

Importance and Benefits of Learning Outcomes

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Abstract: In Asian countries there was a time when students used to study and their teachers & parents used to guide them. However, there has been a shift, the 21st century students have become independent learners. They understand what they want. They choose the courses of their choice. Learning outcomes of a course or programme clearly show what the student is going to achieve at the end of the course or programme. This article presents the importance of learning outcomes of a course/programme, how they are formally specified / written and why students should read and understand the learning outcomes (LOs) before they chose a course or programme.

Key words: *Course, programme, leaning outcomes, measurable, achievable, assessment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

An academic course or a programme is developed successfully based on the clear idea of what can be achieved at the end of the course / programme. And the programme can be launched only if its learning outcomes are clearly specified and communicated in writing. In Europe it is very common to write learning outcomes to define any courses. According to Gosling and Moon (2001) outcomes-based approach to teaching is becoming more and more popular at an international level. This approach has been progressively adopted within credit framework and by national quality and qualifications authorities such as the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) in the UK, the Australian, New Zealand and South African Qualification Authorities (Gosling and Moon).

II. WHAT ARE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are like navigation tool, such as GPS. Once destination is fed to GPS the device guides the driver throughout the journey and takes the driver to the mentioned destination correctly without fear of losing the way. Even if the driver takes a wrong route, the GPS guides the driver and helps to join the route which leads to the intended destination. Similarly learning outcomes are guiding tools which guide the students to the desired results of the planned course. They also show and help the teachers the path to be followed and make the students aware what they will be able to achieve at the end of the course. Also they help the teachers and the students know the route to be followed.

III. DEFINITION

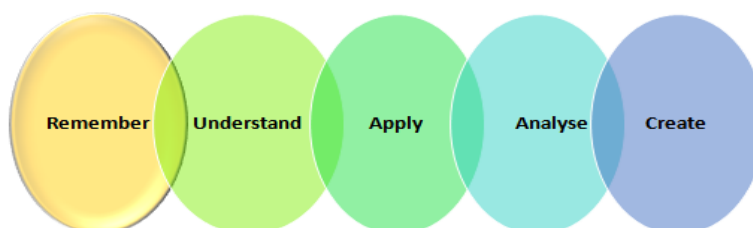
Learning outcomes are written statements of what the successful student/learner is expected to be able to chieve at the end of the programme module/course unit or qualification (Adam, 2004). Learning outcomes are tatements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning (ECTS Users' Guide, 2005).

IV. HOW TO WRITE LEARNING OUTCOMES

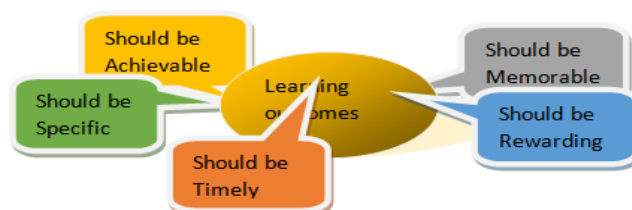
Learning outcomes need to be specific and measurable. Learning outcomes are generally written based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy explains the process of learning and hence has proved to be a powerful tool to help develop learning outcomes. The concept in Bloom's taxonomy is very simple.

- Before understanding the concept, remembering it well,
- Understand it before you apply it,
- Analyse the process before you evaluate it.

Concept in Writing Learning outcomes



Points to consider while preparing learning outcomes



Learning outcomes should be based on the following factors:

- Knowledge - Knowledge about the subject, familiarity, awareness or understanding of the subject, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by discovering or learning. The commonly used words are list, recognize, define etc.
- Cognitive – Intellectual skills, should include how to apply knowledge to actions, should include problem solving skills. The commonly used words are describe, explain, identify etc.
- Practical – How to design and carry out experiments? The commonly used words are demonstrate, implement etc.
- Generic Skills - Generic skills include problem solving techniques, keys to learning. The commonly used words are analyse, compare etc.

V. IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are indicators of success of an academic course/programme. Learning outcomes give a clear idea of what can be achieved by joining a particular programme. Whether it's a short course or a degree programme, the learning outcomes should be listed and written down before the start of the course to know and to check whether the course is designed and conducted perfectly. Based on the identified learning outcomes, teaching context, learning activities and assessment scheme have to be properly designed to successfully conduct and complete the course / programme.

VI. BENEFITS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

6.1 Students clearly understand beforehand what they are going to learn from the course/programme.

- ✓ Learning outcomes help the student choose appropriate course/programme.
- ✓ Well defined learning outcomes remove the risk wasting time.
- ✓ Reduce unnecessary stress on the students.
- ✓ Learning outcomes gives a clear idea to the students of what are they going to learn or achieve at the end of the class before the start of every class.
- ✓ Learning outcomes highlights what exactly and more importantly students should know to achieve from that particular course.
- ✓ By achieving Learning outcomes students can demonstrate that he/she has reached the summit of the course.

6.2 Benefiting Teachers find it easy to plan a lesson

- ✓ Learning outcomes help teachers plan a lesson
- ✓ Learning outcomes give a clear idea of what and how much to teach and plan accordingly.
- ✓ Learning outcomes help teachers design their teaching material more effectively.

- ✓ Learning outcomes help teachers select appropriate strategies for teaching.
- ✓ Learning outcomes help teachers avoid extra teaching which ultimately help in saving time.

6.3 Help in writing Assessments & Evaluation

- ✓ Learning outcomes make Assessments mapping clear & easy.
 - ✓ Learning outcomes make midway corrections possible.
 - ✓ Learning outcomes make students study on their own and come to the class well prepared.
- Evaluation
- ✓ Learning outcomes help in measuring the effectiveness of the unit.
 - ✓ Learning outcomes play a major role in allocation of marks while setting question papers.

6.4 Help Academic Advisors and Advisees

- ✓ Learning outcomes help advisors to focus on the questions on WHAT students should be learning and HOW they are going to teach this.

6.5 Help in securing Accreditation

- ✓ Learning outcomes help Accreditation agencies to assess whether the course / programme has met the mission and goals of the Institution.
- ✓ Learning outcomes help to know how the course or programme has been structured and different processes for evaluating the students' learning.
- ✓ Learning outcomes work as a kind of evidences e.g. rubric, charts or graphs related to summative learning goals.
- ✓ Learning outcomes help the Accreditation Agencies in ascertaining whether the desired objectives are met.

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