Adaptation of outcome-based learning in an undergraduate English education programme

Wang Lixun
Hong Kong Institute of Education

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Outcome-Based Learning (OBL) has gained increasing prominence in many parts of the world and, since 2008, has been formally promoted among all higher education institutions in Hong Kong by the University Grants Committee (UGC) of Hong Kong. A key concept of OBL is that teaching should be driven by outcomes that are desirable for students, and that greater clarity in relation to what is to be achieved simply involves adjusting teaching and assessment. This article reports on a project on Outcome-Based Learning in the English Department at the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), and an OBL adaptation framework that has been developed. First, the development of a set of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) for the Bachelor of Education (English Language) Programme at HKIEd will be introduced. Second, the design of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) in the programme will be discussed. Third, the alignment of teaching and assessment strategies with learning outcomes will be illustrated through a sample course. It is hoped that this study will inspire some reflection on how effective teaching and learning among students in higher education institutions can be achieved through an outcome-based learning approach.

Keywords: Outcome-Based Learning, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, Course Intended Learning Outcomes, English education programme，Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION

Outcome-Based Learning (OBL) can be dated back to the 1980s, and is best known as a tool for reform in the school sector, having been promoted internationally as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in countries such as the United States, Australia and South Africa in order to facilitate educational renewal (Malan, 2000 & Kennedy, 2009). In response to the challenges of the twenty-first century, higher education has been transformed from the preserve of the few to more broadly based education systems, with a concomitant change in quality assurance mechanisms. Stone (2005) points out that until recently there had been a tendancy of assessing quality primarily in terms of inputs and processes, but now the focus is more on outputs: goals and outcomes. Proponents favour OBE because of its vision of high standards for all groups, and because it measures outputs rather than inputs (Lui & Shum, 2010). The questions asked of our educators are therefore what our students are learning, how well they are learning it and how we know that they are learning it (Stone, 2005).

In 2007, the University Grants Committee (UGC) of Hong Kong established a Task Force on Outcome-based Approaches to Student Learning, and in June 2008, the Task Force organised a symposium titled "Quality Education, Quality Outcomes: the Way Forward for Hong Kong" (UGC, 2008). All the eight UGC-funded higher education institutions were represented at the symposium, and a clear message was conveyed to all institutions that OBL should henceforth be implemented in a systematic manner in tertiary education programmes. The underlying motivation is simple and straightforward - to improve education and to assess the quality of teaching and student learning in an effective way. To avoid a top-down imposition of any particular OBL framework, the UGC made clear that each institution would have the autonomy to develop their own framework. As all institutions in Hong Kong are planning major changes to their curricula under the new "3+3+4" framework (three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and four years of university studies, instead of three years of junior secondary school (Form 1, 2, 3), two years of senior secondary school (Form 4 and 5), 2 years of additional secondary school (Form 6 and 7) for students who intend to pursue a university degree, and 3 years of university studies), which will be implemented from September 2012 (Hong Kong Education Bureau, n.d.), the introduction of OBL appears timely. A clear understanding and articulation of what students should achieve can facilitate the design of a more effective curriculum with an appropriate range of assessment modes to measure learning outcomes, and to assist in the planning of learning pathways for individual students (Stone, 2005).

Such developments furnish the context as the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) seeks to generate a new undergraduate curriculum that embodies the OBL approach, and the implementation of the new curriculum will start in 2012 (Kennedy, 2009). Since 2007, the HKIEd has embarked on a review of its approaches to teaching and learning by implementing various outcome-based learning (OBL) initiatives. It seeks to specify what it is we want our students to know, be able to do and to value as future teachers of Hong Kong's young people.

OUTCOME-BASED LEARNING: THEORY AND PRACTICE

William Spady, the leading advocate of OBE, introduced his model of curriculum planning into the U.S.A. some 30 years ago. He (Spady, 1994, p.1) defines OBE as a process of "clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do,

then organizing the curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens." To Dejager & Nieuwenhuis (2005), outcome-based education is a learner-centred, results-oriented approach to education. In contrast to traditional methods, the OBE model defines learning not by what students have been taught, but by what learning outcomes they are able to demonstrate. As Finn (1990) explains, under the new definition, education is the result achieved through an effective learning process.

Spady (1994, p. 2) fleshes out the details, stating that, outcomes are "……clear learning results that we want students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences……and…..are actions and performances that embody and reflect learner competence in using content, information, ideas, and tools successfully." Similarly, Williams (cited in Tavner, 2005) notes the characteristics of outcomes: they should be achievable and assessable; instruction should make a difference; they should be transparent and fair; they should indicate where learners have not achieved; and reflect the results of learning, not process. Moreover, Spady (1998) asserts that outcomes concern significant, not trivial, learning. All in all, OBE focuses on individual student success. OBE teachers, (who assist student success), strive for student achievement at a level appropriate for each individual, the outcomes being defined 'specifically and explicitly to enhance teaching and assessment, always allowing for unintended but desirable outcomes' (Biggs & Tang, 2009, p.7).

Learning outcomes inform curriculum, teaching and assessment. They are designed to promote more effective learning at all levels (Driscoll & Wood, 2007). In fact, OBL is a "designing down" approach (Spady, 1994) to curriculum development, that is, we define the long-term significant outcomes first, then plan the detailed curriculum accordingly (Killen, 2007). In this way, the learning outcomes now represent the guiding principles in curriculum design. In a nutshell, curriculum design starts with what learners are expected to learn and learners focus on what should be learnt since they know the publically available outcomes in advance. This is then followed by the design of teaching and learning activities that will assist learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes. It ends with the application of modes of assessment that can furnish feedback about the levels of learning that have been achieved.

In the OBL approach, what matters ultimately is not what is taught, but what is learned (Towers, 1996). Teachers must set appropriate Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) instead of teaching objectives, and the quality of teaching is to be judged by the quality of demonstrated learning that occurs. More importantly, what we teach, how we teach and how we assess ought to be aligned with the intended learning outcomes, such that they are fully consistent with each other. This is what Kennedy (2009) refers to as Constructive Alignment: the word 'constructive' referring to what the learner does to construct meaning through relevant learning activities, while the 'alignment' element referring to what the teacher does to facilitate the match. In short, the integration of curriculum, teaching and assessment requires a shift from a transmissive mode of instruction to a process of facilitation model that focuses on outcomes rather than comparisons and ranking (Griffin, 1996). The unmistakable message emanating from the introduction of OBL is that the way teaching and learning are delivered needs to be rethought, and assessment must reflect students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.

STRUCTURE OF OBL AT HKIEd

The HKIEd has structured OBL in such a way that learning outcomes have been developed at three different levels – the Institute level, the programme level, and the course level (HKIEd OBL Unit, n.d.). At the Institute level, a set of Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) were developed first. The GILOs represent the Institute's expectations for all graduates irrespective of the varied programmes they undertake and articulate various

generic abilities encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. These GILOs guide the development of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) for each degree programme, and the PILOs then further guide the development of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs).

In the following sections, the design of learning outcomes at programme and course levels in a 4-year Bachelor of Education (English Language) (B.Ed(EL)) Programme at the HKIEd will be discussed in detail, so as to illustrate how such learning outcomes can be properly designed under the guiding principles of OBL.

DEVELOPING PILOS AND CILOS IN THE B.ED(EL) PROGRAMME

Background: The Outcome-Based Learning (OBL) Project

At the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the English Department has been conducting an Outcome-based Learning Project (the author being the Principal Investigator) from September 2008 to June 2011 with the intention of developing and piloting OBL in the B.Ed(EL) Programme. The project team consists of five members from the Department, a project consultant, Prof. Tony Liddicoat from the University of South Australia, and a full-time research assistant.

The Outcome-based Learning Project has the following objectives: to draft a set of programme level outcomes for the B.Ed(EL) Pogramme, to convert over 35 existing B.Ed(EL) courses into OBL format, to pilot OBL in over 20 selected courses, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot study.

What are Programme Intended Learning Outcomes?

Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are statements of what graduates from a particular university degree programme should be able to do (Biggs & Tang, 2009). They represent the knowledge, skills and dispositions we intend graduates to possess as a result of undertaking the programme. Consequently, they provide the basis for developing a coherent set of teaching and learning activities that will assist students in their learning.

In higher education, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are often derived from a vision of a notional, ideal graduate and are determined by faculty in the programme area in consultation with other stakeholders such as employers, experts in the field, and accrediting and professional bodies (Camosun College, n.d.). They should state clearly and concisely how students may demonstrate their mastery of programme goals (University of Hawaii at Mānoa, n.d.). They are necessarily broader than those at the course level. In addition, they tend to emphasize the integration of skills into a consolidated, interrelated set and often put more stress on real world applications (University of Washington, n.d.). Finally, they serve as an intermediary 'step' between the broader institutional mission involving goals and generic outcomes and the more specific and directly measurable outcomes within the courses. PILOs provide a common language for staff to discuss intended student achievement (HKIEd OBL Unit, n.d.).

According to Eames (2003), PILOs must address a number of questions, for example, the kind of knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions that an ideal graduate should demonstrate upon completion of a programme, the ways these capabilities are to be demonstrated, the pre-requisite preparatory courses that are needed for students to do well on the programme, and the types of assessments that can be used to demonstrate growth in students' knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions.

When answering the above questions, we will find that the PILOs have a number of

characteristics: they should be appropriate for and centered upon the students within that Programme; they should be broad enough that they may be mapped to multiple course outcomes; they should also be specific enough that each PILO addresses a distinct area of the Programme.

Developing Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs)

The first task of the OBL project team was to develop the PILOs of the B.Ed (EL) Programme. Based on the principle of 'design down', as suggested by Spady (1994), the project team conducted a survey to ascertain what qualities prospective employers and experienced English teachers think newly graduated English Language teachers require to have before starting to design the 'exit outcomes' of the B.Ed (EL) Programme.

Conducting the survey

In November 2008, a questionnaire on 'Qualities of English Language Teachers' was developed with a total of 30 items, exploring respondents' expectations of teachers' knowledge and skills for teaching English in Hong Kong. The items were drafted based on a study of the relevant literature, reviewed internally by the OBL project team members, and then validated externally by our OBL consultant Prof. Liddicoat. The questionnaire was used to survey school principals and English teachers in Hong Kong, and 50 secondary schools and 50 primary schools were randomly selected for sampling. Five copies of the questionnaire with covering letters were sent to each school by mail and the respondents from each school included the school principal, one to two English Panel Chair(s) (who coordinate the English programme in a school) and two to three experienced English teachers, depending on the situations of the schools. A total of 500 questionnaires were sent to 100 schools in Hong Kong. The respondents were allowed six weeks to complete the survey forms and were asked to return them either via mail or fax. To ensure a high return rate, the research assistant spoke by phone to the school principals and English Panel Chairs to obtain their cooperation during the survey process.

Data analysis and results

By early January 2009, 295 completed questionnaires had been collected, with a response rate of 59%. The respondents were from 42 secondary schools and 42 primary schools, constituting 84% of the selected schools. Data analysis was then conducted using SPSS software, and the degree of significance, the mean and the standard deviation of the 30 statements in the questionnaire were calculated. After the analysis, we found that all the respondents mostly agreed that the freshly graduated English Language teachers need to:
1. have knowledge of learner development appropriate to the level at which they teach and apply this knowledge in all aspects of their teaching;
2. be able to use their knowledge of the English language and culture in social and classroom contexts;
3. tailor programs to best suit learners' particular needs;
4. cater for the diversity of abilities among their students;
5. encourage learners to accept responsibility for their own learning;
6. scaffold learners' learning and English language development through appropriate classroom interaction, negotiation, teaching strategies, activities, materials and assessment;
7. be open to new ideas and developments in their professional work;

8. use their knowledge of English in order to promote learning in ways which are appropriate for learners in context;
9. use a range of methodologies for language and culture teaching, taking into consideration the learners, the learning context, curriculum goals, and the aspect of language being taught;
10. establish trust between teacher and learners which fosters an empathetic view of self and others.

The above findings frequently aligned with the existing programme aims of the B.Ed (EL) Programme and these were used to inform the design of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) for the B.Ed (EL) Programme.

Based on the survey findings, the team started to draft the PILOs of the B.Ed (EL) Programme, also taking into consideration the results of a survey of learning outcomes for English major programmes in different universities around the world, the existing programme aims of the B.Ed (EL) Programme, the Institutional Generic Learning Outcomes, and a list of possible programme level learning outcomes proposed by Professor Tony Liddicoat, the OBL project consultant, based on a review of all the outlines of the courses offered in the programme.

The PILOs of the Bachelor of Education (English Language) Programme

Through a series of consultation sessions with the B.Ed (EL) programme team members, the Institute invited external OBL experts Prof. Mary Diez and Dr. John Savagian from the Alverno College of the United States, and the English Department external OBL consultant Prof. Liddicoat, the drafted PILOs of the B.Ed (EL) Programme were revised and finalized, as indicated in Table 1 (Appendix).

From Table 1 we can see that the programme covers several major aspects of teachers' capabilities. The PILOs are divided into three different categories: Subject Knowledge, Professional Subject Knowledge, and General Characteristics. The subject knowledge outcome statements refer to activities relating to the content areas of the English programme. Since both linguistics and literature are studied as subject knowledge in the programme, PILO1 and PILO2 address these two aspects. PILO3 addresses communication skills, which is a very important aspect of an English Language Education programme. Professional subject knowledge refers to those outcomes relating to the professional practice of teachers of English, and PILOs 4, 5, and 6 address different aspects of this professional subject knowledge. In addition to subject knowledge and professional subject knowledge, there are also a series of general outcomes which relate to ethical and context issues relating to the teaching of English in Hong Kong, such as ethical understanding, multi-cultural competence, and a global perspective on English in the world, which are addressed by PILOs 7, 8 and 9.

Biggs & Tang (2009, p.69) suggest that we should reconcile two aspects in translating graduate attributes to programme intended learning outcomes. The first is mapping the graduate attributes onto the programme. The second is designing the programme intended learning outcomes on the basis of the aims of the particular degree programme itself. In this way, the PILOs will address the graduate attributes in an accountable way. The project team reviewed the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes against the Institute's Generic Intended Leaning Outcomes (GILOs) to assess the extent to which they had been included at the programme level, as indicated in Table 2 (Appendix).

The mapping shows that all the 7 GILOs are addressed by different PILOs. For example, GILO1 'Problem Solving' is addressed by PILOs 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, as in the study of linguistics (PILO1) and literature (PILO2), and in the process of engaging in English teaching related professional activities (PILOs 4, 5 and 6), Problem solving skills are crucial. Many of

the GILOs are actually spread across the PILOs and so the PILOs represent a reorganization of these global outcomes to reflect discipline-specific concerns.

PILOs must be developed and refined continuously, as they are closely related to course development. Courses can be written to embody learning activities that help students to attain the programme intended learning outcomes. Once we have devised the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, we need to make sure that their attainment is clearly achievable through the Course Intended Learning Outcomes. When courses are written, programme intended learning outcomes may be reviewed and, where necessary, revised. This kind of iterative curriculum development process is critical to ensuring that the essential elements of the discipline are captured in the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes and reflected in the courses. In fact, PILOs are expressed as the central outcomes intended for the programme and that are to be met by the particular courses in a balanced way (Biggs & Tang, 2009, pp.87-88). Thus defining programme and course intended learning outcomes is not a linear or one-way process. There is a mutual and reinforcing relationship between the two sets of outcomes.

Developing Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

A course intended learning outcome is a statement of what the learner is expected to be able to do upon successful completion of a particular course in order to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills and/or competences (Bowe & Fitzmaurice, n.d.). CILOs provide clear guidance for the planning and development of the teaching process (Biggs, 2003). When drafting CILOs, we need to make sure that all the outcomes are assessable, and they assist students to achieve the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes. Over a sustained period of time, students can develop increasingly sophisticated understandings that move them towards attainment of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.

When we are designing intended learning outcomes for a course, we might ask ourselves the following questions: What do we particularly value about our course? What kind of knowledge is to be involved? What level of understanding desirable for students to achieve and how is it to be displayed? George Brown College developed   a set of 'Guidelines to the Development of Standards of Achievement through Learning Outcomes' (College Standards and Accreditation Committee, 1994). These guidelines cover aspects such as stating clear expectations, representing culminating performances of learning and achievement, describing performances that are significant, essential, and verifiable, not dictating curriculum content, reflecting equity and fairness, and representing the minimal acceptable level of performance that a student needs to demonstrate in order to be considered successful.

In a more compact manner, Baume (2005) suggests that CILOs must be: Attractive, that is, students want to achieve them; Comprehensible, that is, students understand their importance; Attainable, that is, students can learn to achieve them; and Coherent, that is, they clearly fit into their programme. In other words, we have to design CILOs that are measurable, observable, relevant, and realistic. When writing the CILOs, these need to be stated in such a way that they stipulate (Biggs & Tang, 2009, p.83): the verb at the appropriate level of understanding or performance intended; the topic content the verb is meant to address; and the context of the content discipline in which the verb is to be deployed. Moreover, the statement for the CILOs should be written in such a way that the outcomes can be measured by more than one assessment methods. A well-written CILO statement should not impose restrictions on the type or number of assessment methods that have to be used to assess the outcomes. As for the numbers of CILOs, Biggs & Tang (2009) suggest they usually amount to no more than five or six. They consider "the more CILOs, the more difficult it

becomes to align teaching/learning activities and assessment tasks to each" (p.71).

Colleagues involved in this study followed the principles outlined above to design the course intended learning outcomes. To give an example, Table 3 (Appendix) shows the intended learning outcomes of the course 'Introduction to Language Studies' (Wang, 2011), one of the courses of the B.Ed (EL) Programme.

As can be seen in Table 3, all the CILOs/CILLOs have been mapped onto different Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, such as PILO1 (SK1), PILO3 (SK3) or PILO9 (GC3). For example, CILO1 and 2 are about the study of the English linguistic system, which is the focus of PILO1 (SK1): 'analyze and articulate the structures and functions of the English language system'. Through careful mapping, all the PILOs are reflected in different courses, and all CILOs contribute to certain PILOs. In this way, we can ensure that after completing all the courses in the programme, students will be able to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.

The action verbs used in the CILOs are carefully selected so that all the CILOs are assessable. For example, if we change CILO3 to '…students will be able to understand the roles and value of different varieties of English and their uses', we will find that 'to understand' is not assessable, as it is too abstract, while 'to demonstrate (orally and in writing) a clear understanding' is assessable, as it is more concrete. Also, it is important to specify the level of expectations. For example, in CILLO1, the phrase 'an appropriate level of' is used in front of 'English academic literacy'. Without this phrase, it will be difficult for students to know the standard of expectation. With this phrase, we can define 'an appropriate level' in the marking criteria for the course assessment task(s) so that students will be clear about what is expected of them for successful course completion.

Adjustment of teaching and assessing strategies to align with the CILOs

After finalizing the Course Intended Learning Outcomes, it is crucial that the teaching and learning activities are adjusted so that they help the students to achieve these outcomes. For example, if a learning outcome is to demonstrate an appropriate level of academic literacy, then it is crucial to ask students to undertake academic reading, write academic essays, and carry out other activities related to academic writing, such as studying referencing rules.

At the same time, the assessment strategies must also be revisited and if necessary revised so that they are aligned with the learning outcomes. In the past, when lecturers took the objective-oriented approach, it was often found that some of the learning objectives were not addressed by any of the assessment tasks. When taking the OBL approach, we need to adjust the assessment tasks to ensure that all the learning outcomes have been addressed by the assessment tasks to some extent. Without doing so, it will be highly problematic to show whether students have achieved certain learning outcomes by the end of a course.

When constructing assessment tasks that align with learning outcomes, we could follow a set of guiding questions and a number of steps, as illustrated in the example below:

Programme: B. Ed (English Language)
Course: Introduction to Language Studies
Which Course Intended Learning Outcomes will you work with?
$CILO_1$ analyse and articulate accurately the nature, structures and functions of English language as a rich and complex system;
$CILO_2$ apply appropriately principles of language to the specifics of the English language system;
$CILLO_1$ demonstrate an appropriate level of English academic literacy in speaking, writing

and online contexts;

Step 1: Identify Components/ General Criteria

What do these outcomes mean?

> Articulation and evaluation of linguistic theories;
> Application of linguistic theories in analyzing and evaluating multiple texts;
> English academic literacy skills.

Develop some general criteria that describe your expectations for student performance of this outcome.

> Clear articulation of linguistic theories;
> Critical evaluation of linguistic theories;
> Appropriate application of linguistic theories in analyzing and evaluating multiple texts;
> An appropriate level of English academic literacy skills.

Step 2: Design an Instrument or Process

Use the GRASPS model as below (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). GRASPS is an assessment design tool for developing performance tasks and so fits well with the goals of OBL. It outlines a series of considerations in task design which make explicit what needs to be addressed in developing a task. The features of the task that need to be considered are:

- Goal:

> To obtain a clear overview of the study of linguistics through participating in a student-authored wikibook project;
> Gain an appropriate level of English academic literacy skills

- Role:

> Students becoming the authors of an academic textbook, taking the responsibility of writing different chapters in groups based on the content of the course.

- Audience:

> Group members will peer-edit one another's section in the corresponding chapter; each group will present their chapter to other groups for comments and peer learning.

- Situation:

> Students need to carry out a careful literature review on an assigned topic through intensive academic reading, and write different chapters in groups for an academic textbook together.

- Product/Performance /Purpose:

> Well referenced book chapters based on course topics to demonstrate a clear understanding of linguistic topics and an appropriate level of academic literacy skills

- Standards and Criteria for Success:

> See below

Step 3: Develop Specific Criteria

The criteria from the GRASPS process need to be further refined, so as to create a single point, analytic rubric with either 3 or 4 levels of performance. The lecturer needs to spell out typical things that s/he would expect to see at each level, leaving some room for additional issues that emerge. Table 4 (Appenix) shows an example of such a rubric used in the course *Introduction to Language Studies* mentioned earlier.

Having designed or revised the assessment tasks, it is important to formulate a set of criteria which address the CILOs directly, as seen in Table 4. A well-structured course should

show a clear alignment between the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria used in the course; in turn this requires us to design appropriate assessment tasks, and to deliver the course in a way which enables students to reach the required outcomes. It is also important that all the CILOs are addressed somewhere by the criteria designed for different assessment tasks. As a result, we can ensure that all course intended learning outcomes are measured and evaluated after students have completed all the assessment tasks. This process embodies the concept of Constructive Alignment discussed earlier.

DESIGNING PILOS AND CILOS: A FRAMEWORK

Having discussed the development of learning outcomes at both programme and course levels through the alignment process, we would like to propose a framework that highlights such alignment, as indicated in Figure 1 (Appendix).

As shown in Figure 1, different levels of learning outcomes need to be aligned with each other in a hierarchical manner, with the Institute's Generic Intended Learning Outcomes representing the highest outcome levels which then guide the design of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, and subsequently the Course Intended Learning Outcomes. At course level, teaching and learning activities need to be aligned with the CILOs so that they help students to achieve these outcomes, and assessment tasks should also be carefully aligned with the CILOs so that they directly and fully assess all the intended outcomes. Likewise, teaching and learning activities should be attuned to the assessment tasks, so that they help students to prepare for these tasks during the teaching and learning process.

Although the framework provides a seemingly well balanced structure for assuring the successful implementation of OBL, we need to be aware that the PILOs are only indirectly assessed through the assessment of CILOs, thus it is crucial that we carry out very careful mapping of the CILOs with the PILOs, so as to make sure that all aspects of the PILOs have been properly addressed by the CILOs of all the core courses in the programme. If we try to make curriculum changes, such as dropping courses and adding new courses in a programme, we need to review all the PILOs carefully to ascertain whether or not such changes will affect the alignment of the PILOs and the CILOs, and if so, revisions need to be made to address such issues.

CONCLUSION

OBL has gained increasing prominence in many parts of the world, especially in the case of Hong Kong. What attracts the educators and the education policy makers is that OBL helps learners to focus on clearly defined learning outcomes, so that they know what exactly they will be able to do after completing a given course. This makes learning more student-centred. For teachers, instead of focusing on what they want to teach, they now need to think from the learners' perspectives and focus on how they can help the learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes in an effective and efficient manner. To implement OBL successfully, it is essential to first come up with a set of generic outcomes at the institute level, and then develop a set of programme learning outcomes which map onto the generic outcomes properly. At course level, it is important to design course intended learning outcomes based on the programme learning outcomes, and ensure that the teaching and assessing strategies are closely aligned with these course intended learning outcomes. Such crucial preparatory work is essential before we can implement OBL successfully. At programme level, this process of restructuring the entire teaching and learning framework is very beneficial, as it helps the programme team see clearly what kind of graduates they are going to produce, and what measures they need to take in order to produce such graduates. At

the same time, the students will know exactly what they will be able to do after completing a programme, and thus it helps them to make decisions more easily when choosing a programme. Moreover, after graduation they can demonstrate to their future employers the various learning outcomes they have achieved. This clarity of focus will guide us to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

Baume, D. (2005). *Outcomes-based approaches to teaching, learning & curriculum.* Powerpoint presentation on 15 December 2005 for Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Retrieved January 30, 2010 from http://www.slidefinder.net/o/outcomes_based_approaches_teaching_learning/14218143

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd Edition). Open University Press.

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2009). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (3rd Edition Reprinted). Open University Press.

Bowe, B. and Fitzmaurice, M. (n.d.). *Guide to Writing Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved April 12, 2011 from http://www.e-teaching-austria.at/pdf_s/DIT_Guide.pdf

Camosun College. (n.d.). *Programme Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved January 30, 2010, from http://edp.camosun.bc.ca/mod03/mod3u1.php#programLO

College Standards and Accreditation Committee. (1994). *Guidelines to the Development of Standards of Achievement through Learning Outcomes.* George Brown College. Retrieved April 11, 2011, from http://liad.gbrownc.on.ca/programs/InsAdult/currlo.htm#Guidelines

Dejager, H. J. & Nieuwenhuis, F. J. (2005). Linkages between total quality management and the outcomes-based approach in an education environment. *Quality in Higher Education, Vol. 11, No. 3.* Retrieved April 13, 2011, from http://www.ied.edu.hk/obl/files/18908562.pdf

Driscoll, A., & Wood, S. (2007). *Developing outcomes-based assessment for learner-centered education: a faculty introduction*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Eames, A.L. (2003). *Developing learning outcomes*. Northeastern Illinois University. Retrieved April 8, 2011, from http://www.neiu.edu/~neassess/pdf/DevelopingLearningOutcomesOutline.pdf

Finn, C. E., Jr. (1990). The biggest reform of all. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(8), 584-592.

Hong Kong Education Bureau (n.d.) *Hong Kong Education System*. Retrieved April 20, 2011

from http://www.edb.gov.hk

HKIEd OBL Unit. (n.d.). *Outcome-based Learning*. Retrieved April 15, 2011, from
http://www.ied.edu.hk/obl

Kennedy, K. (2009). *Outcomes based learning, concepts, issues and action*. Retrieved
November 21, 2010 from
http://www.ied.edu.hk/obl/files/OBLConcepts%20Issues%20and%20Action_Kennedy.doc

Killen, R. (2007). *Teaching Strategies for Outcomes-Based Education* (2nd Edition). Cape
Town: Juta.

Lui, G. & Shum, C. (2010). Outcome-based education and student learning in managerial
accounting in Hong Kong. J*ournal of Case Studies in Accreditation and Assessment*,
Vol. 2, AABRI. Retrieved January 3, 2011, from
http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/10562.pdf

Malan, SPT. (2000). The 'new paradigm' of outcomes-based education in perspective.
Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences, Vol. 28. Retrieved January 3,
2011, from http://www.ajol.info/index.php/jfecs/article/viewFile/52788/41390

Griffin, P. (1996) Outcomes-based Education: Interpreting Evidence of Learning. *Paper
presented at the Improving Student Learning Conference*, Barton College of TAFE.
Melbourne, July 31, 1996. Retrieved April 21, 2011, from
http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/arc/pdfs/1996-1006.pdf

Spady, W. D. (1994). *Outcomes Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers*. Arlington,
VA: American Association of School Administration.

Spady, W. D. (1998). Outcomes based education: An international perspective. In J. Gultig, C.
Lubisi, B. Parker & U. Wedekind (Eds.), *Understanding Outcomes Based Education:
Teaching and Assessment in South Africa*. Johnnesburg: SAIDE & Oxford University
Press.

Stone, M.V. (2005). Opening remarks in the "Symposium on Outcome-based Approach to
Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education: International Perspectives"
held on 15 December 2005. University Grants Committee of Hong Kong. Retrieved
April 15, 2011, from
http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/publication/speech/2005/sp171205.htm

Stone, M.V. (2008). Welcome message in the "Symposium on Outcome-based Approaches in
Student Learning: "Quality Education, Quality Outcomes, The Way Forward for
Hong Kong" held on 18 June 2008. University Grants Committee of Hong Kong.
Retrieved April 15, 2011, from
http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/publication/speech/2008/sp20080618.htm

Tavner, A. (2005). Outcomes-based education in a university setting. *AJEE 2005-02*

Towers, J.M. (1996) An elementary school principal's experience with implementing an
outcome-based curriculum. *Catalyst for Change*, 25 (Winter), 19-23.

University of Hawaii at M ā noa.(n.d.). *Programme Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved January
    30, 2010, from http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/outcomes.htm

University of Washington. (n.d.). *Programme Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved January 30,
    2011, from http://outcomes.lbcc.edu/pdf/DevelopProgSLO.pdf

Wang, L. (2011). *Introduction to Language Studies*. Singapore: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Desig*n. (2nd Expanded Ed.).
    Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
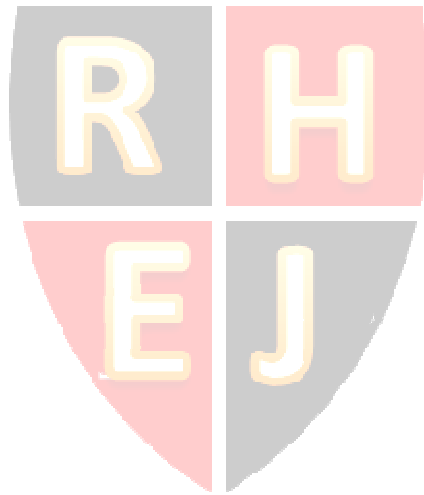
APPENDIX

Table 1: PILOs of the B. Ed(EL) Programme, HKIEd

Bachelor of Education (English Language) Programme Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs)

Students who graduate with a B.Ed. in English Language from the Hong Kong Institute of Education will be able to:

Subject Knowledge
- PILO1 (SK1): analyze and articulate the structures and functions of the English language system;
- PILO2 (SK2): critically appreciate and respond to English prose, fiction, drama and poetry from multicultural sources, and various genre features of print and non-print, and computer-mediated texts, spoken and written; and
- PILO3 (SK3): use appropriate spoken and written English to communicate in academic and professional contexts, and use English at the level expected for LPATE* Level 3.

Subject Professional Knowledge
- PILO4 (SPK1): use their knowledge of English language and culture in social and classroom contexts to promote English language learning in ways which are appropriate for learners;
- PILO5 (SPK2): apply theories of first and second language learning, and the underlying concepts of strategy use, learning styles and individual learner differences to promote English language learning in Hong Kong schools; and
- PIlO6 (SPK3): exercise critical thinking and problem-solving skills for the professional development of their skills in curriculum design, planning, teaching and assessment.

General Characteristics
- PILO7 (GC1): demonstrate awareness of the main ethical, moral, social and cultural issues related to teaching English in Hong Kong schools;
- PILO8 (GC2): recognize the importance of students' home languages and language varieties and build on these as a foundation for learning English; and
- PILO9 (GC3): demonstrate a general knowledge of the changing English speaking world and of the world at large.

*LPATE: Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers – English, a benchmark test for all primary and secondary English teachers in Hong Kong

Table 2: Mapping out PILOs with the Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs)

	PILO1 - SK1	PILO2 - SK2	PILO3 - SK3	PILO4 - SPK1	PILO5 - SPK2	PILO6 - SPK3	PILO7 - GC1	PILO8 - GC2	PILO9 - GC3
Problem Solving	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Critical & Reflective Thinking	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Creative and Innovative Thinking	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Ethical Understanding and Decision Making						✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Social Interaction Skills				✓		✓			
Global Perspective & Multi-cultural Competence		✓					✓	✓	✓

Table 3: Course Intended Learning Outcomes (*Introduction to Language Studies*).

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILO$_s$)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CILO$_1$ analyse and articulate accurately the nature, structures and functions of the English language as a rich and complex system; [PILO1 (SK1)]

CILO$_2$ apply appropriately principles of language to the specifics of the English language System; [PILO1 (SK1)]

CILO$_3$ demonstrate a clear understanding of the roles and value of different varieties of English and their uses. [PILO9 (GC3)]

Course Intended Language Learning Outcomes (CILLO$_s$)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CILLO$_1$ demonstrate an appropriate level of English academic literacy in speaking, writing and online contexts. [PILO3 (SK3)]

Table 4: Criteria for Sample Task: Wikibook chapter (*Introduction to Language Studies*)

	Outstanding	Very good	Satisfactory	Pass*
Degree to which the task is completed (CILOs 1,2,3)	(Omitted due to lack of space)	The writers demonstrate a good understanding of the topic, with satisfactory supporting evidence. Evidence of a good understanding of key ideas in linguistics. Evidence of a developed ability to choose and analyse relevant language examples to illustrate understanding of linguistic concepts.	(Omitted due to lack of space)	(Omitt-ed due to lack of space)
Effort & research input (CILOs 1,2, 3)		Evidence of wide, relevant reading. Evidence of a developed ability to use ideas from reading to demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in linguistics.		
Critical thought (CILOs 1,2,3)		Some evidence of independent thought and critical reflection in discussing key topics in linguistics.		
Organisation		The chapter is organized in a coherent and logical manner.		
(Introduc-tion)		Each section of the chapter has a clear introduction that establishes the context.		
(Conclusion) (CILLO1)		The main points are properly summarized, and the central purpose is clearly restated.		
Writing style & vocabulary (CILLO1)		The chapter is written in good academic writing style, with only some minor errors. Proper use of Task-specific and general vocabulary.		
Grammar (CILLO1)		Generally accurate grammar use throughout the chapter. There are some minor grammar errors which do not impede communication.		
Referencing (CILLO1)		Generally accurate internal referencing with only minor errors. The reference list follows the APA referencing system properly. There are only minor errors. Reference books/articles are all listed properly.		
Formatting (CILLO1)		The chapter is correctly formatted following most academic conventions (font type and size, spacing, paragraphing, margins, etc.).		

*F: A failing grade fails to meet the minimal criteria detailed above for a passing grade.

Figure 1: The Alignment Process