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Evaluation of outcomes-based private junior high school English curricula

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Abstract

Outcomes-based education (OBE) is a current initiative in Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) and high schools with widespread backing by government and standards bodies. However, direct studies of OBE intended curricula vis-à-vis their implementations in the classroom are lacking. It is, therefore, plausible and desirable that an evaluative study be conducted to be able to provide insights into the applicability of an outcomes-based curriculum in the Philippine junior high school context and learn from the teachers, the designers and implementers of the curriculum. This descriptive exploratory study looks into two exclusive junior High schools utilizing outcomes-based English curricula. Representative classes from all levels of junior high school have been observed. Feedback on the best practices and challenges to implementation has also been sought from the teachers. Findings show that OBE curriculum preparation had been tedious, challenging, and laborious. There have been limitations in time, training, and tools of teachers. Among the best practices noted by teachers are teacher knowledge on OBE, horizontal and vertical articulation, provision of clear parameters/standards of learning, aligned, authentic and appropriate classroom activities, and constant monitoring. There have been discrepancies though in terms of students' mastery of skills and time for preparation of outputs. Students do not always demonstrate the intended outcomes (knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) the same way and at the same time. Successful OBE implementation requires schools to have clear vision-mission-goals (VMG), collegial relationship among faculty who are experts in their discipline and pedagogy.

Keywords: outcomes-based curriculum; Stake's Congruence-Contingency model; junior high school English curriculum; curriculum evaluation; Philippine junior high school curriculum

1. Introduction

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Despite its promising features, OBE attracted fierce criticisms. Opponents viewed the implementation of the outcome-based approach as imposing constraints on children's education. It was widely implemented, and then heavily critiqued in the 1970s for reducing values, insight, and judgment to simple behavioral objectives and for not placing affective, social, cultural, aesthetic, and ethic learning processes at the core of education. McKernan (cited in "OBE Principles", 2012) argued that education should be valued for its own sake and not because it led to a pre-identified outcome. Critics assert that defining education as a set of outcomes - decided in advance of teaching and learning - conflicts with the wonderful, unpredictable voyages of exploration that characterize learning through discovery and inquiry (Morcke, Eika & Dornan, 2012; Terry, 1996).

In the midst of national efforts directed toward school improvement, it is important to determine if a major systemic reform effort, such as outcomes-based education, is having an impact. Just as important as determining what to implement, is understanding how to implement it. An unexamined curriculum as Elliot Eisner stressed is "not worth learning" (1994).

A review of the literature indicates that there has been no investigation of the extent of implementation of outcomes-based education in Philippine junior high schools. Direct studies of OBE intended curricula vis-à-vis their implementation in the Philippine classrooms is lacking. Studies that determine challenges faced and successes experienced by teachers and stakeholders during implementation are also rare. As OBE gains momentum in the country, it is plausible and desirable that an evaluative study be conducted to be able to provide insights into the applicability of the curriculum design to Philippine junior high school context and learn from the teachers, the designers and implementers of the curriculum.

The existence of a well-planned curriculum with promising curriculum design such as OBE, is no guarantee that it will be used effectively in the classroom. To know that, as Eisner (1994) and Stake (1988) assert, direct observation in the classroom should be done. Careful analysis and examination of the curriculum implementation in the classroom would disclose significant insights on important aspects such as (1) the applicability of the curriculum design to the learning context, (2) the appropriateness of the content and tasks to the students' experiential and developmental background, (3) the capacity of the teachers to deliver the curriculum in the intended manner, and (4) the quality of resources as they are used, all are vital to curriculum planning and improvement.

Robert Stake (1988) proposed the congruence-contingency model to evaluate the congruence or matching between the intended and the observed data in terms of three major areas: antecedents, transactions, and outcomes. The analysis is based on the matching of what has been planned and what has actually occurred. Using Stake's Congruence-Contingency model of curriculum evaluation as framework, this multiple

case study descriptive research determined whether OBE curriculum is implemented in the classroom as intended by the curriculum developers.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How is outcomes-based education translated to classroom instruction in terms of:
   1.1 Clarity of focus;
   1.2 Designing back;
   1.3 High expectations for all learners; and
   1.4 Provision of expanded opportunities?
2. What are the best practices in the implementation of OBE in the classroom? question.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The research utilized a multiple case study design which aims to gain a deeper understanding of a particular situation and involves collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to people and the place under study (Creswell, 2007). A multiple case study is used in order to offer multiple perspectives on a topic. Case studies are good for describing and expanding the understanding of a phenomenon and are often used to study people and programs particularly in education (Stake, 1995). As opposed to other forms of research, case study places the researcher into the field in order to observe and record, "objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observations to refine or substantiate those meanings" (Stake, 1995, p. 9). This focus on interpretation is fundamental and relies on data analysis as well as the researchers own understanding of his or her experience and the existing literature (Stake, 1995). The end result is a constructivist understanding of the cases.

The study has three phases as shown in Figure 1. The first phase includes a close reading of the English syllabi in both schools to see how OBE principles were translated to classroom instruction. The second phase involves a direct observation of the implemented curriculum. Selected classes from all levels were observed. The last phase entailed eliciting teachers' feedback. Teachers were asked about their training on OBE, participation in the OBE curriculum development, subjective description of the OBE implementation, feelings and perceptions about the curriculum, ways on how the curriculum is translated to instruction, best practices, challenges they encountered in implementing the existing curriculum, and perceived support systems necessary for the successful implementation of the outcomes-based curriculum. Through this step, the

discrepancies between the intended and implemented curricula were determined from the teachers.

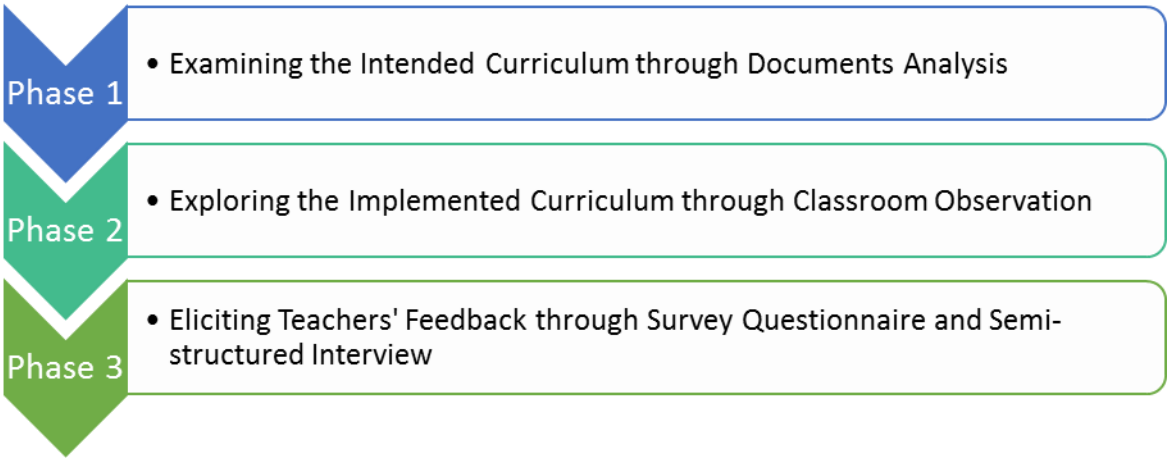

Figure 1. The three phases of the study

2.2. Research Location

Guided by the researcher's survey on private junior high schools using OBE, the study focused on two private Catholic schools in Metro Manila. School A has a population of around 2000 students and 48 teachers (part-time and full-time). The average class size is 43. Most of the students come from middle class families living in the nearby communities, cities and provinces of the school. On the other hand, School B has a population of around 2000 students and 60 teachers. The average class size is 35.

The teacher participants are Junior high school English teachers and administrators. There is one English coordinator in each school. Most of the participants (9 out of 12) are probationary teachers, which means they have been serving for 0-3 years in the school. Only three out of the 12 participants in both schools are regular, which means they have been teaching in the institution for more than three years.

Table 1. *The teacher participants and their profile*

Teaching Years and School	Teachers		Administrators	Total
Years of Teaching in the target school	**0-3 years**	**4years up**		
School A	5	0	1	6
School B	4	1	1	6
TOTAL	9	1	2	12

2.3. Instruments

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to the English teachers and administrators. The questionnaire for the teachers and administrators seeks to determine (1) their profile, (2) their OBE training, (3) their participation in the OBE curriculum development, (4) their subjective description of the OBE implementation, (5) their feelings and perceptions about the curriculum, (6) ways on how the curriculum is translated to instruction, (7) best practices, (8) challenges they encountered in implementing the existing curriculum, and (9) perceived support systems necessary for the successful implementation of the outcomes-based curriculum.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was done in three phases, namely, classroom observation, documents analysis, survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview with English teachers. While efforts were made to ensure that this study was rigorous to make a worthwhile contribution to educational research, there were some unavoidable limitations. First is time limitation. The data for this part of the study were collected over one quarter only. More reliable results may be obtained after more data have been collected in a longer span of time. The second limitation is that of population. The study focused on two private exclusive junior high schools only with established OBE framework.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative data analysis allows one to make sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities. The common approach in dealing with such data is to present it as text which can subsequently be reduced to codes and categories in effect 'turning qualitative data into quantitative data' (Palaiologou, Needham & Male, 2016).

The study followed Creswell and Stake models of data analysis, by which the data is analyzed by both direct interpretation and combination of instances in the form of codes. As Stake says, "some issues call for categorical analysis, while others may only occur once and require direct interpretation" (1995, p. 74).

Data analysis followed a three-step procedure. The first step involves getting to know the data. The second step involves bringing the data into focus or analyzing it. The third step includes categorizing the data into codes. The priori codes used in this study are classified into categories as implications to the Outcomes Based principles (A) Clarity of focus (B) Design Down (C) High expectations for all learners and (D) Expanded opportunities. On the other hand, emergent codes like Time, Training, Tools, and Tasks were also generated in the analysis of the survey questionnaire and classroom observation notes.

After themes had been developed, patterns were identified from the themes in order to establish a smaller number of categories (Creswell, 2007). The themes that emerged during the cross analysis of cases were Clarity, Collaboration, Competence, and Commitment.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings from the two cases have been combined to form a schematic presentation in Table 2 containing the best practices, challenges, and support systems. The table indicates that support systems must be provided before and during the implementation of the curriculum. Support systems such as provision of articulation, quality teacher trainings on OBE and improved facilities are highlighted by teachers as essential to successful implementation. Teachers should be better resourced and equipped in terms of OBE teaching strategies and how to better meet the various needs of students in the classroom. They should also be given enough time to collaboratively discuss strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum before classes begin. Facilities like computer units, modules, online journals and books should be provided for students.

Table 2. Best Practices, Challenges, and Necessary Support Systems of Schools A and B

Best Practices	Challenges	Systems of Support
•**Tasks**:aligned, appropriate, authentic collaborative, varied •Students' engagement and freedom •**Teacher factor:** knowledge and understanding of her role in the classroom •For curriculum checking and monitoring : use of codes and categories of competencies	•**Tasks**: simultaneous, complex or vague activities, differentiation, lack of mastery of pre-requisite skills •**Tools** •**Time** constraints •**Tools**: resources •**Teacher factor**: haphazard planning, idealistic plans, unmet standards, confusion, preparation of curriculum •**Discrepancy** : time and mastery of skills	•**Tasks**: orientation/discussion before the actual performance of activities, integrated activities, varied appropriate, authentic assessments, relevant, engaging, differentiation/Remediation with partnership from Guidance Office •**Teacher support:** support/Buddy system, continuous and careful planning, curriculum audit, monitoring, freedom and flexibility in instructional planning •**Training**: workshops •**Tools**: modules, realia, visual aids •Articulation

From the analysis of the two cases, themes have been generated. The researcher carefully selected terms to encapsulate these themes. This study revealed components deemed essential to OBE implementation and success: principles of clarity, collaboration, competence, and commitment. Salient points from the participants' responses were also chosen to support the themes. Table 3 shows a summary of the responses that correspond to each of the core components to successful OBE implementation in the classroom.

Table 3. *Responses supporting the 4 Core Components to OBE implementation*

Themes Chart	Comments	Responses
Clarity	*How clarity is achieved*	OBE sets "standards, parameters and actual measures" of learning, they can powerfully serve as "map for teachers"
		Knowledge on how to formulate and plan activities is very important.
		The teacher should know what OBE really means inside the classroom not just in words.
	Reason for recommending it	Yes because the activities and the lessons to be discussed are perfectly aligned and the final product to be done at the near end of the quarter/session is appropriate.
	Feelings about OBE	Less stressful and easier to understand ---clear purpose for teachers
		More geared to school's VMG – very helpful to coordinators
		Less stressful for new teachers in understanding
Collaboration	*Teachers' participation in the curriculum planning*	All teachers participated in the curriculum development.
		Yes. We have annual horizontal and vertical articulation where all the teachers per area across all grade levels (Kinder-Grade 12) meet and discuss the lessons covered and the problems each grade level encountered. We get to know which skill/topic to reinforce and to emphasize more.
		Yes, all the teachers are the ones planning for the curriculum for the subject and year level he/she is assigned to.

	Systems of support	
		Teachers' guidance and reinforcement must be felt by the students for them to engage themselves in all the activities assigned to them.
		From the Admin: Provision on seminar-workshop for OBE teaching methodologies, budget allotment for seminars, equipment, facilities, assistance on planning and **moral support**
		From fellow teachers: Buddy system, sharing of best teaching practice, fair share in preparing lesson plan, visuals, etc.
	Effective teaching and learning activities	There should still be short but fruitful discussions on the teachers' end so as to have a clear vision of what to do on the students' part.
		Integration among subjects helps students a lot in producing quality output.
		The development of an OBE curriculum relies heavily on the planning, thus the importance of its mapping.
	Best practices	Group activities/brainstorming --- students create something from what they have previously learned
		CLT, GW -- help us see outcomes of discussions
		Performances/applications of KSVA Students collaborative work
Competence	*Best practices*	Students as performers Effective and practical More efficient and effective for both teachers and students (compared with UBD) Student-centered Laborious but very beneficial both for students and teachers (especially incoming/new ones)
		Teaching is more fulfilling since you can see real life application (students)-relevant
		Not only does it feel engaging and fun for the students but also for the teachers. The teachers get to discover many things about the students compared to the other curriculum.

		Tests and cultivates the creativity of teachers and students as they provide variety of activities A response to the needs of 21st century Engages students to think and show their talents Sets standards, parameters and actual measures Grouping students according to their talents and allowing students to show outputs using their special skills motivate them to produce quality output.
	Requirements for successful OBE implementation	One has to be **creative and unique in** thinking of activities and performances. The activities and options you will present should be engaging and challenging. The administration should conduct more trainings and seminars since most teachers are newly acquainted.
Commitment	*Requirements for successful OBE implementation in the classroom*	The teacher should know that his/her role in the OBE classroom is a facilitator. Students should know that whatever they are learning and doing has an essential outcome. It is actually **very tedious to** think of real-life situations that you need to include and consider when you plan for different activities and performances. However, it is **fulfilling** to see the students get involved during the learning process. Systems of support should come from the administration as they **continually improve** the curriculum through **monitoring** of its implementation, as well as periodically having an **external "audit"** by getting a curriculum specialist to evaluate the work done. Help from the guidance office is also essential especially in identifying the levels of achievement of the students to easily implement DI remedial/enrichment with actual data as basis. **Continuous and careful planning**. It is sad when the curriculum only makes sense in the last few days of the school so even if planning comes in at the beginning, the teachers must **continue to oversee** whether all lessons are **aligned** with the program's set standard and with the school's intended goals for the students. **Teachers' guidance and reinforcement** must be felt by the students for them to **engage themselves in all the activities** assigned to them. From the Admin**: Provision on seminar-workshop** for OBE teaching methodologies, budget allotment for

	seminars, equipment, facilities, **assistance on planning** and **moral support** From fellow teachers: **Buddy system, sharing of best teaching practic**e, fair share in preparing lesson plan, visuals, etc. The development of an OBE curriculum relies heavily on the **planning**, thus the importance of its **mapping**. Tests and cultivates the creativity of teachers and students as they provide variety of activities

Clarity. Outcomes-based education attracted fierce opposition, as well as strenuous promotion, in the pre-university sector (cited in "OBE Principles, 2012) because the inclusion of and emphasis on attitudes and values was deemed inappropriate. Opponents claimed that "the proposed outcomes watered down academic in favor of ill-defined values and process skills". McKernan (cited in "OBE Principles, 2012) argued that education should be valued for its own sake and because it led to a pre-identified outcome. OBE is viewed as something that inhibits learning by discovery.

In this study, however, the outcomes were seen by the English teachers as "standards, parameters and actual measures" of learning as stressed by one of the coordinators in the survey. When the school's VMG are carefully considered in the OBE curriculum design, they can powerfully serve as "map for teachers" telling them where to lead the students to what is desired to be achieved. While Lawson and Williams' (2007) study maybe true that outcomes are disliked when they are vague, too easy, too hard, or wrongly conceived, the respondents in the study however, acknowledged that their school's VMG was clear, comprehensive, and concise. The school's VMG is clearly stipulated in the curriculum documents for all year levels. From these findings, the term clarity was selected to represent the idea that schools should have clear Vision-Mission-Goals statement to facilitate communication and ownership of the vision.

The development of the English curricula in both target schools is guided by the school's VMG. The curriculum is a detailed document of school's VMG, philosophy, the program and the course objectives. The curriculum maps and syllabi studied have school's VMG, institutional and program outcomes, program description, curriculum standards, competencies, and codes; however, the syllabus of School B has more components like requirements, grading system, week/time allotment for the lesson or content, learning experiences and assessment. School A has another document that contains the course requirements and grading system. The schools teaching philosophy such as PEP for School A and academic integration for School B permeates the

instructional planning of teachers. These traditions or long-held beliefs and practices facilitated the acceptance and adoption of OBE principles.

When outcomes are clear to teachers, it can provide a useful framework of the curriculum. It helps unify the curriculum elements and prevents them from becoming fragmented (Harden, Crosby, & Davis, 1999). According to Malan (2000), OBE forces uncoordinated and laissez-faire educational planning, managing and teaching practices into the background and introduces strategic educational planning that is aimed at achieving results. Marzano (2011) indicates that OBE provides "a strategic way to enhance the quality of teaching and learning" by giving a "framework for collaborative curriculum planning." This is in line with researchers' findings that effective curriculum alignment is taking place as teachers develop a better defined curriculum focus—teaches what they test and test what they teach (Hoffman, 1996; Tshai, Ho, Yap, & Ng, 2014).

When outcomes are clear, teachers can properly communicate them to the students. Students have to be explicitly informed of OBE principles and their intended impact on planning and implementation as a pre-requisite to their making informed evaluations regarding the quality of OBE innovations and as an enhancement to their capacity to become educational professionals (Deneen, Brown, Bond, & Shroff, 2011).

Collaboration. Successful OBE implementation requires collaboration between the teacher and her students in the classroom, and among the teachers of the school. According to Owen (1995), the educator's role is to promote discourse in which learners listen to, respond to, and question the educator and one another and try to convince themselves and one another of the validity of particular representations, solutions, conjectures, and answers.

OBE facilitates better communication and collaboration among teachers, a 21st century skill that everyone needs to develop. In curriculum planning and as indicated in the findings of the study, OBE encourages integrated teaching and learning and collaboration among different disciplines. The approach allows for wide participation in curriculum development and may involve members of the community, patients, other professions and employers (Marzano, 2011; Hoffman, 1996; Castillo, 2010). It embraces readily the concept of multi-professional education (Harden, 1998). Through collaboration and collegial relationships, alignment of the curriculum can be facilitated as teachers convene and agree on what is essential for students to learn. With these, the term collaboration was selected to refer to the key to aligning the curriculum and ensuring relevance and quality.

When the curriculum is aligned, there are a number of benefits that can be gained (Perez, 2015). Firstly, alignment ensures that key concepts are emphasized in every classroom. Teachers have the opportunity to agree on the most importance knowledge, skills, and values that must be taught in the classroom. It also allows every student the

same quality education regardless of the teacher helping improve student performance on standardized tests.

Most of the activities observed in both schools feature group presentations and performances during culminating activities. In fact, 13 out of the 16 classes observed had at least one group activity. Students played specific roles that contributed to the attainment of a group aim or goal. Both schools required students to prepare and perform their planned activities in line with the school's theme for the Book Month celebration.

Competence. According to Robert Zywicki, an ASCD leader, "Empowered and supported teachers produce successful students." The principle of competence refers to the importance of building the capabilities of teachers and students. OBE is considered to be a learner-centered, result-orientated education system which is based on the belief that individuals have the capacity to learn, as well as to demonstrate learning after having completed an educational activity (Fakier & Waghid, 2004). According to Spady and Marshall (in Pretorius 1988: ix), "We are outcomes-based when we teach a child to cross the road. We know exactly what the child must do and see it in our mind's eye. We go to great lengths to teach skills correctly to the child and insist that he or she practices it until we are convinced that he or she can do it safely." Put differently, OBE accentuates the demonstration of learners who have completed a specific learning activity. Since mastery learning is at the heart of OBE, students should be given sufficient time and resources to master the pre-requisite and essential skills so they will be able to perform the culminating performance tasks. Result of the classroom observations highlight students as active planners and performers taking responsibility for their own learning. This makes their learning more meaningful and memorable.

Not only do we develop potentials of students but schools should work to build the capacity of teachers in order to come up with quality curriculum. Outcome-based education is a potentially flexible approach. It does not dictate the form of course delivery or the educational strategy (Terry, 1996). Adjustments can be made at any time to the educational process provided that the changes proposed can be justified in terms of the specified learning outcomes (Harden, Crosby, & Davis, 1999). Thus, cultivates the creativity and resourcefulness of teachers. It is for these reasons that competence was used to pertain to an essential component of OBE implementation.

Commitment. In this study, commitment refers to the obligation and dedication of teachers in creating a learning environment that causes optimum learning of students by constantly observing relevance and accountability. With the many challenges that have been identified by teachers that hinder implementation and success, teachers and students need commitment to complete the process.

Educators believe that OBE does not only guaranty the clarity and absence of controversy in curricular planning but also its relevance to the students' future practices (Eldeeb & Shatakumari, 2013). 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 (Lixun, 2011). At program level, this process of restructuring the entire teaching and learning framework is very beneficial, as it helps the program 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. By setting out details of the finished product against which the product will be judged, emphasizes accountability and quality assurance (Marzano, 2011). Commitment is the fuel that drives the stakeholders to carry on until students achieve and perform desired outcomes.

Throughout the course of the study, the researcher was able to capture the factors essential to OBE implementation and success. The practices aforementioned are incorporated in the diagram below. The diagram indicates that the four practices are factors affecting the success of OBE implementation in the classroom.

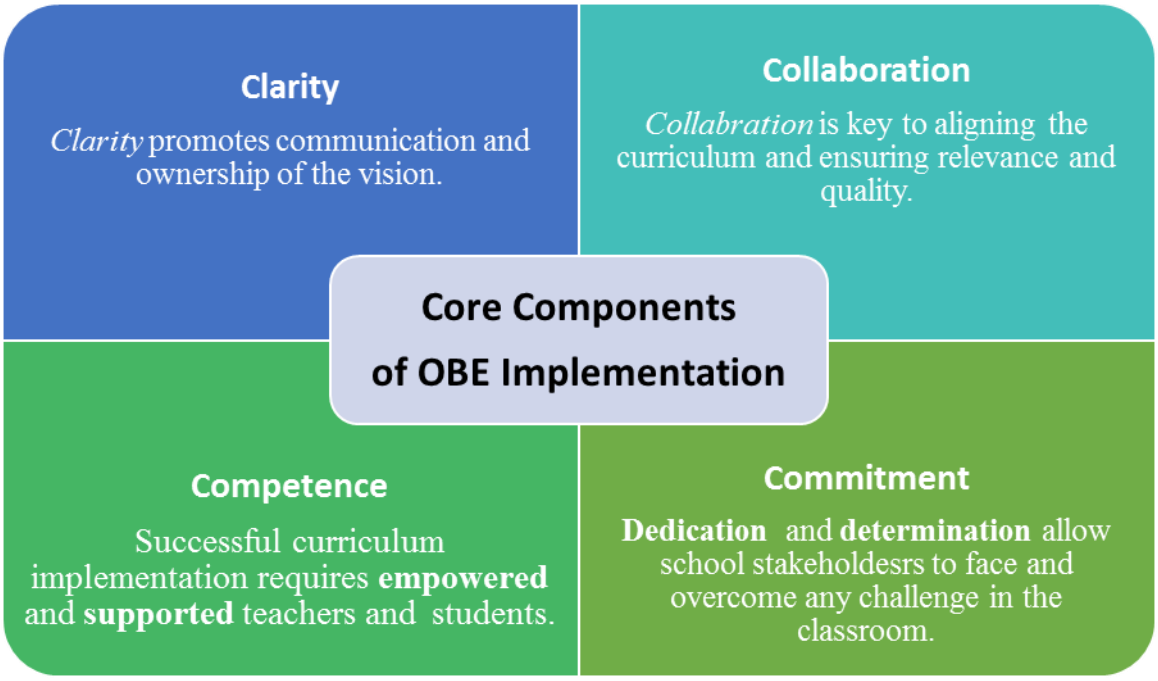

Figure 2. The core components of OBE implementation in the classroom

Clarity is observed when teachers have clear vision of what they want students to be as they graduate. Collaboration happens as they convene to plan the curriculum. They should be trained and resourced in order to be equipped to implement relevant and quality curriculum. There are aspects of the curriculum that they can plan ahead, but there are events beyond their control which may pose challenges to implementation.

When these challenges loom, teachers should be competent and committed enough to strategize and assist students in their learning. They should not only be good at the beginning but committed until such a time students have succeeded and become holistic learners who are also committed to their personal growth.

4. Conclusion

The preparation of OBE curriculum is tedious, challenging, and laborious. Teachers had to ensure alignment among the intended outcomes, teaching-learning activities, and assessment. The preparation requires time, effort, and commitment among planners and implementers.

Teachers had positive feelings and perceptions towards OBE as a framework for designing instruction because of the alignment of the subject curriculum with national curriculum and institutional VMG, alignment of outcomes and activities, teachers' engagement and dedication in the preparation, authentic, relevant, and engaging activities, and students 'engagement in the performances.

Teachers felt a sense of "satisfaction" and "fulfillment" when students enjoy and apply the lessons to real life activities. Inside the OBE classroom, students are the "stars". They perform/demonstrate knowledge, skills, and values which are valuable to the achievement of the school's VMG. Although OBE curriculum promised great results, the implementation proved challenging due to constraints in terms of time, training of teachers, lack of facilities and sense of uncertainty whether they are doing OBE properly. Competence breeds teacher confidence. When teachers are trained and equipped about the curriculum design, they would feel confident about themselves and their performance, but if they feel they lack the necessary knowledge and skills, they would lack confidence in their performance. A model was formulated incorporating the best practices, challenges and support systems necessary for the success of OBE in the classroom.

The aforementioned findings have several implications on implementation. To foster successful implementation, teachers should be better equipped and resourced. Quality trainings, modules, and constant reinforcement by coordinators/administrators must also be provided. A policy on curriculum external audit, buddy system and teacher flexibility in implementation should be considered. Most importantly, time provision in preparation and implementation should be prioritized.

Successful OBE requires expert, dedicated, and committed teachers to plan, develop, and improve a curriculum ensuring that students achieve success in the classroom. Feedback from the planner-implementers is vital in making decisions for curriculum improvement. Monitoring and reinforcement should be constantly provided by administrators to the teachers and by the teachers to their students. Curriculum external

audit should also be provided so that the curriculum can be evaluated for its value not only by how teachers deliver it inside the classroom.

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