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TO THE QUESTION ABOUT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND METHODS OF THEIR EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The article is devoted to the issues of significance of learning outcomes for the education system at the international, national and institutional levels. The authors analyze the significance and approaches to the assessment of learning outcomes according to the new system and structure of European qualifications. The article also presents the types of evaluation of learning outcomes, their criteria and practical significance. The provided material allowed to highlight the main advantages and possible problems of implementing a learning system based on results. Learning outcomes are playing an increasingly prominent role in higher education. However, at the European level, this process focuses mainly on the general development of new systems and structures. This is confirmed by the approach based on learning outcomes, which agrees on the level of European policy and, in particular, on the level of policy in higher education institutions. Learning outcomes can be applied at different levels: institutional, national and international which determines their definition and the meaning. At the institutional level, learning outcomes (curriculum implementation, learning and assessment) can be used to express learning outcomes at the unit or module level. At the same time, they explain to students what exactly is required of them, as well as what skills / competencies and abilities they will receive after successful completion of training. For the teacher, the learning outcomes can clarify what the module will give and how it will be combined with the appropriate assessment. The requirement to make the teaching and learning processes more transparent and clearer presents a challenge for all those involved in education. In the short term, it has to do with preparing for the urgent task of formulating modules and programs in terms of learning outcomes. In the longer term, adopting a learning outcomes approach has the potential to help adopt a more systematic approach to program and module development.

Keywords: higher education institutions, European educational space, assessment, learning outcomes, assessment criteria.

Introduction. The searches carried out in the direction of improving the control system are ongoing. We see the changes in the assessment systems that are being introduced into the practice of modern secondary and higher education: forms and methods of control (from testing to computer technology); changes in control systems are applied and developed by the joint efforts of scientists, educators, practitioners, methodologists and officials of educational management structures.

The developments and innovations in the field of the assessment systems are based on the study of the rich pedagogical heritage, including outstanding teachers of the past, didactics, psychologists and methodologists, the study of experience in organizing control of leading educational institutions, both present and past.

The change in the assessment system in higher education was significantly influenced by the legal documents related to Ukraine's accession to the Bologna Agreement (2005) and the introduction of the credit-module assessment system (ECTS).

The expediency of the evaluation system in the field of education is that the evaluation results allow employees of local education departments, school principals, high school teachers and teachers to improve the essence of educational programs and the quality of the educational process. This also applies to the activities of non-governmental educational organizations that oversee the implementation of educational projects.

The term "assessment" is quite flexible and can provide many types of evaluations. However, all variants of the use of this term have one thing in common – they all mean the assessment of a certain action or phenomenon.

Learning outcomes are playing an increasingly prominent role in high education. So far, however, at the European level, the Bologna Process has focused mainly on the generally agreed development of new systems and structures. The evidence is as follows: a learning outcomes approach based on consensus at the European policy level and often at the policy level in the EU member states, is now adapting more slowly in the higher education sector.

Coordinated formulations of general and specific competencies or adapted to national and local conditions are gradually being introduced into the reform of courses and modules of higher education. Even if learning outcomes have a rather limited impact on higher education in the present, a huge shift in the reform of teaching and learning in higher education in the long term can be proven. The agreed formulations of higher education learning outcomes still have limited the impact. Though, this may change in the medium / moderate and long term perspective with significant impact on higher education teaching and learning.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. In recent years, the European community has been actively developing the principles and criteria for the implementation of qualifications in the European education area. Numerous seminars and conferences are held, projects are being implemented and as a result of these events several textbooks, guidebooks and reports have been written on the basis of which the working commissions develop strategies for the implementation of principles, strategies as well as criteria in practice. The reports by S. Adam [Adam, 2004, 2006], guidebooks by J. Bingham [Bingham, 1999], P. Ramsden [Ramsden, 2003], works by J. Biggs [Biggs, 2003], S. Brown [Brown, 1999], R.M. Harden [Harden, 2002], [ECTS Users' Guide, 2005, 2009] and [Cedefop report, 2008] are the most famous among them. The evidence collected in the listed works shows that learning outcomes currently have a limited impact on the methods of assessment in higher educational institutions and, therefore, there is no universal system, criteria for assessing the knowledge and skills of students regardless of specialization. This problem requires more attention from researchers, politicians and practitioners. Recent reforms in some countries (e.g. Norway, Finland) have fostered interesting case studies based on the way of learning outcomes presentation as an effective method of guiding assessment practice, replacing more traditional concepts such as course completion and subject matter assessment tests.

A review of the literature on learning outcomes presents a number of similar definitions of the term "learning

outcomes", including the following: a) learning outcomes – a clear description of what a student should know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning [Bingham, 1999]; b) the learning outcomes is a written statement of what the successful student must be able to do at the end of the module / unit of the course or qualification [Adam, 2004]. Various definitions of learning outcomes do not differ significantly from each other. According to these definitions it follows that: learning outcomes emphasize what the student has achieved, not the teacher's intentions; learning outcomes focus on what the student can demonstrate at the end of the learning activity.

Presentation of the main positions. The following definition [ECTS Users' Guide, 2005, p. 47] of learning outcomes can be considered to be a good working definition: learning outcomes are statements that a learner should know, understand and / or be able to demonstrate after completing the learning process. The learning process can be, for example, a lecture, a module or the whole program.

Learning outcomes can be applied at different levels: institutional, national and international which determines their definition and the meaning. At the institutional level, learning outcomes (curriculum implementation, learning and assessment) can be used to express learning at the unit or module level. In doing so, they explain to students what is expected of them and what skills / competencies, understandings and abilities they will acquire upon successful completion of the training. For the teacher, learning outcomes can clarify what a module will provide and combine this with an appropriate delivery and assessment method.

At the national level, learning outcomes (qualifications frameworks and quality assurance) play a more active role in providing insight into the ways in which national qualifications frameworks are described and the tools used to describe them. Quality control is improving as explicit guidance of standards can emerge from level descriptions, qualification descriptors and subject tests.

Internationally, learning outcomes (transparency, recognition and comparability) play a different role, they are much broader and less precise than national descriptors compared to the European Qualifications Framework (as descriptors of the Bologna cycle). However, the provision of common approaches used by different states within their own national systems opens up the possibility of real transparency, mobility and fair recognition on a scale that was not possible in the past [Adam, 2004].

Learning outcomes are expected to have an impact on grading styles. The most popular assessment approach relies heavily on cycle-based assessment, such as using the student's portfolio, presenting projects and assignments that the student prepares in cooperation with teachers or trainers, and formative assessment of the learning experience. Even if learning outcomes are less influential in assessment than in some other aspects of education and reform preparation, active learning is defined as a new and increasingly dominant paradigm. It goes without saying the the following question arises: what types of assessment can be applied. The solution can be found in combination with the assessment of the active learning cycle, which implies the need for formative assessment, as well as the creation of a culture of self-assessment as an explicit part of the learning assessment [Cedefop, 2008].

While describing learning outcomes, it is important to present them in such a way that they can be assessed. Importantly, it is necessary to have some samples of methods or ways of assessment in order to determine the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved. The use of written exams, project papers, portfolios, graded

grading systems, abstract, presentation assessment, etc can possibly be the example of direct assessment methods. The employer surveys, benchmarking, alumni surveys, curriculum analysis, etc., can be the examples of indirect assessment methods.

The teacher's task is to ensure consistency between teaching methods, assessment methods, assessment criteria and learning outcomes, which helps to make the learning experience more transparent. The assessment of undergraduate courses shows that clear expectations are an important part of effective teaching. Lack of clarity in this area is almost always associated with negative assessments, learning difficulties and poor student performance. Toohey (1999) recommends a clear statement of assessment methods and criteria as the best way to help students understand how they should achieve learning outcomes.

From a teaching and learning perspectives, there is a dynamic balance between learning strategies on the one hand and learning and assessment outcomes on the other. It is important that the graded objectives reflect the learning outcomes, as "from the students' point of view, the assessment always determines the actual curriculum" [Ramsden, 2003]. This situation can be presented as a process [Biggs, 2003] as follows:

Teacher's perspective: *Objectives – Desired learning outcomes. – Teaching. – Assessment.*

Students perspective: *Evaluation – Performance Study – Results.*

Assessment is often described in terms of formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment has been described as an assessment for learning as well as an assessment of the issue "referring to all activities conducted by teachers and students in assessing themselves, which provides information to be used as feedback for changing / modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are involved" [Black and Williams, 1998]. In other words, formative assessment helps inform the teacher and students about how students are progressing.

Formative assessment is usually carried out at the beginning of the program or during the program. The student's commitment to grading tasks can help the teacher make decisions about the direction of learning and the improvement of the learning process. Research has clearly shown [Black and Williams, 1998] that by providing student feedback, formative assessment can help improve student learning and achievement.

Key characteristics of formative assessment include:

- Identification by teachers and students of learning outcomes and criteria for their achievement.
- Providing clear and complete feedback in an effective and timely manner.
- Active involvement of students in their own learning.
- Positive communication between teacher and students.
- The correspondence of the teacher to the needs of the students.

In summary, formative assessment is more of a learning process than a grading one. A final grade is an assessment that attempts to take stock of a student's learning at a specific point in time – usually at the end of a module or program. The final assessment sums up achievements and has no real value other than describing what has been achieved [Brown and Knight, 1994].

Thus, the use of a final grade allows the creation of a degree that reflects the student's commitment. Unfortunately, the final grade is often limited to the traditional paper exam and does not involve other methods such as a project,

portfolio or essay. Due to the nature of the final grade, not all learning outcomes can be assessed at any given time. The evaluating of only a sample of learning outcomes is common.

In theory, continuous assessment is a combination of summative and formative assessments. In practice, continuous assessment often consists of repeated final grades with written grades, but little or no feedback is provided to students. The importance of the assessment methods to try

to test whether or not the learning outcome is achieved is obvious. The range of student grades was found to be very limited with approximately 80 % of the grades received in the form of exams, essays and reports (Brown, 1999).

Developing links between learning outcomes, learning strategies, student activities and assessment assignments is a very challenging task for the educator. The following Table 1 can help you develop these links and assessments.

Table 1

Learning outcomes	Education and training activity	Assessment
Cognitive Demonstration of knowledge Understanding Implementation Analysis Synthesis Assessment Affective Integration of beliefs, ideas and attitudes Psychomotor	Lectures Tutoring Discussions Laboratory work Clinical work Group work Seminar Group presentation	End of Module – Exam Multiple Choice Test Essay Practical assessment Field work Clinical Practice Presentation Project work

In order to achieve all learning outcomes, not only one assessment method cannot be used and a choice of several of them may be necessary. The curriculum should be designed so that teaching, learning and assessment are consistent with learning outcomes. Biggs (2003) refers to this type of process involving constructive alignment, where constructiveness considers student activity and alignment considers the teacher one. Биггс указывает, что в хорошей системе обучения, методика преподавания, учебной деятельности и методы оценивания скоординированы, чтобы поддерживать процесс обучения.

Biggs points out that in a good teaching system, teaching methods, learning activities and assessment methods are coordinated to support the learning process.

Based on the above data, there are three main tasks associated with constructive alignment of any module: a) clear definition of learning outcomes; b) selection of teaching and learning methods that can ensure the achievement of that learning outcome; c) evaluating student learning outcomes and checking how well they correspond with what has been intended.

Learning outcomes indicate the minimum acceptable standards for students to take a module. Student papers

above this baseline differ in the application of different degrees of criteria. Grading criteria are statements that indicate that the student must demonstrate to achieve a higher grade. These statements help differentiate the levels of student performance. By making these criteria clear to students, it is hoped that students will strive for high levels of performance. If a student receives a "bare" grade, it does not provide adequate feedback on the performance results, but simply indicates the general level of competence. Such an assessment does not provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of these specific learning outcomes. However, if an assessment system is tied to some form of assessment guideline, it can be a very useful way to identify areas for improvement. This guide is often referred to as a rubric.

A rubric is a classification tool used to describe criteria for classifying student performance. In general, each heading consists of a set of criteria and signs associated with those criteria. In this way, rubrics help define the criteria for a rating system by describing activities at various points along the rating scale. For example, the rubric assessment of one of the learning outcomes in module "X" of a master's program at the Faculty of Education might be as in Table 2.

Table 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria				
	1 st degree	2 : 1 degree	2 : 2 degree	Passed	Failed
Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to: summarize data from pedagogical literature, to support the line of development of argumentation.	Outstanding use of literature demonstrates an excellent ability to synthesize data in an analytical way to formulate clear conclusions.	A very good use of literature shows a high ability to synthesize data in an analytical way to formulate clear conclusions.	Correct use of literature shows a good ability to synthesize data in an analytical way, to formulate clear conclusions.	Limited use of the literature shows a moderate ability to synthesize data to formulate conclusions.	Poor use of literature indicates a lack of ability to synthesize data to formulate conclusions.

In the recent past, the literature has criticized the learning outcomes model and, at the same time, the learning outcomes, approach to teaching and learning has received strong international support. For example, A. Jenkins and D. Unwin [Jenkins and Unwin, 2001] argue that the learning outcomes:

- Help teachers communicate to students more precisely what is expected.

- Helps students learn more effectively: students are aware of their place and level and the curriculum becomes more open to them.

- Help teachers design their materials more effectively by acting as a template for them.

- Make it clear what students can hope for in receiving from each specific course or lecture.

- Help educators choose an appropriate learning strategy consistent with learning outcomes.

- Provide assistance in conducting examinations based on the submitted materials.

One of the main problems in accepting learning outcomes is considered to be philosophical: academic learning must be open and learning outcomes do not fit into

this liberal view on learning [Adam, 2004]. The problem does not arise if the learning outcomes are written with an emphasis on high thinking and application of skills. However, if learning outcomes are written within very narrow frames, this can constrain learning and create a lack of intellectual challenge for learners. Other potential problems are the following: • the danger of evaluating a managed curriculum if the learning outcomes are too limited. Learning outcomes can lead to confusion among students and staff provided guidelines and principles are not followed.

Conclusions. International trends in education show a shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one traditionally focusing on what the teacher has done, but now the emphasis has shifted to what learners have learned and can demonstrate at the end of a module. The key characteristics of results-based education include [Harden, 2002]:

- the development of clearly defined and published learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the program;
- the development of the curriculum, learning strategies and exploring opportunities to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes;
- the assessment process is consistent with the learning outcomes and assessment of individual students, which allows them to achieve results.

The shift from "teacher-centered" learning to education focused on "learning outcomes" has received an additional impetus from the Bologna Process, with its emphasis on student-centered learning, which foresees more accurate and understandable curriculum structure and content. Learning outcomes play a key role in ensuring the transparency of qualifications and the qualifications system itself. They are also central to contributing to the various activities of the Bologna Process in all countries of the European Higher Education Area.

The requirement to make the teaching and learning processes more transparent and clearer presents a challenge for all those involved in education. In the short term, it has to do with preparing for the urgent task of formulating modules and programs in terms of learning outcomes. In the longer term, adopting a learning outcomes approach has the potential to help adopt a more systematic approach to program and module development.

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In practice, policymakers, practitioners and researchers are looking for a combination of usefulness, reliability, and credibility on the part of the assessment. While there may be a lack of consensus on where the balance should be and the presented shift to learning outcomes requires significant changes in well-organized testing and assessment practices.

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ЩОДО ПИТАННЯ ПРО РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ НАВЧАННЯ ТА МЕТОДИ ЇХНЬОГО ОЦІНЮВАННЯ В ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

Досліджено результати навчання для системи освіти на міжнародному, національному та інституційному рівнях. Проналізовано значення та підходи до оцінювання результатів навчання згідно з новою системою і структурою європейських кваліфікацій. Розглянуто типи оцінювання результатів навчання, їхні критерії та практичне значення. Наведено матеріал, який дозволив виділити головні переваги і можливі проблеми реалізації системи навчання, що базується на результатах навчання, роль яких у сфері вищої освіти помітно зростає. Однак на європейському рівні цей процес зосереджено в основному на загальних розробках нових систем і структур. Підтвердженням цьому є підхід, який базується на результатах навчання, за яким узгоджено рівень європейської політики і, зокрема, на рівні політики в закладах вищої освіти. Результати навчання можуть бути застосовані на різних рівнях: інституційному, національному і міжнародному, але детермінують їхню дефініцію та значення. На інституційному рівні результати навчання (реалізація навчального плану, навчання і оцінювання) можна використати для вираження результатів навчання на рівні одиниці чи модуля. При цьому вони пояснюють учням, що саме від них вимагається, а також, які навички/компетенції і здібності вони отримують після успішного завершення навчання. Для викладача результати навчання можуть прояснити, що саме дасть модуль і як об'єднається з відповідним виставленням оцінки. Вимога зробити процес викладання і навчання більш прозорим і більш чітким є спільною проблемою для всіх, хто отримує освіту. У найближчій перспективі це пов'язано з підготовкою до невідкладного завдання формування модулів і програм щодо результатів навчання. У більш довгостроковій перспективі реалізація підходу на базі результатів навчання уможливить прийняття більш системного підходу до розробки програм і модулів.

Ключові слова: заклади вищої освіти, європейський освітній простір, оцінка, результати навчання, критерії оцінювання.