

OBE Course Analysis and Learning Reflections

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Abstract

This paper aims to share the findings of outcome-based education (OBE) analysis done on Human Resource Development (HRM549) course from the Faculty of Business Management that was conducted in one of the public universities. Generally, the curriculum documentation of an academic program includes written program educational objectives (PEOs) at the program level together with the course information for all courses in the program. Course information is a document that provides the details of the course outcomes, teaching methodology, assessment, details of students learning time (SLT), program outcomes-course outcomes (POs-COs) matrix, taxonomy and soft skills matrix that serve as an official guideline to a lecturer to conduct the course, deliver the learning activities and assessment of the students. This OBE course analysis was done as a part of an assignment for the Certificate of Education program conducted by Institute of Leadership and Quality Management (ILQAM) in 2014. Findings of the analysis on this HRM549 course showed that there were several items were not mapped to the course learning outcomes. Henceforth, it was recommended that the lecturer should identify the key important elements in the course analysis that will guide them to map the course learning outcomes with program educational objectives. In conclusion, doing OBE course analysis provides an insight of how the curriculum of a course is being designed (or formulated) using OBE approach.

Keywords: Outcome-based education, program educational objectives, course outcomes, course information

Introduction

In today's educational climate, education would be the most powerful means to change the world. A lot of effort by the government worldwide to improve the education due to its roles in developing and sustaining the country. Providing the best education might begin from the designing the best curriculum in schools and higher education. Curriculum can be defined as a set of planned and guided learning experience or course content aimed at achieving a

certain mission or target or objectives (MQA, 2007). The curriculum design will provide a framework on how to organize the learning process of students. Each of the education institution should have the curriculum design in order to abide with the provisions under the related law such as Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007; Code of Practice of Programme Accreditation (COPPA) Standard; National Higher Education Strategic Plan (PSPTN);

Nine Graduate Attributes and program standards. The curriculum should be designed effectively in order to ensure that the learner understand what they need to learn, what to achieve in their learning process and how to learn. Tyler (1949) revealed that there are five basic criteria for an educational program that need to be highlighted which are identify the needs of learners; define learning objectives; indicate the learning activities to achieve the objectives; action plan for the learning experience and end with evaluation of objectives achievement.

Human Resource Development Course

In this study, one of the courses offered in the Faculty of Business Management had been chosen for an assignment to analyze the extent to which the course information had been design accordingly. Human Resource Development (HRM549) is offered in Semester 4 with 4 credit hours and it is a core subject for Bachelor of Business Administration (H) Human Resource Management. The course information for this subject was last reviewed in year 2013 and maintained by the resource person in Faculty on Business Management, UiTM Puncak Alam campus.

In the syllabus of HRM549 (Human Resource Development), there are ten topics that will be covered per semester. The topics are:

Table 1. Chapters in HRM549

Topic	CLO	Assessment Tools
1. Introduction to Human Resource Development	CO1	Test, Final
2. Training Needs Assessment	CO1	Test, Final, Assignment (lower level)
3. Learning and HRD	CO1	Test, Final
4. Training Program Design	CO2	Assignment (lower level)
5. Transfer of learning	CO1	Test, Final
6. Evaluating HRD Programs	CO2, CO3	Test, Final, Assignment (lower level)
7. Training Delivery	CO3	Mock Training Program
8. Use of new technologies in training	CO1, CO2	Test, Final
9. Special issues in training and development	CO3	Test, Final
10. The future of training and development	CO3	Test, Final, Assignment (lower level)

Each of these chapters has been mapped to the course learning outcomes (CLO) and will be evaluated with the right assessment tools.

Course Information

Human Resource Development (HRM549) course was designed to furnish students with the knowledge

and skills to organize a training program. It highlights three main course learning outcomes (CLO) that need to be achieved by students. The aims of this course are: firstly, the students must be able to recognize and illustrate the principles of Human Resource Development (CLO1); secondly to be able to develop and conducting the training program by following the guidelines in the Instructional System Design (CLO2) and thirdly, to understand the predictors and consequences of HRD efforts in an organization (CLO3). Consisting of 10 syllabuses, this course is expected to equip the students with knowledge and skills needed to be a HR practitioner as well as HRD professional in facilitating the employees' learning and development process in an organization.

In general, the course information provides a detailed guideline for the lecturer to deliver the learning process. Each of the syllabuses is linked with three course outcome as mentioned earlier. This can help the lecturer to deliver each of the topics effectively in order to ensure that students will achieve the course outcomes at the end of the semester. In addition, each of the topics is being provided with assessment tools and rubric in order to evaluate the knowledge acquisition and learning process of the students. A detail on Student Learning Time (SLT), MQA credit for the course, course outcomes-program outcomes matrix, matrix taxonomy and soft skills matrix also provided as the guidelines for the lecturer in the lesson plan, learning activities and evaluation of the activities at the end of the semester. Analysis done on this course information, revealed few discrepancies pertaining to its rubric, marks allocations, assessment tools, matrix taxonomy and other related issues that will be discussed in detailed in the next sections.

Rubric

By referring to the second course outcome which is; quoted: "At the end of the course, the students should be able to develop the training program incorporating the stages of needs analysis, selection of resources and techniques and evaluation". This explained that the students have to plan, design, develop and implement the training program by applying the principles of HRD, follow the right steps in designing a training program, and to deliver the training effectively. This is consistent with the allocation of marks in the continuous assessment whereby, maximum twenty percent is allocated to the students who can deliver the training program effectively. However, there is no rubric to be used in assessing the training program delivery by the students.

It is suggested to assess the training program

implementation by looking at the designed training planning by the students starting from the planning stage until the evaluation process. Students have learned the process of designing a training program base on Instructional System Design (ISD). The ISD approach illustrate the seven (7) steps of designing a training program as explained in the main text book that is being used as recommended text for the course. Base on the book of Training and Development by Raymond A. Noe (2013), before a training program being implemented, training provider have to do training need analysis: specifically 1) to ensure employees' readiness for training, 2) to create a learning environment, 3) to ensure transfer of training, 4) to develop an evaluation plan, 5) to select appropriate training method, and 6) last but not least to monitor and evaluate the program.

The marks are to be allocated based on the extent to which the students fulfill the requirement of each of these steps. In addition, the soft skills, knowledge skills, team works, fluency and clarity, interaction with trainees and time management also need to be evaluated as a part of the criteria in organizing a training program.

Marks allocation

Another issue that needs to be highlighted is the allocation of marks for mock training program. Currently, the marks allocated for the group assignment is twenty percent. In this group assignment, students have to form a few groups (9-11 members per group) and start to plan the training program that they intent to deliver. They are given ten week to organize the program and start to plan in week two of the semester and implement the training program in week eleven.

Details of how the marks are allocated for this assignment are not being defined and how the students are being evaluated (scores). The course information provides the overall assessment marks allocated for implementation of program and report respectively. However, the ten percent marks (or allocation) for program implementation is considered too low as compared to the amount of work and efforts of the students spent on planning and implementing the program.

In organizing a training program, training need analysis (Step 1 in training design process) is considered as the most difficult stage to be implemented. This is because it is a complex process; and it requires skills to analyze the needs of

conducting training program. Activities that must be done in doing training need analysis (TNA) are: trainer must analyze the capacity of organization, and trainees' readiness and tasks in the program. Furthermore, the process to analyze organizational capacity, trainees' readiness and task is time consuming. Furthermore, at organizational level though, training needs assessment is too expensive and difficult to be conducted (Noe, 2013).

Based on past semesters final examination papers, almost all of the topics in this course are covered in the final examination. In the newly revised course information, the assessment tools for topic 4 are low level assignment and for topic 7 is mock training program only. The students' understanding for these topics will not being assess in final examination. However, base on previous record, topic 4 (training program design) is among the most popular questions being asked in the final examination in every semester. This shows that there is a need to examine the students understanding in designing a training program by including the topic in a written test or examination.

Matrix taxonomy

The matrix taxonomy of a learning program refers to the goal of learning process whereby it consists of cognitive domain, psychomotor domain and affective domain. The elements in each domain must be attained and acquired by the students in order to satisfy the course learning outcomes that have been stated in the syllabus. For course code HRM549, the course outcomes specified that students must achieve a few elements in each domain:

- Cognitive domain:
 - i. Comprehension
 - ii. Application
 - iii. Analyses
- Psychomotor domain:
 - i. Perception
 - ii. Set
 - iii. Guided response
- Affective domain:
 - i. Acceptance
 - ii. Giving feedback

COURSE OUTCOMES – P				
COURSE CODE	HRM549			
COURSE NAME	HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT			
CREDIT HOURS	4			
COURSE OUTCOMES	PROGRAM			
	PO1	PO2	PO3	PO4
1. Explain general overview and principles of the HRD field (C2,P1,A1) (LO1)	3			
2. Develop the training program incorporating the stages of needs analysis, selection of resources and techniques and evaluation (C3,P3,A2) (LO7)		3		
3. Analyze the implications and consequences of HRD efforts in organizations (C4,P2,A2) (LO3)			3	

Figure 2: Course Outcomes – Program Outcomes Matrix

However, by referring to matrix taxonomy of a learning program provided by the faculty in the Figure 3 Matrix Taxonomy Learning Program, it specifies that students also need to acquire knowledge in related field (C1) which is knowledge but not mentioning it in course outcomes – program outcomes matrix in Figure 2. There is a tendency that will cause confusion to some of the lecturers in delivering the learning content; and to identify which element in the domain that needs to be achieved.

JADUAL 1: MATRIKS TAKSONOMI PEMBELAJARAN							
BIL	KURSUS	DOMAIN KOGNITIF					
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
		Penggetahuan	Pemahaman	Aplikasi	Analisis	Sintesis	Penilaian
	KURSUS UNIVERSITI						
	KURSUS TERAS						
1	Human Resource Development	/	/	/	/		/
2							
3							
	KURSUS ELEKTIF						
	JUMLAH						

Figure 3: Matrix Taxonomy Learning Program

Other related issues

It is suggested that a subtopic on Human Resource Development Acts and Regulations to be included into the course information that are applicable in Malaysia. For examples, the Human Resource Development Act 1992 and Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad Act 2001. These Acts are currently relevant to all organizational trainings and human

capital development in Malaysia; however the human resource management students are not being exposed or even aware on these requirements; and more so to relate, apply and deployment of HRD laws and regulations into real practices in the industry. Parallel to the expectation of program educational objectives, these topics on laws related to human resource development can equip students with new knowledge and practical skills upon graduation.

Conclusion and recommendations

Human resource development is one of the most important HR functions in an organization. Understanding the principles in HRD field, planning the training and development program and managing the continuous employees development in an organization can avoid from skills obsolescence among employees. Thus, the faculty should continuously maintain and ensure the syllabus is up to date and meet the industrial demand. The lecturers also need to understand how to plan the lesson process, understand the alignment among course learning outcome (CLO), program learning outcomes (PLO) and program educational outcomes (PEO), deliver the learning base on the students learning time (SLT) provided by the faculty, apply the matrix taxonomy learning program and matrix of soft skills programs. The PEOs, PLOs and CLOs only can be achieved if there is a collaboration and mutual understanding among lecturers, students and the management of higher learning institutions.

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