

# Developing Expected Learning Outcomes for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University

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## ABSTRACT

Educational standards are extremely important to educational sector worldwide because they could be used to ensure that all students attain their educational goals. To reach high educational standards, expected learning outcomes should not only be clear, measurable, and achievable, but also should reflect the needs of stakeholders. This could assist students to achieve employability. The purpose of this paper is to develop expected learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), Thailand (a developing country in Southeast Asia). The development of expected learning outcomes is in accordance with the concept of outcome based education and international standards of education (such as the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business). This study collected data from the participants who were core stakeholders and non-core stakeholders using the questionnaire with open-ended questions. The categorization of stakeholders into two groups was based on the criterion used in this study. Qualitative method was adopted to thematically categorize and analyze the data. This study found that there were nine items of expected learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program. These expected learning outcomes included generic outcomes and subject specific outcomes that could be used to guide teaching and learning approach as well as student assessment of the program. Since the expected learning outcomes developed in this study were based on stakeholders' needs of the Bachelor of Business Administration Program located in Southernmost Thailand, they may not be generalized to other educational programs or other regions.

**Keywords:** Bachelor of Business Administration, Expected Learning Outcome, Outcome Based Education, Thailand.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to changing business environments in the fourth industrial revolution, university business curricula (e.g. Bachelor of Business Administration: B.B.A.) face disruption that requires them to develop student learning outcomes in accordance with the needs of stakeholders at global and local levels [1]. Traditional curricula that provide students with knowledge-based education may fail to meet students' expectations for relevant skills that are valuable to real companies and employers' demands for employees' skills to perform real-world tasks [2]. Therefore, university curricula have shifted from

knowledge-based education to outcome-based education [1]. To accredit the achievement of student learning outcomes which benefit both employers and students, expected learning outcomes (ELOs) of the curriculum (also referred to as program learning outcomes: PLOs) should be clearly specified [3]. This is in line with the concept of outcome-based education (OBE) that is globally recognized as the effective educational system to ensure the quality of graduates [4].

In Thailand, OBE has been implemented by university business programs especially those that place a value on achieving educational standards such as the

ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) [5,6]. Since the concept of OBE is used as a basis of global educational standards, the university programs that put a great emphasis on OBE would gain a competitive advantage over others [7].

Based on principles of OBE, the university curriculum should clearly indicate what students will be able to do when they complete a program of study [3]. It should provide students with appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) that enable them to accomplish ELOs [1]. This could enhance employability of graduates. Therefore, a key challenge of curriculum development is how to identify ELOs corresponding to the needs of stakeholders [8]. But research on the development of ELOs was rarely seen. A study of entrepreneurship education indicates that the formulation of ELOs is based on “how things are really done” [9]. Educators should seek for ELOs that are strongly recommended by stakeholders and identify relevant KSA to accomplish ELOs [9]. This reflects what needs to be taught, learning environment, and assessment methods [9]. The objective of this paper is to develop ELOs for the B.B.A. Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani Campus (located in Southernmost Thailand). This study used a qualitative approach for developing ELOs in order to ensure that all ELOs of the B.B.A. Program are derived from stakeholders’ needs. The study provides the procedures of developing ELOs that could be applied to future research on this issue. Consequently, the study came up with nine items of ELOs that reflected the requirements of stakeholders, specifically for the B.B.A. Program. The next section will discuss theoretical viewpoint. It then is followed by research method, results and discussion, and conclusion respectively.

## 2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Considering evolution of educational system, it has shifted from knowledge-based education to competency-based education, and to outcome-based education [10]. This section discusses three concepts of education.

### A. Knowledge-Based Education

Traditional concept of education focused on knowledge-based education whereby universities provide students with knowledge for applying in their future working lives [11]. The weakness of knowledge-based education is that graduates face difficulty in applying knowledge they have learned at universities to the workplace [11]. Since knowledge-based education has aimed at understanding the content, they may forget the knowledge after graduation [11]. To develop students’ life-long learning, Doost suggested that university curriculum has to change from knowledge-based education to a process-oriented program [12]. The notion of process-oriented program seemed to place an emphasis on the importance of learning process. This is in line with the concept of competency-based education because the role of lecturer has changed from giving the information to facilitating students’ learning. The concept

of competency-based education will be discussed in the next sub-section.

### B. Competency-Based Education

Competency is defined as “a holistic combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes used as appropriate to solve problems in a given context” [10]. In short, it means a person’s “ability to turn ideas into actions” [10]. Competencies are required to effectively perform a particular task [13]. Thus, the goal of competency-based education is to produce skilled graduates who are more marketable to employers than those who are complied with knowledge-based education [14]. Competency-based education focuses on both hard skills (e.g. technical and procedural) and soft skills (e.g. interpersonal and communication) [15]. Competency-based curriculum is supposed to produce students’ potential for effectiveness in their task performance [16]. Therefore, university curriculum should provide students with the right competencies to reach the demand of the labor market [17].

The past studies have addressed global competencies that can be applied to university curriculum worldwide such as cross-cultural communication, emotional intelligence, and openness to new perspective [18]. According to the AACSB’s 2013 business accreditation standards (revised in July, 2018), curriculum content of B.B.A. program should include competencies that are divided into three groups: 1) general skill areas (written and oral communication, analytical thinking, ethical understanding and reasoning, etc.), 2) general business knowledge areas (financial theories, systems and processes in organizations, group and individual behaviors in organizations, etc.), and 3) technology agility (evidence-based decision making, understanding of the role of technology in society, etc.) [19].

Recently, there has been the transition from the AACSB’s 2013 business accreditation standards to the AACSB’s 2020 business accreditation standards (revised in July 2020) [19]. Based on the latest version of AACSB’s business accreditation standards, competencies broadly include knowledge, skills, and abilities [20]. The AACSB standards suggest that competencies should reflect the expectations of stakeholders that can be varied [20].

### C. Outcome-Based Education

Outcome means the expected result of an action or an event [6]. The term “outcome-based education” refers to “clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences” [3]. OBE encompasses an established mechanism for producing students’ competencies that are essential to achieve learning outcomes and for measuring the accomplishment of learning outcomes [21]. An OBE approach was formerly known as “a means to ensure quality in the American school system” [22]. Recently, it has been widely adopted by university curricula as it is part of quality assurance in higher education [22]. For instance, the

guide to AUN-QA assessment at program level version 4.0 suggests that all relevant criteria (e.g. teaching and learning approach, student assessment, and facilities and infrastructure) should be established and monitored to enable students to achieve ELOs [23]. Since an OBE approach views outcome as the product of learning (i.e. a learning product), the product of learning guides the learning process [22].

The key principles of OBE emphasize ELOs and backwards curriculum design that are used as a guideline to manage teaching and learning activities to achieve required outcomes [24]. ELOs need to be clear, measurable, and achievable so that students can accomplish learning outcomes at the end of their study program [25]. On one hand, if lecturers clearly understand ELOs, they will be able to formulate and implement teaching and learning strategies to produce students' learning outcomes [25]. On the other hand, students who understand ELOs will be better in their learning outcomes [25].

OBE is considered as an effective educational approach that contributes to preparing students to attain learning outcomes and to meet the expectations of employers [26]. Therefore, ELOs should be consistent with the vision and mission of the university and reflect the needs of stakeholders [1, 23]. In the same manner, the guide to AUN-QA assessment at program level version 4.0 places more value on external stakeholders (stakeholders outside the university) than internal stakeholders [23].

### 3. METHODS

The development of curricula has adopted mainly qualitative research techniques [13]. Likewise, qualitative research methods are applicable to this study which aims at developing ELOs for the B.B.A. curriculum corresponding to the needs of its stakeholders.

#### A. Criterion for Participant Selection

The participants of this study consist of core stakeholders and non-core stakeholders. The categorization of participants into two groups was based on the criterion used in this study. The B.B.A. Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, PSU, Pattani Campus was established since 2005. Its purpose was originally to serve the needs of stakeholders in Southernmost Thailand. Similarly, the latest revision of the B.B.A. curriculum in 2020 was still mainly focused on the needs of stakeholders in Southernmost Thailand. Thus, the categorization of participants was based on the area or location. Core stakeholders are stakeholders within Southernmost Thailand, while non-core stakeholders are stakeholders outside Southernmost Thailand.

#### B. Purposive Sampling

The participants from each group were selected by using purposive sampling. It is commonly used to select

the key informants who are able and are willing to give the information [27]. This study adopted brainstorming technique to identify the sub-groups of stakeholders because it is helpful to summarize the key points of a particular event [28]. In this study, the sub-groups of stakeholders were listed through brainstorming by administrative committees of the B.B.A. Program. There were ten sub-groups of core stakeholders and four sub-groups of non-core stakeholders as follows:

- Ten sub-groups of core stakeholders (located within Southernmost Thailand) were: 1) business organizations, 2) entrepreneurs, 3) governmental organizations and public enterprises, 4) employers, 5) alumni who being entrepreneurs, 6) alumni who being employees, 7) graduates (graduation in year 2019), 8) B.B.A. students, 9) B.B.A. lecturers, and 10) high school students.
- Four sub-groups of non-core stakeholders (located outside Southernmost Thailand) were: 1) central governmental organizations, 2) entrepreneurs, 3) domestic companies, 4) Thai companies with international branches in ASEAN countries.

#### C. Questionnaire

The questionnaire with open-ended questions was adopted for data collection. The questions were based on the purpose of the study that was to find out stakeholders' needs in order to formulate ELOs for the B.B.A. Program. The main points of the questions were adapted from the past research on employers' expectations and satisfaction [29, 30]. The examples of questions posed in a questionnaire are as below.

- What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you required an employee to have in your department?
- What expectations do you have of university graduates in the field of business administration?
- Have any of your employees graduated from the Bachelor of Business Administration Program at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand? If yes, please explain how satisfied you are with him/her in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

#### D. Data Analysis

This study adopted qualitative approach to thematically categorize and analyze the data. The themes had been refined by the researchers several times to become clearer themes. The refined themes were ready to be used to develop ELOs for the B.B.A. Program.

The next section will present the results of the study and discussion.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected from two groups of participants (core stakeholders and non-core stakeholders), The data were analyzed and categorized into the themes and sub-themes that can be used to

develop ELOs for the B.B.A. Program. Besides that, the vision and mission of the university were considered when formulating ELOs [1, 23].

A. *Expected Learning Outcomes for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program*

The results showed that there were nine items of ELOs for the B.B.A. Program. According to the AUN-QA version 4.0, ELOs should encompass both generic outcomes and subject specific outcomes [23]. The ELOs at program level or “PLOs” of the B.B.A. consist of both generic and specific outcomes as follows:

- 1) *PLO1*: Apply knowledge of business administration in different contexts. (*Specific outcome*)
- 2) *PLO2*: Solve management problems in accordance with situations, spatial and cultural contexts. (*Specific outcome*)
- 3) *PLO3*: Manage the organization on the basis of ethics and social responsibility. (*Specific outcome*)
- 4) *PLO4*: Communicate across cultures and build diverse networks. (*Generic outcome*)
- 5) *PLO5*: Have leadership skills, be able to control emotions, and deal with pressure in various situations. (*Generic outcome*)
- 6) *PLO6*: Be a human resource professional in various contexts. (*Specific outcome*)
- 7) *PLO7*: Be an entrepreneur both in the local and non-local areas. (*Specific outcome*)
- 8) *PLO8*: Manage a business based on the principles of Islam in accordance with local and global contexts. (*Specific outcome*)
- 9) *PLO9*: Apply information technology in business administration to pursue work. (*Specific outcome*)

B. *The Link between the Vision and Mission of the University and Program Learning Outcomes*

In this study, PLOs of the B.B.A. Program were consistent with the vision and mission of Prince of Songkla University.

TABLE I. THE LINK BETWEEN THE VISION AND MISSION OF PRINCE OF SONGKLA UNIVERSITY AND PLOs

Vision/Mission <sup>a</sup>	PLOs
Vision: “Prince of Songkla University is an educational institution focusing on innovation and society with academic excellence, aiming to become one of the top five universities in ASEAN in 2027”	PLO1, PLO2, PLO3, PLO4, PLO5, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, PLO9
Mission 1: “To build academic leadership and innovation through research for developing the country in general and the southern region of Thailand in particular, creating a linkage to the society and global network.”	PLO1, PLO2, PLO4, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, PLO9
Mission 2: “To produce globally-recognized graduates with academic and professional competence, honesty, discipline, public service mindset and practical skills for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century, based on experience gained from practice.”	PLO2, PLO3, PLO5, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, PLO9
Mission 3: “To develop the university into a society of learning based on a multi-cultural	PLO1, PLO2, PLO3, PLO4,

Vision/Mission <sup>a</sup>	PLOs
background and sufficiency economy principles, and allow the general public easy and convenient access to learning and gain from whatever forms and sources of knowledge are available at the university.”	PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, PLO9

<sup>a</sup> As of year 2020.

Table I showed that all PLOs of the B.B.A. Program supported the vision of the university. There was the link between the mission 1 and seven items of PLOs (PLO1, PLO2, PLO4, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, and PLO9). The mission 2 was supported by seven items of PLOs (PLO2, PLO3, PLO5, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, and PLO9). Mission 3 was related to eight items of PLOs (PLO1, PLO2, PLO3, PLO4, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, and PLO9).

C. *The Link between the Needs of Stakeholders and Program Learning Outcomes*

PLOs of the B.B.A. Program were formulated from the needs of stakeholders. Table II presents the needs of stakeholders that were categorized into the themes and sub-themes. These key themes and sub-themes were used to develop PLOs.

TABLE II. THE LINK BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND PLOs

The Needs of Stakeholders			PLOs
Theme	Sub-theme	Stakeholder	
Knowledge of business administration	Knowledge of business administration in general including accounting, finance, marketing, human resource management, business law, business planning, business strategies, social insurance, labor relations, etc.	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Employers - Governmental organizations - Entrepreneurs - Alumni who being entrepreneurs - Graduates (graduation in year 2019)  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations - Domestic companies	PLO1, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8
	Knowledge of business administration corresponding to Southernmost context (comprising managing in a multicultural society, managing based on the principles of Islam, etc.) and global context	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Governmental organizations - Public enterprises - B.B.A. lecturers  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Domestic companies	PLO1, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8
Communication skills	Communication skills, foreign language skills, and cross-cultural communication skills	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Governmental organizations - Business organizations	PLO4



The Needs of Stakeholders			PLOs	The Needs of Stakeholders			PLOs
Theme	Sub-theme	Stakeholder		Theme	Sub-theme	Stakeholder	
		<u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations - Domestic companies - Thai companies with international branches in ASEAN countries				<u>stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations	
Ethics	Business ethics and social responsibility	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Entrepreneurs  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Entrepreneurs - Domestic companies	PLO3	Technological skills	Digital skill and technological skill for pursuing work	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - B.B.A. students - Alumni who being entrepreneurs - Graduates (graduation in year 2019) - Public enterprises  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations - Entrepreneurs	PLO9
Leadership	Leadership and emotional intelligence	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Alumni who being entrepreneurs - Alumni who being employees  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations	PLO5	Interpersonal skills	Interacting and coordinating with others	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Business organizations  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations - Entrepreneurs	PLO4, PLO5
Analytical skills	Analyzing job trends and SWOT analysis	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Employers - Alumni who being employees  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Thai companies with international branches in ASEAN countries	PLO1, PLO2, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8	Negotiation	Presentation and negotiation skills	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Governmental organizations  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Thai companies with international branches in ASEAN countries	PLO4, PLO5
Planning	Planning skills/ Be able to plan the work	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Alumni who being employees - Business organizations - Governmental organizations  <u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Domestic companies	PLO1, PLO2, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8	Decision-making skills	Data analysis and decision-making skills	<u>Non-core stakeholders</u> - Central governmental organizations - Domestic companies - Thai companies with international branches in ASEAN countries	PLO1, PLO2, PLO6, PLO7, PLO8, PLO9
Problem-solving	Be able to apply knowledge for problem-solving	<u>Core stakeholders</u> - Employers - Business organizations  <u>Non-core</u>	PLO1, PLO2, PLO6, PLO7				

As mentioned in table II, PLOs of the B.B.A. were based on the needs of various groups of stakeholders, especially external stakeholders. This was in line with the criterion used by the AUN-QA version 4.0 that values external over internal stakeholders when developing ELOs [23]. It was found that both core stakeholders and non-core stakeholders expressed similar expectations on B.B.A. graduates (such as knowledge of business administration, communication skills, ethics, leadership,

analytical skills, planning, problem-solving, technological skills, interpersonal skills, and negotiation). Nevertheless, decision-making skills were more likely to be valued by non-core stakeholders (stakeholders outside Southernmost Thailand) than core stakeholders (stakeholders within Southernmost Thailand).

It can be noticed that PLOs of the B.B.A. focused on what students will be able to do after their graduation. Consistently, a study of real estate education which collected data from multiple stakeholders suggests that employers and graduates are more likely to see practical knowledge, skills, and abilities integrated into university curricula [30]. At the stage of curriculum design, the requirements of the key stakeholders should be considered [30].

Since PLOs of the B.B.A. encompass both subject specific outcomes and generic outcomes, a study of the expectation-performance gap in generic skills in accounting graduates maintains that generic skills (e.g. interpersonal and communication skills) have an impact on employability and career success [31]. Hence, university business curricula are supposed to include generic outcomes as well.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study confirmed that the development of ELOs for the B.B.A. Program considered not only the vision and mission of the university, but also the needs of stakeholders (both stakeholders within Southernmost and outside Southernmost of Thailand). In line with the concept of OBE which focuses on the achievement of learning outcomes, this study formulated appropriate ELOs for the B.B.A. Program that could be used to guide teaching and learning strategies as well as student assessment strategies. However, ELOs which were developed specifically for the B.B.A. Program located in Southernmost Thailand may not be generalized to other countries or regions.

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