

**OUTCOME- BASED EDUCATION (OBE) IN NURSING: A NARRATIVE REVIEW**Sr. Godwin^{1*}, Mrs. V. Anusha Selvin Mary²^{1,2}Associate Professor, Jubilee Mission College of Nursing, Thrissur.

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ABSTRACT

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a learner-centred approach that focuses on the achievement of clearly defined competencies at the end of a learning programme. In nursing education, where both theoretical knowledge and clinical skills are essential, OBE provides a structured framework to ensure that graduates are prepared to deliver safe, effective, and patient-centred care. This narrative review explores the evolution, concepts, and application of OBE in nursing education. It highlights the transition from traditional teacher-centred methods to competency-based learning aligned with measurable outcomes. The review discusses key components of OBE, including paradigm, purposes, premises, principles, and practices, along with strategies such as Bloom's taxonomy, formulation of course outcomes, programme outcomes, programme specific outcomes, and graduate attributes. The importance of CO–PO mapping and outcome attainment for continuous quality improvement in nursing education is also emphasized. It also outlines the benefits of OBE, including improved clinical competence, critical thinking, individualized learning, and enhanced learner motivation. Overall, OBE supports the development of competent nursing graduates capable of meeting evolving healthcare demands.

KEYWORDS: Outcome- Based Education, Competency Based learning, Course Outcome, Programme Outcome, CO- PO mapping, Blooms Taxonomy, Graduate Attributes.

INTRODUCTION

Outcome Based Education (OBE) is a student-centred approach of curriculum design and teaching that emphasize on what learners should know, understand, demonstrate and how to adapt to life beyond formal education.^[1] Nursing education consists of both theoretical and practical components that complement each other. As nursing is a skill-oriented profession, students are required to develop practical competence to deliver quality care to the patient. Clinical training provides opportunities for nursing students to acquire essential competence necessary for professional practice. Beyond technical skills, clinical education also fosters the development of problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking abilities.^[2] So, it is the need of the hour to meet the competency demands of OBE, necessitating the adoption of learner-centred and outcome-aligned strategies instead of Traditional lecture-based teaching. Outcome based education is targeted at achieving desirable outcomes (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour) at the end of a program.

Teaching with this awareness and making the associated effort constitutes outcome based education.^[3]

HISTORY OF OBE

The concept of Outcome-Based Education was first formally introduced in the 1980s, but its roots can be traced back to earlier competency-based education models, which focused on mastering specific skills. Competency-Based Education (CBE): CBE emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in vocational and technical education, where specific, measurable skills were essential.

In the 1980s, William Spady, an educational theorist, formally coined the term "Outcome-Based Education." He defined it as an educational system that starts with clear outcomes and works backward to design the curriculum, teaching methods, and assessments. Outcome based education in medical education gained significant momentum during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The approach was formalised in medical education to ensure that graduates could perform necessary tasks, notably moving from an emphasis on the process to the outcome.^[4]

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION VS OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a student-centric teaching approach which rejects the traditional education system that focuses on what is taught. The National Education Policy of India, 2020, considers OBE as the reformed concept of education and many higher education systems are shifting their curricula to OBE.^[5]

CONCEPTS OF OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION

Outcome-Based Education is defined as a structured educational system that ensures learners achieve predefined outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitude. It emphasizes:

- Student-centered learning
- Measurable outcome
- Continuous Assessment and Feedback

OBE aligns curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and evaluation strategies to achieve desired competencies. Outcome-based Education (OBE), a performance based and learner-centred approach in education offers a powerful and appealing way of reforming and managing nursing education. OBE emphasize on what learners should know, understand, demonstrate and how to adapt to future life roles

OBE PYRAMID

The Outcome-based models incorporate several elements that work together to change how schools operate and facilitate learning. These key elements are as follows^[6]

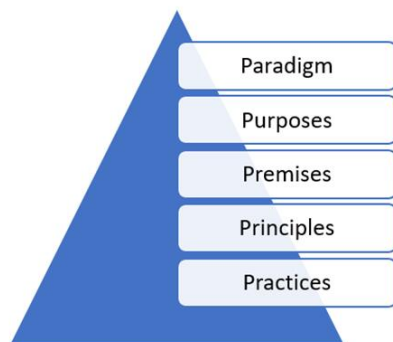


Fig. No. 1: The OBE Pyramid.

❖ Paradigm

A paradigm is a way of viewing and doing things consistent with that viewpoint. In nursing education, the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) paradigm shapes decision-making and guides patterns of action by emphasizing that whether nursing students achieve the desired competencies is more important than when and how they learn them.

This approach focuses on ensuring that students successfully demonstrate essential nursing skills, clinical judgment, and professional attitudes required for safe and effective patient care, rather than simply completing prescribed learning activities.

❖ Purposes

There are two key purposes which reflects its underlying success for all students. They are;

- Ensuring that all students are equipped with the knowledge, competence, and qualities needed to be successful after completing the nursing education.
- Structuring and organizing nursing education programs so that the expected learning outcomes are achieved and maximized for all nursing students.

❖ Premises

The three key premises are:

- All students can learn and succeed, but not on the same day in the same way.
- Successful learning promotes even more successful learning.
- Schools control the conditions that directly affect successful school learning

❖ Principles

In nursing education, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) deliberately and consistently guides teaching, learning, and assessment practices around four clear principles of decision-making and action.

- Clarity of focus
- Expanded Opportunity
- High Expectations
- Design Down

❖ Practices

- Define Outcome
- Design Curriculum
- Deliver Instruction
- Document results
- Determine Advancement

PRINCIPLES OF OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION

The following are principles to be adopted in OBE^[7]

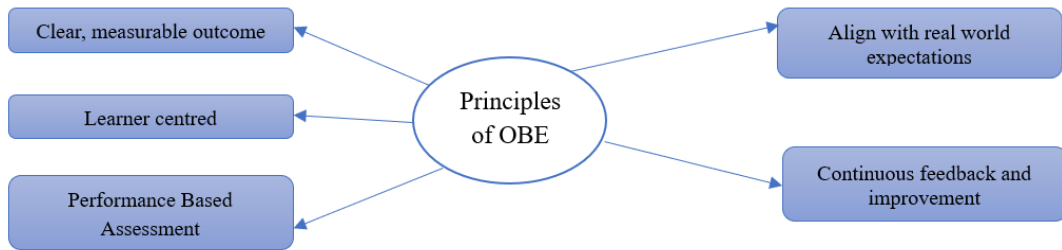


Fig. no. 2: Principles of OBE.

STRATEGIES USED IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

a. Blooms taxonomy

It is a widely accepted hierarchical framework that educators use to categorize and organize learning objectives based on their level of complexity and specificity. Benjamin Bloom and his research team developed this taxonomy to provide clarity and structure to educational goals, aiming to facilitate more individualized and effective teaching strategies.^[8,9]

It includes three main domains (Fig. no. 3):

- ❖ Cognitive domain – related to intellectual processes
- ❖ Affective domain – related to emotions, attitudes, and values
- ❖ Psychomotor domain – related to physical skills and abilities

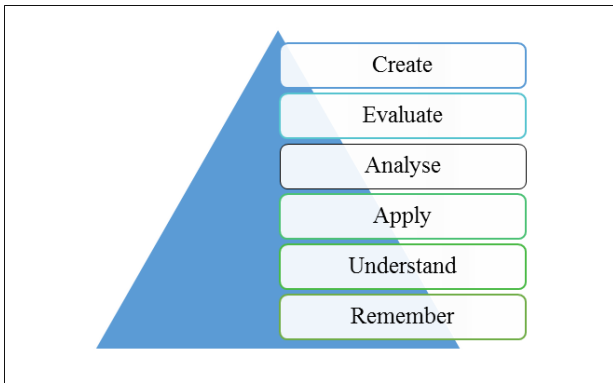


Fig. No. 3: Blooms taxonomy (Cognitive Domain)

The 2001 revision by Krathwohl and Anderson shifted Bloom’s original cognitive categories from passive nouns to active verbs, emphasizing learner engagement and active participation.

The revised taxonomy focuses on a more flexible and dynamic approach to education, rather than placing learning objectives into fixed and unchanging categories.

- ❖ **Remembering:** Recalling facts and basic concepts
Action verbs: list, define, identify, recall, name, state, describe
Example: Naming cranial nerves in order
- ❖ **Understanding:** Explaining ideas and concepts

Action verbs: explain, summarize, interpret, paraphrase, illustrate, classify
Example: Classifying types of pain (acute vs chronic).

❖ **Applying:** Using information practically in new situations
Action verbs: apply, use, demonstrate, implement, execute, solve
Example: Demonstrating proper hand hygiene technique in the clinical setting.

❖ **Analysing:** Breaking information into components to explore relationships
Action verbs: analyse, compare, contrast, examine, differentiate, categorize
Differentiating between types of shock (hypovolemic, cardiogenic, septic)

❖ **Evaluating:** Judging the value of information or ideas based on criteria
Action verbs: evaluate, assess, critique, justify, argue, defend, rate
Example: Critiquing a nursing research article for its methodology and findings

❖ **Creating:** Producing new or original work
Action verbs: create, design, invent, develop, construct, compose, propose
Example: Creating a fall-prevention protocol for elderly patients.

b. Course Outcome

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in nursing education highlights the need for clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes that direct curriculum design, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. This approach ensures that nursing education remains relevant and effective, and prepares students to meet the demands and challenges of the healthcare field.

Course is defined as a theory, practical or theory cum practical subject studied in a semester. Course Outcome (CO) Course outcomes are statements that describe significant and essential learning that learners have achieved, and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a course Generally three or more course outcomes may be specified for each course based on its weightage.^[10]

i. Programme outcome

A programme in nursing refers to the specialization or discipline within a nursing degree. It includes a structured combination of theoretical courses, clinical postings, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities designed to achieve specific objectives that lead to the awarding of a nursing degree. For example, B.Sc. Nursing.

Programme Outcomes (POs) are clear statements that describe what nursing students are expected to achieve or demonstrate by the time they graduate. These outcomes are closely aligned with the graduate attributes, such as clinical competence, critical thinking, communication skills, ethical practice, and professional responsibility.^[10]

j. Programme Specific Outcome (PSO)

Programme Specific Outcomes (PSOs) in nursing refer to what students are expected to be able to do at the time of graduation within the nursing discipline. These outcomes focus on nursing-specific competencies such as delivering patient care, applying clinical skills, promoting health, and practicing ethically. Usually, it includes two to four PSOs.

k. Graduate Attribute

Graduate attributes in nursing are the key qualities and competencies expected from a student who completes an accredited nursing programme. These attributes represent the knowledge, skills, professional behaviour, and ethical values that a nursing graduate should demonstrate, such as clinical competence, critical thinking, communication skills, leadership, and commitment to quality patient care

l. CO- PO mapping

Course Outcome–Programme Outcome (CO–PO) mapping in nursing is a systematic process used to determine how each course contributes to the achievement of programme outcomes. Course Outcomes are defined for each nursing subject, and their relationship with Programme Outcomes is established using a correlation scale such as 1 (low), 2 (moderate), and 3 (high).

A CO–PO mapping matrix is then prepared for each course. The attainment of Programme Outcomes is calculated using both direct measures (theory examinations, clinical performance, assignments) and indirect measures (student feedback, exit survey). The results are compared with predetermined targets, and necessary improvements are implemented to enhance learning outcomes. This continuous evaluation supports quality improvement in nursing education.

m. Attainment of Outcomes

In nursing education, the attainment of Course Outcomes (COs), Programme Outcomes (POs), and Programme Specific Outcomes (PSOs) begin with writing appropriate COs for each nursing subject from the first year to the final year of the programme. These course

outcomes are prepared by the respective nursing faculty members.

After this, a correlation is established between COs and POs using a fixed scale, such as 1 for low, 2 for moderate, and 3 for high level of contribution. A CO–PO mapping matrix is then developed for each nursing course.

The overall attainment of programme outcomes is calculated by combining direct attainment (such as examinations, clinical performance, assignments) and indirect attainment (such as student feedback, graduate feedback, employer feedback) in a predetermined proportion. The calculated attainment is compared with the expected target level.

If the attainment does not meet the set target, necessary improvements are made in teaching methods, clinical training, or assessment strategies. This process is repeated continuously until the desired level is achieved. This ongoing refinement process is known as continuous improvement, which is a key strength of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in nursing.

CHALLENGES

The five major challenges in implementing the OBE are faculty resistance, weak stakeholder collaboration, poor assessment tools, overemphasis on data collection over actual pedagogy, and limited resources. Each of these issues is examined not only to highlight the challenges but also to explore the underlying reasons, and potential strategies for overcoming them. It becomes evident that the implementation of outcome-based education (OBE) is not merely a technical adjustment but it is a significant cultural transformation that necessitates strong leadership, policies, and patience.^[11]

ADVANTAGES

- ❖ OBE can reduce training time for learners who already have prior experience or who achieve competence quickly.
- ❖ It promotes rigorous assessment, which increases confidence in judging learners' competence.
- ❖ OBE focuses on demonstrated competence, ensuring that all graduates meet required standards before completing the programme.
- ❖ It provides quality assurance, as every learner must show achievement of outcomes rather than relying only on time spent in class or clinical settings.
- ❖ The approach allows for individualized learning, helping students progress based on their abilities.
- ❖ It enhances student motivation and initiative, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning.
- ❖ OBE supports learners in pursuing their unique interests, leading to more meaningful and relevant education.^[9]

CONCLUSION

The OBE approaches in nursing education can have a positive effect on nursing students' competencies in terms of knowledge acquisition, skills performance and attitude, in addition to improving higher thinking abilities, reducing cognitive load and achieving higher learner satisfaction.^[1]

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