

The study of student learning outcomes index by Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan from the international perspective: policy implementation, professional development and quality assurance

The purpose of developing student learning outcomes descriptors or index for different levels of education is to measure how students actually learned and how they gained competencies prior to graduation, which they can apply in their careers. Thus, higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, employees, and other stakeholders start to pay more attention to the application and appropriate use of student learning outcomes in higher education. Many nations have also deeply integrated learning outcome descriptors in their accreditation system and review framework. These learning outcome descriptors often include various dimensions, such as knowledge, skills, autonomy, responsibility, and even attitudes, to help clearly define each level of education or qualifications awarded.

This study aimed at examining the development of the “HEEACT Learning Outcome Index” and comparing with the current learning outcomes used by Taiwan’s universities for bachelor’s degrees. This study also explored the possibilities to engage the HEEACT learning outcomes index into the next cycle of program accreditation. First of all, this study compared and analyzed the current learning outcome descriptors which are used by various regions and countries, including the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia. This research employed the mixed research methods and approaches,

including content analysis, surveys, and focus groups for data collection.

There are several major findings. 1. It was found that the relevance between learning outcomes and qualification framework becomes a norm in the selected cases; 2. Universities highly agreed that students and educators will be benefited if a well defined learning outcomes index is established. The index system will contribute to a clear definition of an academic qualification at the bachelor's level. Moreover, it is believed that the application of learning outcomes in the new cycle of program accreditation will be challenging.

Key words: HEEACT Learning Outcome Index, national qualifications framework, learning outcome, level descriptors