with the statistical packages in analyzing various research data. Hence, to attain the outcome, they must undertake quantitative investigations – an assignment that requires learning beyond the traditional classroom. Their output and oral presentation (not the test scores) should serve as the ultimate basis in judging their achievement in the course. The evaluation of their outcome attainment must be based on how rigorous (careful and appropriate) they use Statistics in seeking and giving answers to the research problems.

The traditional (inputs-based) education has a lot of deficiencies (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019; Nakkeeran et al., 2018) that damage various professions across countries and regions that adopt it. Take the case of the teaching profession. Generally, the outcomes expected among graduates of a bachelor of secondary education (BSE) in the Philippines reflect real-life attributes such as to be able to: 1) possess a wide range of theoretical and practical skills for effective delivery of instruction; 2) perform the necessary competencies needed in the different learning areas in the secondary school; 3) conduct research for

instruction; 4) undertake actual training in community development through extension activities; 5) apply appropriate innovative and alternative teaching approaches; 6) practice the professional and ethical requirements of the teaching profession; and 7) demonstrate desirable Filipino values as a foundation for social citizenship participation. With rigidly structured prescriptive and unalterable curriculum in traditional education, the student teachers are likely exposed particularly to academic learning which is done largely through a series of lecturing and testing (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019; Nakkeeran et al., 2018). The ultimate focus of the school is on preparing student teachers for passing the board licensure examination for professional teachers. Therefore, there is an excessive dependence on lecture discussions and multiple-choice tests to develop primarily the student teachers' cognitive skills (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019; Lee, Ryoo, & Lee, 2014).

Despite the abovementioned six outcomes sworn to before the student teachers and other stakeholders, the traditional school tends to shift its attention to student teachers' high stakes assessment scores and gives less emphasis on the development of skills necessary for handling teaching jobs competently (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019); thereby, creating the gap between schooling and work. The traditional education produces graduates who are underprepared for the work; lack communication skills, working attitude skills, collaboration skills, creativity skills, and other essential job skills. Hence, the graduates are confronted with two alarming issues in their careers. Firstly, given the competency-based guidelines for hiring teachers, they have lower EMPLOYABILITY and chance to be qualified for a regular teaching position. Secondly, in case they will be hired for a teaching position, they probably have less PRODUCTIVITY because they have inadequate competencies to produce outcomes hence they need to struggle to be able to meet the demands of the job.

The issues of employability and productivity as a result of incompetence in the teaching profession, on the other hand, can be mitigated by applying an outcome-based approach to education. The school and the student teachers must have a clear focus and understanding of those six intended learning outcomes. The teacher educators must align or match all the teaching and learning activities (TLAs) and the assessment tasks (ATs) to those outcomes. The TLAs and ATs must be authentic enough to simulate true to life jobs that high school teachers are concerned about. These must include demonstrating teaching anchored on outcome-based constructivist principles of teaching, learning and assessment; conducting research in instruction; organizing and extending training to communities; and performing other jobs of secondary school teachers (e. g. devising instructional materials, constructing valid and reliable test, emceeing, counseling, and mentoring). In the performance of all these tasks, the student teachers must observe innovation, professional and ethical practice, and desirable Filipino values. Similarly, expanded learning opportunities (as to *time, methods and modalities, performance standards, operational principles, curriculum access and structuring*) and high expectations must be offered among the student teachers to ensure that they all perform actively at their best in the given tasks. Before they can exit the course and get their diploma, they must have clear and adequate learning evidence that they are able to display all the criteria that constitute the six intended learning outcomes.

Learning over grading

Considering the discussed validity issues of the current grading system, it is highly important that teachers give attention to what and whether students have learned successfully. Teachers should use assessments mainly to improve students' performance rather than certify it permanently. In certifying, however, teachers should only judge culminating achievement and exclude formative achievements (sum of partitioned [raw] achievements during the course). Research has shown that giving high regard to grades is the ultimate cause of cheating in

education (Davis, Drinan, & Gallant, 2009; Abdaoui, 2018). Hence, prioritizing learning over grading can be the most effective way to prevent and eliminate cheating in school. This intent must be evident and clear to the students. They must observe that learning matters most to the teacher and the institution, not the grades.

Qualitative assessments over quantitative assessments

The basic role of education is to develop students who are at least life-ready in this ever fast-changing world. For them to become life-ready, the tasks that they should do in school must be relevant to what they experience in real life and build their 21st-century skills. Thus, considering the complexity of outcomes, teachers should employ qualitative assessments that depict real-world complexities such as capstone or final-year projects, individual and group projects, case study, or portfolio assessments, presentations, and reflective journals, rather than traditional assessments (Kaput, 2018; Biggs & Tang, 2011). These authentic tasks have the capacity to increase their engagement and motivation which have been found to be a strong indicator of long-term academic achievement and graduation (Kaput, 2018).

Qualitative assessments initiated at the level of teachers should open avenues of shifting gradually from quantitative marking using scores to qualitative marking using rubrics. The current policy toward quantitative marking encourages educators to a) use objective tests rather than authentic performance tasks; b) promote undeserving students by giving the lowest passing score (75) rather than enable them to demonstrate a quality performance at their own pace; c) permanently grade cumulative achievement that includes past mistakes rather than focus to culminating performances; and d) categorize students' achievement (grades) differently rather than find ways to make these achievements comparable.

Formative assessments over summative assessments

There is nothing wrong with frequent administering of quizzes provided it will be considered a formative assessment and one of the various assessments to be employed. Formative assessment results should be recorded but not graded. It should help learners to monitor their own learning and progress and identify their weaknesses in order to allow them to devote time and effort for improvement. Summative assessments, on the other hand, must be conducted only at the end of instruction so that grades could reflect culminating students' performance/achievement.

Open admission but outcome-based promotion and retention policies

To ensure producing competent graduates, open admission but outcome-based promotion and retention policy must be adopted. Admitting students based on the specialization they would like to pursue could sustain learning motivation which is a tool used to reinforce learning and commitment to learn. Outcome-based promotion and retention means promoting students only when they can attain the intended learning outcomes but retaining them at their current level when they lack learning evidence to proceed to the next higher level. However, given a systematic, consistent, creative and simultaneous application of the OBE principles, the said policy could work and students tend to give their best to meet the expectations along their ways. Hence, they are likely to succeed and there is quality assurance among graduates.

Outcome-based Faculty Assessment and Promotion Criteria

Faculty assessment and promotion criteria that are inputs-based (e. g. level of educational attainment, research not intended for learning outcomes, licensure exams passed) are potential barriers that keep faculty from focusing on students. These criteria invite faculty efforts, leading to lose of focus and commitment to shaping successful learners. Hence, to ensure that faculty efforts are used for outcomes attainment, the way in which they are assessed and promoted should be directed toward enabling students to produce significant learning outcomes. Though this requires collective efforts among stakeholders to change mindsets and develop an assessment system that directly associates faculty effectiveness and promotion with outcomes.

Conclusions

This policy perspectives article discusses the implications of the following inputs-based organizational structures and procedures to the implementation of OBE in Philippine higher education: (1) segmenting learning time and periodic testing; (2) covering curriculum contents over achieving desired outcomes; (3) imposing regular classroom meetings; (4) quantifying inputs targets; (5) quantifying learning performance using a mark; (6) aligning assessments with the licensure examination rather than the desired outcomes of education; (7) and screening and clustering students through a test. This paper argues that forms (policies on outcomes) do not necessarily precede functions (practice), and the barriers to obedizing higher education in the country exist in both forms (policies on inputs) and functions.

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