

SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHERS ASSESSING OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE): A CASE STUDY

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Samevatting

In 2008 was dit 'n dekade gelede dat Kurrikulum 2005 met 'n uitkomsgebaseerde benadering deur die ANC-regering geïmplementeer is om onder meer die ongelyke Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysstelsel van die apartheidsbewind te herstruktureer. Hierdie nuwe onderwysbenadering is deur sommige opvoedkundiges beskryf as 'n "paradigma skuif" omdat dit op radikale wyse afgewyk het van die vorige kurrikulum in terme van teoretiese begronding, struktuur, organisasie, die onderrig- en leerprosesse en assessering.

Uitkomsgebaseerde Onderwys (UGO) verteenwoordig 'n gewysigde metodologie van 'n suiwer inhoudgerigte transmissie-model onderwys (waar die onderwyser hoofsaaklik kennis aan passiewe leerders oordra) na 'n interaktiewe en leerdergesentreerde benadering. Voorsiening moet vir elke leerder in die klas gemaak word om teen sy eie tempo en volgens sy eie doelwitte te kan vorder na die bereiking van die leeruitkomst. Van die onderwyser, as die fasiliteerder van leergebeure, word verwag om 'n groter mate van individuele aandag aan elke leerder te skenk, addisionele leerbehoefes te diagnoseer en om verrykende en alternatiewe remediërende leergeleenthede te ontwerp. Op sy beurt beteken dit dat addisionele assesseringsgeleenthede en -strategieë ook deurentyd geskep moet word. Al hierdie veranderinge het outomaties ook die Geskiedenisonderwyser beïnvloed.

In hierdie artikel word gepoog om deur middel van 'n gevallestudie sekondêre Geskiedenisonderwysers (n=85) van voorheen bevoordeelde Model C-skole sowel as benadeelde skole se houding, ingesteldheid, oortuigings en ervarings te peil ten opsigte van hierdie onderwysmodel.

Die vernaamste bevinding is dat meer as die helfte van die deelnemers 'n positiewe ingesteldheid teenoor UGO gehad het en gemaklik daarmee was om dit in hulle onderrig- en leerpraktyke te inkorporeer. Ten spyte hiervan is ook probleme geïdentifiseer, waarvan die belangrikste was: 'n toename in werkslas wat meegebring word deur groot klasse en administratiewe take wat met te veel

assessering verband hou; die aard en omvang van indiensopleidingskursusse; die beskikbaarheid en toeganklikheid van onderrig-en leersteunmiddele en om die leeruitkomste en assesseringstandaarde te bely.

Introduction

In 2008 it was 10 years since the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, launched Curriculum 2005 (C2005). In 1998, this curriculum was hastily implemented in what become known as Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) with the aim to transform the inequalities of the past educational system. After initial problems were experienced with the implementation thereof, a Ministerial Committee reviewed it in 2000. The recommendations of this Committee suggested a revised “streamlining and strengthening” of C2005. It was accepted by Cabinet and resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for grades R-9. This was not a new curriculum and affirmed the commitment to OBE (DoE, 2002a: 4-6). The RNCS is now commonly referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)(DoE, 2006:14). The NCS confirmed OBE as one of its main principles by setting learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the education process. (DoE, 2003a:2).

The new approach was described as a “paradigm shift” in South Africa’s education system. It represents a radical departure from the previous curriculum in terms of theoretical underpinnings; structure and organization; teaching and learning processes; and assessment (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:4-8). All these changes obviously also influenced the History teacher. OBE goes beyond content-driven rote learning and memory skills and is characterised by a learner-centred and activity-based methodology. It also brought about a new way of assessment where learning outcomes and assessment standards have to be taken into account (DOE, 2003a:1-2). The way in which secondary school History teachers handled this change in the ten years that have now lapsed will, to a great extent, be determined by their understanding, attitudes, beliefs and experiences towards this educational model. It will also be determined by the quality of in-service training they received (should they not be trained in the new educational approach) and the extent to which the backup and support from the Department of Education and school management were adequate.

In an effort to define secondary school History teachers’ understanding, attitudes, beliefs and experiences towards OBE, a case study was undertaken.

This will provide one with a worm's eye view (certainly not a bird's eye view) on how some History teachers view and handle certain aspects (e.g. assessment) of the outcomes-based approach.

Sampling

Use was made of a nonprobability sampling design using the purposive type with the intention to provide quantitative and qualitative information. In purposive sampling a representative subset of people are chosen (History teachers in secondary schools), as the name implies for a particular purpose for answers on certain research problems (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:219). In this case, it was used to establish secondary school History teacher's, attitudes, beliefs and experiences with regard to OBE. The representative group of people included secondary school History teachers from the old Model C schools as well as from the former disadvantaged schools. They all attended a History workshop in June 2006 in one of our provinces. All teaches who took part teach History in one or more of the Grades (8-12) and thus experience OBE in one or another way. Those who teach Grade 8-9 History have already experienced OBE through the RNCS in the Learning Area Social Sciences where History and Geography are presented as "separate but linked disciplines" (DoE, 2002b:4). The NCS was introduced in 2006 in Grade 10 (Ngqengelele, 2006) while those teachers who only teach History in Grades 11 and 12 experienced outcomes-based practices through the "interim" syllabi known as Report 550 (DoE, 2003b:2). Eighty-five of the nearly 120 teachers that attended the workshop completed the questionnaire.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A comprised of 13 questions based on the biographical detail of the respondents. In this section, questions were asked about their number of years of teaching experience, training and qualifications. Section B comprised of seven statements to which a "yes" or "no" answer indicated the respondents understanding, attitudes, beliefs and experiences toward OBE in general. Section C had four questions on aspects that are related to assessment, followed by section D that had two open-ended questions on OBE assessment.

Findings

Section A (biographical detail)

In Table 1 to follow, the respondents teaching experience in the teaching profession (in years) as well as teaching experience in History (in years) are displayed.

Table 1 Number of years of teaching experience in the teaching profession and in History teaching				
Number of years	Response rate of number of years in the teaching profession	Percentage (%)	Response rate of number of years teaching experience in History teaching	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	9	10,59	20	23.53
6-10 years	13	15,29	16	18.82
11-15 years	19	22,35	27	31.76
16-20 years	22	25,88	10	11.76
21 years plus	22	25,89	12	14.13
Total	85	100,00	85	100,00

In the response rate of the 85 teachers, (of which 58,82% were male) it is interesting to note that:

- Just more than a half of the respondents, 44 (51.76%) had more than 16 years of teaching experience, while in the case of History teaching it is only 22 (25.89%) with more than 16 years of experience.
- On the other hand, it shows that quite a significant number of 36 (42.35%) of the respondents had ten years and less experience in the teaching of History. Taking into consideration that 51.76% of the respondents indicated that they had more than 16 years of teaching experience, one can possibly conclude that they did not always teach History as a subject throughout their teaching career.
- To a great extent 42.35% of the respondents with less than ten years of experience in History teaching would be largely dependent on in-service programmes (in

cases where they have not received training at a tertiary institution) for the successful implementation of the outcomes-based principle.

In general, the respondents' professional educational qualifications were good as 48 (56.47%) held a Bachelor's degree and/or a teaching diploma. 19 (22.35%) obtained a Degree in Education and 17 (20%) were post-graduates of which 13 (15.29%) obtained an Honours degree and 4 (4.70%) a Masters degree.

As far as qualifications in History are concerned, 47 (55.29%) had History as a major until third year (History III); 12 (14.11%) an Honours in History and 2 (2.35%) a Masters in History. There was one respondent who teaches History with a Grade 9 History qualification and 9 respondents teach History with a Grade 12 History qualification.

Section B (Understandings, attitudes, beliefs and experiences)

In this section, seven statements were made on selected aspects of OBE, to which the respondents only had to answer "yes" or "no".

The first statement, concerning there being currently too much assessment in History, "yes" was answered by 54 (63.52%). An overwhelming 80% of those who answered "yes" came from the category of respondents with 16-20 years of teaching experience. This category of respondents whom also experienced the former educational model was in a good position to judge whether the outcomes-based principle of teaching involves more assessment.

The following two statements in this section dealt with the in-service training programmes. The pie chart below as Tables 2 and 3 indicates the opinion of the respondents on the statements: "The in-service training programmes on OBE equipped me with sufficient (i) theoretical knowledge and (ii) practical knowledge."

Table 2: Sufficient theoretical knowledge on OBE during in-service training programmes

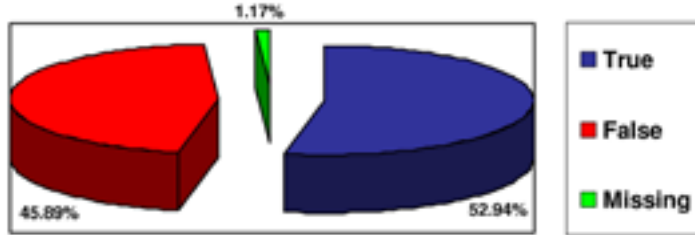
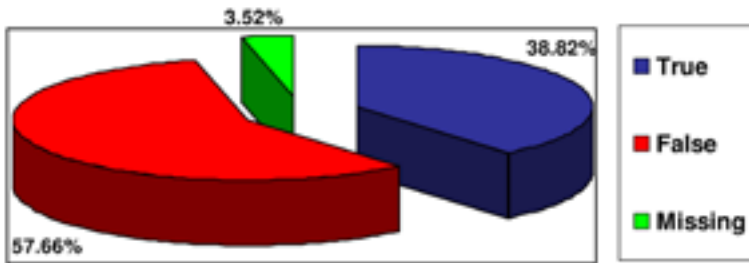


Table 3: Sufficient practical knowledge on OBE during in-service training programmes

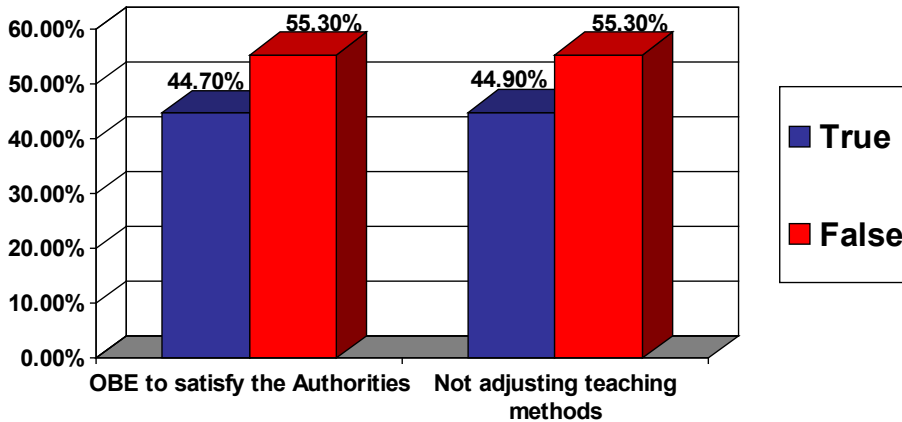


From the above information, it is clear that the respondents are generally satisfied with the theoretical knowledge they gained during the in-service training programmes, but felt there is room for improvement as far as the practical component of these programmes is concerned.

The next two statements in the questionnaire were made in an effort to determine how far the respondents adapted their teaching and learning strategies to accommodate the outcomes-based teaching principle (see graph below). Response to the first statement: “I don’t believe OBE is a great teaching model, but use it to satisfied the authorities”, reveals 44.70% of the respondents commenting that it was true, while 55.30% were convinced that the statement was false. Response to the second statement: “I did not adjust my teaching methods to incorporate OBE and still use to a great extend the traditional method of chalk and talk.” the percentage outcome was more or

less the same. 44.90% opted for the “yes” and 55.30% for the “no” (also see Table 4):

Table 4: Respondents comments on their experience with the OBE model



The percentage outcome was nearly identical in these two statements. It is clear that more than half of the respondents (55%) believe in the merit of an outcomes-based educational approach and therefore are quite willing to adjust their teaching and learning strategies to accommodate it. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that 44% of the respondents felt OBE is not a great teaching approach and therefore did not adjust their traditional teaching approaches. This attitude also correlated with the 43.52% of the respondents that answered “yes” to the statement regarding their feelings of uncertainty on how to implement OBE.

Although there is a relatively positive feeling towards the outcomes-based approach an overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.58%), as indicated, believe that the principle of OBE definitely contributes to an increase in their work burden.

Section C (Aspects related to assessment)

In this section, the focus is on data relating to aspects of assessment. The respondents could choose one of three categories in their answer: (i) in no way problematic (ii) moderately problematic and (iii) very problematic. The respondents answered as follows to the statements below (see Table 5):

The related aspects	In no way problematic	Moderately problematic	Very problematic
First choose the theme (knowledge focus) and then the outcomes and assessment standards	24.70%	45.88%	18.82%
Have relatively easy access to OBE History policy documents at my school	44.70%	31.76%	18.82%
The availability of learning and teaching support material	23.52%	41.17%	31.76%
Informal collaboration with colleagues from other schools	42.35%	32.94%	20.00%

From the above information, it is clear that there were no major problems related to these aspects of assessment. The highest percentage in the category of “very problematic” was only 31.76% where some of the respondents indicated that they still experienced serious problems with the availability of learning and teaching support material for assessment. This problem seemed to become even more serious taking into consideration the 41.17% that also indicated it as a “moderately problematic” issue. The relatively high percentage of 45.88% (moderately problematic) and 18.82% (very problematic) also indicates that the respondents still do not feel comfortable with their understanding of the interrelationship between content, learning outcomes and assessment standards. From this information it is also clear that 44.70 % of the teachers find easy access to OBE policy documents at

their school which is the highest percentage in the category of “in no way problematic”. It also seems that the respondents are working together in assessment related practices where 42.35% indicated they find it in “no way problematic” in doing so.

Section D (Open-ended questions)

In this section, two open-ended questions were posed with the aim of indicating the positive and negative attitudes the respondents experience toward OBE assessment in general.

Although 17.2% of the respondents answered “nothing” or did not fill in an answer, the most informative comments were submitted in reply to: “What positive attitude do you have towards OBE assessment”?

Participation of learner

An overwhelming response was received regarding the learner’s active involvement in assessment. It was generally agreed that OBE assessment was better for the reason that learners work toward an outcome; it is learner centred, continuous and holistic. In this regard, the respondents’ attitudes were in general personified by the following comments:

- “I enjoy the OBE [assessment] method, we love [to] worked out activities that suit us. Things are done to a high standard, which is very good”.
- “More interaction with learners. Open-mindedness in accepting different views pertaining to History.”
- “Learners know what they will be assessed [on]...working towards an outcome.”
- “It allows learners to be assessed holistically and on a continuous bases.”

Development of different skills

A high percentage of respondents also indicated that they experienced OBE assessment as positive because it promoted difficult skills:

- “OBE equips learners with independent skills ...”
- “The use of specific skills and they do away with rote learning”.
- “Has a variety of teaching methods, has usable outcomes, more skill orientated.”

Other responses

Other positive responses on assessment included:

- “It is fair for each and every learner.”
- “Creates expanded opportunities for teachers.”
- “Lessons no longer being teacher-centred....gives learners the opportunity to be unique.”
- “Learners explore.”
- “Learners assessed over a variety of issues.”
- “The rubrics are easy to understand.”
- “OBE assessment is a very good way of assessing learners because even a poor learner is going to have some marks if using rubrics for assessment.”
- “Learners progression to be systematically recorded and learners progress easily monitored.”
- “It teaches learners critical thinking; encourages teamwork; there is practical activity during lesson presentation.”
- “Team teaching and teamwork.”
- “Learners are able to think for themselves”.
- “Teaching is easier.”
- “I am very positive because I still learn new ways of making history alive! I think it is the way to go, teaching our learners to think for themselves.”
- “It is mentally challenging which is exciting.”

The second question:” What negative attitude do you have towards OBE assessment”?
the following concerns were raised by the respondents:

Increased workload

The respondents felt that assessment contributed to their increased workload. 43.20% of the respondents indicated that “too much paper work/administration/red tape” as a substantial stumbling block when assessing their learners. According to the respondents, it inhibits the quality of their teaching. Some answers below:

- “We do more recording and assessing than teaching. No time to teach but more paper work and recording.”
- “There is a lot of paper work which is very time consuming. Paper work is to satisfy the authorities not the learners...more of a clerical job.”
- “When you teach 4 to 5 different Grades, it is difficult to do proper planning, assessment etc. The whole process takes over your life.”
- “The focus lies upon paper work, the work load is too much...the teacher is left with to much to mark.”

Size of classes

Respondents felt that big classes prevent them to do assessment properly:

- “Due to the number of learners in our classroom it is time consuming and difficult to assess and you have to finish your work on time.”
- “The huge class numbers and amount of marking makes many elements of OBE impossible.”

Access to resources

The lack of access to proper resources to effectively implement OBE assessment showed to be still a worry:

- “Implementation [of assessment] is not effective because many schools do not have the necessary resources that are needed to make it work.”
- “...our learners won't have resources if the school lacks some. I find myself in a scary situation.”
- “No specific learning material for it and the educator has to go the extra mile in search of information.”

Inadequate training

This research showed that some of the respondents had strong attitudes regarding in-service training as being inadequate and plead for the continuation and improvement thereof:

- “Let teachers receive adequate training. An assessment should be conducted to identify the number of teachers that never received OBE training workshops. There is a lack of development activities arranged at school level or district level to constantly empower the educator.”
- “We are not well trained. In my Education diploma, I was trained for 2-3 years, but OBE is a matter of 40 hours. Too much assessment on certain aspects that one is not yet equipped in.”
- “No computer and internal training on OBE assessment is given to the educator...more workshops could be of great assistance.”
- “I am willing to learn, but there are not enough workshops.”

Other responses

Other negative responses relating to OBE assessment included:

- “There is less content to work with.”

- “Learners don’t want to do research on their own.”
- “Learners are slow in submitting their research work.”
- “Learners find it difficult to express themselves because of the language problem.” (Where the medium of instruction is English).
- “Learners don’t take assessment seriously.”
- “Frustrated when dealing with assessment.”
- “CASS carries less weight than the final examination.”

Conclusion and recommendations

It seems clear from this case study that more than half of the respondents reveal a positive attitude towards the outcomes-based approach and are comfortable to incorporate it into their teaching and learning practices.

Some of the aspects of the OBE approach that finds approval are the structure that it gives to assessment in general. According to the respondents, the learners know what they are going to be assessed on. Learners work towards mastering outcomes, which makes progress easier and more systematic to monitor. The holistic and continuous nature of assessment also finds approval. The interaction with the learners and the skills that this approach equips learners with, are other aspects that the respondents feel positive about. The fact that learners must explore by themselves and encourage critical thinking is also positively experienced.

Irrespective of this positive state toward the outcomes-based approach, this case study identified problems that are still encountered. The largest percentage of the respondents, namely 90.58% believed that the principle of OBE contributed to an increase of their work load. Huge class numbers and the administrative tasks, which are related to assessment, are seen as reasons for this. A significant amount of the respondents (63.52%) also felt that there is too much assessment in History.

The respondents also experienced certain problems with the in-service programmes. Some were of the opinion that there was too little training or the training was too short. More than half indicated that the training did not equip them with enough practical knowledge so as to implement OBE effectively. This can serve as a possible reason why the respondents in this research indicated that they still struggle with, for example, understanding, the interrelationship between learning outcomes and assessment standards. Others would like to see computer training as part of the training programme.

A lack of access to and the availability of learning and support material to effectively implement the outcomes-based approach was another aspect that this study highlighted as problematic. Indeed 64.70% of the respondents experienced it as “moderate to very problematic”.

From the stumbling-blocks History teachers still experience in executing the outcomes-based approach, it is clear that there is a great need for a specific training model in History teaching. In the structuring of this model provision can be made for certain criteria levels of mastering. One can start with a beginner’s level and eventually this will lead up to an advanced level. Computer training can be integrated in the final advanced level as it is something the respondents asked for. This will empower the History teachers to use the Internet and the World Wide Web as a resource and communication tool in their teaching and learning. This will compliment the government commitment to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education and the Department of Education’s phase 1 strategy. According to this strategy, every teacher will have access to basic training in the use of ICTs by the end of 2007, and 50% of all schools will have access to a network computer facility for teaching and learning. Phase 3, to be reached by the end of 2013, foresees that all schools will have access to a networked computer facility where all learners and teachers are trained in ICT (DoE, 2003(c):31-32). On completion of the respective levels of this training model, some form of accreditation should be given. In this regard, universities and other tertiary institutions can be of help.

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