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The Fortunate Consequences of OBE introduced in the NAAC Framework 2017: Teacher Attitudes towards using Bloom's Taxonomy to write Program Outcomes (PO) and Course Outcomes (CO) - A Study

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with its Headquarters in Bengaluru. The vision of NAAC is to make quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India. (www.naac.gov.in)

The new NAAC framework introduced in 2017 consists of 7 Criteria and 34 Key Indicators (KIs). The criterion-wise weightages vary for the 3 types of HEIs:

1. Universities 2. Autonomous colleges 3. Affiliated colleges.

Criterion-wise Weightages for the 3 Types of HEIs

Curricular Aspects	150 (U)	150 (Au)	100 (Aff)
Teaching-learning & Evaluation	200 (U)	300 (Au)	350 (Aff)
Research, Innovations & Extension	250 (U)	150 (Au)	120 (Aff)
Infrastructure & Learning Resources	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)
Student Support & Progression	100 (U)	100 (Au)	130 (Aff)
Governance, Leadership & Management	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)
Institutional Values & Best Practices	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)

(<http://naac.gov.in/index.php/assessment-accreditation#eligibility>)

Criterion 2 Teaching-Learning & Evaluation has a mention of Outcome Based Education (OBE) in the Key Indicator 2.6 (Student Performance and Learning Outcome) which carries a weightage of 40.

Metric No. 2.6.1 is a Quality Metric (QIM) which contains the following specifications: Programme Outcomes (PO), Programme Specific Outcomes (PSO), and Course Outcomes (CO) for all the Programmes offered by the institution are stated and displayed on the website and communicated to the teachers and students. (naac.gov.in/docs/manuals/).

As a part of new NAAC regulations, all the Universities, autonomous colleges, and affiliated colleges display the POs and COs in their website and describe their method(s) of measuring the learning outcomes.

Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women is located in Sembium, Chennai.¹¹ It was started in the year 1986 for the development of women students from the underprivileged society. It continues to strive hard for the empowerment of these students in and around the locality. It follows the new NAAC framework to introduce many quality initiatives, enhancing the teaching-learning and research in the institution.

A study was conducted in Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women, Chennai, to find out the teachers' attitudes towards using Bloom's Taxonomy to write Program Outcomes (PO) and Course Outcomes (CO).

54 teachers participated in the online survey and recorded their responses. The major findings of the survey are:

1. 64.81% of the teachers are already familiar with Outcome Based Education (OBE) and Bloom's Taxonomy.
2. 100% of them agree that Bloom's Taxonomy has helped them in defining the POs, PSOs, and COs effectively.
3. 87.27% of them say that all the 6 levels of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy are applicable to their teaching and students' learning.
4. 90.74% of them agree that 'defining the COs' has changed their views on teaching and learning in the classroom.
5. 67.27% of them say that they have used Bloom's Taxonomy verbs in their question papers earlier.
6. 98.18% of them agree that they will continue framing question papers using appropriate verbs.
7. 94.44% of them say that they will give assignments based on the 6 levels in Bloom's Taxonomy.
8. 89.09% of them agree that it is possible to improve student's thinking ability by using Bloom's Taxonomy in framing question papers, giving assignments, conducting quizzes/competitions, giving tests, etc.
9. Only 34.55% of them say that they have better ideas to define or measure learning outcomes.

10. 53.7% of them have given qualitative feedback on using Bloom's Taxonomy to define POs, PSOs, and COs.

Some of the positive comments from the teachers' qualitative feedback are:

1. (Bloom's Taxonomy) It's a simplified tool and handy to apply.
2. Had been doing it intuitively now have learnt the scientific way..
3. Bloom's taxonomy helps us in good 'distribution' of the questions at various levels - lower, intermediate, and higher (consisting of Bloom's six cognitive skills in a ladder) - so that the students perform better.
4. We have been using Bloom's Taxonomy verbs, but did not know the term. Now there is a better understanding of the term and OBE.
5. Bloom's Taxonomy definitely provides a systematic and structured approach which needs to be course and student diversity specific.
6. Bloom's Taxonomy is applicable to frame QPs (Question Papers).
7. Through Bloom's Taxonomy students are able to analyse ideas in innovative ways.
8. Through Bloom's Taxonomy, students are able to get innovative ideas.
9. It is useful for the students.
10. Good initiative!
11. This method is good for teaching learning process.
12. Bloom's Taxonomy helps the students to think in a creative way.
13. It helps the students to think, create, understand, and analyse ordinary things in extraordinary ways.
14. The six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy help to make teaching learning process effective.
15. It is very useful and gives us a clear idea about the proceedings in a programme.

Some of the critical comments from the teachers' qualitative feedback are:

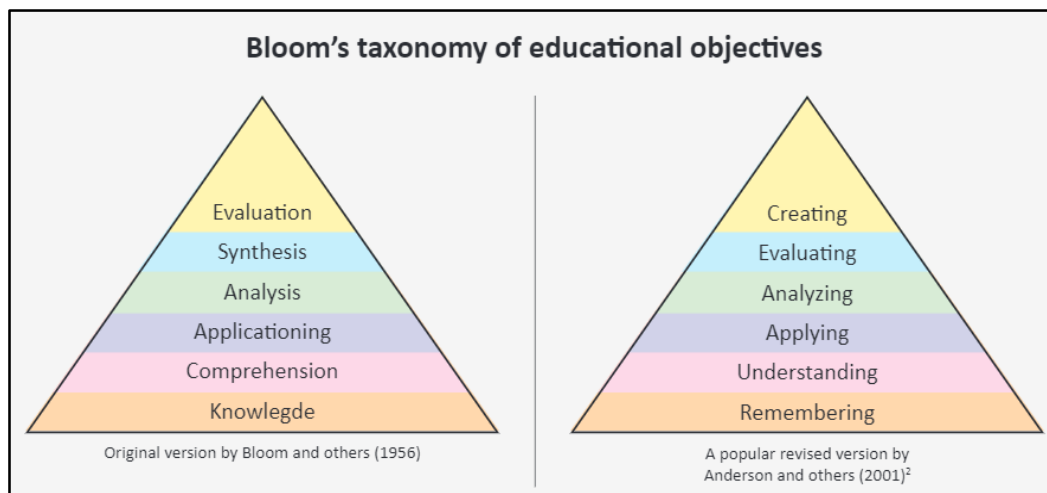
16. We still need a lot of time to understand and start using it. Familiarising and taking it out to the students would surely be a challenge within the university syllabus.. Truly speaking, it can be simplified.
17. We were doing the best for the students without Bloom's Taxonomy. When we are forced by rules, we don't feel the worth. We, the teachers, live in the city where knowledge is available free of cost. Knowledge is in the fingertips of students obtained from Mother google. We are happy to follow the taxonomy.
18. Choice of diction need not be restricted or limited at least for certain disciplines like English Literature.
19. It has to be explained in micro-detail and macro-context.
20. Not sure if it can be applied to certain courses in literature. Students do not always answer to the question asked; in other words, they do not take the verbs used seriously. As a result their answers are summaries or just what they know. In such a case it is difficult to judge the outcome appropriately.
21. Literary studies should not be capsuled in scientific methods.
22. Applying all the six levels of thinking differs with respect to each subject we teach. Some levels of thinking are not applicable to certain subjects.
23. We need to bring in more creativity and innovation by providing some freedom to the students in the class.
24. Following Bloom's Taxonomy is difficult, but may be by practice we can follow it.
25. In my opinion, all the six verbs cannot be used for my students. Depending on their level, basic verbs can be used.
26. Bloom's Taxonomy can't be applied to Indian syllabus, as it is an outdated syllabus. There is limited freedom for the faculty as they have to juggle administrative duties

with teaching, which ultimately reduces the quality of teaching and the learning of the students.

The researchers have tried to study the teachers' critical comments in the light of the research article *The Unfortunate Consequences of Bloom's Taxonomy* published by Roland Case in 2013.

According to Case (2013), Outcome Based Education (OBE) is arguably one of the most destructive theories in education. He remarks that Bloom's original theory is credible, but the 'double shift' that occurred between Bloom's theory and his colleagues' proposals in 1956 have caused the damage (1).

Bloom's Taxonomy - Original and Revised Version



(Case 2)

He puts forth the serious claim that OBE is not popular among the teachers as a theory of assessment but as a theory of teaching - prescribing when and how outcomes should be addressed (2). He has identified three major flaws in the modified Bloom's Taxonomy.

1. The misapplication of Bloom's taxonomy as a theory of teaching makes the teachers underestimate the students' ability to think.
 - Problem: Teachers argue that students who struggle with Knowledge and Comprehension (lower order skills) are not capable of Analysis or Evaluation (higher order tasks).
 - Solution: Instead of assuming that higher order tasks will always be more difficult than lower order tasks, teachers can tweak almost any level of question (higher or lower order) by reducing its difficulty (but not its level) and supporting the students in performing the higher order tasks (4).
2. Another widely held misconception with regard to Bloom's taxonomy is that learning occurs 'hierarchically'.
 - Problem: Teachers believe that learning shifts 'hierarchically' from lower order to higher order. They seem to give 'lower order' activities to achieve 'lower order' outcomes first, and then try 'higher order' activities to achieve 'higher order' outcomes.
 - Solution: Transmitting information and providing definitions don't develop factual or conceptual understanding. 'Understanding' can be developed only by problematising the content using 'higher order' learning tasks (5). Any activity (irrespective of the lower or higher order hierarchy) can be given to the students to improve their thinking skills and learning outcomes.
3. Bloom has carefully attached verbs to each level of cognition. Over the time, it is believed that the mere use of a specific verb is sufficient to evoke a particular kind of (higher order or lower order) thinking (6).
 - Problem: The selective use of verbs to trigger thoughtful student responses often falls short of their intended purpose when the use of any term is restricted to only one level of thinking.

- a) For example, ‘explaining’ cannot be seen as a ‘lower order’ task, as it requires thoughtful choices about what, how, and whom to explain.
- b) Analysis or evaluation is not one level of thinking divorced from other levels: Remembering and understanding are required for analysing or evaluating.
- Solution: Since all rigorous thinking is evaluative (critical) thinking, it is important to establish expectations for reasoned judgments where students know to assess or judge the merits of available options or criteria. Teaching or evaluation should more explicitly invite the kind of critical reflection required for every level of thinking (6).

Case (2013) remarks that the paradox of popular interpretations of Bloom’s Taxonomy is that the efforts to elevate the quality and complexity of classroom tasks often have the opposite effect. As an alternative, he suggests three principles to promote effective thinking in the process of teaching and learning:

1. Adjust the difficulty level so that every student engages regularly in ‘higher order’ learning activities.
2. Appreciate that understanding of subject matter is not a ‘lower order’ task that can be transmitted; it requires that students think critically ‘with’ and ‘about’ the ideas.
3. Understand that inviting students to offer reasoned judgments is a more fruitful way of framing learning tasks than the mere use of verbs clustered around levels of thinking that are removed from evaluative judgments (6).

Key Findings:

- Not only the teachers but also many educationalists and researchers are sceptical about the use of Bloom's Taxonomy in defining the POs and COs and measuring the students’ learning outcomes through OBE method.

- It is true that the students perform the learning tasks at every level in two ways, either ‘critically thoughtfully’ or ‘critically thoughtlessly’ (Case 6). So it is really difficult to measure learning outcomes using any specific method.
- Bloom's Taxonomy has made the teachers realise that they should not stop with developing the students' memorising skills, but should find ways to develop their understanding, analysing, assessing, evaluating, synthesising skills, etc.
- Despite the use of Bloom's Taxonomy verbs, the teachers should encourage thoughtful understanding, analysis, evaluation, or synthesis at all levels of teaching and learning to improve their students' learning outcomes and make Outcome Based Education (OBE) introduced by the NAAC Framework 2017 useful for the students.

Works Cited

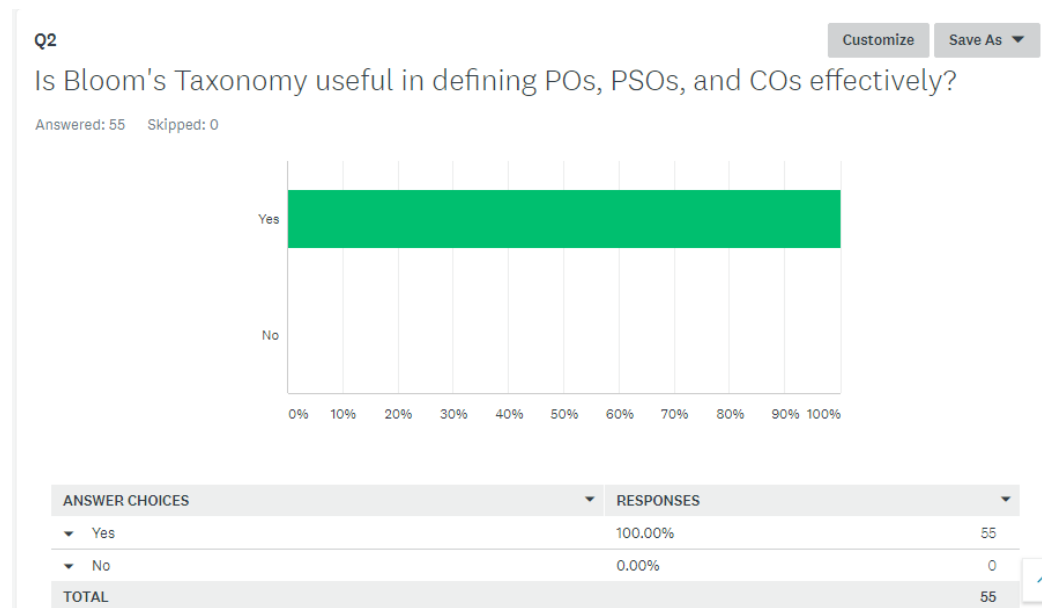
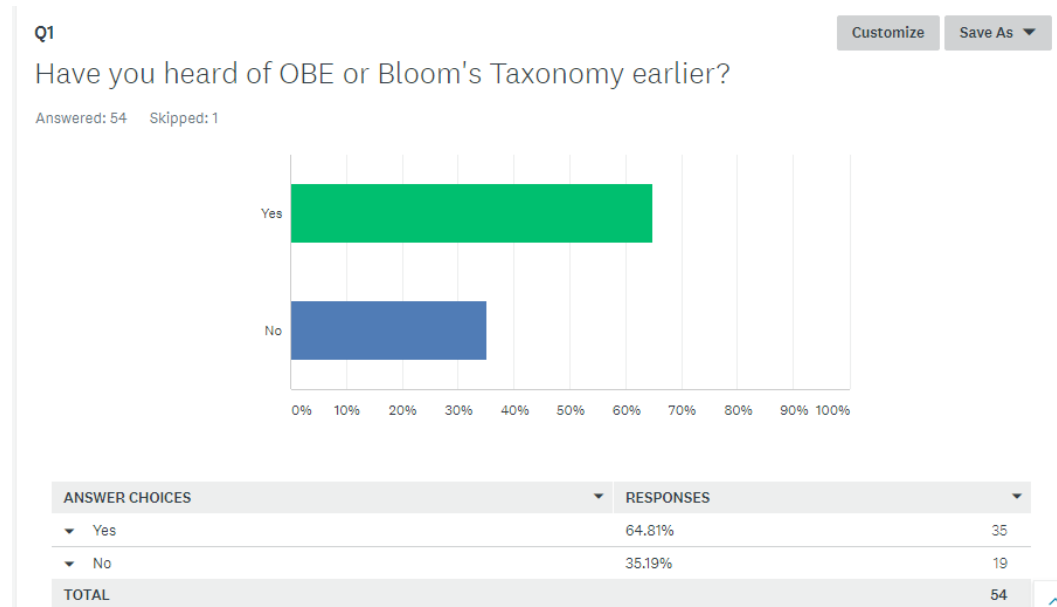
Bloom, B. S., Englehart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1956.

Case, Roland. "The Unfortunate Consequences of Bloom's Taxonomy" Social Education Vol. 77, No. 4, Sep. 2013, <<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1043145>> Accessed on 30 Sep. 2018.

NAAC related Documents available in <http://www.naac.gov.in/>.

Annexure

Graphs Representing the Teachers' Attitudes towards using Bloom's Taxonomy to write Program Outcomes (PO) and Course Outcomes (CO):



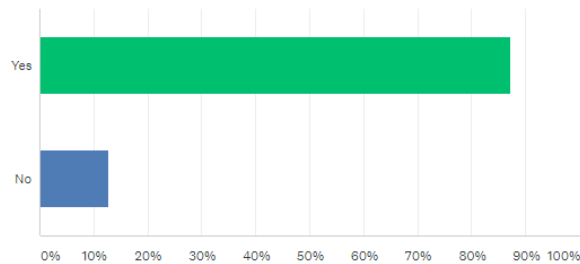
Q3

Customize

Save As ▼

Are the 6 levels of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy applicable to your teaching or students' learning?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

87.27%

48

▼ No

12.73%

7

TOTAL

55

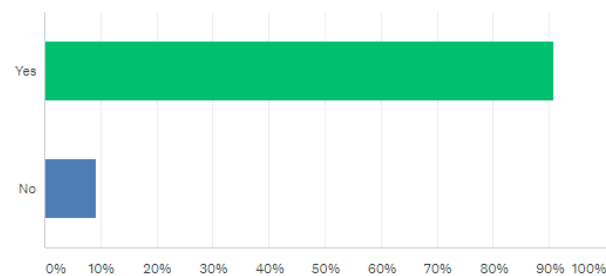
Q4

Customize

Save As ▼

Has 'defining the COs' changed your views on teaching and learning in the classroom?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

90.74%

49

▼ No

9.26%

5

TOTAL

54

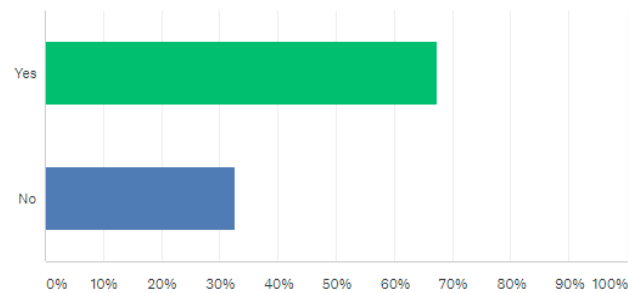
Q5

Customize

Save As ▼

Have you used Bloom's Taxonomy verbs in your question papers earlier?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

67.27%

37

▼ No

32.73%

18

TOTAL

55

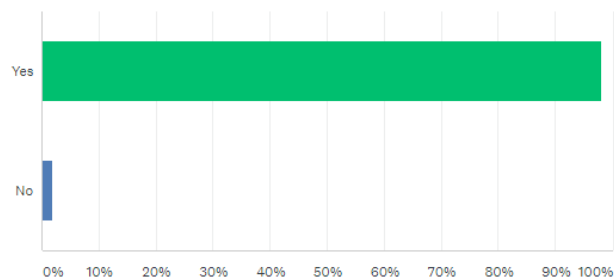
Q6

Customize

Save As ▼

After reading about Bloom's Taxonomy, will you continue framing question papers using appropriate verbs?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

98.18%

54

▼ No

1.82%

1

TOTAL

55

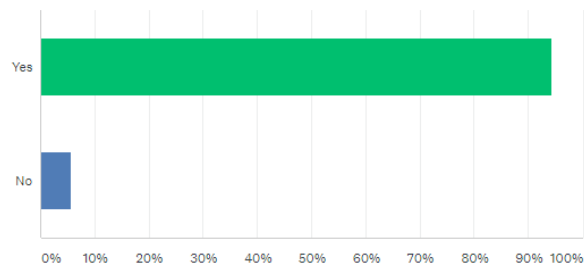
Q7

Customize

Save As ▼

Will you give assignments based on the 6 levels in Bloom's Taxonomy?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

94.44%

51

▼ No

5.56%

3

TOTAL

54

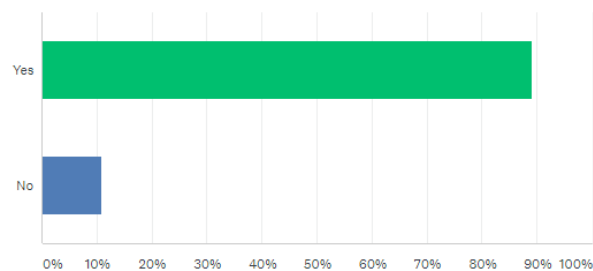
Q8

Customize

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Is it possible to improve students' thinking ability by using Bloom's Taxonomy in framing question papers, giving assignments, conducting quizzes / competitions, etc.?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES ▼

RESPONSES ▼

▼ Yes

89.09%

49

▼ No

10.91%

6

TOTAL

55

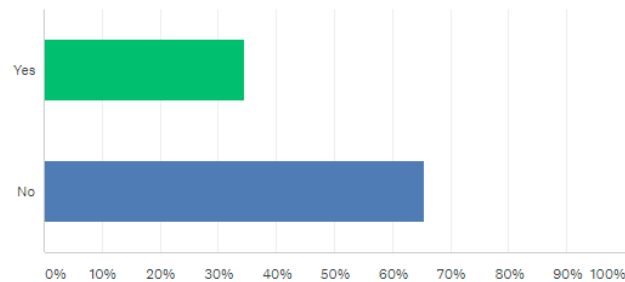
Q9

Customize

Save As ▼

Do you have a better idea to define or measure learning outcomes?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	34.55%	19
▼ No	65.45%	36
TOTAL		55

Q10

Save As ▼

If yes, what can be the alternative for OBE or Bloom's Taxonomy? If no, please share your views on OBE or Bloom's Taxonomy. [You can be honest in answering so that we can have a better understanding of OBE and Bloom's Taxonomy. Thank you!]

Answered: 31 Skipped: 24

RESPONSES (31) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

☐ Apply to Selected ▼ Filter by tag ▼

Search responses 🔍 ⓘ

Showing 31 responses

☐ Following Bloom's taxonomy is difficult but maybe by practice we can follow it
10/14/2018 10:08 PM

[View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags ▼](#)

☐ In my opinion, all the six verbs cannot be used for my students. Depending on their level, basic verbs can be used.
10/14/2018 9:03 PM

[View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags ▼](#)