VALUE AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING OUTCOMES-BASED STUDENTS-CENTRED PROGRAMME

Aliza Ali

Open University Malaysia (OUM)
Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Programme development is a process that involves a systematic process that requires focus on the students' achievement and outcomes. To create an outcomes-based education programme, the university has to prepare its academicians with knowledge and skills that can help the academicians to design and develop an outcomes-based students-centered programme. This study used a quantitative approach using a survey method for data collection. A total of 53 academicians were selected to become research respondents for this study. A questionnaire was sent through a Google form survey to all respondents who are located in Selangor, Malaysia. The survey and data collection were done through a set of questionnaires using a 5-point Likert and open-ended questions. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for The Social Science (SPSS) version 21 software to get the frequency and percentage of the academician response on a way to add value to the university programme development. Open-ended questions are used to identify the academician's issues and constraints pertaining to the programme development process. The results of the study indicated that the respondents are aware of the importance of the outcome-based education progamme, however, most of the respondents need support and training to help them to face challenges in developing an outcomes-based student's centred programme.

KEYWORDS

Curriculum, Outcome-Based Education, Student-Centred, Higher-Education, Learner, Programme Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum design refers to the way curriculum developers conceptualize the curriculum and arrange its major components such as subject matter or content, instructional methods and materials, learner experiences, or activities to provide direction and guidance as we develop the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). The curriculum development model serves as a guideline for action and sequence for the process. A good curriculum development model provides greater efficiency and productivity in developing a student-centred university programme. The developed curriculum will be used in the education system so that what has been implemented in the education system would have a clear direction in resulting in better future generation.

Programme is used to describe any stand-alone curriculum experienced by a student which contributes to a qualification of a degree-awarding body. In the 21st century, higher education institutions need to provide programmes that are relevant and appropriate to prepare graduates for the global market. It is therefore vital to address the enhancement of graduates' competency to ensure that graduate employment matches market needs in the future (Marfunizah Ma' et al., 2020). In addition, stakeholders are demanding that university graduates not only have the knowledge but the appropriate skills and job fit for the workplace (Akir, Eng, & Malie, 2012). Universities are the main sources of knowledge and competence (Marinov & Fraszczyk, 2014) because they deliver education programmes and create the programmes according to the education principles and the current needs. Development of new curriculum or programme as well as monitoring to existing programme is an essential part of higher education providers, especially for a private university such as the Open University Malaysia (OUM). This is to ensure that higher academic standards are set and maintained and enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved by the students.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the 21st leaning century era, higher educational institutions need to provide programmes that are relevant and appropriate to prepare graduates for the global labour market and improve employability (Ministry of Education, 2018). In addition, stakeholders are demanding that university graduates not only have the knowledge but the appropriate skills and job fit for workplace (Akir, Eng, & Malie, 2012). Universities are the main sources of knowledge and competence (Marinov & Fraszczyk, 2014) because they deliver education programmes and create the programmes according to the education principles and the current needs. Development of new curriculum or programme as well as monitoring the existing programme is essential part of higher education providers, especially for a private university such as OUM. This is to ensure that higher academic standards are set and maintained and enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved by the students.

Programme is used to describe as any stand-alone curriculum experienced by a student which contributes to a qualification of a degree-awarding body. The most important components for higher academic institute are the educational programmes offers based on the education code and accreditation standards of the country. Outcome Based Education (OBE) model together with Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and Malaysia Qualifications Framework (MQF) that will be the main reference to develop the guidelines. In addition, the educational programmes formulated will reflect the core mission of the institutional as well as providing viable and relevant programme to the community itself in order to support the economic and cultural growth of the community.

The development of a new programme is important for the university because it enable the university to maintain a position of intellectual leadership. It is imperative to note that the development of a programme in any higher education providers in Malaysia must comply with the MQF, Programme Standards, Guidelines to Good Practices (GGP), and the Code of Practice Programme Accreditation or COPPA (MQA, 2014). The adherence these code of practice standards is to ensure that the programme developed reflect international best practices so that graduating students are on par with those from other countries. Thus, academicians who are employed by the university should have sound knowledge on programme development and MQA and eventually gain their recognition without facing any setbacks in getting their programme accredited.

Programme development in any education institution is the fundamental process to achieve its goals for sustainability. When people refer to curriculum it literally means that everything that goes on in school or college or university. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2018), curriculum design refers to the way curriculum developer conceptualize the curriculum and arrange its major components such as subject matter or content, instructional methods and materials, learner experiences or activities to provide direction and guidance as we develop the curriculum. Thus, when developing a programme, it must be structured to align with the curriculum development model serves as a guideline for action and sequence for the process. A good curriculum development model provides greater efficiency and productivity in developing a programme. The developed curriculum will be used in the education system so that what has been implemented in the education system would have clear direction in resulting better future generation without loss of unnecessary cost, energy and resources. (Saedah & Muhammad Ridhuan Tony, 2011).

A programme is designed and delivered to facilitate the attainment of a set of desired learning outcomes (MQA, 2018). Developing an academic programme requires understanding of curriculum development process includes phase of need analysis, design, development, dissemination, implementation and evaluation. Like developing any product for marketing, academic programme development requires commitment, collaboration, understanding of the key educational experience that could further enrich the students' learning. This can be a daunting process, which need times, approval, collaboration between academics, departments and stakeholder. A range of training supports through in-house training need to be carried out to enable academician to understand their roles in the programme development process. It involves transforming the curriculum of a programme that requires not only academic expertise in the entire suite of courses that makes up a programme, but also education experts from various disciplines who have been trained or who have considerable experience in effective learning-teaching methodologies including associated technologies that make the classroom environment a very rich one (MQA, 2018).

Although the primary role of the university is to give knowledge based on the theoretical aspect, investment in higher education should not be neglected by society (Marfunizah Ma' et al., 2020). Higher educational institutions should produce graduates to cope with industrial development. This involve the development of

Programme Education Objectives (PEO) that describe the professional accomplishments that the graduates achieve after they graduate. In the university programme, PEOs enable evaluation of how graduates are contributing towards the industry within the first five years following their graduation. Even so, the Programme Learning Objectives (PLO) that reflect the three learning domains namely the cognitive, affective and psychomotor must correspond to the MQF learning outcomes. PLO statement must be addressed the 11 MQF learning outcomes and courses that are offered to, directly and indirectly, support the attainment of PLOs. According to Gordon, Taylor and Oliva, (2019), the learning outcomes may be identified in three major domains namely the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor. Five clusters of the 11 MQF learning outcomes are based on these three learning domains. Students' learning outcomes should address relevant outcomes for each of these learning domains and hierarchical levels in each of the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains are from low to the higher order. These learning domains represent the areas of knowledge, skills and attitude that are the basis for writing Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) that contain measurable action verbs. To rephrase it, CLO is intended learning contains the which explain what the students should be able to achieve by the end of the course. Thus, when writing learning outcomes, we relate the existing needs of the profession and industry.

The educational programmes offer in any higher educations must be based on the education code and accreditation standards of the country (UNESCO, 2014). In Malaysia context, OBE and MQA COPPA 2nd edition and MQF is the main reference to develop the programme guidelines. In addition, the programme developed will reflect the core mission of the institutional and provide viable and relevant programme to the community itself in order to support the economic and cultural growth of the society.

OBE approach is a student-centered strategy in which students' mastery over particular skills is demonstrated and measured. The OBE approach is a clear statement that is expected to be achieved by the students at the end of the programme. OBE is emphasised because it can influence the whole process of education including decisions about the content of the curriculum, formulation of aims, educational strategies, design of teaching methods, assessment procedures, and the educational environment (Esmaily et al., 2014). However, OBE is a complex strategy for any programme planning which is based on the intended learning outcomes to achieve the desired performance. In other words, the OBE can be used as a framework for designing learning outcomes at the courses' level which curriculum mapping with the programme learning outcomes that ultimately lead to optimal learning experiences or desired outcomes (Esmaily et al., 2014).

In education perspective, OBE is an educational approach that is related to the goals or outcomes and at the end of the of the educational experience through a programme, learners should have achieved the outcomes. OBE is considered a holistic approach which offers a powerful and appealing way of reforming and managing education for mastery in learning and to meet the prerequisites for local and international accreditation (Mohieldein, 2017). OBE has gone through evolution and hence, redesigning programme development based on on educational outcomes has become the focus and prioritise by higher institution providers around the world. An OBE curriculum design starts with the determination of the programme aim, which outlines the philosophy, rationale and purpose of the programme (MQA, 2014).

OUM apply OBE as a programme approach in handling teaching and learning to prepare graduates to face challenges in life and at work place. OBE is an education philosophy organized for the learners to experience in order to become successful in life and workplace when they finish their studies. OBE specifies the desirable outcomes or abilities which students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of an educational programme (MQA, 2018). Programme learning outcomes are expected from certain academic programme at higher institutions and these are assessed through various measurement methods and tools. OBE is a programme approach that involves the development and restructuring of curriculum, assessment and reporting knowledge into practices.

OBE is an approach to education that begins with clearly focusing on high-quality learning in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences (MQA, 2014). Thus, it is important for all the academician in the higher education to understand the importance of OBE (OUM, 2019). To overcome the requirement, it is mandatory for all programme to shift from traditional education system to OBE, which includes Programme Educational Objectives (PEO), Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLO). In order for any programme development to be successful, it is necessary for the CLOs in OBE to be identified, explicitly and communicated to all concerned as well as to be the overriding issue in all curriculum and teaching decisions (Morcke et al., 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for the university academician to have the knowledge in OBE.

Programme development should be a perpetual and comprehensive planning process used to establish any university programme. Quality program development is should be supported by a good documented plan of action. However, education university encounter challenges using the existing leadership skills towards change in curriculum, competencies and skills essential to their graduates' career development with regard to the programs offered by the faculty (Syed Ismail et al., 2017). In Malaysia, the MQA is the government agency in charge of supervising and monitoring standards of programmes offered at the higher institutions. Universities need to respond quickly to MQA requirements to meet the minimum compliance criteria. Nevertheless, the challenges of high education institutions, to a considerable degree, do have an undue influence over the university inputs, operations, functions, processes, and outcome (Abdul Majid et al., 2018). Planner and curriculum developer will also face the crisis on choosing a policy and the goals of future education (Saedah & Muhammad Ridhuan Tony, 2011). Poor management and financial strains are among reasons for private universities faced accreditation problems, causing the MQA to suspend or refuse accreditation after auditing process were carried out (Ainaa, 2021). Baumgardt and Lekhetho (2013), identified the challenges of quality assurance in South African private higher educations, indicating that proper accreditation mechanisms are essential to ensure the delivery of quality education.

At the micro level, the programme development and revision, the main concern is programme planning and development process as indicated by Richey and Klien (2017). This process has warranted for a need analysis for data collection for the targeted learners' demand of the programme. In addition, the development of new programmes varies among institutions and are subjected to the changing needs. Since most of OUM learners are working adults, it is crucial to develop a programme towards the market.

Thus this paper reporting the study that has conducted (1) to identify what ways university academician can add value to the university academic programme during programme development process that focusing on the OBE students -centred approach and (2) to identify challenges university academician faced during programme development process that focusing on the OBE student-centred approach.. In this context of study, value refers to knowledge enhancement, knowledge improvement and what the students should be able to do at the end of the proggrame or after graduatings. Programme in this context of study refers to an arrangement of courses to achieve the stated learning outcomes, which usually leads to an award of a qualification. Academician of the university plan and advocate for the growth of the programme, responsible to develop the programme or ensure that the programme under their supervision remain viable, relevant and at highest standard of quality. The academician must aware of the regulotory body outlines to ensure that the learners are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitute.

2.1 Methodology

This study involves academicians of OUM. The academicians are OUM academic staff designated to teach, design and coordinate academic programmes offered in the university. The finding of this research will be able to identify the ways academicians add value to the university programme and issues they faced when reviewing and developingthe academic programme. This study used quantitative approach using a survey method for data collection. A total of 53 academicians were selected to become research respondents for this study. However, 49 respondents were returned. A questionnaire was sent through google form survey to all respondents who are located in Selangor. The survey and data collection was done through a sets of questionnaires using a 5 point Likert open-ended pen ended questions. analyzed analysed using the Statistical Package for The Social Science (SPSS) version 21 software to get the frequency, percentage, mean and mode on the academician knowledge on the product in programme development. Open ended questions were also used to identify the academicians issues and constraints pertaining the programme development process.

2.2 Findings

Figure 1 shows respondents' responses on ways for department to add value to educational programmes in OUM. The highest scores to improve on competencies regarding curriculum development 73.5% (N=36) and to improve knowledge on the capacities, rights and responsibilities 71.4% (N=35). This is followed by to enhance knowledge on how to organize, assess information 63.3% (N=31), improve knowledge and understanding of the importance 59.2% (N=29), and improve knowledge on ethics and info-ethics 40.8% (N=20) respectively.
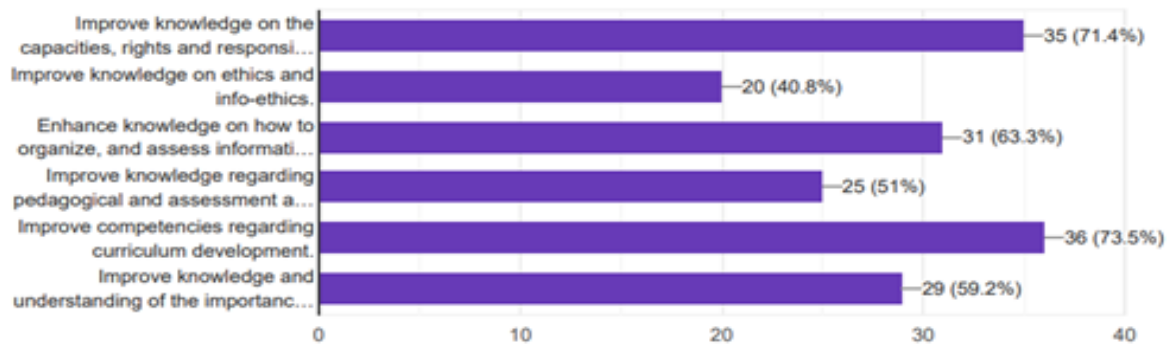
Figure 1. Respondents' responses on ways to add value to educational programmes

2.2.1 Challenges Faced by Academicians Concerning OBE Programme Development

The following are respondents' responses on the challenges faced as academicians in programme development process in OUM based on the open-ended questions. The following responses were not based on ranked order.

- To keep updated with the new policies/ guidelines/Standards from relevant bodies
- time constrain, number of academic
- No ad-hoc team in preparing documents during development process
- No ad-hoc team in preparing documents during development process
- Meeting the MQA requirement.
- Workload has increased tremendously due to insufficient academic staff in faculty. There is not much time left to review our own programme to improve it further in terms of delivery, learning material, assessment and engagement with students and alumni. Major weakness, in my humble opinion.
- Having the internal expertise to offer adequate supervision in certain areas
- Not having sufficient knowledge of the needs of the industry with regards to the program

Based on the above challenges, it can be concluded that respondents faced more on the input and implement process in the programme development. Some of the challenges faced by academicians from input process include to keep abreast with the updated policies/ guidelines/standards from relevant bodies due to time constraint and academic. In addition, academicians also mentioned that lack of support in term ad-hoc team in preparing documents during development process and meeting the standards required by MQA. The situation is exasperated by the increased workload due to insufficient academic staff in faculty and thus, academicians seem to overlook to keep on reviewing the programme assigned to them. Further, this situation also has led to lack of attempt to improve on the programme in term of delivery, learning material, assessment and engagement with students and alumni. It also seems that academicians encountered challenges in the programme development due to lack of support from internal expertise to offer adequate supervision in certain areas and academicians mentioned that they lack of knowledge of the needs of the industry with regards to the programme.

3. DISCUSSION

In supporting the programme development process and the revision of curriculum development, there are some points raised and suggestions from the programme directors. The issue of manpower or the number of internal academic staff and expertise was raised to assist in developing a programme in the faculties. The academic staff based on areas must be recruited to sustain the OUM programmes. In addition to that, the assistance from the non-academic staff also plays a significant role to expedite the overall programme development process in

gathering relevant materials, resources, and data collection. Therefore, dedicated staff from the faculty or other units must be focused on handling the process. The appropriate timeline and duration are also critical to developing a quality programme based on the current programme standard and industry input. Concerning the demand to produce a quality programme, continuous demand on the internal training to the programme directors and embed a system to support the process is crucial to higher education institutions. In this manner, the system is vital to sustaining the current changing demands and accountability. The last suggestion is to have a centralised input or department, for example, Programme Accreditation Unit (PAU) to handle as a one-stop center in terms of managing the information transfer and not to rely on the individual programme directors for the information update on the programme as well as the programme development process. Programme is a product and should have a set of objectives that describes what the entering and exiting students should be able to do. Product development is depend on the outcomes of the needs and situational analysis of a specific context (Saedah, Norlidah, DeWitt & Zaharah, 2013). Thus, it is the responsibility of programme developers to seek continuous improvement in the programme. In supporting the programme development process and the revision of curriculum development, there were points raised and suggestions from the academicians. The issue of manpower or the number of internal academic staff and expertise was raised to assist in developing a programme in the faculties. The academic staff based on areas must be recruited to sustain the OUM programmes. In addition to that, the assistance from the non-academic staff also plays a significant role to expedite the overall programme development process in gathering relevant materials, resources, and data collection. Therefore, dedicated staff from the faculty or other units must be focused on handling the process. The appropriate timeline and duration are also critical to developing a quality programme based on the current programme standard and industry input. Concerning the demand to produce a quality programme, continuous demand on the internal training to the programme directors and embed a system to support the process is crucial to higher education institutions. In this manner, the system is vital to sustaining the current changing demands and accountability. The last suggestion is to have a centralised input or department, for example, Programme Accreditation Unit (PAU) to handle as a one-stop center in terms of managing the information transfer and not to rely on the individual programme directors for the information update on the programme as well as the programme development process.

Another glaring issues are the time constraint faced by the programme directors to prepare and check the documents. There is no specific committee that can assist them at the initial stage. This issue also happened during the programme review process. The programme directors will do it from scratch with a minimum assistance from the other departments. The fact is, to expedite the speed of documentation, a strong support from all departments in the university is required (Ahmad, 2019).

Some of the academic staffs claimed that the workload has increased due to the insufficient number of academic staff. Some of them have been assigned more than one programme. A bigger portion of time were utilised to do the other academic tasks which in turn limit the time for reviewing the programme delivery, learning materials, assessments and engagement with the existing students and alumni. Meanwhile, these are the essential parts in the Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA) (Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), 2018). The programme directors also perceived that lack of industrial experience is one of the major constraints. To-date, many programmes are developed based on the industrial demand (Jaedun et al., 2020). The fact is, many of them are purely academicians without prior industrial experience. According to Kaiser et al. (2018), in European countries, academics are required to undergo industrial attachment or sabbatical leave to gain experience and integrate the knowledge gained from the industry into the academic programme. This is to ensure the relevancy of the programme with industrial requirements.

4. CONCLUSION

This finding will help the university to identify the best way to solve a problem related to programme development. Programme directors will understand better the importance of programme development devolvement and the effect on students' learning if they are given adequate training and more time to develop a new programme. Programme director will have a better understanding of how to overcome the challenges that prevent them from getting involved with programme development. Training and coaching will help programme director understand the correct process of programme development and maintain the quality of the existing programme. Thus, programme developers must given opportunities' to seek continuous improvement

in the programme. It would benefit programme director if the faculty can add value in terms of educational programs enrichment within the university.

In conclusion, majority of the programme directors raised concern about the challenges in facing programme development process. Lack of understanding about the correct process of programme development and maintain the quality of the existing programme become the main challenges in maintaining the programme quality in the University. In-house training is needed to enable programme directors to understand their roles in the programme development process and they must be exposed with the process related to the continuous improvement in the programme and the improvement should based on the current and future need of the students.

However, the key question of how curriculum developer incorporates unknown future into the curriculum remains unclear. While most people would agree that one goal of a curriculum should be to prepare students for the future, there is often little consensus about what knowledge and skills will be required in the future (Parkay, et al., 2014).To what degree should students master the determined selected knowledge (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) need to be assessed. Willingness to learn and prepare for the future will help improve students' learning experience. To be relevant, curriculum should response to change brought about by psychological principles, new knowledge and educational reform. Change is all about moving the whole system and taking daily actions that build capacity and ownership (Fullan, 2006). In addition, cooperation between educational institutions and industry is critically necessary for the development of teaching and learning (Marfunizah Ma' et al., 2020). If we believes that all students can be academic success, then we need to select with care the content of the curriculum, organize with wisdom the content selected, initiate creative pedagogies, and even "think outside the box" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Thus the programme developed for students at higher institutions should reflect the core mission of the institution and provide a viable and relevant programme to the community itself in order to support the economic and cultural growth of the society. Refection is required just to determine for what purpose the curricula are being developed (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

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